

Creative programmes and activities 2025 - 2026

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Summary



20 Workshops



126 people trained



329 beneficiaries

In 2025/26, more people living with dementia were able to enjoy our workshops and community, with a 21% increase in people attending our programmes.

We were delighted to start a second year-round programme in Southwark, hosted by SET Social in Peckham, alongside our ongoing programme at the Tree House, Elephant and Castle, which is now in its third year.

This year, 26 artists were employed across our programmes, an increase of over 70%. This enabled participants to enjoy new arts practices, from mosaics and drama to animation, alongside long-time favourites dance, sculpture, music and drawing, and supported more artists to develop their practice in arts and dementia.

Our weekly online Art Wednesday sessions continued to provide vital creative activity and social connection for those unable to attend workshops in person, with additional guest artist-led sessions enriching the programme and broadening participants' experience.

Partnership working remained central to our impact. Collaborations with leading cultural and community organisations, including new partnerships with Shakespeare's Globe, Park Theatre and the Philharmonia Orchestra, enabled participants to engage with a diverse range of artistic styles and settings.

Participants' artwork was showcased across six exhibitions, celebrating creativity and providing opportunities for friends, family and the wider public to engage with their work and achievements. These events also help raise awareness of Arts for Dementia and how people can take part or support our work.

Demand for our early-stage dementia awareness training for the arts continued to grow, with 126 people attending, a 22% increase on the previous year, helping to build greater understanding and more inclusive practice across the sector.

"Thank you for inviting me, before coming, I wasn't sure what to expect and wasn't sure if I would like it, but I've loved all the art classes so far, there's such variety and I have learnt so many new skills, I wouldn't have been able to do all these things otherwise"

Companion participant



Southwark

Year-round programme

Art at the Tree House - Elephant and Castle

Five programmes lasting ten weeks each:

1. Animation

Under the guidance of Lily Sakula, participants created imaginative animations using drawing, storyboarding and stop-motion techniques. Found objects, light and texture were used to develop characters and collaborative short films. The workshops concluded with a joyful film premiere, bringing everyone together to celebrate their creations over popcorn.



"Inspired. I'm always inspired when I am here."

Companion participant



2. Dance

Inspired by Sleeping Beauty and delivered in partnership with English National Ballet, this programme invited participants to respond to music through movement. Over the weeks, participants built expressive routines together, developing choreography and contributing their own creative ideas. Scarves, percussion instruments and live music enriched the sessions, supporting both group connection and individual creativity.



"I love these classes, they are amazing, I wish they would never end. I want the classes to be forever."

Participant with dementia



3. Printmaking

Through printmaking workshops led by Lucy Grainge, participants experimented with bold colours, textures and layered mark-making techniques. Collaborative activities and individual experimentation encouraged participants to build increasingly complex and expressive works over time. Final outcomes included handmade concertina books and a celebratory display of both individual and collaborative artwork.

"I love learning new skills and techniques."

Participant with dementia



4. Photography

Using a handmade box camera, artists Chiara and Claudia, Box Camera Duo, introduced participants to experimental approaches to photography. Working in groups, they explored portraiture and still life, before decorating the photographs using collage and mixed media. The programme concluded with the creation of mini photo albums documenting the group's shared creative journey.

"This class is amazing."

Participant with dementia



5. Poetry and writing

Music, storytelling and sensory prompts formed the basis of this creative writing programme led by Elida Silvey. Participants reflected on familiar songs and shared memories and created poems using prompts, objects and collage. Each session concluded with the creation of a collaborative poem bringing together participants' words, memories and ideas.



"Lots of me gets hidden away, I hide it away, but here I can share it."

Participant with dementia



Year-round programme

GET Creative at SET Social - Peckham

Four programmes lasting ten weeks each:

1. Drawing and collage

Through drawing and collage, participants experimented with charcoal, textiles and found imagery in workshops led by Rhian Sutcliffe. Individual and collaborative mark-making activities encouraged participants to develop ideas and techniques over time. The workshops concluded with building artworks that combined individual pieces into large-scale 3D installations displayed throughout the SET Social space.

"I see the change in my mum doing an activity she loves. . . A fun and pleasant and enjoyable experience for mum thank you."

Companion participant



2. Nature and textiles

Led by Molly Bonnell, these workshops explored the use of natural materials within textile practices, including scrap weaving, cyanotype printing and patch-making. Participants experimented with natural dyes, creating pigments from materials such as spirulina and turmeric. In the final session participants created a collaborative hand-painted textile piece that brought together individual creativity and collective making.

