

"That very first moment of putting pen or brush to paper we're all in the same boat.

We're all a bit scared.

Then someone will start and soon everybody's doing something. You're not alone."

'Moments of Joy': Building connections and community in extra-care schemes through arts, music, dance and digital



South
Yorkshire
Housing
Association



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**“Art flies beneath the radar
delivering nourishment for our soul”**

- Grayson Perry

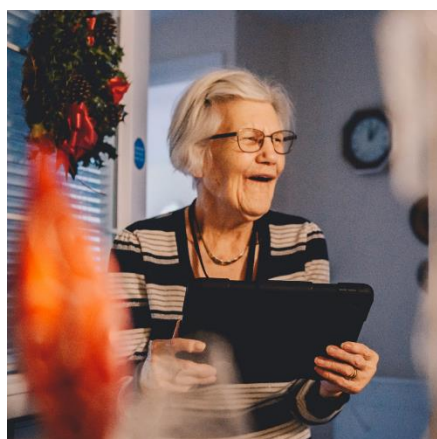
1. Moments of Joy

Moments of Joy is a programme of high-quality creative, participatory work, made for and with South Yorkshire Housing Association customers and funded by The National Lottery Community Fund's Ageing Better programme through Age Better in Sheffield. Age Better in Sheffield (ABiS) was a 7-year programme which developed creative solutions to tackle loneliness and isolation in people over the age of 50 and it came to an end in March 2022.

Following on from Moments of Joy programmes in 2013 and 2016 this 2020-2022 two-year programme focussed on residents in extra-care schemes, plus one mental health scheme during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Reaching potentially isolated and vulnerable people and helping them stay connected with one another during the pandemic was a key driver for starting the programme again. Whilst the programme does not have a specific arts and health remit it has increased people's wellbeing and feelings of social connection through taking part in creative activity.

Despite the challenges and restrictions of the pandemic, the programme reached a high number of people with extremely high levels of engagement for this kind of work. Feedback and statements of impact have been overwhelmingly positive.



2. Moments of Joy at a glance



Dancing in the garden

Residents were joined by award-winning dance artist Charlie Armitage who led energising and joyful sessions to tunes such as "Walking on Sunshine", "Dancing Queen" and many more. Charlie also led indoor sessions when restrictions allowed.



Sculpture artwork

Individuals living at Beaufort Road worked with a local metal artist to create a permanent piece of artwork for the side of the building they call home.



Music through windows and doors

From world-class clarinettists to accordionists, string trios, and brass bands, residents enjoyed a huge variety of performances from musicians based in Yorkshire.



Christmas tea trolley

When restrictions stopped local children singing for residents in person, Polly Ives helped create a virtual concert which was taken round on an Ipad with festive snacks provided too.



Pif Paf theatre

Residents enjoyed a unique performance from Pif Paf theatre where they were entertained by the interactive Bee Cart.



“The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health.” - Creative Health Inquiry Report, 2017

3. Timeline

April 2020	Planning
May 2020	Delivery began at the beginning of May across several different schemes. Weekly music and dance sessions ran over the summer.
October 2020	The National Lottery Community Fund (TNCLF) grant was extended to finish in March 2022 and replanning of activity took place to become more participatory.
Nov/Dec 2020 Jan/Feb 2021	Activities adapted for lockdowns
Spring 2021	Participatory projects began, with 8 projects of different scales taking place until March 2022. Other smaller performances/sessions also happen throughout.
March 2022	Programme end

Case study 1 – 'And so we danced', Whitfield House

Charlotte (Charlie) Armitage a dance to health practitioner offering weekly sessions to residents from the start of the first lockdown. "And so We Danced" is a dance piece directed by Charlie, based on a poem written in collaboration with the residents of Whitfield House. The sessions were mainly outdoors so that people could take part from their windows if they wanted to and comprised of three or four 'pop-up' bursts of activity lasting around 20 minutes each. The activities could be carried out standing or seated and were suitable for all abilities. The project created opportunities for residents to connect with one another and stay active during a period that was both unsettling and isolating. It was filmed and edited to provide a finished video as a lasting record of the work they had done together. It was first screened at Whitfield House during "a red-carpet event".

