



# THE STORYBOX STORY

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

Bethan Harries  
University of Manchester



# 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?

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# 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

