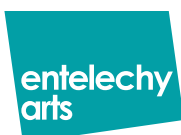




# Discoveries in Distanced Arts:

The work, wonder, and wear of Entelechy  
Arts' Staying Connected Programmes



November 2021



## Overview

This report stems from a larger 18-month UK Research and Innovation - Arts and Humanities Research Council (UKRI-AHRC) funded research project conducted in collaboration between Entelechy Arts and Queen Mary University London (QMUL). The overall aim of the project was to investigate the design, delivery and impacts of Entelechy Arts' distanced arts intervention, 'Staying Connected', from the perspectives of service providers and users during, and as the country transitioned out of, the restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic.

In this report we focus on **the experiences of service providers**. We conducted qualitative interviews with staff, artists and volunteers to understand the design and delivery of the Staying Connected programme and to identify the key learnings for these individuals and Entelechy Arts.

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## Contact

Enquiries about this report should be addressed to Dr. Janelle Jones:

Janelle Jones:  
j.jones@qmul.ac.uk  
02078823439

Department of Biological and Experimental Psychology, School of Biological and Behavioural Sciences, Queen Mary University of London, 327 Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS.

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## Summary of Key Findings

- + Group phone calls were used to deliver parts of the programme known as 'working clusters' because many older adults had limited internet and smartphone access.
- + Practitioners (Artists, Volunteers, and Staff members) used creative problem solving (e.g. reflective practice) to discover new ways to promote creative interaction within the finite limitations of the remote format.
- + Entelechy Arts supported artists to use their own expertise to develop and adjust the creative activities for remote delivery.
- + Several strategies including check-ins, warm-up exercises, and acknowledgement, were embedded into the weekly remote telephone working clusters to encourage individual contributions and active engagement amongst members (older adults).
- + Artists often combined activities which engaged different sensory modalities to promote dynamic interactions and to stimulate conversation. Tactile materials were sent out to supplement the continuous working clusters, and also as one-off stand-alone activities such as the gnomes at home programme, which was completed independently from the working clusters.
- + Staying Connected provided different types of social spaces on the phone and through the radio, that allowed Entelechy Arts' members to share their thoughts, ideas, and life experiences with one another.
- + It was challenging to implement Staying Connected because remote delivery by phone, radio, and parcel deliveries changed the nature of the social interactions (e.g., the necessity for turn-taking reduced spontaneity and organic discussion) and the stay at home orders increased the level of emotional distress experienced by members and practitioners.
- + Sustained delivery of remote programmes may require additional support measures for practitioners including hiring well-being support staff, regular check-ins, and weekly group movement sessions for practitioners.

## Literature Review

The on-going coronavirus pandemic has highlighted unique concerns among older adults (aged 65+) including increased risks of contracting and experiencing severe illness, and dying from the virus (Rout, 2020; UN, 2020). To reduce these health-related risks, the UK government classed all people over the age of 70, even without underlying health conditions, as vulnerable and recommended that they shield by staying home during the pandemic. Although these recommendations have now been relaxed (UK Government, 2020), the fast-changing nature of the on-going pandemic (e.g., local lockdowns, additional waves) places older adults at increased risk for detriments to health and well-being through reduced certainty around their ability to continuously access social networks and health and social services (UN, 2020). These potential interpersonal deficits are of particular concern as we know that social isolation (i.e., loss of partner; lack friends and/or family; exclusion from society) has a disproportionately negative impact on older adults' health and well-being (e.g., loneliness, poor quality of life, development of illness; (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Perissinotto et al., 2012). Recent estimates suggest that up to 36% of older people are experiencing loneliness as a result of social isolation caused by COVID-19 imposed stay at home measures (Gaeta, & Brydges, 2021).

