



Care Homes in the Community

Evaluation report of a Bristol Ageing Better project led by Alive



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ABOUT THIS REPORT >>

This report presents an evaluation of the Alive project 'Communities of Interest' funded by Bristol Ageing Better. It is a collaborative piece of work, written by Alive staff Sara Turrill (Project Manager, Alive), Harriet Blackmore (Project Assistant, Alive), Abi Sweet (Community Projects Officer, Alive), Jennie Reed (Marketing Manager, Alive), Simon Bernstein (Former CEO, Alive), Amy Beardmore (Research Associate, UWE), Mat Jones (Associate Professor, UWE).

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Foreword >>

Simon Bernstein, Former Chief Executive, Alive

Alive find every way possible to engage older people in care and to create a world where they can live lives full of joy, meaning and opportunity. That is why it gives me such pleasure to introduce this report on our hugely successful Bristol Ageing Better funded 'Communities of Interest' project.

Living in a care home can sometimes be a life-affirming, positive, experience for an older person thanks to the support of skilful and motivated care staff. Too often this is not the case and residents are bored, lonely, socially isolated and depressed. Their health may deteriorate because they are not able to use their imaginations, be creative or share their life stories or experiences. Yet research from Exeter University shows that just 10 minutes of meaningful social interaction can make all the difference to older people's wellbeing.

The 'Communities of Interest' project, which ran in four care homes in Bristol over a two-year period, was designed to connect older people with their local communities using asset-based community development and coproduction techniques. This meant us tapping into the skills and interests, networks and resources, held by individuals and groups within the local communities surrounding each care home. But, critically, it also recognised that people in care homes – older people, including those living with dementia, and their care staff – possess skills and knowledge to share with each other, as well as the outside community. Above all, the project was founded on Alive's belief that older people have a right to choose and shape the social activities in which they engage both inside and outside their homes.

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Footnote 1: Simon Bernstein was succeeded by Isobel Jones as Chief Executive in 2019.

This approach was challenging at times, though all the more rewarding for that. Using coproduction, for example, meant we were unsure of the activities we would be facilitating. We had to experiment with the best ways to find out the skills and interests of older people across the four care homes, each person a unique individual but as a group possessing a very wide range of cognitive and physical abilities. This only worked because BAB enabled us to extend the time we took to find out what older people truly wanted and thanks to the support of the care staff and loved ones who shared their invaluable personal knowledge and insights.

The results were inspirational as you will read from the evaluations and case studies in this report. Each care home formed a steering group made up of a majority of residents to propose and help organise activities. Older people wanted to get outdoors, into care home grounds to touch the earth and create beautiful gardens, to invite young people into their homes to share stories and interests, but also to escape the confines of those homes to explore the local area with the help of willing volunteers and community groups – to feel the sea breeze on their cheeks and watch the waves roll in again, to experience lush and humid botanical gardens, and to spend time stroking and feeding farm animals.

The steering groups continue after the project's end. We believe we have begun to break down barriers, challenge negative perceptions about care homes and stereotypes of older people in care, showing they have so much still to offer their communities and fulfilling lives still to live. There is still work to do to spread this practice and to that end we happily share some of what we have learnt in this report.

Executive Summary >>

Bristol Ageing Better commissioned Alive to run the 'Communities of Interest' project, working with four care homes in Bristol, to connect care home residents with their local communities and put residents at the centre of deciding and shaping activity plans within the home. This evaluation was led by the project team, with support from researchers at UWE.

Steering groups were set up in each home and run on a quarterly basis. At these, residents were asked what activities they wanted to see more of in the home and what connections with the local community they wanted to make. Alive sought to train staff in coproduction, community engagement, meaningful activity and volunteer management to ensure the continuation of the work and longevity of the project.

Evidence from the evaluation shows a high level of engagement by residents, positive feedback from staff, and the delivery of a wide range of activities including those that made new community connections for the care home. Over the course of the project, 162 care home residents across four care homes took part in 38 activities and community visits. The care homes established 23 community connections with outside organisations and 22 relatives engaged in project activities. Alive trained and worked with 25 care staff and 38 volunteers.

The outcome assessment measures and qualitative feedback showed very positive short-term outcomes for the mental and social wellbeing of residents taking part in project activities.

Alive learned to work with four very different care homes, where residents brought different skills and interests to the table. Residents reported that they appreciated and benefitted from being involved in steering groups and shaping activity plans. Activity plans were tailored to each setting, with clear feedback that residents preferred this to a 'pre-decided' activity plan.

Gardening and outdoor activities were very popular with residents and were the most chosen activity. Trips out into the community were also very popular, with residents choosing places that they had visited in the past and to which they felt a personal connection.

Having the support of care home managers and activity coordinators was crucial to the successful delivery of the project. Training for all care staff, not simply activity coordinator staff, had an important role in embedding a coproduction and community engagement ethos across care homes.

The project demonstrated the viability and benefits for care homes to engage more closely in the community life of their neighbourhoods. The project enabled schools, allotment groups and other local community groups to benefit from building relationships with older people in local care homes. At the time of writing, it is too early to assess the sustainability of the project approaches. However all four homes are continuing to run steering groups in line with the project goals. Further evidence suggests that participating care homes made enduring community connections and substantially enhanced their volunteer capacity to deliver novel, diverse and meaningful activities with residents.



Introduction >>

Bristol Ageing Better (BAB) is a partnership of individuals and organisations working together to reduce isolation and loneliness among older people in Bristol. The BAB partnership is led by Age UK Bristol and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund as part of their Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better programme. Currently BAB is a partnership of over 150 organisations interested in reducing isolation and loneliness among older people. BAB partners represent a very wide spectrum of organisations, including statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations. Delivery of the projects within the programme is being undertaken by BAB partner organisations.

The BAB programme aims to reduce isolation and loneliness in older people in Bristol through projects across 4 main themes:

1. Creating the conditions to reduce and prevent loneliness.
2. Identifying and informing older people at risk of loneliness.
3. Working with communities to increase the services and activities available.
4. Supporting individuals to live fulfilling lives.

The 'Communities of Interest' project, led by Alive, was delivered over a two-year period from April 2017 to March 2019, working in four care homes across Bristol. The project used an asset-based approach to enhance the lives of older people and create a community around and within the care homes.

The funding has allowed Alive to explore the idea of developing a community around a care home, with care home residents at the centre. By taking an asset-based approach, the Alive team sought to work with care home staff and residents to coproduce activity plans with residents' skills and interests at the heart of the project.

Sustainability was key to the project from the outset. Alive developed and delivered coaching and training for the care home staff, to support them to run their own coproduction and community engagement work, once the project had ended.

The aim of this report is to show the process of delivering the project, explore outcomes, and present the learning for wider audiences. The evaluation was led by Alive staff and volunteers, with advisory support from Mat Jones and the evaluation team at University of the West of England.

Context >>

Over 400,000 older people live in residential care in the UK. Approximately 80% of care home residents have dementia or severe memory problems. An ageing population means that the number of people aged 85+ with significant care needs is set to double in the next 20 years. When someone goes into residential care, things that give them a sense of identity and purpose - such as friends and family, home and possessions, hobbies and interests, the ability to make choices - often disappear from their life. Their health and wellbeing are in the hands of others.

Yet as things stand, those who enter residential care often experience a poorer quality of life. Lack of funding/investment, staff shortages (and high staff turnover), lack of awareness (including at the most senior level), and under-investment in staff training have combined to create a task-focused culture of care that prioritises residents' physical and practical needs whilst frequently neglecting their mental and emotional wellbeing.

Activities provided by care homes are often limited to television or 'entertainment' that takes no account of individual needs and interests. Many residents have little or no contact with family or the wider community and spend most of their time sitting, doing nothing, rarely interacting with others. This inactivity has been shown to exacerbate the symptoms of dementia, and to contribute to widespread loneliness, isolation and depression amongst older people in care, impacting hugely on their quality of life.

The benefits of outdoor nature-based activities are well documented, and include

improvements in emotional state, physical health, verbal expression, memory and attention, awareness (multi-sensory engagement and joy), well-being, independence, self-esteem and control, social interaction and a sense of belonging. Social and therapeutic horticulture, for example, can be used to provide exercise, reminiscence and accessible activities for people of any ability (Greening Dementia, 2013).

The benefits of intergenerational activities are also well known and were summed up in a recent paper titled 'Positive Ageing Through Place Based Intergenerational Activity' (Kagan, 2016). Kagan cites a reduction in isolation, and a sense of satisfaction and pride as key benefits, and overall evidence suggests intergenerational activities can also improve community cohesion.

Overview of the project >>

As part of the early stage of the BAB programme Alive and Growing Support had both been commissioned to run small scale pilot projects to explore the scope for social and therapeutic activities in care homes. Following these pilots and an evaluation that included research by BAB Community Researchers, BAB tendered the opportunity to deliver a project that would connect care homes to local communities. Alive were successful in being awarded the commission for this 'Communities of Interest in Care Homes' project. Initially the project was co-run with Growing Support, who merged into Alive at the end of year one of the project.

Alive drew upon a number of core principles to develop the project:

- ▶ **Empowering:** Alive set out to work with residents in all four care homes to find out what activities they enjoy, and how/whether they would like to engage with their local community. Activity plans were designed and drawn up based solely on the requests of the residents, as well as the assets and strengths of the residents and the care homes.
- ▶ **Building links:** Steering groups made up of care home residents and staff ensured a collaborative and older people led approach to planning activities. Long lasting relationships were brokered with community groups. Following initial contacts, Alive organised trips and visits with community groups.

- ▶ **Support & partnership:** Alive delivered coaching programmes with staff in all four care homes. This embedded key coproduction and asset based approaches to activity planning and enabled the staff to sustain steering groups, meaningful activities and community links after the project ended.
- ▶ **Evidence-based:** Alive provided care homes with information on the measurable difference that the steering group, community activities and staff coaching has had on life at the care home.

