

Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Project: HUG by LAUGH

Organisation: CARIAD, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Region: Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan

Designed for: Adult residential care and hospitals



“Findings from the Sunrise Senior Living evaluation show an increase in cognitive and functional ability of half those in the study...”

Image credit: HUG by LAUGH™ – a therapeutic soft comforting object designed to give a cuddle

Introduction

HUG by LAUGH™ is a spin-out company, established to take university research to market and make a positive difference to the lives of those affected by dementia and cognitive impairment. The business is currently focused on manufacturing HUG™, a soft comforting therapeutic device that gives the sensation of giving a hug; designed to reduce anxiety for people living with dementia and post-stroke cognitive impairment. HUG™ has a beating heart and plays a personalised playlist of music; it is one of range of products developed by LAUGH design researchers at CARIAD, Cardiff Metropolitan University, led by Professor Cathy Treadaway.

During COVID 19, 40 HUGs™ were given to residents in Sunrise Senior Living Care home in Cardiff and to patients in the NHS at Llandough Hospital (Cardiff And Vale University Health Board). This work is part of the LAUGH EMPOWERED PSCI project Led by Professor Cathy Treadaway and is funded by Welsh Government ERDF. The 20 HUGs in Sunrise of Cardiff care home were given to people living

with dementia, living in the Reminiscence Neighbourhood. A further 20 HUGs were given to patients in the Stroke Rehabilitation Centre at Llandough Hospital and in the dementia wards. The aim was to evaluate the impact of HUG on the participants and their care. Restrictions, due to COVID, have made the evaluation difficult in the NHS and the study is on-going. The Sunrise care home study was undertaken and completed by the professional carers within the home and has yielded some very positive results of the impact of HUG™ on the wellbeing of residents.

Funders

Welsh Government ERDF Smart Expertise Grant (Grant reference 2018/COL/012/80839)
Arts and Humanities Research Council (Grant reference AH/M005607/1)

Partners

- NHS
- Sunrise Senior Living Ltd.
- Cardiff Metropolitan University

Who is it for?

People living with dementia in residential care and in hospital
People living with post stroke cognitive impairment in hospital

Are these people you have worked with before, or new participants?

New participants

How many people took/are taking part?

40 participants with HUGs™

Over 60 NHS staff

20 Sunrise Senior Living staff

Where is it happening?

Wales (Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan)

For how long has it been happening?

Began May 2019 and is ongoing

What were/are the main outputs?

Manufacture of HUG™ and distribution of the product via Alzheimer's Society and www.hug.world

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

Reducing anxiety and stress, providing comfort, and overcoming feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Increasing quality of life and enhancing wellbeing. Our research has shown that it also helps staff and family members by providing a stimulant for engaging conversation with the person with a HUG™.

Have you adapted existing work to make this happen? If so, how?

Yes, adaption due to COVID. Health and care professionals are now overseeing the intervention as the LAUGH team are unable to visit.

Does your work support people who identify with one or more of the protected characteristics¹?

Our work is designed to support people living with dementia and cognitive disabilities, older people and those who are socially isolated due to disease or disability

Evaluation & Feedback

Our current study LAUGH EMPOWERED PSCI is a qualitative evaluation of HUG™ and its impact on wellbeing of people living with dementia and post stroke cognitive impairment uses the Pool Activity Level (PAL) Instrument (Pool 2012). This assessment and profiling tool was developed to inform the provision of appropriate activity-based care for people with cognitive impairments by determining levels of cognitive and functional ability. A modified version of the instrument was specifically designed for this project by Jackie Pool. Also, an adapted Bradford Dementia Wellbeing Profile was deployed to help understand HUG's effect on participants' quality of life, to assess how they were faring psychologically and socially.

Findings from the Sunrise Senior Living evaluation show an increase in cognitive and functional ability of half those in the study. These results are significant, particularly in the context of a neurodegenerative disease in which the assumed trajectory of a person is towards reduced activity and limited cognitive response. Where dementia is concerned "no change" over the six-month evaluation might be perceived as positive, given that it suggests no deterioration in the person's condition. An increase, therefore is very positive.

Findings from the adapted Bradford Wellbeing Profile indicate that wellbeing improved for 87% of residents who had a HUG for six months.

Testimonials are available on www.hug.world

What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

The challenges are not being able to meet the participants in person due to COVID and see their responses for ourselves. The successes include the family and staff testimonials describing how lives have been improved and knowing that people are happier as a result of having a HUG™. Also winning the [UK Tech4Good](#) People's Award and Winner of Winners award in September 2020.

Are you reaching more people/fewer people/different people?

We are reaching more and more people due to the publicity from the study and awards in the [media](#) and the growing public awareness of the huge need for people wanting a hug during the virus.

What new skills have you or your colleagues had to develop to deliver this work?

On-line Zoom meetings and digital interview techniques. Also, persistence and resilience to keep going, even when there were many obstacles that made continuing difficult.

What would you say has made this project possible?

The help of amazing health professionals and care staff, willing to continue the work when the team can't be involved on site.

¹Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equalities Act 2010).

What would have made it easier?

Better communication with NHS which was understandably difficult because everyone was so busy and stressed by the virus. Also, more time – therefore, more funding.

Further information

www.hug.world

www.laughproject.info

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-50237366>