Although older adults are at an increased risk of loneliness as a result of social distancing measures, there has been very little support specifically targeted towards this group from official public institutions during the pandemic. Instead community groups and volunteers have often stepped in to provide additional social supports such as food deliveries and prescription collections, to older adults (Abdullahi, Chana, Zenone, & Ardiles, 2021; Mao, Fernandes-Jesus, Ntontis & Drury, 2021). Some community groups have also tried to support the emotional needs of older adults using group activities to foster social interactions. For example community arts organisations have used arts engagement to stimulate social interaction, reduce loneliness and improve the health and wellbeing for older adults (Groarke, Berry, & Graham-Wisener, 2020; Groot, Kock, Liu et. al. 2021; WHO 2019). Moreover, community arts groups have been an important resource during the pandemic because people reported feeling less lonely and less bothered about being alone on days when they felt that these services helped them to be more creative than usual (Pauly, Chu, & Zambrano, 2020). Although these reports are encouraging, they do not speak to the practical considerations that are required to facilitate connection and engagement in a remote context with older adults.

One place that we can investigate these issues is by looking at arts organisations working with older adults during the pandemic. Arts organisations needed to quickly adapt their practices for remote delivery. However exactly what was done, whether these changes worked, and their impacts on service providers and users was not always clear. Understanding these changes can provide important insights into what organisations need to consider and implement for successful remote delivery. Moreover, remote delivery may come with unique challenges in arts contexts. In particular, the nature of community arts practice can change as there are limitations on the ways that practitioners and older adults can engage creatively together when apart. The portfolio of practices that are developed and delivered (e.g., continuous versus one-off activities; arts targeting different sensory modalities) should also be considered to better understand what services users might need to sustain creative engagement and social interaction in remote contexts. The current research project examined these issues by focusing on the design and delivery of a remote creative programme by Entelechy Arts from the perspective of artists, staff, and volunteers (i.e., service providers/ practitioners).



## Entelechy Arts

A recognized National Portfolio Organisation of the Arts Council of England, Entelechy Arts produces vibrant and important cultural programmes, created by and for the communities they work with, who are primarily isolated older people, those living with profound and multiple disabilities, and those living in care home environments. Entelechy Arts' has a broad portfolio of programmes co-created with older people one of which is 'Meet Me at the Albany', a creative arts club for the over 60s, in collaboration with regional arts space The Albany and the London Borough of Lewisham, to address the social needs and creative aspirations of isolated older people within the community. As the pandemic unfolded, Entelechy Arts recognised that the stay at home orders presented challenges for their established ways of working, and put their members at increased risk of social isolation and loneliness. In response to the pandemic, Entelechy Arts worked in partnership with their communities, partners, associate artists, staff and volunteers to design and deliver a series of remote creative activities collectively referred to as 'Staying Connected'.

## Staying Connected Remote Creative Programme

The Staying Connected remote programme is a series of creative activities that have been adapted and designed to be delivered in remote environments to help members to stay connected during the Covid-19 pandemic. The remote creative programme included both continuous events such as working clusters and a radio show, which were both delivered on a weekly basis, and one-off activities such as a gnomes at home parcel and a zine. Remote working clusters were developed using group telephone calls to promote agency and shared responsibility for focus, content and output between members, staff, artists, and volunteers. Working clusters focussed on using voices creatively to perform poetry, storytelling and solo singing in a small group setting, and were supplemented with deliveries of bespoke materials such as song lyrics and poetry. A weekly radio programme brought the performances and discussions from telephone clusters to a wider audience on an arts radio station. A crafting working cluster which operated on a continuous basis and decorating gnomes at home which occurred as a once-off activity provided tactile interactions with bespoke materials delivered to people's homes to foster visual and physical creativity. Some clusters rearranged their meeting times to dovetail into visits from care workers and family members thereby providing additional support to clients with complex needs in accessing the programme's digital/phone-based services. Collectively these activities provided opportunities for entertainment, social interactions, and creative development. Each activity was designed by a team of artists and designers and tailored to meet the needs of the specific group of members, with the support of Entelechy Arts staff and volunteers.

To understand how creative practices and their provision changed during the pandemic, we asked the artists, staff, and volunteers working with Entelechy Arts about the practicalities of creating and delivering remote programmes for older adults.

