



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

Crafty Corner
Christchurch Belles WI
South West England

Introduction

Crafty Corner is open to all 71 members, however is normally a group of between 15 and 24 members. We meet monthly at a community hall to undertake craft projects and share skills. We recognised that during the COVID 19 outbreak isolation of members who were living alone or shielding could become an issue. We kept in contact with all members by email however felt that the craft group could meet by 'Zoom'. The original Zoom meeting was designed to bring together the range of community activities being undertaken by members to support the NHS and key workers. Members were sewing scrubs, scrub bags, hair bands and ear savers, crafting hearts and flowers to give to patients and families and small gifts to provide to local care home residents who were not seeing family and friends. Fabric face coverings are currently being created and sold to raise money for the local food bank. Alongside these community activities Crafty Corner had a weekly Zoom meeting to share ideas and allow attendees to discuss the effects of lockdown. Craft challenges were set to encourage all attendees to try new skills.

Funders

Self-funded

Who is it for?

We recognised that during the COVID 19 outbreak isolation of our WI members, some of whom are over retirement age, have underlying health conditions, are living alone or shielding could become an issue.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

We hoped to combat isolation and loneliness within our own membership but also within the community.

Where is it happening?

Dorset (although some of our key worker items were distributed to Kent and London.)

Are you working in partnership?

We are not in partnership, however do work alongside other local organisations. Some members volunteer at the local food bank, or provide support to local care homes and / or support local beach clean activities. During lockdown many members have additionally registered as NHS responders, or local support agencies and supporting neighbours within their local communities.

How many people took/are taking part?

Approx 20 members

For how long has it been happening?

Began in April 2020 in response to lockdown and will continue until we can meet physically as a group.

What were/are the main outputs?

We have created a gallery of our art which we currently share with all members on our Facebook page.

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Attendees enjoy the opportunity to meet virtually and share their experiences and ideas. We feel this has worked well, allowing us to maintain contact with friends and fellow members and enjoy craft challenges alongside supporting out local community.

The main challenge has been the technology – getting everyone set up and familiar with Zoom, and the interaction with local broadband services and audio / video output.

Further information

Christchurch Belles WI (Women's Institute) is a charity, formed in January 2019. The WI exists to educate women, to enable them to provide an effective role in the community, to expand their horizons and to develop and pass on important skills. Christchurch Belles' Crafty Corner was set up shortly after we were formed to inspire and share talents and engender friendship and community. We additionally set up a community group which has been supporting local care homes, sharing initiatives and campaigns (e.g. 'end plastic soup' and 'share the love'). It is run by 71 volunteers.