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Hafford-Letchfield, Trish ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0105-0678>, Hirst, Katy and Lane, Rhiannon (2016) 'Tetley's adventures': a multigenerational arts project for people living with dementia and early years children evaluation report 2015. Project Report. Bright Shadow, Sussex, UK. . [Monograph]

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# 'Tetley's Adventures'

A Multigenerational Arts Project for  
People Living with Dementia and  
Early Years Children

Evaluation Report 2015

Produced by Trish Hafford-Letchfield  
and Bright Shadow



“Watching them teaches you to forget all your sorrow”

## Introduction

This short report documents an account of the multigenerational arts based project led by Bright Shadow in partnership with LEYF's Luton Street Nursery and a site within Notting Hill Extra Care services for older people, during June-July 2015. The report gives a brief overview of the partners involved, describes the activities undertaken during the project and provides a reflective evaluation of the outcomes of the project from the perspective of those involved. Based on the experiences of the project leaders, the report makes some recommendations on the value of intergenerational work in supporting wellbeing of older people living with dementia and community engagement using arts based approaches.



**“When they are my age they will realise how I feel... happy...It’s nice to see them”**

**-David, adult participant**

## Background to Bright Shadow

Bright Shadow's mission is to enable people with dementia and those affected by it to live well and to thrive. They use creativity and performance to celebrate the present moment and create means and opportunities for people with dementia to express themselves, interact with others and take part in meaningful activity. Bright Shadow design and deliver a range of tailored workshops, programmes and learning resources for people living with dementia in care settings and those working with them to help deliver meaningful and creative activities that promote wellbeing. Bright Shadow is also a community activist through the medium of creative performance, which they use to raise awareness of dementia and advocate for dementia friendly communities.

## The core of Bright Shadow's work is embodied in performance, based on the following principles:

1. It is varied. Performance encompasses many types of creative expression including improvisation, storytelling, movement, dance, music, singing, puppetry. It also engages all the senses.
2. It has no right or wrong. Unlike theatre and drama, which typically require participants to act and pretend to be someone else, performance allows people taking part to be themselves, or whatever version of themselves they wish to present at the time.
3. It allows creativity and self-expression to flourish. Performance is often created by the performer. Rather than picking up someone else's script or piece of music and sharing their ideas, performance empowers the performer to create and share something that they want to.
4. Performance happens in an imaginary space, where anything goes. For people with dementia, who can sometimes find themselves being frowned upon for not behaving 'normally', having a safe place where they can be who they want to be, and be celebrated for it can be incredibly meaningful.
5. Performance doesn't rely on verbal communication as the only means of self-expression. As described above, performance encompasses movement, music, song, puppetry and sensory stimulus—all of which provide an opportunity for someone to express themselves and a feeling – and have it understood by others, without the need for words. Being able to communicate with others is a vital contributor to our sense of identity and to our relationships.
6. Performance needs more than one person. By nature performance is an exchange. People create, perform and share ideas in order for them to be enjoyed, received and understood by others. If social interaction is a vital part of our well-being, but often challenging for people with dementia, then performance can provide the vehicle in which to do this.
7. It takes place in the present moment. Performance is immediate. It is an experience for the present moment. It does not rely on an accurate recall of the previous minutes, hours, days, months or years or assume peoples' abilities to be creative have been left in the past.

## Background to the Intergenerational dementia Project

In 2015, Bright Shadow collaborated with a specialist residential unit for people living with dementia within Notting Hill extra care housing scheme, and with LEYF Luton Street Nursery, an early year's centre which provides year round care and education for children from birth to 5 years. The London based project was funded by the Royal Society of Arts as a pilot to explore how these two groups of people, separated by age, could be joined by a mutual disposition of living in the present moment, willingness to play and great imaginations. The project was made possible through a small grant given by the Royal Society of Arts (£2000) and costs 'in kind' from the staffing costs of those involved, free access to the venue and evaluation costs – again, in kind. The project capitalised on what is known about the benefits and value of arts-based and intergenerational activities in care settings.

