

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

The After Party
Magic Me (At Home Together)
Greater London

“Thank you for giving me this moment”

Introduction

Magic Me's longstanding, award-winning Cocktails in Care Homes project saw us throwing monthly cocktail parties in care homes and extra care schemes across London.

The After Party is Cocktails team's response to the changing situations around the Covid-19 virus, and is the new format for the Cocktails project over the coming months. We aim to find new ways to fulfil our project aims of connecting young and older adults through regular social activity, even if we are no longer able to meet face to face. Our core project's aim is to reduce social isolation in our communities has never been more pressing.

The After Party is an interactive project to the keep the Cocktails community – volunteers, care home residents, staff and family members – and wider community connected through fun, meaningful creative activity.



The After Party is led by a team of four artists, where we will find new ways to engaged what we love most about parties: laughing, singing, dancing, debating and exploring together, now remotely and from afar. We understand that the current situation means that

staff capacity in care settings to support and engage in creative activity may be reduced and that access to technology differs across the board. Therefore we are carrying out a bespoke and tailored approach towards supporting resident and staff engagement.

Image credit: Magic Me

Funders

Arts Council England, French Huguenot Church of London Charitable Trust, Hammersmith United Charities, Salter Charitable Trust, Westminster Amalgamated Charity, The Expat Foundation.

Who is it for?

Residents who live in care homes and extra care schemes – some of those are living with a dementia or a long term health condition and some have been asked to shield. Some residents cannot leave their rooms or their flats.

Care staff working in the care homes and extra care schemes.

Volunteers aged 18+ who have been part of the Cocktails in Care Homes project. Some of them may have been asked to shield.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Continued intergenerational community networks, reduced social isolation for younger and older people, improved wellbeing through creative activity.

Where is it happening?

London – in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hammersmith & Fulham, Waltham Forest, Westminster, Lambeth and Islington.

Are you working in partnership?

We are partnered with Notting Hill Genesis at six of their extra care schemes, Anchor at two of their care homes and Waltham Forest Local Authority care home.

Magic Me has contributed an activity for the The Arts and Dementia Doctoral Training Centre Creative and Sensory Activity booklet for people living with a dementia at home and their families.

National Activity Provider's Association (NAPA) – Magic Me has commissioned an evaluation report on The After Party by NAPA.

How many people took/are taking part?

Approx 135 residents across 9 care homes and extra care schemes – 30 responses to activities sent back.

Newsletter for volunteers sent to pool of 1,311 Cocktails in Care Homes volunteers – 36 responses to activities sent via newsletter

For how long has it been happening?

April–August 2020. Part of the ongoing Cocktails in Care Homes project that was due to end in July.

What were/are the main outputs?

- 3 x Cocktail Hour – once a month activity online for volunteers to socialise with each other, Magic Me staff and Magic Me artists.
- 4 x newsletters sent to care homes with creative activities for residents to respond to
- 4 x care packages sent to each of the 9 care homes/schemes (for max 15 residents in the care homes)
- 6 x newsletters sent to pool of Cocktails in Care Homes volunteers

We are expecting creative engagement and responses to the activities that we are sending out. These are shared to residents, care staff and volunteers and shown on our social media channels and our website. We are also producing a film by an artist/film-maker.

Feedback:

From care staff

“The postcards activity hit a note with the residents, we have sent some out to our volunteers - from Magic Me and others. The legacy of this still goes on and we are still making them. It allows the residents to think about the outside.”

“Activities being received well, esp with 5 residents in particular engaging – most that are living with dementia. Staff capacity is very limited at these homes however xxx is hopefully going to be working back on site from early July, where she is eager to provide further support to delivering activities alongside the care staff.”

“Thank you for giving me this moment” (Resident)

Volunteers

“I was so happy to see the photo of XXX with her postcard and really touched by the message! I'm glad that the Elgin Close residents seem to be doing well in the circumstances.”

Evaluation

We have commissioned an evaluation report from NAPA. The aim is to publish the report in August.

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Challenges:

- Digital exclusion – many care homes and schemes do not have WIFI or equipment to go online, work digitally or print out newsletters.
- MM response: staff took work printers home to print newsletters. Physical care packages were part of the artist brief to send/courier to care homes and schemes.
- MM sought funding to buy smart phones with data plans to donate to care homes. Phones were set up by MM staff with apps and instructions for care staff and residents to use. We have already received pictures, voice recordings and videos from the care partners.
- Staff capacity at care homes/schemes – care staff have been hit particularly hard during the pandemic which is reflected in the number of deaths reported in care homes.
- Staff illness/shortages with residents becoming sick and dying at a faster rate than normal has meant that staff may be experiencing trauma or PTSD. With the doors closing to outside visitors that include friends and family, the community around the care homes has become much smaller.
- MM response: we collaborated with our care partners to ensure that the support and activities we provided were useful and meaningful. And tailored our approaches to the needs of each care partner.

Successes:

- Encouraging volunteers to get creative to feed into their sense of wellbeing and reflect on their position in the world.
- Artists develop their practice in a different way, challenging the way they normally work.

- Supporting care staff who have reduced capacity to engage in creative offers during a time of crisis.
- Connect care homes with local community.

Further information

<https://magicme.co.uk/project/theafterparty/>

Magic Me is an arts charity that brings the generations together to build a stronger, safer community. Our projects often link unlikely partners. Young people aged 8+ and adults aged 60+ team up through shared, creative activity. Since mid-March, within the huge changes brought by Covid-19, we have been working with our partners and participants, to find new ways to meet, to make and to party, at a distance. This programme is called At Home Together. Projects are led by our team of freelance creative artists who are creating and facilitating activities for people living individually, in families or in group care settings, where some staff support may be available. Magic Me is a charity employing 6 people full-time, 3 part-time and a pool of freelance artists.