

# iris



Stimulating Thinking on dementia policy and practice from the Dementia Services Development Centre at the University of Stirling

## 05. IdeasLab 2015

### Arts, dementia and culture

IdeasLab 2015 had one simple goal – to identify ideas and projects where Culture and the Arts can really help improve the world for people with dementia in years to come.

A world-wide call generated submissions from across the world. Ten of the best ideas were selected - from America, Hong Kong, Italy, the Republic of Ireland and from across the UK.

Each IdeasLab run by DSDC is about bringing on ideas which have a real chance of making a difference. This IdeasLab is also part of the year-long programme of the Dementia Festival of Ideas, running during 2015 to mark the 25th Anniversary of DSDC. Find out more at: [www.festivalofideas.org.uk](http://www.festivalofideas.org.uk)

#### The format

**Professor June Andrews and Mark Butler from DSDC** facilitated a process of exploration and exchange which involved both an expert Panel and a lively audience. Each idea was presented in turn to the Panel, which was made up of artists, producers, dementia experts and arts and ageing specialists. Also in the room were health and care professionals, international funders, policy experts, designers, inventors, researchers and members of the public.

There was no ranking or judgement made of the ideas. Instead robust discussion and encouragement helped strengthen these ideas and generate even more. Each idea is presented in the same order as in the short film of the event. The film and more details on each idea is available on the DSDC website: [www.dementia.stir.ac.uk](http://www.dementia.stir.ac.uk)

*In February 2015 DSDC hosted an international IdeasLab to explore how the arts and culture can make a difference to the future of dementia. This Iris captures the ideas explored at the one-day IdeasLab 2015 event held in Belfast as part of the year-long Dementia Festival of Ideas, marking the 25th Anniversary of DSDC. The Centre, like the IdeasLab itself, was made possible by the Dementia Services Development Trust which has generously supported DSDC since its inception.*

Written by  
Mark Butler

## The ideas

### Idea 1 – Look, Listen, Learn

*Guided museum tours for individuals with dementia and their carer-givers*

**Jessica Ruhle**

*Associate Curator of Education, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University*

Look, Listen & Lunch tours provide engaging, and normalising, museum programs for visitors with dementia and caregivers. The complete visit combines a 90 minute museum experience with a group lunch. The day includes interactive thematic conversations about art, hands-on art-making activities, and live musical performances related to the art.

Jessica explained that Look, Listen, Learn had drawn on learning from the long-established “Meet Me at MOMA” project hosted by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, but the Nasher programme is itself distinctive.

Researchers and students are involved as well as gallery staff. University students work as tour guides and assistants, interact with participants for their class assignments, and research similar programmes as part of their museum internship. Future generations of museum professionals, social workers, and medical researchers are therefore made aware of the positive effect of arts programming, whilst dementia also becomes destigmatised for them.

Plans to scale up the current program will allow up to 45 additional families per month to participate. Annual workshops for care partners, service providers, and cultural organisations, and a symposium in 2017, seek to establish communities to share ideas and plans for the future.

### Idea 2 – Project e-ma

*Creative workshops involving Japanese non-sectarian wooden prayer*

**Andrew Woollock**

*PhD Candidate, Queen’s University of Belfast*

An e-ma (pronounced like the girl’s name ‘Emma’) is a Japanese wooden tablet, traditionally used to record hopes and wishes for the future - much like the idea of a New Year’s Resolution in Western culture.

The e-ma tablets are used to engage people with different levels of dementia, their carers and family. Started in 1999 as an undergraduate project, facilitated workshops are built around creating and displaying the e-ma to promote self-expression through mark-making in a safe environment with others. The images generated help create dialogue amongst participants and those who view the finished artwork which is displayed in a simple wooden frame.

Andrew stressed that in spite of having roots in the Japanese shin-tou belief system, the project is universally appropriate, as it centres on engagement with the self and with others. Project e-ma is adaptable to different social and cultural settings. It is sustainable and manageable, affordable, portable, and cost-efficient. For example 250 e-ma, a full-size frame, quality paints and brushes can cost as little as £500.

It can also be easily scaled up and down. For example, for a large-scale project, a single frame could be built and located at a central space, with e-ma and materials used in various workshops, before being gathered for display in one central location.



*Future generations of museum professionals, social workers, and medical researchers are made aware of the positive effect of arts programming, whilst dementia also becomes destigmatised for them.*

### Idea 3 – Immersive Experiences

*Innovative use of technology to change the care environment*

**Colette Gollcher**

*Managing Director, 4D Creative*

This project uses technology to create engaging and calming environments in dementia assessment and care settings in Merseyside. High and low tech solutions are combined to create person-centred experiences intended to inspire new ways of thinking and articulation of ideas.

