THE STORYBOX STORY
EXAMINING THE ROLE OF A THEATRE AND ARTS-BASED INTERVENTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

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THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION

- Why do an evaluation?
  What can we learn from Storybox about how creative activity can best be delivered for people with dementia and their carers?

- What do we want to find out?
  What are the benefits of projects like Storybox for what is often loosely termed ‘quality of life’?

- How do we go about answering these questions?
  ...
BACKGROUND TO CREATIVE ARTS AND DEMENTIA

Limitations of many studies to date:

- Emphasis on clinical outcomes
  - Observation methods to ‘score’ participants
  - Use of clinical scales to measure ‘improvement’
- Do not include the voices of people with dementia
- Do not account for flexibility in approaches to dementia care.
- Do little to improve our understanding of how creative activity can have affects on people’s lives.

(Renée Beard, 2012 and Brown Wilson et al. 2013)
Evaluating Storybox

Multi-method approach including:
- Artists observations during workshops;
- Artists diaries/reflections on their experience of running group sessions;
- Short interviews/conversations with carers and participants conducted by artists at the end of each session;
- Preliminary, midpoint and endpoint feedback forms from participants and carers;
- Creative outputs of participants;
- Photographs of sessions by professional photographer.
THE STORYBOX METHOD

- Multi-faceted: drama; role-playing; story-telling; singing; poetry; crafts...
- Caters to different interests and abilities.
- Participatory and participant-led.
- Challenges ‘carer’ and ‘cared for’ roles.
“EVERYONE DESERVES TO DO FUN ACTIVITIES”
STORYBOX...

- **Breaks up the routine**
  
  “I was so depressed this morning, but this I’ve enjoyed” – Participant.

- **Creates an enjoyable living and working environment**
  
  “I love it so much! I look forward to coming into work because of the Storybox and it’s really fun!! XOXO” – Carer.

  “I laughed till I cried on some occasions” – Carer.

- **Ignites the imagination, humour and creativity**
  
  “This focuses more on imagination than memory” – Carer.

  “Storybox is for cheeky swines!” - Participant.
“We’re all in it together”
STORYBOX…

- Challenges the ‘carer’ and ‘cared for’ roles
  
  “We all did it didn’t we?” – Participant

  “I liked the fact that I joined in...I was nervous before” - Carer

- Creates a social space and togetherness
  
  “By talking to us you get more people talking to each other” – Participant

  “I felt close to others who I wouldn’t normally” - Participant

  “There is a sense of togetherness amongst the staff during sessions” - Carer
“I’VE GOT MEMORY PROBLEMS, BUT I’M STILL HERE”
STORYBOX...

- Creates memories: living now and looking forward
  - “I can sleep when I’m at home” – Participant
  - “If you’re dull or dismal, there’s no future” – Participant

- Gives participants empowering roles
  - “It makes you feel your mind is endless”

A: We can make the next chapter.
B: What’s the next chapter?
C: We’ll decide what the next chapter will be.
B: We’re going to do it together, all three of us.

“Sometimes it seems that activities are an afterthought and dementia clients can be left out” – Carer.
“Oh no! Has it finished?”
Legacy and Future directions

- Increased confidence
- New collaborations
- Embedded in routine care

Challenges
- Training needs
- Management issues