



# THE AFTER PARTY

Evaluation Report on a socially distanced  
care home project March – July 2020



**COCKTAILS  
THE AFTER PARTY**  
A MAGIC ME PROJECT





*In the morning it's important not to begin to tidy up too obviously... Things look different in daylight, and if the difference seems too sudden everything can be spoilt... One must be able to move about in peace and quiet and see how one feels and wonder what it is one really wants to do.*

**Tove Jansson, 'Parties' from The Winter Book**

## OVERVIEW

Approximately 400,000 older people in the UK live in care homes and a significant proportion of these are living with dementia, multiple health conditions, physical dependency and many are in their last year of life. Care home residents are at a higher risk of Covid-19 and of having poorer outcomes, and many are shielding. Our care homes faced unprecedented challenges as the Covid-19 outbreak escalated. The government applied measures to contain the virus and slow its spread. One of the procedures introduced was that of social distancing. In March 2020 care homes made the difficult decision to close their doors to all visitors, including external activity providers. Maintaining resident engagement whilst also ensuring safe staffing when care homes supported residents away from shared areas proved extremely difficult. Though all people living in care homes have the right to freedom of movement and association, including the right to see their families, care providers were encouraged to make decisions in the interest of residents living in close proximity.

Applying social distancing in care homes was not an easy decision to make, it involved restricting people's movement around the home, residents being asked to spend their day and eat their meals in their rooms and those living with dementia experiencing heightened levels of anxiety and distress due to the change in routine and the lack of physical contact with family and friends. For many people living in care settings, it is very important that they are able to experience connection. During the lockdown all staff have been expected to ensure engagement, this has enabled greater conversation and connection on a one to one basis, involving all staff.

It is important to recognise how difficult it has been for both people using care and those who care for them. Finding ways to enable connection in a risk-based, balanced way, whilst attempting to reduce the inevitable anxiety experienced by families, friends and external agencies including activity providers has been incredible for NAPA to witness. Care homes have developed many creative and innovative approaches in order to facilitate virtual visits from families and external activity providers, they have liaised with their customers to provide new and innovative ways to continue to provide meaningful engagement. Connecting via technology has become a far more familiar enterprise than ever before. As families begin to visit safely again and we work towards external activity providers returning to in person activities, it is important that we support care homes to balance the continued management of the Covid19 risk and the important connections that activities can provide.







*Despite this being the toughest of times for care homes. NAPA are encouraged to hear of such innovative approaches as The After Party. Magic Me have found a creative and inclusive way of continuing their important work and we look forward to hearing about their next endeavour.*

**Hilary Woodhead. CEO, NAPA**

## THE AFTER PARTY EVALUATION

The purpose of this report is to, in the words of Magic Me Director Susan Langford MBE, “provide a snapshot of this time.” It is hoped that it will provide an illuminating insight into the development of participatory arts activities for care settings and specifically how these were developed by Magic Me in response to the Covid-19 situation in 2020.

The evaluation will summarise outcomes for those involved in The After Party project, including care home residents and staff, volunteers, artists and staff from the care providers. It will provide a short overview of Magic Me’s Cocktail in Care Homes (CICH) project, with a focus on the context of how The After Party began. The study also includes learning and suggestions for future work, in light of outcomes and learning from The After Party.

The author, Alison Teader is Project Manager for NAPA’s Arts in Care Homes project.

**This report is dedicated to all the care staff, residents and families who have been affected by Covid-19.**



# METHODOLOGY

Interviews were conducted by Alison, with eleven people who were involved in the project in the following roles: volunteers, care staff, care providers and artists. Interviews were conducted via telephone calls, zoom interviews and written questionnaires, with individuals selecting the format they felt most comfortable with. It was not possible, at this time to gauge first-hand the responses of participating residents. All comments about outcomes for residents are based on feedback from participating staff and volunteers.

# BACKGROUND

Care Home residents told Magic Me that evenings are the loneliest part of the day as there are few visitors or activities. So, in 2010 Magic Me began organising cocktail parties in care homes. Due to ill health and frailty, most care home residents cannot pop down the pub or out to socialise with friends. Those whose families live far away might not have any visitors or even see anyone from the outside the home for days at a time. Magic Me trained volunteers who were seeking connections with their local communities to come into their local care homes and have a party with residents. Piloting in three care homes in Tower Hamlets in 2010, by January 2020 CICH was in 18 care homes and schemes in 9 London boroughs attended by over 400 volunteers and 500 residents per year, alongside care staff and family members. No two parties were ever the same, with activities and entertainment shaped by the interests of the party goers. Sessions encompassed themed décor, music, dancing, games and magic, with support from specialist volunteers and creative organisations.

For over 10 years CICH was funded by a variety of regular supporters to whom Magic Me are extremely grateful. It was a jigsaw of multiple funders that kept the project working for 9 years. However, in its final year, the numbers did not stack up so Magic Me decided to close the project in August 2020. The original plan was to hold the last few parties in key schemes from April – July. The onset of Covid-19 made this impossible, as no outside facilitators or volunteers were able to visit the care settings after March 2020. The After Party was developed as a way of keeping up the links with these key CICH sites, in place of the planned last few parties.

This study will concentrate on the outcomes of The After Party, whilst bearing in mind the larger context, impact and outcomes of the CICH project in general.

## The After Party: those involved

**Number of care settings:** 9

**Number of volunteers:** 23

**Four Artists:**

**Mia Harris** – London designer, maker, producer, project manager and facilitator with a special interest in costume, textiles, set, décor and events in unconventional spaces.

**Kathy Horak-Hallet** – mixed media artist working in puppetry, animation, print and textile currently studying for an MA in Arts and Learning at Goldsmith's University.



**Shepherd Manyika** – London based artist who works with mixed media and is interested in representations, drawing narratives from the everyday.

**Chuck Blue Lowry** – artist and filmmaker, specialising in documentary with a strong interest in arts as social practice.