The consensus amongst the residents was that the project provided them with something to look forward to each week which, during lockdown, which was very important. One resident stated that taking part in the project *"was the highlight of the week"* and all others in attendance at the focus group agreed. The first lockdown had been a particularly hard time for them in terms of social isolation, especially for those that did not have any family:

"It sort of lifted the lockdown where you had something to look forward to each week. Even if you were in your own flat you could hear what was going on..." - Whitfield House resident

“I only hope it did for others what it did for me, whisking me away from this horrible nightmare of a world with Covid-19. Gone for nearly 2 hours of heaven by angels on strings.” – extra-care resident

4. What we learned

1. **Engagement:** We put a lot of energy into connecting with customers remotely at the beginning of the project and didn't get many responses. This got much easier as artists became regulars and could act as conduits and work with the producer on planning activity and feeding back on each scheme. We learned that trusted relationships were key in embedding practice within the different schemes.
2. **Momentum:** keeping up momentum with changing restrictions and staff capacity on site was tricky and there dips in delivery at certain points when we needed to recalibrate and refresh our offer.
3. **Capacity:** A freelance producer had oversight of the programme, but did not have capacity to be on site in the way that projects like this sometimes require - having administrative support was important.
4. **Lead in time:** We began this work as a reaction to lockdown. Normally work like this requires significant lead in time which we didn't have – e.g. visiting schemes, coffee mornings, introducing artists into schemes – when we do this type of work in the future we will build in planning time as well as space for reflection and learning.



Case study 2 – Music and Songs with Luke Carver-Goss

For freelance musicians like Luke, the Covid-19 pandemic has been extremely challenging, depriving them of the opportunity to perform their music and make a living. Luke had been working with older adults pre covid through Doncaster Community Arts and this is where he met Cara McAleese who invited him to join her in the pilot of Moments of Joy. Since then, Luke has become a very familiar and much-loved presence at SYHA extra-care schemes, playing outside in gardens in all weathers, in corridors and communal lounges and even playing musical requests down the phone for residents. Originally an organ scholar at Oxford university, Luke plays keyboard, piano, piano accordion, various brass instruments, guitar and digeridoo. And he sings as well.

Luke has brought joy to residents at Whitfield House, The Meadows, White Willows and Westmeads. He recalls playing in the cold and rain at The Meadows and playing in corridors in the lead up to Christmas 2020. He remembers that one visit coincided with the window cleaners being there so he couldn't resist playing a bit of George Formby "When I'm Cleaning Windows". The window cleaners obliged and joined in the singing.

"I live for Wednesday mornings, and I wouldn't miss it (the group) for anything." - Jean 96 White Willows

"It gave us the opportunity to continue our work and enjoy engaging with an audience and that's so important." - Luke Garver, Moments of Joy musician

5. What's next

We're thrilled that arts-based activities have continued to be delivered following the end of the Age Better in Sheffield programme, and South Yorkshire Housing Association is looking to build on these across many more of our supported accommodation services.

We're looking at opportunities to continue these activities and would love to connect with partners who might like to be involved in helping us to deliver this across South Yorkshire.

We would also love to connect with people who want to deliver their own curated arts programme, either in Sheffield or beyond.

If you'd like to find out more about Moments of Joy please get in touch!

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“Arts engagement can also help to reduce the risk of developing mental illness such as depression in adolescence and in older age.” – What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? WHO, 2019

Our thanks and appreciation for Moments of Joy goes to:

- The National Lottery Community Fund (TNCLF) for supporting us to deliver Moments of Joy during the pandemic and for your steadfast commitment to test and learn throughout the programme.
- Cara McAleese, our brilliant curator of Moments of Joy for her work on delivering a high-quality programme of arts, music and dance during a period of great uncertainty and upheaval.
- The brilliant cultural sector in Sheffield, including the many artists - we worked with throughout the project for their creativity, their talent and their willingness to adapt to every challenge that the pandemic brought with joy and laughter.
- To all the residents & staff in South Yorkshire Housing Association's extra-care and Livewell schemes for their participation in the programme, and for helping us to create a sense of togetherness during a time of adversity.

Artists

Charlotte Armitage, Joe Armitage, Backstage Brass, John Barker, Genevieve Carter, Luke Carver-Goss, Jemima Foxtrot, Hayley Graham, Lucy Highton and 50CDS, Matthew Hunt, Polly Ives and Concerteenies, Nisha Lall, Cara McAleese, Alexandra Mettam, Music in the Round, Rob Pearson, Pif Paf Theatre, Sally Proctor, Heledd Rees, Wayne Sables, Simply Strings, Jason Turpin-Thomson, Lucy Vaughan, Yorkshire Artspace.

Enjoy our films

['And so we danced' film](#) (created by Joe Armitage)

[End of project film](#) (created by Wayne Sables)