

Dance Magic Dance



A toolkit for
creative dance
in residential
care settings

In partnership with



INTRODUCTION

Dance in care homes offers people a chance to take part in a fun activity that can have a number of really positive impacts. It's a safe, enjoyable way for people to maintain mobility and at the same time have an opportunity to express themselves creatively.

For some residents it may prompt memories of dancing when they were young, taking part in jiving and other social dances. It can be fun to experience a seated version of Strictly Come Dancing. Alternatively participants might enjoy some gentle creative dancing with props such as scarves and feathers.

Aims

Whatever the context or dance style participants should experience:

- Enjoyment
- Engagement
- Mobility
- Opportunities for creative expression
- Social interaction

It's important that people have a choice about joining in.

Offer a shared dance moment rather than imposing or coercing people to take part in dance activities. We always remember that this is people's home and some people don't want to have dance visited upon them as they relax in the lounge. So we need to find a way of tempting residents to join us in dance and respecting their right to say no if they don't want to.

"....older people are not a category apart. We will all grow old one day – if we have that privilege, that is. Let us therefore look at older people not as people separate from ourselves but as our future selves. And let us recognise that older people are all individuals with individual strengths and needs, not a group that are all the same because of their age."

KOFI ANNAN (2002) UN WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGEING, MADRID

PLANNING A DANCE SESSION WITH OLDER PEOPLE

Health related benefits

The following list includes some of the positive impacts on health. It is useful to consider which of these are priorities for the individuals in a group. Dance which is offered as part of a falls prevention programme will have different priorities from a session in a continuing care ward for people with dementia.

- Improve balance
- Improve circulation
- Mobilise joints
- Retain / regain mobility
- Improve muscle tone
- Promote quicker reactions
- Mental stimulation
- Improve posture / co-ordination
- Improve continence / bowel function
- Having fun / laughing
- Alleviate depression
- Social interaction



Why dance?

Dance is a combination of patterns – it helps create change. If we just do repetitive exercise we get stuck in certain grooves. Dance creates change – change means less fatigue – variety is stimulating. If people are stimulated they are more likely to want to carry on attending.

It's important to remember that dance is an art form and has the potential to engage the whole person – it offers an aesthetic experience and opportunities for self expression. These are just as important to well-being as the exercises which build strength and increase flexibility.



MANAGING ROLES

If you have support workers or volunteers in the session think about what their role will be.

Do you want them to join in or observe? It's worth thinking this through beforehand – sometimes people's, well intentioned, helper behaviour can be quite disruptive.

It's a good idea to have a chat with support workers beforehand and share with them the above guidelines. You could also ask them to:

- Join in the activities and show a positive response. Their interest and enthusiasm is more likely to encourage participation than repeating dance leader instructions.
- Try to stay for the whole session and only permit those interruptions that are absolutely necessary (eg respond to non-urgent phone calls after the session).



Guidelines for leading group dance sessions

- Allow time for participants to respond
- Resist the temptation to intervene if someone is not moving in the way you would expect. All contributions are valid and there is no wrong way to respond (unless movement is inadvisable on medical grounds).
- Give help on a 1:1 basis if someone has difficulties (eg hearing / vision loss) or asks for help
- Do not passively move participants' limbs
- Lead as non-verbally as you can
- Take your lead from the person rather than giving instructions.
- Adapt your approach to suit the individual participants (in this work 'one size does not suit all')
- Try to have fun – an enjoyable few minutes may be a real joy for the individuals and for you.

IDEAS FOR SEATED DANCE ACTIVITY

Dance sessions can be done with small or large groups, in any room where people are able to gather comfortably. Sessions can be as long or short as you need them to be. Whatever the length of your dance session try to have a simple structure that includes:

- An introductory activity
- 1 or 2 warm ups
- At least 1 creative activity
- A cool down or ending

TOP TIP:

If there are people with dementia in the group you may need to say their name and suggest a move or be ready to copy any small gesture they make.

Introductory activity

1

Gently roll a large ball or tap a large balloon to each person and say their name. Alternatively use a soft toy or bean bag – something which is easy to catch.

2

Go round the circle and each person says their name and makes a move. Everyone repeats the name and the move.



WARM UPS

Here are some tried and tested warm up activities – feel free to make up your own and be ready to follow residents who initiate a move. The main aim here is to work the main muscle groups and suggest ways of putting joints through their range of movement. There is no need to include all of these activities and it may be appropriate to just do a few repetitions rather than allowing the activity to continue to the end of the music.



Seated Exercises: Lower Body

(Music Track 2 A Jig and a Caper JABADAO)

- Tap feet slowly (to the half beat)
- Lift heel leaving ball of foot on floor
- Tap toe then heel – change legs
- Roll from toe to heel – change legs
- Marching
- Charlie Chaplin steps
- Tap ball of foot on coloured spot on floor, change to heel. Repeat with other foot
- Lift leg and lower. Repeat with other leg
- Lift leg – then circle foot slowly in both directions. Repeat with other leg
- “Free style movements”. Shake and pat down

WARM UPS



Seated Exercises for Upper Body

(Music “Java Jive” The Inkspots)

- Circle shoulder backwards
- Rock your baby
- Raise arms and look through the space
- Stir stew – large movement clockwise and anti-clockwise
- Royal wave – change direction – change arms
- Pretend to catch ‘bubbles’ with a clap
- Paint the fence – change arms
- Pinch together finger to thumb – each fingers – then change hands
- Play imaginary piano
- Play your neighbour’s imaginary piano

Elastic Stretch

(Music “The Stripper” Joe Loss – from ‘The Full Monty’ soundtrack)

A fun activity which gets the heart beating faster. All hold a large piece of soft stretchy elastic, stretched around the circle.