Colette said people with dementia become more engaged in the type of immersive space which can be created by thoughtful use of visual and audio triggers. People with dementia appeared more communicative with each other and more relaxed, as a direct result of the impact of environmental changes around them.

Healthcare staff have said the project increased their understanding of the personal identity of their patients. Carers have said they feel more involved in care and more able to contribute to the development of care plans by taking part in the sessions too.

Colette also reported on early research which suggests a decrease in the administration of anti-psychotic drugs to patients experiencing sessions in the 4D room takes place during the sun-downing period. But more research is now needed.

The project is expanding with two more immersive spaces, one of which will be used by four wards. Plans for the future include tools that integrate the software into care planning and even an app that will enable families to be involved in their dependent's experiences in the ward from home.

### Idea 4 – ImaginationGym

*Well-established workshop programme using thematic creative activity to stimulate people with dementia*

**Peter Blackbyrne**

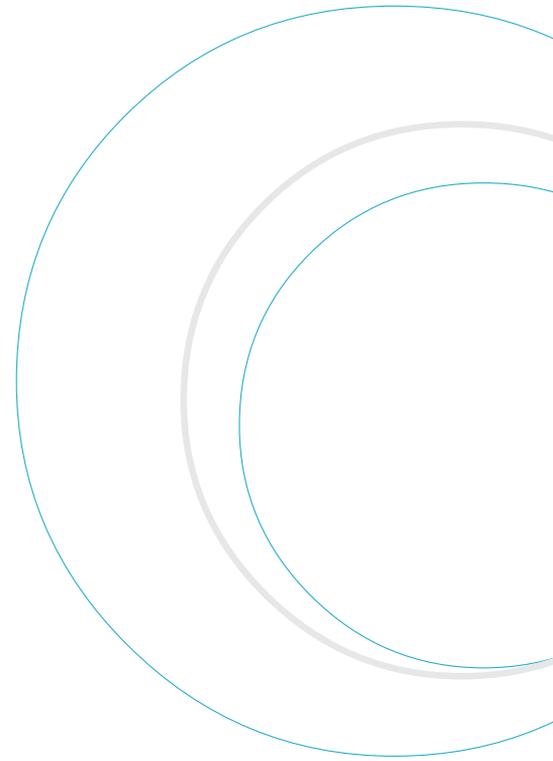
*Co-author of ImaginationGym Method (with Rosaleen Durkin)*

Each ImaginationGym workshop aims to create a relaxed and peaceful environment for clients and carers through use of music, stories and art – all linked to a theme such as an Enchanted Forest. It is based on three simple principles – to provide a cultural setting for creativity, to use tools to stimulate imagination and ideas, and to provide a platform to bring these ideas out into the real world as creative output.

Workshops are adaptable for different clients and settings. For example a trained person may run a group workshop in the community centre, whereas home carers can simply use the same material at home with support from a trained ImaginationGym community carer. However, as Peter explained, creative output in workshops which involve clients with advanced stages of dementia, are often limited in terms of what can realistically be created.

ImaginationGym is seen as cost effective to implement and run, and scalable. It really depends on the training. Community carers can be trained in two days spread over six weeks, equipping them to run group workshops in their communities. A further day's training allows them to provide support to carers in the home. The programme can then be repeated as often as it is needed.

Participants on all courses receive a certificate on completion, which must be renewed bi-annually by a short update course. Exam-based practitioner training is available for advanced users. On-going support services are provided for those who have completed Level 1 and Practitioner training.



## Idea 5 – Art Gallery in a Wandering Path

*Innovative gallery project connecting art, community and people with dementia*

### **Virginia Serrani**

*Architect*

A permanent art gallery has been created as an integral part of the “Margherita” day centre for Alzheimer’s disease in Fano, Italy. It is open to both Margherita users and to external visitors and citizens. This promotes integration between the centre, its users, and the city.

A “Wandering Path” is quite literally that - a winding walk-way which connects the entrance to the three different units which make up the centre (according to the severity of the dementia) and to spaces for shared activities and gardens.

The path is not confusing for people with dementia, as it incorporates three distinct landmarks - gardens, therapeutic kitchens, and a winter garden, placed in the middle of the path. It has been designed to ensure the safety of patients at every stage, but there are deliberately no barriers to limit people’s freedom of movement or independence within the space itself. It is packed full of sensory stimulation that also helps guide people - flowers and kitchen smells, bird song, colours from plants and artworks.

