

Arts in care homes

Drawing and painting in care homes



Getting involved in the visual arts stimulates the mind and raises the spirits of people living in residential care.

Doing it yourself

Participation from residents may vary vastly but whether it's watching the activity or getting involved with drawing and painting directly, any participation is liked to improve wellbeing. It's important to discover what form of art each individual has an interest in, and if possible to base sessions and opportunities that appreciation.

You don't have to be a master artist to benefit from the creative participation in drawing, painting or artwork. There are many ways to get involved including drawing, painting, art appreciation and making collages. Art makes us more human; it helps us to communicate in a different, personal language. This is a great benefit for all people and especially for those who have conditions with a lack of communication or problems expressing themselves.

Artwork is an individual activity even within a group of others; the individual enters into their own world, a world full of possibilities. Stimulating the creative mind allows the individual to positively isolate from reality, which provides a mental rest that lowers stress and generates relaxation and happiness feelings. This is especially significant for people with aggression or nervousness conditions.

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

Practical tips:

- Deliver artwork sessions in a creative, imaginative and enthusiastic manner
 - Encourage staff, volunteers and family members to join in
 - Create a studio feel using easels, which can be freestanding or table top
 - Have music playing to create atmosphere
- Provide advance notice to participants so that a potentially new experience is offered in a non-threatening way
 - Consider naming the group imaginatively, i.e. Art Workshop, may be less daunting
- 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
- 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
- To encourage a reluctant participant, try starting a drawing or painting and inviting them to complete it
 - Taking part in art can stimulate the mind as well as developing or maintaining motor skills
- Don't underestimate potential achievements
 - Always display finished work in frames, creating a gallery of artwork. Frames can be sourced cheaply from charity shops

Points to consider:

- Appropriate products
 - Acrylic paints can be easier than either oils or water colours
 - Palettes are easier to use than pots of paint and less likely to tip over
 - Source brushes with large handles are easier to hold

- Darker coloured paper works well with chalk drawing. If the paper is large it may be off-putting for someone whose movement is limited. But a large sheet is better for someone who finds fine movement difficult
- Drawing
 - Pencils with triangle grips make them easier to hold
 - Charcoal produces good results
- Collage
 - Use of different textures can stimulate hand movement
 - Use of bright colours can help for those with low vision
- Topics to consider
 - An art activity focused on exploring a theme, such as abstraction, nature, the seasons, light and shadow, portraiture
- Other ideas
 - Sessions could stimulate reminiscence of artwork created by the person or a gallery visit they enjoyed
 - Discuss famous artists or art works

Working with others

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

Creativity is an innate ability possessed by us all and that can be applied to daily life. That's the message from organisations that promote drawing and painting for care home residents. Some work on projects to connect the generations such as with schools where the children are 'paired' with a resident. The pairs first correspond by painting postcards so they can learn a little about each other, and then meet up for parties where they can get to know each other better and work on art together. Other projects employ trained artists to work in care homes. Bringing art materials and equipment to deliver the sessions, they adapt the art session to make sure that everyone can participate and enjoy the drawing or painting, regardless of cognitive function. Most galleries engage in outreach work. Some will organise guided tours and creative workshops for certain groups in the gallery while others may run events and discussions in settings such as care homes.

Using art appreciation to inspire staff to start and build on conversations with 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! Art sessions](#)

Activity sessions take different forms. Content of these sessions can include painting techniques and looking at work by famous artists.

[Alive! Paint Pals](#)

This is a creative project that connects older and younger people through art. Paint Pals is being successfully run across care homes in Bristol, Bath and North Somerset. The creative sessions are designed to be effective for older people and those living with dementia. The scheme offers both residents and children a chance to chat, reminisce and paint together.

[Creative Minds Art Sessions](#)

This social enterprise based in Guildford, Surrey employs a community of artists and art students to deliver art sessions in a range of settings for older people. Sessions are devised and delivered to enable participants to explore their creativity with the guidance of an experienced artist.

[Engage and Create Ignite Programme](#)

Ignite sessions are run by a facilitator using a tablet computer. They are a tour guide around artworks from galleries and museums all over the world. Sessions are flexible and can be run for individuals or as a group activity.

[Golden Galleries Art & Soul National Art Exhibition](#)

This collection of artwork has been created by Abbeyfield residents living in their care homes and supported houses across the UK.

Resources

[The Alive! Difference: an evaluation of Alive! workshops and training](#)

Activities delivered by Alive! include arts workshops, music and movement and guided reminiscence. The results of this evaluation suggests that Alive! activities have a positive impact on the mental and emotional wellbeing of those who participate.

Theorizing how art gallery interventions impact people with dementia and their caregivers

This study analyses wellbeing benefits to people with mild to moderate dementia and their carers of an eight-week art gallery-based intervention offered at two very different art galleries. (The Gerontologist)

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