

YORKSHIRE  
DANCE



# IN MATURE COMPANY

End of Year Summary

2022



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

## Introduction

Yorkshire Dance's In Mature Company has continued into its fifth year, delivering specialised creative dance and music sessions for older adults living in care homes across Leeds. Evidenced by Dementia Care Mapping™, In Mature Company sessions consistently increase levels of wellbeing and mood and engagement for residents living with dementia.

Previously funded by Time to Shine to explore the benefits of meaningful touch for people living with dementia, we have since secured a further 3 years of funding from the NHS. For this year's programme, we have shifted our focus towards measuring the impact of creative movement on specific clinical outcomes.

The team took the innovative approach of using 'Dementia Care Mapping', an observational technique, to evaluate outcomes such as improved mood and more regular sleep patterns. Distress is an underlying cause of complex needs in dementia and can lead to increased numbers of hospital admissions. We reduced distress amongst residents in care homes by bringing joy and meaning to people's lives, rather than clinically managing the consequences of profound boredom and loneliness. By encouraging physical activity, we also aimed to improve strength & mobility, and therefore reduce the falls risk of people vulnerable to frailty.

Each session is led by 2 artists and a musician who use movement, music, touch and non-verbal communication to create moments of social connection, reducing social isolation and loneliness. Sessions begin slowly, with a gentle warm up that focuses on joint movement such as the wrists and ankles. We then build up to more energetic movement that encourages residents to explore their individual creativity. Sessions end with a cool down that offers residents space to breath and relax, whilst the artists offer gentle hand and shoulder massage.

Our sessions gave new experiences to those who had not danced before and encouraged reminiscence for those that had. We have aimed to enrich and empower residents by using their life histories to drive choices in music & movement. Reflecting on their time taking part in the sessions, one resident said *"I love to dance and sing with everyone. It's lovely to be all together. It brings me back to dancing as a child."*

People living within a care home environment may experience a 'deprivation of liberties' due to their dementia diagnosis. In Mature Company enables creative decision making by encouraging resident's to take an active role in how each session develops. Our artists enter each sessions with no pre-conceptions about a person's ability, instead focusing on ensuring each person feels able to demonstrate their individual agency.

## Statistics

We delivered weekly in-person sessions in 4 care homes across Leeds. This included Berkeley Court in Harehills; Aspen Hill Village in Hunslet; Adel Grange in Adel and Alexander Care Home in Morley. Over the last 20 weeks we received 1086 attendances across 76 sessions (with 4 cancelled due to Covid-19 outbreaks in the care homes), engaging 139 individual residents.

Our programme also included a zoom offer, engaging 8 care homes and day centres under Leeds City Council's care provision. We received 330 attendances across 20 sessions, reaching 61 individual service-users.

We employed 14 freelance artists across the programme including 5 lead dance artists, 4 assistant artists and 5 musicians. Our assistant dance artists have built the skills needed to deliver effective dance interventions to people living with dementia, increasing the workforce within a much-needed area.

One of our assistant dance artists said *“Working with In Mature Company has been a completely new and exciting experience for me as I have never worked within a care home before. I have learnt the importance of developing connections with the participants and It has been interesting to see the residents become more and more willing to join each week.”*

We collaborated with 1 external dementia care professional, Dance Psychotherapist Dr Richard Coaten, who observed one session at each of our partner care homes. His comments were fed back to our artists during a continuing professional development day. This allowed them to reflect on their artistic practice, whilst refining their understanding of how to best meet the complex needs of older adults living with dementia.



## Successes

*“The residents have really enjoyed the sessions and can truly see the impact, it is the most engaged we have seen the residents in an activity and they have become more alert and active. The night staff have noticed that the wake up time is noticeably less, we believe it’s an impact from the session in the morning that is helping them with their sleep.”*

- Care Home Manager at a partner care home.

The sessions have had a significant impact on the residents in the care homes we delivered to. Residents visibly enjoyed the sessions in which they are able to connect to the artists and each other. A circle-based, group format encouraged residents to communicate with each other through eye contact and joining hands. This is something that can often not be seen regularly within care home environments. Our dementia care mapping has observed that as soon as the creative sessions begin residents shift from displaying passive mood and engagement to expressing or articulating themselves.