The Wandering Path also includes a permanent art gallery open as a semi-public space. The Gallery exhibits artworks from professional painters and sculptors from the area. The space supports occupational, physical and psycho-social activities, as well as accommodating wandering by clients. It also neatly tackles stigma, promoting real community inclusion and integration of patients, carers and community stakeholders.

As Virginia explained, the underlying philosophy of the centre places real value on art, as something which connects the inside and the outside, both literally and cognitively.

## Idea 6 – Journey for Active Mind

*Cultural research project assessing the impact of art appreciation*

### **Professor Timothy Kwok**

*Director of Centre for Positive Ageing Chinese, University of Hong Kong*

The Jockey Club Museum Programme for the Elderly centres on specialised guided tours of the Hong Kong Museum of History museums for groups of six people with dementia and their carers. Each tour is repeated and ends with creative workshops stimulated by the tour.

The aim of the project is to evaluate the impact on both the relief of symptoms and communication between people with dementia and their caregivers through art appreciation and mental stimulation.

The Museum Project adopts aspects of similar projects in western culture which can be traced back to “Meet Me at MOMA”, including the involvement of charities such as Art in Hospital and the Alzheimer Association. Like the best of the other projects, this one in Hong Kong is exploring how to establish credible and culturally-sensitive measures of impact.

Compelling qualitative and quantitative measures are still proving elusive across the world. However by placing a practical programme of repeat visits in a clear research context, this project enables further work on cultural and clinical comparisons of impact and assessment, not usually built into research in this area. Unlike many of the UK forms of evaluation, there is no distorting pressure from funders about the criteria to be used and the outcomes to be established.



## Idea 7 – Creative Writing in Communities

*Sharing the learning on creative writing gained on a Churchill Fellowship study visit to North America*

### **Romi Jones**

*Writer, Researcher & Facilitator*

Romi drew out work in the USA and Canada to suggest how creative writing and a programme of arts activities can help develop UK aspirations for dementia friendly communities.

Romi talked about one approach, from the Islands of Milwaukee, which involves people with dementia in shaping communities through effective consultation using creativity. A second approach, the connect2culture symposium, supported by Alzheimer's NYC Chapter, showed how cultural venues can improve inclusion through the way they work.

The presentation also highlighted how Judith Marcuse's Art for Social Change programme, together with Ardra Cole's work on art as a form of social research, resonated with the UK's national Artworks Programme, funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The focus here is on participatory practice, with both graduates and established artists using creative writing, music and art with people with dementia.

Romi also drew on evidence from the CECD Creativity Celebration in Vancouver about the calm and concentration generated by creative activities in people with dementia. She advocated that their contribution to the cultural life of their community should not be dismissed because it is not 'high art'. By making better use of local experienced writers and artists, backed up with training for emerging artists and local care staff, people with dementia can be more involved in their communities.

## Idea 8 – Reading Rooms

*Poetry-based, collective reading project*

### **Martina Blake**

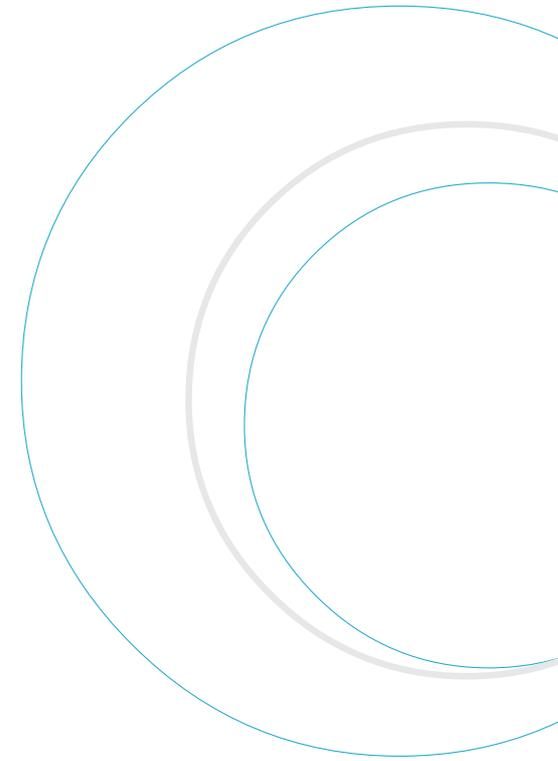
*Reading Rooms Regional Coordinator, Verbal Arts Centre*

Reading Rooms is a weekly session of up to an hour, led by a trained facilitator who reads aloud a short story or poem. The aim is to develop a safe space for a group of people with dementia, supported by volunteers, to explore thoughts, feelings and experiences through literature. Additional prompts such as photographs or materials help to bring the literature to life for participants.

