



(<http://diehardbrain.blogspot.co.uk/>)

# Developing a Creative and Theatre Based Intervention for Young People with Dementia and their Carers

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# A focus on younger people with dementia

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- ▶ Young onset dementia (< 65 years)
- ▶ 17,000 to 18,500 diagnosed in the UK
- ▶ Diagnosis is complex
- ▶ Symptoms may differ from those with older onset dementia; behavioural and speech problems more prominent
- ▶ Social and 'life phase' implications
  - ▶ Employment
  - ▶ Financial
  - ▶ Social isolation
  - ▶ Stigma
  - ▶ Family
  - ▶ Mental health
  - ▶ 'it's not the retirement either of us had planned'



# A focus on younger people with dementia

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- ▶ **Lack of service provision for this age group:**
  - ▶ Access care services for older age group - who are in a different stage of dementia and less physically active
  - ▶ Focus is on respite and longer term care
  - ▶ May not be able to access support if <65
- ▶ **Benefits of service provision:**
  - ▶ Can improve behavioural issues
  - ▶ Provide carer respite
  - ▶ Improve wellbeing
  - ▶ Provide social engagement and support
  - ▶ A feeling of normalisation



‘[provision of activities allows people with dementia to do] not just ordinary things, but great and amazing things, [it] is transformational...And it enables people to take the lead, to take responsibility where... they can learn each week to do a little bit extra. So how lovely to go home and have something to talk about...’

(Lynda Hughes, Occupational Therapist, SCIE, 2013a)



# Why be creative through theatre & drama?

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- ▶ Range of activities:
  - ▶ Music
  - ▶ Drama
  - ▶ Art
  - ▶ Poetry
  - ▶ Dance
- ▶ Focus on dramatic engagement
- ▶ Creativity can:



# Creative Engagement – Current practice

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- ▶ Reminiscence Theatre; Storytelling and Improvisation based drama
- ▶ Ladder to the Moon
  - ▶ Incorporate carer training with improvisational film shoots
- ▶ To Whom I May Concern
  - ▶ Sharing personal stories through performance
- ▶ TimeSlips
  - ▶ Storytelling



(Ladder to the Moon, 2013)





He's got long legs Oh boy!

He sure is jumping.

He is into the music

(TimeSlips, 2013)



# What can we learn for a new intervention?

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- ▶ Person centred care
- ▶ Recognise the diversity within dementia
  - ▶ Build in interests and needs of participants
  - ▶ Focus on abilities
  - ▶ Focus on the person
- ▶ People can do more than we may realise
  - ▶ Where it doesn't work and how you can't fool people!
- ▶ Flexible approach
- ▶ Clear aims of the intervention
- ▶ Build in success
- ▶ Developing a model aimed at the person with dementia and the carer
- ▶ Developing a model of support within the intervention





# What can we learn for a new intervention?

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- ▶ Reflective model of participation
- ▶ Clear communication
- ▶ Use of:
  - ▶ Music
  - ▶ Movement
  - ▶ Storytelling
  - ▶ Improvisation
- ▶ Consider practical elements:
  - ▶ Transport
  - ▶ Environment



# Applied Drama Model

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- ▶ **New intervention will be based on applied drama methods and structure:**
  - ▶ Open communication
  - ▶ Reflection in and on action: taking learning forward
  - ▶ Development of a safe, trusting environment
  - ▶ Respect
  - ▶ Working to the needs and experiences of participants
  - ▶ Ownership of the work is with the participants
  - ▶ Distance provided through creative process
  - ▶ Use of tools e.g. role play, improvisation and games
  - ▶ Focus on fun and joy of the process





Living Stage Theatre Company (1995)



# Proposed methods and engagement

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- ▶ **Intervention is being developed with a theatre company:**
  - ▶ Series of weekly workshops run with people with young onset dementia and their carers
  - ▶ Developing communication skills
  - ▶ Social interaction and sense of normalisation
- ▶ **Research methods:**
  - ▶ Participant observation of sessions
  - ▶ Pre and post interviews with carers and people with dementia
  - ▶ Photo/video diaries
- ▶ **Celebrating the work:**
  - ▶ Development of a video of the work undertaken to share with friends/family and aim to be posted online to share with the wider community



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# Questions and Feedback



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