Creative Carers Report 2022

Arts for Health Partnership, West Cork

Photo by Sarah Ruttle 2022

"Research has shown that loneliness has a serious impact on people's physical and mental health and quality of life, with loneliness comparable to risk factors such as smoking and obesity in terms of its impact on life expectancy. Carers are particularly at risk of loneliness and social exclusion as the caring role often limits the time available for socialising and the associated costs of caring can make social activities less affordable."

Family Carers Ireland Report: The State of Caring (2022)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022 the Arts for Health Partnership developed and delivered Creative Carers, a new participatory arts programme strand for and with Carers in West Cork. The programme was delivered by professional artists from various disciplines, it took place at Uillinn and other locations in West Cork, and it worked in partnership with community, voluntary, and/or statutory organisations.

In beginning to work with home carers, research and development was identified as a priority for the first year of the programme to ensure that the needs of family carers were understood and to create a programme that met those needs. The administrative and artists team sought to learn more through consultation with carers, arts and health professionals (specifically Waterford Healing Arts Trust), development workers, and healthcare professionals.

The final programme for 2022 included: Creative Carers at Uillinn, In the Picture, Creative Carers at Home, and Community Outreach. These projects are ongoing throughout 2023.

Creative Carers at Uillinn is a creative workshop series exploring different visual art techniques, held on Wednesday evenings at Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre. The workshops take an informal and relaxed approach to exploring creativity in a supported and creative space where each participant can explore their own ideas.

In the Picture is a dementia friendly gallery tour for people with dementia and their family or professional carers. In The Picture includes a seated tour of the gallery with time to look and experience the artwork and the many wonderful views from the building. Sharing of stories, singing, making of artwork in the workspace and a shared cup of tea and biscuit are also included.

Creative Carers at Home is a series of 6 one-to-one creative sessions with a professional artist at home. With safety for both participants and artists a key consideration, the sessions are designed to develop shared creative activities for carers and the person they care for.

Community Outreach involves stand alone workshops for community centres and local resource groups to raise awareness about the programme and invite service users to get involved. In 2022, art making workshops were organised with Skibbereen Luncheon Club, Skibbereen Alzheimer's Café, and Skibbereen Day Care Centre.

All activities were provided free of charge, materials included and no experience was required to participate. Workshops and events were advertised publicly and via the AfH networks whereas participants on the At Home programme were referred or known to the artists via their work on the wider AfH programme.

Arts for Health artists Sarah Ruttle and Justin Grounds were the facilitators of the programme in 2022. Sarah Ruttle is a visual artist creating work using illustration, print and paper art. Collaboration is central to her participatory practice, developing projects both with other artists and participants within an Arts and Health context. Justin Grounds is a violinist, composer, and electronic music producer. He performs regularly as a solo baroque violinist, as a composing member of The Vespertine Quintet, leader of chamber group The Early/Modern Players and with bands Idiot Songs, Fir Beag and Farewell J.R. He also works as a record producer and string arranger, teaches workshops with young people and brings music to hospital and clinical environments through his work with Arts for Health.

In 2022, Arts for Health successfully devised and implemented a new participatory arts programme strand providing creative opportunities for and with home Carers in West Cork. Care was taken to include the participant voice in devising and evaluating the programme and much was learned both in researching and implementing the first year of programme activities.

Arts for Health Partnership aims to continue working with community and voluntary organisations in 2023 to develop and deliver a responsive participatory arts programme for and with family carers across West Cork. Among a number of objectives, Arts for Health plans to incorporate the following aims into the Creative Carers programme:

- To work with the Family Carers and Older Persons Development Workers to build a network of organisations working with family carers in West Cork to meet on an ongoing basis to share resources, learnings and engage in mutual referral systems.
- To continue to work one-to-one with carers at home and to consider whether further sessions can be offered to the same family.
- To view the programme as a whole and encourage participants to attend multiple different activities as appropriate.
- To expand the artists team and to incorporate fixed quarterly meetings for discussion, debrief, peer support and planning.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The aim was for Arts for Health partnership to develop and deliver a new participatory arts programme strand for and with home Carers in West Cork.

The programme was named 'Creative Carers' and would be:

- Delivered by professional artists from various disciplines
- Take place at Uillinn and other locations around West Cork
- Work with community and voluntary and/or statutory organisations

It was envisioned that participants on the programme would benefit from access to the arts, peer support, increased community network whilst engaging in an enjoyable creative process. It was also anticipated that they would experience an improved sense of wellbeing and build personal resilience from the creative and social engagement.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

71% of Family Carers feel left out of society

51% are severely lonely since the onset of the pandemic

88% feel the value of what they do is not recognised by society

69% experience barriers in accessing respite

Source: Family Carers Ireland Report The State of Caring (2022)

In beginning to work with home carers, research and development was identified as a priority for the first year of the programme to ensure that the needs of family carers were understood and to create a programme that met those needs. Preliminary discussion identified that carers might face obstacles in committing to a fixed time slot, in travelling to attend activities and in self identifying as a carer but it was important to the team not to make assumptions.

The administrative and artists team sought to learn from the following stakeholder groups:

- Carers about their experiences, routines & interests
- Arts and health professionals running similar programmes in Ireland
- Development Workers and healthcare professionals about exiting supports and building infrastructure

Carers

The artists working on the programme were allocated time to conduct interviews with family carers to better understand their experience. They sought to learn more about their routines and to ask them directly what kind of activities they would like to engage in, and how best to structure the programme in terms of frequency and location of activities.

What emerged was that the programme should aim to incorporate a range of different opportunities to engage with. Carers were interested in opportunities to attend activities away from home, away from the care environment in the company of others in a similar position with creativity providing the focus rather than a direct exploration of being a carer. There was also interest in one-to-one activities at home with the person they cared for that combined their creative interests and would be simple enough to incorporate into their own routine outside of sessions with the artists.