## What we did - Project Methodology

We conducted this study remotely in collaboration with Entelechy Arts. The project used a qualitative approach where a series of questions were posed to staff, volunteers, and artists to gain insight into their experiences with the design and delivery of the Staying Connected programme, and the perceived impacts of the programme on their own and members' health and wellbeing.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected over a two-month period from May 2021 to June 2021. Fifteen participants completed the study - five artists, five staff members, and five volunteers, representing different types of practitioners within the organisation. Artists were involved in the design and facilitation of creative activities. Volunteers provided practical support for the remote working clusters which involved getting Entelechy Arts' members onto the group phone calls and helping to develop creative activities and materials. The roles of Artist and Volunteer were interchanged depending on the requirements of the activity. Staff members received referrals onto the Staying Connected programme and provided needs assessments with members at regular intervals to determine whether additional support was warranted.

After providing informed consent, one to one semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded remotely using Zoom (Zoom Video Communications, 2021). Recordings were transcribed for analysis.

Data was analysed using thematic synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2014; 2019) where each sentence in the interview transcripts was coded in terms of its content (i.e., ideas, concepts, thoughts). Similar content was grouped together into clusters to form the basis of descriptive themes, and data was re-coded where necessary to fit the structure of the themes. Finally, the descriptive themes were analysed and synthesised into 4 main themes which are outlined in the findings below.

## What We Asked

Questions were developed by the research team. All participants were asked the same seven questions during a semi-structured interview (see Table 1 for exact wording of questions). Prompts were used to encourage people to expand their answers where needed.

- + **What have you done to adapt to remote creative programmes since lockdown began?**
- + **In your recent experience, what works well with remote creative programmes?**
- + **What are the challenges of remote creative programmes?**
- + **How has working remotely impacted your own feelings of isolation and loneliness? Health and well-being?**
- + **In your opinion, how has remote delivery impacted on the older adults you work with. For example, their feelings of isolation and loneliness? Health and well-being?**
- + **How have remote creative programmes shaped your ideas about what art is, who art is for, and how art can help individuals?**
- + **What advice would you give to other service providers who are interested in remote creative programmes?**



## Findings

Four themes were developed that focussed on (1) the design; and (2) the delivery of Staying Connected; (3) the features of the final programme; and (4) the impact that the process of design and delivery had on the practitioners and members. The four main themes can be summarised as Design, Delivery, Outcomes and Impacts. Each theme, is outlined in detail below.

The relationship between themes is presented in *Figure 1*.

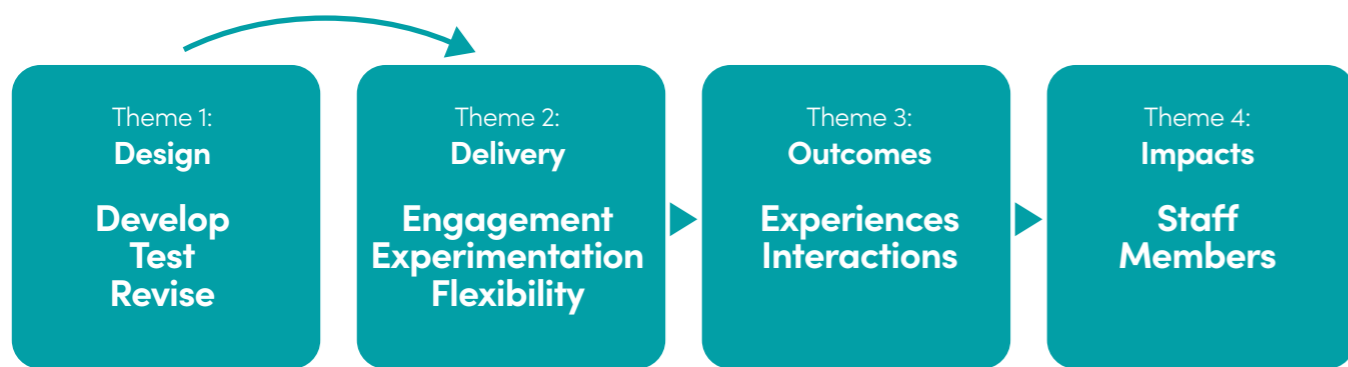


Figure 1. Diagram depicting the relationship between the four themes; Design, Delivery, Outcomes and Impacts

### 1. Design:

#### Creative problem solving was used to develop, test and revise the program

The design of the Staying Connected program evolved in response to the stay-at-home orders during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Stay at home orders meant that Entelechy Arts' members could no longer attend the face-to-face 'Meet Me...' creative programme at The Albany or other programmes run by Entelechy Arts. As one of the core aims of the face to face programme was to help promote social interaction and inclusion, a key consideration in the design of the Staying Connected program was for practitioners to understand possible limitations of interacting in a remote environment, and the access requirements of Entelechy members. Several practitioners mentioned the importance of considering the accessibility requirements of members to ensure as many people as possible would be able to participate.