The longevity of the 20-week programme has meant that some residents have been able to recognise the artists and understand the purpose of the sessions, with some commenting that they look forward to the artists visiting each week. Feedback from care home staff has noted that the sessions have encouraged them to continue singing and dancing together once the sessions have ended. Our artists go into each session with no-preconceptions of capability and the nature of dance as a non-verbal, non-hierarchical activity, prompted residents to demonstrate their agency by taking the lead at different moments. This surprised staff members and disrupted their assumptions of a resident's ability.

Yorkshire Dance is passionate about leading high quality dance interventions in care settings and so is committed to building a workforce with the necessary skills to do this. Our lead dance artists have been able to consolidate their practice, having worked on the *In Mature Company* project since 2019. They are in tune with and responsive to residents' needs and can both plan and improvise sessions that are consistently effective in raising resident's mood and engagement levels. They can build relationships quickly, getting to know what music and type of movement the people they are working with will be most responsive to. For example, some sessions have been more gentle and tactile to ensure that some residents are not outpaced. Our musicians are skilled at using instruments to offer a structure through which residents can creatively express themselves and facilitate haptic engagement for those with low mobility or who communicate non-verbally.

We also recruited four new assistant dance artists. They have shown their warmth and passion whilst making significant developments within their practice. They have been able to develop a specialism within this area through work based learning and 1:1 mentoring our more experienced artists. They have built confidence in tailoring sessions to older adults living with dementia, whilst sustaining meaningful relationships with each resident they have worked with, allowing them to deliver person-centred care.

Our digital sessions have allowed service users from different care homes and day centres across Leeds to connect through dance and music. Though engaging people through a screen can at times be difficult, the set up required to deliver these sessions has meant that care staff have a clearer role and understand the necessity of their encouragement to ensure participants remain actively engaged.

Care staff at our partner homes have noticed the positive effects this high-level of engagement has had on residents' mood, confidence and overall wellbeing. Two of our partner care homes have requested to continue the sessions on a freelance basis once the 20-week programme was completed, recognising the benefits of professional dance artists delivering this type of engagement. One staff member reflected, *“It has changed our perspective of what we mean by dance, and that everyone can do something – it doesn’t matter if they are in bed all the time or if they are immobile, there is something for everyone to do, and that will stay in our minds.”*

## Further Development

Yorkshire Dance is committed to building a legacy for this project that encourages continuous creativity within care - however this may look. We will continue to collaborate with care staff, valuing the skills they have and ensuring they are integrated within sessions, as well as any training or development we offer. For example, sharing their extensive understanding of residents' life histories with our artists will enable them to explore a variety of different approaches to build up an even more person-centred programme.

Building on our artist's understanding of the physical benefits of different types of movement, Staff could also demonstrate appropriate assistance techniques so that the artists feel confident in expanding the range of exercises that they include within their session. This could be difficult because of the staffing issues across the whole care sector, especially in those homes without a designated wellbeing or activities coordinator. However, by building relationships with targeted staff in the initial stages of next year's programme - those who have a specific interest in delivering creative forms of care - we can foster a culture of knowledge and skill sharing.

This form of creative engagement, and the nature of working with people living with dementia, requires an improvisational, reactive approach so that the facilitator can adapt to an individual's changing needs. Skilled artists are able to use their creative practice to initiate movement sessions, whilst also creating opportunities for participants to enact agency and shift the direction of the activity. This can be overwhelming for care staff who may not consider themselves to be 'creative' or who don't feel like they have the right skillset to deliver a movement based session. This may help to answer why care staff tended not to interact with the sessions during this iteration of In Mature Company unless they were dedicated Activities or Wellbeing Staff.

Artists should consider how elements of their practice can be shared with care staff in ways that are accessible. For example, an exercise that builds upon the staff member's understanding of person-centred care. If care staff are not confident enough to deliver group dance sessions, this would instead allow them to facilitate meaningful 1:1

engagement that can benefit residents with more complex needs and less likely to engage in a creative group activity.