Arts & Health Professionals

AfH approached Waterford Healing Arts Trust (WHAT) regarding their project *Art at the Kitchen Table* (AATKT), developed in 2020 to address the isolation experienced by older people who had had to cocoon at home for long periods of time. AATKT is offered to older people in Waterford city and county, supporting them to create art in their own homes with a professional artist.

WHAT shared their Guidelines for Home Visits and advised that they had been adapted from the Procedure for Lone Working for Clinical Staff, by Waterford Occupational Therapy Department. The guidelines were used to ensure the safety of both the artist and the participant working together in the home. WHAT also provided an insight into the adaptation of their insurance policy to cover activities as part of AATKT.

AfH subsequently engaged artist Caroline Schofield to provide an online sharing of the AATKT project for the Creative Carers artists and administrators. She gave an overview of the project content and structure, her experience of working with participants in the home and the safeguarding measures they took in order to protect both participants and the artists.

The AfH administrative team met online with artist Breda Mayock from the *Hearth* project in Co. Mayo which brings art into the homes of older people who are isolated geographically or restricted for other reasons. Each participant is visited weekly by a skilled artist who is experienced in working with older people and facilitates a one-to-one workshop in the participants home. The meeting with Breda provided insights into the appropriate length and number of sessions to offer each participant; maintaining a professional relationship within the personal context of the home and systems of reporting and safeguarding - both for the artist and the participant.

The learnings from this consultation process were combined to compose a set of health and safety guidelines which were reviewed by the team and finalised to govern home visits, Creative Carers - Guidelines for Home Visits. These guidelines are subject to regular review as the programme progresses and applied in conjunction with the Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre Best Practice Guidelines, Infection Control, Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy and all other AfH and Uillinn protocols.

Development Workers & Healthcare Professionals

Consultation with arts and health professionals helped not only to create protocols around working in the home but to shape other considerations - in particular, how to identify potential participants for the programme. The need to establish a referral system via existing healthcare and community supports became a clear priority during the course of the year.

Making contact with home carers presented the primary challenge for the programme both initially and with each new piece of programming throughout the year. Where possible, AfH connected with existing support services to learn from their expertise and to raise awareness of the programme among organisers and service users.

In Autumn 2022, two development workers Juliette O'Donoghue and Lorna Harte were appointed covering Bantry, Mizen Head and Sheep's Head as part of the Family Carers and Older Persons Initiative. The initiative is hosted by Local Link and funded through Cork Kerry Community Healthcare, HSE and aims to engage a further two development workers to cover the wider West Cork area in the coming year. AfH held a meeting with the two development workers and Evie Finlay of Cork Kerry Community Healthcare to exchange information about our respective programmes and to work towards establishing connections between the two.

This initial discussion led to an agreement, in principle, that in 2023 the development workers would identify family carers in their communities who might benefit from and be interested in creative activities and would refer them to the Creative Carers programme - particularly the At Home strand. It was also noted that any referral would include a facilitated introduction in a neutral space with the family carer, development worker and artist present. The development workers expressed further interest in collaborating to host creative group workshops across West Cork - either as a once off or a series of 6 depending on interest levels and a suitable venue. The development workers, AfH and CKCH agreed to meet in Spring 2023 to further this discussion and share plans for the coming year.

Learnings

In Summer 2022 following the research and development phase, it was decided that the programme of activities would include:

- Group activities with opportunities for home carers to connect outside the home with the focus being on creative learning and techniques rather than their experience of being a carer
- At home sessions with a carer and the person they care for sharing an activity
- Events at Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre for people with dementia and their carers
- Once off workshops for different community groups / cohorts

All activities were to be provided free of charge, materials included and no experience was required to participate. Workshops and events would be advertised publicly and via the AfH networks whereas participants on the At Home programme would be referred or known to the artists via their work on the wider AfH programme.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Creative Carers was divided into four strands in 2022:

- Creative Carers at Uillinn – a creative workshop series exploring different visual art techniques, held on Wednesday evenings at Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre.
- In the Picture – dementia friendly gallery tours for people with dementia and their family or professional carers.
- Creative Carers At Home – a series of 6 one-to-one creative sessions with a professional artist at home. Designed to develop shared creative activities for carers and the person they care for.
- Community Outreach – stand alone workshops for community centres and local resource groups to raise awareness about the programme and invite service users to get involved.

Photo by Sarah Ruttle 2022

Creative Carers at Uillinn

Creative Carers at Uillinn included the Art and Wellbeing workshop series and In the Picture, a dementia-friendly gallery tour.

Art and Wellbeing
These workshops ran for two series led by visual artist Sarah Ruttle, joined by artist and musician Tess Leak for two guest sessions per series. The workshops took an informal and relaxed approach to exploring creativity in a supported and creative space where each participant could explore their own ideas. Sessions included making and connecting with others providing care, and studio and gallery tours. The first series in September ran with 5 participants with a 70% attendance rate overall. Feedback was positive with 3 of the 5 participants expressing interest in the wider programme at Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre, Creative Carers At Home and signing up for the second workshop series. The second series was attended by 6 participants in total with an attendance rate of 75%. Participants were very appreciative of Sarah Ruttle's facilitation style and the opportunity for a weekly space for themselves to create in a relaxed and friendly environment.

"The carers art program was truly a wonderful experience. It was a time set aside each week to create, laugh, drink tea, meet new people and re-center. I cherished this experience and am beyond grateful to have been able to participate. A big thank you to all that are involved in creating and teaching this class."

- Participant

Artist Sarah Ruttle noted that the atmosphere in both series was very positive and encouraging. In the second series the combination of 50/50 previous participants and new participants worked well. Attendance was steady and the group dynamic was well maintained even where participants had to miss a session.