Building on these principles Alive worked with residents, care homes and community members to create a unique activity plan for each care setting. The range of activities included intergenerational meet ups with local nurseries and primary schools, creative workshops ranging from dance, art and classical music to cooking and travel, and educational evening talks and trips out to local landmarks, including botanical gardens, farms and allotments.

PARTICIPATING CARE HOMES

Four care homes agreed to take part in the Alive project. Box 1 gives a summary of the main characteristics.

Care homes were selected on the following basis:

- ▶ Homes with varying budgets – some homes were more affluent and others were operating on an extremely limited activities budget.
- ▶ Homes from disparate parts of Bristol – although the project aimed to ensure that there was a balanced geographical spread and a difference in local distinctiveness, this was somewhat limited by which homes were able to commit to the project. Originally the plan had been to select four homes from four entirely different parts of the city however two of the original homes selected were unable to fully commit to the longevity of the project and two other homes were subsequently

engaged. This resulted in two homes being situated in similar areas (Stokeleigh and Katherine House).

- ▶ Homes with varying numbers of activities staff – two out of the four homes had one main activities lead (Bamfield Lodge and Stokeleigh). Two out of the four had two or more activities staff which meant that they were able to provide more activities and that they had more capacity and resources to support events.
- ▶ Initial meetings took place between the BAB project manager and each care home involved in the project. This enabled Alive staff and each care home to sign data protection forms, gain consent from staff and residents to be involved, gain photo consent and track participant engagement. A care home agreement was also signed which laid out Alive's commitments to each care home and their commitments to Alive throughout the project. These were signed at the outset of the project and updated and refreshed at the start of the second year.



Box 1: Characteristics of the care homes and staff taking part in the project

Care Home 1: Katherine House (including Griffiths House which is the Dementia Unit at Katherine House)

No. of residents directly engaged: 53 residents over two years in a 57 bed care home.

Care Home 2: Stokeleigh Residential Care Home

No. of residents directly engaged: 34 residents over two years in a 28 bed care home.

Care Home 3: Granville Lodge

No. of residents directly engaged: 38 residents over two years in an 81 bed care home.

Care Home 4: Bamfield Lodge

No. of residents directly engaged: 31 residents over two years in a 60 bed care home.

Staff involved from across all four care homes included:

- ▶ Seven activity coordinators.
- ▶ Five care home managers (two different managers took up post during the two year period at Bamfield Lodge).
- ▶ In addition three carers, one maintenance worker and three activities leads from Katherine House accompanied trips.
- ▶ Three carers, one activity coordinator and one maintenance worker from Stokeleigh.
- ▶ Four carers and one activity coordinator from Bamfield Lodge.
- ▶ Two activity coordinators, one manager and one regular volunteer from Granville Lodge – they had considerably less support from care staff being that the needs of residents were much higher in Granville Lodge and all care staff were needed at all times to support people who were bedbound or had higher needs within the home.



At the end of the project, decided by residents, Alive held a celebration event in each care home sharing food, music and photos from the project with care home staff, residents and their families.

To share the learning from the project as a whole, a celebration event was held in February 2019, with care home staff from the project, other local care home staff, Bristol Ageing Better staff and representatives from other groups who work with older people in care and the community across the region. At this event, Alive shared lessons, showcased photographs and case studies and facilitated workshops centred on coproduction and community engagement with care homes.

Methodology and methods >>

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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This evaluation followed a mixed methods study design, with the parallel collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation was a collaboration, in which the Alive project delivery staff led on the collection and analysis of the data, and UWE Bristol staff provided advisory support, further analysis, validation, and interpretation of the research. Alive have an established track record in assessing the effectiveness of their work using an evaluation framework, developed in 2015 in consultation with Willis Newson, a leading arts and health consultancy, and UWE Bristol. Alive used additional evaluation methods to measure the impact on specific areas outlined in the BAB aims. The following section sets out the data collection tools and procedures.

SESSION TRACKER AND PARTICIPANT TRACKER

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At the start of the project Alive set up two databases to record the delivery of activities and participation in these activities. The Session Tracker was set up to record trips, activities and events that had taken place throughout the project:

A second spreadsheet, the Participant Tracker, enabled Alive to record information on everyone who had been involved in the BAB project. Recording information about each participant allowed Alive to track the following:

- ▶ Number of participants aged over 50.
- ▶ Number of participants joining each quarter.
- ▶ Date of entry into project.
- ▶ Route of entry (e.g. via the steering group, gardening activity, daytrip).
- ▶ Gender of participant.
- ▶ Participant type (e.g. resident, care home staff, volunteer, community member, school pupil).

Additional columns were later added which enabled Alive to keep track of the following:

- ▶ Which activities each individual had attended.
- ▶ Patterns of engagement among participants.
- ▶ Completion of wellbeing questionnaires.
- ▶ Key quotes from participants and information for case studies.

Information from the two trackers enabled Alive to record the following:

- ▶ Total number of residents, care home staff, children, students, relatives and volunteers engaged.
- ▶ Total number of hours of BAB related events, trips and activity.
- ▶ Number of different types of activity organised.
- ▶ Types of training offered and attended.
- ▶ Total number of community connections made.

Figure 1: Extract of the Session Tracker

Date of session	01.04.18	01.05.18
Type of BAB session / activity	Shared reading group	Steering group meeting May 2018
Care home(s) involved	Granville lodge	Bamfield lodge
Organisations involved	Alive, Avonmouth Library	Alive
Length (mins)	60	60
No. of residents involved	7	6
No. of children involved	0	0
No. of CH staff involved	1	1
No. of relatives / visitors	0	1
No. of vols involved	2	2
Anyone else involved? Who, how many?	Alive, Granville Lodge, Library	No
New participants over 50	1	0

Keeping track of the status of activities (started, ongoing, and completed) also enabled Alive to gauge the legacy of the project and understand the degree to which different activities were sustainable beyond the BAB funding period.

Figure 2: Extract of the Participant Tracker

BAB CMF entry	Y	N
Sent		
Received		
Inputted		
Alive entry evaluation	Emailed 08/02/18	Emailed 08/02/18
Sent		
Received		
Inputted		
Date of exit form		
Exit reason		
BAB CMF exit	Y	N
Sent		
Received		
Inputted		
Alive exit evaluation		
Sent		
Received		
Inputted		
Activity attended	Gardening	Gardening
Date attended	Jan-18	Jan-18

ARTS OBSERVATIONS TOOL

For session observations Alive used a modified version of the 'ArtsObs' tool (Fancourt & Poon, 2016). This tool is cited by Public Health England in their new guidance on evaluating arts programmes that seek to improve health and wellbeing (Daykin and Joss, 2016). This allowed an evaluator to directly observe changes in mood, relaxation, stimulation and interaction as well as the general atmosphere in the care setting during and following the activities. The mood/wellbeing measurements allow the observer to tell whether an activity session caused a participant to experience a greater sense of wellbeing than they would have experienced without the session. Participants are rated before and after the activity session on a scale of one to seven. Body language is observed, and categories used to rate individual responses (e.g. listless, distracted, excited, receptive etc.). The 'ArtsObs' tool also has an open text section to record qualitative information, such as participant views of the activities.

The Arts Observations tool was selected as an evaluation tool for this project because it is highly appropriate for measuring the impact of activities for people living with dementia. The tool measures impact in the moment (rather than over an extended time period), it collects observational data (not just verbal comment from participants). Both these characteristics mean that verbal communication and memory loss are less likely to interfere with the evaluation.

TRAINING FEEDBACK FORMS

All Alive training days were evaluated. Alive asked participants to assess their knowledge,

skills, motivation and confidence both before and after the course. Feedback forms were filled in from the following courses: Coproduction and Community Engagement training, Volunteer Management training, Meaningful Activity training, and Coproduced Gardening Activities in Care Homes training.

STEERING GROUP QUESTIONNAIRES

At the final steering groups, project staff asked residents who had been involved in group meetings a series of questions asking how they felt about being involved in this process.

CARE STAFF INTERVIEWS

Alive conducted semi-structured interviews with the care staff who had been most involved in the project. These surveys have been used to assess the following criteria:

- ▶ The impact of Alive's training upon staff and residents.
- ▶ The overall effects and outcomes of project activity.
- ▶ How the project has altered perceptions of care within their community.
- ▶ Staff's approach and use of community engagement and coproduction techniques.
- ▶ Confidence amongst staff and residents when engaging with their local community.

Alive also asked staff to reflect upon and detail any change in culture or approach at each home over a two-year period.

SURVEYS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Surveys were sent to volunteers and community members involved in the project to ask about creating and sustaining connections with the care home, and if the project has helped them feel more connected to community life.

COMMON MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK FORMS

Common Measurement Framework (CMF) forms are Bristol Ageing Better's main quantitative evaluation tool.

Given the high needs of the residents that Alive were working with, the complexity and length of the CMF forms were not always suitable for participants, many of whom were living with dementia. Instead Alive captured the impact of the project on mood and wellbeing using other recommended tools as outlined in the report.

Wherever CMF completion was appropriate, forms were completed with residents:

- ▶ 16 demographic and entry surveys collected.
- ▶ 10 exit surveys collected.

Fewer exit surveys were completed than entry surveys due to residents having passed away or their dementia advancing. In other instances residents that had filled out entry surveys were unavailable to fill out exit surveys due to having moved home or being otherwise engaged.

BAB EVENT AND WORKSHOPS FEEDBACK

At the project celebration event in February 2019, project staff led presentations and workshops on coproduction and community engagement. Alive asked participants to assess their knowledge, skills and confidence in delivering coproduction activities and community engagement for older people both before and after the event.

FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING ASSESSMENT TOOL

'Growing Support', the gardening/green activity component of the project, was designed to help participants achieve the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing). They are:

- 1. Connect.** "Connect with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day."
- 2. Be Active.** "Discover a physical activity you enjoy that meets your level of mobility and fitness."
- 3. Take notice.** "Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you."
- 4. Keep learning.** "Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will help you feel more confident as well as being fun."
- 5. Give.** "Do something nice for a friend or a stranger. Seeing yourself and your happiness connected to the wider

community can be rewarding and creates connections with people around you." (Aked and Thompson, 2011)

Growing Support's assessment tool was used to assess the extent to which the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing,' had been achieved for each session.