There is a growing evidence base which verifies the positive impact participative arts can have on the health and wellbeing of older people. The participatory arts might include; music; singing; drama; visual arts; dance; storytelling and other mixed art forms. The participatory arts is a relatively new field of research and evaluation which has limited high quality research to draw evidence from which makes drawing conclusions or comparisons of different methods difficult (McLean et al, 2011; Baring Foundation, 2011). However, a synthesis of published evidence (Baring Foundation, 2011) on the impact of participatory arts on older people has identified impacts in relation to mental and physical wellbeing; as well as beneficial outcomes at both the community and societal level. For example the arts have been associated with increased confidence and self-esteem through engagement and the embracing of new and positive aspects in relation to identity and to counterbalance negative feelings (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2012). Impact on physical wellbeing include cardio-vascular, joint mobility and breathing control and general increase in the levels of daily activity that older people undertake when actively engaged with the arts (McLean et al., 2011). At the community level, participatory arts are thought to offer opportunities for meaningful social contact, friendship and support alongside the challenging of age discrimination by raising awareness and expectations which at the societal level, can bring people together in ways that help individuals in marginalised groups to mitigate the negative effects of stigma and self-doubt on their wellbeing (Hafford-Letchfield et al, 2012, Hafford-Letchfield and Lavender, 2015).

**“I liked meeting the adults!”**

**-Grace, child participant**

Similarly, intergenerational approaches to providing community based support are beginning to demonstrate the potential to capitalise more positively on the contribution of older people, particularly those who are becoming dependent, which might otherwise often, go unrecognised. Intergenerational activities involving arts and other learning activities have been described as an informal vehicle for systematic transfer of knowledge, skills, competencies, norms and values between generations (Hoff 2007) through purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which “promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities” (Beth Johnson Foundation 2011, p4). Intergenerational practice in care settings is thought to be an inclusive method, by building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them. The principles are often centred on keeping new generations grounded in a history of their culture and to provide a link to the past.



## Early Years and Older People Project using Zest

The project led and provided by Bright Shadow was an intergenerational programme involving 6 older people living in a care setting with varying stages of dementia and 8 children in a neighbouring local nursery. Based on the Zest approach which is a unique programme developed by Bright Shadow, the project participants were invited to use their imaginations and join the puppet 'Tetley' on his 'big adventures'. Over a five week period, participants adventured to the Great Outdoors, Wimbledon, The Seaside, Circus and Space.

Zest workshops are themed, participatory and sensory activity sessions that use performance-based activities to bring life, energy and fun to individuals and environments. Zest Workshops use a variety of performance activities such as song, movement, music, story making, puppetry and other sensory stimuli. In this project, the workshops were carefully designed and delivered to take participants from both age groups with mixed physical and cognitive abilities on a creative journey to a different place or space based on the principles of relationship-centred and user-led practice.



Each intergenerational workshop was provided in the extra care setting for one and a half hours including a break with themed refreshments. The first workshops were delivered to each group separately in their own settings. The nursery children were accompanied by early years staff who joined and supported the activities and the older people were supported by care staff who did not always participate directly but were on hand to support the individuals and workshop facilitators where required. Participation in the project was completely voluntary. Children were identified by the nursery staff who then gained permission from the children's parents/guardians. The older adults were recruited by the staff and Bright Shadow by building rapport and inviting them to attend.

## Project evaluation

Whilst a formal evaluation was undertaken, the evaluation methods were relatively low key and designed to be the least intrusive so as to minimise any disruption to the quality of the workshop activities themselves, which was the main focus of the project, and to ensure that the methods used reflected the process of sharing and collaboration. The evaluation drew on a qualitative approach within the limited resources available.

All participants were given an information sheet and consent form by the project facilitators so that informed consent was maximised to gather feedback from the workshop participants. The evaluation was built into Bright Shadow's normal approach to collecting feedback from the people that they work with rather than creating any 'extra' burden particularly given the resources available.

The aim of the evaluation was to identify any benefits from the participant's perspectives which may include the following;

- New skills learned or demonstrated as a result of the activities and opportunities provided
- 'Feel good' factors experienced such as social engagement, opportunities to interact and develop friendships and enjoyment.
- Sense of control – co-participation in activities and decisions during the workshop
- Sense of accomplishment – personal or group achievement, contribution to another or wider community
- Sense of self, expressions of self-worth, self-image and feelings during and immediately after the workshop.

For the nursery children, the consent process involved obtaining parental consent in accordance with the LEYF nursery procedures. No names or identifying features are used in this report and all of the evaluation feedback, most of which was verbal or based on the facilitator's reflective observation is anonymised and collated so as to remove any identifying features and to remove the risk of being able to identify individuals within the evaluation report.

The evaluation included:

- Verbal feedback from individual members of the group at the end of each workshop collected by the Bright Shadow facilitators in a group round-robin from which brief notes were made.
- The completion of post session reflective evaluation by the session facilitator
- A short recall or reorientation group discussion on the last session noted by the facilitator.