"Creative Carers at Uillinn was an incredible series of groups. Encouraging creative exploration, which brought something different to their day and situation, was special. Without 'being a carer' being the topic of conversation there was mutual understanding of one another."

- Sarah Ruttle

Photo by Kevin O'Farrell 2018

In The Picture

Visual artist Sarah Ruttle with the assistance of Dementia Advisor Sarah Cairns invited people with dementia, their professional and /or family carers to visit an exhibition at Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre to look and experiment with others in a safe and welcoming environment. In The Picture included a seated tour of the gallery with time to look and experience the artwork and the many wonderful views from the building. Sharing of stories, singing, making of artwork in the workspace and a shared cup of tea and biscuit were also included.

In The Picture is an event that had previously been extended to Community Hospitals, Day Care Centres and Residential Care Homes and was attended by groups with their professional carers. As part of Creative Carers the aim was to invite home carers to attend with the person they care for. Three sessions were planned for 2022 however only one session went ahead due to difficulties in successfully connecting with family carers. The session, held in November, was attended by a group from Skibbereen Residential Care Home (5 participants and 3 staff members) and one of the participants from the Creative Carers at Uillinn group and the person they care for.

Photo by Sarah Ruttle 2022

Creative Carers At Home

Artists Justin Grounds and Sarah Ruttle provided 6 creative sessions at home for carers and the person they care for. Safety for both participants and artists was a key consideration. With this in mind, it was ensured that the four participating families selected in 2022 were known to the artists in advance of beginning work in the home. Sarah Ruttle worked with two carers who had attended her Creative Carers at Uillinn series and Justin Grounds was referred to his participants via the Clonakilty Day Care Coordinator. Beginning with an informal conversation about each family's daily routine and creative interests, the artists visited over 6 weeks to develop a shared creative activity for the family to enjoy together.

The sessions were 1 hour 15 minutes in length and took place over 6 weeks, at a regular time slot between the hours of 9am - 5pm. Both artists reported positively on their experience of working in the home and have expressed interest in continuing to do so in 2023. Sarah Ruttle has identified a further two families from the Creative Carers at Uillinn series who are interested in participating and the participants working with Justin Grounds in 2022 are interested in further sessions.

For the purposes of the programme's first year it was agreed that families would be limited to 6 sessions over 6 weeks to maintain a professional relationship & provide opportunities for as many participants as possible to engage with the programme. It is suggested for 2023 that families who have already availed of Creative Carers At Home be encouraged to participate in other aspects of the programme in a group setting.

Photo by Sarah Ruttle 2022

Outreach (now Creative Carers in the Community)

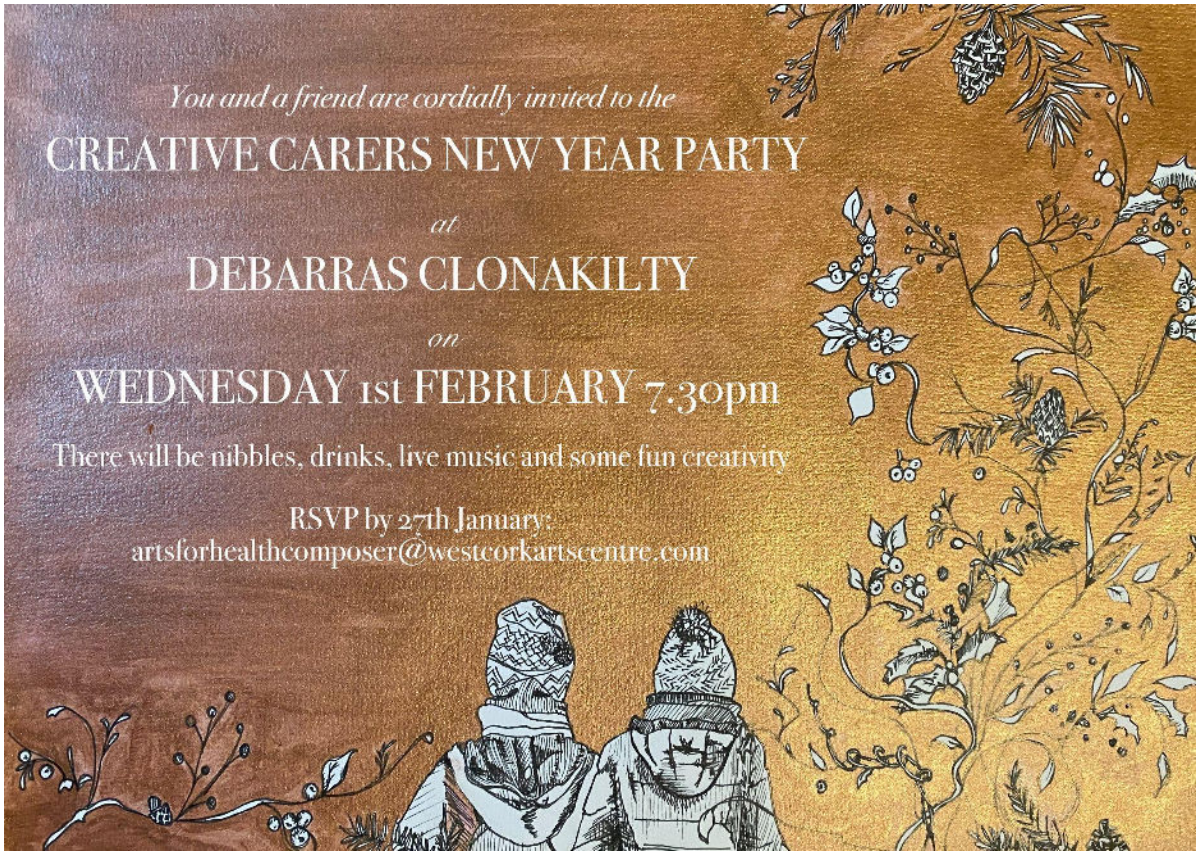
The Outreach programme involved once-off workshops with community organisations, as well as an end of year celebratory event.