**Number of care packages sent out:** 405 (3 x large package to 9 care homes for 15 residents per home)

**Number of E-Newsletters:** 16 (12 to volunteers, 4 to care partners)

## WHAT HAPPENED?

The After Party was an interactive project to keep the CICH community – volunteers, care home residents, staff and family members – and wider community connected through fun, meaningful creative activity. Whilst the project was designed with previous CICH participants in mind, you did not have to be a registered CICH volunteer to take part – anyone and everyone was welcome to join in and take part in the activities. The After Party was led by a team of Magic Me artists Mia Harris, Kathy Horak-Hallett, Shepherd Manyika and Chuck Blue Lowry, where they found new ways to engage in what Magic Me loved most about parties: laughing, singing, dancing, debating and exploring together, in the present remotely and from afar.

Each month, After Party care partners received newsletters from Magic Me, which included artist actions and activities, alongside personalised messages from CICH Volunteers. After Party 'Care Packages' were sent via post by the artists, which included creative activities and resources, physical items, i.e letters, artworks and/ or physical representations of artworks produced by volunteers and the wider public who've taken part in the creative activities throughout the month. They are physical mementos for residents, staff and the home/scheme.

What was very present throughout the After Party project was that Magic Me staff and volunteers could not easily find out about the health and wellbeing of residents and care staff, which was a real concern for all. Especially with the media coverage of devastating Covid-19 situation in the care sector across the UK. Magic Me staff knew the care partners and care staff were stretched and sent the activities and care packages out not knowing if or how they would respond.



# CREATIVE ACTIONS

Artist Mia Harris kicked off the After Party with three activities based around the idea of invitation and introductions:

*Postcards* explores gestures of invitation by making a postcard for someone you are missing at the moment. Make a postcard using pictures from newspapers or magazines. Write a message to someone you are missing. Take 2 photos of yourself holding the postcard, one showing the picture side and one showing the message side.

*Cherished Picture* – choose a cherished picture from around your house and share what it means to you. Choose a favourite picture from around your house and then take a picture of yourself with it. Share in 1-2 sentences why you have chosen the picture, where it came from, what it reminds you of, how it makes you feel and why you like it.

*Colour Mood Scene* – create a colour mood scene using items from around your house. Pick a colour that reflects your mood and rummage around your house finding objects of that colour. It could be clothes, curtains, cleaning products, tins of food etc. Set up a scene in an area of your home with all your things and make a 30-second video telling us why you have chosen the colour and showing a couple of your favourite items.

Artist Kathy Horak-Hallet created activities around Dream Dinner Parties:

*Dream Dinner Party* – Kathy would like you to share a dream evening, by inviting an admired person to your dinner table. A vindaloo with the Pope on the French Riviera... cheese sandwiches with Frank Sinatra in Southend. By combining our ideas, we can create an unexpected party that would be impossible in real life...!

## STEP 1:

**Make an invitation to a dinner party by hand including the following information:**

1. Your name
2. The name of a famous person, family member or friend that you would like to invite.
3. An image of that person – either a photograph or drawn, or even a collage – interpret this how you like.
4. The name of a music artist or band that you would like to appear on the evening.
5. Your favourite lock-down snack that will be on offer.
6. The drink/cocktail you will be serving.

**Materials:** Paper (any colour) pens, coloured pens / pencils. If you're making a collage like Kathy, you will also need some magazines / newspapers to cut out images that you like, scissors and glue to stick them to the page.

*Raise a Toast* – Kathy invited people to 'raise a toast' to a fellow CICH party goer that they were thinking about – resident, care staff, fellow volunteer or care homes – by sending a video / voice note or written toast that will contribute to an interactive artwork for care partners.



Artist Shepherd Manyika understood that music became a safety net throughout lockdown. It is a way of inviting others and different voices into our spaces as well as bringing us joy.

*Sound Selecta* – Shepherd would like you to think of a song you want to share with others. If you are up for it, you can sing the song and send it to us. You can also send us a URL / YouTube link if you like. Is your song dedicated to anyone in particular? Care staff? Resident? Fellow Party-goer?

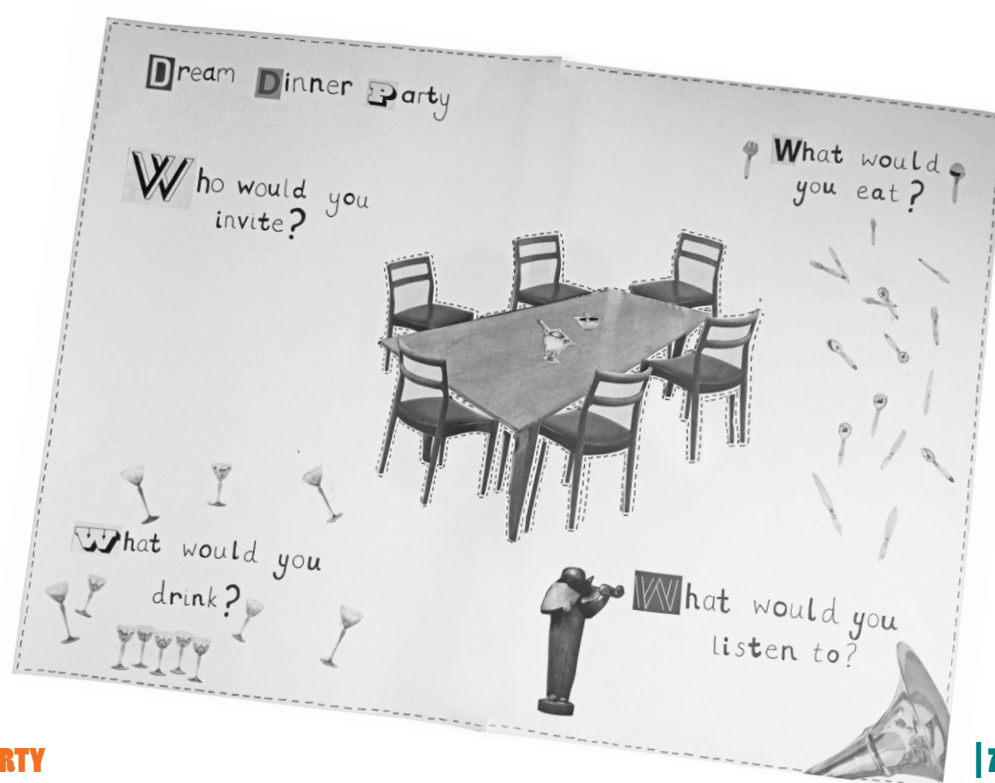
Shepherd will compile the songs into a playlist called Sound Selecta which will be hosted on SoundCloud for us all to enjoy. We will also include your toasts that you have been missing during this time.

