



Active and Creative Lives

The ongoing influence of Occupational Therapy on Adult Social Care provision.

In November the National Care Forum hosted our first Arts Festival, an interactive arts and creativity event embedded within our national managers' conference. This was an opportunity for managers of residential and community settings across the country to come together and get first-hand experience of how effective this form of intervention is. The buzz in the room was palpable, as the sound of laughter and interaction rang out across the crowded exhibition space with managers finding their voice in singing sessions, demonstrating their artistic talents through iPad based self-portraits, digging into flower pots, dancing with scarves and reminiscing through pictures. Activity provision has become a key focus for care providers, and many of our members will employ dedicated activity co-ordinators who are part of the National

Activity Providers Association (NAPA). The reasons for the focus on activity provision are manifold. Andrea Sutcliffe, the Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care for the CQC, the Care Regulator in England has spoken recently about the importance of the Arts in care settings highlighting that CQC's description of an outstanding service is one that is "flexible and responsive to people's individual needs and preferences, finding creative ways to enable people to live a full life." She also notes that "Creativity and innovation are key ingredients in outstanding care homes." In addition, there is a growing body of evidence that recognises the impact that arts and creative activities can have on an individual's life. Arts Enterprise with a Social Purpose (AESOP) recently produced an evaluation framework, funded by Public Health England, to support providers and commissioners to

pull together data and information to support their understanding of just what a difference the arts can make. Live Music Now, who have been coordinating the nation-wide project 'A Choir in Every Care Home', supported by the Baring Foundation, have brought together a strong body of evidence through working with Canterbury Christchurch University, which has led their Consortium Leader to state "It's encouraged us to be bold in recommending unequivocally that care homes should do more music and singing". Oomph, who provide activity provision in over a hundred care settings across the country have produced detailed impact reports outlining the contribution of their work to combatting key areas including physical mobility, mental stimulation and social interaction.

What is interesting is that, of course, much of the origins of this work stem from the contribution of Occupational Therapy to social care practice. It is important to remember that whilst they may no longer be the key delivery agent for this practice within care settings, our understanding of why it works, and why it is

important was largely brokered by Occupational Therapy. That is why I have been particularly pleased to see the recent focus by the College of Occupational Therapists (COT) on reminding care providers how close the links are between Adult Social Care and Occupational Therapy. I know that many of our members at the National Care Forum have found **Living Well through activity in care homes: the toolkit**, produced by COT, an excellent resource to help them navigate through to an activity programme founded on sound evidence, researched practice and with an eye to the outstanding.

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