Workshops
In order to promote the Creative Carers programme amongst community groups and potential participants, a series of stand alone creative art making workshops were offered to the following groups:

Skibbereen Luncheon Club - attended by 31 clients and 4 staff members
Skibbereen Alzheimer's Café - attended by 6 clients and 4 staff members
Skibbereen Day Care Centre - attended by 8 clients and 3 staff members

Arts for Health Dance Artist in Residence Philippa Donnellan also provided a dance workshop for health care professionals at Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre attended by 5 participants.

The aim of these workshops was to build relationships with organisers in order to connect on available supports for carers and to learn from their experiences with this cohort. In practice however, while organisers were keen to host a workshop for their clients, very little engagement was provided subsequently in referring participants to the Creative Carers programme despite AfH attempts to maintain communication and share information about events and opportunities.



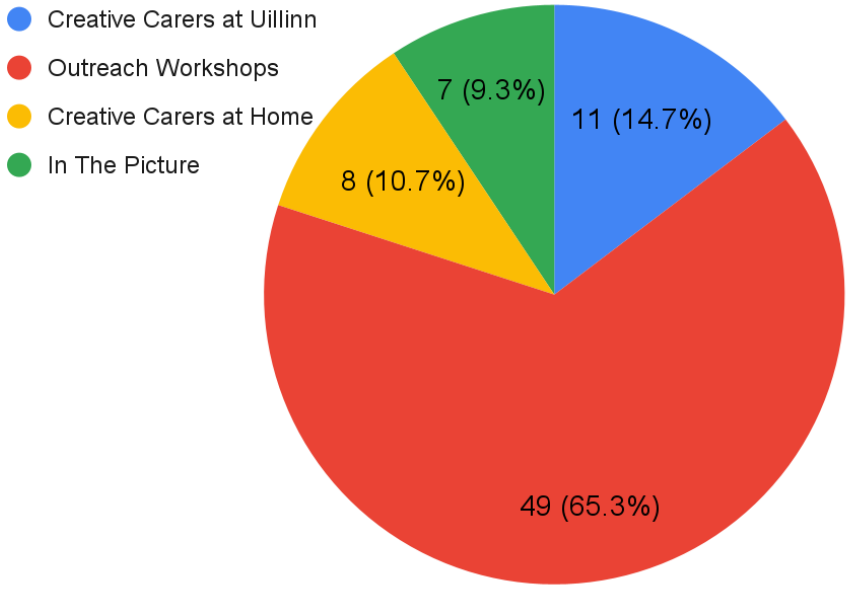
Poster by Sarah Ruttle 2022

New Year Celebration

To celebrate the end of the first year of Creative Carers programme and the connections it fostered, AfH artists organised a celebration in Debarra's Folk Club Clonakilty. The artists wanted to create a participatory event that involved creative activities that would invite interaction between attendees. Invitations were distributed to participants, the AfH artists and administrative teams, the AfH steering group and healthcare professionals from the Hospitals and Day Care Centres. The evening was well attended by representatives from each cohort and featured a red carpet, live music from three of the AfH artists, polaroid camera snaps, collective poetry writing and conversation.

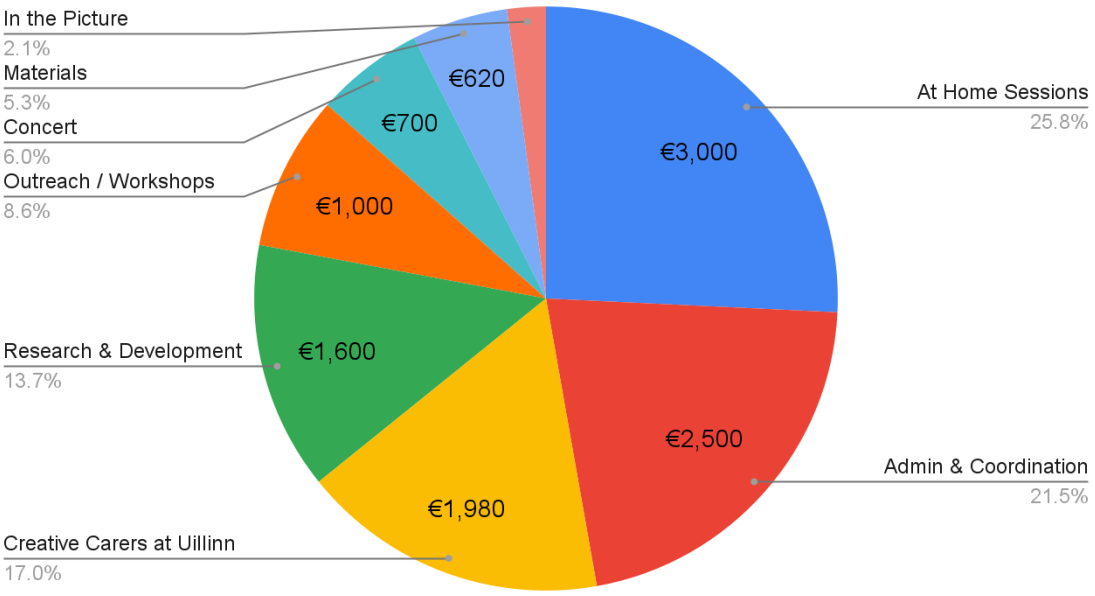
FINDINGS

Participation Figures



Activity	Participants
Creative Carers at Uillinn	11
In The Picture	7
Alzheimer's Café Workshop	6
Skibbereen Day Care Centre Workshop	8
Luncheon Club Workshop	31
Dance Workshop	5
Creative Carers At Home	8
Total Participants	**76**