*"So accessibility, lots of groups have gone online, which does exclude a lot of people. I know that perhaps there is a push from higher up that let's invest in getting older people online, but for some people, that's quite a complicated process. It involves paying for the internet and some people will need ongoing support to get online. So it's not that easy, and some people just don't want to."* (Staff Member 2)

After discovering the limited digital access of members, practitioners decided to create a bespoke programme based on group telephone calls, a radio programme and one-off activities that could be delivered to members. Discussions with practitioners highlighted that they relied on a range of creative problem solving techniques such as reflective practice, and design thinking to discover new ways to promote creative interaction within the finite parameters of the remote format. Mostly activities were planned in advance, and this was important to make sure the materials would reach the members in time. After each session artists and volunteers would reflect on what they thought worked well or didn't work, or if anything needed to be changed. As highlighted by one staff member, if they felt that something didn't work reflective practice was routinely used to find creative solutions.

*"...it was really very much about trial and error, we went down lots of avenues that didn't work, and always having to problem solve, and use reflective practice [...]but there's always ways to do it and I think working with artists obviously that's what they do best at finding solutions."* (Staff Member 4)

A strong partnership built on trust and a shared set of values provided the foundation for the design of the Staying Connected programme. Several practitioners highlighted that Entelechy Arts emphasised attention to detail and also spoke about their own prioritisation of attention to detail. Entelechy Arts supported artists to work independently to develop and adjust the creative activities for remote delivery using their own specific skillsets. This meant that artists had the freedom to embrace a risk-taking process of trial and error to determine the specific elements that would be included in the creative activities. One artist emphasised the importance of this type of trust between the organisation and the practitioners.

*"I would say, it required a lot of trust on their part. [...] I think only after they saw it all assembled and everything they said, you know we weren't really sure, we weren't 100% sure on it, and we were, just kind of went on the power of the fumes of your conviction, whatever. Which was great."* (Artist4)

## 2. Delivery: Strategies to Encourage Active Engagement

There were several strategies used to encourage active engagement. First, practitioners increased the focus placed on the person, reporting that they used check-ins and warm-ups to make members more comfortable and to encourage individual contributions to the creative activities. Some practitioners acknowledged that they found it difficult to describe how they encouraged members, but they felt that what they did was encouraging. Practitioners also emphasised the importance of acknowledging and appreciating members contributions during activities by giving positive verbal encouragement.

*"I think whatever they sing, and however they sing it, really acknowledging that they've found the drive and the courage to learn the song, and that they shared it, and really finding the positive things to say. No lies, nothing like that, but just absolutely encouraging in whatever they've achieved. That works well, because, and each of the members maybe having a chance to say something about that, if they want to, so they support each other."*

(Artist 1)

At the same time, practitioners reduced the focus placed on producing artworks. Instead, artists facilitated members' contributions to a creative process that involved sharing thoughts, ideas, opinions and experimenting with new creative approaches. Several artists reported that they focussed on facilitating creative conversations and tried to help members to develop a critical voice in relation to arts practice. The degree to which this led to the creation of specific artworks was considered almost immaterial, because many artists felt that it was the interactive creative process itself and sharing ideas that helped people to form bonds and led to increases in confidence.

*"It's more like the person talking about it and how they feel about the art they've made or their engagement with it. That's the more, that's the outcome that we're looking for, rather than the actual thing."*

(Staff Member 2)

Lastly, flexibility was embedded as a key component of delivery. Activities were adapted based on members feedback which helped them to maintain a sense of autonomy over the Staying Connected programme. The programmes were changed and adapted in real time to provide several different options for members to participate within the same activity.

