



Reignite the Spark

**A snapshot of an Arts and
Health Partnership 2007-2011**



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An Cathaoirleachs Award 2010, awarded to Terry O'Farrell and St. Joseph's House for Adult Deaf and Deaf Blind, Stillorgan

Introduction

On behalf of the Health Service Executive, Health Promotion Service, Dublin South East / Wicklow and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council we are proud to present a snapshot of our Arts and Health Partnership from 2007-2011, told from all perspectives.

From intergenerational drama, dance in the community, to storytelling through clay, participants, staff and visitors alike have given the term 'arts and health' meaning. This reflects our belief that everybody has the right to access and experience the arts to enhance their day-to-day life.

During this period we targeted residential and day care facilities across four areas in the health services.

These four settings were:

- Dalkey Community Unit and Day Care Services for Older Persons.
- Coiscéim Residential Care Unit, Mental Health Services.
- St Joseph's House for Deaf and Deaf Blind Adults.
- St Joseph's Centre, Day Care and Outreach Services for Older Persons with age related illness.

Evidence based research indicates there is an increased need to offer older people opportunities to actively participate in the social, creative and cultural life of their community. Equity of choice, discrimination,

isolation and mobility frequently act as barriers to participate in these activities. Inclusion of older persons, those with disabilities: physical, intellectual, sensory and mental health illness or long-term conditions such as dementia are traditionally hard to reach. As recommended in "An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People".¹

"Commissioners for older people need to take account of older people with mental health problems, long term conditions such as dementia and other disabilities, and older people who are 'hard to reach', such as people living alone, living in care homes."

To maximise engagement, the projects described in this document considered the needs of each participant, each care setting, their staff and facilitators. The partnership aims to make creativity intrinsic to life within residential and day care. It enhances quality of life, self esteem and improves overall health and wellbeing for all those taking part.

We hope you enjoy this snapshot; which tells the story through the voices of all involved.

Arts and Health Partnership, HSE Health Promotion Service Dublin South East/Wicklow and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

Foreword

At Age & Opportunity, we know that good quality arts opportunities can make an enormous contribution to quality of life and health of residents of care settings. At their best such programmes benefit not only residents but also staff. This is not just about filling time, but enhancing communication and relationships, and enabling residents to make creative choices, at a time when other opportunities for self-expression or for the exercise of choice are more restricted. Such projects can begin to affect the whole ethos of a care centre, revealing residents to staff in ways not otherwise imagined, and having ripple effects on the wider community.

Positive effects of arts programmes with older people living in care are being increasingly recognised by research, which shows how participants experience increased self-efficacy, esteem, self-reliance, better morale and more social interaction.

Vital though good research is, what I find most compelling is meeting people participating at first hand and talking to them about the difference that participation makes to them. I think about the residents I've met who are always ready and waiting for the artist to arrive for the workshop because it is the highlight of the week. I think of the woman I spoke to who has spent over ten years living in care and who, having never painted before, learned to paint with her left hand following paralysis of her right side. I remember the passionate way she was engaged with her paintings, with getting the colours and the lines right, and how she said she could almost miss mealtimes because of how time flies when she had access to an easel and brush.

It makes me imagine the potential of care homes to operate as centres of creative living, where people could choose to engage meaningfully in a range of creative activities. I think about how that approach would concentrate on promoting human flourishing in the face of disability and frailty and how – in recognising the creative spark in all of us - it would acknowledge at a profound level the dignity of human beings. I think about how such projects require relatively modest investment, and have potentially far-reaching effects.

Artists who work in care settings must respond to people living through an important chapter of their lives, one during which they are adapting to change and often to loss. These artists frequently develop innovative, participatory solutions operating within relationships of equality and respect leading to quite profound outcomes. It is important that work of this kind be recognised and sustained. For that reason I am happy to be associated with this publication.

Ann Leahy

Assistant CEO, Age & Opportunity.

Arts and Health Programme Objectives

The Arts and Health Partnership objectives are:

- To ensure that those in residential care become active participants in the creative and cultural life of their community, as well as the county's arts life, not just as an audience but also as creators, participants and decision-makers.
- To demonstrate that access to and participation in the arts not only enriches quality of life but has a positive influence on the general health, mental health and social activities of those involved.
- To recognise that people participating in the arts benefit most, where artistic excellence is pursued and sustained over a long period of time.