Budgetary Overview

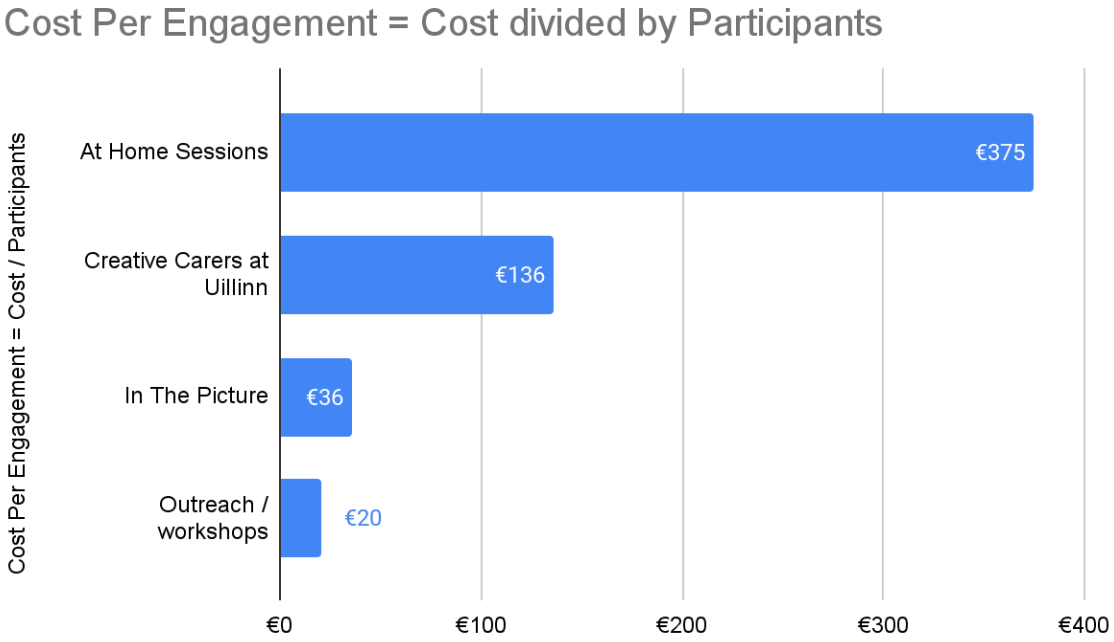


Total Budget €12,000
Admin & Co-ordination €2,500
Research & development €1,600
Materials €620

Budget Carried Forward:
In The Picture cancelled session = €250
Music Sessions = €600

Programme Activities:

Activity	Frequency	Sessions	Participants	Cost
At Home Sessions	4 Families x 6 Sessions	24	8	€3,000
Creative Carers at Uillinn	2 Series x 6 Workshops	12	11	€1,500
In The Picture	1 Session	1	7	€250
Outreach / workshops	4 Workshops	4	49	€1,000
End of Year Celebration	1 Concert	1	-	€700
TOTAL		**46**	67	**€6,450**


Cost Per Engagement = Cost divided by Participants
Cost Per Engagement = Cost / Participants
At Home Sessions
€375
Creative Carers at Uillinn
€136
In The Picture
€36
Outreach / workshops
€20
€0
€100
€200
€300
€400

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIES

Photo by Justin Grounds 2022

Creative Carers at Home

“Myself and my father absolutely loved Justin's weekly visits. It was a beautiful journey of music, memories and swapping of stories. It was so lovely to see how engaged my Dad was at times especially when Justin played some of his favourite tunes! It also brought me out of the humdrum of caring into a lovely space of connection. Justin has a wonderful way with people and is very kind and engaging. We had so much fun too. It's a fantastic initiative and we are grateful to have been a part of it. Thank you.”

- JM

Photo by family member, Justin Grounds and Ian 2022

"When my husband heard about the Creative Carers music programme he was so excited. He is house bound for 5 years due to Parkinson's. Music was his main hobby, he played violin in the Cork Symphony Orchestra for over 20 yrs. Never opened a Violin case for the past 5 years until the multi-talented Justin walked into our home. Everybody knows how talented Justin is musically but few realise his hidden talent of communicating with older people. He has the ability of making them feel so amazing and special. I have worked with many people all through my working life and I know this is a rare talent and congratulations to Creative Carers for finding him!! Ian is so happy after his music session and the joy it brings into our home is immeasurable so long may this programme continue in West Cork."

- BM

Creative Carers at Uillinn

"Sarah is an amazing instructor and sets the tone for such a nourishing class."
- SW

"Thank you for such a great programme."
- SW

"It was time for me and everybody was so helpful."
- MC

"I thought Sarah was an absolutely wonderful and welcoming art teacher. She is so kind and welcoming and knowledgeable. A fantastic class and programme. Thank you."
- SW

"I enjoyed every part. I especially liked the playing around with the words and wire art."
- KOB

ANALYSIS

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the programme yield very different results - the two must be examined together to gather a full sense of the programme outcomes. Taking two contrasting examples - **Creative Carers At Home** was allocated €3,000 (25.6% of the overall budget) with a total of 8 participants (10% of total participants for the year) whereas the **Outreach Workshops** for community groups were allocated €1,000 (8%) with the largest attendance rates at 49 participants total (65%). In terms of the cost per engagement rate of both activities the outreach workshops would appear the most effective use of budget.

From a qualitative perspective however, the At Home strand was valued highly by participants and artists alike. Both artists have expressed interest in continuing At Home sessions and were excited about the opportunity to work with participants one to one. They also noted that this work had a positive impact on their AfH work in Hospitals and Day Cares as it offered the chance to make progress with an individual participant:

"Simply entering the home brings with it an intimacy and vulnerability that is rare in care institutions, and being able to be very person centred means that there is a greater possibility of connection and collaboration."