GROWING SUPPORT COACHING AND TRAINING FEEDBACK

Activity staff and volunteers in each care home were provided with gardening coaching to enable them to continue gardening sessions without Alive facilitators. Growing Support used Alive feedback forms to ask participants to assess their knowledge, skills and confidence in delivering gardening activities for older people, both before and after the course.

CASE STUDIES

Throughout the two-year project, Alive developed case studies of outstanding outcomes or stories. These were based on interviews with participants and other stakeholders.

ETHICAL ISSUES

- ▶ Alive has clear processes in place to address ethical issues that might occur when working in a care home setting.
- ▶ All Alive staff, Facilitators and Volunteers are DBS checked before entering care settings.
- ▶ Alive data collection and information management is fully compliant with policies.

- ▶ Alive had clear policies on GDPR (confidentiality, anonymity unless active consent, information management).
- ▶ Procedures were followed to ensure that care home agreements were signed and consent gained from participants (further details can be found in the findings section below).

Ethical approval for the evaluation, including delegated data collection by project staff, was obtained through the UWE Bristol Health and Applied Science Faculty Research Ethics Committee (reference: HAS.16.11.045). In this report all quotes have been anonymised or given pseudonyms except for case study instances where participants have given active consent.



Findings: Impact on residents >>

ACTIVITY DELIVERY AND PARTICIPATION

Over the project period, Alive's monitoring system demonstrated good engagement from a range of residents and other stakeholders:

- ▶ **162** care home residents across four care homes engaged.
- ▶ **25** care home staff participated in project activity.
- ▶ **22** relatives engaged.
- ▶ **38** volunteers.
- ▶ **328** hours of BAB related events, trips and activity.
- ▶ **24** different types of regular activities.
- ▶ **14** different kinds of trips.
- ▶ **Eight** different types of training offered to staff and volunteers.
- ▶ **23** community connections made with other organisations.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL OUTCOMES FOR RESIDENTS TAKING PART IN ACTIVITIES

'ArtsObs' results were available for **125 participants**. The following areas showed changes:

- ▶ **79%** of older people were observed to have improved wellbeing/mood.
- ▶ **93%** of older people appeared relaxed by the activity (showed evidence of reduced anxiety/distressed behaviour).
- ▶ **90%** of older people appeared stimulated by the activity.
- ▶ **80%** of older people appeared connected to their personhood through the activity (i.e. connected to memories/words/music, actively participating).
- ▶ **82%** of older people interacted as a result of the activity (talking, physical/verbal communication).
- ▶ **100%** evaluators reported the activities had a positive effect on the general atmosphere of the care home.

Qualitative feedback from residents, family and care staff provided further illustration of these changes:

» "When my Mum retired she used to make wedding cakes and celebration cakes with people...It's so nice to see her happy, doing something. She's really enjoying it."

- Daughter of participant at a cooking session, Bamfield Lodge

» "I really enjoy being part of a big group and all the conversation. It helps me forget about my pain and other trouble."

- Participant at a steering group session, Granville Lodge

» "Lottie's mood shifted throughout the session. She had seemed distracted before the session began and worried about missing an appointment however by the end of the session, she seemed completely relaxed and also clapped along to the beat of the music. At the end she told me 'I really did enjoy that. I'm so glad that happened to me!'"

- Observer at the 'Live Music Now' folk concert, Stokeleigh



» "One resident at Bamfield is living with fairly advanced dementia and is usually extremely quiet. She often joins activities although does not really fully engage in them and rarely becomes excited or animated about the activity on hand. The cookery workshop was the exception to this rule. It appealed very much to her sense of personhood and she lit up and began to chat to her daughter. Her daughter told us at the end that 'it made a world of difference to my Mother's mood and that it has bought me a lot of joy to see my Mother enjoying something again!'"

- Evaluator at a cooking session, Bamfield Lodge

» "I enjoy doing arts and crafts I like using my hands."

- Participant at a Christmas wreath making session, Granville Lodge

FEEDBACK FROM STEERING GROUP PARTICIPANTS

20 questionnaires were completed at three of the care homes. The decision to ask alternative questions at one of the four care homes was made due to the advanced stages of dementia affecting some residents. In the final steering groups, residents were asked for their feedback about how the project had impacted them. Of those completing this feedback:

- ▶ 89% reported they felt they were contributing to their community (47% gave highest mark of 'very much so').
- ▶ 84% reported that their confidence has improved (21% gave highest mark of 'very much so').
- ▶ 70% reported that their sense of purpose has improved (35% gave highest mark of 'very much so').

This was supported by qualitative feedback gathered at the time, which indicated that residents enjoyed listening to others and meeting new people. Some also reported a sense of belonging when participating in group activities and an increased sense of togetherness. For others there was an appreciation of the sense of variety it added to their lives. One resident even saw it as a welcome distraction:

» "It helps me forget about my pain and other trouble."

- Resident

Others welcomed the experience itself as an opportunity to re-engage with 'normal' life and saw the steering group as a chance to re-engage in some of the activities that they used to participate in.

When residents were asked if they had formed any new connections, friendships and links with others from the community through the project, some noted the intergenerational activity as a particular highlight:

» "Muddy Boots - ah they're lovely aren't they?" "The children enjoyed it and that's the most important."

- Resident

» "I love it with the little ones. I'm glad we've got them."

- Resident

For some though, it was the simple pleasures that they enjoyed the most:

» "Oh I loved going for fish and chips... that was fun wasn't it pet?"

- Resident

TRACKING THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT UPON PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS

Survey Question: How have residents benefited?

» "We've seen...the confidence of the residents to pick and choose what they want to do and say no I don't want to do that or I've got this idea can we do it?"

- Activity Coordinator, Granville Lodge

» "I think I could name at least five, especially with the gardening, they would never ever have done the gardening; the gardening one stands out more than anything else because they really, really got into it. And they wouldn't normally do it, and they really, really wouldn't."

- Activity Coordinator, Bamfield Lodge

» "It's a nice change with Greta actually, because when she first came she didn't want to come out of her room. Although she likes to socialise, it wasn't until the garden came along. That opportunity's always been there but I think she didn't know it as much, and then we started doing the project, and Alex knew that she really loved gardening, there was a good opportunity for her to come and get involved. She's got to know some of the residents as well, so now she'll come out, she'll talk to them, she's getting involved with the children so we're going to continue that as well, even though it's not just gardening now, she's getting involved in small bits of other socialising and other activities."

- Activity Coordinator, Granville Lodge

» "One resident who is one of our male members of the home has really enjoyed being part of this project and has gained confidence in going outside and really enjoys going on trips...they've all really benefited really, I mean Joyce and Peter have obviously benefitted because they've expressed to us that they want a few more intellectual based activities, more talks and things like that. So that's been really beneficial for them. Peter also obviously having the outside contacts with the fabric man and things like that, that's really great for him, to keep him engaged in the community."

- Activity Coordinator, Katherine House

Additional comments supplied by staff during the project exit interviews included:

» "I have been really pleased that you chose us to be part of this project, we have gained volunteers that without your help to start us off wouldn't have happened. We have plenty of knowledge in all the areas you mentioned and have gained connections with plenty of people from Bristol Ageing Better Team, Alive Team, Stokeleigh Care Home and the people in the community who came along to provide us with an activity. It has been a real benefit to our home, and we will continue to use our new skills and knowledge in the future. And who knows we may work together again if our home can help."

- Manager, Katherine House



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» "Thank you all at Alive for helping Stokeleigh to become what we always wanted to be and creating such a positive atmosphere and relationships within the community."

- Manager, Stokeleigh

» "You've brought so much in, we will carry on with. Benefits the residents and also ourselves. Trips were lovely, the residents really enjoyed all of them. We know now to engage the residents in the activity plans and have monthly meetings to decide what we do."

- Activity Coordinator, Granville Lodge

» "It's been a really positive experience, it's really helped us and it's been going on basically the whole time that I've been here and I can definitely think that there's just so much that we've been able to do that we wouldn't have done without the support."

- Wellbeing Coordinator, Katherine House



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GROWING SUPPORT GARDENING-RELATED ACTIVITIES

The Growing Support Project Officer delivered a range of gardening-related activities across the three homes whose residents chose to engage in these activities. In evaluating the impact of these, case studies, quotes and observations were collected alongside numerical data recording instances of walks, talks, coaching sessions and community links that were made with gardening and nature-based organisations.

The table below provides an overview of the Growing Support gardening-related activities during the period February-October 2018.

The New Economics Foundation's 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' model was used to assess the impact of the Growing Support gardening-related activities on participants.

As outlined previously, the 'Five Ways' are:

1. Connect.
2. Be Active.
3. Take Notice.
4. Keep Learning.
5. Give.

This is a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing, which encourage facilitators to deliver sessions in a way which optimises participants' opportunities to nurture wellbeing, whilst providing a framework for evaluating how this is achieved.

Table 1: Engagement in Growing Support gardening-related activities, February – October 2018

	Katherine House	Granville Lodge	Bamfield Lodge	Total
Total number of sessions	17	17	17	51
Total instances of residents engaged	153	153	107	413
Average number of residents engaged per session	9	9	6.3	8.1
Total number of hours engaged	28.3	28.3	28.3	84.9
Total number of volunteers engaged	3	4	1	8
Total number of volunteer hours	28	48	28	104

1. Connect

» *"I've got to know a lot more of the residents through this project, which I wouldn't have done otherwise."*

- Volunteer, Granville Lodge

To evaluate the rate at which sessions enabled participants to "Connect", the documentation records the number of people in a session who "socialised with others in the group". Across the sessions delivered at Katherine House, Granville Lodge and Bamfield Lodge this averaged 78.9% of participants.

