



Dare To Imagine

Artists and care home staff working together
to embed creativity in care homes

ARTISTS' RESIDENCIES IN CARE
HOMES PROGRAMME 2019-23



DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to all those care home residents, staff, families and loved ones everywhere who died or were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Report production

This report is based on the Artists' Residencies in Care Homes (ARCH) project, that was funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation. It has been produced in collaboration with all project partners.

Magic Me authored sections one and three with contributions from Anglia Ruskin University on the impact of Covid-19.

The sections about each partner and their residency were written by those organisations.

The Anglia Ruskin University research team devised the project evaluation, collected and analysed the data, and authored sections five, six, and seven on the research approach, research findings, and recommendations from the project. They also edited the final report.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the care homes and their staff members, residents, and their family members who gave up their time to take part in this study and the arts organisations and artists. Without everyone's active participation this research could not have taken place.

Anglia Ruskin University (ARU)

The ARU research team was led by Professor Hilary Bungay and co-led by Professor Carol Munn-Giddings prior to her retirement in 2021. Dr Ceri Wilson and Anna Dadswell were co-researchers throughout the project. Hilary, Carol, Ceri and Anna all have specialist expertise in researching arts, health and wellbeing, and in using qualitative and creative research methods. The team previously conducted the Arts Council England-funded *Creative Journeys* project which explored the impact of participatory arts activities on the social relationships of older people in care home settings. They have published widely on the impacts of the arts on older people and in care home settings.

[Dr Ceri Wilson](#) (Co-Investigator) is a Senior Research Fellow in Mental Health and lead author for this report

[Anna Dadswell](#) (Co-Investigator) is a Research Fellow in Social Work and Social Policy

[Professor Hilary Bungay](#) (Principal Investigator) is a Professor of Arts for Health and Wellbeing

[Professor Carol Munn-Giddings](#) (Co-Principal Investigator 2019-2021) is an Emeritus Professor of Participative Inquiry & Collaborative Practice

Contents

Section 1: ARCH Aims

Aims of the ARCH programme	5
The original timeline	5

Section 2: The Partners

Magic Me	7
Excelcare	8
Gecko	10
curious directive	11
New Adventures	12
Fevered Sleep	13

Section 3: The Programme

Background and context	15
Setting up the partnerships	15
Getting started	16
Covid-19 disruption	18
Legacy phase	19

Section 4: The Residencies

Lime Court and Gecko	21
Longfield and curious directive	25
St Fillans and New Adventures	30
Sherrell House and Fevered Sleep	34

Section 5: The Research

Research aims	41
Research methods	41

Section 6: The Research Findings

Power of the participatory arts	44
Setting up for success	46
Artists and care home staff collaboration	50
Creative practice in care home contexts	55
Legacy and embedding	60

Section 7: Conclusions

Key learning and recommendations	68
References	71



Section 1:
ARCH Aims

Photo: Stephen Daly

Aims of the ARCH programme

Magic Me developed a Theory of Change for the four-year Artists' Residencies in Care Homes (ARCH) programme. The aims were that on its completion:

- Four participating Excelcare homes have improved relationships and understanding between staff and residents, informed by arts practice.
- The care sector has raised expectations of what the arts can be and do in care homes and has been inspired and challenged to integrate them into the culture of homes and the lives of residents.
- The four arts partners have increased understanding, skills and confidence working with care homes and are committed to building this work into their future programmes.
- Magic Me is stronger, with increased evidence, expertise and understanding of the practice and potential of the arts in care homes; strong working partnerships and profile across a wider geography; and is thus better positioned to influence others and attract future investment.

The original timeline

The original timeline shifted significantly due to the disruption and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic: an overview of both the original and the actual timelines are shown below.

Original timeline

Phase 1: Research & development (R&D)

Between October 2019 – March 2020

Focus on building relationships between the care home and arts partners

Test ideas through arts partner delivering activity in care home

Phase 2: Main residency

Between April 2020 – March 2021

Larger scale residency takes place

Phase 3: Learning and legacy

Between April 2021 – March 2022

Arts partner and care home together identify learning and find ways to create legacy for the home

ARU Research Report published and findings shared with arts and care sectors

Further dissemination and development

April 2022 - March 2023

Actual timeline

Phase 1: Research & development (R&D)

Between October 2019 – March 2020

Focus on building relationships between the care home and arts partners

Test ideas through arts partner delivering activity in care home

Covid-19 disruption

From March 2020 – ongoing

Care homes and much of the UK went through various stages of lockdown and restrictions

The ARCH programme stopped, though partners kept in touch where possible and some remote/distance work took place in 2021

Phase 2: Main residency

Between April 2022 – March 2023

Larger scale residency took place

Phase 3: Learning and legacy

Between October 2022 – March 2023

Arts partner and care home together identify learning and find ways to create legacy for the home

Further dissemination and development

Between January 2023 – ongoing

ARU Research Report published and findings shared with arts and care sectors



Section 2:

The Partners

Photo: Lily Ash Sakula and Georgia Akbar

Magic Me



Magic Me exists to combat ageism: our vision is a world where everyone can enjoy their unique creativity and full potential. We believe everyone has a past, present, future and an imagination – a wealth of stories, ideas and dreams to inspire art making.

Magic Me is a pioneer in intergenerational arts practice, sparking dialogue between generations and across cultures. For more than 30 years Magic Me has partnered with care homes and schools in Tower Hamlets, east London and practising artists to create powerful artworks and performances, which challenge how society thinks about ageing.

Today Magic Me prioritises widening access to the arts and community building in Tower Hamlets and improving the quality of life for individuals in care homes in London, Essex and beyond. Since collaborating on [Creative Journeys](#) in 2017, we have grown working partnerships with care providers across Essex, including our current [Magic Moments](#) programme. Initially commissioned by Essex County Council in 2021 to combat loneliness amongst older care home residents during lockdown, Magic Moments offers high-quality, impactful, creative, sensory activities, which improve the quality of everyday life for residents, delivered by care home staff, trained and supported by skilled artists.

The [Artists' Residencies](#) body of work draws on Magic Me's specialist knowledge of bringing arts into care homes and connecting meaningfully with residents, particularly those living with dementia. Before the current ARCH programme in Essex, the first [ARCH](#) programme in 2015-17 paired four leading performance companies [Duckie](#), [Lois Weaver](#), [Punchdrunk](#), and [Upswing](#), with four

[Anchor](#) care homes in London, bringing circus, alt-cabaret and immersive theatre to residents.

From the very start of Magic Me, research and evaluation reports, now regularly published on our website, have helped us to examine and refine our practice and share our learning. In partnerships with Queen Mary and Goldsmiths, University of London and others, they include: [Getting Everybody Included](#) (2001), exploring arts with people with dementia and staff who work with them; [Our Generations](#) (2009), comparing the benefits and practicalities of intergenerational projects with a range of people and partners; and [Detail and Daring](#) (2012), exploring the beauty and challenges of arts projects with young and older people.

Magic Me team involved in ARCH:

- Susan Langford - Director / Founder
- Kate Hodson - Programme Director
- Bethany Haynes - Maternity cover for Kate Hodson, May 2020 - Feb 2021
- Emily Bird - Project Manager
- Sally Knocker - Dementia Specialist, Trainer and Consultant
- Georgia Akbar, Lily Ash Sakula, Sue Mayo - Magic Me Associate Artists
- Danuta Lipinska, Mike Phillips - Ageing & Dementia Care specialists and trainers

www.magicme.co.uk
[@MagicMeArts](https://www.instagram.com/MagicMeArts)

Photo opposite shows Magic Me's Magic Moments project

Excelcare was proudly established in 1989 as a family-run business. We are still family-run to this day, and instil our family values onto our colleagues, the people we care for, their relatives and friends.

We provide high-quality, person-centred care at 31 individual and unique care homes situated in [Cambridge](#), [Essex](#), [London](#) and [Milton Keynes](#). We also operate a [home care](#) service in these areas.

Excelcare now supports over 2,500 people, delivering care that is as individual as the people we care for with empathy, kindness and compassion. Our team of over 2,000 are each dedicated to making a difference to the quality of everyday life of every individual in our care.

For the Artists' Residencies in Care Homes programme, with support from Magic Me, four Excelcare homes in Essex – Lime Court, Longfield, Sherrell House, and St Fillans – were matched with four arts organisations that break boundaries and use thought provoking activities to engage with people.

This four-year partnership was part of a mission to engage residents with different art forms and encourage expression through music, movement, and other creative outlets. As well as making this a memorable experience for each person, Excelcare wanted to ensure the partnership would impact each person positively and encourage them to step out of their comfort zones to try something new.

Built around individualised, person-centred care, Excelcare explain their approach with an anecdote that changed their outlook and helped to make

them [the number one ranked care provider for older people](#) they are today (based on Care Quality Commission (CQC) ratings by Care Markets UK).

This story starts with a visit to a care home, where members of the Senior Management Team met an inspirational gentleman named Mr Bailey. In conversation together, Mr Bailey shared his likes, interests and the things that truly put a smile on his face. This conversation inspired positive changes to shift the focus of the Team's internal audits, from assessing results individually to a more integrated approach, with a new focus on the individual and how each team member working in the home comes together to ensure the life of people living in the home is as fulfilling and enriching as possible. Mr Bailey now represents each and every person living in an Excelcare home, to ensure they are viewed as a unique individual.

From this day on, Excelcare has been working collaboratively with family members to ensure each person lives life to the fullest. This partnership with Magic Me is just one example of the company's commitment to the people who live in their care homes, and ensuring each day is as meaningful and enriching as it can be.

Despite being interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the partnership was a huge success and residents involved said how enjoyable the process had been, from the initial workshops all the way through to the creation of the final projects.

All four of the homes involved offer [residential](#), residential [dementia](#), respite and [end-of-life care](#).

Lime Court partnered with Gecko

Lime Court is a 44-bedroom home, that also offers day care, near the seafront in Dovercourt, Harwich.

- Suzanne Moore - Home Manager
- Robin Sayers - Deputy Manager
- Sarah Meachen - Lifestyle Coordinator
- Gordon Snelling - Healthcare Assistant
- Lisa Oxley - Healthcare Assistant

Longfield partnered with curious directive

Longfield is a 40-bedroom home, arranged in five care suites, all on ground level in Maldon.

- Gina Copsey - Home Manager
- Paula Clarke - Lifestyle Coordinator
- Karen Andrews - Lifestyle Coordinator



St Fillans partnered with New Adventures

St Fillans is a 72-bedroom home formed of four care suites including frail nursing, dementia nursing, and residential care, over two floors in St John's, Colchester.

- Anumol Thomas - Home Manager
- Samantha Farrow - Lifestyle Coordinator
- Beverly Killick - Lifestyle Coordinator
- Janet Randall - Nurse
- Tracy Smith - Team Leader
- Sharon Beaumont - Healthcare Assistant
- David Smith - Healthcare Assistant
- Adam Heard - Healthcare Assistant
- Malgorzata Ciesielsta - Healthcare Assistant
- Mariola Falkowska - Healthcare Assistant
- Felicitas Speed - Healthcare Assistant

Sherrell House partnered with Fevered Sleep

Sherrell House is a 92-bedroom home arranged in five care suites offering frail residential, nursing and dementia nursing care across three floors, in Chigwell.

- Jane Maxwell - Home Manager
- Astrid Gabon - Lifestyle Coordinator
- Dawn Missenden - Team Leader
- Emma Gill - Team Leader
- Andreea Coman - Nurse
- Tara Thraves - Healthcare Assistant
- Veraj Jadea - Healthcare Assistant

www.excelcareholdings.com

[Gecko](#) is an award-winning physical theatre company, led by Artistic Director Amit Lahav. Founded in 2001, the company has created eight critically acclaimed shows, two Associate Shows and two films. Gecko is currently touring their latest stage production [Kin](#), commissioned by the National Theatre, exploring themes of racism, family, migration, and home.

Gecko's mission is to deepen human connection through physical, visual, visceral and ambitious performance and participation. In everything they do, they create opportunities for people to connect to their work and to each other.

Gecko's [Creative Engagement](#) programme supports the company's artistic output, inviting young people, artists and communities to bravely and open heartedly delve into new worlds of connection, imagination and discovery through creativity and play. It provides an opportunity to explore the techniques and processes used to create and perform their work and a space to express, heal, be vulnerable, nurture empathy, uncover truth and foster deep relationships.

Working with their highly experienced facilitators, Gecko creates a safe and supported environment that allows participants to be bold and experimental, inviting them to push beyond the boundaries of their previous experience, develop new skills and a new understanding of the world around them.

Gecko team involved in ARCH:

- Helen Baggett - Associate Director
- Paul Smethurst - Creative Engagement Producer

Gecko team involved in STILL:

Created, Facilitated and Performed by:

- Miguel Hernando Torres Umba and Helen Baggett
- With Facilitation and Performance by Vanessa Guevara Flores
- Directed by Miguel Hernando Torres Umba
- Filmed and Edited by Rich Rusk
- Set Design, Build and Technical Stage Management by: Jake Channon
- Produced by Paul Smethurst

With thanks to:

- Rosalind Wyn
- Kenny Wing Tao Ho
- Katie Lusby
- Lorna Garside

www.geckotheatre.com

www.gecko-still.co.uk

[@geckotheatre](https://www.instagram.com/geckotheatre)



curious directive

curious directive is an internationally touring theatre company, based in Norwich. Since 2008, curious directive has explored theatre through the lens of science.

curious directive has achieved 20 awards and are seven times published by Bloomsbury. Led by Jack Lowe, their work has been presented in over 120 venues and reached 175,000+ audience members - and they are regulars at prestigious international festivals.

curious directive's co-working space, [Studio Theatre / Digital Lab](#), and [Botanical Garden Bar & Kitchen](#) all serve to develop ground-breaking theatre productions in the heart of Norwich.

Recent productions have explored a diverse range of science topics including 37,000-year-old Indonesian cave paintings, coral reef bleaching in Australia, and quantum biology.

"The always excellent curious directive."
The Guardian

"curious directive are theatre pioneers."
The Telegraph

Since 2014, curious directive has specifically sought to collaborate with care homes at different stages of our devising theatre processes; sometimes as sounding boards around the themes from residents, sometimes simply to share some of the science we're exploring in our productions.

With [Pioneer](#), which explored the moments humans first landed on Mars, we worked with care home residents to recollect their memories of the moon landings - the last time humans attempted a feat of putting humans onto other worlds.

With [Spindrift](#), which explored sailing as a metaphor for Quantum Biology, we took a group of 15 80+ year old residents sailing on the Norfolk broads in collaboration with the Nancy Oldfield Trust. Our previous work with care homes can be characterised as disruptive, unusual and fearless.

curious directive team involved in ARCH:

- Natalie Songer - General Manager, curious directive 2018-2022
- Jack Lowe - Artistic Director, curious directive

www.curiousdirective.com

Matthew Bourne's [New Adventures](#) is an iconic, ground-breaking British dance-theatre company, famous for telling stories with a unique theatrical twist. Since 1987 New Adventures has changed the popularity of dance in Britain, creating works that have altered the perception of what is possible when it comes to telling stories without words.

