

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

Project: Behind Closed Doors, Smile Inside, and Tackling Inequalities

Organisation: Inclusive Intergenerational Dance (iID)

Region: South East & South West

Introduction

Behind Closed Doors is funded by National Lottery Community Fund and was due to start in June 2020 working with isolated older

people 2:1 in their own homes with the aim of engaging them in discussing to create movement and prose based on museum objects. While setting up a new Creative Lunch project (Seated dance, art and lunch) at The Pound Arts Centre, aimed at the frail elderly, people with dementia or other long term health conditions and their carers and a regular



by hand". Gladys completed this sculpture during lockdown and shared it with us during a socially distanced conversation through her window!

"It has given me great joy, knowing that you listened to me"

group for more physically able and younger 'older people' who have asked to be 'challenged' as they 'don't want to be patronised or left to sit to wait to die' (participants on trial all reached through social prescribing as identified as lonely and or feeling isolated). This is in partnership with The Pound (NPO), Green Square sheltered housing and the local Health and wellbeing board and the local social prescribers linked to the CCG. The third aim is to work with partners to develop a clear offer for older people, dementia friendly venues and trips and support the people we meet to access these opportunities.

Image: Gladys loves to dance and make sculptures here is her 'Mother Nature' from her Smile Inside story in which she shares how important the group and creativity are to her, she says "Angels wings are made

Smile Inside: We have collected stories from 20 people who normally attend one of our projects and who are shielding, live independently, and have little or no technology, asking them what they think about that makes them smile inside. We have then commissioned 20 freelance artists who are struggling at this time to create a response inspired by one of the stories and they have each been invited to pitch for one of 6 larger commissions to develop their work. We have also invited the community to read the stories and to be inspired to create a response. The creative responses can be in any art form, eg dance, poetry pottery, collage, baking or photography. We have made some suggestions but we are excited to see what people do. All the responses we receive we are sharing with the storytellers to put a smile on their faces. Finally when it is safe to do so we will hold an exhibition of all of the work and a celebratory event so the storytellers

(and other participants who we have spoken to as part of this project) can meet the people who have responded and been inspired by them.

Lastly we have just received funding from Active Surrey to deliver Sport England Tackling Inequalities Project to engage vulnerable older adults in exercise through creative dance and will be delivering via zoom and in gardens in sheltered housing units and care homes over the next 3 months. 4 groups for 12 weeks each. In addition they have funded 8 additional zoom sessions to enable us to continue that provision to the end of October.

Funders

Behind Closed Doors is funded by National Lottery Community Fund, Green Square Community Housing, Corsham Health and Wellbeing Board.

Smile Inside and Zoom sessions are funded by ACE Emergency Response Fund

Tackling Inequalities is a Sport England project funded by Active Surrey on behalf of Sport England

Who is it for?

Behind Closed Doors is funded by National Lottery Community Fund and was due to start in June 2020 working with isolated older people, the frail elderly, people with dementia or other long-term health conditions and their carers as well as more physically able and younger 'older people' who are struggling with feelings of loneliness. IID also aims to work with partners to develop a clear offer for older people, dementia friendly venues and trips and support the people we meet to access these opportunities.

Smile Inside is a project developed in response to Covid-19 and funded by ACE Emergency Response Fund. IID normally runs regular groups for people with dementia and their carers, the frailty Clinic and Woking Community Hospital, at Sheltered housing units and a Dance for Parkinson's class which have been halted at this time. The majority of our participants have either no or limited internet access or smart phones. For those who do we are supporting them to access Zoom classes but Smile Inside is aimed that those who have none.

Lastly we have just received funding to deliver Sport England's *Tackling Inequalities* project to engage vulnerable older adults in sheltered housing units, in the community and in care homes in physical activity over the next 3 months.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

- Lowering feelings of isolation
- Lowering feelings of loneliness
- Empowering people to make their own choices
- Engaging people in skills development and creative exploration
- Support physical health
- Increase participation in physical activity
- Support mental health and wellbeing
- Support people to feel they are living their 'best life'
- Develop connections between individual people, between people and venues and services and with the wider community

Where is it happening?

Behind Closed Doors is based in Corsham in the South West

Smile Inside was delivered in Surrey first, as this is where the majority of our current participants live, but we have now started to deliver it in Corsham, and Oxfordshire Community Hospitals are fundraising for us to deliver it on their dementia wards. Tackling inequalities will be delivered in Woking Surrey.

Are you working in partnership?

Behind Closed Doors – Corsham Health and Wellbeing Board and the local GP and Social prescribers employed by the CCG. Green Square and Somerset Care. The Pound Arts Centre and ACE NPO. Chippenham and Corsham Museum.

Smile Inside – Woking Borough Council, Woking Sheltered Housing, Surrey Libraries, St Lawrence School, Freelance artists,

Tackling Inequalities Sport England – Surrey County Council, Anchor Homes, Woking Sheltered Housing,

How many people took/are taking part?

Behind Closed doors – is just starting but 22 people are already involved. We hope this figure will be in excess of 100.

Smile Inside – Over 80 people are already involved but we have only just started to engage the wider community so hope this number will significantly increase.

Sport England – funding aim 80-100 frail elderly.

For how long has it been happening?

Behind Closed Doors was due to start in June but planning started in 2018, with trials to support the design of the project, assess models and needs and start a co-production process. It is due to run for 1 year. The need for the project is greatest at the moment but we need to find new ways of working to keep participants safe and follow guidelines.

