



*"I'm fully supportive of celebrating the arts and creativity in care settings. It's a powerful way to give voice to people's experience."*

**James Bullion**  
Chief Inspector, Adult Social Care & Integrated Care, Care Quality Commission (CQC)

# A Manager's Guide to Arts in Care Homes

Why and how to develop arts activities in your care home

## SUMMARY REPORT





Photo by Ivan Gonzalez, Bradbury Grange Care Home.  
Live Music Now musician Maz O'Connor Fleming

## Introduction

**At National Activity Providers Association (NAPA) - the UK's leading activity and engagement charity - we support care services to prioritise wellbeing and promote activity, arts and engagement. Our vision is of a UK where wellbeing, activity and engagement is an integral part of care provision, where people with care and support needs live meaningful and connected lives.**

We know that this vision is desirable, realistic and achievable. Since NAPA began its work in 1997, we have seen so many examples of ways in which everyone in care communities - including individuals receiving care, staff teams, relatives and friends, volunteers and artist/facilitators - can benefit from access to the arts. By involving the wider local community, even more can be accomplished.

This guide aims to show care home managers how to deliver this vision of creative, connected, vibrant communities. We explore some of the issues and challenges in doing this work. We explain how you can capture what you are doing in your arts projects and use this evidence in your reporting to the Care Quality Commission. We show how managers can lead the way, and the sorts of practical steps you can take to get things moving. Ideas,

inspiring examples and links to a wide range of resources are also included.

Ultimately, NAPA hopes that care home managers show leadership in building arts-focused communities - showing their staff teams that the arts is part of their core, caring role; it's not a luxury or optional extra.

The guide has been developed by NAPA's Arts in Care Homes programme, working with three managers from care homes in England, incorporating input and suggestions from Activity Providers, care staff, artists and arts organisations. While the guide is aimed at care home managers, it may also be of interest to Activity Providers and other staff members interested in developing arts activities in care homes. For the purposes of this guide, we will refer to care homes for older people, but it may have relevance to managers of other types of care settings.

NAPA believes that all care homes have the potential to be creative, connected communities, offering a wide variety of person-centred, comprehensive arts activities and ongoing opportunities for cultural participation for everyone. We hope this guide helps managers in their efforts to achieve this.



Photo by Rich Rusk. Gecko for Magic Me's Artists' Residencies in Care Homes

# NAPA's Position statement

## Arts and care quality

The arts play a significant role in improving care quality in various ways:

- 1.** Engaging with the arts, such as through music, visual arts or performance, can have a positive impact on mental and emotional wellbeing. This is particularly important in care homes where individuals may be experiencing stress or anxiety.
- 2.** Encouraging providers to engage with the arts can help develop empathy and compassion. This, in turn, can lead to becoming more person-centred and improve relationships.
- 3.** For individuals who may have difficulty communicating verbally, the arts provide an alternative means of expression. The arts can be used to help individuals convey their emotions and experiences.
- 4.** Studies have shown that art interventions, including listening to music or engaging in art-based activities, can reduce stress and even alleviate pain. This can be particularly valuable for individuals' living with dementia.
- 5.** The arts offer diverse perspectives and can help providers better understand the cultural, social and individual backgrounds of individuals. This cultural competence is essential for providing equitable care.
- 6.** Incorporating the arts into care homes can make these environments more engaging and welcoming. Artwork, live performances or interactive exhibits can create a positive atmosphere that contributes to overall wellbeing.
- 7.** Training professionals in the arts, can improve their observation skills, creativity and ability to think critically. These skills can enhance their assessment and care planning abilities.

The arts can significantly improve care quality by addressing the emotional, psychological and cultural aspects of care and support. They promote holistic care, empathy and creativity, ultimately contributing to better experiences and outcomes.

# Working with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

*"The CQC is always looking at how people are supported to live full lives, and art is a true expression of individuality, passion and joy. With the new CQC assessment framework there has never been a better time to focus on the arts, as the evidence will support a favourable rating."*

**ED WATKINSON DIRECTOR, WATKINSON CONSULTING**

Activities evidence shared by the care home provides assurance to CQC that the support provided is person-centred and promotes the wellbeing of the people using the service. CQC have stated that their new approach to regulation is that it is 'always on' and is more about 'continuous assessment' rather than an 'exam-based' model.

