

Arts in care homes

Dance in care homes



Research shows the older we grow, the less shy we are to dance. Dancing gives care home residents a chance to express and enjoy themselves.

It also improves mood, is good for physical wellbeing and can strengthen the bond of trust between staff and residents.

Doing it yourself

Whether dancing or watching other people dancing, moving to the music or even just tapping your toes to the beat, these actions will provide an instant feeling of wellbeing.

Many care homes offer dance events as part of their activity and events programme. Dances include formal dance such as ballet, social dance, creative and contemporary dance and traditional dance forms such as Turkish folklore dance, traditional Greek dance and Irish country dancing. Traditional folk dancing may reawaken a sense of cultural identity with benefits similar to reminiscence and memory therapy.

The following suggestions can be adapted to suit the needs of all individuals, regardless of their physical or mental health and wellbeing. A risk assessment should always be completed.

Practical tips:

- Deliver dance sessions in a creative, imaginative and enthusiastic manner.
 - Dress to suit the occasion
 - Encourage staff, volunteers and family members to join in
- Provide advance notice to participants so that a potentially new experience is offered in a non-threatening way
- Add value to the activity by making the environment special to create the right atmosphere
 - Decorate the area to suit the mood: sixties jazz theme, country and western, etc.

- Have food and drink to fit the theme
- Structure the time of the session appropriately
 - Forty-five minutes is regarded as a good length of time for participants to feel that they have been active without becoming over-tired
- Remove distractions that can break up the flow of the session
 - Participants may have a regular routine and may become anxious if tea-breaks don't happen at the same time
 - Pre-warning about a change of routine or planning the session times to coincide with the breaks may be wise
- Ensure that the sessions are held in an accessible space where people can watch at a distance initially
- Playing music before a session can be helpful in getting everyone prepared and in the right mood to dance
 - Replaying the music used in the sessions during the week can also be helpful
 - Could lead to discussions about costumes and music
- Props can be effective
 - Scarves, ribbons, flags, percussion instruments and balloons can all be incorporated into the dance sessions to support spontaneous movement and inclusivity
 - People with little movement or comprehension can be a valuable part of the group just by holding a ribbon or feather
- Ensure that sufficient staff support is available to assist with the care aspects such as helping participants to join the group, providing refreshments, going to the toilet and other personal needs

Some ideas:

- DVD of ballet
 - Many are available to hire or purchase
 - Could benefit either a group or an individual
 - Discussion about the actual ballet could take place
 - Could lead to memories of childhood ballet classes or performances
- Tea dance
 - Invite others to join in, such as family members
 - Make it a regular event
 - Making decorations and catering will expand the activity

- Opportunity to dress appropriately
- Choice of music and form of dance

Working with others

Here are some ways in which other organisations can support the art activity. Start by searching locally for what's available.

Dance is a form of expression open to people of all ages. People can show what they feel through the way they move.

Some dance companies which work in care homes may be funded by a charity or trust. Others charge for their support but offer staff training so that when the project is over, staff have sufficient knowledge and confidence to lead dance sessions on their own.

Some projects involve a local dance school sending student dancers into the home to give performances or they may work directly with residents. This could stimulate discussions about costumes or music or the different types of dance there are across the world. Could residents go to the dance school's Christmas show?

There may be a local tea dance that residents could attend. Even those who are chair-based can participate from the spectator seats. And those who are only able to watch will enjoy the spectacle and the event.

Some dance groups use props such as hats and feathers to stimulate creativity while others draw on participants' past experiences to provide material for the activity. One company has developed a digital programme which transforms the care home into an interactive space. It mirrors the movement of dancers reminding them 'where they are' in the dance and responding to the way they move as though they are dancing with another person.

Dance provides a means for people who can no longer speak to express powerful emotions. Rhythmic clapping, tapping, using the limbs to create dramatic gestures all communicate feelings. Some dance companies specialise in leading movement classes for people with moderate and advanced dementia.

