

Culture Box- remote and digital delivery of arts and creative activities to improve the wellbeing of people with dementia in care homes

Professor Victoria Tischler, Dr Chloe Asker, University of Exeter; Dr Hannah Zeilig, University of the Arts London; Julian West, Royal Academy of Music; Dr Mary O'Malley, University of West London; Dr Errol Francis, Culture&

Summary of the research

People living with dementia in care homes were severely negatively impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups were disproportionately affected. High rates of mortality, levels of social isolation, loneliness and responsive behaviours (e.g. agitation) increased as all external visiting ceased, including visits from artists and musicians. The Culture Box project investigated whether remotely and digitally provided interactive arts and creative activities (Culture Boxes) could alleviate social isolation and improve the wellbeing of residents with dementia in care homes during the pandemic. Culture Boxes were designed, produced and delivered to 33 care homes across England, reaching 86 residents, every week for 12 months. Surveys and interviews were used to assess the impact of the project. All resources will be made freely available via the Culture Box and National Activity Providers Association websites at the end of the study.

Policy recommendations

- Remote and digital delivery of arts and creative resources should be used more widely to support provision of stimulating activities that improve the quality of life for those living in care homes
- Materials suitable for diverse (i.e. BAME) communities and clear guidance are needed for successful implementation
- Care home staff attrition and digital poverty must be addressed as they negatively impact on participation
- Future projects should involve more people with dementia from BAME communities and should address the cost effectiveness of remote and digital provision of arts and creative activities

Key findings

- Remote and digital delivery of creative resources promote wellbeing by providing stimulation for people with dementia and staff in care homes, including those from Black and Asian communities. This includes promotion of socialisation, enhanced communication and improved quality of life.
- Relationships between care home residents and staff were improved, for example, by learning new information about life histories, abilities and interests as a result of participating in the project
- Residents became sociable and calm when engaging with Culture Box activities
- Art making, musical and nature-based activities were most popular
- Culture Box provided support and inspiration for staff at a time of unprecedented stress
- Staff attrition, lack of confidence in using Culture Box resources, and digital poverty were barriers to participation



Further information

Project website:

<https://www.cultureboxstudy.org>

Twitter:

@CultureBox

Podcasts:

Pandemic and Beyond (Episode 5)

<https://pandemicandbeyond.exeter.ac.uk/media/podcasts/>

Centre for Cultural Value (Episode 3)

<https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/podcast/whose-safe-spaces/>

Contact details

Professor Victoria Tischler

v.tischler@exeter.ac.uk

2nd May 2022