- Justin Grounds

"Creative Carers At Home has been inspirational. It's a lot for a carer to have us into their home and really brave of them to invite us in. Building from relaxed conversations to an exchange of creative ideas seemed to bring joy and excitement on different days we met. This is a really exciting opportunity to build the At Home programme, which I feel makes a big difference to the carers I have had the opportunity to work with to date."

- Sarah Ruttle

At Home participants mirrored these sentiments:

"Myself and my father (Ted) absolutely loved Justin's weekly visits. It was a beautiful journey of music, memories and swapping of stories… It also brought me out of the humdrum of caring into a lovely space of connection."

- Janine

"Ian is so happy after his music session and the joy it brings into our home is immeasurable so long may this programme continue in West Cork."

- Bríd

The Family Carers and Older Persons development workers also expressed particular interest in the At Home strand and felt the potential for meaningful connection and self expression would be of great benefit to the family carers they work with. The cost per individual engagement, €375, is relatively high however the demonstrable quality of each engagement is valuable and offers the AfH programme the potential to reach a wider geographical audience as it does not require participants to travel.

In contrast, the cost per engagement of the outreach workshops was €20.4 however the benefit to the programme or to individual participants is less clear. None of the workshops resulted in further engagements, programme sign-ups or enquiries despite follow up communication with organisers and invitations to activities and events. It was apparent that the development work required to convert awareness into engagement among these service users was beyond the capacity of the Creative Carers team or budget. For this reason, while participation rates were high, further consideration would be needed to ensure future workshops were attended by participants with relevant interest in the programme. It is also suggested that an introduction to group organisers / community workers be provided in advance by a mutual contact ideally from the HSE in order to promote buy-in and to build a network of service providers for carers.

"Having the outreach workshops gave us a step into new connections as we grow Creative Carers in the community. And having the new community liaisons will I think be a great benefit to building a strong relationship in the community."

-Sarah Ruttle

In The Picture presented a challenge for the administrative team and was the least successful event in reaching participants. The cost per engagement was relatively low at €36 however 6 of the 7 participants attended as part of a day trip from a local Residential Care Home rather than the intended audience - individual family carers and the people they care for. Every effort was made to promote the events - via social media, the Arts for Health website and emails to AfH healthcare and community contacts. Flyers were also distributed in person to the Skibbereen Alzheimer's cafe attendees. Ultimately the AfH team felt that the low sign up rate may be attributed to:

- Stigma and vulnerabilities surrounding dementia
- Difficulties in self identifying as a home carer
- Lack of familiarity with Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre and the Creative Carers Programme
- Trust required to bring a family member with dementia to a public event
- Further development work needed on the part of AfH in order to effectively communicate with home carers

Creative Carers at Uillinn, representing the second highest cost per engagement at €136 per participant, was well received by participants and played a central role in the development of participation on the programme. As the first activity to take place as part of Creative Carers 2022, the initial workshop series

was attended by 5 participants, 3 of whom attended the second workshop series and two of whom were later selected as participants for the At Home strand with two more interested in At Home in 2023. Participants also attended events at Uillinn and the end of year celebration. Though these workshops ran at half capacity, the quality of the engagements and the extended creative expression they provided for repeat attendees was valued both by participants and artist Sarah Ruttle. Most participants surveyed on exiting the workshops expressed interest in being kept informed about not only Creative Carers but the wider Uillinn programme demonstrating the lasting effect of their involvement in the programme.

"Having [Creative Carers at Uillinn] running on a regular basis I think would be of great benefit to those who come. I feel like we just started some interesting creative conversations which could be built on in focused creative making."

-Sarah Ruttle

"I loved how they invited me to other carers events. No judgement, a chance to escape the carers duties and forget your worries."

- Participant

"Warm, friendly atmosphere. Being encouraged to relax and let go. It was very freeing and forgiving, a whole new experience."

- Participant

Photo by Sarah Ruttle 2022

CONCLUSIONS

In 2022 Arts for Health successfully devised and implemented a new participatory arts programme strand providing creative opportunities for and with home Carers in West Cork. Care was taken to include the participant voice in devising and evaluating the programme and much was learned both in researching and implementing the first year of programme activities.

The programme was delivered by professional artists and consultation from professionals with relevant experience in the arts and health field was provided in order to inform the work.

Events were held at Uillinn, in Skibbereen and in Clonakilty - it is hoped that future iterations of the programme would expand this geographical reach.

The administrative and artistic teams worked with development and community workers, Day Care Co-ordinators and community group organisers in order to build connections, raise awareness of the programme and identify participants.

Testimonies from participants indicate that benefits of the programme included wellbeing, play, relaxation, creativity and skills development, peer support and respite.

Participation & Inclusion

With a total of 76 participants in 2022, the programme made progress in establishing connections with the home carer community in West Cork. The structure of the programme - including different settings, activities and group or solo work sought to make participation as accessible as possible to people providing care at home and to cater to their different needs and interests. This was largely successful as evidenced by the positive feedback from participants in the At Home strand and Uillinn workshop series and expressed interest from participants and artists in continuing both.

With 15% of the budget this year allocated to research and development, the resultant programme offering was varied and catered to the needs of participants on an individual level. One to one work in the home, in particular, provided opportunities for participants who might ordinarily have experienced barriers to accessing activities. As isolation is such a prevalent issue for home carers, especially in a rural setting, areas of improvement in 2023 would be to expand geographical reach both for activities in the home and in a group / community setting.