Artist Chuck Blue Lowry produced a short film celebrating the CICH community. The film shared participants messages and reflections, artworks have produced together during lockdown, showcased the creative way they have kept in touch through the 'Cocktails Hours' and 'Care Packages', and telling the story of CICH and the After Party.

*Favourite Dance Move* – Chuck invites you to send a short video of yourself doing your favourite dance move to your favourite song to be included in the film. This can be a dance move that makes you feel happy, makes you laugh, empowers you or makes you feel connected to others. You can include your whole body or focus on one detail of your body and you can be dancing wherever you like – in your house, in the garden or in a park!

*Raise a Toast* – we are continuing Kathy's action to be included in the film.

*Share your memory of CICH over the past 10 years* – What are some of your favourite moments? Favourite party theme? The care home / scheme you visited often? Favourite song to dance to at the parties? Favourite cocktail? These can be sent in, in any format and will be included in the film.





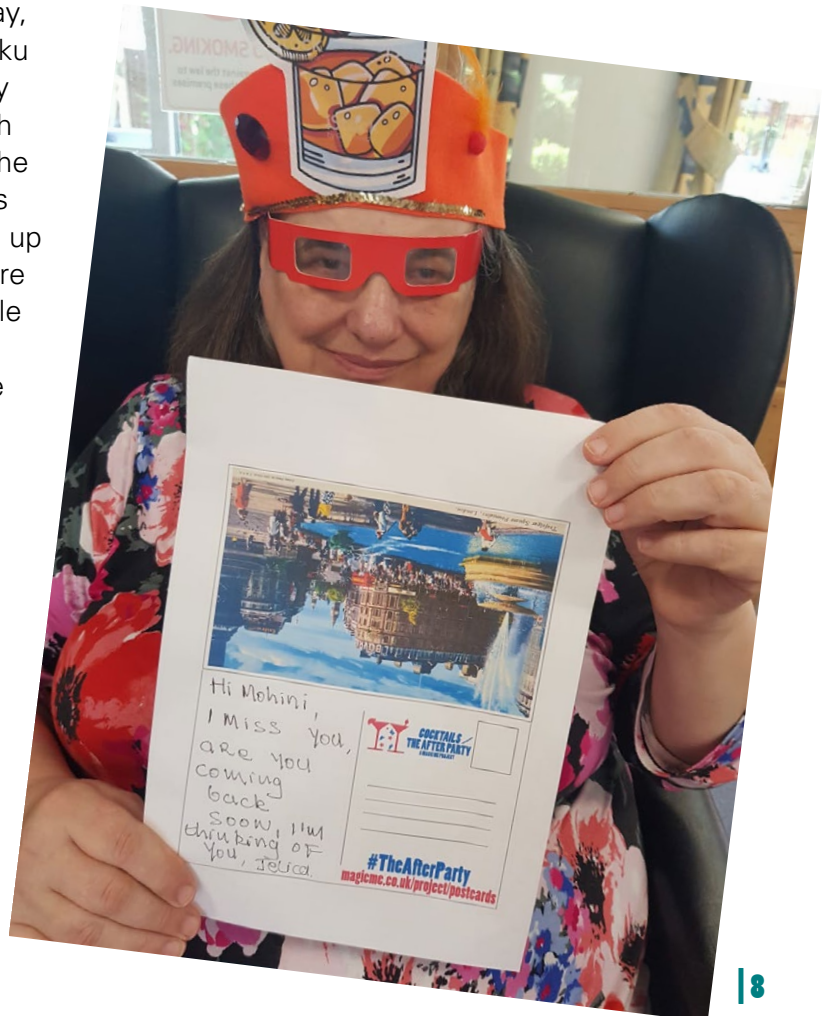
# CARE PACKAGES

As part of the After Party project, each care partner received an After Party 'Care Package' sent via post designed by our artists, which included creative actions, activities, physical items, artworks and/or physical representations of artworks produced by volunteers and wider public who have taken part in the creative actions. They are physical mementos for residents, staff and the home/scheme.

In May 2020, artist Mia Harris led the After Party, with a Care Package that included Colourful 'Choose your favourite Cocktail' Headdresses, stickers and resources to engage with Mia's 'postcard' making activity. In June 2020, artist Kathy Horak-Hallett designed a Care Package explored 'Dream Dinner Parties'! with an 'interactive tablecloth' collage and drawing activity. In July 2020, artist Shepherd Manyika's Care Package included materials for participants to explore self-portraiture by creating a unique artwork for their spaces.

# COCKTAIL HOUR

Each month, Magic Me and an After Party artist hosted a 'Cocktail Hour' – an opportunity for CICH volunteers to catch up and get creative together. In April, Mia Harris explored portraiture, party games and participants enjoyed the 'Cocktail Hour' in our Colour Mood Scenes. In May, Kathy Horak-Hallett and guest artist Kweku Sackey explored the Dream Dinner Party with collage, sound and storytelling, with a special performance from Kweku, all the way from Sheffield. In June, Magic Me's Sarah hosted and took the time to catch up on the Creative Actions as well as explore the group's outdoor spaces. Using mobile devices the group foraged together in gardens and patios and documented the journey, sharing different textures and making a collaborative video collage in the zoom window.





# THE AFTER PARTY OUTCOMES

## Outcomes for Care Staff

### Accessible materials

The consensus was that the activities were presented to homes in a very accessible, easy to use format. Practical considerations of care staff and care settings were really considered and responded to when creating activities for staff to do with residents. As a result, scheme staff found the project and the different activities very user friendly and easy to implement.

The fact that Magic Me provided printed leaflets and notices at the beginning of the project as well as printed care packages, with pre-cut elements was very helpful. Care staff would have found it very time consuming to have to printed out instructions and activity sheets and prepare materials prior to sessions and this would definitely have proved a barrier to delivery from their end. The newsletters sent by Magic Me were informative and entertaining, providing valuable feedback and communication between participants.

