

Coral Lodge

Music and Visual Technology Workshops

September 2019 – March 2020

The project

darts ran 21 hour-long sessions of music and visual technology based workshops (one was missed due to local flooding and two due to the Covid-19 Lockdown) between September 2019 and March 2020, exploring a variety of music making and graphic visualisation techniques. The work has been a combination of percussion, music technology, recording and visual technology using iPads and filming outdoors on the Tickhill site. Our artists developed their work in response to the needs of residents, introducing technology and techniques to stimulate creativity and learning then responded, using their expertise to professionally mix, master and edit the work produced by residents.

Rob Pearson, our music technology artist followed the interests of individuals and taught people to use Garage Band on the iPads, as well as using some other music-making apps. Residents also explored a drum machine, Ableton and hand percussion, as well as creating soundscapes and recording using the voice. People have talked about their own musical interests and tastes and Rob has responded to this, incorporating these styles into the sessions, as well as introducing new sounds and techniques. The work has mainly been individual, with people working on iPads or taking turns to work in 'the hotseat' with Rob on more complex technology. However, there has also been group produced music. This combination of individual and group work, new devices, techniques and technology rooted and adapted to individual participant's musical tastes has seemed very successful.

As well as Rob's sessions, Jim Lockey, our film artist worked with participants to explore making visualisations to go with the music using several different apps on iPads and filming footage with residents towards production of a music video. This work introduced new and different skills and approaches and gave participants the opportunity to film outside the Lodge.

Challenges and benefits

Staff have been really supportive overall, supporting individuals who are more nervous or distressed and looking on and encouraging when people are enjoying the activities, sometimes sharing their ideas and musical tastes. They have been enthusiastic and supportive and have

been able to see the benefits of the work for the residents noting that some participants had surprised them by participating well, despite having had a recent 'rough time'.

Part way through the project, sessions moved from the small games room to the dining room, where there is a more open feel and people feel comfortable popping in. This bigger, more open space seems to have had a positive effect on some of those who found attending a challenge, as it allowed for more flexibility where people can watch from a distance and gradually participate. This seems to be a key part of the project, allowing people to have a sense of control over how and when they take part.

Artists tried a couple of times to instigate activities outside of the session, with the idea of using the chalk board in the Lodge for ideas and questions about music, but the chinks weren't available during the session and this didn't happen outside of sessions. However, some participants did reflect on ideas between sessions and expressed that they had looked forward to participating between sessions, with one using their own device (downloading an app with Rob's help) between sessions.

The project engaged 13 residents with 7 showing repeated and developing engagement, learning new skills, developing confidence and working in collaboration with others. The way both artists worked with individual's needs and interests seemed to be an effective way of inspiring participant's creativity, bringing the benefits for exploring new skills and ways of working with others as well as enjoyment and the sense of wellbeing that can come from experiencing creative flow and being in the moment. Artists often commented that participant's moods seemed lighter after the engagement in the session.

Music Technology Sessions

Overall several of the residents have engaged well with the project and seemed to have really enjoyed the work. Most of them began quite casually and gradually built up focus and learning over time, as well as the confidence to attend, to support each other in the group and to try new things. The variety of options, new technology and new ways of working effectively maintained the enjoyment and interest for participants and a few of them really looked forward to sessions. Residents achieved a lot in short sessions and some developed skills that they used on their own devices outside of sessions. We hope the high quality of the work they created will bring a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

Visualisations workshops

This work allowed participants to engage in different ways and take a visual focus, whilst following the technology based route established in earlier music sessions. The option to film footage outside of the lodge seemed to have particular benefits for one participant who stayed for the whole session and resulted in a beautiful short music video. Sadly, the final two film/visual sessions were missed due to the Covid-19 social distancing measures.

Outputs

5 residents completed a total of 9 solo tracks and other residents participated in 4 group tracks. These have been sent on CDs for residents and staff.

One music video was completed before lockdown and there are some other visualisations to be completed when lockdown restrictions permit. These will be sent via private links so they can be enjoyed by residents when they are completed.

Due to the lockdown, darts is creating a suite of online creative content as part of the darts at home initiative. These resources will be forwarded to staff at Coral Lodge for use with residents during the restrictions.

Individual examples

M participated in every music tech session and a few of the visual tech sessions. He had worked with Rob before during Creative Directions sessions at The Point. Through the regular sessions, he developed his confidence and became much more open and enthusiastic about trying new techniques and apps, whereas to begin with he wasn't sure about creating music with technology at all. He began drawing on his own musical interests to culminate in producing three solo tracks and contribute to the group tracks.

W's attendance was intermittent, however he was often very focussed and keen from the outset and developed considerable skills and confidence. As sessions progressed he began to take a lead, encourage others and really seemed to gain a lot of enjoyment and a sense of satisfaction with the work. With Rob's help he downloaded some of the apps onto his own iPad. W also enjoyed the visual sessions and in particular the filming, where he showed a lot of enthusiasm and creativity culminating in an impressive music video and three individual tracks, as well as contributing to the group tracks.

R often came in and out of sessions to begin with, mainly watching and not participating, though he kept showing interest. This shifted when the workshops moved to the dining room and he began to engage more and from there his skills and focus really developed. Though he found engagement difficult at times, he created one individual track over the course of the project.

Reflections for future work

Residents engaged with the sessions in very different ways. Each journey was quite unique, with residents choosing how much or how little they participated. For some it took many sessions of watching and popping in before they could fully participate. With such variety of need, diverse ways of engaging individuals' creative offers were required. Our artists worked flexibly, engaging residents at different levels, with different styles and this approach seemed effective. The technology focus seemed popular with residents, however this often led to individualised experiences, more physical art forms might promote more group activity, though any approach would require flexibility.