Participants attending Country House
Concert in Cabinteely House, 2007

Arts and Health Programme Overview

Step 1: 2007 - 2008

From 2007 to 2008, as a starting point, taster sessions were introduced. Participants were offered opportunities to attend external events and onsite workshops.

- Attending and linking with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council initiatives such as the County House Concerts, Festival of World Cultures, Public Art launches, screenings and other exhibitions. This gave participants a good insight into the variety of cultural activities that they potentially could participate in within their community.
- Workshops (such as music reminiscences and visual art workshops) were offered within the units, which were open to residential and day care participants. This increased the reach of the programme to those that were unable to attend offsite activities.

Step 2: 2008 - 2009

Following on from the taster sessions, short term projects, were initiated to build on the first stages of the programme.

Active participation opportunities in various art forms were offered to the care settings, examples included:

- The Children's Exhibition 2008, County Hall, Dún Laoghaire was visited by residents. It was an exhibition of artists in school projects from around the county.
- One of the classes involved in the exhibition was from The Harold School, Glasthule focused on local buildings. After the residents visited the exhibition, Dalkey Community Unit Residents and Day Care invited the school children and an intergenerational conversation began. This resulted in local artist Aoife Dwyer running a series of responsive visual art workshops for the residents in Dalkey Community Unit.

Step 3: 2009 - 2011

Long-term residencies in the care settings built on the taster sessions and the shorter projects.

Participants were offered the opportunity to work with creative practitioners in different art forms and to become creators themselves. Some examples include:

- Reminiscence project based on Killiney tearooms, initiated by residents and family members.
- Intergenerational drama project with Dalkey School Project and Dalkey Community Unit and Day Care for Older Persons.
- Dance workshops based in two residential units, linking with local active retirement groups culminating in a community based tea dance experience for all involved.
- Quilting workshops in three residential units and one-day care facility, resulting in showcasing of work as part of Festival of World Cultures 2009.
- A visual arts residency based in adult deaf and deaf blind care setting where participants told their life stories through the creation of clay vessels.
- Singing workshops based in residential, day care and outreach services for older people with illnesses associated with ageing, dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Participants engaged in stop motion animation, combining singing with animation and moved to focus solely on singing which was most popular with the participants.

To highlight the range and diversity of the work that people participated in, we have chosen four art forms to give a more in-depth snapshot of the Arts and Health partnership. Dance, Drama, Craft and Visual Arts are just some of the examples of opportunities on offer as part of the programme.

Dance

Dance and Tea Dance Experience

Choreographers Michelle Cahill and Ríonach Ní Neill worked with Coiscéim Residential Care Unit and Dalkey Community Unit on a weekly basis for three months. They started by talking to participants about their personal musical choices, which led to conversations about their experiences of going to dances when they were younger. In a way that was natural and comfortable, the choreographers worked to ensure that participants went from listening to these songs, to moving and dancing.

The Tea Dance was something that everybody looked forward to. Participants had practiced their dances, both seated and standing, depending on their mobility. They chose the songs that they wanted the “Brian Mc Carthy Show-band” (a band of their own age and era) to sing on the day. Local members of active retirement groups were invited to be a part of the experience, and this broadened the reach of the project to the wider community, creating a rare social occasion where both groups could dance, chat and relive times gone by.

“We learned a dance and everyone came to the final dance, it was great! Oh yes! I would be singing, Oh I loved it”

Resident Dalkey Community Unit

“The Tea Dance was really uplifting! They were transformed. Especially people who were very quiet, because people really love music! And, even those who suffered from dementia, the music definitely triggers things. Anything with music and dance is fantastic, I feel the residents benefited most from that”

Tríona McMorow – Assistant Director of Nursing,
Dalkey Community Unit for Older Persons

“During the classes and the process, things emerged. Songs people liked or what they could sing. There was one really lovely moment when one woman, when I played a song, she was crying. She was just really moved by the song. Then the band played that song for her at the Tea Dance. It was just an amazing moment. She wasn’t very physically able, she was in a chair, but the band sang that for her. So the process allowed me to find that and she had a really wonderful experience...it was really lovely.”