*"I think what I found is that always giving people options, so there's some, for example there might be someone that isn't, doesn't feel like writing that day, so instead they might do some kind of free poetry, free verse instead, so making sure that all the activities are adaptable to different people's access and needs and things like that, or just how people are feeling on that day, or there's always the option to not participate in that thing and do it in a different way."*

(Volunteer 4)



### 3. Outcomes:

#### Key Features of the Staying Connected Programme

Two key features of the Staying Connected programme were that it involved dynamic experiences and provided a space for sharing. Staying Connected experiences were characterised as 'playful' (Artist 3), 'silly' (Artist 4), 'flirtatious' (Volunteer 3), and 'hilarious' (Volunteer 1) by practitioners. Practitioners identified that a vibrant and playful atmosphere in the Staying Connected programme was driven by the creative energy and enthusiasm from members.

*"I think they were all taking the activity very seriously, and putting their creative energy into it, and supporting each other, and that was really nice to witness. [...] Well, especially watching the theatre group, and again I'm just there to create monologues, so I wasn't necessarily leading the group at all, but that really, I was amazed at how engaged they all were, how seriously they were taking their characters. One [member] put on an accent. [...] That session was really lovely to see how they were just running, having ideas. What if this happens? What if that character does this? [...] They're as energetic and creative, more so than teenagers who don't want to do anything". (Artist 2)*

Alongside members own creative energy, artists identified that they tried to change, amplify or disrupt members' energy and ways of thinking, which may have contributed to the dynamism and creativity in the programme. Special care was taken to help people think about things in a positive way. Practitioners reflected that they actively tried to change the emotional energy of the phone call in a creative way.

*"I suppose I've been thinking about spontaneity a bit more, and trying to interrupt, or trying to change the emotional energy over a phone, how to distract and get people out of a certain negative way of thinking about things, or a feeling about things, but trying to do that in a creative way, and even just trying to do it in a, the way I use my voice in conversation." (Artist 3)*

This dynamism may have stemmed from artists' use of different sensory modalities in their creative activities. Different sensory modalities were used to generate conversation across the continuous and one-off activities. For example alongside the continuous working cluster group phone calls, practitioners sent out materials that members could touch (e.g., garden gnome figures, plants, bunting, workbooks, song sheets), to provide tactile elements and to generate conversation between the members during the working cluster phone calls. During the auditory phone calls, members might also be asked to engage in movement (e.g., arm movements as part of a warm-up exercise based on embodiment practice), or to engage in visualisation exercises (e.g., imagining the sun or the faces of other members in the group), which provided additional sensory elements. In tandem with the working clusters the radio programme added an additional layer of conversation by playing segments of the working clusters to a wider audience intermingled with conversations from two members who acted as radio presenters on a continuous basis. Whereas in the stand alone gnomes at home activity, the practitioner aimed to create a project that could be done with other people outside of the cluster, to help support members to generate conversation with their friends



and family. Artists also described how they tried to personalise the creative materials (e.g. with members stories from the creative clusters, and by hand painting the packaging) to make each package unique. By incorporating multi-sensory elements, and by changing the activities regularly, artists may have helped to create a vibrant atmosphere. As noted by one artist they noticed that they were able to generate more conversation by sending out sensory and tactile materials.

*"Collage, we tried to make, so me and [Artist 8], we talked about having quite tactile things, and they are very tactile, what we've put in the books, sensory, like the collage stuff. I've tried to just make lovely colours, lots of lovely fabrics, so, and we've included Blu Tack [...] In some ways, that got more conversation, sending stuff out to people." (Volunteer 1)*

At the same time Staying Connected was characterised as a space for sharing. The remote programme provided a social space that allowed Entelechy Arts' members to share their thoughts, ideas and life experiences with one another. Several practitioners remarked that they thought that the smaller group size facilitated a greater sense of intimacy which allowed members to reveal more personal details about themselves and provide more opportunities for peer support.