Reading Rooms uses a collective reading model delivered in group settings. This Northern Ireland-based programme embodies the belief that shared reading and rhythmic literature helps cognitive function and short-term memory in people with dementia. The Volunteer Delivery Framework, used by the Verbal Arts Centre, also empowers volunteers involved in the programme to be active and fulfilled in their own communities.

Feedback from groups suggests benefits in general well-being and mood, improved sense of purpose and connection, increased confidence and self-esteem as well as better communication skills.

Future plans include building a support network to allow people to access Reading Rooms in their local community, using more volunteers to deliver the program. Reading Rooms could then become more of a holistic model, working for anyone living alone and struggling to live a good quality of life.



*"Most of what I learnt can be replicated easily anywhere - it requires a change of attitude, a belief in the effectiveness of creative programmes for people with dementia. People with dementia are capable of learning, creating, contributing".*

**Romi Jones**

*Writer, Researcher & Facilitator*

Martina emphasised the affordability and sustainability of the project, as trained volunteers deliver the programme rather than health or literary professionals. The hope is that through the art of reading quality literature Reading Rooms enables participants to begin a process of transforming their lives.

## Idea 9 – Insightfull!

*Practical kit using co-design to stimulate creative engagement and practical change in clinical settings*

### **Kevin Harrison**

*Director, ArtsLink Central*

Insightfull! is about creating stimulating spaces in care and health settings through a participative, co-design process involving visual artists, designers and healthcare professionals. The win-win occurs when what is designed has real functional beauty and also the way it is created balances up the clinical and social needs of people using them.

Kevin explained that ArtsLink Central has been evolving a range of practical interventions that can temporarily change the care environment so it encourages social exchange, stimulates creative activity and enhances well-being. ArtsLink Central is testing a kit which they hope will extend the reach of arts and culture in affordable, accessible and sustainable ways.

Recent results have included the development of a portable dementia creative kit based on a tablecloth, a digital project addressing way-finding and privacy in a community hospital ward, and an automated clinically-safe blind that can transform a sitting room into a social space. Critical to each has been the engagement with health and care partners, as well as patients, in the design process.

There are potentially many benefits to the type of kits which are now emerging. For participants the kits can encourage social engagement and transform a static, clinical environment into an inspiring space. For care homes the kits can provide a workshop program which meets requirements for creative activities outlined by National Care Standards and Care Inspectorate guidance. For facilitating staff and volunteers, the kits can provide easy to use materials and clear activity plans.

## Idea 10 – RADIQL

*Multi-sensory workshop and research programme going beyond reminiscence practice*

### **Belinda Sosinowicz**

*Arts and Health Coordinator, Age Exchange*

RADIQL is a method of working with people with dementia that uses Reminiscence Arts to improve quality of life and well-being. This project is about mainstreaming arts in daily care in care homes.

The arts activities extend reminiscence practices, which often rely on verbal discussion, by involving all the senses and enabling participants to communicate non-verbally through mark making, music, craft and movement. This multi-sensory approach responds well to the needs of the participants, particularly those with advanced dementia.

At its heart is high-quality practice and new models of training. Partners include Guy's and St Thomas Charity as funders, together with several London NHS Trusts and the Alzheimer's Society. A formal research programme involving Royal Holloway is looking at cost benefit, as well as practice-based, research.



Belinda reported that observations of sessions involving residents suggested that group sessions had improved the mood and engagement of people with dementia in the first 50 minutes and that this was sustained over a period of 24 weeks. Evaluation suggested improvements to the lives of care home residents by improving their connection to both the place where they currently live and to spaces of memory and imagination.

The other findings from the research were highlighted. Firstly, the programme is most effective when it employs a range of different creative activities in the sessions, because this engages people with dementia in multiple ways. Secondly, in order for the sessions to have a sustained impact on quality of life, beyond the limits of weekly sessions, care staff need to be involved in the creative activities. Future plans therefore include a staff training programme to accompany delivery of this programme.

## Reflections

Some comments and questions which arose in discussion go to the heart of the future of dementia. They also challenge a number of currently accepted assumptions.