In NAPA's experience, care homes that get 'outstanding' CQC ratings often have a person-centred comprehensive arts offer or have developed arts projects with artists or an arts/cultural organisation. We believe that the arts have the potential to support the key CQC questions and quality statements.

## Preparing the evidence for CQC

There are six 'evidence categories' and each quality statement will use a selection of evidence categories to come to a judgement about the Quality Statement.

The evidence categories are:

1. Feedback from people who use services
2. Feedback from staff and leaders
3. Feedback from partners
4. Observation
5. Processes
6. Outcomes.

So, a good way of providing evidence is surveying people about activities and how good the provision is - this way the evidence is objective and based on people's views. These

surveys could be part of wider surveying, but it is important that activities are recognised in whatever the service does.

How can care homes show that the arts work they are doing actively supports meeting the Care Quality Commission's standards and guidelines?

The key is to provide concrete evidence of how your arts activities enhance care provision, promote wellbeing and align with the specific CQC standards. Clear documentation and a proactive approach to compliance are essential.

Below we offer some guidance on how to go about this:

### Identify relevant arts initiatives

Identify specific arts initiatives or activities within your care home that relate to the CQC standards. For instance, if you have art-based activity programmes that aim to improve mental wellbeing, link them to the most appropriate standards.

Similarly, you could categorise your arts initiatives under the current five CQC domains. Describe how each initiative contributes to meeting the specific criteria within these domains.

### Community arts initiatives

Consider evidence of how you engage with the local community in terms of arts and culture ie highlighting the art work of people in the community, using local artists and groups, opening up the home for community

arts activity and reflecting local themes - eg fishing if by the sea, mining in the NE / Wales, steel industry in Sheffield etc.

### **Document the process**

Keep detailed records of your arts-related activities. Document the planning, implementation and outcomes of these initiatives, and include dates, participant feedback and any relevant artwork or creations.

### **Demonstrate how art has improved people's lives**

Provide evidence of health improvements such as reduced medication, more engagement, fewer GP and hospital visits, increased appetite and better sleep.

### **Collect participant feedback**

Gather feedback from individuals, friends, family and staff members involved in the arts activities. Use surveys, interviews or focus groups to collect their opinions and experiences. Highlight positive feedback as evidence of impact.

### **Use an evidence-based approach**

Whenever possible, link your arts initiatives to existing research and evidence supporting their effectiveness in improving care outcomes. This strengthens your case with empirical data.

Three of the four key factors of wellbeing for older people identified in Age UK's Index of Wellbeing in Later Life, shared below, are particularly relevant when demonstrating positive mental, physical and social wellbeing outcomes from arts and cultural participation:

- Participation in enjoyable, meaningful activities was the biggest direct factor for wellbeing. This could be in creative, cultural, civic and/or social activities.
- Physical activity is extremely important, too – this is the 2nd biggest individual factor.
- Having positive social interactions with others is a common thread throughout wellbeing. In fact, the social domain accounts for 33% of one's wellbeing.

*"The Index can be used to start conversations about what is needed at local and national levels to help older people achieve a good amount of wellbeing. This person-centred and quantitative intelligence supports and poses a challenge for Government, policymakers and service practitioners.*

## **AGE UK INDEX OF WELLBEING IN LATER LIFE**

### **Record training and staff involvement**

Showcase how staff are trained and involved in delivering arts-based activity and engagement. This demonstrates commitment to the CQC's emphasis on a well-led and caring environment.

### **Address risk management**

Address any potential risks associated with arts activities, such as safety concerns or emotional reactions. Describe how your facility manages and mitigates these risks to support compliance with CQC safety standards.

### **Show continuous improvement**

Highlight any changes or improvements made based on feedback and evaluation. This shows your commitment to continuously enhancing the quality of care you provide through arts initiatives. If you do satisfaction surveys, share the results and action plans to address any issues raised in them, including how the arts might contribute to this.

### **Report or present on the arts work**

Prepare a comprehensive report or presentation that clearly outlines how your arts activities align with CQC standards. Use visual aids, testimonials and data to support your claims. Evidence shared with CQC about the outcomes of arts engagement needs to be concise and snappy and should focus on the headlines and how it improved the lives of people.

### **Engage with CQC**

Share your findings and evidence with the CQC during inspections or when requested. Be prepared to discuss how your arts activities contribute to the overall quality of care.