### Dementia Care Mapping™

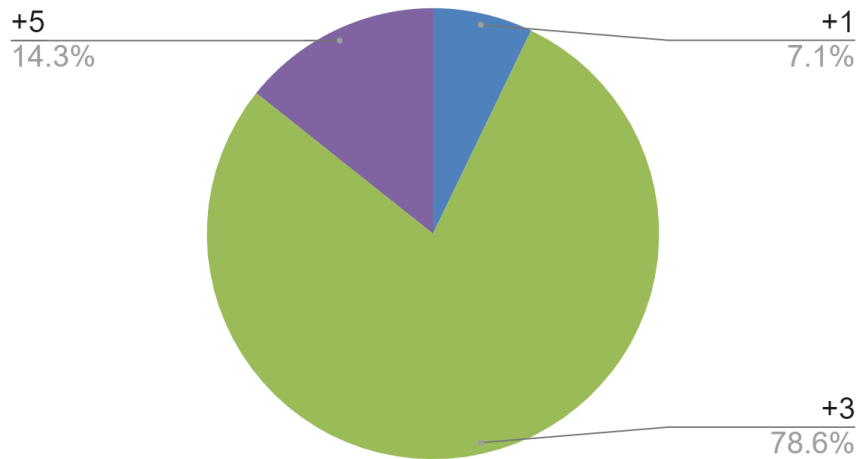
We have continued to use Dementia Care mapping as a tool to evaluate the levels of mood and engagement within the creative sessions. We were able to capture outcomes like the amount of time spent awake during the session and their impact on levels of distress exhibited by participants. In the last 3 years of the In Mature Company project, we have gathered extensive evidence for the trends between creative movement sessions and participant's overall wellbeing - the evaluated data can be found here:

<https://www.opforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2020-Q1-report-Dementia-Care-Mapping-Year-2-In-Mature-Company-min-2-min-compressed.pdf>

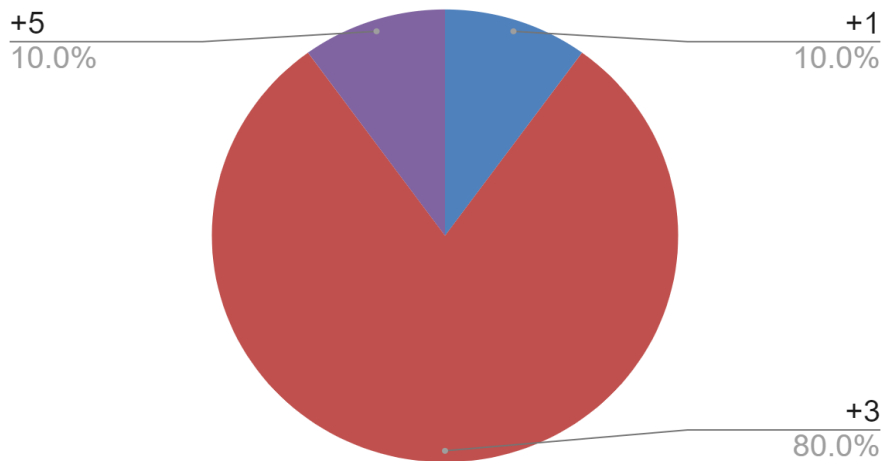
This year we enrolled one new staff member on the *DCM™ for Realising Person Centred Care* course at the University of Bradford. Once their training was complete, we conducted maps on 4 of the in-person sessions. We observed that throughout the time the session took place the residents were mostly engaged, whilst demonstrating a positive mood. There were some moments of intermittent engagement, but these typically occurred before or after the movement session was taking place. The below graphs show the percentage amount of time spent in each mood and engagement value for the two care homes that we mapped: Adel Grange and Aspen Hill Village.



Aspen Hill % ME Value



Adel Grange % ME Value



**Key:**

- +1 = Neutral mood with intermittent engagement.
- +3 = Showing signs of considerable positive mood and considerable engagement.
- +5 = Showing signs of very high positive mood and highly engaged

