

## **praXis Creative Remedies Arts and Health Awards 2011 Application Form**

### **About your project**

Please provide us with background information about your project

### **Project title**

Songs for You

### **Tell us who your participants were, their age range and how many took part in your project**

People with dementia who are being supported in the community by our health professionals in our community teams, plus their carers. Mostly older people between 55 and 85. Overall and so far we have had approx 700 people taken part so far in the project sessions.

### **When did your project take place and how long did it run for?**

From March 2011 to date – a series of 16 sessions in Shrewsbury, 6 sessions in Bridgnorth, 5 sessions in Telford

### **Please tell us where your project took place (including postcode)**

Meole Brace Trinity Centre (SY3 9HF), Bridgnorth (WV16 6PD), Wellington Care home (TF1 2BJ), Telford Mond (TF7 4AS), Wellington Leisure Centre (TF1 1LX), Ketley community Centre (TF1 5AN), Lightmore View Care Home (TF7 5LH), Rodington Village Hall (SY4 4QS), Tasley Village Hall, Bridgnorth (WV16 4NJ)

### **Tell us who your project funders were and your total budget**

South Staffordshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Concertina Trust, The People's Postcode Trust, Awards for All and Shropshire Council – total budget - £6746

### **Project website or blog address (if applicable)**

<http://www.southstaffsandsdropshealthcareft.nhs.uk/Services/Arts-for-Health/Default/General-Information.aspx>

### **What health issues was your project exploring?**

Health and wellbeing that can be improved by using music and singing with people with dementia – the aspects of harnessing what memory is still there and the qualities of the participants personalities and abilities to sing and remember lyrics and songs. To look at how singing can help to maintain contentedness and support the health and wellbeing of people with dementia and also the support it gives to their carers.

### **What was the involvement of the participants in health issues prior to the project starting?**

Seeking support and advice from our community mental health teams across Shropshire and Telford. Some are being supported at home by their carers, others are making use of day centres across the patch and some are now residential in care homes. Some care homes we visit to take the sessions too, but some of the participants come out of the care homes to join us for these sessions at a central location – accompanied by their carers or staff

### **Please give a brief description of your project (100 words max.)**

We have developed a singing programme for people with dementia and their carers to attend by working with our partners in Alzheimer's and Age Concern. The singing and music activities, attract people with dementia and their carers – a creative activity that they can take part together on an equal basis; as participants they are stimulated positively by the activity; it re-engages the patient with their real self and with their carer; it raises self-esteem and confidence because whereas patients might be losing their memory for other everyday things, the lyrics and songs remain with them. The sessions are over subscribed due to need.

**Please tell us about the creative activities that happened during your project, e.g. artists who were involved, artforms used, products made etc (100 words max.)**

We have a professional singer/actor who runs the sessions, plus two volunteers who support with musical instruments and singing, plus two other volunteers who help to support the sessions during the tea break. The professional singer takes the participants through a warm-up, a range of well-known songs – sometimes on a theme and then she teaches them a new song which we all share. We are also working on an intergenerational aspect to the project and have invited the local school children to join us for our Christmas session with a view to develop this relationship next year.

## **Partnership**

Evidence of useful partnership working on the project: how this worked, how it influenced the process and product, how it may have been used to address any problems etc.

**Did you work with any partners on the project? Please tell us who these partners were**

Yes, we have developed this programme with our partners within the Trust directorates, plus representatives from Age UK, Alzheimer's Society and also Mind. We have also partnered with a number of professional musicians and have involved the media to support the publicity and marketing of the project.

**Please tell us how you identified the need to work with this partner and why this partnership was useful / beneficial / made a difference to your project (100 words max.)**

The Trust had been developing a singing for health programme within inpatient settings but felt it would be beneficial to expand our reach into the community to support those service users who are being supported by our community teams. We had very little experience of working in the community settings and involved our partners because of their research and evidence that this type of activity was beneficial to the target group., It also enabled us to reach the people we needed to reach and to ensure that the sessions were appropriate and well-planned.

**Did this partnership influence the process and final outcome of your project? Please tell us how (100 words max.)**

The partnership was beneficial as it allowed us to develop the sessions appropriately for the target group we were intending to reach. The process was influenced in as much as we learned from the partners about similar projects and programmes from which we were able to base our idea. The outcome of the project has been influenced by this partnership in that the organizations had a direct link to people in need of this activity and were able to support our recruitment to make sure that we were reaching those people as well as our own service users who were referred by our own community teams.

## **Participation**

Evidence that the beneficiaries were involved in the decision-making and development of the project.