During the Growing Support sessions, residents' ability to "Connect" was facilitated by volunteers (including training on how to recruit and support them) and increased communication with families (including posters and newsletters informing the wider home community of opportunities to engage in activities). Engaging with community initiatives, nurseries, schools, and other organisations also contributed to this objective.

2. Be Active

» *"I enjoy anything that takes me out. I don't like being stuck inside. It's nice to go and see places like that."*

- Resident after a trip, Stokeleigh

To assess the degree to which sessions enabled residents to "Be Active", the numbers of participants who went "outdoors" and also "mobilised fine or gross motor skills" was recorded in the monitoring. Throughout the sessions, residents were supported on 258 instances to access the outdoors, and on average 85.9% of residents mobilised motor skills. Increased access to trips, walks and mapped walking routes also contributed to resident's capacity to "Be Active."

3. Take Notice

» *"It's nice to be able to look out of the window and think oh, well, I grew that!"*

- Participant at a gardening session, Granville Lodge

The number of residents who "reflected on the activity/ became more aware of the environment" was recorded to assess the way sessions supported them to "Take Notice". This averaged 73.1% of participants over the sessions. The extent to which participants "engaged at a sensory level" was also observed and quantified, averaging 90.3% of participants.

The regular steering groups that residents engaged with were also designed in a manner to encourage participants to "Take Notice" of their interests, surroundings, strengths and be part of shaping activity plans based on these.

4. Keep Learning

» *"I never knew that was there, that was lovely." (referring to a local green area after a walk)*

- Resident, Granville Lodge

Numbers of those who expressed having "learnt something new" during a social and therapeutic Growing Support activity session were recorded, averaging 49.7% of participants.

The capacity to continue lifelong learning was specifically requested by residents of some of the participating homes, and supported by a series of talks, trips, nature charity initiatives and courses.

5. Give

» *"When I'm happy it makes other people happy."*

- Participant at a gardening session, Katherine House

» *"It's a chance for me to give back."*

- Volunteer, Granville Lodge

In evaluating participants' level of ability to "Give", Growing Support recorded the number of participants who "helped someone else." This averaged 53.5% of participants during the sessions. Residents were also supported to coproduce a collection of nature-based activity plans, providing residents with an opportunity to share their skills and ideas around developing the garden related activities.

Improved mood

From facilitators' observations delivering the Growing Support activity sessions, 314 instances of improved mood were recorded. At Katherine House, sessions visibly improved participant mood 75.8% of the time, at Granville Lodge 67.3% of the time and at Bamfield Lodge 88.8% of the time.

Table 2: Five Ways to Wellbeing Outcomes (based upon 314 recorded instances)

Five Ways to Wellbeing	Katherine House	Granville Lodge	Bamfield Lodge	Average
Connect "Socialised with other members of the group"	88.90%	71.20%	76.60%	78.90%
Be Active "Outdoors" "Mobilised fine or gross motor skills"	72.5% 92.8%	75.2% 79.1%	29.9% 85.9%	59.2% 85.9%
Take Notice "Reflected on activity/ became more aware of environment." "Engaged at Sensory Level"	71.90% 87.60%	79.10% 86.30%	68.20% 97.10%	73.1% 90.30%
Keep Learning "Learnt something new"	54.90%	41.80%	52.30%	49.7%
Give "Helped someone else"	52.60%	48.40%	56.00%	53.5%

CASE STUDIES

The following case studies demonstrate the impact of the project on individuals and care homes in each of the four project settings.

CASE STUDY 1: CONNECTING WITH THE LOCAL ALLOTMENT, BAMFIELD LODGE

Residents at Bamfield Lodge expressed interest in getting to know the adjoining St Giles allotment during the early conversation phase of the project. Many residents could see it from the window, but had never been. Residents at the home have been taking part in regular gardening and cooking sessions in the home, and many were keen to explore further afield.

From the very first conversation with the allotment site representative, it was clear that he had a great deal of time and enthusiasm for encouraging the wider community to engage with the allotments, and was keen to visit the home to talk with residents about how they wanted to develop such a connection. He had been trying to connect with the care home for years, but due to management change in the home, this hadn't been possible.

He visited and spoke to staff and residents at Bamfield Lodge in September 2018, describing

the layout and accessibility of the site, the crops currently growing, his bee hives and honey making process, and suggestions for ways for residents to engage. He encouraged residents that they would be welcome to come and visit for **"just a cup of tea and fresh air."**

Whilst at the allotment the group were gifted with a spectacular "Trombocino" squash. The flowers and squash sparked conversations about what is growing at this time of year, what dishes they would like to cook, nostalgia about what they have grown in the past and inspiration for what they can grow in the future. On the sunny walk back to the home Minnie told Alive **"just being out and about in the fresh air...feeling the sun on our faces makes you happy. If I had a long hoe I could hoe away at the edges [of the plot] It's amazing what you can get done as a group. There's always a way!"** Other residents suggested making greengage jam together from the plentiful trees on the site, and there was talk of plum wine which really got everyone going!

Alive have now stepped back from the project and Bamfield Lodge's Activity Coordinator is keen to keep visiting the allotment once the weather has got warmer and there are plans for the allotment site representative to visit the home and run a honey tasting session, with honey from his hives.



Care Homes in the Community - Evaluation

CASE STUDY 2: GRETA'S STORY, GRANVILLE LODGE

Greta lives at Granville Lodge and has been member of the regular gardening sessions as a part of the project. She has also attended two trips, to Windmill Hill City Farm and Bristol Botanic Gardens. Greta recalls how she was encouraged by one of Granville's Activity Coordinators, to join the gardening sessions and get involved in the project **"after seeing my photos of my old garden."**

She has been an active voice in shaping activity choices for the gardening sessions and has since been supported by Granville Lodge staff and family to become an active independent gardener in the grounds of the home. Her family purchased a doorbell for her to communicate with staff if needs be, enabling her to spontaneously engage with the garden. She discussed plans to recreate a Wildflower meadow such as she had at home and has been supported in bringing this dream to life. Greta also purchased an extension hosepipe with an easy to use sprayer nozzle to enable residents with varying capacities to more easily water the garden and enjoys watching others use this and develop their ownership of the garden, as the watering cans were difficult to use before.

Greta expressed how before participation in this project she felt **"helpless and hopeless"**, but that now she has a **"legacy"**, and **"life is still beautiful"**. Greta's daughter told Alive how **"Greta did not attend any activities previously, slept much of the day and could not sleep well at night and was very low and insular"**. Since becoming involved in the garden project it has **"made a huge difference"** and she has **"blossomed"**.

Greta has called those involved in the project the **"Granville Garden Dream Team!"** and it is these aspects of **"teamwork"** and knowledge that staff **"have faith in me"** that generate her feeling of **"reciprocation"** and pride that **"we worked together"** on **"our garden"**.

Greta says how with the support from all involved **"we have got everything going for us"**, there are **"so many things still happening"** and her ambition **"is to see what WE have planted and enjoy what WE have done"**.

She next aims to **"get it so everyone can take part in it"**, with ideas including a spring bulb bed, rockery and sign explaining to visitors the species in her Wildflower garden and residents' ownership of the garden.



Care Homes in the Community - Evaluation

CASE STUDY 3: FORMING NEW FRIENDSHIPS, STOKELEIGH AND MUDDY BOOTS

Forging new connections between care homes and the wider community has been a central focus of this project. One of the best examples of this has been the relationship formed between Muddy Boots nursery and the residents at Stokeleigh. At the start of the project Alive asked participants what sort of connections would be most meaningful to older generations, the overwhelming response was that older generations would like to spend time with the younger members of their community - particularly those of nursery school age.

The Activity Coordinator at Stokeleigh told Alive that there was a nursery just across the road which seemed like a great opportunity to link up. In the end Alive popped in to have a chat and it became clear that it would be possible to link up. The proximity of the nursery and the care home meant that both the residents and the children could walk from one to the other and weekly visits were arranged.

As care home staff have pointed out - the walk to and from the nursery is a chance for the residents and children to get some fresh air and exercise as well as meet new faces from the community.

"It's impacting upon the children" the staff at Muddy Boots told Alive "it totally helps them.. We've got a really lovely routine now and Stokeleigh are a massive part of that."

Since this connection first came about over 40 visits to and from the nursery to Stokeleigh have taken place. One of these sessions included a joint trip to Windmill Hill Community Farm - a third community link - who provided a group tour and a cookery workshop for participants.