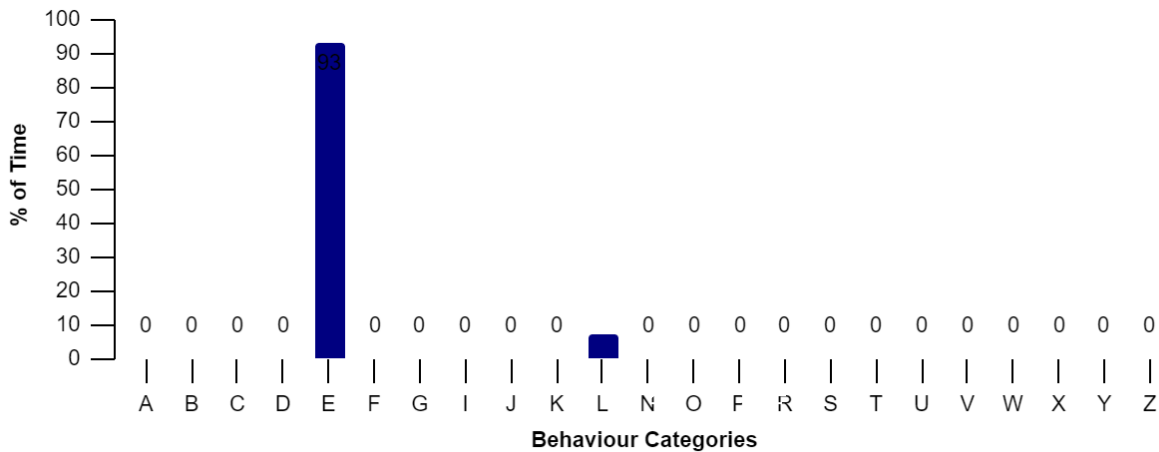
These tables show that for the vast majority of the time mapped the residents displayed signs of positive mood and sustained levels of engagement. There were some examples of +5, the highest ME value, which was demonstrated when the residents felt able to be their most expressive. This usually occurred when a song they had asked for was played and they were able to reminisce with those around them.

The below graphs show the percentage amount of time residents who were mapped spent in different types of activities. These are called Behaviour Category Codes (BCC's).

## Adel Grange % BCC's



## Aspen Hill Village % BCC's



### Key:

A = articulation (communication with another being)

E = expression (demonstrating creativity)

L = leisure

This table shows that the residents mapped demonstrated behaviour codes that had a high potential for high levels of mood and engagement throughout the creative sessions. They were consistently engaged, as opposed to passive, and were able to use their individual voice to contribute to the session. Articulation usually occurred after the session had ended so it appeared that the creative expression during the activity encouraged further communication and interaction beyond the parameters of the artists' intervention. There were no instances of residents observed to be asleep during the creative sessions.



Levels of mood tended to increase further when residents were able to express themselves verbally as well as through movement, by laughing and making jokes with one another. This allowed them to demonstrate their agency by driving the session through verbal communication for example by mentioning a song that could then be played.

Throughout the sessions mapped, artists showed warmth through touch and skilfully ensured residents felt included by using the knowledge they had of what the residents might best respond to. However, the mapping observed that those residents who may have been quieter, or who expressed more subtle forms of communication, were sometimes lost within the group activity. The mapping report has made suggestions that a greater knowledge of individual residents' life histories would enable the artists to facilitate greater engagement with those residents.

In the next stage of the project, we are interested in engaging an academic researcher who can quantitatively measure improvements in other physical outcomes such as strength and balance, whilst considering the complex ethical implications of collecting data from older adults living with dementia. By combining this information with our DCM reports we aim to evidence how In Mature Company sessions can lead to a reduction in agitated or distressed behaviours arising from boredom and miscommunication, which should consequently decrease the number of serious falls and avoidable hospital admissions.



## Next Steps

This year we commissioned Charlene Martin, a researcher at the University of Leeds, to produce a report on how embedded creative activities are within the care homes we have worked with; what impact these sessions have had on staff behaviour and what support they would need to continue to deliver elements of the In Mature Company Programme. We are utilising the recommendations she has made, alongside feedback from the care homes themselves, to produce a programme of tailored support for our 2022 partner care homes.

These recommendations noted that a series of training sessions, rather than a one-off session, would be most beneficial. A mixture of hands-on practical training, such as participating in sessions alongside the artists, and resources/guides for planning sessions were also suggested. Care staff may be more suited towards training on one-to-one sessions, and activity coordinators are more suited to group session work, but it is important to train a team of individuals with a range of skill-sets. This development package will be implemented in February and March 2023, with support from some of the artists who worked on this year's programme.

If you would like to find out more about this project please email Project Manager Adie Nivison: [adie.nivison@yorkshiredance.com](mailto:adie.nivison@yorkshiredance.com)