Collaboration & Partnerships

Community outreach workshops provided an opportunity to reach larger groups and to begin a conversation with organisers about the aims of the programme. Initial progress was slow however awareness of the programme has been increased over the year and with the support of the Family Carers and Older Persons Development Workers, there is potential to build on this work with a view to developing a network of organisations providing opportunities for carers.

It is envisioned that the Arts for Health Steering Group will work to provide support in identifying and connecting with organisations relevant to this network. It is further hoped that the Steering Group will assist in establishing a referral system for the programme connecting participants to suitable activities via referrals from health care professionals, community workers or educational professionals already known to them. This not only complies with the Creative Carers standards document but provides a personal introduction to the programme that is often necessary where a participant has no prior relationship with or knowledge of the Arts for Health programme.

Artistic Quality & Outcomes

Time devoted by both artists to research and development of their respective creative offerings provided a solid foundation for the creation of quality artistic experiences with the participants at the heart. Both Creative Carers at Uillinn and the At Home sessions provided participants with ongoing creative guidance from professional artists. Over a series of six weeks they were able to explore creative self expression and shape their own output.

"Variety of Media. Laid back and comfortable atmosphere, relaxing. Sarah is so positive, encouraging and creative, caring."

- Participant, Creative Carers at Uillinn

"It was a beautiful journey of music, memories and swapping of stories. It was so lovely to see how engaged my Dad was at times especially when Justin played some of his favourite tunes!"

- Participant, Creative Carers at Home

These sessions were largely participant-led with a focus on creative empowerment - encouraging participants to develop their own practice and to equip them with skills that could be used outside of the sessions. The interest among both groups to continue further activities in the future is a testament to the quality and enjoyment of the programme content.

Although In The Picture did not reach its intended audience, the inclusion of an interpretive activity to complement the creative making activities is an important one. The opportunity to engage with the programme as an observer within a group is potentially less intimidating for certain participants. This is something artist Justin Grounds has begun to consider in looking at future musical group sessions. He is exploring activities that begin with listening to music together with an informal discussion to build trust and connection among participants before creating something together.

It is difficult to gauge the creative outcomes of the outreach workshops - engagement with participants was short and often in larger groups with less direct interaction with the artist. Future workshops of this kind, as stated above, would benefit from an introduction / referral to the particular group and a conversation about their creative interests. Further expansion of the artists team would also allow for pairing the most suitable artist with each group in addition to expanding the geographical reach of the workshops.

Crucially, both artists felt that their work on the Creative Carers programme had contributed positively to their own creative practice. The opportunity to work with carers complimented and provided a new perspective on their existing work with people in a care setting:

"Having the opportunity to work on Creative Carers Programme has been personally refreshing with a positive effect on my own practice. Participatory Arts, while it is exciting and rewarding, can be challenging and draining. Having the combination of working within the healthcare setting and in the

community has worked well for me. Creative Carers has given me new energy."

-Sarah Ruttle

"This pilot project has been a very fruitful development for me in my practice as an Arts for Health composer and musician. Previous to this my experience was in Community Hospitals and Day Care Centres with groups of participants. In this more institutional context the sessions needed to be group focused, trying to involve and inspire as many of the group as possible… I look forward to developing the project more in 2023 with group sessions for carers, and more home visits."

-Justin Grounds

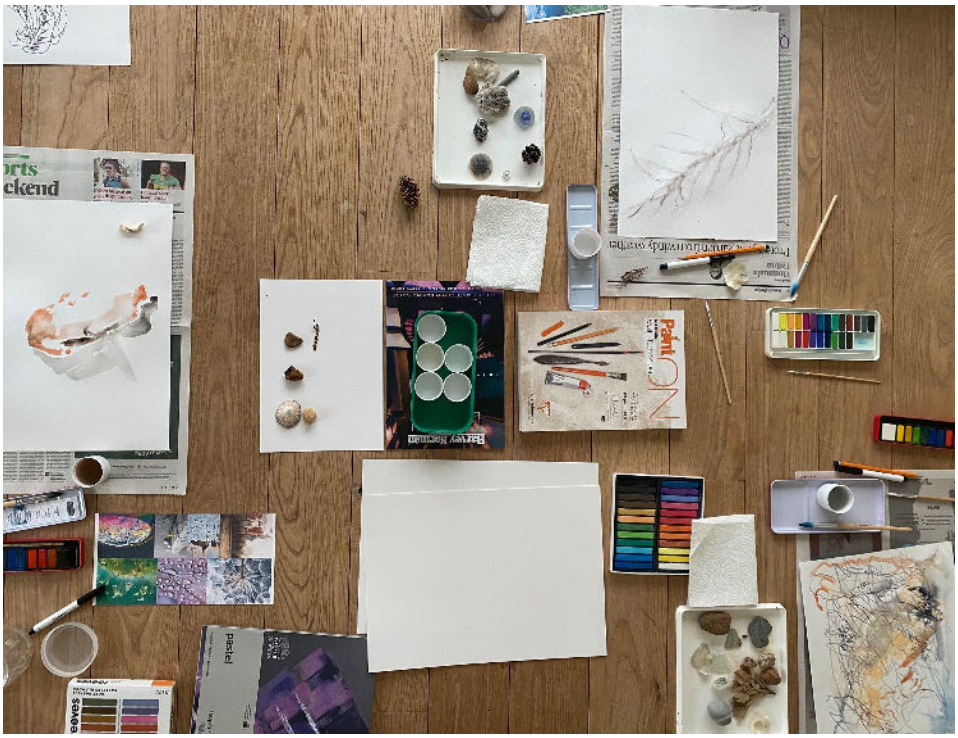


Photo by Sarah Ruttle 2022

OBJECTIVES FOR 2023

Working with community and voluntary organisations, Arts for Health Partnership aims to continue to develop and deliver a responsive participatory arts programme for and with family carers across West Cork.