"It's a lifeline really... you're so friendly, I love being here."

Participant with dementia



3. Ceramics

Participants explored tactile making processes through ceramics, sculpture and plaster casting in workshops led by Helen Johannessen and Molly Bonnell. Participants created and decorated a variety of objects, from ceramic pieces to small-scale sculptures, exploring both individual and collaborative making. Sessions concluded with a shared display of festive clay decorations.



"This has been so meaningful, thank you, I needed this."

Participant with dementia



4. Painting

Inspired by artists including David Hockney, Georgia O'Keeffe and Basquiat, participants explored a variety of painting, drawing and collage techniques in workshops led by Flora Dorian. Activities encouraged experimentation with colour, composition and mark-making while supporting confidence and self-expression. In the final sessions people learned techniques used in portraiture and then drew and painted portraits of their loved ones.

"[Flora's] sessions have been truly inspiring as they got me back to trying to draw and paint again!"

Participant with dementia



Short-term programme

Drama and more at Shakespeare's Globe

Hosted by Shakespeare's Globe, this eight-week programme introduced participants to drama guided by actor Gabi McPherson. Participants used games, movement and improvisation to explore the characters, language and scenes from plays including Macbeth and As You Like It, building confidence and creativity as stories were brought to life. In the final session participants visited the Globe itself where participants had the opportunity to step onto the stage and perform, celebrating their achievements together.



"This has been magic. I am going to write a poem on my way home inspired by this group. Wow. Thank you."

Participant with dementia



Philharmonia Orchestra: Hear and now

We were delighted to work with the Philharmonia Orchestra on their Hear and Now programme, bringing it to London for the first time. Participants explored music alongside professional musicians and students, learning and performing together. The weekend culminated in a joyful performance for family and friends, including a memorable harmonica solo from one of our participants.



"It's given us something to look forward to - we want to do this every week! It's not just the activities, it's how welcoming and positive the people are. Outside of our front door the world can feel a bit too much, so we're so grateful to have found you."

Companion participant



Camden

Year-round programme

Art in the Library - Swiss Cottage

Five programmes lasting ten weeks each:

1. Mosaics

Using materials including seeds, grains and mosaic tiles, participants created richly textured artworks in sessions led by Eniko Leanyvari. The workshops encouraged playful experimentation and across the programme, participants produced personalised works including tile coasters, decorated plant pots and mosaic panels.

"It was great to be able to work with such a varied amount of material and learn different techniques."

Companion participant



2. 3D sculpture and ceramics

Workshops led by Jacky Oliver and Julia Clarke introduced participants to a range of three-dimensional techniques including plaster casting, wire sculpture and clay work. Participants explored different materials and processes to create tactile artworks ranging from sculptural forms to personalised printed booklets.

"It's nice to have the time to just let go and be creative."

Participant with dementia



3. Visual arts and drawing

Through mindful mark-making and playful experimentation, workshops led by Lucy Thomas explored a range of visual arts and drawing techniques. Participants worked with materials including ink, clay and collage, creating tactile pieces, handmade zines, ceramic lanterns and layered drawings.



"These classes are amazing - they make such a huge difference. Such a welcoming atmosphere, so supportive. It's been transformative!"

Companion participant



4. Ceramics and 3D art

Inspired by modern and contemporary artists, this programme introduced participants to a range of three-dimensional art techniques in workshops led by Julia Clarke. Participants experimented with materials including clay, wood and collage, creating abstract sculptures bunting and handmade cards.



"Everyone is smiling, when you look around you just see how happy everyone is."

Participant with dementia



5. Drama

Park Theatre came to us and led workshops that combined visual art, movement and improvisation to explore imaginative themes and shared storytelling. Participants worked collaboratively, using drawing, gesture and performance to develop short improvised scenes inspired by weekly themes. Sessions fostered creativity, confidence and connection within a supportive and sociable environment.

"Heaven, where I can let go and play". "I love the tai chi movements, it really allows me to get out of my head and in tune with my body, thank you for letting me explore that."

Participant with dementia



Short-term programme

The Art of Craft at Cockpit studios Bloomsbury

This eight-week programme with four resident makers at Cockpit Studios Bloomsbury encouraged participants to experiment with embossing, painting, natural dye and needle felting techniques. Activities ranged from creating embossed compositions and floral paintings to producing naturally dyed fabrics and appliqué landscapes. Needle felting formed the final focus of the programme, providing a calm and reflective creative experience.

"This has actually encouraged me to be more creative in my spare time, before this I wasn't doing much at all."

