

Case studies: How can the arts and creativity support people who are shielding or vulnerable during Covid-19?

Celebrating Age Wiltshire
South West England

Introduction

CAW is a health and wellbeing project which uses arts, heritage, culture and creativity as a vehicle to improve or maintain the health and wellbeing of older people, including those who are socially isolated or vulnerable due to dementia, reduced mobility, ill health or caring responsibilities. CAW Phase 1 provided free monthly events in 6 different community areas of Wiltshire, bringing older people together in local, accessible community venues, with a focus on connecting with other people, being active and keeping learning. Each event had an informal social time with refreshments for people to connect with others, meet new people, chat with existing acquaintances, and find out about other activities and support services available locally.

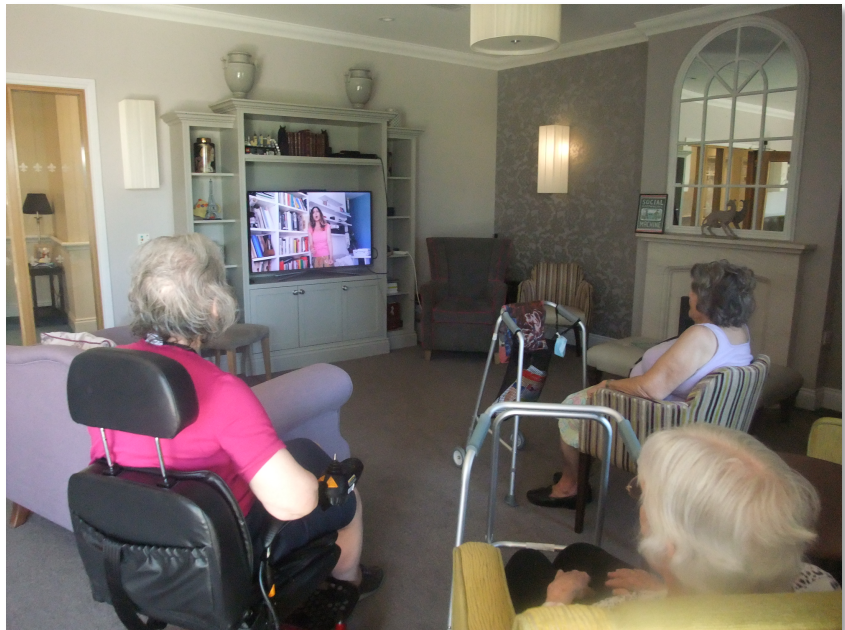
CAW Phase 2 has been re-structured since Covid-19 to enable us to continue to reach the most isolated older people in 10 community areas through five key strands of activity:

- 1) On-line concerts and events;
- 2) Outdoor concerts and small-scale theatre;
- 3) 1:1 creative conversations via telephone;
- 4) 1:1 creative conversations in individuals' homes;
- 5) Wiltshire Postcards – a postal project across the county.

The project explores culture and creativity in its broadest sense – heritage, reminiscence, storytelling, reading, theatre, food and cultural traditions, music, dance, visual arts and crafts.

Image: Blenheim House residents enjoying *The Soprano* series online (credit: Christopher Guest)

“The residents ...have been thoroughly enjoying themselves experiencing the concerts in the comfort of the home. It’s great that at this really testing time, there is still plenty of pleasure to be found”



Funders

CAW Phase 1: Arts Council England (from Baring Foundation) Wiltshire Council Area Boards
CAW Phase 2: The National Lottery Community Fund, Wiltshire Council Area Boards, Wiltshire and Swindon Community Foundation, Goldsmiths Charity

Who is it for?

Over the past 3 years we have worked with vulnerable, socially isolated older people, generally over the age of 75 living in the community, sheltered housing and in care homes. We work with people living with dementia and carers.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

- Reaching isolated older people who haven't engaged in quality arts and cultural activity/events for a long time/before.
- Providing social opportunities for older people to re-connect with friends, make new friends and share activity.
- Older people re-connecting with past pleasures engaging in arts activity, or trying new activities and learning new skills/information.
- People living with dementia engaging with well-structured cultural activity that offers them comfort and well-being, and a sense of belonging.
- Carers respite and relaxation during events and a chance to see loved ones engaged and enjoying cultural activity.
- Supporting the well-being of vulnerable older people by offering monthly events to look forward to.

Where is it happening?

South West England – predominantly in the county of Wiltshire

Are you working in partnership?

CAW is a partnership of arts, heritage and community organisations comprising Wiltshire Music Centre, Wiltshire Creative, Pound Arts, Wiltshire Council Community Engagement Service and Library Service, Community First, Age UK Wiltshire and Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. Delivery and support organisations include GP Medical Practices, Social Prescribers, Local Area Co-ordinators, Dementia Support Services, Community Day Centres, Lunch club leaders and volunteers. We also work closely with Care Homes and Sheltered Housing Schemes.

For how long has it been happening?

CAW Phase 1: June 2017 – June 2020

CAW Phase 2: Sept 2020 – Aug 2025

What were/are the main outputs?