As well as producing award-winning work which has dazzled and delighted audiences across the globe, New Adventures is passionate about the development of emerging talent and is committed to playing a meaningful role in diversifying the dance landscape for future generations. Our [Take Part](#) programme reaches thousands each year through transformative workshops and masterclasses to schools and communities across Britain; and through [Green Adventures](#) we are also proud to be regarded as sector leaders in environmental sustainability, driving best practice in green initiatives across the performing arts.

The project with Magic Me continues our work with care home residents. In 2015 New Adventures partnered with [Dementia Pathfinders](#) to collaborate and create [Dance For Life](#), a programme delivering dance workshops in care homes across the southeast to residents with diverse types and stages of dementia, their carers and family members. The Dance Artists underwent [training in dementia awareness for dancers](#) with skilled practitioners from Dementia Pathfinders.

New Adventures team involved in ARCH:

Creative Workshops led by:

- Emily Piercy
- Alan Vincent

Moving in Time Film:

Choreographed and Directed by:

- Anjali Mehra

Performed and co-created by:

- Reece Causton
- Natasha Chu
- Glenn Graham
- Emily Piercy
- Alan Vincent
- Karishma Young

Produced by:

- Stephen Daly

With thanks to:

Alex Ringham, Paul Smethurst, Kerry Biggin,
Maddy Brennan, Alex Towers

www.new-adventures.net
Twitter: @New_Adventures
Facebook: MBNewAdventure
Instagram: mbnewadventures

Fevered Sleep was established in 1996 by artistic directors Sam Butler and David Harradine.

All our work is made in collaboration with people outside the company, and participation is at the heart of everything we do. We see our creative process as a kind of research: a way to investigate and reimagine the complex and challenging world in which we live.

We've worked with performers, designers, artists, scientists, doctors, teachers, vets, philosophers, social workers, all sorts of other adults and many, many children. We invent new kinds of spaces which invite people to come together and share their experiences of things that matter.

Our projects have appeared across the UK and internationally. Sometimes we work in theatres and galleries such as The Young Vic, Sadler's Wells, Tate Britain and Sydney Opera House. Sometimes we turn up in other places where people work, learn and live, like at Sherrell House Care Home.

Our most recent relevant projects include; [This Grief Thing](#), encouraging people to think, talk and learn about grief; [The Sky Is Filled With Thunder](#), an audio artwork making space for children to be truly heard; and [Men & Girls Dance](#), which celebrates the rights of adults and children to be together, to play together and to dance together.

The Artists' Residencies in Care Homes programme connected with our wider body of work in that it brought artistic intervention into people's everyday lives and was created in direct response to the needs of the people engaging with it in a creative collaboration. This project committed wholeheartedly to our wider purpose to

create a more caring, curious and compassionate world, one unlikely art project at a time.

Fevered Sleep team involved in Artists' Residencies

- Akshay Sharma and Petra Soor - Associate Artists
- Annabelle Sami - Assistant Producer
- Camilla Greenwell and Roswitha Chesher - Photographers
- Imogen Alvarez and Olive Hardy - Dancers
- Kip Johnson - Associate Artist (2019 - 2020)
- Louisa Borg-Costanzi Potts - Programme Director
- Pascal Colman - Sound Designer
- Sam Butler & David Harradine - Co-artistic Directors
- Sam Evans - Production Manager

Explore Our Work

www.feveredsleep.co.uk

[Instagram](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)



Section 3

The Programme

Photo: Camilla Greenwell

Background and context

This programme built on Magic Me's Artists' Residencies in Care Homes 2015-2017, a series of partnerships with four care homes run by Anchor across London, supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Our arts partners, Duckie, Lois Weaver, Punchdrunk, and Upswing, brought cabaret, visual arts, performance, storytelling, immersive theatre and circus to their partner homes. Evaluation of the project noted very positive responses from care home communities and artists alike.

There was much learning about how to bring high quality arts to older people living in residential settings, however many questions remained unexplored. Magic Me saw great potential in a second round of residencies, over a longer period of time.

The launch of the ARCH Report in 2017 generated much interest from care providers, keen to partner with Magic Me. After supportive conversations with Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we began to devise a new plan and reached out to potential care and arts partners. In line with Magic Me's strategic plan to expand our activities eastward, offering arts opportunities in underserved communities in Essex, our goal was to find a care partner in a very different context to the inner-city London homes. Keen to capture and share learning we also approached Anglia Ruskin University, with a campus in Chelmsford, Essex, to be our research partner. Both Magic Me and ARU had been part of Creative Journeys in 2017.

Setting up the partnerships

Finding partners and rationale for choosing them

Kate Hodson, Programme Director, reached out to a short list of arts companies whose work excited us and seemed to have, based on our experience from the first ARCH series, a relevant approach for care home audiences. We sought partners with a mix of arts ambition and truly person-centred practice, committed to long term work in care homes – not an easy brief. Through visits, meetings and viewing work we selected four arts partners, all then Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), two of whom were based in the east of England. They are curious directive in Norwich, Gecko in Ipswich, New Adventures in Farnham, and Fevered Sleep in London.

Susan Langford, Director, focused on care partners. Desk research and conversations with Essex County Council colleagues and other local partners generated a shortlist of care providers with whom we had initial discussions. At the same time, by happy coincidence, Magic Me was contacted by Simone Bullen, Executive Head of Lifestyle & Innovation at Excelcare, who, knowing of Magic Me's work with Westport Care Home in Tower Hamlets, was keen to discuss potential future partnerships.

There are few care home providers operating at scale in Essex. Of Excelcare's 31 homes, 11 are in the county across a range of locations – coastal, small town, small city, edge of London – giving the scope and variety we wanted for ARCH. We decided to partner with Excelcare and with input from all partners, we made a funding bid to Paul Hamlyn Foundation. A grant to fund the ARCH programme over four years was confirmed in June 2019.

Matching homes and building support

Simone Bullen worked with Helen Bennett, Essex Operations Director, to shortlist homes in Essex with capacity to join the project. Susan and Kate visited them all with Simone, meeting the Care Home Managers, staff and residents, aiming to understand each home's particular situation and personality. The four of us then met and after much discussion partnered the four arts partners with four care homes, based on what they had all told us about their work and ambitions for ARCH.

Together with Simone's ongoing project leadership, Excelcare assigned a member of the Head Office Lifestyle & Innovation (L&I) team to each residency: Simona Petrehus, Alvin Singelee and Di Veness. Their role was to facilitate communications between the partners and across Excelcare and take on some key tasks and additional work which would inevitably be generated, ensuring homes could in Simone's words "fully embrace this opportunity". Gloria Read, also joined the project from Excelcare as a Dementia Specialist to offer training and support, as always, for care home teams, and also for the artists.

Cohort Day 1: Getting to know one another

An introductory Cohort Day in east London in September 2019 brought together 19 staff and freelancers from the four arts partners, Magic Me, Excelcare and ARU, who all shared their practice and interest in the project. Sally Knocker, Dementia Specialist and Trainer, co-led the day, offering an introduction to working creatively within care homes and ARU led an exploration of our aims, hopes and fears for our work together. Sally continued to provide ongoing support throughout the four years.

Cohort Day 2: Introductory sessions at care homes

Through Autumn 2019 each arts organisation spent a day visiting their partner home, accompanied by ARU, Magic Me and Excelcare L&I staff. Each day included: an introduction to the home from the Manager, Lifestyle Coordinator and other key staff; a tour to meet residents and staff and sometimes to join in that day's activities; and an introduction to the arts partner's practice, through talks, films and experiential activities to take part in. ARU introduced their role and approach. There was plenty of time for Q&A and Magic Me facilitated discussions to start to agree joint expectations for each residency and how to work together. Homes provided lunch for everyone and we felt very welcome.

Getting started

Contracts and agreements

It was important for each pair to negotiate and have a clear agreement of the roles and responsibilities of each partner which was signed by the Care Home Manager, the lead from the arts organisation, and Magic Me. It covered work within the homes and beyond including:

- roles of care home staff in supporting residents to participate
- roles of artists during their residency
- schedules, timings, rooms, storage of materials, refreshments
- how best and with whom to communicate, and what information to share
- safeguarding, confidentiality and consent; activity risk assessments
- keeping diaries, records or registers to document what happens

- photo consent, press and communications, partner and funder credits
- crediting artists, intellectual property and rights of artworks made

The project would run for four years and regular reviews were planned. Everyone who participated in the ARU research also signed the research consent forms.

Research & Development phase

From November 2019 to March 2020 arts organisations spent time in their partner home, getting to know people, learning more about how things worked, and experimenting with creative

activities and ideas. Their goal was to shape an appropriate, longer residency to take place in phase 2. Each arts partner describes their work and outcomes in section 4.

Cohort Day 3: Reflections on R&D

The regular cohort days were intended to share experiences and learning and provide peer and specialist support. The third took place on 2 April 2020 to review this first R&D phase and share the research findings to inform the longer residencies. However, by this time the country had gone into lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic and all ARCH meetings moved online.



Photo: Rich Rusk

Covid-19 disruption

Impact of Covid-19 in care homes

The Covid-19 pandemic had substantial impacts on everyone involved in the ARCH programme but was particularly devastating within care homes. In England and Wales, 45,632 care home resident deaths were registered as involving Covid-19 between the week ending 20 March 2020 and the week ending 21 January 2022 (ONS, 2021). These figures are likely to be an underestimate as not everyone was tested, and do not include the many care home staff who also lost their lives. They reflect the "slow, late and inadequate response to the risk and reality of Covid-19 in care homes" (Daly, 2020, p.985). At the time of writing in June 2023, the UK Covid-19 Inquiry has just got underway, set up to examine and learn from the response and impact of the pandemic. The restrictions on everyday life, disruption to community activity and businesses, and the emotional, physical, and financial costs of the virus and lockdowns are still playing out. However, existing research paints a picture of these turbulent times to provide important context for the artists' residencies.

Care homes faced many challenges, including severe staff shortages, increased workloads, and substantial disruption to daily working practices (Nyashanua, Pfendeb and Ekpenyong, 2020; Hanna et al., 2021). Care home staff experienced significantly increased responsibilities for end-of-life care and exposure to a greater number of deaths, causing emotional trauma with little additional emotional support or time to grieve (Spacey et al., 2023). As a result, there were high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder amongst care home staff (Greene et al., 2021; Beattie et al., 2023).

In addition to the impact on care home staff, the pandemic and associated restrictions also

shaped residents' experiences of loneliness. Pre-covid there were already high levels of loneliness amongst older people in care homes with the need for meaningful social engagement recognised as important to improve quality of life (Gardiner et al., 2020). The disruption and effect of the restrictions highlight the need for initiatives and activities that could restore meaning by reconnecting or establishing new connections with people and entities beyond the home (Ho et al., 2022). In this context, the significance and focus of the ARCH programme shifted, which is reflected in the subsequent phases of the artists' residencies.

Spring/Summer 2020 onwards

Care home staff and those at Excelcare head office were totally focused on dealing with the health emergency, working to maintain the wellbeing of their residents and staff in an unprecedented and rapidly changing situation. Arts partners paused all planned work, cancelled tours and renegotiated their funding agreements, whilst working out how to support their regular participants, staff, and freelance artists at a distance. Some partner staff were furloughed for periods.

Our best guess for when the main residencies could take place was Autumn 2020, then April 2021. Strict national guidelines on visiting care homes, meant our contact was via phone or Zoom, though some garden visits and work outside became possible in 2021. Care homes only opened fully to visitors in April 2022, though Covid-19 outbreaks could still mean a temporary closure to visits.

Arts partners negotiated with their partner homes around what support or activities they might offer from a distance, depending on both the home and the partner's capacity or situation. Plans had always to be flexible, open to change or cancellation. Excelcare's purchase of iPads,

mobile phones, and big screens supported remote working, which all arts partners – along with the whole country – were now developing. The Excelcare L&I team roles changed, with Simona Petrehus and Helen Bennett remaining part of the project.

Support for partners

From early 2021 Magic Me brokered online meetings for homes and arts partners to reconnect. The story for each home was very different, but staff, residents and families had experienced huge trauma and exhaustion. In response Magic Me arranged a session for artists and arts partner staff with Danuta Lipinska to reflect on their own covid stories, and how they might respond to the situation in their care home.

At monthly Zoom meetings arts partners could share experiences, questions and learning as they experimented with remote and then in-person work. Sally Knocker and Dementia Specialist Mike Philips provided bespoke support to partners, particularly as new artists and staff joined the project from 2021 onwards. Magic Me Associate Artists Georgia Akbar and Lily Ash Sakula shared their recent learning from other remote care home projects and Sue Mayo facilitated a session on ethical use of participants' stories in making creative artworks.

Changing plans

The huge impact of the pandemic on the care home communities and the loss of momentum between the R&D phase and main residencies meant we had to rethink our whole plan.