## Responding to CQC's key questions

A lot of the evidence gathered through the use of creative approaches to personalised care is likely to fall under the 'caring' quality statements. This is where the personalised care elements are most strongly featured, such as whether the service is supporting emotional wellbeing, personalised and individual care, supporting and protecting people's human rights, reflecting people's emotional, cultural, social preferences, supporting people to connect to community and activities etc. The quality statement about Workforce wellbeing and enablement to deliver person centred care is also very relevant.

Below, we present some suggestions for ways you can respond to the five CQC key questions through your arts offer:

### ? 1. Is the service safe?

#### Quality statement: Involving people to manage risks

To mitigate the risks associated with an arts offer, NAPA suggests that managers conduct a thorough assessments of needs and preferences, provide appropriate supervision and support, and ensure a safe and inclusive environment

**Consider...** after doing appropriate risk assessments, explore creative opportunities such as running an outdoor nature printing session, working with clay, visiting a local gallery or inviting a school group to join in with a community display or project.

### ? 2. Is the service effective?

#### Quality statement: Assessing people's needs

Good care homes are always inclusive and respect the needs of individuals. By developing your creative arts community, you are providing individuals and staff with the opportunities to grow, both personally and as a team. This will help support people to live happier, healthier lives.

**Consider...** taking a fresh look at the arts activities and interests of every individual. It's easy to assume Maggie always wants to knit or Ali likes to draw birds, but are there other things they might want to try? A fresh 'audit' of opportunities and choices could be added to individual care plans with related goals. Perhaps their interests could be expanded so Maggie teaches local school children how to knit or helps to make items for a local baby unit. Maybe Ali could start a bird watching group or be supported by staff to make a bird table. Meeting needs like this can turn a simple activity into something that can really benefit someone's quality of life and therefore the effectiveness of the service you provide.

There is a wealth of research that highlights the wellbeing benefits of participation in the arts: see [Age UK Index of Wellbeing in Later Life](#). By embedding the arts into the everyday life of your care home, it is likely that you will improve the health, happiness and wellbeing of individuals and staff.

### ? 3. Is the service caring?

#### Quality statement:

##### Treating people as individuals and responding to people's immediate needs

Ensure the cultural needs of individuals are met with the arts materials you provide. If, for example, you have individuals of Asian background, consider exploring traditional patterns or botanicals using gel plates or carved blocks, play Indian folk music, discuss a mystery object or a piece of Asian artwork or invite a kathputli puppeteer to visit. The wider the arts offer, the more personalised and embracing the service will be.

**Consider...** an art project based on people's 'wishes'; can you make any of them come true?

#### Quality statement:

##### Workforce wellbeing and enablement

Arts projects allow opportunities for staff to deliver person-centred care and utilise their skills and strengths to meet personal goals as well as enhancing job satisfaction and morale. Participating in the arts is known to have a calming effect and is the ideal way to foster connections and conversations between everyone living and working in the care setting.

**Consider...** inviting staff to lead on projects based on personal interests and 'buddying' them up with people who share similar interests. Maybe start a staff art club?

#### Quality statement:

##### Kindness, compassion and dignity

Meaningful arts engagement is about being in the moment with someone and really listening and responding to them in order to allow space for personal expression and connection.

**Consider...** spontaneous arts activities that can be used to respond to a specific need without any preparation. This could be as simple as picking daisies to make a posy or chain, watching a webcam of birds in the forest, playing a recording of a nightingale or giving someone a bag of colourful silk scarves to hold and lay across their lap. Using colour, touch and calming sounds can transform a difficult moment for someone instantly.

### ? 4. Is the service responsive to people's needs?

#### Quality statement:

##### Person-centred

Meaningful arts engagement demonstrates person-centredness, providing opportunities for people to share their stories, wishes and memories.

**Consider...** creating a 'memory tree' - people could hang a photo of a loved one or a favourite quote written on a hand-painted leaf, affixed to an image of a tree. Perhaps a corner of a room could be set aside for quiet reflection with seasonal pieces from nature to touch and hold, such as acorns or shells with the sounds of birdsong or waves on the seashore.

**Quality statement:**  
**Listening to and involving people**

Arts can be a great way of encouraging people to give meaningful and useful feedback about their care. It can be a useful way to find out the things that matter most and to empower people to have more influence over their daily life.