In addition to these standard measures, Bright Shadow asked the author of this short report, as an independent stakeholder, to undertake some short 10-15 minute interviews with key participants and stakeholders on their impressions of the workshops and programme. These included nursery staff, project staff, and staff in the care home via telephone calls and e mail contact. The author also attended the last workshop for the purpose of contextualising the interviews and introducing herself. There was no direct involvement in the project by the author of this report in collecting feedback from its participants. Feedback from those unable to consent was not sought or used. The report has therefore been put together through direct liaison with the programme facilitators to go through their evaluation sources in order to collate and synthesise the feedback in a coherent way and to collate these into a short report on their behalf.

**Feedback gathered through group round robin at the beginning of the first session:**

1. What are you expecting from the session today
2. Who is looking forward to it and why?
3. Has anybody got any reservations and why?
4. Who do you know in the room already, can you tell us? (draw a quick map of these)

**Group round robin at the beginning of the second session and at the beginning of each session thereafter:**

1. What do you remember about the last session we had together? What sticks out the most in your mind about it?
2. How do you feel about the last session?
3. Have you got any questions or suggestions to make for this next session

**Group round robin at the end of each session :**

1. What do you remember most about what we did today?
2. What was the most enjoyable thing you did today?
3. Did you learn anything new? About yourself, something you did, about someone or something else?
4. What was challenging or difficult – why was that? What can help next time?
5. Who did you get to know the most during the session, why/how was that?
6. Have you made any new friends or contacts with people involved? What have you found out about other people in the group?
7. Give us one word to tell us how you are feeling right now?
8. Anything you want to tell us about today that we haven't asked you?

The facilitators also completed their own routine project self-evaluation and post session reflection sheet. The table below captures some of the key emergent themes from the facilitators' workshop reflective evaluation.

## Workshop Overview

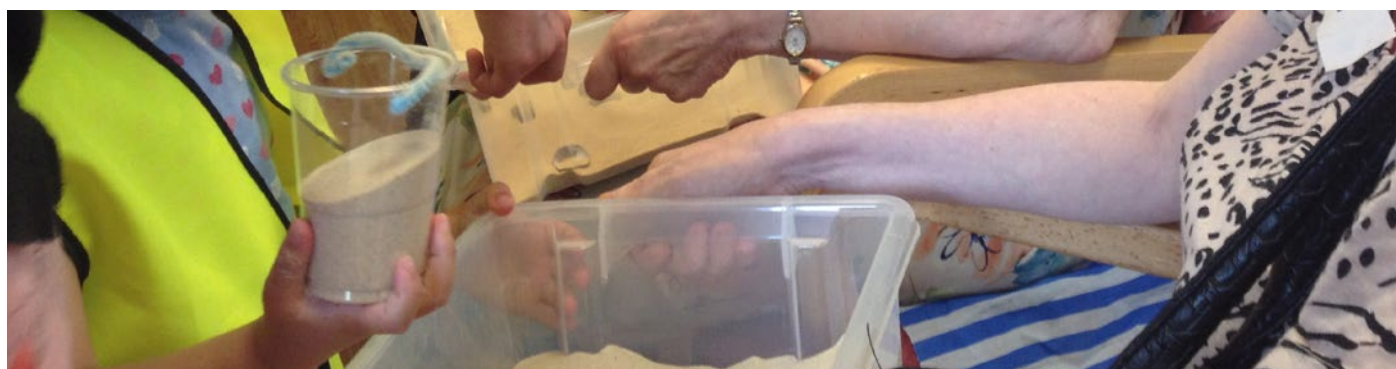
Session	Topic	Participants	Key emergent themes from the post workshop reflective evaluation
1	Great outdoors Involving: Singing songs Morris dancing Hooking ducks Making posies Storytelling	Separate groups 6 older people	-There was lots of laughing from both children and adults during the activities -Rising to the challenge through a 'competition' -Older people were observed to be responding positively to gentle touch to facilitate following of verbal instruction -Use of physical objects to stimulate imagination -Selecting simple activities to maximise involvement in movement requiring co-ordination
2	Seaside Involving: Singing songs Playing with sand Punch and Judy Ice cream Story making	Intergenerational group 4 older people 4 children	-Distinguishing between activities that engage both groups separately and encourage collaboration -Children giving attention to a particular older person -Showing interest in each other through sustained eye contact, smiling and facial expressions -Older people and children taking physical and verbal cues from each other
3	Wimbledon Involving: Singing in the rain Balls and balloons Strawberries Storytelling	Intergenerational group 5 older people 6 children	-One older woman initiated physical contact with child by gently touching her hair -One or two older persons taking the lead with particular activities -Children becoming more extrovert and this was commented on by an older person -Increased smiling and interaction between participants noted through facial expressions and touch
4	Circus Involving: Song singing Scarf juggling Candy floss/Twizzle sticks Puppets Tight rope	Intergenerational 4 older people 7 children	-Marked increased interaction with one particular older woman and in general with older people. -- -Increased noise, animation and engagement overall. -One person taking care of puppet throughout session and danced spontaneously at the end -One older person who usually takes time out during the session stayed throughout. -Encouragement between both adult and children participants was initiated to sustain activities
5	Going into space Involving: Dressing up in space suits Lift off Moon walking Meteorites Communicating with aliens Storytelling Song singing	Intergenerational 5 older people 5 children	-One older person was very playful throughout -One older woman sleepy at the beginning smiling and listening at the end, making eye contact -One older man who can be agitated was very calm sitting down and noted as being more positive and happy than at the beginning of the project