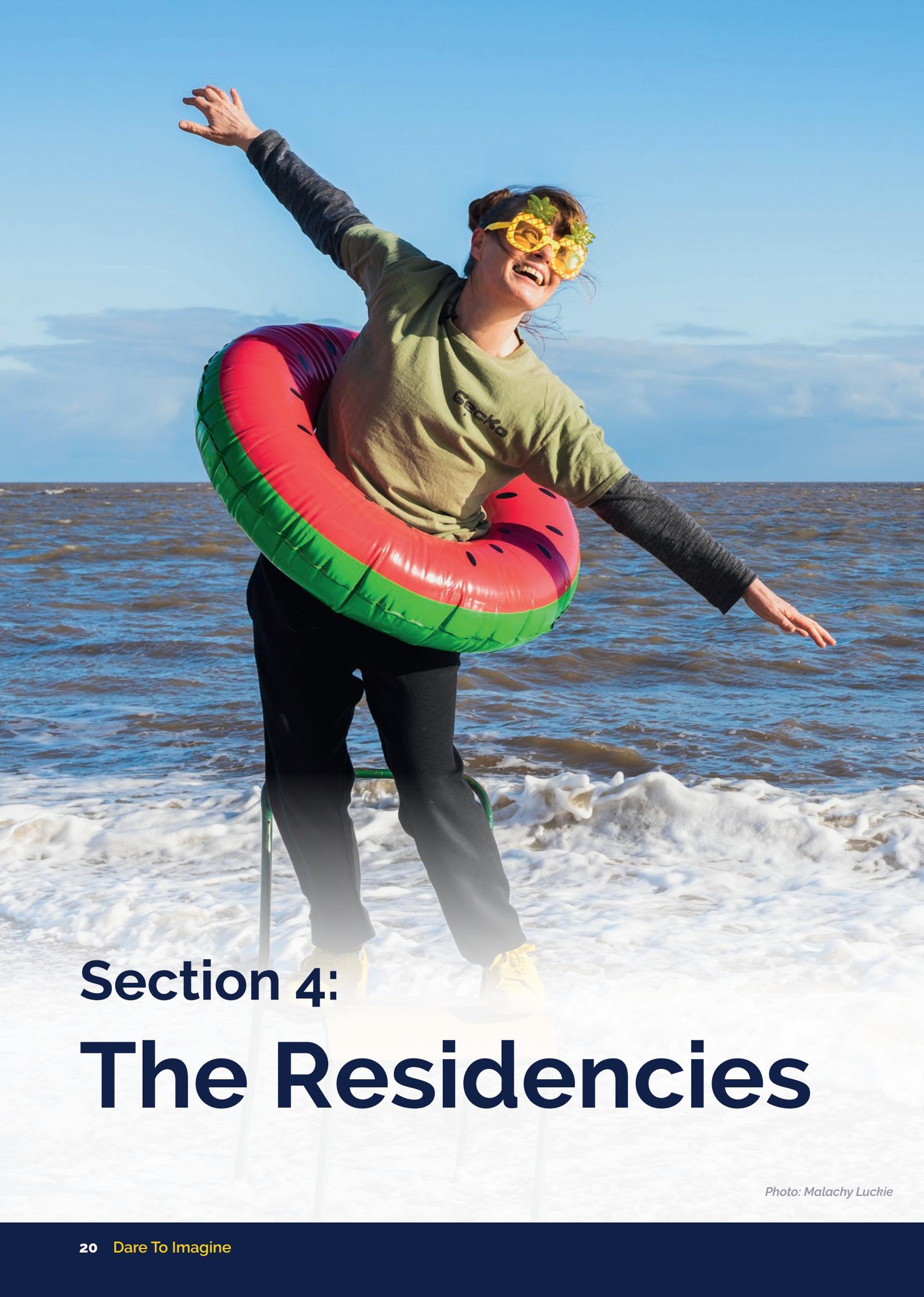
With generous support from Paul Hamlyn Foundation, who provided an additional emergency grant, we were able to add a fifth project year and re-run the R&D phase, including additional time for the ARU research to capture what was happening. However, with restrictions

ongoing, the R&D, residency and legacy phases became wrapped up together through 2022 and 2023.

During 2020 and 2021 the Cultural Recovery Fund, run by Arts Council England with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, provided extensive financial support to the arts and culture sector, keeping many organisations afloat. Magic Me benefitted from two grants, enabling us to not just survive, but to adapt and reinvent our work with communities, during these unique times.

Legacy phase

The main residencies were mostly completed by March 2023, but the legacy phase is ongoing. This includes the creation of a written resource booklet of creative ideas and approaches from the residencies, to be tried and tested by a cohort of six Lifestyle Coordinators from other Excelcare homes, for publication in early 2024. This will be shared initially across Excelcare and then publicly online. In a series of day-long training sessions in Spring 2024, commissioned by Essex County Council, ARCH artists will introduce these and other successful creative approaches to 120 activities coordinators across the county.



Section 4:

The Residencies

Photo: Malachy Luckie

Lime Court and Gecko

Our journey

In 2019 Magic Me approached Gecko with the provocation of a long project, working in partnership with Lime Court in Dovercourt, Essex. Our process is regularly studied by students across the globe and as such we regularly deliver in schools. However, working in this way with this demographic was not something we had vast experience in, and we were excited by the opportunity. We were particularly inspired by the prospect of taking our well-established methodology into a care home setting, with time and resource to be able to build authentic relationships and to co-create the artists' residencies project and journey.

The project began in the Autumn, with a series of 'meet and greet' sessions for families, friends and loved ones to talk about our work and to help them understand the project aims. To see our work in action, we screened our digital production *The Time of Your Life*. We led training in the 'Gecko way' for staff, then, over the course of two weeks, we delivered creative workshops, to begin building relationships and test working with ideas of movement, touch and stimulation.

In March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic halted our engagement with Lime Court, as they coped with this national crisis. Further into the lockdown, staff reached out in need of some fun, energy, and happiness, and in April 2021 we developed a regular interactive session exploring music and movement over Zoom, which was beamed into their lounge area. We also built in one-to-one Zoom conversations to get to know the residents'

lives, passions and experiences more personally.

In September 2021 we began our second R&D phase where, due to continuing restrictions, we built an outdoor stage area in the garden, adorned with wonderful props and costumes. Over the course of two weeks, we captured this playful exploration on film, galvanizing our decision to create an artistically elevated piece of film theatre for the residency phase: 'STILL'.



STILL

STILL was created in May 2022. The film was artistically led by Associate Director Helen Baggett and Devising Performer Miguel Torres Umba, who devised a storyboard to take viewers on an emotional journey through different worlds inspired by the residents. Their concept was brought to life with Technical Stage Manager Jake Channon designing and building our very own film studio

within one of the unused rooms at Lime Court. This room was transformed into different scenes and environments for the residents to experience, explore, and respond to through movement and music, with facilitation and performance from Devising Performer Vanessa Guevara Flores.



Photo: Rich Rusk

Our amazing cast of residents and staff were treated to a sneak peek of the film at a red-carpet event within the home before it was premiered as part of the local Harwich Festival. STILL was publicly launched on 24 September 2022, the National Day of Arts in Care Homes, and has since been viewed in over 56 countries. To celebrate the launch, we held some free screenings of the film at Ipswich Central Library. It was also screened at HOME in Manchester, as well as at the Ipswich Film Society later in the year.

STILL was longlisted for Arts Council England's Digital Culture Awards.

"Just wanted to let you know that this is one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. I've still got tears rolling down my cheeks as I'm writing this email. It was an incredibly emotional piece to watch."

Victor Craven Freelance Director & Animator

"You have taken my breath away with this latest project. I have always been in awe of you as a Company but 'STILL' is for me quite possibly your most moving and thought-provoking piece yet."

Judy

Legacy

Six months later, we returned to Lime Court and consulted with the Care Home Manager and Lifestyle Coordinator to delve into the final legacy phase. We posed the question 'What can Gecko leave behind that will be useful, and meet the needs of the staff and residents?' The resounding response from Lime Court was they wanted Gecko back in the home, ideally returning and delivering the whole project again. Due to our limited resource and capacity yet aspiring to bring the Gecko energy and creativity back to Lime Court on a regular basis, we developed a series of digital workshops.

These interactive films have a blended delivery method. They are bookended with Associate Director Helen delivering a warm-up and cool down, and see her pass the 'baton' to the in-person staff member to deliver the creative exploration section of the session, using props and objects supplied by Gecko. The content was filmed on location, inviting the residents to transport their imaginations into a blustery field, woodland, and 'sunny' beach. We tested out the films at Lime Court in April 2023 and they were incredibly well received. The staff plan to deliver one of the three workshop packages weekly, and experiment with using the films in one-to-one settings within the residents' rooms.

Eliciting

In any Gecko creative process there is always a period of eliciting, of us evoking or drawing out information or a reaction in people. This long process, introduced once trust and connection has been established, involves our facilitators opening all their senses to collect snippets and wisps of experiences, feelings and knowledge used to inspire and subsequently create a piece of physical theatre. This approach is embedded with curiosity and openness; the intent is not to arrive and teach or lead, but to learn, gather and then represent and celebrate the individuals who are involved in the process and journey. We elicit not just verbal stories, but also movement qualities, feelings, and responses to stimuli.

We may collect these things in note form or through film, and from this wide array of information begin to steer, shape, shift, and focus ideas and themes into a clearer direction and form. This leads to a process of storyboarding a structure that is informed and inspired by this range of offerings. Layers are built, developed, and discarded, and we stay open and flexible to editing and pivoting ideas as we progress. Elicitation leads to many things – choreographic ideas, sense of place, space and location, musical accompaniment, and sense of dynamic or quality.

An example from STILL

Upon asking, 'Where do you find joy?' one of the residents quietly responded, 'Sailing' and continued to share memories of sailing trips with her husband and her love of bracing, cold, windy weather. From this small but profound nugget of remembering we created 'Watery World', a stark, beautiful environment with rippling aqua tones that the residents entered into and explored, imbued with breath, ebb and flow.



Whilst verbal stories were useful and informative, other elicitations and discoveries served in the creation of our film. For example, different styles of music evoked different reactions and revelations. When playing rhythmical jazz music, our Associate Director observed one resident's movement mimicking drumming and striking an imaginary hi-hat. This led to a conversation where we discovered a personal story around jazz in 1961, which was poetically amplified into our section of the film called 'Jazz World'. The residents' recollections of the sounds, smells and feelings in this setting informed what this world looked like and fed into the design of this space.

Keeping aware and vigilant of residents' reactions and moods is essential; so much can be gleaned and discovered from the slightest movement or expressive change. These observations can then prompt discussion and discovery, in effect the reversal of the original eliciting process where now, the creative session leads to an eliciting conversation.

Eliciting connects us, inspires us, and provides a collaborative creative process placing the participant at the heart of the work, honouring and representing their lived experience.

Non-verbal

The non-verbal element of our work and methodology is a key factor in the success of this project and the positive impact for the residents. Our work, therefore, does not rely upon

a knowledge of English or other languages. Where English is not a participant's first language, we may use their mother-tongue.

Voice is not the only tool we have to communicate. There is so much we can say and express through a look, an outstretched hand, a squeeze. The use of breath, eye contact and touch is a vital part of the process and creates a shared human language. This ensures engagement is accessible on multiple levels – sonically, visually, emotionally – inviting residents to participate in their own way, allowing, accepting and celebrating their own version of engagement and understanding of the creative journey.



Many of the residents live with dementia, and are at different stages on this journey, and thus verbal conversation and communication can have varying results. Our embodied approach allows us to communicate with the residents in a different way, which has delighted and surprised the staff at Lime Court.

"It empowers the staff because I think they see reactions from very simple movements, music, reactions that...you're not aware that could happen. Through movement and time, you know putting that combination together, the reaction that you get is amazing."

Suzanne Moore,
Care Home Manager, Lime Court.

Human connection

At the centre of our methodology and approach is connection with people. The success of the residency hinged on the authentic relationships we built with staff and residents. This is something that we built over time and could not be forced or rushed. It was essential to take the time to get to know the individuals and understand how the home worked.

As a united front, we were able to take risks, be bold and ambitious, meet each other's needs, and adapt to any challenges. The personal connections we forged allowed us to encourage and support profound moments of lucidity, engagement, and expression. Delivery and engagement shifted from a didactic method of demonstrate and copy, to an exchange and a conversation.

The bonds we created opened up safe spaces for residents, staff and practitioners alike to nurture a sense of belonging, acceptance and togetherness. Together, we returned to a pure state of being human, untouched, and uncontaminated by societal pressures, conventions, and injustices. We were not afraid to explore a full range of emotions that are part of being human, regardless of age. Our methodology, combined with the connection and relationships we nurtured, allows for the stimulation and expression of many feelings, which are safely held and navigated, with movement being a tool to transition from one emotional state into another. That is what the Gecko methodology is all about, transcending into a state of deep human connection.

It was important for us to bring the full Gecko experience and methodology to the home, not diluting or compromising on our commitment to quality and ambition for profound expressive experiences. This was only made possible due to the relationship we created with the incredible Lime Court staff. We capitalised on the mutual playfulness we discovered and brought them on board to trust our bold vision, encourage our risk taking, and support our process.



Longfield and curious directive

Photo: Jack Lowe

Ideas and introductions

2019-2020

The R&D phase of the ARCH programme consisted of a series of experimental digital storytelling interactions with residents. Jack and Natalie spent whole days at Longfield meeting residents and staff on all the units, offering a variety of activities to engage with them and start a dialogue. Residents and some staff and visitors tried and enjoyed using Virtual Reality Headsets as a means of digital travel. We also offered residents the chance to wear cutting edge 'wearable' Augmented Reality technology as a means of experiencing the world beyond Longfield.

Initially we proposed offering something digital, a way of connecting residents with their own sense of self, as well as with family members – those who are able to visit often and those who are not. However, we encountered early on how difficult it can be to introduce new technology into a care home setting over a sustained period of time. We needed to be there to facilitate its use.

Recognising that residents were at Longfield night and day, early ideas and themes we considered for the residency included a 'Sleep Diary' project. However, for practical reasons the home could not facilitate artists staying overnight and we moved on.

We worked closely with Paula, Lifestyle Coordinator, to understand how the existing calendar year looked for the residents, including key activity days, the structure of these events and any key barriers to attendance for some residents.



In this way we researched different lifestyles in the home, and mapped out aspects of the home which, as newcomers, it felt easier to navigate than others. Our approach then became about focusing on our role in the home, re-thinking how we could possibly help, as artists, in this space. We were interested in how our work at Longfield might support increasing creativity throughout Excelcare.

Excelcare had an established model of having staff members identified as 'Champions' for different aspects of care. A Champion in one home, with particular experience or expertise, would share learning and ideas with colleagues at other homes. We therefore considered an idea called 'Creative Champions' – namely a member of the team who could champion alternative creative, life affirming experiences across the homes.

The two-hour journey from Norwich to Maldon and back again gave both Natalie and Jack plenty of time to critically mull over the days of development in Longfield. We were about to offer to Excelcare the idea of creating a bespoke piece of software development for residents to connect with their family members, when the pandemic struck.



Photo: Jack Lowe

During Covid-19

Our instincts around the need for digital infrastructure in care homes became starkly clear as homes rushed to install communication speakers through windows, acclimatise residents to the use of Zoom, and upskill care workers in time-consuming software and hardware operation. Excelcare bought additional iPads and mobile phones for all its homes during the first months of lockdown to ensure staff could support and enhance direct communications between residents and their friends and families.

Had the pandemic struck just three months later, curious directive would have been further on in its experimentation with digital communication, and in a position to offer more significant infrastructure and support with creating a more connected experience for residents.

In spite of the significant national restrictions placed on visiting care homes, and on bringing in equipment or materials, we were determined to use our skills to try to bring something to the residents of Longfield. Therefore, in collaboration with Paula, we worked to create a 'Sensory Room' for residents

still restricted to their rooms on a day-to-day basis to support infection control. We worked to install (via a sanitised delivery package and with the use of radio communication through windows) a comforting soundscape made up of familiar sounds to one individual resident, an aromatherapy corner and a digitally mapped videoscape loop – projecting onto the ceiling where a resident was lying in their bed, facing up.

The idea was to create this installation for the resident, who at this stage was far along their dementia journey, offering variety and new experiences to break up the day. Paula reported that our chosen resident displayed a positive change in mood and was transfixed by the images on the ceiling. Truly, these small interventions felt like a significant step forward in our approach to using digital technology post-pandemic. Our belief in the power of the wider use of technology to reduce isolation and loneliness in care homes continues to this day.