- Hold and kick legs – changing legs each time
- Hold and kick – stretching out with arms
- Wind the bobbin up – then pull, pull, pull
- Finish freestyle

This works well to ‘The Stripper’ music – you could also try free move to a slower piece of classical music. There is no right or wrong way – the challenge is to get the ‘fit’ right for your group.



CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Feathers

(Music – any gentle piano music such as Einaudi collection)

Seated in a circle, a feather is passed round with gentle music playing in the background.

- Leader moves around the room asking individuals to ‘blow’ the feather off the back / palm of her hand.
- Feather is then blown / caught from person to person around the circle.
- Introduce a second feather going the opposite way around the circle.
- In pairs or threes people pass the feather back and forth ‘playing’ and exploring ways of blowing / patting / passing the feather.

Scarves

(Music – try classical music and then something livelier like a Charleston)

- Explore different ways of making scarves move
- Make a scarf dance in small groups
- Have a ‘question and answer’ dance:
A moves – B responds
...A moves – B responds etc

Expanding creative activities

Dance is a wonderful way to make an event of your activity. Think about your session in a wider context. What about seasonal activities, Morris Dancing in the spring? A tango for Valentine’s Day? Have some fun with your creative activities. Could you tie it into a TV show or regular movie night?

Strictly Come Dancing

Try adapting a cha-cha or tango and perform it seated with ‘ballroom hold’. Participants may enjoy dressing up with feather boas and long gloves.

Seated tap dance

Home made tap shoes – buttons sewn onto a band of fabric or elastic or a fabric. Add some sticks made from doweling and a few bowler hats and you can have your own musical theatre routine. (Make sure no-one stands up wearing the ‘tap shoes’).

COOL DOWN & ENDINGS

Cool down

*(Music Track 6 A Jig and A Caper
JABADAO)*

- Encourage residents to gently stretch our right leg then left leg
- Open arms outwards in a gentle stretch
- Hug arms into the body

Endings

Some groups enjoy slow movement with LED tea-lights in the palm of the hand.

Alternatively, if you have a few helpers, you could offer a very gentle shoulder rub and ask people for feedback about the session.

Small dances & 1-2-1

Dance isn't just about working with a large group and it may be difficult for you to get a group of residents together all at the same time. Sometimes it's easier to work with people in small groups or even one to one. This can be an effective way of engaging hard to reach residents - perhaps people who are no longer able to communicate verbally or even residents who are in bed.

You can try and engage a small group of people in the lounge or individuals in their own rooms. Play tunes on a wireless music system - or even use your phone - to tempt someone to join you for a gentle mirroring dance with scarves or a lively hand jive to some rock and roll music.



DUTY OF CARE – KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

- Think about the pace of the activities – and plan for a range of abilities and energy levels.
- The participants don't all have to be moving at the same time – try dancing with people one after the other.
- Find ways of building in short breaks – half the group could watch whilst the other half dance, or you could have a couple of quiz questions between each activity (e.g. “Who is singing this song”? “What dance would you do to this music?”).
- Seek advice from the doctor about anyone with a health condition that gives cause for concern.
- In creative activities, where there are opportunities to experience playful, spontaneous movement, make sure that participants' enthusiasm does not result in them overexerting themselves.
- Pay attention to each individual and watch out for any changes that give cause for concern (e.g. breathlessness, signs of discomfort).



Resources

.....

JABADAO

Sell music CDs and other resources to support dance sessions.

www.jabadao.org

.....

People Dancing

Foundation for Community Dance – the UK development organisation and membership body for community and participatory dance.

www.communitydance.org

.....

Amans, D. (2012)

Age and Dancing: Older People and Community Dance Practice

London: Palgrave Macmillan

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Since 2015 Dance Magic Dance has worked with five professional dance artists and their mentor Diane Amans exploring how creative dance can be used in care homes to engage residents, staff and their family and friends.

This has happened through 20 artist residencies, which have taken place in care homes across Herefordshire.

This toolkit has been developed to support Dance Magic Dance and aims to be a simple way for people who work with older people to develop their own creative dance activities.

Dance is both a social and creative activity and, as such, can benefit both the physical health of older people and promote a sense of well-being and social inclusion.

It has many physical health benefits including improvements in balance, strength and coordination, which can help reduce the risk of falls, often a significant health risk factor in later life. Creative dance based activities provide the opportunity for individual self-expression, creativity and communication through non-verbal channels. This allows for thoughts and feelings to be expressed in new and different ways in a safe and supportive environment. As it is not dependent on language based communication it is an ideal failure free activity for a range of participants of varying abilities and needs.

Project Statistics



1 Mentor
5 Artists



428
Older people
took part



240
Sessions



9 People
average per
session



24
Residencies



21% Men
79% Female



2123
Attendances



8
Training sessions





This toolkit was created by Creative Ageing in collaboration with Diane Amans to support the projects 'Dance Magic Dance' and 'Making of Me'.

The Courtyard Centre for the Arts
Edgar Street Hereford
Herefordshire HR4 9JR

creativeageing.co.uk

This toolkit was made possible by the kind funding from Big Lottery Reaching Communities fund, The Baring Foundation and Arts Council England.