Care Homes in the Community - Evaluation

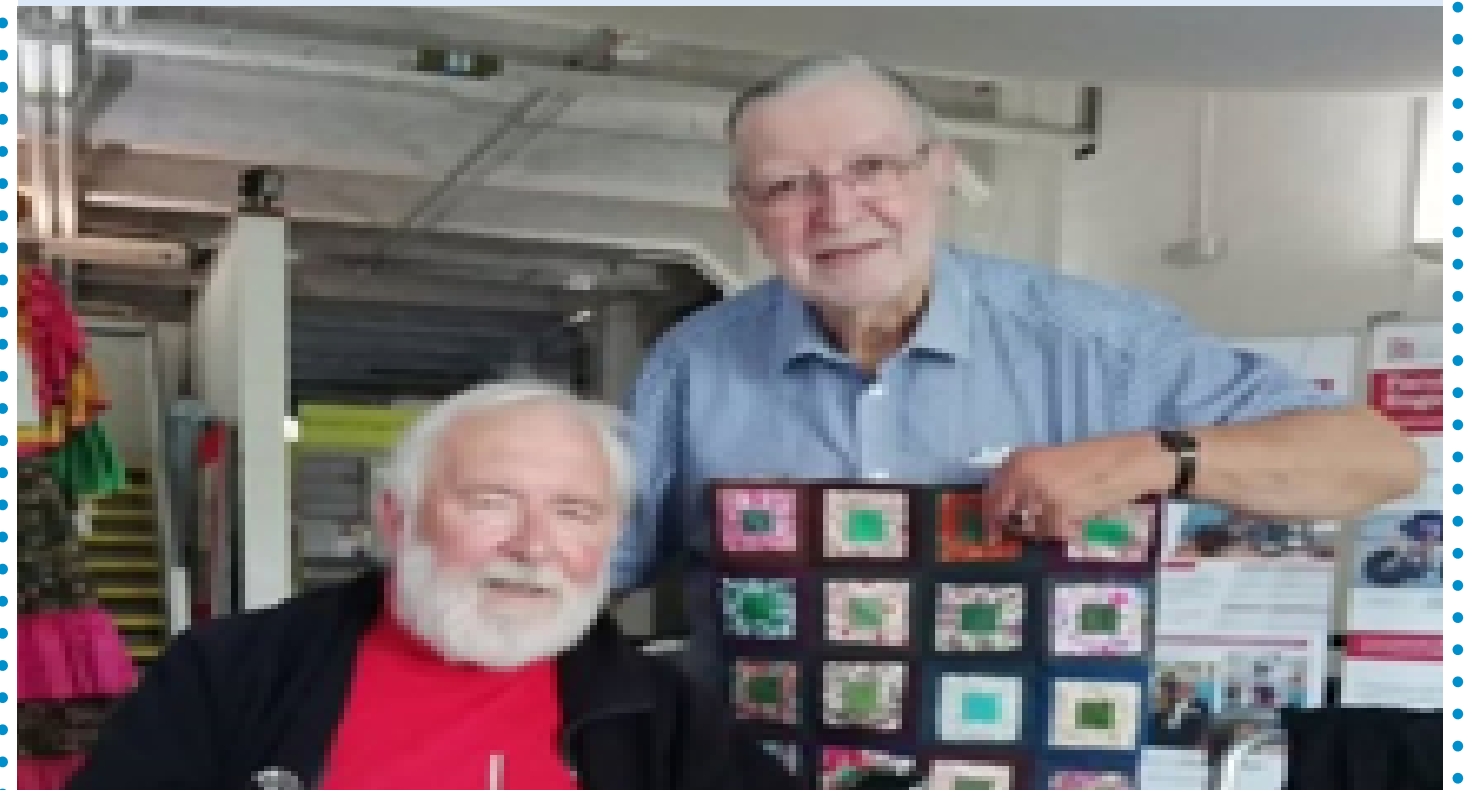
CASE STUDY 4: PETER'S STORY, KATHERINE HOUSE

Peter first became involved in the project during a series of one to one and group discussions with care home residents and staff. These meetings were set up to encourage participants to identify what they hoped to gain from project, the sorts of activities they wanted to engage in and the community links they wanted to form. Having Peter on board, alongside other residents at Katherine House, enabled Alive to keep coproduction at the heart of the project and respond to suggestions and requests from participants as they arose. During one of these meetings, Peter told us that he hoped to build tighter bonds between male residents at Katherine House as well as involving men from other care homes and communities.

"The men don't always turn up to activities". "The majority of the residents are women and the activities are slanted in their direction. I remember saying that a lot of the things we do were angled more at ladies...and perhaps the men were a bit left out of decisions."

Peter's feedback and comments inspired staff at Katherine House to put on beer tasting evenings for the male residents within the community. These were well attended by residents and the husbands and partners of staff. In addition, there's been more of a focus upon creating opportunities for men to socialise together both inside and outside the home. For example, Peter now regularly sees Guy an Alive volunteer who visits Katherine House to help run gardening workshops and attend trips across Bristol.

We asked Peter how he felt about being involved in the project at a strategic level and he told us that it was nice to be asked to input and help shape the initiative. In his words it was valuable ***"to have something coming from the base so to speak. I think most of the residents here are fairly valuable...it's nice to have a group and share the ideas...it's nice to know the resident's opinions."***



Care Homes in the Community - Evaluation

Findings: Impact on staff, volunteers and the wider community >>

CARE HOME STAFF PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT

10 members of staff were asked to complete a survey and were interviewed about their perceptions of the project. The results of the survey questions are summarised in the following section, along with a selection of qualitative responses.

Integration of the care home into the wider community

Survey Question: *How much does the care home feel part of community life at the end of the project compared with the beginning?*

Staff were asked to indicate their answers on a scale of one to five; one indicating little involvement within the community and five indicating considerable involvement. Each respondent was asked to rate the position of the care home at the beginning of the project compared to the end.

- ▶ **All** reported that the care home felt more included in community life at the end of the project compared to the start.
- ▶ **Seven out of 10** reported to have moved up three places on the scale.

Survey Question: *To your knowledge, what is the local community's perception of the care home now compared to the start of the project?*

Respondents were asked to indicate their answers on a scale of one to five with options ranging from very negative (one) to very positive (five):

- ▶ **80%** reported an improvement in the community's perception of the care home.
- ▶ **20%** reported no shift in perception within the community.
- ▶ Out of the 80% that moved up the scale, **30%** reported moving up two or more points on the scale.

Survey Question: *How confident do you feel in making new connections with the community in the terms of the following: confidence to do so, motivation to do so, skills to do so, knowledge to do so?*

- ▶ **100%** reported a positive increase.
- ▶ **70%** reported moving up by two or more marks on the scale.

Survey Question: *How confident do you feel in terms of maintaining these new connections?*

- ▶ **93%** reported that they felt more confident.
- ▶ **7%** reported no change, however they had marked their confidence level with the highest rating at the start of project so no shift was recorded.
- ▶ **83%** reported moving up by two or more points on the scale.

Survey Question: *How many hours per week did/do you engage people or community groups from outside the care home to run group activities with your residents/service users at the start of the project compared to the end?*

- ▶ **100%** of the respondents reported an increase of activity provided by community members or volunteers at the care home.
- ▶ The average increase in weekly activity was three hours per week.

Survey Question: *How many hours per week did your own staff spend providing meaningful activities with residents at the start of the project compared to the end?*

- ▶ **70%** reported an increase.
- ▶ **20%** reported no change.
- ▶ **10%** reported a decrease of one hour of activity.
- ▶ Of the 70% that reported an increase the average was **17 hours per week of increased activity.**

Survey Question: *To what extent have the BAB project activity sessions, trips and community connections had a positive impact on resident's mood/wellbeing, relaxation, stimulation, sense of self and interaction with others?*

Staff were asked to pick from the following options to indicate the impact of the BAB project in each of the areas below: 1) not a lot; 2) yes a little; 3) very much so.

- ▶ **Mood/Wellbeing - 100%** of participants selected 'very much so' indicating that project activities had had a positive impact upon residents in this area.
- ▶ **Relaxation - 100%** of participants selected 'very much so' indicating that project activities had helped residents to relax.
- ▶ **Stimulation - 100%** of participants selected 'very much so' indicating that the project had helped increased stimulation among residents.
- ▶ **Sense of self - 100%** of participants selected 'very much so' indicating that the project had had a positive impact on residents sense of self.
- ▶ **Interaction with others - 100%** of participants selected 'very much so' indicating that the project had had a positive impact upon residents' interactions with others in their community.

The following was an open question concerning tracking the impact of Alive's coaching and training on participants. Qualitative feedback was collected during staff interviews. A small selection of responses have been included below:

» *"Because of learning about coproduction we now have an open door policy to our staff planning meeting. We encourage residents to join this every Monday to help us plan and make decisions. Before the project this was just the staff. Anyone who doesn't feel able or wish to attend the planning meetings will be engaged one to one and know that they can input into decision making at Katherine House."*

- Activity Coordinator, Katherine House

» *"Having the outdoor activity training really helped. Especially having access to a folder with suggested activity plans. It meant we felt able to continue running gardening sessions after the project came to an end. Some of the residents are now running activities e.g. Peter runs a holiday club and staff have started a men's social club in response to residents requests during the project steering group meetings."*

- Activity Coordinator, Katherine House

» *"I came along on one course and this has benefited the home as we got some really good ideas and put one into place which was a men's social evening. We asked for our husbands, partners or male members to come along to a beer tasting evening which my husband arranged. The night was a success and we are looking to do this one again in the future. From this we are also starting a men's social afternoon on a weekly basis."*

- Manager, Katherine House



Survey Question: *In the last year what new connections has the care home made with the local community? This can include interaction with volunteers, neighbours, individuals from the wider community, other charities, schools, NGOs etc. Please give examples.*

Respondents listed the following examples of new connections that the care homes had made with the local community:

- ▶ The Reader (shared reading group).
- ▶ Schools, nurseries, youth groups.
- ▶ Avonmouth Library.
- ▶ University of the Third Age.
- ▶ Local history group.
- ▶ Bristol University (various departments).
- ▶ Avon Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers.
- ▶ Local volunteers.
- ▶ Local allotment holders.
- ▶ Live Music Now – musicians.
- ▶ Bristol Museum.
- ▶ Local dancers.
- ▶ Links to other care homes.
- ▶ Clevedon Pier Heritage Trust.
- ▶ Alive staff and facilitators.
- ▶ Windmill Hill City Farm.
- ▶ Fabrication: a sustainable textiles project.

- ▶ Links to local Health and Wellbeing Centre (Bristol Helios Centre).
- ▶ Link to local knitting group.
- ▶ Sunlife corporate volunteering scheme.
- ▶ Links to local schools and nurseries.

The following three questions were open and the participants were asked to elaborate further on the strengths of their care home and its connections with the wider community.

Survey Question: *In your opinion what are the strengths of your care home?*

» *"Residents- they've just lived such full lives that there's so much they can offer. Not only their skills but also the things they've got, the experiences they've had, all makes for a very nice place to come and volunteer I think."*

- Activity Coordinator, Katherine House

» *"I think we've got quite a good set of amenities to offer to the local community with our gardens and the big open lounges and the grounds around us."*

- Wellbeing Team Member, Katherine House

» *"It's [nice] for some of the community, to come in and just join in with [activities]....it's offering them that release from being lonely... we have had open days and the vicar has brought some of the parish people to join in with some of the activities that we got so that's a positive thing... the offer of coming in and using our facilities with the gardening club."*

- Activity Coordinator, Bamfield Lodge

Survey Question: Has this project improved your ability to make community connections?