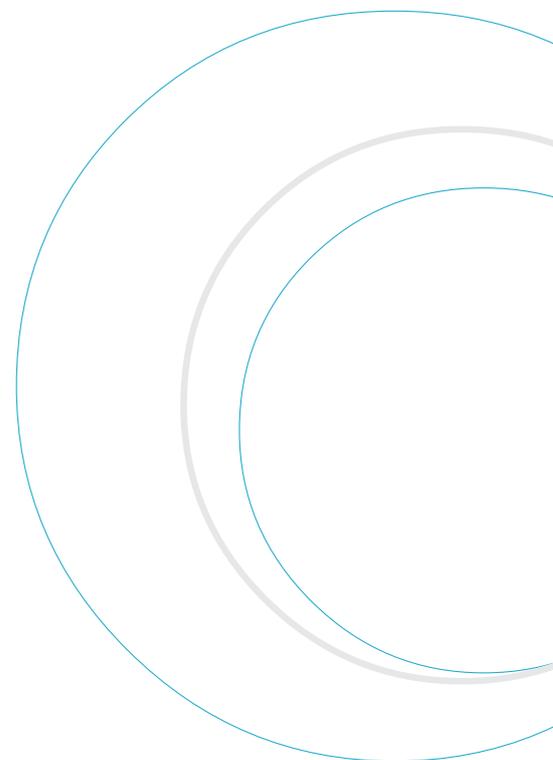
This IdeasLab showed the value of exploring ideas and projects side by side. Ideas stimulated other ideas. Projects which had been developed in isolation gained value by connecting to others. International exchange added a lot to the day. *How can innovative ideas and projects be better supported and connected together, earlier in their development?*

Exchange and learning depends on how well ideas and projects are captured and documented as they develop. Open and objective evaluation, however difficult to achieve, still seems elusive. Clear evaluation is hampered by overuse of abstract language and a lack of credible measures of impact. Equally projects are being encouraged to overstate their value and impact to secure funding. There needs to be a sharper, shared understanding of what constitutes objective evidence. *How can projects be properly documented, shared and evaluated in an open, supportive and critical way?*

The IdeasLab threw up very different views about the role and value of the arts in relation to dementia. Some projects, broadly speaking, celebrated the inherent and therapeutic value of participation in individual arts activities as an end in itself. They were about an intervention to improve mood or deliver an experience, with the artist involved as mainly a therapeutic giver of benefit. This IdeasLab did not manage to explore in any detail issues about other more challenging and exciting roles for artists and issues around the quality of art. *How can discussion on the role, quality and impact of the art itself, rather than its therapeutic value, be promoted?*

One surprising theme which emerged was about where and how work should be exhibited. Projects showed different possible directions for physical display and performance – in clinical settings, by bringing people to traditional spaces or by developing dedicated and professional spaces linked to community sites. These are not necessarily alternatives but each has implications for the way art is seen in relation to dementia. *What is the future direction for exhibition and performance where art meets dementia?*

It was encouraging to see technology being used to engage directly with individuals and the environment they are in. Discussion at the IdeasLab suggested much more can be done given more encouragement and investment. *How can technology be used more extensively and creatively to open up dementia in new ways?*



*Projects showed different possible directions for physical display and performance.*

The IdeasLab also exposed a range of views about the purpose and framing of research. On the one hand, the projects tended to be reporting some early anecdotal results about the impact of arts-based therapeutic interventions. On the other, questions were asked about the framing of such research, its focus and terms, and questions raised about its objectivity and credibility. These different reactions suggest research remains a contentious issue with credibility issues. *What is the best approach to research around arts and dementia which will achieve consensus about its focus, objectivity and rigour?*

These and other fundamental questions will now be explored in the Dementia Festival of Ideas during 2015.

## Next Steps

### Another IdeasLab

Each IdeasLab is a self-contained event, designed to give value to those who participated by being there. The main ideas are captured in a film on the DSDC website: [www.dementia.stir.ac.uk](http://www.dementia.stir.ac.uk)

DSDC will also continue to work with presenters on their ideas.

A further IdeasLab is being planned for late in 2015 as part of the year-long programme for the Dementia Festival of Ideas. Visit the website at: [www.festivalofideas.org.uk](http://www.festivalofideas.org.uk)

## Panel Members

DSDC would like to thank the following for being members of the Panel:

### David Clegg

*Artist, author and producer*

### Ciaran McKinney

*Head of Arts and Culture, Age and Opportunity*

### Lorraine Calderwood

*Development Officer, Arts & Older People, Arts Council of Northern Ireland*

### Mark Butler

*Director, Dementia Festival of Ideas*

The Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) exists to improve services for people with dementia and their carers throughout the UK and beyond. We do this through research and teaching and by supporting workers and organisations that provide care for people with dementia.

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