One staff member commented on how the loan of a mobile phone by Magic Me, with data included on it, made it very easy for them to share videos and comments from the residents. It also meant the residents received very personal messages back from volunteers quickly, which added to the fun and novel element of running the sessions. Without this, staff would not have been able to share data, as no wifi is available in the scheme lounge or in people's flats.

### Helped with workload

The majority of staff in care homes have been very overstretched during Covid-19 due to incidents of sickness amongst residents and staff, resulting in a variety of additional duties on top of their regular workload. Activity Co-ordinators commented on the fact that it was helpful to have activity ideas presented to them in such a clear accessible manner at this time.



*Because of [extra work resulting from Covid-19] there was lot to think about- so it was nice to have The After Party project preparation already done.*

### Positive interaction with residents

It was valuable for care staff to have something fun to do with residents which had positive outcomes at a difficult time. Positive outcomes for residents also helped in terms of staff morale and job satisfaction.





*I see the improvements with how people feel and it makes me feel my time is worthy and well spent.*

The activities also had long-term beneficial effects, providing a talking point and added happiness and entertainment after the session itself



*We had a lot of laughter with some of the projects. The activities also kept us talking about them for weeks especially the imaginary dinner party invite."*

### **Team building**

The different activities helped to lighten the mood of staff during Covid-19 and got other care staff, outside of the activity team, more involved in activities. Staff gave the following feedback:



*Staff who don't normally join in with activities were chipping in on the way by.*



*It was an opportunity for us all to come together, residents and staff and forget about Covid [whilst maintaining social distancing] and have fun together.*

This is a useful outcome in terms of increasing awareness of the importance and benefits of creative activities amongst different staff members in care settings.

Previous involvement in the CICH project meant that several of the staff involved already had an understanding and awareness of the way Magic Me work and the potential benefits of The After Party project. However, previous involvement was not a factor in the project's successful reception by care staff. A new member of staff found the project very helpful. The activities suggested creative ways of working in this setting and ideas for future work which she is keen to implement.

### **Difficulties**

There were no negatives issues or outcomes raised by staff about this project. It is clear that the issue of digital exclusion is a real one for many care settings with lack of wi fi, printers and mobile phones. However, Magic Me overcame/anticipated any related difficulties by design of project, format of activities packs and loan of equipment such as phones, where necessary.



Although the project did mean additional work for staff in the schemes, because of the way that the materials were presented and the activities were designed, it was not seen in a negative way by any of the participating scheme staff. The After Party project was deemed to be a very positive intervention. Several staff members also commented on how helpful Magic Me staff were in terms of providing friendly and helpful support and advice, during an extremely stressful and worrying time.

## Outcomes for Residents

### Motivation

The project provided much needed motivation and something to look forward to during this time. The different activities provided a chance to think about something other than the covid-19 situation and provided a reason for residents to leave their rooms and interact in a safe, socially distanced manner.



*For residents it provided something for them to look forward to – sometimes anticipation is almost as good as doing the thing.*

### Stimulation

The creative activities proved particularly beneficial for residents in terms of providing a break from routine and the monotony of lockdown.



*The activities helped our residents to get through these difficult times by providing stimulus which kept them active, it also helped those residents who would have been lonely and bored and perhaps being showing challenging behaviour due to continued isolation.*

### Enjoyment

Staff commented on how some of the very simple activities, such as putting on a home-made party hat, made residents laugh. Taking photos was also popular and provided a relaxed and homely atmosphere for residents, particularly those who were experiencing agitation and boredom.

### Dementia Care

The activities worked well for people with different needs and interests.



*It's good to think of projects that can involve people at different abilities and with different physical and intellectual range.*





Staff noticed and commented on the benefits for residents living with dementia. They felt that the activities really helped in terms of alleviating stress and giving both themselves and the residents purpose and motivation.



*The support I received to plan activities from Magic Me resources gave me direction for supporting residents and it was wonderful to see results, and witness residents with anxiety achieve purpose and pleasure. It also helped staff know that residents with dementia who wander were being provided with an activity that would help them stay safe.*

## Outcomes for volunteers

### Building community

The online zoom party which the artist held for volunteers at the beginning of the project in April, had many positive outcomes, including creating feelings of community and helping people keep positive during lockdown. Volunteers said they enjoyed 'meeting' new people on-line and found the experience an uplifting and distracting experience which was especially helpful at this time.



*Doing Zoom calls every month with other volunteers and artists was really appreciated and helped me personally. It was nice to meet with people I didn't know and see a glimpse of someone else's life when stuck indoors.*

### Increased creativity

The involvement of the four artists in this project and the different format to CICH, resulted in increased creative output for volunteers.



*We had a different artist each month doing specific type of actions related to their practice. I thought it was v creative & interesting to work with the artist. Nice to be more involved in artistic side of things then we were in the CICH parties."*



People enjoyed activities such as making postcards, thinking about colour and creating toasts for residents. This involvement in art activities was valued by participants and seen as helpful in terms of aiding relaxation and “mindfulness” during lockdown.

The input from artists gave volunteers an extra boost:



*Actions were very nice, creative and artistic – a bit wacky and colourful – literally! I love colours... at a time when the world is not very colourful, there was happiness and joy.*

This response from volunteers also highlights the general benefits of bringing artists to work in care settings generally and the fact that they bring a different energy and a new approach.

### **Purpose/motivation**

Volunteers spoke of how their involvement in this project was particularly helpful and motivating at this point in time:



*It felt nice to send something creative and positive to residents during lockdown.”*

### **Different levels of engagement**

The project worked particularly well for volunteers because of the flexible nature of activities and involvement, which allowed people to take part as much or as little as they wanted to. Volunteers could take a picture and send it or write a video or do different types of art actions. This was particularly significant during Covid-19 as an inflexible approach may have alienated people at this time and resulted in low levels of volunteer engagements. This flexible approach and understanding of the needs of volunteers, demonstrated by Magic Me here and in the ClCH project is a crucial factor in their success signing up and retaining volunteers. There was some drop-off during the project, which from feedback seems to be mainly due to people being overloaded with emails and zoom meetings. However on the whole, the flexible nature of the project seemed to allow participants to dip and out as required and as a result most volunteers stayed involved throughout.