**Tell us how the participants were involved in your project, e.g. creative engagement, final outcome, advocacy etc. (100 words max.)**

The participants come along with their carers and we have chairs in a circle. We start with a warm up after some chit chat and then we sing some songs connected to any particular theme we have used for that session. Often we teach a new song or a round. We also have percussion instruments that we hand out and sometimes the participants will start a song of their own that we encourage and join in with. There is time for tea and cake at the end and lots more chat and often more songs before they leave.

**Tell us how these participants were involved in getting your project off the ground e.g. decision making and planning etc. (100 words max.)**

We worked with a number of inpatient groups as consultation, we visited care homes to talk to residents; we liaised with our partners and other directorates of the trust and our community staff; we took part ourselves in other singing workshops (such as singing for the brain run by Alzheimer's in other part of country) and devised the singing sessions based on this research.

**Once your project was up and running how did the participants influence it? e.g. Did you change or adapt the project? If so, why? (100 words max.)**

We are continually adapting the sessions in respect of responses from the participants. We hand round a comments book every week and sometimes a longer evaluation sheet to be filled in by carers at home with their partners. We make changes where necessary and appropriate in order to provide the best experience possible for the service users and carers.

## **Learning and Reflection**

Evidence that the people involved in the project have demonstrated a commitment to learning and reflection in their work and sharing what they have learnt through their experiences.

**What were the outcomes of your project and what difference did your project make? (100 words max.)**

The project is still ongoing. So far all of the feedback from participants and partners has been extremely positive. Each week the numbers continue to grow and we are almost at the point where we will have to run two separate groups. Feedback from participants suggests that the sessions are unique in this location, they are extremely helpful and enjoyable for the service users and for the carers they provide an opportunity to engage in a creative activity together and a chance to share stories and support with other carers. The sessions are upbeat and make the service users very content which lasts well beyond the session itself.

**How did you know if this project was successful? (100 words max.)**

We have asked participants to feedback; we have talked to the partner groups who are in a position to make a judgment on the success of the series; we have continuing growing attendances; feedback from care homes is always positive and there is a demand that is increasing for people to attend the sessions.

The mood is always happy and positive and illustrates very obviously that the sessions are successful.

**Was there anything you would have done differently if you could do this project again? (100 words max.)**

No, not currently. We will be continuing to evaluate and assess as we go along, but just at the moment we are happy with the way the sessions have been devised. As we are very flexible and happy to adapt as we go along. If there is a need to do things differently we are happy to do so.

**Additional comments and information**

**If you have any other comments, quotes or useful information about your project, please tell us here**

“Songs for you is an invaluable help in keeping people with Alzheimer’s happy which makes the Carers happy too. My husband who has Alzheimer’s loves anything to do with singing, dancing and music and he enjoys meeting other people. There is a good range of songs old and new for all tastes. The songs help them remember the past; they sing along and remember the tunes. It is something we can enjoy together and the carers can meet other people in the same situation and enjoy a chat over a cup of tea and cake at the end and not feel so alone and isolated. So, please keep it going – it really does make a difference.”  
Maisie (carer)

“Rachel loves the singing sessions. They have given her great emotional uplift which lasts long after the session is over. Singing is something she can still do when so much else in her life has disappeared. It is so important to her to be able to say “I can still do this!”

Other things that enhance the experience are: your friendliness and enthusiasm. One hour long is the right amount of time. The venue is very pleasant and the tea cake after!

Keeping Rachel positive and contented is so important to us both. I enjoy the singing sessions too and all the benefits they provide us help me to survive this very difficult time too”. Alex.

“I have only been to one session so far and enjoyed the atmosphere very much. My wife, Deirdre (Dee) obviously is attuned to the songs and its wonderful to see her participation – I second all the things my daughter Debi Angell has said and I shall look forward to future Thursdays.

Please find ways to keep things going!”

Basil Burt.

“These sessions have been one of the best things my mum is able to do. Music appears to tap into a person where mere words cannot.

It has been a joy to accompany mum and learn new songs for me, but not for her, she knows most of them.

The organisers are sensitive and caring people who gently lead the session – but amazingly allow the participants to lead as they are able and so the whole session, though carefully prepared appears to be led by the participants. This means everyone feels comfortable. It is interesting to see how rhythm, rhyme and dance etc all appear as we sing together. Laughter, some tears and a general feeling of enjoyment shared with others.

Please keep the sessions going, they are invaluable, not only to those suffering dementia but their carers too! Thank you.” Debi Angell.

“During these dark and dismal days, the next hour is a ray of sunshine and laughter!” Betty (Carer).