*"But it's just changed, the whole intimate space that, that's created each time has really transformed the conversations that people have, the dynamic, the depth of how people, what people talk about and how they share how they're feeling." (Staff Member 4)*



## 4. Impacts:

### Recognizing the Challenges (And Successes) Of Remote Delivery

During the pandemic, practitioners reported that the degree of distress and loneliness expressed by members increased during the stay-at-home orders. At times members appeared to be depressed or emotionally disengaged from with the activities. Practitioners reflected that they tried to strike a balance between providing emotional support and stimulating creative engagement.

*"..the team [] was massively supported when [Staff Member 7] came into post which I can't remember when that was but, yeah, she came in as a, I think, well, I can't remember what her role was, to begin with, but it was all to do with supporting the team in wellbeing and, yeah, that was, that really, really helped." (Staff Member 5)*

Several practitioners reported that they would often worry about the welfare of the members after the group phone-calls, and that they would think about how alone they were. More than one practitioner reported that sometimes they felt like crying because, as one practitioner reflected, they didn't feel equipped to cope with the emotional content of the phone calls. This seemed to be particularly pronounced because the practitioner was also living and working in an isolated context.

*"I don't know, thinking about how I might be equipped to, once I've had these conversations, what am I to do with it? And maybe in a less isolated space, I could go and meet a friend, whatever what else, whereas at the time I was just with my partner." (Artist 2)*

Alongside the emotional challenges, several practitioners reported a range of personal benefits which included skills development, creative inspiration, and a sense of reward from doing something that was useful and creative. One artist reported that participation in Staying Connected had helped them to improve their editing skills, and develop their thinking about social arts practice to the extent that they had applied to do a PhD on a related topic.

*"Well, it's been really interesting actually during, I think partly as a result of some of the thinking, I've actually applied to do a PhD starting in October which thinks about the voices, voices and community voices in artistic practice, so this has been, I think it's opened the door for me to start asking lots of questions which I've now made a long commitment to now, thinking about in a more focused way. So I've definitely, I've been thinking about what is the social value of art? What does art mean to different organisations and groups? Is this an artwork? It's an artwork for me, is it an artwork for [Member A] and [Member B]? Is it, who is an artwork for? Does it matter who frames it how?" (Artist 5)*

Most of the practitioners felt that there were benefits of the Staying Connected program for members. In particular they noted that for many older people in the community, and particularly for those who lived alone, the Staying Connected programme was one of their only opportunities for social interaction.

*"Well, some of the feedback that we've had is that people do feel it is the highlight of the week, and it does, it's something rather than nothing. It gives you a bit of structure to the week. I'd hope it's had a positive impact, and I think it has." (Staff Member 2)*

## Interpretation and Implications

Taken together, the qualitative findings provide an initial roadmap for the development of future remote creative programs. Although The Staying Connected programme was developed in response to the pandemic, it may constitute a more accessible way to engage in community arts programmes that can be accessed from the comfort and convenience of members' own homes. Practitioners developed a clear understanding of the limitations of working in a remote environment and the access requirements of Entelechy Arts' members. The Staying Connected programme was designed for delivery with these constraints in mind whilst still emphasising the importance of creativity and interaction.