### **Feedback on activities**

The overall opinion was that the activities worked very well, especially considering the limitations and contact of Covid-19. Volunteers felt that it was often the small, simple activities that proved especially effective from their point of view.





*I think care packages the [care homes] received did really make a difference. The party props and sensory stuff I think, provided little moments of happiness (from looking at photos) and during a grim time made a difference in their day. The artists put a lot of thought into making it as easy, nice and not burdensome to staff & user friendly.*

One volunteer commented on the fact that by doing the activities remotely and sharing outcomes with the care homes, the residents and staff were able to have a bit more of an insight into their lives. Usually the ClCH parties were about volunteers coming into the residents home but some of The After Party activities allowed residents a glimpse into volunteers' homes.

There was some difference of opinion in terms of the efficacy and potential impact of the video films. Some volunteers also felt that if it had been possible, some live activities with residents via zoom or other apps would have helped make the groups feel more connected.

### **Aftermath of ClCH Parties**

The only 'negative' responses to the project were related to those volunteers that had previously been involved in the ClCH parties. Several interviewees described feelings of great sadness and of going through almost a "grieving process" after hearing the parties would be coming to an end. For one ClCH party manager, the jump to The After Party project was too quick. They felt confused and unsure about the different, more 'arm's length' process, albeit adapted out of necessity as a way of working during lockdown. They decided not to take part, as for them it was the personal interaction which got them involved in volunteering for Magic Me in the first place.



*To me that [personal contact with older people] was 60/70 percent of the ClCH project. People love ClCH and the title and it inspires people as it's novel but that is really just the icing on the cake. Interaction of people in a group setting is what works for me – the group element.*

However, those ClCH Volunteers and Party Managers that did take part in The After Party all found it useful in terms of coming to terms with the end of the project and having a chance to stay in contact with the residents.



*After the ClCH parties came to such an abrupt end, I was glad that there was some continuity and it didn't just end.*





CICH volunteers stated that they felt a sense of loyalty to Magic Me and the care homes they had worked in and wanted to support The After Party venture, despite the difficult time and situation.



*I wanted to support Magic Me and The After Party project as I know how hard it is to get and keep volunteers onboard & wanted to show solidarity, especially in light of the situation with CICH which was so devastating for the team and the volunteers. I felt I need to be there for them.*

Volunteers that had previously been involved in CICH were worried about the situation in care homes and didn't want to ask questions about specific residents. In one such case, a volunteer found their own way of dealing with this by making messages (in the form of written toasts) general dedications rather than writing them to the specific residents.

## Outcomes for Care providers

### Activity staff

A view from one of the care providers was that The After Party activities had the best outcomes for residents in schemes where there was a staff member in a dedicated activity role, to co-ordinate and rollout to participants. For this project format to work best, it seems, there is a reliance on scheme staff that specialise in activities - in schemes with overstretched staff, without someone in role of activity delivering, it might not work so well. However, two of the schemes that took part, did not have a dedicated activity person. When they had the time, they took part in the activities and gave good feedback.

### Email feedback

Care providers and some of the volunteers commented on their increased workload during lockdown. An increase in the number of emails received during this time, made it hard for some people to keep up with reading all the newsletters and therefore they felt they may have missed out on getting all the feedback on how the project was going and outcomes for residents and staff.

### Cocktails in Care Homes (CICH)

Feedback from care providers was that all of the schemes that had previously had CICH parties absolutely loved them. They were viewed as enormously beneficial for the schemes and organisations as a whole. The fact that parties were geared to specific interests of residents was commented on and benefits for specific individuals were noted and valued. Care providers had no issue with contributing towards the parties, when fees were introduced, feeling that they were very good value for money and played an important role in enhancing wellbeing and happiness:





*For residents, when you come to the ClCH parties you don't feel forgotten – when you are 'partied up' you are not talking about ailments and care but what makes you alive. The parties allow people to be vibrant and are a time to have fun.*

However, there was some debate about whether The After Party had been so beneficial and effective because this project was based around activities, rather than parties being the main focus. Conversely someone questioned whether this really was the time for partying due to anxiety.

In terms of developing future work, care providers pointed out that in the aftermath of Covid-19, there would be massive issues with individuals' mental health on top of physical needs. They will be looking for projects for their care settings that address both these types of needs and take into consideration the anxiety people will be feeling. They also questioned whether this may limit peoples' ability or desire to be creative.

## Outcomes for Artists

The participating artists needed to be flexible and adapt in a quick and responsive manner to the needs of participants, as presented to them during project. The interviewee artist felt that they had a different impression of what was required at the beginning of the project and adapted their ideas when it became clear that what was most needed was instigating communication between people in the homes.

As a result, they tried to develop things to help care staff when delivering key components of the care provision. For example, dinner time was difficult for care staff as it could no longer be a communal event – people had meals in their rooms and this really increased workload for care staff. The Dream Dinner Party activity was developed as a way of making meal-times more fun for both staff and residents and providing things to instigate conversation and stir the imagination.

The artist's aim was to make something simple enough that everybody could engage with it and based on feedback from staff, this approach seems to have been very apt for this time and worked very well. For the artist it was nice to get feedback about the activities in monthly reflection and feedback meetings with Magic Me staff and see peoples' responses. Hearing back about peoples' Dream Dinner Parties and the details they chose such as kittens with party hats and a Liverpool FC meal with The Beatles was very satisfying.

The interviewee discussed how it was quite satisfying to work in a quite separate way during lockdown and develop work and ideas in isolation and it gave the work quite an individual stamp:



*Because you are separated (because of lockdown) as an artist developing work, you feed in what you want to be doing – put more of your own stamp on it whereas in a group setting you would bend and adjust work more to others.*



However, they also very much valued the collaborative element of working with other artists by handing on their ideas to the next artist and developing some of their ideas from previous activities.

In terms of learning from the project, the artist found it very useful for their own practice and also for developing future work in care settings. When considering future participative work, they questioned if asking residents to make work for public dissemination, might prove fruitful.