Re-engagement 2021-2022

With visiting allowed once more, Jack spent an entire week in residency at Longfield, getting to know the residents again. During this time, he participated in many aspects of the home, exploring the activities, lifestyle and what it is that residents were missing after lockdown. Overwhelmingly, it became clear that residents missed interacting with their families. Geography seemed to be a major factor. Jack undertook a series of conversations with Deloitte Digital and other world-leading communications consultants to see if there was something simple off-the-shelf which could be installed, at first in three rooms and then potentially across the entire home. Jack began working with the Scandinavian company called KOMP, who established the world's first one-way, single button communication device.

Modelled on a picture frame, the KOMP is a one-button computer which allows residents to speak with nominated family members without difficulty, and without needing the support of carers. KOMP allows family members to send text messages, photos, and videos whenever they want via an app. It became clear, when talking to family members that all they really wanted to do was to synthesize their normal communications practices with friends (via WhatsApp, etc.) and send simple things such as short videos or ideas to their family member in Longfield. Care home residents, without technology, were being excluded from the ordinary. KOMP, with its incredibly simple user interface can offer a solution to intergenerational communication between residents in their private space of their room with their wider family. The device is used across the NHS and was developed over many years with senior Care Home operators.

The initial seeds of a project entitled 'MATRIARCH' was born. Jack worked with family members of three residents to set up the app on their phones, installed the KOMPS and began to see a high level of traffic of normal updates from family members to residents. However, use of the KOMPS raised many GDPR and privacy questions which was hard to overcome and after much discussion, in late 2022, the experiment was stopped. curious directive withdrew the KOMPS and returned to the drawing board again.

EXPERIMENTS

2022-2023

Delivering an idea which felt simpler became the priority for curious directive, ideally one linked to the company's other work. Earlier in the project, it was clear that Paula really enjoyed the offer of small, easy-to-replicate interactions with residents. curious directive had recently established Science Club at its base in Norwich, billed as 'science for grown-ups', offering a great

night out with food, drink, and science. Although the arts have grown a lot in care homes in recent years, science focused activities remain very rare.

The final idea of 'EXPERIMENTS' was born. The main aims of these experiments are to provide residents with something interactive, hands-on, kinesthetic – involving science; something residents can keep, make, or hold; and something which is replicable after curious directive has moved on. With Karen, the new Lifestyle Coordinator, Jack began to develop new experiences to carry out with the residents.

Testing

EXPERIMENTS

Jack attended Longfield for two days, working with Karen to deliver the experiments in the four lodges. The experiments were carried out in a variety of formats, ranging from including four to five residents around a shared table to working one-to-one with residents.

Cyanotype print making

This included foraging for objects in the home which aesthetically appealed to the resident, as well as bringing in natural objects from outside. Once the objects were assembled, Jack worked with the residents to create a collage on a piece of A4 or A3 paper (depending on eyesight). Then, using the light sensitive cyanotype paper (created onsite with the residents) the objects were then taken out into the sun to develop, creating silhouettes. The prints were then signed by the residents, as artists. In most cases, Jack schemed with the residents to work out who might receive their artwork as a gift.

Soap making

Residents worked with Jack to choose from a range of soap mould shapes the one they were most interested in. The residents would then choose a natural dye they most liked, as well as a scent, and then began to mix the soap mixture together. The soaps set in the fridge and were offered to residents to use in their personal rooms.

Perfume making

Jack explained to residents the basic chemistry of perfumes, the top, middle and bottom notes. The residents started by choosing their favourite smells from an offered range, mostly in a one-to-one set up. These were then mixed together and a perfume created on-site which was offered to residents to try.

Candle making

Jack began by showing residents some examples of the candles they might be able to make themselves. Moulds were chosen, followed by coloured dyes and essential oils with different perfumes. Residents worked one-to-one with Jack to melt down the candle wax, colour it, and scent it. The candles then cooled and set and in collaboration with Karen, were given back to the people who made them.

3D printing

Karen runs a weekly 'Gentlemen's Club' for male residents. During this session, Jack introduced a 3D printer on the shared table, explaining and demonstrating how it worked. As those joining ate some food and enjoyed a lite beer, they watched a mini dog 3D print in front of them. General reaction was that they couldn't believe this sort of thing was possible. One of the gentlemen took the little 3D printed dog away with him.

Follow-up

Following these experiments, Jack drafted instructions for each activity, which Karen then tested and used. He also provided a supply of the necessary materials and equipment for her to use with further residents in the future.

Conclusion

During our residency, curious directive introduced residents to totally new worlds. Some of the technology we were working with isn't even really in the mainstream of most people's lives. This is what made our approach exciting and interesting. Our project, due to complicated rationale and context, was forced to spread across three main focuses. Initially digital technology, then new ways to communicate with families and finally, the safer, practical, hands-on creativity with science projects.

We are sure that at the start of our residency, our presence animated the room. By the end of our time at Longfield, it was very much the creativity of the residents delivering these vital sparks, these moments, and interactions – which are so vital to life feeling abundant and positive in these spaces.



Photo: Jack Lowe



St Fillans and New Adventures

Photo: Stephen Daly

Our approach

The aim of the residency was to bring a way of working and story creation through movement to the care home. We wanted to use the methodology of storytelling used by New Adventures in this setting, in which the inspiration for the work would be from the lives of the residents.



The initial phase 2019-2020

At the start of the project, our then Resident Artist, Paul Smethurst ran workshops with residents and staff at St Fillans. As we got to know people and the home community, our vision formed: to bring a live theatre experience to St Fillans, building a stage outside in the front carpark. We planned to create a new dance piece, comprised of material, movement, and stories, gathered in workshops with the residents. Our aim was to create a blended performance, with an intergenerational cast made up of residents themselves, together with members of the local cast company of New Adventures' touring production of Romeo and Juliet. In March 2020 this plan was put on hold as St Fillans and the country locked down.

Overview: 2022 onwards

Following the restrictions that came out of the pandemic and with a new project team we decided to create a dance film based on the lives of the care home residents so that it could be created even if there were restrictions around visiting the care home.

We recruited three key artists to deliver the project. Emily Piercy and Alan Vincent are two of our lead dance artists and deliver workshops across our Take Part programme. Emily has been specialising in developing a dance workshop practice for working with people in care homes and living with dementia. Together with Alan, she would deliver the workshops. Anjali Mehra is a former dancer with the company and a choreographer and director. Anjali would work with Alan and Emily to curate and form the stories and experiences with the residents to create a dance film produced by our regular film collaborators, Tea Films.

Anjali, Emily and Alan worked together, in consultation with St Fillans to plan ten workshops with residents that would give people a taster of a dance session. This would be set up like an informal, social tea dance and the residents responded well to the familiarity of it. We would then follow up with chats over tea, and with information from the staff and family members start to group together stories and experiences from the residents.

Anjali then started to create a storyboard with what we learned about the residents. She looked for themes and settings that came up time and time again as well as ensuring that we brought the residents and their lives into the film. We moved on to the filming phase in October 2022. We shot in a number of locations in London and Essex, including at St Fillans.

Relationship building with staff and residents

As there was a complete change in those of us working on the residency we had to start the relationship anew in Spring 2022. The creative team met with the new Care Home Manager and Care Manager and Lifestyle Coordinator to discuss the revised plan for the project. The two key objectives for the care home were for all residents to have the opportunity to take part and for staff to learn skills to use themselves in their work with the residents.

Although we would not be able to include everyone in the film and needed to find a core group to attend weekly sessions, we also wanted to be as inclusive as we could. We therefore decided that our first two sessions would take the form of a social tea dance on each of the four units in St Fillans with all residents welcome to attend, and we opened with a short dance performed by Alan and Emily. This proved so successful as a way of working that we incorporated the tea dance format into all our sessions as it was familiar to the residents. We encouraged staff to take part in the sessions and while the Lifestyle Coordinators and key carers working individually with residents attended most weeks, this was difficult for the majority of staff due to availability and staff turnover. Towards the end of our workshops we had one session for staff, which some staff were able to attend. We then worked with management and came up with a plan for a staff training day which took place in March 2023.

The staff at St Fillans were key to the success of the artists' residencies. We worked closely with Lifestyle Coordinators Samantha and Beverley to get to know the residents; they provided us with details about residents' lives and helped us connect to some family members. This information was invaluable and contributed to both the workshops and the final films in terms of scenes that we devised and music

that we used. We hope that St Fillans will continue to bring movement and performance to their work with the residents. To support this, we have created a video resource and will offer a year of mentoring as they develop their skills and already fantastic arts programme.

Sharing the work

Moving from our first plan of a live theatre performance to the creation of a film not only allowed us to create something that did not depend on access to St Fillans in case of Covid-19 restrictions; it also crucially allows us to share the work we created and the stories of the residents more widely.

It was important to the creative team that the work in the film came from the residents. The stories and their movements were incorporated, as was their choice of music. Music was a key part of the workshops that Alan and Emily created. Choosing songs that the residents enjoyed meant that movement could be added and remembered, but it also made it more enjoyable for the residents. Elvis, The Beatles, Frank Sinatra and Chubby Checker were always popular for a dance and most songs were sung to. 'A Bicycle Made for Two' and 'Que Sera Sera' were great for a singsong. We wanted to bring that music into the film but, limited by budget, had to choose what we could afford to pay royalties for. We decided it was more important that the film include some of the songs the residents loved and so paid for it to be streamed from the New Adventures website in the UK only. While this limits the potential audience for the film, it does stay true to the heart of the work that we created, and who we created it for.

The film, *Moving in Time*, is inspired by the residents and the journeys that shaped them. To ensure that we could properly celebrate the residents and their contributions to the film we held a premiere at St Fillans on 9 March 2023. We brought the dancers from the film to meet the residents and after

some speeches, we watched it together. It was a beautiful moment to see the residents recognising themselves in the work and we followed it with a dance to some of the songs we used throughout the project – with tea and cakes. The wonderful staff at St Fillans also arranged for awards for those residents who had taken part which were presented to them to rounds of applause.

A lot of residents make their own scrapbooks. They were a useful way for the artists to get to know individuals, who enjoyed showing them and talking through the memories attached to the photos. We decided to make a 'Moving in Time' scrapbook filled with photos taken from the first workshop right through to the premiere and containing messages from all the artists involved in making the film. We gave it to the residents to continue to add to, a physical legacy of our partnership.

Challenges and successes

We encountered a few challenges across the residency, but they all led to important changes in both the output (the film) and also our processes. Following one of the regular sessions our dance artists were asked to do some work with a resident always in bed in their room. The artists led some movement exercises with the person, but felt that they were not as prepared as they could have been for that particular type of work and the needs of the resident. We provided some additional training for the dance artists on working one-to-one with residents with limited mobility and means of communication. The training was incredibly rewarding and useful for our artists. The use of hand-to-hand contact and other means of communication were incorporated into the film in a series of duets that focused on tactile communication.

We faced many scheduling issues, whether it was down to train strikes or Covid-19 and other public events, we regularly had to rearrange and adapt.

This led to a working practice of adaptation and working with what we had. We had a person-centred approach from workshops through to filming, to meet the needs of everyone involved.

Another challenge was the emotional impact the work had on all of the team; however, this was also incredibly rewarding. Although the dancers had experience working in care home settings, the process of getting to know the residents and their lives so that their stories and their physicalities were brought authentically to the creative process had a deep impact on them. This was emotionally challenging for the artists at times, and we ensured we had space to discuss and reflect. These relationships and emotional connections were pivotal to the story of the film. At all stages we wanted to honour the people we had met and worked with, and who had been kind enough to share their home and their lives with us.

The film exceeded all our expectations. Everyone involved spoke of the passion they had for it and how humbled and privileged they felt to have been a part of it. We are so incredibly proud of our work with St Fillans, we hope they continue to bring the arts to their residents and we hope audiences enjoy Moving In Time.

"You have captured so beautifully and poignantly the confusion, bewilderment and loss of someone with dementia. The desire and need for compassion, comfort and touch."

"I'm so happy to have watched Moving in Time. It thrilled, spilled and darn near killed me! Truly, it made me cry with love for all of you that put it together."



Sherrell House and Fevered Sleep

Photo: Camilla Greenwell

From touch to gestures: Four years at Sherrell House

In 2019, we were invited by Magic Me to be part of a programme linking arts organisations with residential care homes in Essex. For some time, we had been wanting to make a project on touch, and we'd been talking about the significance of touch for older people, many of whom have to deal on a daily basis with loneliness and isolation. So when Magic Me approached us with a ready-made opportunity to develop this idea, we jumped at the chance. After initial meetings and conversations between us, Magic Me, and Excelcare, we were paired with Sherrell House, a large home in Chigwell. We invited three dance artists – Akshay Sharma, Petra Söör and Kip Johnson – to be Associate Artists on the project and asked them to **explore touch as a meaningful pathway to wellbeing**, through their own dance practice.

Our initial R&D phase took place in early 2020. Akshay, Petra and Kip spent five days and one night in the home. They spent time talking, observing and dancing with residents, relatives and staff to get a sense of the day-to-day rhythm of the home and understand how touch was already present in the activities offered and in staff/resident relationships.

However, we were quickly halted in our project by the global pandemic that stripped us of our ability to physically connect with one another. Throughout 2020 and 2021 we were unable to visit Sherrell House due to lockdown restrictions and the ongoing health crisis, which had a particularly extensive impact on care homes.

So we began to question, **“what gestures and invitations of touch can we offer each other at a time when touch is limited and disparaged?”**

In response to this question, our Associate Artists Akshay Sharma and Petra Söör designed a series of small art works, digital resources and activities for staff, relatives and residents to engage with in our absence.

One of these artworks was a pamphlet designed by Akshay and Petra with Graphic Designer Fraser Muggeridge Studio. It was designed as an invitation to enter the world of touch by reading thoughts and stories on touch and performing short exercises to help staff, relatives and residents tune into their senses. The pamphlet was sent to the care home with accompanying materials to encourage greater creativity and a range of engagement.

The pamphlet had multiple purposes: as a card to keep or give away to someone as a gift, or as a fold out poster that can be hung on a wall, or stand in a window sill. The back of the pamphlet was left blank as an open canvas for experimentation. The QR code on the first page of the pamphlet led to a voice recording of the whole contents. Voice recordings of instructional breathing and massage exercises were also made available.

Akshay and Petra also created a short eight minute film to encourage calm, tactility and playfulness through the world of movement, sound and voice. The TV is a central focal point in the care home, and in the making of this film we questioned, “In what ways can we bring attention to touch and bring a little of the outdoors, indoors?” Whilst experiencing the film we encouraged staff and relatives to engage in touch-based activity, for example holding a leaf or paper flower, touching or holding someone's hand.

In April 2022 we finally returned to the care home in person. In the intervening months the residents and staff at Sherrell House had almost completely changed, most crucially the Care Home Manager and Lifestyle Coordinator, our main points of contact. Our staffing arrangements had also shifted. Kip was unable to continue with the project and our co-artistic directors had to take a

Final year of activity and legacy

With the end of the project approaching in March 2023, our attention turned to the question of **what we could meaningfully and usefully leave behind**. In response, the following interventions were designed by Akshay Sharma and Petra Söör respectively.



