Creative Conversations
Using the arts to enhance the skills of dementia care staff
Dr Kat Algar-Skaife & John Killick
Why?

Rather than helping staff understand how to communicate with older people, including those living with dementia, training for care staff tends to focus on manual handling, fire safety, and safeguarding (Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, 2014)
Why the arts?

DEMENTIA AND IMAGINATION
DEMENTIA A'R DYCHYMYG

Dementia Positive
celebrating the strengths, creativity & insights of people living with dementia
"[IT] MADE ME REALISE RESIDENTS ARE MORE CAPABLE THAN ONE MIGHT GIVE THEM CREDIT FOR"
Aim of the project

To develop and test a ‘Creative Conversations’ intervention to improve the quality of interaction between care staff and people living with dementia

“The arts for encouraging new ideas and different ways to engage with different residents”
The Creative Conversations Programme

• Aims to develop skills of dementia care staff using the arts.

• Has a remit for developing compassionate communication and quality of relationships between staff and those they care for.

• Encourages staff to use the skills developed in sessions in everyday interactions in the care home (rather than a time-limited activity session)
'Creative Conversations’ is based on and takes its’ inspiration from two earlier programmes:

1. The Descartes project conceived by Hannah Zeilig, (Zelig, Poland, Killick & Fox, 2015, The arts in Dementia Care Education, in Journal of Public Mental Health 14(1) 18-23.) Descartes innovated the use of arts based material to educate care home staff.

2. The Arts and Older People Project and John Killick at The Courtyard, Hereford. This project used poetry to enhance creative conversations and enable compassionate communication. (The Arts and Older People Project and Killick, J. (2015) The best words, in the best order: A toolkit for making poems in dementia care settings. The Courtyard Centre for Arts, Hereford).
Creative Sessions

• Groups of 12 staff (4 from 3 different care homes
• 4 creative sessions over 12 weeks
• 2 hours with a break in middle
• Unconventional venues:
  • Informal approach
  • No facts given
  • High degree of sharing
  • Personhood asserted throughout without being stated
Who took part?
- 14 care homes
- 49 care staff completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Demographic data</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (Mean)</td>
<td>41.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender, Female (%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity, White British (%)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total years of employment in care homes (Mean)</td>
<td>11.85</td>
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Creative Conversations – on the ground
The approach

- Co-produced from inception to infinity and beyond...
  - Bangor University
  - Flintshire Social Services
  - John Killick
  - Care homes
  - Advisory group
The links

- Social Services and Well-being Act 2014
- “A Place to Call Home”
- Embedded in ‘Progress for Providers’
The opportunity

• Develop local workforce
• Strengthening the relationship
• Opening the doors to research
• Investing in care
The rewards

• Staff Time Covered
• Travel/child care expenses
• Specialist Knowledge Fees
• Prize Draw:
  • VIP Pantomime Experience
  • Creating Conversation Tablecloths
Impact – An appetite for being Creative

- Positive response from care staff
- Valued space to reflect on own practice
- Opportunity for discussion and to learn from other staff
- Learning through the arts strengthened their understanding of residents and role of non-verbal communication.
- Arts can be weaved into everyday interactions
Creative Conversations is continuing in Flintshire

• 12 Courses Planned 2019-20
• 2 courses for Care Staff and 2 for Family Carers
• Product development meetings
Thank you for listening!  
Any questions?