*At the time it was a really good response and it felt really good because it was an experiment. One thing I would say is we've talked about awareness raising – also in tandem with participatory things – having a public outcome might be useful – how aware are people of situation in care homes? As someone who might exhibit work, it might be nice for participants to think about this too – maybe if they felt they were sharing work they might react differently.*

They were interested in the process of working collaboratively with people in care settings and how artists can develop participative practice:



*I would like working pattern in future to be part of a negotiation – these are your ideas, these are my ideas – where can we go from this?*

They did see less engagement from volunteers, as the project went out, with some people dropping out or participating less. This is perhaps inevitable given the circumstances but worth considering when designing projects in similar circumstances.

The practicalities of this project meant it was very time consuming. The interviewee had printed out 90 packs and cut out several elements. They also felt that being unable to deliver activities first-hand and in person did limit what activities they could offer:



*You would never normally work like that. We had to do so much preparation and simple explanations because you couldn't be there to help and guide. This situation of not being able to go into homes reduces what is possible.*





# LEARNING POINTS

## Simplicity of offer

Small things can be very meaningful. Some of the activities that took place during this project were very simple but had big impacts for example the Dream Dinner Party. It would be useful to incorporate small, easy to implement activities into future projects in care settings.

## Involvement of artists

There was lots of feedback suggesting interesting outcomes for volunteers in terms of their own creativity as a result of working with artists. It is worth bearing this in mind for future projects, especially long-term ones with ongoing involvement of specific volunteers. The inclusion of additional elements for volunteers, such as training or networking opportunities may help to keep them interested and onboard as well as helping develop their learning and creativity.

## Printed out care packages

The care packages worked very well. This was a very time consuming and costly element of project in terms of printing, cutting out and postage. However it was the approach that was needed at this time, bearing in mind the reality of situation in participating care settings, with regard to wi fi and access to printers.

## Team building

The After Party activities had the best outcomes for residents in schemes where there was a staff member in a dedicated activity role to co-ordinate and roll-out to participants. In order for arts organisations and arts facilitators to work most effectively in care settings they need a specific person to contact for bookings and queries, who over time builds up experience and expertise in how best to support outside session leaders, help with sessions and get the most out of them for participants. However, it is possible that post-Covid-19, care staff in general will have more involvement in activity provision in care settings, and certainly a greater understanding and awareness of the crucial role meaningful activities can play in terms of maintaining health and happiness of their residents. As a result the responsibility for supporting activities provided by external facilitators may be shared more across the whole staff teams.

## 'Whole Home' approach

Many homes are moving away from having activities coordinators to a 'whole home' approach, where staff members take a shared responsibility for activities. The team building aspects, demonstrated during this project in terms of encouraging other member of staff, outside the activity teams to take part in activities, could prove useful for care settings when developing this more universal approach towards activity provision. Projects such as The After Party could prove very useful in terms of introducing care teams to creative activity provision and ways of incorporating the arts into everyday care.



## Person-centred approach

Arts projects in care settings need to be flexible and designed to work with a wide range of interests and needs. Activity provision needs to balance catering for large groups with individual needs. Where possible, care settings need to take a person centred approach, offering activities that can be tailored to individuals' interests and needs. Activities that are suitable for people living with all levels of dementia are key and the arts can really play an important role in providing stimulation and enhancing quality of life.

## Digital exclusion

Access to digital appliances and wi fi is still an issue in care homes. The care packages worked so well because Magic Me understood this from offset and developed things that staff could use very easily and immediately. The Zoom party was a particularly successful element for volunteers and would, if wi fi was available in schemes and staff were geared up to using, be worth considering for future in similar situations. Post Covid-19, all care providers will have learned and recognised the importance of digital technology as a means of keeping in touch with relatives and community partners. They may well have also tried new ways of providing activities, including showing live-streamed concerts and taking part in on-line activities. Therefore, it is likely that it will be easier to incorporate real-time activities, facilitated online within care settings, in future arts projects of this nature.

## Personal contact

Few things can effectively replace the one-to-one contact and interaction that is at the heart of many participative community art activities. It seems sensible to explore what art mediums can best replicate this and there is some feedback from interviewees to suggest that visual arts may not be the best medium for this. It would certainly be worth considering other art forms or mediums of sharing information, which replicate to some extent human interaction, such as podcast or radio formats which might make contact between participants seem more personal and immediate.

## Importance of ongoing feedback

Regular feedback regarding participants' responses and results of activities is an important element of a project like this. Efficacy of communication of outcomes can affect the way that stake holders such as volunteers, artists and senior housing provider staff that are not based in the care settings perceive the outcomes and success of activities and the project. The email newsletters were good way of sharing information at the time but it might be worth also considering bite-size, summarised feedback, to ensure everyone is kept in the loop.

## Volunteers' motivation

Some volunteers adapted well and were happy to take part in The After Party. Indeed it proved a very useful way for them of ending their involvement in CICH parties and actually gave them some additional positive outcomes which they had not got from CICH parties, such as more communication with other volunteers (meeting new people outside their parties schemes) and increased creative stimulation and activity. Others found the jump too hard to make and did not continue volunteering in The After Party, as it was the personal interaction that got them involved

in the first place. In participatory art projects where volunteer involvement is a major element, it is crucial to consider volunteers motivations for taking part, when designing the project. Otherwise their expectations and needs may not be met.



# LEGACY OF COCKTAILS IN CARE HOMES PROJECT

## A life changing experience

Involvement in the CICH project was clearly very significant for several of the volunteers. People spoke of how important the project had been in terms of building self-confidence, providing a means for them to make a difference and helping to improve the quality of life for people in care settings.



*Going to CICH parties and working as manager became a point of pride. Understanding the impact you have on people on a wider scale, outside your family and friends, alters your outlook on individuals, especially older people who are often forgotten. All they want is to chat with someone – You get a lot from that. ”*

A number of the volunteers interviewed for this evaluation said that they would use the learning gained from the CICH project to develop their own community projects in the future.