Dance, Photography and Sound Installation by Akshay Sharma

In June and July 2022 Akshay worked with photographer Camilla Greenwell and dancers Imogen Alvares and Olive Hardy, to deliver a dance photography project, ' Gestures', for Sherrell House. The dance was choreographed to evoke the exhilaration, vastness and wildness of being in nature whilst exploring themes of tenderness, balance and support. It was performed first on a beach in Eastbourne where the photographs were taken. The dancers then came to Sherrell House when restrictions permitted, to perform the piece for the residents. Through the combination of the dancer's intimacy and touch with each other, and the photography of beautiful outside spaces, the project was able to evoke the gesture of touch at a time when physical closeness was not available between the artists and residents.

A Gestures photobook was created by Akshay, designed by Aimee Capstick, using images from the dance photography project and text by Akshay. This photobook has been distributed to staff and residents to use and share however they would like.

Akshay also worked with Sound Designer Pascal Colman to create a sound piece inspired by these photographs, which is now installed permanently on the second floor of Sherrell House in an alcove that we transformed into a relaxing reflection space. This space has become a calm haven for both staff and residents; staff using it for one-to-ones with residents and residents sitting and listening to the work at all times of the day and night. Staff have felt the calming interruption it brings to their space, and have plans to develop it into a sensory space for the home.



Materials, Tactility and Togetherness by Petra Söör

In February and March 2023 Petra worked with residents, staff and relatives to co-design activities, materials and objects exploring touch through tactility and texture, including:

- Activity boxes for each floor of the care home, containing materials, conversation cards and tactile objects to encourage a different type of engagement and new ways of being together. One of these boxes is also stored in the reflection alcove to be used in conjunction with the sound installation.
- A mobile loom that can be transported between residents so that everyone can contribute to a woven object together.
- Tactile lap blankets and cushions, co-created through workshops with relatives to provide comfort and stimulation to everyone, even those who cannot leave their beds.

Through this work with soft, tactile materials, Petra was able to engage people of all abilities, at all stages of life. Her work encouraged different types of stimulation and suggested new ways for staff, relatives and residents to be together. Many staff members and residents expressed their desire to continue these 'making sessions' as a monthly activity as a way for all those at Sherrell House to be together creatively, showing the efficacy of the intervention.

Challenges and successes

Challenges

- It was particularly difficult to build momentum, presence and a knowledge base in the care home when our partner's key staff changed midway through the project. In addition the care home had to employ many more agency staff post-pandemic, which reduced the consistent engagement we could have with the wider staff team.
- Communication at the midpoint of the project was a challenge. The care home was dealing with an incredibly challenging context, and so understandably this project was not their priority. This meant that some activity didn't happen as we would have liked; however, this was addressed later in the project and communication ended up being much more frequent and consistent, and therefore more effective.
- Sherrell House is a large care home supporting residents with incredibly diverse needs. It was challenging to devise and develop interventions that supported the differing abilities of every resident. We still feel more could be done to support residents who are at the end of life, or unable to leave their beds.

Successes

- 'Touch' as the project focal point had to evolve to ensure we worked safely and adhered to government guidelines. As such, the formats explored in the project were much more varied than originally expected. Not only did we explore the theme through dance, but we also worked with film, sound design, print, weaving and textiles, supporting the development of our creative practice and the expansion of our freelance artist team.
- As our delivery comes to an end, we are enthused to see how inspired and confident our partners are to continue to develop and deliver this creative work. Their belief in how important and desperately needed this type of work is shows their commitment to continuing to invest time and energy in artistic opportunities which engage residents, staff and relatives.
- Workshops conducted by Petra with residents, relatives and staff highlighted that residents were able to do more than both family members and staff had previously realised. This has encouraged more positive ways for residents to connect with others. For example, one family member has since brought in their mum's sewing box, and they now spend time sewing together every visit.

As we reach the end of delivery, the overwhelming feeling for both ourselves and our care home partner is that we are only just getting started! Developing effective and meaningful partnerships to support this type of work takes time, and despite this project spanning four years, the interruption of Covid-19 has meant our time together has sadly felt far too short. However there has been some incredible learning for us as a company, and we hope to continue the relationship with Sherrell House into the future.



Section 5: The Research

Photo: Rich Rusk

Research aims

The ARU research team explored how the artists and care homes staff worked together to deliver and embed creative arts during the ARCH programme. The research aimed to:

- Enhance knowledge and understanding of the collaboration between artists and care home staff in delivering creative arts experiences for older people.
- Explore the understanding of artists and care home staff regarding the challenges and enablers of introducing arts activities in care homes to identify best practice for artists in residencies.

The research took a qualitative approach that encouraged collective and individual reflection by the artists, care home staff, Excelcare and Magic Me throughout the R&D phase, artists' residencies phase, and legacy and embedding phase of the ARCH programme. Ethical approval was granted by the ARU Education & Social Care School Research Ethics Panel.

Research methods

Phase 1: Research and development (R&D)

During the introduction day, the 'sticky notes' method (Peterson and Barron, 2007) was used to invite arts organisations and Excelcare to respond to four questions throughout the day: how they felt about the prospect of delivering ARCH; what was seen as exciting, what were the anticipated challenges, and what skills would be needed. A focus group discussion at the end of the day reflected on the introduction and what was needed going forwards. ARU researchers observed the introduction visits in each of the four care homes to understand the preparations and planning for

the ARCH programme. A focus group discussion reflected on the visit and the hopes and concerns for arts organisations and care homes. Telephone interviews were conducted with Care Home Managers to explore a strategic perspective on the ARCH programme.



At the end of phase one, online focus groups were held with each of the four care homes to reflect on their experiences so far and identify good practice in preparation for phase two. An online focus group across the four arts organisations reflected on the learning from phase one and considerations to take forward (Excelcare and Care Home Managers were unable to participate due to work pressures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic). An online interview with Magic Me (Director and Programme Director) provided context for the study and explored the thinking and motivations behind the ARCH programme, their role during phase one, and their reflections on the collaborations so far.

Phase 2: Artists' residencies

Due to the interruption and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, short online interviews were conducted pre-residency with arts organisations, care home staff who were leading on the ARCH programme (depending on the home this was the Lifestyle Coordinator and/or the Care Home Manager, sometimes joined by wider care home

staff), Excelcare, and Magic Me to explore what might have changed since the end of phase one and their expectations for phase two. After the residencies, online interviews were conducted with the arts organisations and care home staff.

Phase 3: Learning and legacy

During the evaluation day, online focus group discussions were conducted with the arts organisations, care home staff, and Magic Me respectively. The 'sticky notes' method was also adapted for the online space to reflect on: what they wish they had known at the start; what have been the key learning points; and what they will take forward into the future.

Data analysis

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and professionally transcribed. Each dataset was explored through thematic analyses guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) to draw out key themes and identify good practice and challenges – both resolved and ongoing. The findings are presented under the overarching themes of power of the participatory arts; setting up for success; artists and care home staff collaboration; creative practice in care home contexts; and legacy and embedding. Illustrative quotes are presented from across the phases and methods, “/” is used to indicate a change in speaker in quotes from focus groups.





Section 6:

The Research Findings

Photo: Stephen Daly

Power of the participatory arts

The power of participatory arts was seen across the findings and highlighted the importance of the ARCH programme for both arts organisations and care homes. During the residencies, the artists demonstrated the ease of engaging with residents through the arts.

I think the music that they loved became such an important thing...[music is] such an easy thing to talk to someone about. Even someone with dementia, it's, "Do you like this music?" or, "What songs do you like?" It's a conversation starter...Even if you're not dancing to it, just play the music they like, and it's a start. That's what I'd love to pass on now...find music and find just touch and movement. Just keep it simple. You've got a body and there's a speaker. That's an in.

Arts organisation post-residency

There were many examples of "special moments" where the arts generated meaningful impact.

It was actually lovely to see their [artists'] emotions...[Artist] danced with [resident], who we'd only got to know recently. And to see her move and [artist] was in floods of tears, but it was all happy tears. It was just that moment was perfect... Because she's not been here very long, this lady, so we obviously learn as we're going along...[her son] said how fantastic that she's had this experience and how happy she is. So that was lovely. It's lovely for the family as well to see them in that moment. And we didn't know any of that about this lady. Obviously, [arts organisation] had captured that moment.

Care home post-residency

...the power of movement, specifically, which really came out with one particular resident. It was the power of moving in her way, but moving with us and moving over time and having a few different experiences of moving... It was really her expressing herself, and in the middle of this improvisation, she stopped and she started crying. She said, "I don't know what's happening..." We said, "We completely do know what's happening. You are expressing yourself," and she took a deep breath and she carried on.

Arts organisation post-residency

The residents and staff alike were proud of their involvement in the project and were keen to share it with families and their local communities.

To say that we've done that in a care home and that it's worked, you know. We shout about it really, don't we?

Care home post-residency

In the post-residency group interview with one of the care homes, they reflected on how the ARCH project delivered "far more than" the performers and acts they had brought into the home before.

We can do the basic stuff..... But what I've found with this... was the impact it has had on everybody... the piece of music that was put together was breath-taking... It was art to another level... Because I felt that the music and how they came up with the piece, it was just a place for me that I could relate to. And be able to put that music on and take me to a different area.

Care home post-residency

The power of the participatory arts was also conveyed by the artists in realising the importance of their work in the care home setting for residents who are apart from their families and coming towards the end of life. This was particularly true for some of the freelance artists and support team who had not worked in care homes before and were particularly affected by the experiences.

And that really hit for us...when we were filming, we couldn't film there, it was like, "Oh." And I was like, "Will you just please tell her family that we love her and she has inspired an entire piece of choreography." I think it really brought home to us how important what we were doing was. We really want families to see it, so they can see how these stories, that their relatives... inspired dance, inspired a film.

Arts organisation post-residency

I think the ones [in the arts organisation] that hadn't had any experience in a care home before were quite profoundly moved by the whole thing...it was just so special to see that reaction of: "This is the power of the arts. I can see it up close and personal. I can feel the impact that it's having." I think when you're working on a big show and you're backstage, you don't necessarily get the audience's reaction...especially for the technical stage manager, I think, just for him to be so connected to that power that we all know that arts can have...I think it was one of the first times that he'd seen it so viscerally, and I think will be forever changed.

Arts organisation post-residency

Reflecting on the power of the arts, Care Home Managers expressed how "there is so much need" for projects like ARCH and the pandemic made these findings even more pertinent as both artists

and care homes talked about how long the residents went without having contact with anyone apart from the care home staff.

We're so desperate for it. And not just this home, all homes are desperate for this input.

Care home post-residency

I think it is such a special thing to be able to do. And I think one thing that has come from the pandemic is it has shone a light on care homes... because of all the stuff that went on in care homes and how awful it was... last summer, and we still couldn't go into the care homes, so we were outside, the residents were inside but behind the French windows...and it was the first thing they had had through the whole pandemic. It was the first entertainment or people coming in. And you could see they were so excited just to have different people... Something new happening. I think it has made people think about that sort of situation. What it is like to just be stuck somewhere where you need things to come in and make people's lives better, you know?

Arts organisation post-residency



Photo: Stephen Daly

Setting up for success

The findings highlighted elements of setting up the ARCH programme that intended to support successful residencies, including the role of Magic Me; forging new partnerships; understandings and expectations of ARCH; and building trust and relationships.

The role of Magic Me

As the host organisation, Magic Me facilitated the introductory days in each care home; though not part of the ARCH programme originally, these were found to be vitally important in building excitement, alleviating anxiety around the unknowns, and facilitating mutual learning between artists and care home staff. Throughout the programme, Magic Me's role was vital, as *"the broker, as the connector for the arts organisations and the homes"* helping to build trusting relationships between artists, care homes, and Excelcare.

It has been great to be able to be new at something...in their very safe and experienced hands. At the same time knowing that what we bring is a very unique thing as well. So it is this nice triangle of a partnership of [care home], ourselves and them.

Arts organisation pre-residency

Throughout the programme, Magic Me provided artists with encouragement, helped them to feel valued, and provided constructive and sensitive creative feedback, described as *"very generous"*, although the feedback could also at times challenge. They responded organically to the needs of each arts organisation and tailored their approach and level of support. This required a delicate balance in giving advice whilst also stepping back and allowing the work to emerge in

an authentic way. In addition, the monthly group meetings for the arts organisations facilitated creative sharing and was valued by everyone.

They've been incredibly supportive the entire time...I think they really understand how to support organisations in a way that works for them and their practice.

Arts organisation pre-residency

Forging new partnerships

Partnering the care homes with the arts organisations was a joint process between Magic Me and Excelcare who considered the motivations of arts organisations and the culture of the care homes, as well as logistics and practicalities. In the R&D phase, participants raised the concept of 'bringing two worlds together' from the arts and care sectors. While these two worlds were seen to have different priorities, expectations, approaches, languages, and ways of working, which could present challenges, there was also excitement at the opportunities for generating new ideas and learning from each other. After the initial introductory care home visits, both care home staff and artists reported that they felt they had been well-matched to each other in terms of their energies, personalities, and approaches; however, some issues emerged later in the programme.



Photo: Stephen Daly

In terms of practicalities, the size and resources available needed to be considered, with smaller arts organisations paired with smaller care homes and ensuring appropriate levels of support. Also, geographical location was important in terms of distance for artists to travel as public transport could cause issues. For those arts organisations based in London – and particularly for Magic Me in overseeing the ARCH programme – there was also learning around taking artistic practice to another geographic location, as well as the need to acknowledge the strong connections that care homes had to the local community.

For artists, delivering authentic practice that reflected their ethos and values was essential, so the residency flowed better when this aligned with the values of the care home.

...their ethos and their attitude to that was very... reassuring in that I felt it aligned with what I was hoping for and my sort of assumptions about how we would work in that setting. By that I mean their warmth, their humanity in terms of those relationships, their playfulness... our work fits very well with that.
Arts organisation pre-residency

Magic Me had invested time getting to know the care homes but reflected that they could have spent more time with the arts organisations to understand particularly how they work outside of arts settings, which would support the matching process. Similarly, it was also recommended that care homes – especially care home management – should be aware of the artists' work beforehand to understand their approach, ascertain whether this would be transferable to their specific context, and give a sense of what to expect. This would have helped support a smoother journey for the paired arts organisation and care home working together through the programme. Overall, further deliberation of the approaches, values, and

personalities involved would have helped to lay the foundations for strong relationships, with some artists reporting that they would have liked to have been involved in this decision.