Events, concerts, small scale theatre, poetry readings, creative writing and poetry sessions, art workshops, singing, seated dance sessions, exhibitions of work created during activity, online concerts and events.

Feedback:

The residents at Wiltshire Heights have been thoroughly enjoying themselves experiencing the concerts in the comfort of the home. It's great that at this really testing time, there is still plenty of pleasure to be found – long may the Celebrating Age Wiltshire programme continue! I think what you are doing is amazing! (Client Services Manager, Wiltshire Heights, Porthaven Care Homes)

Thank you Rebecca, it was lovely to hear Frankie's singing again. A very good concert. (individual)

thank you for that> i loved it> and have watched several times> thanks again to you and the team> hope its not too long till we meet in person> (individual)

Great, just the right song choice for my day care members to enjoy and sing along to. (Manager of Day Centre)

Very enjoyable! Frankie has a beautiful voice. (individual)

Thank you so much. I will pass the link on to our residents - much appreciated (Neighbourhood Officer, Salisbury City Council)

Thank you so much for this. We will share far and wide!

(Head of Communications, Engagement and Fundraising, Alzheimer's Support)

Thank you so much for this. Frankie is one of our singing instructors so it is lovely to have this to share with her singing groups. (Community Services Coordinator, Alzheimer's Support, Trowbridge office)

Lovely! I have sent it to my Mum's care home. They put the last one on for the residents (individual)

This is so great. Thank you, and well done and good wishes to everyone involved! I've asked Chloe to add it to the Celebrating Age FB page. (Lorna Easterbrook, LE Associates, Evaluator for National Celebrating Age projects)

Thank you so much for this - I have sent it onwards already and shall look forward to sitting down and enjoying it properly later. Well done to you all - a great initiative.... (organiser, Steeple Langford Day Centre)

Thank-you for sending the information through - I put it up on the website yesterday and enjoyed watching the video. Well done all of you for doing it. (New Valley News, South Wiltshire)

I love that concert! It's very professionally filmed. We're watching it now - they're talented! The children are loving seeing and hearing an oboe for the first time. Also loving the poetry, we wrote a little for home schooling today so it's very nice to hear some professionally read. I'm so impressed that you're still managing to be creative and put content out. (Artistic Director, Tall Tree Theatre)

Thank you for taking the trouble for recording this. We look forward to listening to it. (individual)

Thank you, keep up the good work! (CEO Alzheimer's Support)

Thank you for this wonderful concert online. I enjoyed every minute, very talented people. I had my cup of tea sitting in my chair so cosy. (individual)

I really enjoyed this and enjoyed the music singing along with every song bar one. Her (Frankie's) breathing is so good just to be able to sing one song after another. Perfect for my age. Because it was recorded in a studio the sound echoed a bit, although I saw the lovely plant, could you find an old squashy sofa or armchair or something maybe borrowed from the theatre? ...it would still feel very relaxed. (individual)

We are saving your videos and putting them on in our communal rooms when possible, so thank you so much and we can't wait to see the next ones! (Events & Lifestyle Manager, Blenheim House Care Home, Melksham)

I really enjoyed listening to these couple, saw them at Florence court in Trowbridge with a couple of my friends who need support. I will send the link so they can also enjoy these great couple. (Trowbridge support worker & Companion)

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

The challenges have been in reaching many extremely isolated older people and their carers who have not been able to attend our monthly events due to disability, lack of transport and anxiety around coming out of their homes. Covid-19 restrictions forced us to rethink planned activity for CAW events during the final three months of Phase 1 (April-June 2020). During this time we have adapted our approach to reach participants digitally through online content, which has enabled us to tackle some of these challenges and invite wider participation.

CAW 2 was planned to deepen the connections in the six community areas involved in Phase 1 and develop further activity in four new areas. We particularly wanted to focus on reaching more isolated older people who haven't so far engaged in the project. CAW 2 has now been restructured to factor in Covid-19 restrictions, particularly for vulnerable older people who have been and will be shielding for many months to come. This involves more focused 1:1 work via the phone and home working, rather than large group events, which aren't possible at this time. We hope to recruit many more volunteers during CAW 2 to support this 1:1 creative work.

Further information

Celebrating Age Wiltshire (CAW) is a partnership of cultural, heritage and community organisations with Wiltshire Music Centre as the lead partner. Our aim is to deliver high quality cultural and heritage activity to the most isolated and vulnerable older people in Wiltshire's community, who struggle to access regular creative and social stimulation. Phase 1 has been running for 3 years since June 2017 involving 6 community areas in Wiltshire; Phase 2 will run from September 2020 for 5 years, reaching 10 community areas. CAW is a charity employing 6 people.

Celebrating Age Wiltshire:

<https://www.wiltshiremusic.org.uk/learn-take-part/celebrating-age>

Wiltshire Music Centre YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZxtl--lzm4eNJg6rjasnCA/videos>

Health:Pitch YouTube channel – collaboration over The Soprano series:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCw-qxlvRmbV-VrmxUjklBXA>