*My involvement with Magic Me has inspired me to try and seek opportunities in the new community I’m living in and find creative outlets – community/volunteering locally and even to maybe start my own project. It is inspiring to see how much difference a small team can make and I want to take this forward.*

## Importance of having dedicated staff managing CICH project

Several people commented on the professionalism and dedication of the two main Magic Me members of staff who specifically oversaw this project.



*Phoebe and Sarah were great – good to have such a great support network and their personal commitment – they put a lot of their personality into it and attended lots of parties as well as doing their day jobs.*



*The CICH project really was a great success and a testament to Phoebe and Sarah and they have inspired me to take something forward.*







*When Phoebe and Sarah joined CICH there was a distinct difference to the project. Before it was ambling along – when they came it became something much bigger and impactful. Their energy took it to another level. I am grateful they joined the project. They always made me feel valued under their stewardship. I want to say how much I appreciate their work and the work of Magic Me as a whole. It has given me such a lot and all from that one copy of Metro [where I first saw the volunteer post advertised]...*

It is important to consider the impact a small team can make and the need for dedicated members of staff to steer a project like this in order to get maximum beneficial outcomes. Staff posts and salaries should be included in future project designs and funding applications.

### **‘Millennial’ approach to involving volunteers**

The following factors seem to have been crucial to the success of CICH in terms of recruiting and retaining volunteers, which was an integral part of the initiative:



A press article in Metro for volunteers



The name of the project ‘Cocktail in Care Homes’ juxtaposing two elements that one might not commonly put together



Use of the website as a source of info – volunteers (often young professionals) could log on to find out info about parties taking place that night and attend on their way home from work.



Provision of training in dementia awareness



Flexible approach, allowing volunteers to take part where and when suited them – they did not have to commit to a specific attendance pattern.

### **Changing perceptions of older people and care homes**

CICH was a ground-breaking project which introduced new ways of signing up and involving volunteers. It helped to challenge peoples’ image of care homes and older people and break down barriers, bringing different generations together to socialise and breathe new life and energy into care settings.



*I liked talking about dementia and parties together - transforming the care home and turning it into a party – such a simple and wonderful idea. No pretence, normal people and very accessible and warm.*



# MOVING FORWARD

Bearing in mind the outcomes and learning from the Cocktails in Care Home project and The After Party, these things should be considered when developing future work:

## Need for some kind of follow-up or continuation of CICH parties

It is important for Magic Me to encourage and perhaps enable care settings and volunteers to keep up some kind of contact after Covid-19 and the finish of CICH. The After Party provided a much-needed opportunity for participants to keep in touch and it would be good to continue this in some way if possible. A scheme staff member suggested the following:



*Maybe some time we could set up a call over What's App, a few residents would love to chat to some of the leaders and regular volunteers that came to the cocktail parties."*

## Different art mediums

In the light of Covid-19, lockdown and the possibility of future re-occurrences of the virus, it would be worth exploring which art mediums most replicate the immediacy and warmth of one-to contact and interaction. The reality of the situation regarding digital exclusion for care factors is a very real factor though that may limit and determine future approaches as it did with this project.

## Use of volunteers

Magic Me may want to build on their pioneering work involving volunteers in care settings as this has proved very effective. By looking closely at what worked well, the successes of the CICH project and what elements contributed to this, future work could be developed, using similar formats.

## Public interest

Covid-19 has arguably increased levels of social conscience in the population in general and certainly raised the profile of care staff, residents and the care sector. It seems there is currently a real desire for people to develop communities and make contact between different generations, as evidenced by massive sign-ups to intergenerational lockdown projects such as NAPA's Only Connect Pen Pal project. Volunteering take-up has risen dramatically during Covid-19 and according to a Guardian article by Rupert Jones (May 2020) most of those who have volunteered during this time, plan to continue after lockdown ends. The popularity of programmes such as Grayson Perry's Arts Club and increased sign-up for on-line creative classes and activities during lockdown may heighten public awareness and understanding regarding the need for meaningful activities in care settings and the role the arts can play. Magic Me and other arts organisations working in this field could try to capitalise on this by developing related initiatives which build on public and media interest and offer volunteer opportunities.



## Parties

Parties are one of the activities that nearly all care settings enjoy and are used to organising. It would be useful to look at what are the elements that differentiate CICH parties from regular home parties. These could include some or all the following features: art elements; use of trained volunteers; ratio of volunteers per residents; timing; regularity; change from routine; energy and presence of people from outside the home with lack of preconceived ideas about what people want or can do and artist stance of looking outside of the norm/ thinking outside box. Once Magic Me have identified these key things that make CICH parties extra special, it should help to point to what long term/ongoing options might be and what is really needed in the current situation. Solution might lie in training packages including volunteer management and arts elements.

## Arts and Covid-19

It seems that the arts and creative activities are more important than ever, both for care settings and society in general. The arts provide a means of communicating and connecting and have played an important role in tackling isolation and building a sense of community for people during lockdown. In her article, *The New Normal*, Helen Johnson discusses the role of the arts, saying:



*Arts engagement can support community wellbeing, cohesion and development, reducing isolation, strengthening social relationships, and forging a sense of belonging. This is particularly poignant given the increased isolation, separation, uncertainty and fragmentation, and decreased sense of self-efficacy, which is characteristic of so many of our experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

She also discusses the role the arts can play in a world emerging from Covid-19, arguing that they can be used positively to benefit overlooked sectors of society:



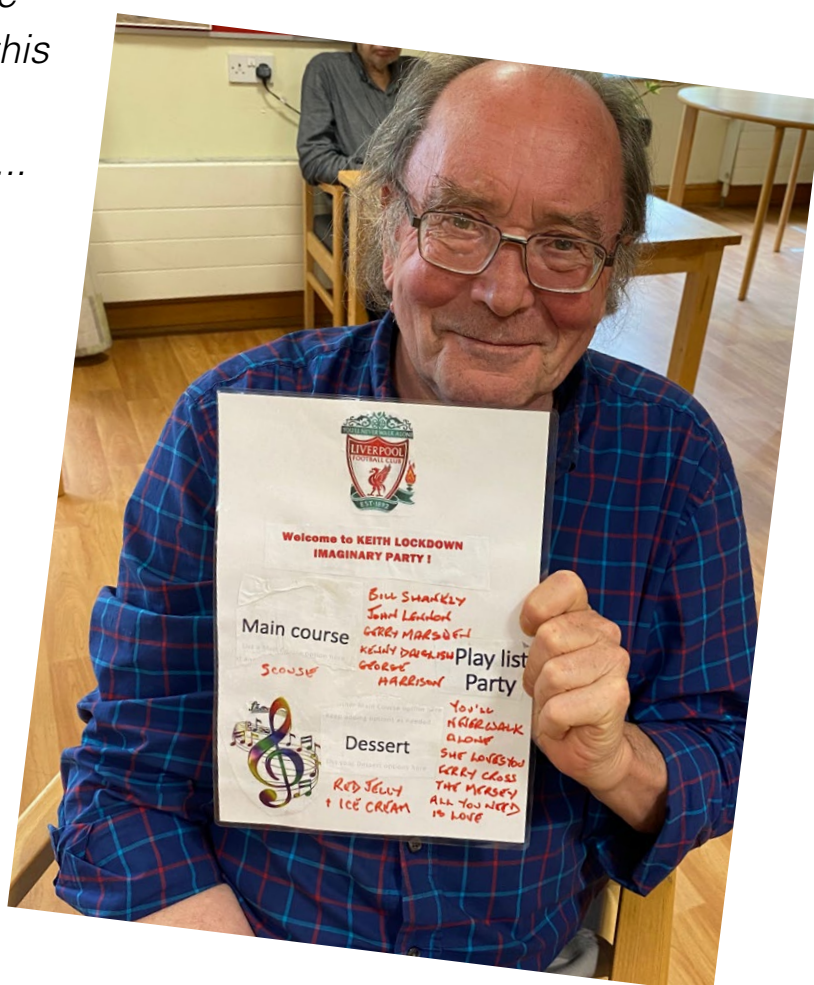
*We should harness the power of the arts to promote a 'critical' or 'social justice-based' resilience, which works towards systemic social change, targeting the underlying inequalities that limit both the health and art access of marginalised groups.*

She posits a 'new normal' where the arts are accessible to all, envisaging a society that "places the arts and culture at its centre; where we can all – regardless of socio-economic status, wealth, educational level, gender, ethnic background or disability – flourish spiritually, emotionally, cognitively and socially; one where inequalities in both arts engagement and in health/wellbeing are rendered the arcane artefacts of a less-enlightened era".

This vision of a more tolerant and inclusive future was also captured in a comment from one of the CICH volunteers:



*To me I would like to see legacy of CICH as making it unnecessary to have projects like this! It should be in us to want to get involved. You find your cause and spend your time doing good. Ideally as people we won't need to have projects like CICH to make sure we put the time into being with other people. The legacy for the people involved should at least be taking this ethos outside of the project and to carry that forward in their own lives, which I look to do from a personal standpoint. However, I understand that this probably will never be the case. It's like your birthday. With a lot of friends it can be difficult to get together, especially a number of them in one place, but if it's your birthday then people generally make the effort, and projects like CICH are great because it makes people make the effort, which we sometimes need. Personally, all I have experienced in the project will be with me forever and I hope to apply this throughout everything I do - and that is my big takeaway...*





# OVERALL CONCLUSION

Magic Me provided very easy to use care packages which met the needs of residents, were helpful to care staff, motivated volunteers and generated a great deal of happiness and interaction at a very difficult time. Benefits were felt by all involved. Although it was impossible to create the same sense of connection as when meeting face to face, it seems that The After Party managed to capture some of the energy and colour of the CICH parties and this was transferred into the online project.

The transition from the CICH project to The After Party was not an easy one but it was sensitively negotiated with many positive outcomes. Several creative activities took place, wellbeing was enhanced, and staff morale and job satisfaction were positively impacted. The volunteers enjoyed the experience and felt it was worthwhile and helpful and they benefitted greatly from the input from artists into this project. The success of the project on these terms, seems to be a major achievement in the light of what was happening at the time. The artists enjoyed the challenge of creating user friendly activities for care staff to facilitate. They also very much enjoyed their interaction with volunteers and felt their artist practice and development benefitted as a result. Several participants commented on the care and dedication shown by Magic Me, the two dedicated members of staff Sarah and Phoebe and how positive and helpful the experience was.

The flexible approach and understanding of the needs of volunteers, demonstrated by Magic Me here and in the CICH project is a crucial factor in their success in signing up and retaining people to support their projects. Magic Me are leaders in the field. Their expertise, developed through years of experience of producing intergenerational work and involving volunteers, combined with a real understanding of care settings and the needs of staff and residents and an individual life affirming approach is unique. Lessons should be learned from the impressive legacy of CICH and developed into new strands of work to enhance the happiness, health and wellbeing of residents and staff in care settings.





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Helen Calvin	Mandy Worster
Christopher Nugent	

## References

### **NAPA (National Activity Providers Association)**

NAPA is a National charity with activity provision at its heart, training and supporting activity providers to enhance the lives of the residents in their care. Our aim is that every care and support setting is full of life, love and laughter.

[www.napa-activities.co.uk](http://www.napa-activities.co.uk)

### **Arts in Care Homes**

Arts in Care Homes is a NAPA project funded by The Baring Foundation and the Rayne Foundation, aimed at promoting the importance of the arts and creative activities in care settings. The Arts in Care Homes website is a user-friendly resource, including HOW To guides, relevant research and details of organisations working in this field. The National Day of Arts in Care Homes is an annual event that takes place on 24 September.

[www.artsincarehomes.org.uk](http://www.artsincarehomes.org.uk)

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*'UK Volunteering soars during coronavirus situation'* Rupert Jones

**The Guardian May 2020**

*Arts and Culture and New Normal,*

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[www.thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-33/summer-2020/arts-and-culture-new-normal](http://www.thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-33/summer-2020/arts-and-culture-new-normal)

### **NAPA, Arts in Care Home Only Connect Pen Pal project**

Project linking care settings up with volunteer pen pals to exchange messages of support, letters, art and poetry.

[www.artsincarehomes.org.uk/aboutonlyconnect](http://www.artsincarehomes.org.uk/aboutonlyconnect)





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