**Consider...** Using poetry or drama to collect people's views on specific issues related to their care setting. A poem might reveal interests, likes or memories or a love of words and the rhythm of memorable poems. A piece of improvised drama might explain a dislike of something or even a way of discovering a preference.

**? 5. Is the service well led?**

**Quality statement:**  
**Shared direction and culture**

The arts can also contribute to the wellbeing of staff and enhance their job satisfaction and motivation, by making them feel part of a caring, inclusive community where their skills, stories and interests are valued.

**Consider...** Developing opportunities for staff to lead on new activities but also to learn new skills and take part in arts activities and training for personal development.



Photo by Hannah Lovell. Bridgeside Lodge National Day of Arts in Care Homes 2022. L-R Arthur Lea, Resident JC, Ben Hazleton, Alice Zawadzki, Isabella Bonfanti, Resident JR, Marcus Bonfanti - part of The Spitz 'Next Generation' project



# Managers' guide to arts in care homes

## The quick read

- Do some research using the internet and relevant resources.
- Do an audit of existing skills/interests of individuals, care staff and relatives.
- Contact local organisations, museums, galleries and groups.
- Invite everyone who is interested in helping develop your arts offer to a meeting. Use creative ways to encourage discussion and make plans.
- Set up an 'arts station' in a communal area with an assortment of art materials.
- Plan a simple community arts project, involving interested people.
- Consider developing rooms or spaces within your care homes into art hubs, including somewhere to display artwork.
- Add a question about arts/cultural interests and hobbies to staff interviews.
- Create a dedicated arts committee, comprised of interested individuals from various roles, to oversee and drive the arts offer.
- Do a callout to your local community for required items such as art materials, musical instruments or tablets.
- Offer arts training in the form of online or in-person courses.
- Combine art forms and include multisensory elements in art sessions so people can take part in different ways.
- Update care plans based on interests and preferences and pair individuals up with staff with relevant interests and skills.
- Document your activities by taking photos or films and capturing anecdotes and quotes.
- Develop mobile arts resources as a way of taking arts engagement into people's bedrooms and every corner of your care homes.
- Be proud of your achievements and share news about your arts activities in newsletters, via local and national press, and online.
- Collaborate with local artists and arts organisations to bring in expertise, energy and fresh perspectives for your arts initiatives.
- Consider organising regular art exhibitions or showcases within the care home to celebrate the creative work of the whole care community.
- Gather feedback from everyone involved to check on the effectiveness of the arts offer and make continuous improvements.
- Consider hosting arts and cultural events, such as live music performances or art workshops.
- Let NAPA know what you are doing so we can help inspire other care homes.



Photo by Camilla Greenwell. Fevered Sleep for Magic Gecko for Magic Me's Artists' Residencies in Care Homes

## Why encourage more arts in care homes?

Developing your arts offer will help you to demonstrate the quality of your person-centred care. This can be a rich source of outcomes for CQC inspections.

The arts improve relationships, creating a culture of sharing, supporting and understand each other's needs better.

Everyone can try something new; learning a skill creates feelings of achievement and renewed purpose.

The arts help people to express their feelings and to release emotions in a safe way.

The arts support discussions, debates and meaningful connections.

Everyone can contribute and share their work, encouraging feelings of self-worth, a sense of identity and belonging.

The arts boost quality of life for people living with dementia; working with colour and form brings joy in the moment and doesn't require the use of memory or recall.

Actively providing arts in care can challenge ageist attitudes and inspire others.

Arts can help with staff retention and job satisfaction as they develop their own creative skills and interests.

Research shows that arts improve person-centred care regardless of someone's diagnosis and have a role to play in palliative care, too.

The arts help people to connect meaningfully with each other and to develop sustainable links with local communities.

The arts provide a space for playfulness, life-long learning and adventure.

A home with a good arts offer may be attractive to a greater range of staff applicants.

Participating in artistic activities can reduce stress, anxiety and depression, improving mental health and overall quality of life.

Artistic expression can bridge generational gaps, helping to create intergenerational connections and understanding.

Creative arts can be tailored to individual preferences, encouraging personalised and enjoyable experiences.

Art can serve as a creative reminiscence tool, helping individuals recall and share meaningful memories from their past.

The presence of arts and creative activities can help to create a positive first impression for potential clients and their families.