

darts



Case Study

Dance On Care Homes

Winnie's Journey: Learning through Dance On

Dance On is fun, local and social, and is aimed at raising activity levels and reducing isolation in older adults across the city of Doncaster. darts' care home project specialises in chair-based movement, bringing the joy of dance to residents. The combination of socialisation and movement means that both wellbeing and agility are benefited. We work closely with care home staff, as well as residents, building their confidence when delivering and sustaining Dance On.

“A couple of words about Dance On... It is fantastic, brilliant, outstanding!”

Winnie is Activities Co-ordinator at a care home in Mexborough, where our Dance On programme has been taking place over a period of 6 weeks. Charlie, a darts Core Dancer and Programme Manager, has been going in and leading sessions, all whilst building a strong bond with Winnie. Winnie hasn't just seen the benefits of Dance On in residents, but in herself too.

Winnie has worked in care for 20 years, starting out in domestic care and then making the move to residential activities. She's been in her current role for two years and is now 'loving every minute'. But it hasn't always been the case.

As Activities Co-ordinator, Winnie is responsible for organising and planning the activities that take place for residents. With no budget and having to fundraise for everything themselves, Winnie has been left under immense pressure. This is the case for many care homes – individual staff members are responsible for not only planning, but boosting resident wellbeing, sustaining quality of life, and bringing joy to the residents and staff.

This had left Winnie under significant stress, but Dance On's intervention has turned things around. Bringing movement to residents is no longer a challenge. Charlie listened, learned and delivered a tailored programme for Winnie and her residents.

“After 6 weeks of Dance On, not only do I enjoy the sessions, but I look forward to them every time. My approach to activities has changed for the better through the moves and techniques darts' artists have taught me.”

Dance On is a movement programme for people aged 50+ in Doncaster. The care home benefits from a specific, research-led approach that expertly blends socialising and exercise for those with dementia in later life. With this approach, Winnie has noticed a definite improvement in residents through combined factors: improved alertness and physicality and boosted engagement.

“If residents are asleep, you’ll see their feet start tapping! Residents not only experience boosted mood, but they are more physically confident too. In cases where residents have been through a stroke, they find confidence in their agility again through the props in Dance On.

Dance On is always spoken about afterwards, for days to come. We all experience enjoyment through movement, music and the connection that comes with it.”

Charlie’s intervention work with the [Dance On Tool-Kit](#) has meant that Winnie is much more confident in embracing new forms of chair exercise that work in combination with background movement too. More staff members are involved, and she has discovered the importance of residents interacting with their neighbours. That can be through having fun together through pairing up, mirroring movements, or sharing props.

“They wake up physically and emotionally too. They are more joyful and more confident. A room of residents could be silent before Dance On, but after it will be buzzing.

At the end of each session, the residents are always smiling. These smiles aren’t just from having a great time, but they smile because they know they will be dancing again soon. There is a non-verbal recognition: they know what Dance On can do and feel the joy it brings.”

Winnie has noticed that whenever visiting family members are in the room, they’ll be joining in. This makes sessions extra special. When residents and their loved ones take part, they bond by experiencing Dance On’s joy together. The residents feel the benefits and their families do too, feeling trust and confidence in the care they have handed over to.

The exercise Winnie delivers to her residents is now more fun, more beneficial, and she now feels confident to take part and lead. She feels equipped with new skills; they are powerful skills that can bring alertness to fragile residents and joy to those in need of it.

At darts, one of core messages we set out to bring to others is discovering ‘the art of taking part’. This isn’t just the case for participants, but for session leaders too. In expressing yourself through movement, there is confidence to be found, agency to discover, and joy to be sourced. The same can be said for instructing, as burdens are lifted and stress eases. Taking part has lasting effects, and leading does too.

“I would love to contribute to training other co-ordinators to lead Dance On sessions on their own, where they work. Then more can experience what we have. Charlie and I have been on an uplifting journey together, and I can bring that to other care homes now, myself.”

To support the continuation of Dance On’s legacy in care homes, [donate to darts today](#).

*Name has been changed.