» "I had very little knowledge of how to connect with the outside community prior to this. And I've definitely made lots of connections and I now know how to go about making them and supporting volunteers when they're in."

- Activity Coordinator, Katherine House

» "My Wellbeing Co-Ordinator is able to support volunteers and has a greater understanding of what is needed to support them, especially after attending the course that was put together through Alive for this particular aspect."

- Manager, Katherine House

FEEDBACK ON TRAINING FOR STAFF

Alive

21 training feedback forms were collected at the three Alive training courses that were delivered during this project. The courses run by Alive included: Managing Volunteers, Coproduction and Community Engagement, Meaningful Activity Training, Tangible Memories Training and Gardening Activities Training. In addition, care home staff were funded to attend Bristol City Council's course on 'Asset Based Community Development'.

The feedback from these events indicate that, of those who undertook the training:

- ▶ **91%** reported increased confidence.
- ▶ **91%** reported increased skill levels.
- ▶ **82%** reported increased motivation.
- ▶ **100%** reported increased knowledge.



When asked what the most useful part of the training was, staff responses included:

» "Ways of engaging residents in the coproducing of activities and engagement in the community. I will try to build up the confidence of our residents, find out their interests, find links in the community, find out the interests of relatives and encourage residents to run sessions."

» "How to coproduce with residents, get them more involved in the planning, try a different approach, try things with a small group."

» "New ways to introduce sensory activities, background music and the value of an aroma stone, using simple objects to be effective, seashells, bubbles, pine cones."

Growing Support

In order to work towards sustainability of the care home's ability to provide nature-based sessions to residents after the BAB Growing Support Project Officer role ended, coaching was provided to skill staff and volunteers in the homes to deliver these sessions in-house.

This training consisted of staff observing Growing Support sessions, then receiving a sit-down coaching module and resources pack, co-running a session with the Growing Support Project Officer and volunteer, and finally being observed planning, preparing for, and delivering a nature-based session. Three of the four homes receiving this asked for two self-led sessions to be observed, to maximise feedback on a variety of formats and contents of nature-based sessions.

A custom-made observation framework provided the staff with a record of observations and areas for improvements made by the Growing Support Project Officer during the observed sessions, to reflect on and improve upon on following sessions.

The content and duration of the coaching was tailored to the assets and requirements of each setting and from feedback forms collected after participation. 11 feedback forms were collected:

- ▶ **100%** reported improved knowledge in delivering gardening and nature-based activities.
- ▶ **100%** reported improved skill in delivering gardening and nature-based activities.
- ▶ **100%** reported improved confidence in delivering gardening and nature-based activities.
- ▶ **81%** reported improved motivation in delivering gardening and nature-based activities.

The feedback also asked what participants found most useful about the training:

» "Very informative - things were very well explained and broken down into clear sections. It was brought home to me how important nature and nature-based activities are to wellbeing and as a relative it was great to know how involved the charity and staff were in including gardening activities to the residents."

- Resident's relative, Katherine House

» "Open conversation - about tips, about activities, different ideas. Useful tips from all around the table (group) lots of laughter. I want to try a flower bingo with residents at Griffiths House."

- Care staff, Griffiths House

» "Learning ways of making outdoor and gardening activities accessible for residents. How to involve relatives in activities."

- Activity Coordinator, Katherine House

» "The material provided, all the handouts. Really enjoyed the open conversation, especially with activities/relatives and carers across the whole home."

- Activity Coordinator, Katherine House

» "I found most useful how to grow the potato."

- Maintenance Manager, Stokeleigh

» "Learning new ways to grow vegetables and potting plants for access to everyone."

- Activity Coordinator, Granville Lodge

FINDINGS FROM VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Throughout this project a total of 38 volunteers were engaged. Due to volunteer availability and the opportunities available at each care home, volunteer involvement varied from regular to ad-hoc. Alive made a distinction between 'volunteers' and 'community connections' which Alive have recorded and analysed separately. Although both community groups and volunteers dedicated their time to this project, where it was done so free of charge Alive have counted these participants as volunteers.

The following opportunities arose as a direct result of coproducing activity plans with older people in the four care homes. During these planning sessions older people put forward their preferences regarding trips, activities and events. In order to deliver requests effectively, Alive recruited volunteers to support or facilitate activities. These included the following:

Evening talks run by volunteers from:

- ▶ Bristol Festival of Nature.
- ▶ University of the Third Age.
- ▶ Local history association.
- ▶ Avon Wildlife Trust.
- ▶ Bristol University Music Department (student volunteer).

Trips:

- ▶ To local allotments.
- ▶ To the Create Centre to discuss Sustainable Textile production.

Workshops:

- ▶ Knitting workshop assisted by friends of staff.

Volunteers were engaged using the following methods:

- ▶ Advertising on social media.
- ▶ Advertising on volunteer platforms such as Voscur and BS3 Helping Others.
- ▶ Asset mapping each area of Bristol and contacting relevant organisations and institutions.
- ▶ Word of mouth and via face to face conversation in community settings.

The volunteer recruitment process was initiated first by Alive and then later by care home staff. Staff were offered training and support in these areas via two free courses: Volunteer Management and Community Engagement training. These two courses sought to equip staff, not just in initiating new connections, but in maintaining them and ensuring their sustainability.

Some volunteers were able to make a more regular time commitment and were involved in the project for a longer duration. After attending Alive's Volunteer Management training, staff at Katherine House recruited two volunteers to visit residents on a regular basis to run a shared reading group. These sessions take place once a week for two hours and have been a success among care home residents.

There are other volunteers who have been committed participants throughout.

These include:

- ▶ Five Growing Support volunteers who have attended weekly gardening sessions at each care home.
- ▶ Two volunteers who regularly support staff and residents with activities at Granville Lodge.
- ▶ One minibus driver at Granville Lodge who supports with transport to and from activities and events.
- ▶ One events coordinator volunteer who helped run trips, activities and events.

Whilst some of the volunteers have moved on during the course of the project due to other commitments, four of the above continued to volunteer after March 2019.

Teams of corporate volunteers were recruited in response to a request from care home staff at Bamfield Lodge. The Activity Coordinator wished to revamp the care home's outdoor space so that residents could enjoy the garden, and that watching residents partake in the Growing Support sessions had compounded the value of horticultural activity at the care home. They felt that whilst they wished to transform the space she could not do so alone. Alive contacted Sunlife who had an existing corporate volunteering scheme and a day was set aside to complete the task of clearing up the garden. The results were:

- ▶ Garden area was repainted.
- ▶ Two benches were painted and sanded down.

- ▶ The pergola was also painted and sanded.
- ▶ Flower beds were planted.
- ▶ A 'Beach at Bamfield' area was created.
- ▶ Solar lighting was installed.

Alive have also made corporate volunteering links with other organisations who wish to respond to similar requests after project closure. These connections have proved to be valuable links for care home staff who require the help of large groups with projects, and would not otherwise be able to complete the tasks.

Whilst being interviewed, some care home staff wanted to highlight the positive impact that volunteers have had upon residents and staff. The Activity Coordinator at Granville Lodge reported the connection between a Growing Support volunteer and one of the residents living at Granville:

» *"(The volunteer) comes in to see Greta and do gardening. If the weather's bad, the volunteer still spends that time with Greta. Greta very much looks forward to that visit, which is lovely for Greta as that's the only interest she's got. She's not interested in other activities, just in the garden. Her garden's her life, she's got her own little meadow out there and her own little plant pot as well. She says it gives her new life, something to live for."*

Likewise, during her staff exit survey the Manager from Katherine House told us:

» *"I have been really pleased that you chose us to be part of this project, we have gained volunteers that without your help to start us off wouldn't have happened. It has been a real benefit to our home."*

As the end of the project approached Alive offered volunteers the opportunity to fill out a volunteer exit survey which helped to capture and analyse their experience. The survey focused around the central theme of creating and maintaining strong connections between care homes and the wider community. The survey analysed how volunteers regarded these connections and how confident they felt going forwards, and a summary of the findings can be found below.

Survey Question: *On a scale of one to five how confident do you feel in reaching out to the wider community at the end of the project compared with at the start?*

- ▶ **100%** of participants reported an increase in confidence.
- ▶ **100%** of participants moved up two or more marks on the scale, indicating improvement.

Survey Question: *On a scale of one to five how would you rate your skill and ability to form new connections at the end of the project compared to the start?*

- ▶ **100%** of participants surveyed reported an increased ability to form new connections.

Survey Question: *On a scale of one to five how would you rate your knowledge of local community assets at the end of the project compared with at the start?*

- ▶ **100%** of participants surveyed reported an increase in knowledge.

Survey Question: *On a scale of one to five how would you rate your motivation to form new connections at the end of the project compared with at the start?*

- ▶ **100%** of participants surveyed reported an increase in motivation.
- ▶ **100%** of participants moved up two or more marks on the scale, indicating improvement.

Survey Question: *Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

» *"It's been nice to get involved with various care homes and see connections build between them and the local community. Also to see how easy it is to maintain them once the initial connection's been made."*

- Volunteer, Katherine House

» *"I loved doing sessions with the residents and have made friends with one resident in particular. I go and see her every week even if it's raining. We talk about the garden and go out if it's a nice day so we've both gained."*

- Volunteer, Granville Lodge

» *"Being involved in the BAB project has certainly educated me and I now have a greater awareness of the care sector. Seeing first-hand how positive these community links are for the residents as well as the community has been motivation for me to look more into volunteer work to continue these links."*

- Volunteer, Alive

» *"I've got to know a lot more of the residents through this project, which I wouldn't of [sic] done otherwise."*

- Volunteer, Granville Lodge

FEEDBACK FROM END OF PROJECT LEARNING EVENT

On February 28th 2019, Alive held a celebratory event for care home staff and funders to share the learning from the project. Activities included presentations and workshops facilitating discussions around coproduction and community engagement. Alive asked attendees to fill in feedback forms about the event and workshops, 17 forms were received:

- ▶ **65%** reported an improved knowledge of community engagement with care homes as a result of attending the event.
- ▶ **76%** reported an improved knowledge of coproduction with residents as a result of attending the event.
- ▶ **100%** participants reported that the event was interesting or very interesting.