Understandings and expectations of ARCH

Artists and care home staff came to the ARCH programme with a range of expectations that had to be carefully negotiated. While arts organisations and artists were used to embarking on new projects in new contexts, some had not worked in care homes before and were unsure what to expect. Similarly, some care home staff said they did not come into the project with specific expectations and reflected that *"it was quite nice not to have known anything and to expect the unexpected"*. However, many care home staff were used to *"entertainers"* coming into the home to perform or do a one-off session with the residents, which shaped expectations and pre-conceived ideas about what an artist is and does. This did not fit with the approach of arts organisations or the ARCH programme as an *"artistic project"* and could lead to anxiety, resistance, and rejection of ideas. For example, some care home staff expected artists to turn up and deliver something that they had pre-planned so wanted to know what specific activities were going to be happening and when; they wanted certainty and were uncomfortable with the more fluid and paced approach of the artists.

There were also different expectations around the time investment and engagement required from care home staff. While arts organisations began with high hopes of engagement and involvement, care home staff sometimes did not see this as part of their role. This issue was pre-empted by a Care Home Manager during the R&D phase.

So, the staff members that have easily accepted any changes, they are playful, and they are not so over-protective...they are more welcome to engage and to do things, "Yes, we can do that". While we have other staff members, they are a bit, "Ah, this is not for me. I am here to work. I am here to care for this resident, not to play around. I am not here to dance or to sing. So, I am here to provide care and I have to protect them" ...that is our major challenge.

Focus group R&D

These difficulties were linked to the need for wider communication about the values and vision for the ARCH programme. For example, it appeared that in some homes only management and certain staff members were aware of this, which was perpetuated by staffing changes, particularly in management, during Covid-19. However, wider care home staff may have been more willing to engage if they had had a better understanding of the programme and what to expect. Specifically, it was suggested that care home staff should be reassured that they were not expected to be or become experts in dance or theatre, for example, but that engaging with the creative practice may support different ways of communicating and caring for residents. However, the timing of the interruption of Covid-19 made communicating and embedding the values and vision of the ARCH programme in the care homes challenging. In some homes the final R&D sessions didn't get to happen due to the timing of the first lockdown.

Although the attitudes of some care home staff did not change throughout the programme, many others immersed themselves in the creative and collaborative processes, gaining a different perspective and feeling pleasantly surprised by the experience and outcomes. This highlighted the importance of clear and open communications about the ARCH programme and more time to

establish shared understandings and manage expectations.

Building trust and relationships

Building relationships, collaboration, and communication was central to the ARCH programme, which echoes previous research highlighting the importance of care home staff and artists working together to enable residents to engage with participatory arts activities (Bungay et al., 2020). The introduction days provided the opportunity for the artists and staff, and artists and residents, to get to know each other. Care home staff were enthusiastic and welcoming, and the artists valued learning about the care home context and practice of the care home staff. The tour of the care home was key to this learning, as care home staff became more comfortable and confident in sharing their knowledge and experience, and artists were able to ask questions and see how care home staff interacted with residents. Meanwhile, the taster activity delivered by the artists provided an opportunity for care home staff to learn about what the artists do and understand the intention of the arts activities.

...your artistic endeavour is not the most important thing. The important thing, initially, is to get to know those people as people, that home as a home. What happens, what they're interested in, that's much more important...that layer of building the relationship with everyone in the care home – staff, residents, families, and your team.

Arts organisation post-residency

Artists and care home staff conveyed the need to build trusting relationships with each other, to get the most out of the residency and to have the most impact on the residents and the home. Care home staff needed to be able to trust the artists, who were often proposing things that hadn't been

done in the home before, the value of which was not always recognised or appreciated. Developing a trusting relationship was vital in allowing for meaningful collaboration between artists and care home staff. However, it was at times challenging for artists to gain the trust of care home staff and managers, which could create barriers to achieving impact from the residency.

...it requires a huge amount of investment and trust from the staff. I don't think we've fully achieved that yet... We have with a few people but the level of trust and investment in the project is a huge challenge.

Arts organisation pre-residency

Artists stressed that building trusting and collaborative relationships took time. This could sometimes cause friction, for example one arts organisation wanted to spend more time in the home but there were concerns over risk management and resourcing in terms of care home staff time. Being 'present' in homes to build relationships and shared understandings with care home staff, to get to know and build relationships with residents, and to build relationships with each other as artists, was essential for achieving impact through the residency.

[Building] trust...time for me is always a huge part of that. You can't expect to do that over Zoom...over a cup of tea for an hour. That comes with time, and little by little...[care home staff] noticed...we took the time with individual residents. So that allowed them to go, "We trust these people... as humans. We trust them with the care of our residents...that what they're doing is of value."

Arts organisation post-residency

Communication was also essential for building trust and relationships. Communication within sessions was good, but maintaining contact between sessions was more difficult, particularly during the pandemic when both arts and care sectors were under huge strains. Artists and care home staff reflected on the need to communicate with each other in a direct and clear way to get the most out of the relationship, and ultimately the residency.

We realised...if we leave too much openness in our communication and ideas as to what to do next then nothing happens and they're busy... So...we need just to say, "This is the plan and we will come and do this, this is how we're changing it and this is how we're extending it." Then they say, "Great"... or they say, "No, no you can't have the staff."

Arts organisation pre-residency

Artists having a key point of contact within each care home, and Magic Me having a key point of contact within Excelcare head office, was a facilitator to maintaining regular communication. However, there were significant changes in staffing during the ARCH programme across arts organisations, care homes, Excelcare and Magic Me, which inhibited sustained communication and eroded relationships. For example, one arts organisation and one care home had a completely new team once the residency was able to begin, and only one care home had the same Care Home Manager throughout.

I think we were really unlucky with covid...We started to build a really good relationship with [artist], and then the whole world shut down. And we almost had to rebuild it again, when the world opened up again.

Care home post-residency

Artists and care home staff collaboration

Collaborative working was essential in delivering the ARCH programme, as well as the artists' approach, Lifestyle Coordinators, and wider care home staff engagement.



Photo: Lime Court

Collaborative working

Working collaboratively was identified as essential to the ARCH programme, which required everyone being open to change rather than plans being "set in stone" and respecting and valuing the different skills and expertise that each other brought to the partnership. Artists talked about going into the R&D phase without fixed ideas but involving care home staff from the start in creating new ideas together. This was facilitated by defining care home staff as "experts" and valuing the knowledge, skills, and experience they had in relation to working with residents in the care home sector.

Rather than... "We're going to come in and show you how we do..." it's like, "Can you teach us how care homes work...you are the experts. Can you teach us, as artists, how this care home works day to day and how you work?"

Arts organisation post-residency

Some care home staff needed encouragement and time to adapt to the new approaches and – just as with the residents – artists needed to get to know the wider staff members to encourage participation.

It's also important to get to know [staff] – not all of them will want to participate. Need to encourage people to be open and honest – don't push people but encourage those who will really enjoy it and make sure there is staff understanding.

Care Home Manager R&D observation

Best practice was identified in terms of creating time and space for artists and care home staff to come together within the structure of the ARCH programme.

...our structure...of what we planned allowed that equality of that relationship to be there. There was enough time for us to reflect with them, listen to them, check in with them and make sure that day-to-day impact on their home worked well...

Arts organisation post-residency

This often took the form of check-ins before and after sessions, which allowed care home staff to inform artists of any changes in the home that might impact their work, reflect together on what worked and incorporate learning into future sessions, and more broadly promote mutual feedback and idea-sharing to ensure equality of relationships.

...every evening we had the check-in with the staff about how it went and what residents responded in what ways. They were sharing with us what was unusual for some residents to do or not do. We were both learning all the way along. For us, that was key to the development of the week and it will be key as well for the development of this year of the project.

Arts organisation reflections R&D

However, whilst artists talked about encouraging care home staff to voice their ideas and provide constructive feedback, there were concerns that they may not feel confident to share if something was not working well.

Artists also reflected that working collaboratively was challenging at times. Linking back to expectations, care home staff perceptions of their role as providing care rather than engaging in the arts were compounded by time constraints due to workload and staff shortages; artists were left unsure how to support their involvement. Some suggested that this needed greater input from the care home management and a shift from acting as the host for the ARCH programme that the artists were responsible for delivering to taking on a more collaborative role. After the residencies one Care Home Manager emphasised the need to embrace this collaborative approach to working.

I just think you've just got to roll with it really, haven't you...don't be scared, because if you all work together, it will work.

Care home post-residency

Artists' approach and challenges

One of the key facilitators to the success of the residencies was the individual skills and experiences of the artists, underpinned by the ethos and values of the arts organisation. They brought a depth of artistic and creative skills, along with their confidence in communication developed from working with different groups of people in various settings, and thorough organisation and preparation as "they always had a backup plan". The artists were described as easy-going, happy, welcoming, friendly, fun, calm, comforting, accommodating, patient, intuitive, responsive, tactile, passionate, and energetic. This led to engagement from residents, who were open and wanted to talk with them, and both residents and staff enjoyed their presence and the new energy they brought to the home.

...the residents respond so well to them... because of their way, their personality...I said if we could bottle that, just hearing them laughing and joking. And they're very tactile. Even with the masks, their faces just lit up...it is their persona and the residents react to that. They're kind of drawn to it...they managed to actually coax [new things] out of the residents... in a fun way, it wasn't intrusive.

Care home post-residency

Two of the arts organisations and one of the care homes specifically described the importance of the artists taking a human and empathetic approach to working with the residents, for example by carefully considering how the residents and care home staff might be feeling about the artists coming into their home.

"What might it be to be in their shoes...?" I remember initially thinking, "How might this feel for me to be [Lifestyle Coordinator] and to have me come in? What might she perceive about that and what that could be?" / For me, it was just remember that we are in their home. They're not living in our workplace. We are working in their home.

Arts organisation post-residency

Artists described the need for a certain degree of trust, freedom, and artistic licence from care home staff, but they also emphasised flexibility and adaptability in their approach. Arts organisations needed to adapt their creative approach for the care home, be responsive to their needs, and be willing to change if something wasn't working.

In a care home, you can have a plan, but you have to be totally prepared for that to change completely... you have to learn to go with that flow...it's the most person-centred project I have ever worked on...it has been so responsive to each person on every level involved in it.

Arts organisation post-residency



Photo: Stephen Daly

Both artists and care home staff talked about the importance of "being bold", ambitious, daring, and taking positive risks for the residencies to be successful. This also involved care home staff needing to keep an open mind and being willing to try new approaches.

'Be bold' is a big one.../ I guess my reflection on working in different settings is treading softly...going, "Oh, the staff are going to be very protective. They're not going to want them to do that" or "The residents aren't going to cope with it," and actually just erasing all of that and approaching it like you would approach anything else and letting the experts answer you, which is the people that work with them every day. I think I was really surprised that that answer was, 9½ times out of 10, "Yes, do it." So I think that was liberating and led to a more ambitious kind of approach.

Arts organisation post-residency

It's definitely about trying to take some risks...to step out of the box. And actually, life goes on. We're not caged animals when we come into a care home, we are living a life. It's just a life we've got now, but to live it to the full.

Care home post-residency

As the quotes illustrate, care home staff appreciated this and one care home suggested that they would have welcomed an even bolder approach; however, one of the arts organisations felt their creative vision had been somewhat constrained and some ideas and activities "blocked" at different points in the programme by the bureaucracy and decisions of the care home management.

Understandably, care homes needed to ensure the safety of everyone and sufficient care for

the residents alongside the ARCH programme, which involved carrying out risk assessments, planning rotas to ensure sufficient staffing, and implementing additional Covid-19 regulations. However, this was sometimes perceived as unnecessarily restrictive by artists, for example when on one occasion they asked for but were not provided with a list of names of residents.

However, this was not the case in all the homes despite them all being managed by Excelcare, supporting the need for shared understandings and expectations of ARCH.

Lifestyle Coordinators and Champions

Lifestyle Coordinators played a key role in the delivery of the ARCH programme. The post-residency interview in one of the care homes emphasised the extensive role of the Lifestyle Coordinator, described as *"the hardest job out of everybody...just trying to keep the spirits up"*, which became more difficult and more necessary during and after the pandemic. They made a key contribution in terms of keeping the momentum of the residency going between sessions and encouraging the engagement of the wider care home staff, supported in some cases by the Care Home Manager.

...the advocacy of [Care Home Manager] and [Deputy Manager] saying, "That's very important," and [Lifestyle Coordinator] saying, "Oh, they're all amazing in the project," was valuable in bringing in some of the other staff members.

Arts organisation post-residency

They were also the lynchpin in the partnership with the arts organisations, who talked about how welcoming and supportive they were as their main point of contact at the care home. However, there

was also concerns that the ARCH programme was seen as the responsibility of the Lifestyle Coordinator alone.

If [the Lifestyle Coordinator] were not there, then yes, you just have to do it on your own...the point of reference was only one person.
Arts organisation post-residency

This put a strain on Lifestyle Coordinators, and one reflected on how they felt unable to give the ARCH programme the time it needed due to competing priorities and changes in care home management.

I just wish we had more time to be able to really take this to the next level. I think myself and [Care Home Manager] both agree on this... we've not been able to put as much input as we would have liked to have put in. And it's only in the last recent months that we've been able to get really involved, and we can see the impact it has had... I'm just so gutted now, because I feel like I've wasted that time... but I just had to prioritise other things...it was like, "I just really don't have time," and it was just awful. You're dealing with the home...undergoing a lot of stress, because it hadn't had a manager...
Care home post-residency

Both arts organisations and care home staff emphasised the importance of support from both care home management and wider care home staff. In the R&D phase, there had been care home staff members named as ARCH Champions in each home. Though there was some uncertainty around what the role would specifically entail, the general intention was for Champions to work with the Lifestyle Coordinators on the residencies. In the post-residency interviews, arts organisations talked about the importance of involving care home staff who knew the residents and had an

interest in arts and creativity, particularly given the prerogative from Care Home Managers around care home staff learning new skills and supporting legacy. This could have been achieved through the Champions, but unfortunately with staff changes across all partners and increased pressure on workloads due to the pandemic, the role was not utilised in a defined way during the residencies.

Care home staff engagement

Artists described the importance of seeing both residents and care home staff as creatives. This was to some extent provocative as it contrasted with their caring role that was sometimes perceived as "clinical" or "task focused" while care home staff were sometimes unsure whether they were allowed to be engaging with arts activities whilst at work. The ARCH programme gave them permission to be creative and have fun – "permission to imagine" – and an invitation to "think beyond what they already know".

...we're not a hospital, we're a care home, and it's where people are cared for, in a home environment. And I think [ARCH] has helped that... It's okay to dance around and have fun... you're not here just to do clinical work, this is a home.

Care home post-residency

Additionally, care home staff sometimes lacked confidence around their own capabilities as creatives and were initially sceptical about whether residents would engage or benefit from the creative practice of the arts organisations. The introduction visits and staff taster sessions were essential in overcoming this uncertainty, with reports of care home staff then becoming fully engaged during the R&D phase and utilising their experience and knowledge of the residents to support their participation.

All staff really engaged with the creative arts sessions and the residents in a remarkable way. They were very willing to join in with the activities and had unique ways to engage the residents.