**“Watching them teaches you to forget all your sorrow”  
-Adult Participant**

## Benefits identified from the participants perspectives

### New skills learned or demonstrated as a result of the activities and opportunities provided.

The workshops all followed a set format including a warm up and debriefing activity to build rapport with and between participants. Over the period of time, there were noticeable and subtle changes in the relationships between children and older people from initial shyness progressing to gentle touching, smiling, nodding and initiating direct approaches outside of the activities by the last workshop. The structure of the workshops included opportunities for both physical and verbal interaction for example through singing familiar tunes (singing in the rain) and gentle movement that could be done by those with mobility issues. Opportunities for improvisation through the provision of stimulation materials (silver balls as meteorites) facilitated imaginary play and co-construction of experiences (meeting an alien on the moon). Familiar themes such as Wimbledon, space travel and the season enabled older people to draw on longer term memories which sometimes triggered positive memories and associated feelings. Staff commented on their surprise about what individual older people could remember for example one talking about this after eating strawberries as well as the contribution those participants made in creating a story together and reading it out at the end of the session.



### 'Feel good' factors experienced such as social engagement, opportunities to interact and develop friendships and enjoyment.

Most of the engagement was 'in the moment' although after week 2, one of the older people asked when the group was coming back and said 'Great, I'll see you next week' after which he was much more positive and active in the group compared to the start of the project where he had a tendency to be agitated and wanting to leave. Another of the older participants was noted to be very animated and chatty specifically about the children when the group was packing up and volunteering conversation which has not been previously noted. One of the older people commented that "In the old days little boys should be seen and not heard. Had no choice, they would hit you". He referred to one of the children as being 'loveable' and expressed regret that he didn't have this sort of thing (referring to one of the fun activities) when he was a child.



### Sense of accomplishment – personal or group achievement, contribution to another or wider community.

This was very hard to ascertain based on the feedback gathered although in response to the question 'Is there anything you want to tell us about today that we haven't asked you?' Some of the participants responded 'everything they talk about' (referring to the children), 'watching them enjoying themselves teaches you to forget all your sorrow' and 'being so happy together, made me feel part of them', all of which generate insights into the potential exclusion that older people can experience when living in care settings or with long term conditions. It was noted that being in the company of young children brought out the playful nature of older people particularly when preparing for an adventure which opened doors to explore new conversations that may not be available in day to day routines.

### Sense of self, expressions of self-worth, self-image and feelings during and immediately after the workshop.

Staff particularly commented that for those older participants that didn't have relatives or where the family did not visit often, the opportunity to have interaction and physical contact with people in the community, they thought was very beneficial. Staff had been particularly curious about how the workshops would work particularly in relation to older people who were not actively verbal. As one put it, 'it's amazing how much enjoyment you can get out of tins!'. Asking participants to identify one word to describe how they felt in the post workshop debrief revealed frequency of words such as 'happy', 'fun', 'enjoyment'.

## Concluding commentary

One of the main themes from the evaluation was the way in which the interventions and process used in the project facilitated opportunities for intergenerational and interactive learning activities. Through the medium of imagination, drama, voice and imagery, those involved expressed positive regards and positive feelings that contributed to their own sense of presence and identity. Warne and McAndrew (2010) suggest that when using arts-based approaches, the emphasis needs to be on identifying what contributes to or inhibits the effective use of self in relation to help and/or working with others. This way of 'knowing' is also essential to knowing what we need to know in order to be competent and effective as a professional. This was something that was acknowledged by the care workers who whilst not directly involved were able to identify the value of relationship based practice through being in the moment and enjoying activities away from the routine of care.