» *"We've loved working with Alive they've opened up so many doors for us."*

- Event attendee

» *"Thank you very much for a wonderful event, great work and outcomes!"*

- Event attendee

» *"Thoroughly enjoyed the event-presented really well and very informative."*

- Event attendee

Image credit: Centre for Ageing Better
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Discussion >>

Although each home had a very unique activity plan there were strong themes that emerged from all the steering groups. Many residents wanted to get out and about in the community and visit places that they had visited before moving into the care home. This wasn't universal however and not all residents wanted to leave the care home, with others building confidence to come on trips as the project developed.

Two activities that were popular with all four homes were gardening activities and intergenerational activities. Three homes worked with the Growing Support Project Officer to get out into the home's garden more, doing gardening and nature-based activities with residents, volunteers and community groups. Additionally, all four care homes set up intergenerational partnerships as a result of requests from residents in steering groups. Partnerships were created with nurseries, primary schools and a youth group, giving residents opportunities to interact with people of different ages in the community.

Residents in each home chose creative, meaningful activities such as dance, art, music and cooking. These were activities run by Alive facilitators, but care home staff have been trained to continue them, now that the project has come to an end.

From the success of running steering groups with small groups of residents, sat around a table, with visual prompts, care home staff in all four care homes have decided to carry these on, on a regular basis, now that the project has ended. Equally, the coproduction training that some of the care home staff participated in supported this work and gave staff ideas for coproduction in the future.

A limitation of the project was that staff had very little capacity in their role to support the project as they have very busy and demanding jobs. In each home there was one main point of contact and if they were on annual leave or sick leave, it was hard to get activities going in the care home.



CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE BAB PROGRAMME

Alive have worked closely in partnership with BAB to make sure that the project has worked towards achieving the BAB outcome statements, set out in Box 2 below.

Box 2: BAB Outcome Statements

Bristol Ageing Better is working towards four ambitious outcomes by 2020.

More older people:

1. Have the amount and type of social contact that they want to reduce isolation and loneliness.
2. Can influence decisions that affect their local area and how services are designed and delivered.
3. Are able to contribute to their community through such mechanisms as volunteering, belonging to a forum, steering group or other activity.

Bristol Ageing Better:

4. Uses the evidence collected to influence and inform decision makers to ensure that future services in Bristol are better planned and more effective in reducing loneliness and social isolation.

Through this 'Communities of Interest' project, Alive have been working toward these outcomes too by:

1. Supporting care home residents to choose and increase the type of social contact that they want, both within and outside of the home, to reduce isolation and loneliness.
2. By involving care home residents in the homes' activity plans, through inviting them to attend coproduced steering groups and have a say, older people have been able to influence decisions in their home and therefore affect how home services are designed and delivered.
3. By linking care homes up to community groups (e.g. allotments, schools, libraries), older people in the care homes have been contributing to their local community and meeting new people to share skills and interests with. By training staff to sustain and create new community links, this work will continue, despite the project ending.
4. In creating this report Alive hopes to share the learning from the project and therefore influence and inform decision makers to ensure that future services for older people living in care homes are more person centred, with older people involved in their design and delivery and better connected to the community.

LEARNING FROM THE PROJECT

There have been a number of successes linked to the project. The following include some of the **main achievements**:

- 1. Ongoing community links with homes:** Many community links and partnerships have been created as a result of this project, set up by Alive project staff and by care home staff. Although some of these were one-off links, such as a local history group coming in to do a talk, many are successful, ongoing links which will continue past the project, for example the Muddy Boots Nursery children visiting Stokeleigh care home residents on a weekly basis.
- 2. Ongoing volunteer visits:** Volunteers have played a large role in this project and there are still two volunteers from gardening sessions visiting residents in two of the homes on an ongoing basis. Many of the community groups are also volunteer led, for example Katherine House have a fortnightly reading group, led by a volunteer.
- 3. Residents are now more included in shaping activity plans:** As a result of residents taking part in regular steering groups throughout this project, they have been central to shaping activity plans. Care home staff have seen how successful this has been and are now continuing this work, supported by the training that they received from Alive in coproduction.
- 4. Residents able to access the outdoors and gardening more:** As a result of the gardening focus of the project, residents have had many opportunities to go

outdoors more often, and be involved in designing the garden through simple, gardening tasks. Staff were trained to continue this work, and build confidence running gardening sessions themselves. Alive have also bought the care homes accessible gardening tools and resources to support them to run their own sessions in the future.

- 5. Staff and volunteers more confident to make community links due to training:** All staff were offered training in making and sustaining community connections with the care home. All that attended the course said that they were more knowledgeable and confident at making and sustaining community links.
- 6. Residents able to share skills and stories with each other and community:** As a result of creating new and sustaining existing community partnerships, residents have had more opportunities to meet and share stories with people from the community and also from other residents living in the home that they might not have had the opportunity to speak to before. This was especially true in Granville Lodge - the largest home with over 80 residents - where not everyone knows each other, but the project meant that there were more opportunities for residents to meet over the common ground of a shared interest (for example the art group).
- 7. Link between homes:** An unexpected outcome of the project has been that two of the homes have formed a friendship. After introducing the Activity Coordinators in each home, they decided to bring residents to events in each home, resulting in more opportunities for residents to attend more activities, meet

new people and for staff to share ideas and challenges with someone in the same role, but in a different home.

- 8. Other organisations more likely to connect with care homes in the future:** Community groups and organisations that hadn't connected to care homes prior to the project will hopefully be more likely to continue the contact and connect with care homes more in the future.
- 9. Changing negative perceptions of care homes and older people in the wider community:** By creating community partnerships, the project has connected many people with older people in the care homes. These new connections will have hopefully challenged stereotypes of older people living in care, showing that they have skills and stories to offer and fulfilling lives to continue living.

There have also been a range of challenges that occurred over the course of the project.

- 1. Confirming participating homes, due to staff changeover:** In the initial phase of the project, it was hard to confirm homes, as some of those that were initially interested dropped out due to staff and management changeover.
- 2. Staff changes in Alive and the homes themselves:** The two members of the Alive project team went on maternity leave at the end of the first year of the project. The second year was led by an entirely new team, who had to spend time getting to know the homes, staff and residents, before organising the complex activity plans. This meant that time organising activities was lost. The Growing Support Director left and the Project Officer changed roles, meaning

that the new Project Officer and Director roles were taken over by the Alive projects team.

- 3. Care home staff's lack of capacity to make time for the project:** Due to many demands in their jobs, Activity Coordinators did not always have the capacity to answer emails or phone calls from the Alive team, or to organise activities and steering groups.
- 4. Lack of email address:** Granville Lodge activity team did not have an email address at the beginning of the project, meaning that it was difficult and sometimes impossible to get hold of them. The Growing Support Project Officer persuaded the home manager to create an email address for the activity team, which made communications between them and Alive, and between them and new community links much easier.
- 5. Only one main point of contact in the home:** This meant that it was difficult to contact homes when the main contact was ill or on annual leave or jury duty.
- 6. Trips:** trying to get all the homes on trips was particularly challenging as there were last minute cancellations due to transport issues and bad weather forecasts. Alive did however, manage to organise one trip that all four homes came on, to Clevedon Pier and the pub for fish and chips.
- 7. Intergenerational partnerships:** Although some of these were straight forward to set up as schools were keen to visit care homes, sometimes these required a lot of time to set up and one in particular took six months to get going.

8. Working with people who are living with dementia, which is rapidly progressing:

This was a continuous challenge of the project, as residents who had asked for certain trips and activities at a steering group would forget they had asked for it. We tried to support residents by using visual prompts like photographs and information from trips such as leaflets to jog people's memories and remind them of the activities they had been on.

LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

There are a number of limitations to this evaluation. The data collection was led by Alive project staff, as opposed to external evaluators (although UWE researchers did undertake verification work to audit the data collected). It was difficult to collect numbers of residents involved in each activity, due to the scope of activities taking place and care home staff's capacity to record and report the data. Not all care home managers completed the feedback survey, although we did obtain good responses from other staff including Activity Coordinators. Some volunteers had left the project by the evaluation stage. Therefore, we had a low number of surveys returned from this group.

The CMF questionnaires were not appropriate for the majority of people living with dementia due to the complicated nature of the questions, and the necessity to be able to reflect over a period of time (and remember and contrast). Therefore only a small sample size were collected. Some residents passed away during the project and as a result, did not fill in an exit CMF form.

Conclusions >>

Care homes can be isolating places in which residents have little meaningful influence over decisions about social activities and few outside contacts. Alive was supported through Bristol Ageing Better to change the way care homes work with their local communities and to actively involve residents in creating social and therapeutic opportunities. Building upon an extensive track record of work within the sector, the Alive team developed a coproduction process to facilitate the voice of residents, and to train and support staff to respond through putting in place community-facing activities.

Evidence from the four participating care homes shows a high level of engagement by residents, positive feedback from staff, and the delivery of a wide range of activities including those that made new community connections for the care home. The outcome assessment measures and qualitative feedback showed very positive short-term outcomes for the mental and social wellbeing of participants. The project demonstrated the viability and benefits for care homes to engage more closely in the community life of their neighbourhoods. The project enabled schools, allotment groups and other local community groups to make connections with care homes in their area.

At the point of this report it is too early to assess the embeddedness and sustainability of the project approaches, however initial evidence suggests that participating care homes made enduring community connections and established new ways to involve greater involvement of residents in decision making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For similar projects, agencies, policy and further research:

1. When arranging partnerships with care homes it is vital to have a single point of contact within each home, but also to have a deputy in place, who is familiar with the project and can take over if needed.
2. Care staff need to be trained in how to go about coproducing activities with older people. It is not something that most people can simply 'pick-up' because it requires a range of skills and techniques, not to mention focussed time, to elicit good information from people likely to be living with mild to very advanced dementia.
3. A formal group in care homes provides the basis for residents to have greater influence over decisions on social activities. These groups benefit from having majority representation of residents, with the role of staff as facilitators.
4. Care home inspections by the CQC should place far greater emphasis on meaningful social engagement between older people and their local communities.

