

Tea Dance



Project evaluation

EVERYBODY DANCE (ED) held its first Tea Dance as part of its Buzzz project at Longlands Farm on the Herefordshire/Worcestershire border in July 2016.

Tea Dance, an inter-generational, outdoor, participatory project, comprised farm visits to see livestock and nature, short guided walks around the farm yard and tea dances in a converted barn with supported dance activity and cream teas. Tea Dance involved older people living with dementia, young people excluded from mainstream education, care staff, professional artists, friends and family. It was pro-active in supporting and encouraging social and creative interaction between people of different ages and abilities.

The thinking behind Tea Dance:

- Bring a diverse range of people together in a positive and supportive environment
- Have the farm animals present throughout the event encouraging and stimulating contact and communication
- Provide entertainment through dance excerpts from ED's 'The Kingfisher and The Damselfly' and 'Lovely Bugs' performances
- Talk and listen to each other
- Dance together
- Share a cream tea
- Test out the Tea Dance concept with future development in mind



We have become increasingly aware of the barriers to inclusion and the need and desire for our inclusive work as we have led projects, gone into places and made contact with people. Tea Dance has allowed us to respond to this knowledge and help people connect with the work.

A belief in dignity and independence in old age, alongside our commitment to inclusion and the facilitation of a sense of belonging, drove this project. We believe all people with dementia should have the opportunity to experience the benefits of contact and connection to young people and nature while participating in exercise which adapts to their level of ability.

Feedback:

"Thank you so much for an absolutely fantastic afternoon with you on Wednesday. Our residents were immediately so relaxed with all of your team and with the animals, and they seemed happier than they had been. All of our group said how much they enjoyed it and I think it was probably the most fulfilling trip out for our residents that I remember.

Marjorie said she had "thoroughly enjoyed it." Lydia said "it was a total surprise. It was an incredible place." Lydia would like to come back to visit you on a regular basis and I wish this could be possible! Dorothy said "It was very nice." She remembered stroking the two 'tiddler lambs' that had been bottle fed. Cora remembered cuddling the lambs and smiled when she saw a photo of herself with them. Valerie was the most relaxed we have seen her recently, especially whilst dancing and my colleague Helen was so pleased. Pat was also relaxed and found the afternoon "Lovely".

You worked so hard for us! Everything, animals, dancing to watch, opportunities to dance and the afternoon tea was brought to each resident in a personal way. All of you related so sensitively to each individual, engaging each in the best ways for them. The way you presented the animals and sequenced the dancing to watch and to take part in, and the tea gave the afternoon a very balanced and satisfying feel. The aerial dancing was a very special treat for us!

Our residents were able to respond creatively during dancing and were part of a very caring group which they clearly trusted. Thank you very much!"

Emma Curd - The Forbury Residential Home, Leominster

"It was obvious in the first few minutes that a visit to Longlands by The Forbury Residential Home and the opportunity to be in close company of chickens, lambs, cattle, sheep, ponies and dogs was a positive experience for the elders.

Many had grown up or worked on farms and the sight, smell and touch of our animals evoked memories. One spoke of hand milking cows, another of looking after chickens and collecting eggs. One woman said very little but held a lamb on her lap and buried her face into its neck inhaling the sheep smell for several moments.



For those who are confused by the present the experience seemed to stimulate reconnection with the past.

It was also a worthwhile encounter for the excluded teenagers Longlands works with. Our students supervised the presence and handling of the chickens and livestock. I hope it's an experience to be repeated in the future"



Julia Evans - Longlands (www.longlandscarefarm.co.uk)

Lessons Learnt:

- A three hour session is too long for the elders, two and half hours is adequate
- Recruitment for the Tea Dance was difficult, barriers of transport and staffing prevented residential homes from signing up but also a lack of experience and confidence in residential home staff proved problematic
- Poor uptake from general public could be addressed through local press and media coverage
- Regular events – e.g. one per fortnight during June and July
- Printed marketing material with images and quotes backed up with face to face meetings with activity co-coordinators of care homes is recommended for the future projects
- To make use of agencies: Age Concern, Stroke Association, Alzheimer's Society
- Connect with Dancefest 'Chance to Dance' groups of over 55's with a view to involving participants in performance and support roles
- Staff (artists and support workers) to participant ratios need to be 1:4
- Dance demonstrations are an effective tool to participation
- Dance performance has a place in the Tea Dance as it gives participants a time to rest and inspires their own creative input
- The combination of a farm tour and dance is an unexpected partnership but it works extremely well to create a rich sensory experience
- The inclusion of animals provides a good pathway in for Longlands students to get involved in Tea Dance
- There is great potential to involve primary school children in future Tea Dance projects

Rachel Freeman, EVERYBODY DANCE, September 2016



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