Michelle Cahill, choreographer



Participants at the Tea Dance in the Royal Marine Hotel 2009

Drama

Intergenerational Experience

Joanna Parkes, educational drama practitioner, worked with Dalkey Community Unit and students from Dalkey School Project (a local primary school). Thirty school children and seventeen residents were involved. Small groups of younger and older people worked together, looking at their connections, similarities and differences.

Through the creation of a timeline they explored and acted out significant events from their lives – birthdates against historical backdrops, World War II, the invention of the washing machine, television and the Internet.

Being around older people in a residential care setting on a weekly basis over a period of three months was as important to the school children's learning experience, as was the acting out of adventures from the histories of the residents. As one schoolchild lamented, after hearing some of the stories "Travel was much more exciting and adventurous in the past than it is now."

"I have worked on a number of Intergenerational projects developing the creativity, imagination and confidence of children and older people, working together on shared arts experiences. I firmly believe in the right of every person young or old to have access to a rich and dynamic relationship with the arts. As well as having the capacity to teach social and developmental skills, drama helps inform people's aesthetic and creative potential and teaches them to appreciate the important role of the arts in every day life."

Joanna Parkes, Drama Educationalist



Intergenerational project 2008

Craft

Quilting

Over a period of three months three care settings and one-day care unit worked with Lucinda Jacob to make quilts. The participants used the appliqué method and came up with lists of their favourite foods, animals, teapots and handbags. They expressed their personalities and reflected their lives in how they went about creating the quilts.

Lucinda was careful to let each group know what the others were doing, establishing connections between the participant's different stories and life experiences. This social aspect was a very important component of the residency.

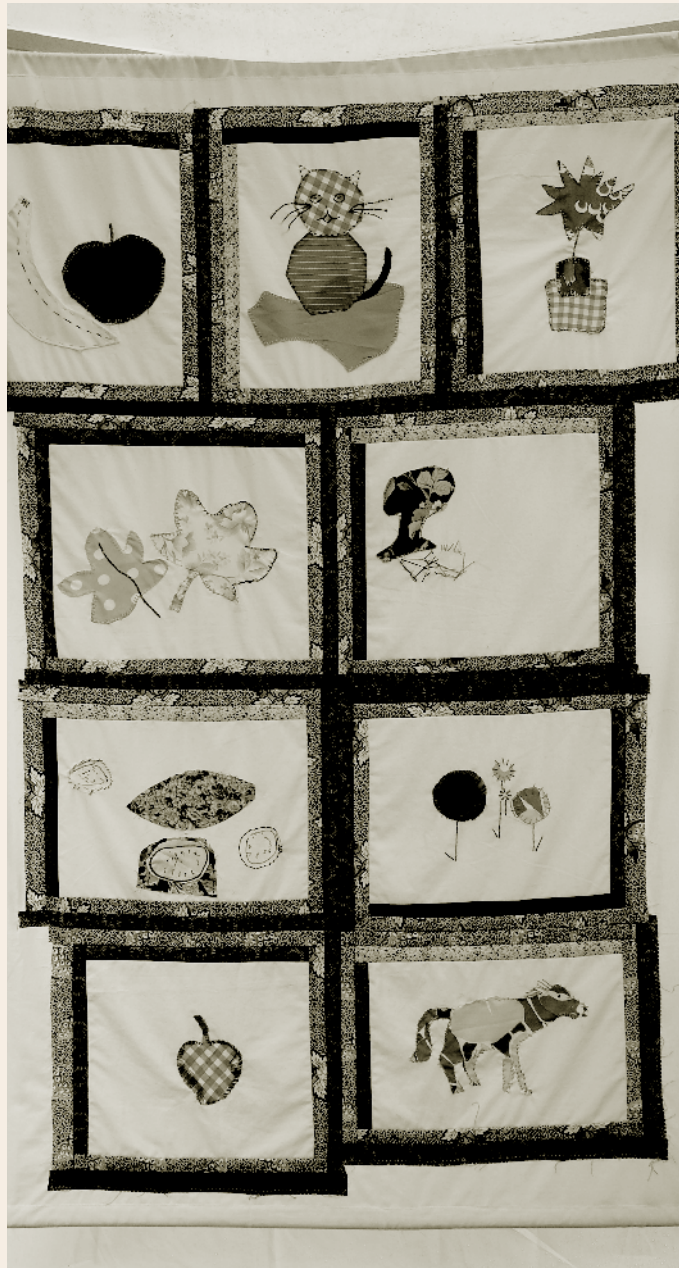
All the participants completed quilts and they were invited to be part of the 2009 Festival of World Cultures Americana theme in Clarinda Park. Showing their work and being highlighted in the festival brochure was a great achievement for the participants. Their work was viewed by the greater community and it was a proud moment for them and their families.