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Appendices >>

APPENDIX 1: ARTS OBSERVATIONAL TOOL

More information: <http://www.cwplus.org.uk/assets/pdf/Manual.pdf>

A specifically adapted version of this tool was deign by leading arts, health and wellbeing experts Willis Newson and professor Norma Daykin for Alive. This version is inserted below.

Arts Observational tool used by Alive:

Care Setting: Date: Presenter: Observer:

ID									
Gender/Age									
1. Mood/wellbeing score at start	/7								
2. Mood/wellbeing score after	/7								
3. Did it help to relax participant?	1-3								
4. Did it help to stimulate participant?	1-3								
5. Did it connect to the individual/support their personhood?	1-3								
6. Did it encourage interaction among those who participated?	1-3								

7 = 😊 1 = ☹️

3 = 😊 1 = ☹️

7. Did it have a positive effect on the general atmosphere?		8. How many participants took part?		9. How many staff were engaged in the session?	
	1-3				

To be completed **after** the activity session - Question ideas (how did that session make you feel, what did you like the most, what did you like the least, was anything new?)

10. Please add any positive feedback or comments from the questions above from participants, relatives or staff.

11. Please add any negative feedback or comments from the questions above from participamnts, relatives or staff.

12. Please add any anecdotal evidence or case studies from the questions above from the resposnes of participants, relatives or staff to the activity.

Alive's guidance notes for Arts Observational tool

Introduction

The Alive Wellbeing Observation Tool has been adapted from the Arts Observational Scale (ArtsObs). This is a tool that was developed for the evaluation of performing arts activities in healthcare settings. It has been adapted for Alive by Normal Daykin and Willis Newson. Alive is using it to help evaluate the impact of the group activity sessions that we deliver in care settings. The tool complements other methods of evaluation in use. It is a semi-structured observational tool focusing on a small sample of care settings that are observed across a number of sessions throughout the year.

These guidance notes intent to explain to users how to use ArtsObs and are to be used by observers in conjunction with training by Alive. For more information on the tool or details on its validity, please refer to <http://www.cwplus.org.uk/research/arts-research/artsobservational/>

1. Quantitative data

a) Demographic data

The scale captures basic demographic data on the activity sessions and participants. Prior to the start of the activity session, observers should fill in the name of the care setting, date, name of the presenter delivering the session and their own name.

Alive recommends observing a minimum of six and a maximum of eight participants for each ArtsObs. During the activity session, it will be necessary to find a way of identifying these participants. This is for the observer's purpose only and could be an initial to represent their name or another way of identifying them, such as the colour of their clothes. Sex is represented by an M for male and F for female and age can be approximated, for example M60s (male aged 6-70) or F80s (female aged 80-90).

Please record the total number of participants who take part, not just those being observed (Q8) and the number of staff who engaged in the session (Q9). If a member of staff accompanies a participant to the session and then leaves, please do not consider this as engagement. Please take engagement to mean staying for at least 10 minutes and actively taking part or positively responding to the session.

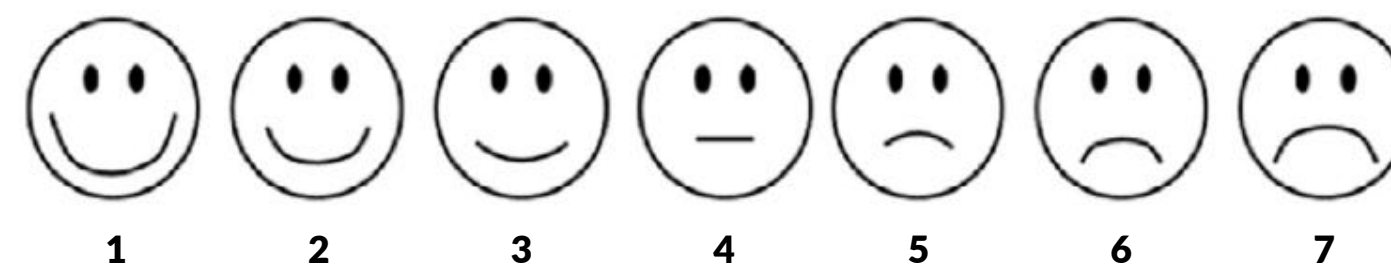
Please give an overall rating for whether the session had a positive effect on the general atmosphere (Q7) using the following scale:

1	No	The activity session brought no benefit to or even had a negative effect on the care setting, causing complaints, missing its target audience or getting in the way of staff.
2	Mid	The activity session helped to lift the mood / increase the sense of wellbeing in the care setting, bringing a sense of calm, or having a small beneficial effect on participants, relatives, friends or staff.
3	Yes	The activity session was almost universally liked, or made a significant difference to the feel of the setting.

b) Mood/wellbeing scores

See Qs 1-2 on the evaluation form.

The **mood/wellbeing** scores allow you to tell whether an activity session made a participant experience a greater sense of wellbeing than they would have experienced without the session. Participants should be rated both before and after the activity session on a scale of 1 to 7. Ratings should be made based on the faces, headline words (in bold) and other associated words in the following table:



(Visibly expressed)	(Moderate)	(Mild)	(Neutral / unresponsive)	(Mild)	(Moderate)	(Visibly expressed)
Angry	Frustrated	Sad	Calm	Satisfied	Happy	Excited
Depressed	Restless	Bored	Reserved	Focused	Receptive	Delighted
Aggressive	Anxious	Listless	Quiet	Alert	Entertained	Appreciative
Distressed	Irritated	Tense	Still	Relaxed	Interested	Enthusiastic
Hostile	Upset	Distracted	Passive	Content	Amused	Friendly

c) Set criteria

See Qs 3-4 on the evaluation form.

Set criteria are aimed to be constant across all activities in a care setting, enabling activities to be compared during evaluations. These criteria are 'relaxation' and 'stimulation'.

Relaxation (Q3: Did it help to relax the participant?) Participants' reactions should be rated 1, 2 or 3 depending on how many signs of relaxation they are exhibiting.

1	Not at all	No change evident
2	Yes, a little	One or two changes evident
3	Very much so	Multiple changes or pronounced changes obvious.
Signs to observe		Muscular relaxation in face or limbs, slow breathing, jaw relaxation, shut eyes, soft lips and resting tongue, smiling, decrease in physical tension, crying or shouting out.

Stimulation (Q4: Did it help to stimulate the participant?) Participants' reactions should be rated 1, 2 or 3 depending on how many signs of stimulation they are exhibiting.

1	Not at all	No engagement with any of the activities in the session
2	Yes, a little	Stimulated to engage with some of the activities in the session
3	Very much so	Strong stimulation to engage with many of the activities in the session
Signs to observe		<p>Verbal communication: Responding to questions, making suggestions, making contributions.</p> <p>Non-verbal communication: Eye contact with the presenter or others in the session, participating in physical activities, visible expression of disengagement or boredom (e.g. staring into space, sighing, falling asleep, leaving, becoming distracted by something else).</p>

d) Additional criteria

See Qs 5-6 on the evaluation form.

Alive has added two criteria to the standard ArtsObs criteria. These are 'connection/personhood' and 'interaction'. Connecting to an individual/supporting their personhood means reinforcing a participant's personal identity, for example by resonating with their life story or experience, through the development of new skills or by enabling a participant to display and reinforce an existing skill or area of knowledge.

Connection/Personhood (Q5: Did it connect to the individual/support their personhood?) Participants' reactions should be rated 1, 2 or 3 depending on how many signs of connection they are exhibiting.

1	Not at all	No connection to the activities evident
2	Yes, a little	One or two reactions to the activities evident
3	Very much so	Multiple reactions to the activities evident
Signs to observe		Nodding, eye contact, responding directly e.g. by laughing, initiating movement/contact with another, inviting someone else to do something, articulating how an activity relates to them, joining in with words or music, extending the activity by adding reflections, memories or making suggestions.

Interaction (Q6: Did it encourage interaction among those who participated?) Participants' reactions should be rated 1, 2 or 3 depending on how many signs of interactions with each other or with staff, relatives or friends who are also engaged in the session, or the presenter of the session.

1	Not at all	No interaction with anyone during the activities session
2	Yes, a little	Some interaction with one or more participants during the activities session
3	Very much so	Lots of interaction with one or more participants during the activities session
Signs to observe		Interacting with anyone else present at the activity session through – smiling, laughing, agreeing or disagreeing, questioning, commenting or touching.

2. Qualitative data

Alongside quantitative data, ArtsObs enables the collection of personal feedback and quotations from residents or service users, relatives, friends and staff.

a) Feedback

See Qs 10-11 on the evaluation form.

Following the activity session, observers should gather discreetly any informal comments shared between participants. Observers should also engage actively with participants and staff after the session to gather more formal statements about the value of the session. This can be achieved through prompting participants to talk about the impact of the session, but questions should remain as open as possible. Structured and semi-structured interviews and conducted separately. No personal data need to be recorded, but observers should record basic data on the role of the person quoted e.g. 'resident', 'daughter of resident' or 'Activity Coordinator'.

Prompts for questions 10 and 11 could include:

- ▶ How did that session make you feel?
- ▶ What did you like the most about the activities?
- ▶ What did you like least?
- ▶ Was there anything new?

b) Case studies

See Q12 on the evaluation form.

Observers can also gather more detailed accounts of responses to activities. For example, if any participants show a particularly strong response such as sharing a personal story or performing for the group, or if a member of staff or family remarks on the unusual level of engagement by a participant. If potential case studies are observed, these can be supplemented with more facts from staff and relatives to provide a better picture of the impact.