The social value of engagement with the arts has been endorsed by the World Health Organization who has called for increased partnerships between health and other sectors to address social and economic problems, and recognize the role of the arts (p. 4). The Royal College of Psychiatrists, the British Medical Association; the Department of Health (Clift et al 2009) and the New Economics Foundation (Aked et al not dated) all support the notion that creative activities promote wellbeing and in the UK, prescribing arts and other leisure activities have been seen to be effective as a way of connecting patients of primary care services with community-based sources of support that are usually found in the voluntary sector (Stickley and Eady 2013). The values of these are thought to lie in prompting and giving impulse towards opportunities in an environment where service users are taken away from everyday demands. The opportunity to be diverted from dependence and everyday problems towards realising their potential is also enhanced where service users start to access environments from which they may have previously felt excluded or estranged, or which would not previously been in their day-to-day experiences. This project had an emphasis on personal experiences, relationships and creating a social environment in which two 'institutions' could share their time and resources towards a common goal.

One of the challenges is in exploring potential for joint working across different sectors involved in community support and developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence in service provision. This may involve carrying out joint projects and finding ways of building resources to facilitate these within everyday routines.

The Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) have identified how the fundamental elements of intergenerational practice can be of practical use particularly to those working in voluntary and community sectors, local authorities and central government if they organise their collaborative roles and relationship in delivering more devolved local services to bring about systemic change. The basic essentials and essence involves a good base of community engagement skills such as, setting up and running activities.

Those involved in setting up, collaborating and executing the project all reflected on the limitations of undertaking time-limited and small scale interventions, all of which are difficult to evaluate in terms of their impact beyond the immediate 'feel-good' factors or in the use of any validated measures which are complex to administrate. This particular project did not have sufficient resources to evaluate any sustainable impact but considered it important to document the outcomes, no matter how small, on the work completed. Further, the provider organisations involved have commented on the challenges in co-ordinating longer term activities and relationships given the other demands on their time which highlights the gap in infrastructures to support intergenerational and arts based work within community support.



## Limitations of the evaluation and recommendations for the future:

A number of limitations are noted which concern wider issues impacting on a project such as this one and some recommendations are made about how these might be overcome in the future

-There is Insufficient funding by local agencies and organisations to support arts-based and intergenerational activities which are generally seen as a luxury, particularly given pressure on fees and contributions around care. More attention could be given to how these might be embedded within mainstream commissioning processes given what we know about the contribution made to individuals, groups and communities for longer term wellbeing. This might include actively bringing smaller organisations together like Bright Shadow to discuss challenges in meeting needs and to work together within the sector to foster innovation and cross disciplinary partnerships to meet these.

-Vulnerable older people experience particularly limited access to the participatory arts and there is a need to skill up the workforce to undertake these activities so that these can become part of the service delivery repertoire. The provider of the supported housing organisation involved in this project also noted that whilst there are a lot of opportunities for short term interventions for those older people living with dementia, the opportunities for older people living in mainstream supportive housing are noticeably sparse and more preventative and capacity building activities could be developed with that group.

-Maintaining sustainable participation particularly in view of barriers in later life that imposes on motivation and ability to participate. Training partnerships with organisations like Bright Shadow can be fruitful in providing challenges to how low expectations of the limitations of age on the abilities of older people to participate and be creative can be fostered in everyday support.

-There is poor age proofing of mainstream participatory arts services and projects already funded by LA's, central government, arts and community councils and insufficient targeting of excluded minority groups in the community. Again, fostering collaborations between organisations with specialist skills such as Bright Shadow and mainstream services may help to address these.

**“Being so happy together made me feel part of them”  
-Adult Participant**

-There is insufficient funding for robust evaluation particularly good quality research and evaluation with larger samples, longitudinal impact to improve strength of evidence. Identifying and embedding a common framework which smaller organisations such as Bright Shadow can engage with and to recognise the significance of evaluation within funding streams should continue to be supported.

-A number of the above recommendations indicate the need for more forums for sharing research findings amongst practitioners and policy makers to avoid duplication and promote learning.

-More needs to be known about the key elements of the participatory art activity process to produce better understanding of what makes successful projects work well or impedes them so that replication and spread of innovation can occur.



## Thank You

Bright Shadow and this Multi-generational project is proud to be supported by RSA Catalyst, which selects the best new ideas to help tackle social problems that its 27,000 fellows are looking to deliver.

We would also like to thank the staff, children and residents of LEYF Luton Street Nursery and Notting Hill Extra Care Services for partnering with us on this project and for giving permission to publish our evaluation.

## For more information

Please contact Rhiannon Lane, director at Bright Shadow on [rhiannon@brightshadow.org.uk](mailto:rhiannon@brightshadow.org.uk)

You can also look at Bright Shadow's website: [www.brightshadow.org.uk](http://www.brightshadow.org.uk)



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