Building on the strengths of the first year of the Creative Carers programme and in acknowledgement of areas in need of improvement, the following recommendations are proposed for the future of the programme:

- To work with the Family Carers and Older Persons Development Workers to build a network of organisations working with family carers in West Cork to meet on an ongoing basis to share resources, learnings and engage in mutual referral systems.
- To work with the AfH Steering Group to strengthen this network and identify key contacts in the health, arts and education sectors locally who could be approached to provide participant referrals.
- To expand the geographical reach of the programme across West Cork.
- To continue to work one-to-one with carers at home and to consider whether further sessions can be offered to the same family.
- To consider if an after care element should be included for families who have participated in the At Home sessions, for example a follow up / debriefing session or an invitation to an alternative group activity - similar to the AATKT studio.
- To adapt and continue Creative Carers at Uillinn for locations across West Cork.
- To view the programme as a whole and encourage participants to attend multiple different activities as appropriate.
- To continue to offer once off workshops to community groups but to consider maximum group sizes and to work with partners to identify suitable participants with an interest in creative activities.
- To incorporate participant feedback collection as part of workshops in order to effectively assess their impact, relevance and interest levels.
- To remove In The Picture from the programme and incorporate new opportunities to engage with creativity as an observer with discussion.
- To expand the artists team and to incorporate fixed quarterly meetings for discussion, debrief, peer support and planning.
- To allocate a portion of the budget for communications and promotion to support development, collaboration and partnership work.
- To plan and deliver an exhibition of participant work and celebratory event at the end of the second year.

APPENDIX

About the Artists

Sarah Ruttle

Tyrone born visual artist Sarah is a graduate of Textiles from DJCAD Dundee, Scotland. Based in West Cork she creates work using illustration, print and paper art. Illustration has become an important part of her solo work, developing contemporary portraiture drawing on her experience of working within participatory arts. Creating characters influenced by her passion for photography, pattern and texture she hopes to make intimate and compelling images, which capture humanity, emotion and courage.

Collaboration is central to her participatory practice, developing projects both with other artists and participants within an Arts and Health context. Sarah has worked as part of the Arts for Health Partnership Programme, West Cork artist team since 2008. With experience of developing projects within the community and in acute mental health settings.

Justin Grounds

Justin is a violinist, composer and electronic music producer based in West Cork, Ireland.

He studied baroque violin with Rachel Good in his home town of Cambridge, UK, and went on to do a degree in Music and Theology at Durham University, majoring in electroacoustic composition. Justin toured as violinist with the live electronic band Keiretsu as well as producing 5 albums of solo music. He most recently collaborated with songwriter Pearse McGloughlin on 'Idiot Songs', an acclaimed collection of 'electronic chamber songs' taking inspiration from Dostoyevsky. His work for orchestra and chamber ensembles has been celebrated for its "minimalist musical aesthetic, with an almost rhapsodic arch of movement." His 'Passacaglia Apis' for solo baroque violin and string orchestra won the inaugural East Cork Early Music Festival composers competition in 2014 and was premiered by Maya Homburger and Barry Guy.

About Arts for Health Partnership Programme

Arts for Health Partnership Programme is based in West Cork and provides a managed arts programme for older people accessing healthcare services. The programme takes place in eleven widespread, rural locations including Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre, five Day Care Centres: Bantry, Castletownbere, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen; five Community Hospitals: Castletownbere, Dunmanway, Schull, Skibbereen, Bantry General Hospital, Care of the Elderly Unit and, more recently, at home.

Arts for Health, West Cork is underpinned by an inter-agency partnership between Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (HSE), Cork County Council, and Cork Education & Training Board (CETB). The partnership is governed by a committed group of regional arts, education and health representatives working together, with Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre and the HSE playing the key operational roles.

The programme is delivered by a team of professional artists managed through Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre. The artists establish a close, professional working relationship with the staff, integrating the arts and care services. They are supported with training, peer networking, residency and learning opportunities to develop their professional expertise in working with older people and in healthcare settings. Each with a distinctly different artistic practice, the artists work independently and collaboratively resulting in a diverse range of artistic outcomes.

Access to and engagement with the arts in healthcare settings improves the quality of life for individuals in residential care and service users. Integrating an arts programme into the culture of the care setting allows for ideas and individual creative interests of the participants to be nurtured and developed over time. Participants are placed at the centre of the programme, their wellbeing and creative choices being paramount. In general, participants are older people, who reside in hospitals or attend day care facilities in West Cork. Participants might also be professional or family carers.

The programme is delivered in three strands: Community Hospital, Day Care and Creative Carers each tailored to the creative needs of participants in the context of their environment.

Acknowledgements

Compiled and researched by Phoebe Cotton, with Justine Foster Programme Manager, Arts for Health Partnership, West Cork

Thank you to our participants and their carers on the programme for their creative courage.

Our funding partners at HSE, Cork ETB and Cork County Council without which none of this would ever happen.All the steering group members past and present who work with me on realising the programme and ensuring that we meet the high standards our participants deserve, Roisin Walsh, Joanna McCarthy, Margo Daly, Sarah Cairns, Sheelagh Broderick, Maeve Mulrennan and Teresa O'Sullivan. In particular HSE Community Work Department Eleanor Moore and Evie Finley, June Hamil,, who initiated the support for Creative Carers.

To the Artist team who bring their expertise to the fore each working day sharing their artistic skills, and creative ideas_ Sarah Ruttle and Justin Grounds.

To all the day care and community development workers including Julliette O'Donahue and Lorna Harte.

The dynamic team at Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre who work hard behind the scenes.

The Arts for Health partnership gratefully acknowledge the local support towards the programme with special thanks to **Friends of the Community Hospitals and Day Care Centres.**

www.artsforhealthwestcork.com
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