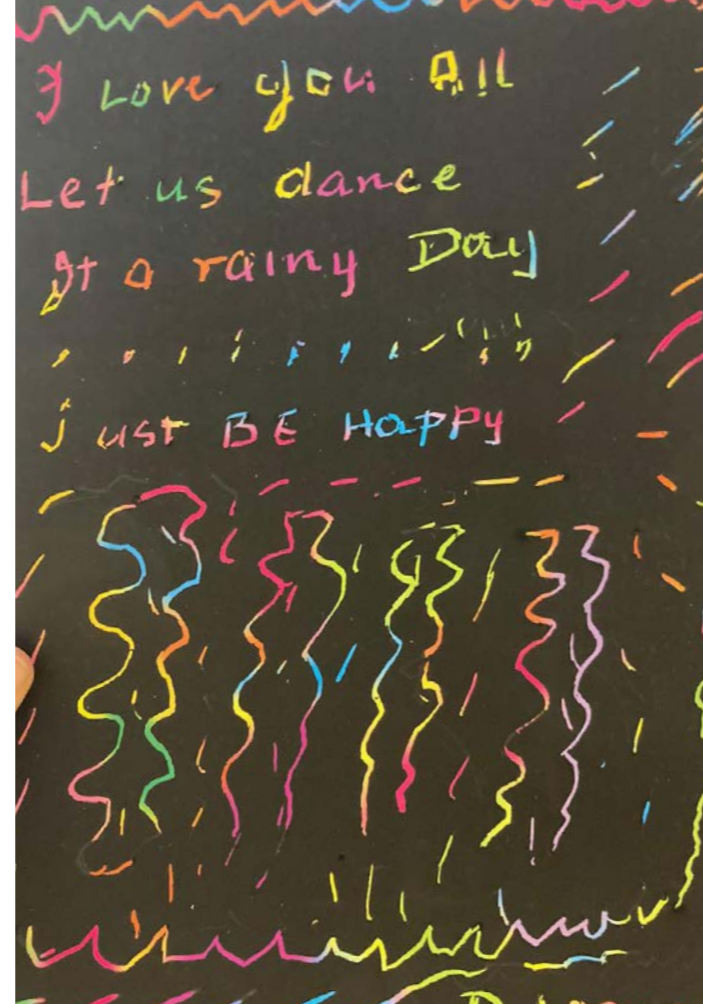
Practitioners also recognised the importance of active engagement and devised several strategies for its promotion within their creative work. Individual check-ins and warm-up exercises were used to encourage members to experiment with new ideas and materials. Collectively, these approaches may have made the activities more accessible, and more engaging particularly for those members who had little experience with art.

Continuous and one-off activities with auditory, visual and tactile elements with several options for participating were used to create a wonderful experience for service users where dynamism was a key element. The small group size of the working clusters provided an intimate social space that allowed Entelechy Arts' members to share their thoughts, ideas and life experiences with one another, and ultimately provide an opportunity for peer support. An extra layer was added to the working clusters by introducing a weekly radio programme to showcase members performances and to provide an additional discussion space. Maximum flexibility was facilitated with the gnomes at home activity because it was a one-off activity that could be completed at a time and location of the members choosing.

The remote delivery of the Staying Connected programme was more challenging for practitioners compared to in-person programmes, in part due to increased emotional vulnerability of members during the pandemic. Extra measures were proactively implemented before the beginning of the first lockdown to support practitioners in reducing this emotional wear. However, given that many practitioners reported experiencing substantial emotional wear, additional supports may be required to sustain the long term delivery of the Staying Connected programme, and to protect the health and wellbeing of social arts practitioners.

## Considerations and Recommendations

The findings highlighted four key elements for consideration in the design and delivery of remote creative programmes for the arts sector in general: Accessibility, Active engagement, Flexibility and Feedback, and Addressing Wear and Tear.



### Accessibility:

Many members of the Staying Connected programme did not have access to high-speed internet or video call software. To accommodate as many members as possible, the Staying Connected programme was held in a range of accessible formats, which included a combination of phone calls, a radio programme and parcels that were presented in both continuous and one-off formats. The core format of the creative activities included working clusters which could be accessed through a group phone call on their mobile or landline, and were held continuously on a weekly basis. Bespoke creative materials were posted or delivered to members to supplement the working clusters on an ongoing basis, to add an additional tactile and visual element to the calls in an accessible way. A weekly radio programme was also presented on an arts radio station on an ongoing basis and was accessible through any FM radio. Additionally one-off stand-alone creative projects were sent to members, such as the gnomes at home parcels, and these could be completed at a time and location of the members choosing, either alone or with a friend or family member. Entelechy Arts' members did not need any type of computer or smart device to access the programme, as it could be accessed using a standard phone, radio, and the postal service. Although some cluster groups did eventually move into a video call format, the majority of the clusters continue to be delivered by telephone to make sure that the clusters include as many older adults as possible. Importantly, the decision to move to a video call format was driven by members preferences and their ability to access video call software.

### Consideration 1:

Digital exclusion is a reality for many older adults. Using videocall software alone to deliver remote creative programmes may be a barrier to attendance for many people in the community.