Smile Inside was funded by ACE to run from April to September 2020 and is a project developed in response to Covid 19.

Sport England funding is to run sessions from July to October 2020, this funding is specifically in response to Covid 19 but aims to address the same strategic priorities of Tackling Inequality.

What were/are the main outputs?

Behind Closed doors (Delayed due to covid but looking for ways to start):

- 2 artists to visit identified older adults in their homes taking tea and cake and museum objects. Exploring dance, storytelling and prose.
- Run weekly Creative Lunch sessions including seated creative dance and craft at The Pound for older people, people with dementia and their carers.
- Run weekly Studio 64 sessions exploring movement and visual art for older people who are more physically active.
- Trips to local cultural venues
- Sign posting to activities in the local area
- Provide transport to all activities

Smile Inside (ACE Emergency Fund)

- Collect 20 stories from shielding isolated older adults living independently and who have little or no technology

- Commission 20 artists from different disciplines to create responses to the stories
- Commission 6 larger works
- Invite the community to be inspired by the stories and create a response in any art form
- Final celebratory exhibition and event for everyone to meet and encourage people out of their homes when it is safe to do so.

Zoom Classes (ACE Emergency Fund)

- 24 zoom art workshops
- 24 zoom dance workshops

Tackling Inequality (Sport England)

- 12 x 4 weekly seated dance sessions in care homes and sheltered housing
- 8 additional zoom sessions to extend current zoom provision to the end of October

Evaluation & Feedback:

Smile Inside: We have had a fantastic response and the project has been a joy to deliver. The artists have gone way beyond their small fee to create some beautiful pieces and the community are now starting to get involved. St Lawrence Primary school's Key worker group became incredibly invested in the project and have written about what inspired them and also created a film talking about their work (Have permission to share publicly). They are all really excited to meet the storytellers and the school want to make it a trip to come to the celebratory event, which we think is great and an opportunity to further develop those connections between young and old. For our participants, many of whom are really struggling at the moment and found it hard to think about something which made them smile inside have really enjoyed being part of the project and it has enabled us to reach out to them and support them to focus on something positive. We know they are going to be delighted to receive all the creative responses to their stories, which they will be able to keep and continue to look at and know they inspired others. As we start to meet our participants again (one sheltered housing unit has asked us back) we are using their stories to inspire dance and creative projects with the group.

The aim was to support people to feel heard and not forgotten, from experience we have learnt the power of listening and watching and reflecting back to people their own words and movements.

One participant's response to receiving her copy of her story was "It has given me great joy, knowing that you listened to me".

As lockdown eases we believe this project becomes even more important and relevant as there is a real danger that our participants will feel even more isolated and forgotten, with no safe place for them to meet up and work together.

Behind Closed Doors – 2 stories collected are from participants of the trial and focus on the impact participating has had on their lives and wellbeing. The trial of the 2:1 work resulted in people joining a group in the communal room for the first time as well as calls to others sharing their positive experience and encouraging others to participate in the group.

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Smile Inside: Our participants tell us stories all the time, we didn't anticipate how hard they would find it over the telephone, we feel there are a number of reasons for this

- Participants shared that they really missed us and their group, the activity and the company, they didn't want to talk to us on the phone they wanted to see us which resulted in a number of trips to talk through open windows and doors.
- For a few they felt overwhelmed by the number of phone calls from friends and family and didn't want to be on the phone any more.
- For some they found it really hard to focus on something positive or happy, they wanted to talk about covid-19 or to try to understand it and when it would be over. Or they were influenced by other events for example VE Day so a number of stories are around war time experiences.
- They are used to working with us face to face, many can't remember our names but they clearly remember the group and us when they see us. We think this is linked to muscle memory and the use of the body, emotions and memory in creative activity. Our creative exploration and ways in through music, images, props and movement unlocks memories and emotions in a safe environment which enables and supports people to share their stories and make connections. They therefore found it much harder over the phone.
- The project has enabled us to connect in some way with our participants. It has highlighted to us the importance of the groups and projects we run to every participant, which can be for a range of reasons. It reminds us that we are passionate about our work and that it is with people and all about those people and the connections which are formed through creative process, within themselves, with others and with their environment.

Behind Closed Doors,

- So far the greatest successes has been in going to where people are in their own homes with an offer – all be it a simple one, tea and cake and a question 'What do you think this could be?' and asked for nothing in return.
- We don't ask people if they feel isolated or lonely and this is not raised to avoid stigma.
- We found people loved hearing and seeing performed back to them what they had said and done. When we did the same thing with an intergenerational group both the primary children and older adults had the same joyous response.
- The challenges have laid in co-production in offering too much choice and we are learning how to balance this and be confident of the boundaries that need to be in place to enable successful delivery of coproduced projects.

Further information

www.iid.org.uk/smile-inside

Inclusive Intergenerational Dance (iID) uses creativity, particularly dance, to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing, community connection and lower feelings of isolation and loneliness.

iID produces creative projects and weekly movement, music and visual art sessions for people of all ages, but are specialists in working with older adults and people living with long term health conditions and their carers.

iID aims to support people through coproduction in developing their interests and skills through creative exploration. Whilst ensuring that every experience is high quality, person-centred, inclusive, safe and of artistic value.

iID is a CIO, with no employees but which regularly employs 4 freelance artists.