Artists' reflections R&D

Across arts organisations and care homes, the importance of care home staff engagement in and commitment to the ARCH programme was emphasised. Facilitators for this included artists' presence and spending time in the home as well as Lifestyle Coordinators and Care Home Managers advocating for their involvement in the residencies.

...you've got to put that work in, because you get so much more out of it. You've got to start off with having the grounding that, if you're going to take on this project, you need to be committed to it. And... to give time to it... because you get so much more out of it when you do.

Care home post-residency

However, there were significant challenges in terms of care home staff shortages, high staff turnover, and the pressures on their time. They worked long busy shifts and the time that the artists were there was sometimes the only opportunity for them to have a break. They were also often pulled away from arts activities into caring duties; and on some occasions artists found themselves supporting staff who were overwhelmed by the everyday demands within the care home. These challenges to engagement were frustrating for both care home staff as well as the artists, who at times felt they were delivering the programme on their own – but stressed that this was completely understandable.

...to be honest, if I was them, I'd probably think, "Oh good, I can go and have a break while this is happening." So I don't blame them for not being there...the demands on the care staff...they don't stop. And it's really difficult for them to find that space and that time.

Arts organisation post-residency

Rather than having a consistent group of care home staff involved throughout the residency in each home, it was often whoever was available at the time, and this was sometimes agency staff who didn't have the existing relationships with or knowledge about the residents. Artists tried to take this into consideration by thinking about how staff could be involved as a one-off or wherever possible, and when staff did engage they reported a good level of connection.



Photo: Stephen Daly

Creative practice in care home contexts

The ARCH programme required adapting creative practice to the care home context; consideration of creative spaces and inclusive creative practice; artists' learning and development; and responding to care home staff and artists' wellbeing.

Adapting to care homes

How to adapt their creative practice to the care home context was an ongoing consideration for arts organisations throughout the ARCH programme. Those that had not worked in care homes before saw it as a new and exciting opportunity, and all arts organisations expressed a strong desire to bring their practice to residents and staff. Nonetheless, navigating this unique setting was also challenging.

How we bring our practice versus the environment we find ourselves in, what we are going to do as artists in that space – that's a challenge.

Artists' reflection session R&D

The artists took time to understand the care home environment and used the care home introduction days and R&D sessions to think about how they could adapt to specific aspects, such as the structure and routines of the care home day, the space available to them, the requirements of management, the technology, and the unpredictability.

Trying to deliver a focused session in a busy care home has its challenges, residents need to use the bathroom, wander off, need a cup of tea, can become upset. It is a different environment than we are used to creating and for us, it's important that we can have focus and work hard but understand that this setting is unique and we must adapt while still striving for focus. We achieved it in many moments, but it is a very different negotiation.

Artists' reflection R&D

At the start of the programme, Excelcare emphasised that artists would be working in the residents' home and some artists expressed concern about invading residents' space, for example by entering the rooms of residents who were unable to leave their beds without explicit consent. This was discussed with care home staff, and it was agreed that they would accompany artists to be a familiar face in such situations and would be able to chat with residents beforehand and afterwards. However, this remained a concern for artists when they were working with individual residents in their rooms and as they moved through different spaces, fully immersing themselves in the life of the home.

Creative spaces

Both artists and care homes were keen to incorporate some of the unused spaces as well as outside spaces and potentially going beyond the care home grounds into the local community. The ARCH programme encouraged them to rethink the use of space in the homes: how spaces could be used creatively and how artists could move their practice throughout the whole home to include all residents.

Then we started talking about what these particular residents' lives must be like when they're in their rooms most of the time. The potential of that space, which is white walls and a white ceiling...all the white walls around are great portals into other worlds and that felt like something for [immobile] residents we could try and look at that and experiment with that.

Artists' reflections R&D

Artists faced challenges when trying to engage residents in communal living spaces such as the residents' sitting room, as the television was often on and there were other distractions. Though they did some work in communal spaces, they also identified other spaces where there were less distractions, and they were not imposing their work on anyone. Though it was noted during the R&D phase that the arts activities were not disruptive, in some cases the residencies involved taking over large spaces and changing or adding décor that would stay in place for extended periods of time.

We commandeered a room in the home and we made a film set...That happened in a way because of covid, but also because we were all aware that in that main space there are a lot of distractions. That's their main living space. So there was always...a desire to have a bit more control over our space...

Arts organisation post-residency

This was sometimes met with fear and negativity from care home staff and management when first attempted and some reflected that they had not been prepared for how involved the artists would be in the home. Though some care home staff initially perceived this as "intrusive", "disruptive" and "commandeering", such views were mostly tempered once they were able to see the value of the creative practice or output.

Inclusive creative practice

The ARCH programme promoted inclusive creative practice with the intention of reaching out to all residents, whilst being respectful of those not wanting to participate. Care home staff in particular felt strongly that all residents should have the opportunity to take part, including those with cognitive or physical impairments and those who did not usually engage with care home activities.

What I'm really hoping [the artists will] be able to do is engage some of our residents that aren't necessarily...the ones who will come to every activity. We have other people around that are harder to engage...

Care home staff member R&D focus group

The artists echoed this recognising the benefits that arts could bring and the opportunity to expand their creative practice. However, they were apprehensive about working with residents with dementia. This was somewhat relieved by the care home introduction days where care home staff introduced them to residents and shared examples of how they could interact and respond to challenging behaviours. This was also addressed in training sessions organised by Magic Me.

But working with people with dementia really is your behaviour, plus things like you do not argue. If they say they are in a zoo right now, you go along with the story. You don't approach from the back, you always approach from the front... if you could offer touch or whatever, you always ask for it. Especially these are things that we were working with, so what colours to use, what not to use, what can trigger...

Arts organisation post-residency

Additional challenges included knowing what is feasible for residents, balancing active and passive engagement, engaging residents with different abilities within the same session, the number of residents they could meaningfully engage with, and some care home staff not initially recognising the agency of residents. During the residencies, artists and care home staff found it was possible to include people with physical and cognitive limitations and to look at what they can do rather than what they can't do. Examples included residents and relatives making tactile blankets together, and the creation of soundscape books with images of the artists that could be taken into residents' rooms. Throughout the ARCH programme there were many examples of inclusive creative practice that involved a range of residents – including those with dementia, those who were immobile, and those who do not usually engage – which was particularly appreciated and praised by the care home management and Excelcare.



Photo: Stephen Daly

Artists' learning and development

The learning and development of artists and arts organisations in understanding and working in the care home context was a key aspiration of the ARCH programme and supported by Magic Me through specific training and monthly meetings for arts organisations. This was hugely valued by

all artists, whether they had previous experience in care homes or not, particularly the training on trauma that was delivered to support artists in dealing with conversations about what the care homes had been through during the pandemic.

‘[Magic Me have] gone above and beyond what an almost commissioning organisation necessarily needs to do. They’ve really listened to what us as organisations have needed and shifted the way they work with us to enable us to connect more or to have these regular meetings or to have training... to help us build more understanding or expertise around certain areas.

Arts organisation post-residency

While the training was appreciated, some expressed the need for more training, for example specialist training on different needs of residents and particularly those with very “restrictive medical needs” and “limited movement”. It was also suggested that it would have been useful to have all the training sessions at the start, before the projects began, rather than running throughout. However, Magic Me planned the training to be spaced out based on learning from previous residencies. This learning indicated that some training worked best if provided after artists had experienced being in the homes. This approach also allowed for training to be responsive to arising needs and ensured new staff joining part-way through the programme could still access training.

Along with the training, artists learnt from their experience delivering the residencies and talked particularly about their new understandings around how to engage with residents with dementia or other cognitive or physical impairments. Additionally, artists talked about their personal and professional development in terms of confidence, both in relation to a “sense of ease” that came with understanding the care home context and gaining

new skills, developing their practice, and growing their sense of agency in delivering the residency. It was also an opportunity for freelancers to develop a greater connection with the arts organisation. For some of the arts organisations, this was the first time they were applying their approach within the care home context, which was an exciting prospect and a learning opportunity.

There was significant learning and development for artists and arts organisations in adapting to the pandemic, relating to practicalities, integrity, and dealing with emotional impacts.

...it had come across quite strongly...how awful it had been for the staff. [Artists] were asking...“I want to understand that a little bit more or know what I can do to support that...” So, I... found a consultant and counsellor, who... developed a half-day training, which was about grief and trauma in care homes through the pandemic... Making the crucial link of... everybody has just been through a traumatic experience ...you yourself as an artist will have a response to what has happened and the trauma, as will the residents and the staff that you are working with. So, it was giving the artists a vocabulary to talk about that and to think about how they might need to shift both their communication with the homes, but also the practice and the way that they work with the residents and the staff...

Magic Me post-residency

Furthermore, on the evaluation day arts organisations reflected more broadly about their learning, with one artist stating: “it’s been really rather an insight”. They also considered how they could draw on ARCH to continue working within care homes.

It's really informed how we're going to approach some of our projects in the future... looking at the kind of first layer which is eliciting and working together really personally and then creating films, that can be something that is wider spread, that raises awareness to work to a theme or a challenge...it's been really inspired by, by the way that we did the project.

Arts organisation evaluation day

Care home staff and artists' wellbeing

The wellbeing of care home staff was identified as a key focus for the project, particularly within the pre-residency interviews in relation to the devastating impact of the pandemic.

...staff morale was at the lowest you could probably get... it was very sad to see. Because these staff have worked their backsides off... Everyone had done everything they possibly can...the care sector had an absolute dreadful time...

Care home pre-residency



Photo: Camilla Greenwell

Magic Me and the arts organisations recognised this and shifted their focus to look at how staff could also be supported through the ARCH programme alongside residents. Care home staff reported finding joy in seeing the residents working with the artists and that it provided an emotional release.

...for every one of us, I think it has just brought nothing but joy. And to be able to take that time for ourselves...It has taught me to be able to take on that emotion that we sometimes block. We deal with a lot of sadness within the home, as well as happy times, and I don't think we ever really deal with it in a way that perhaps we should...just having that piece of music and just sitting there, and turning my back on all that's going on, and just dealing with that emotion. And it's okay to cry, it's okay to show emotion...

Care home post-residency

Care home staff wellbeing was also discussed particularly in relation to care home staff attrition and turnover – often because of the toll the pandemic had taken on them and simply the need for a change. The concerns around wellbeing made the positive emotional impacts from the residencies on care home staff even more pertinent.

...the video was so emotional for us, because we didn't think that we were ever going to be kind of back to our baseline, if you like, because we'd had so much sadness and misery. It had affected everybody so much that we really didn't know whether we were going to be able to get back to where we were. To hear music and laughter, again, in the home, has just been amazing...It lifted all our spirits.

Care home pre-residency

Related to this, the wellbeing of artists was highlighted as a key concern, particularly for those who had little experience in the care home context given the potential for emotional and sometimes distressing experiences they may encounter, which was again exacerbated by the pandemic and how that had impacted on the care home staff and residents. For arts organisations this raised questions around how best to support their artists.

...it can be a space which feels incredibly challenging to be in... I've been very much grappling with how we keep artists safe in these types of contexts and how we support them... Some artists really need boundaries to be able to create their work and other artists need that porosity, they need to feel it to be able to generate work. That is so challenging when you're trying to keep everyone well.

Arts organisation pre-residency

Alongside artists' wellbeing, the emotional impact of the ARCH programme was also discussed in more positive terms with regards to their emotional investment in the project and how it had changed them as artists and as people.

...our freelance team...for them it's had a really significant impact on them as humans...[one of them now] volunteers with a project...for people living [in care homes] you know, it's literally shifted what he is interested in, where he wants to spend his time and energy outside of work.

Arts organisations evaluation day

Legacy and embedding

The ARCH programme promoted legacy through thinking about this from the outset and ongoing; artists spending time and sharing skills in the care homes; cultivating creative outputs and sensitive endings; and embedding creativity in care home culture.

Legacy from the outset and ongoing

The ARCH programme was designed to build legacy from the start, with care homes and arts organisations invited due to their enthusiasm, time for research and relationship development before residencies, and time for embedding and legacy after residencies.

It is really exciting to be doing something that is continuing and developing into something... there is going to be something that comes from this which is about those people. And that is really special.

Arts organisation pre-residency

Legacy was at the forefront of the artistic approach, demonstrated in their hopes and expectations to "develop a relationship with the home, the staff and the residents that would allow us to develop something which felt meaningful to that place and something which felt could exist beyond the life of the project". This involved "a continual thought process and challenge" of embedding creative practices throughout the programme, which was seen in some care homes where they had been able to use some of the skills and activities they had learnt in the R&D phase during the pandemic and one Lifestyle Coordinator shared their plans to align their everyday activities with the artists' ideas

and themes during the residencies.

Throughout the programme Magic Me encouraged both artists and care homes to think about how they could keep the lines of communication open with the residents, for example by leaving something physical in the care homes as a reminder of what's happening and what's coming up. The time between sessions and especially the time between the R&D phase and the residencies was a concern for care home staff, which was further and significantly delayed by the pandemic. Some arts organisations and care homes were able to keep in touch, for example with artists providing sessions on Zoom or through windows and via radio or sending resources to the homes; however, others lost touch due to staff changes.

Both care home staff and artists raised the need for ongoing support in embedding creative practice, which was achieved to some extent through the legacy phase of the ARCH programme for example through regular check-ins. For one arts organisation, this was about providing really practical support, structure, advice, and accountability.

I'm not coming from a creative point of view, I'm coming from more of a kind of supporting [Lifestyle Coordinator] and going, "Okay, what do you need? Alright, let's check in..." just being an outside support...that they can check things with, and give a little bit of advice on how they can maybe organise things...if we can, follow up with emails to management. That's something we're going to do over the next year, set some goals and then check in with them regularly.

Arts organisation post-residency

However, one care home felt *"there is so much help we need"* and emphasised that although they were doing their best, increasing workloads meant

they were incredibly stretched while Covid-19 had undermined staff morale, which was also recognised by arts organisations.

...the constant difficulty in continuing that legacy is the practicalities of it, and the fact that the staff are working 12 hours daily and they don't have much time...I felt for [Lifestyle Coordinator], because I could see that she was really keen to do more.

Arts organisation post-residency

Accordingly, the ARCH programme identified the need for funding to enable continued collaboration between arts organisations and care homes to sustain the momentum and impact of creative practice – as one artist put it: *"we just should be here all the time"*.

I just feel there should be...something in place. That we've got the resources to be able to have artists coming to the home on a regular basis, or even a couple of times a year. There should be that facility. Because we know what they can bring to the table and the impact it can have on residents' and the staff's wellbeing.

Care home post-residency

Spending time and sharing skills

Spending time physically in the care home with care home staff was identified as vital for embedding legacy, as one artist remarked *"there's something in the meeting of the flesh and the minds and the sensory spheres of me being here"*. They explained how just leaving resources may not work, but talking with care home staff about their ideas for what could happen in the future encouraged them to take ownership.

What is the overlapping time that we can spend...get the ball rolling and then see seeing it grow...sometimes I could almost like leave the conversation, it might be a Lifestyle Coordinator and staff...coming up with "Oh, we could do this"...taking off from working with materials or that was completely theirs.

