

## The Impact of Arts-based Programmes in Dementia Care

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This presentation highlights the core findings of an evidence-based research study (2018-2020) funded by the National Arts Council that evaluated the impact of arts-based programmes organised by the Alzheimer's Disease Association 'Arts and Dementia' initiative. The following outcomes were observed in the participants:

- Much higher mood and engagement values during the programmes compared to baseline measures;
- More active behaviours reflective of greater social interaction and sustained personhood during the programmes;
- Increased sense of purpose and humour when engaging in the arts activities.
- Greater benefits were observed over multiple sessions, with well-being scores typically peaking at the last session.

These findings demonstrate that participatory arts provide a safe space for self-discovery, interaction and growth, supporting its potential and suitability for elderly participants without previous experiences in the arts. This evaluation has identified several important aspects of the programmes crucial their success and positive impact:

- The incorporation of reminiscence and cultural traditions enabled participants to better relate with the museum artefacts and helped to strengthen their sense of identity, promoting deeper engagement during the programmes.
  - The purposeful activities in the programmes allowed participants to learn new skills, providing a sense of empowerment, achievement and joy at the completed artwork.
  - Artists and volunteers interacted warmly towards the participants, making them feel welcomed and appreciated, which rekindled their feelings of self-worth.
  - The shared experiences during the programmes provided an opportunity to observe the remaining strengths of the persons with dementia, and were important in strengthening existing relationships and new friendship bonds.
  - Structured and regular programmes over multiple sessions provided greater opportunities to build rapport and adapt the programmes to match the interests and needs of participants.
  - Accessible community-based programmes provided opportunities for participants to reconnect with the society, instilling a sense of social inclusion and empowerment.
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