“Others would have been very keen on handwork but they were saying their hands couldn't do it anymore. That was fascinating; their hands remembered which was really extraordinary. Then they would find they were doing amazing stitching - wow!”

Lucinda Jacob, Creative Practitioner

“We went down to Dún Laoghaire and they were on display down there. My daughter said, 'Mammy you didn't do that.' I said I did do that, oh yes they look beautiful together - we can't believe we done them!”

Resident - Dalkey Care Unit Resident



Quilting project 2009

Visual Arts

Clay Vessels

St. Joseph's House for Deaf and Deaf Blind Adults collaborated with the artist Terry O'Farrell. The group discussed personal stories and a way of expressing them in the surface of the clay, making use of the outside, inside and rim. Each participant built a simple vessel, controlling its shape and height over the first few weeks. Individual styles emerged, reflecting the makers' life stories. There were particular challenges. It was important for the deaf-blind participants to find ways to keep the narrative alive after the vessels were fired and the surface texture of the vessel changed.

The support staff were vital in this project as Terry does not use sign language. Using her considerable experience she realised that language was only part of the exchange and that tools and materials are capable of breaking down barriers. Terry described the traditional one-to-one approach in this case as a "partnership of three", because the staff involvement was so important.

Participants were invited to exhibit their work as part of dlr's Social Inclusion Week 2010, a great opportunity for all involved that further validated their creations and enhanced the experience for all involved.

"I worked with a group that radiated pure joy in creativity; where everyone was continually mesmerised at their own progress every week; where fingers found a fluid way to express a new visual and tactile language, where there was growing independence and a deep sense of satisfaction and pride, and where I found my practice as an artist working with older adults strengthened."

Terry O' Farrell

"Oh they are delighted to have their own pot and it brings back so many memories"
Activities Co Ordinator – St Josephs House -
Translator for residents

"I was shocked, I cried! I couldn't believe it came out like that! It's beautiful"

Resident St Josephs House for
Deaf & Deaf Blind Adults

"Just to try it. I had no idea what to expect. So to learn, Terry showed me how to do it - rolling coil and scrapping all done by hand. And I enjoyed it. I hadn't thought about the past until Terry got me thinking! I started to open up, I enjoyed it. And it's some fun as well. I would like to continue to do pots after it's finished."

Resident St Josephs House for
Deaf & Deaf Blind Adults



Clay project 2011

Thank You

We would like to thank everyone that has been involved in the partnership programme.

We pay special tribute to all those below and to especially remember all those that are no longer with us.

Residents, Staff and Families of Coiscéim
Community Mental Health Older Age Services

Residents, Staff and Families of Dalkey
Community Unit for Older Persons

Residents, Staff and Families of St Joseph's
House for Deaf and Deaf Blind Adults

Residents and Staff and Families of St Joseph's
Centre, Day Care and Outreach Services
for Older Persons with age related illness.

Teacher Mr. Tadgh Dennehy and past
students of Dalkey School Project

Teacher Mrs. Helen Macy and past students
from The Harold School, Glasthule.

- Aileen Lambert
- Ann Leahy
- Aoife Dwyer
- Brian Lawlor
- Brian McCarthy Big Band
- Claire Behan
- Joanna Parkes
- Michelle Cahill & Rionach Ní Neill
- Terry O'Farrell
- Lucinda Jacob
- Pally Wally Ltd
- Patricia Mc Kenna
- Chris Binchy

Staff of dlr Arts Office & HSE Health Promotion
Service, Dublin South East / Wicklow

Staff of Festival of World Cultures 2008 & 2009
Social Inclusion Week 2010

‘All artistic practice is empowering to the individual, returning to the maker the means of production of their life, its meanings, its importances and its innate value’

Sir Christopher Frayling