Some dance companies run courses that residents can leave the home to attend; these must usually be paid for. Dance and movement classes for men and people from different cultural groups mean everyone can be involved. There may be local theatres and other dance spaces which run performances at a discount for care home residents.

Examples of good practice

Here are some examples of how the art activity is used in practice. Search locally for what's available in your area.

Alive! Dance & Movement

Activity sessions take different forms. These sessions are particularly recommended for those who find it difficult to express themselves verbally, such as people living with dementia.

Anna Morris Zumba®Gold & Zumba®Gold Seated Classes

Classes are offered in various care homes in and around East Grinstead, Sussex.

Oomph!

Provides training and services to enable anyone working with older people deliver meaningful, personalised exercise and activity programmes.

Oomph! - Examples

Examples of the impact of Oomph!

Oomph! - Magic Moments

Brighterkind Care Homes delivers a programme with support of Oomph!

Green Candle Dance Company – Dance projects

This company works in residential care homes, sheltered housing and day centres delivering tailored dance projects that engage and inspire participants to lead active lifestyles, improving health and wellbeing, in a social and inclusive environment. Training programmes are available for a wide range of professionals, including dance teachers, performers, care workers and other health professionals.

Green Candle Dance Company: case studies

Between November 2011 and March 2012, Green Candle Dance Company delivered weekly seated dance workshops to the residents at St Peter's Residential Home, London.

Dance & Dementia

Green Candle has become increasingly involved in dance and music projects specifically for people living with different stages of dementia.

Moving Memory Dance Theatre – Digital Doris (uses digital technology)

This portable digital 'kit' helps give older people the freedom to express themselves through movement and dance. Digital Doris uses Resolume software which projects digital images into any area. It can be used to demonstrate warm-up exercises, remind older people where they are in an activity, and provide an extra point of reference for their movements.

Resources

Sensory stimulation and seated physical activity

This article provides advice to service providers on promoting healthy living in line with physical activity guidelines specifically for adults aged 65 years and over. Two types of activity are described.

Sensory activities which involve the stimulation of the senses, and include various activities from opening a window and smelling fresh cut grass to spending time in a sensory room and seated physical activities which involve regular, therapeutic movement. These often entail touching equipment or hearing instructions or music.

Sensory stimulation and seated physical activity can be provided together to give mental and physical benefits to patients. The article describes simple and cost-effective ways of providing this service in homes (Abstract only) (Nursing and Residential Care)

Dancing as a psychosocial intervention in care homes: a systematic review of the literature

This systematic review of looks at evidence from studies related to dancing interventions for older people with dementia living in care homes and how these interventions can improve the mood and behaviour of residents. (International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry)

Care homes urged to run dance classes after they were found to calm dementia patients

This article draws on research which reveals that dancing improves mood, is good for physical wellbeing and also helps to strengthen the bond of trust between staff and residents. (Carehome.co.uk)

Developing relationships between care staff and people with dementia through Music Therapy and Dance Movement Therapy: a preliminary phenomenological study

This study aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions of staff who participated regularly in Music Therapy (MT) and Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) groups for residents with dementia in a nursing home (Abstract only). (Dementia: the International Journal of Social Research and Practice)

Mental wellbeing in over 65s: occupational therapy and physical activity interventions

This guideline covers promoting mental wellbeing in people aged over 65. It focuses on practical support for everyday activities, based on occupational therapy principles and methods. (National Institute for Health Care Excellence)

The case for Zumba classes in care homes

Fitness experts highlight the benefits of Zumba classes in a bid to save older people from cancer, strokes and hip fractures. (Care Homes Journal)

Physical and social activity in care homes

This document looks at the benefits of providing physical and social activities for older people in care homes and provides advice on planning and delivering activities. (Staffordshire County Council)

Remember to dance: Evaluating the impact of dance activities for people in different stages of dementia

This study evaluates two programmes run by the Green Candle Dance Company, Remember to Dance in the Community (RtDC) and Remember to Dance in Hospital (RtDH). (Canterbury Christ Church University. Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health)

www.scie.org.uk/person-centred-care/arts-in-care-homes/