### Recommendation 1:

Different formats should be considered and tested to find the best solution for each organisation. Although some older adults will have access to videocall software, this access should not be assumed, and organisations may want to consider what can be done to maximise the number of programme participants and to accommodate the specific access needs of their programme participants. Hybrid models of delivery - with a mix of phone calls, videocalls, radio, and parcel deliveries - may be a useful way to maximise accessibility, and thereby attendance.

## Promoting Active Engagement:

Practitioners reported several strategies that they used to encourage people to contribute creatively and to promote social interactions. Check-ins and warm-up exercises were used to help people to feel more comfortable in the remote setting. Artists introduced a range of continuous, and one-off activities with auditory, visual and tactile elements to generate creative energy and to stimulate conversation. For example in the continuous working cluster group phone calls practitioners sent out materials that members could touch (e.g., garden gnome figures, plants, bunting, workbooks, song sheets), to provide tactile elements and included movement (e.g., arm movements as part of a warm-up exercise based on embodiment practice), and visualisation exercises (e.g., imagining the sun or the faces of other members in the group), which provided additional sensory elements. Additionally practitioners used the radio programme and a zine to reflect the activities back to the members and showcase different creative contributions. In the stand alone gnomes at home activity, the practitioner aimed to create a project that could be done with other people outside of the cluster, to help support members to generate conversation with their friends and family. To ensure that members did not become overwhelmed by the range of activities, members were gently encouraged to experiment, and specific attempts were made to acknowledge members contributions by saying something positive.

### Consideration 2:

Before people can actively engage with creative activities, they need to feel comfortable in the remote setting and acknowledged within the group.

### Recommendation 2:

It is important to develop specific strategies to promote active engagement in a remote context. Individual check-ins (both with a separate call in advance of the activity and an individual welcome at the beginning of the group call) and warm up exercises can be used to make people feel more comfortable in a remote environment. Vibrant activities can be used to generate conversation and ideas. To make creative activities more accessible people should be encouraged to experiment with ideas and materials, and all contributions to the co-creating process should be acknowledged.



## Flexibility and Feedback:

The design and delivery of Staying Connected incorporated ongoing feedback from Entelechy Arts' members. Feedback was used to evaluate and adapt creative activities and to help members retain a sense of autonomy over the Staying Connected programme (which included both continuous activities such as the working clusters and the radio programme and one-off activities such as the gnomes at home parcels). Practitioners designed the creative activities and then modified the activities depending on the feedback that they received from Entelechy Arts' members. Postcards, follow-up phone calls, and group meetings were all used to give Entelechy Arts' members multiple opportunities to report on the degree to which they liked or disliked the activities. The range of feedback mechanisms also allowed members to provide feedback anonymously, in a one-to-one setting, or in a group depending on their preference.

### Consideration 3:

Participant perspectives can be leveraged to improve the design and delivery of remote programmes.

### Recommendation 3:

Seeking feedback about what works or needs improvement in the programme is a useful way to engage users. Different feedback formats (e.g., anonymous, one to one, or group) can be used to help participants to communicate in way(s) that are most comfortable for them. Specific feedback from participants can be used to adapt the programme to meet the needs and preferences of the specific users.

## Addressing Wear and Tear:

The delivery of the Staying Connected programme was more challenging to implement for practitioners compared to in-person programmes. In the remote programme practitioners were more isolated and could not receive the same degree of peer support that they may have received in an in-person setting, which meant that they did not always feel equipped to provide support to Entelechy Arts' members. Extra measures were proactively implemented, such as dedicated wellbeing staff, regular check-ins with practitioners, and weekly movement sessions, to support practitioners to ensure that they could continue delivery of the Staying Connected programme.

### Consideration 4:

Remote delivery can be more isolating than in-person delivery; Members required to stay at home may become more vulnerable leading to increased emotional reliance on practitioners.

### Recommendation 4:

It may be necessary to introduce additional measures to support practitioners engaging in remote programme delivery. Dedicated staff to support the health and wellbeing of practitioners could be introduced to ensure that practitioners do not become overwhelmed and are suitably equipped to deal with the demands of providing emotional support.



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