Arts organisation evaluation day

Through spending time in the care homes, the arts organisations supported care staff in developing skills and greater confidence for engaging in creative practices, for example in embracing technology during the pandemic or dancing and being silly with the residents. Care home staff reported learning to see certain things in a different and more creative way.

For me it was the first time when I looked at the wheelchair in a different purpose. I saw the wheelchair just to transfer someone from one place to another, actually dancing with someone so that was really nice. They used a wheelchair in a different manner, different way, like rolling and dancing.

Care homes evaluation day

Furthermore, they learnt new ways to communicate, both with residents and with staff, and learnt artistic practices and activities that helped them to find out more about residents in terms of their life histories and their capabilities. In this way, the residencies also helped to develop personal confidence and bring care home staff out of themselves.

Can I just say as well that as far as the learning points for us are, there are so many ways to communicate with people. Even as carers, we kind of know that but we never really push the boundaries. We kind of keep in this bracket of how you can communicate with people. There are so many ways and we've learnt so much from our artists... to do with communication and so has the team as well...

Care homes evaluation day

In addition to spending time in the homes, some arts organisations provided structured training sessions for care home staff that facilitated this learning. This focused on easy activities and ways to engage residents that could be integrated as "part of their everyday", as one Lifestyle Coordinator reflected: "playing with the balloons has become a habit now... a regular activity".

We did some of the dances with them in the staff training and we talked about how they might bring that in slightly more, just to their everyday...sometimes there's just these lulls in the day...and they said if, on each floor or each unit, they had a box of props...balloons or some scarves or something, they could just put some music on and they could just have a little dance with the residents...they can find little moments... maybe that's easier...than setting up lots of sessions...maybe that's a good way for [the care staff] to continue this.

Arts organisation post-residency

But aside from the training, spending time and sharing skills during the residency was recognised for enabling care home staff to see the impact of the arts, which would support their efforts to continue engaging with creative practice.

...having [artists] doing things with the residents and our staff observing and seeing them, what a difference it will make to the residents...for [staff] to realise, "Okay, so if I...get more involved in activity with the residents" ...once you guys leave, at least they can say... "How great it was for the residents...let us try and continue."

Care home pre-residency



Creative outputs and endings

Leaving something behind in the form of creative outputs was seen as a crucial part of building legacy that will last beyond the residency, in terms of something collective for the care home, but also something tangible for the residents to take away from each session.

...there has always got to be something [residents] can, in theory, take away with them, be that like an object, or something they're shown, or something that they've done. I think that tangibility of stuff is quite important...it has ripple effects...

Arts organisation post-residency

The tangibility of creative outputs was discussed as "really powerful" in helping care home staff, as well as family members, see how they could be involved in the ARCH programme, for example in creating a film or a photobook from the residencies. Photographs and photobooks were identified as a useful tool to encourage family and care home staff involvement that had captured "moments" and "fond memories" for the residents and "can be left for residents to reminisce". Certainly, building towards something that would continue to have impact beyond the life of the project – and the life of the residents – was important and galvanised support from the Lifestyle Coordinators, as one remarked "you've got it forever".

The films created by two arts organisations celebrated the residents and care home staff through high quality art; however, it was emphasised that "it is balancing the experience of everybody... staff and residents in those moments with the art". The films were made for the residents and care home communities with the focus on their experience of engaging, making, and telling stories that were captured to provide a lasting memory.

[The film] has had an effect from the residents all the way through to management...I don't think they would have engaged in the same way without the output of the quality of film that has been made, and seeing that level of performance...that level of art in this space...and it's about celebrating them.

Arts organisation post-residency

The launch film screenings brought the whole care home together – including Care Home Managers and Excelcare – to experience the impact of the arts, with one care home staff member stating: "you actually can't believe how powerful it is, it's amazing". This was a particularly special event for residents, described as "one of the best things for them... to

see themselves in the film", but also facilitated staff reflection on their role and relationship with residents.

[Watching the film] really made them realise how important their connection... with the residents was...especially the duets, they could see how meaningful and how much the care staff, especially in recent years, were the family to the residents...which hadn't been something that was intentionally part of the choreography...so I think that was really interesting, to see that that's how they received that, and really seeing both the importance of what they do, and how they can do it more...

Arts organisation post-residency

These events also celebrated the end of the project, with endings described as "really vital, very valuable" particularly in the care home setting. One arts organisation explained how this is wrapped up in the creative outputs that continue to develop impact.

Of course there will be an end...but there will be something more that we get...we learn more about [the residents]. We are able to leave something even more special and interesting. More about their lives rather than just dance sessions. I think it is really amazing.

Arts organisation pre-residency

Arts organisations also left behind resources to support legacy and embedding, often in the form of boxes with "practical or concrete" resources and props for recreating creative sessions as described in section 4.

Embedding creativity in care home culture

A key aim for the ARCH programme from both Magic Me and Excelcare perspectives was to promote the value of arts in care homes and embedding creativity as part of the care home culture to promote residents' wellbeing. This was also echoed by one Care Home Manager during the R&D phase, who expressed hopes for "a bit of a culture change and a bit of a lasting legacy from it" suggesting "it might influence people's attitudes" beyond the Lifestyle Coordinator and Champions. Despite the disruption of Covid-19, this aim was reignited particularly after the first film had been created, which "raised the awareness of how ambitious a project can be and what it can do".

Embedding creativity in care homes was predominantly approached through building relationships with care home staff, involving them in ARCH, and engaging them with the power of the participatory arts.

...how do we reach and kind of involve more staff? So that we have a greater chance of there being a kind of sustained culture, I'm not going to say shift because it doesn't need to shift as such but like an addition.

Arts organisation pre-residency

One Care Home Manager shared how ARCH had invigorated her staff with "more ideas" and enthusiasm around what they could do next, although they still depended on the Lifestyle Coordinator to make it happen. Certainly, identifying staff who were interested and enthusiastic about being involved was seen as potentially more useful than involving everyone as they could then be better supported with resources to take the creative practice forward.



Photo: Stephen Daly

...people that want to learn this...that might be a career trajectory for them, that they're interested in doing some of that lifestyle work... this could be a project that they're timetabled in for...

Arts organisation post-residency

It was suggested that rather than lots of training, it was more important to “break down this idea that they can’t do it” and build the confidence of care home staff in engaging with creative practice. One Care Home Manager explained how staff could sometimes “take things very seriously” and “become very clinical”, but ARCH helped to challenge that, giving them “the confidence to come out of

that barrier, and it’s okay to do these things”. The involvement and support of Care Home Managers was essential to legitimise the programme and encourage the engagement of wider care home staff.

[The Care Home Manager has] learnt that by working in partnership collaborating with [the arts organisation]...the home is getting way more from the project. And it needed that change for her to be involved for the project to work, it was absolutely crucial...there’s been such a turnaround in how they’ve worked together since she’s been onboard.

Magic Me evaluation day

However, it was noted that there may not be "the understanding of what that takes" in terms of working in partnership to embed creativity in care home culture. Concerns were raised about care home positivity obscuring the true impact of ARCH and some artists felt that the legacy they had envisioned had not been achieved.

I'm not quite sure what our care home has learned...they're so positive and effusive, with their sort of excitement...we don't get a deep, reflective answer...so I'm not quite sure whether it's really impacted them.

Arts organisations evaluation day

I don't know if I've seen a massive change in the culture of the organisation.

Arts organisation evaluation day

Nonetheless, in the evaluation day care home discussion staff talked about how they had already implemented some of the learning from the ARCH programme and how they intended to continue, declaring "it will be a learning curve but it will be fun that it's carrying on". The discussion included references to changing processes and incorporating creative approaches into care plans, which represent modest but significant changes in culture.

I know it's changed the way I do things and the way that I think about what activities and how I'm going to do those activities....

Care home evaluation day

When they say "I want to go to the beach, I want to go in the garden to touch the leaves", then I think from [ARCH] we learnt that actually they don't need to go in the garden to do that. We can bring the garden to them... that's something we can look into... what do people really want to do and somehow to help them achieve that... to support them rather than saying, "You can't go, it's not possible," at least say, "We'll do something about that"... I think that will be the vision of the care plans as well.

Care home evaluation day

Finally, Magic Me shared their learning and legacy from ARCH around how they articulate their identity and support other arts organisations to take creative practice into care homes.

...in all the conversations with all the arts partners and care homes, it's been showing for me what we do really well and it's crucial that we write that down or articulate it. That will make it stronger in terms of bids for the future but also in terms of our reputation in this work... with care homes. But also our ability to support other people in the future to do this work, I think it all is powerful, carving out an identity and our expertise...that's going to be a real legacy.

Magic Me evaluation day



Section 7: Conclusions

Photo: Rich Rusk

Key learning and recommendations

The findings emphasised the power of high quality participatory arts practice to make meaningful impacts for care home staff and residents. The findings provide some excellent examples of best practice for artists working in care homes, as well as illuminating some challenges in bringing together arts organisations and care homes to deliver high quality arts programmes. We make the following recommendations for best practice:

1. There are vital **leadership and project management roles** that need to be fulfilled in order for artists' residencies in care homes to be successful. Leadership is needed to oversee the residencies, mediate between artists and care homes, keep momentum going, ensure people's needs are being met, and develop and enact a clear communication strategy from the start that ensures that:
 - (i) All partners are aware of the purpose of the programme as a whole and its phases.
 - (ii) The collaborative process is responsive to the needs and priorities of the care homes and co-created between artists/care home staff and residents.
 - (iii) The roles of all involved: artists as well as care home staff including the Lifestyle Coordinator, and wider care home staff, are clearly defined.
 - (iv) The collaborative process that artists intend to use is as clearly defined as is feasible for care home staff and residents.
 - (v) The 'endings' of sessions and different phases of the project are considered from the start.
 - (vi) Any protocols required such as safeguarding are agreed and discussed

with artists before going into the homes.

- (vii) Ways to keep in touch between phases and sessions are agreed and shared between the arts organisations and care homes (including back up/handover plans in the event of staffing changes)

In this case, the programme had the advantage of an expert host organisation – Magic Me – who took on these leadership and project management roles. However, if a host organisation is not available then consideration from the outset of who will take on these roles is needed.

2. Early acknowledgement and negotiation of the similarities and differences between the arts and care sectors in their expectations and approaches to working, is important in **building shared understandings** and mitigating potential challenges in working together.

Facilitated through:

- careful 'matching' of care home and arts organisation (considering energies, personalities, ethos/values, location, size and resources of arts organisations and care homes)
- ensuring prior awareness of arts organisations' practice amongst care home management
- clear and open communication early on about the values and vision of the programme, including to wider care home staff (see point 1)
- Introduction days where artists can meet staff and residents and tour the home, care home staff can experience a 'taster' of the creative activities, providing opportunities for mutual experiential learning.

3. The **support and commitment from senior management** – Excelcare head office and Care Home Managers - is key for successful

implementation. It is very helpful to have designated 'link staff' who promote the importance of the work in care homes and emphasise the support for the programme from senior management.

4. **Lifestyle Coordinators have a key role** in keeping momentum, advocating for the work to wider care staff, and serving as a lynchpin in the relationships between the arts organisation and the care home. However, Lifestyle Coordinators should not be solely responsible for the programme and need to be supported in this role by care home management.

5. **Allow time for building care home staff confidence** to promote engagement.

Facilitated through:

- Introduction days with creative activity taster session
- R&D sessions prior to residency
- Artists spending time being present in the care home
- Artists providing additional sessions with care home staff
- Artists' approach to working (see point 6)
- Senior management in care homes allowing time for, and encouraging staff to engage.

6. **Artists bring essential experience and skills** (creative, organisational, communication) to the programme. Impact is achieved in care homes through artists taking an ambitious, humane, flexible and adaptable approach, and seeing residents and care home staff as creatives. Artists should also carefully consider how to best utilise space in care homes for their creative practice.

7. Creating opportunities for **peer support and learning between the artists** and arts organisations throughout the programme builds the partner community and enables the ongoing sharing of good practice e.g. finding ways to share practice on balancing active and passive engagement and involving residents with different abilities.

Facilitated through:

- Regular catch ups with all arts organisations and host organisation (if available)
- All participant evaluation days at key milestones in the programme (including separate break out rooms for artists and care home staff).

8. Ensuring the arts organisations and **artists are prepared and supported to work in care home settings**, to work with people with dementia and other physical and cognitive impairments, and in supporting care home staff who have endured trauma through the pandemic, is essential for building artists' confidence, protecting their wellbeing, and helping to ensure inclusive practice.

Facilitated through:

- Training for artists (prior to visiting care homes and ongoing)
- Arts organisation managers providing ongoing support, and opportunities for reflection, with freelance artists
- R&D sessions in the care home
- Having **time** to engage with and be present in the care home.

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9. Ensuring facilitation of and time for **building trusting and collaborative relationships** between partners throughout the project is essential for the programme to have a meaningful impact on the care home.

Facilitated through:

- Introduction days for artists in care homes (including taster activity for staff, tour of home for artists, and opportunities for open discussions).
 - Time for artists to be present in the home for research and development sessions prior to the residency.
 - Identifying key points of contact in care homes (with handover plans in the event of staffing changes) to facilitate regular maintained communication.
 - Mediation (where required) from host organisation (or person allocated this role, see point 1)
 - Regular check-ins, debriefs, and other opportunities for feedback and sharing.
 - Host organisation (or person allocated leadership role) promoting a culture of valuing each others expertise and the value of mutual learning.
 - Communication strategy (see point 1).
10. **Ensuring a legacy** from artists' residencies in care homes is facilitated through artists spending lots of time physically being present in the care home and creating and leaving something tangible behind. This promotes care staff learning and skill development, helps staff see the positive impact of the arts which provides impetus to enact new skills and learning, and helps embed creativity in the care home culture.

11. Both arts organisations and care homes need to be aware of and plan for the **additional time and resource that is needed for building relationships** as the foundation for a meaningful experience and also for **ensuring legacy** from the artists' residencies. Both care homes and arts organisations need to be prepared to re-introduce the programme to new staff to support relationships and momentum through staff changes and turnover.
12. **Funders and commissioners also need to recognise the time and resource** that is needed to build relationships, maintain communication, and embed legacy within artists' residencies, as well as the time for conducting the actual activities themselves, and allow for this in their allocation of funding.

All of the above support the ethos of the ARCH programme in recognising that older people in care need opportunities for creativity and expression, and contribute to the ways in which creative practice can be embedded in the fabric of care homes. These findings highlight the time investment needed from artists, care home staff and management, and those with overall leadership and project management roles, in order for residencies to have meaningful impact in care homes.

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Photo: Susan Langford, Magic Me

The first Cohort Day September 2019 with people from all the partner organisations:
Anglia Ruskin University, curious directive, Excelcare, Fevered Sleep, Gecko, Magic Me, New Adventures.

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