Participant with dementia



Lewisham

Short-term programme

The Art of Craft at Cockpit Studios Deptford

Working with four resident makers at Cockpit Studios Deptford, this eight-week programme introduced participants to a wide range of contemporary craft techniques. Sessions included experimenting with natural dyes, dried flowers and ceramics, alongside stitching techniques such as couching. Participants also created paper lace designs and zines inspired by found ceramics before exploring weaving through the use of paper looms. The workshops concluded with the creation of handmade journals that brought together participants' work as a lasting record of the programme. We're delighted to announce that in 2026-27 we will be starting a year-round programme at Cockpit Studios Deptford.

"I absolutely loved facilitating both sessions, thanks for having me, I'm so pleased everyone else enjoyed it too."

Cockpit Studios artist



Westminster

Short-term programme

The King's Gallery: Edwardian Elegance

We were delighted to visit the King's Gallery at Buckingham Palace, where art historian Catherine Chastney guided participants through The Edwardians: Age of Elegance exhibition. Participants explored the lives of the Edwardians through beautifully preserved objects and artworks from the Royal Collection. Working with textile artist Alice Burnhope, they sketched items from the exhibition before creating their own props, postcards, badges and fans, inspired by the intricate and jewelled designs. We are very grateful to the Gallery team for their warm welcome and generous support.



"For me, it's not an exaggeration to state that for the last six weeks each Tuesday has been the highlight of my week."

Participant with dementia



Art Wednesday

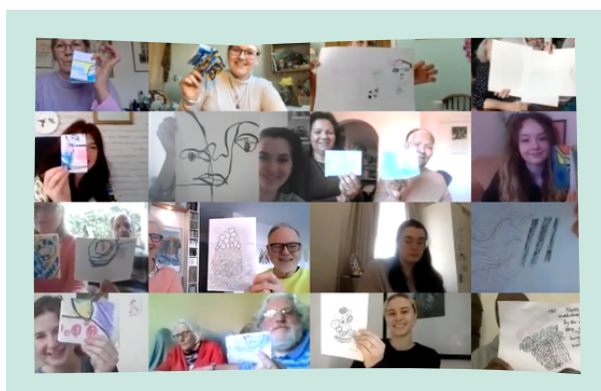
Our weekly Art Wednesdays continued to bring people together online, offering a lively and varied creative space for those who may not be able to attend in person, as well as those who attend in-person sessions, but value an additional artistic outlet from home each week. The sessions provide consistency, connection and inspiration, wherever participants are joining from.

This year's programme covered an extraordinary breadth of themes and techniques. Participants experienced collage in many forms from nature and landscape to Picasso-inspired compositions and 3D constructions. They explored painting styles inspired by artists such as Howard Hodgkin, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Althea McNish, Beauford Delaney and Nnena Kalu. Pattern-making, terrazzo painting, Aboriginal dot work, concentric drawing and sound-led drawing offered further opportunities to experiment.

Poetry from across the UK and beyond forms a regular and much-loved part of the programme, complemented by creative sessions inspired by collections at the Wallace Collection, the British Museum and the Royal Collection. We also enjoyed moments of seasonal celebration, improv drama with Park Theatre, and our ever-popular festive quiz. The diversity of themes reflects the curiosity and openness of the group, and the power of creativity to spark conversation, memory and shared enjoyment week after week.

"This is the first time I have heard of and seen Basquiat's art. I've now read about him and certainly feel a link with his way of art and life influences. Extremely interesting."

Participant with dementia



Training

Early-stage dementia awareness training for the arts

Delivering creative workshops for people affected by dementia requires more than artistic skill alone. Arts for Dementia's training is designed to support artists and facilitators to move beyond assumptions about ageing and dementia, and towards a person-centred, strengths-based approach to creative engagement. This year we delivered ten training sessions for arts facilitators and organisations. This included four bespoke training sessions: Museum Development Midlands, Cockpit Studios, Shakespeare's Globe and Central Saint Martins. We continue to deliver our training both virtually as well as in-person, to reach attendees across the UK.

"The training was invaluable and has equipped me with the knowledge needed to confidently support individuals with dementia. The welcoming and friendly atmosphere created a lovely learning environment."

"I gained a better understanding of dementia and how we can make sessions more accessible."

Training participants



Exhibitions

Including the Affordable Art Fair Hampstead

We were incredibly grateful to be chosen as the charity partner of the Affordable Art Fair Hampstead this year where we hosted a stand exhibiting works from professional artists who support our work, with 50% of proceeds going to support our programmes. Our partnership with Galeria Moderna's Invitational Art Contest and Exhibition continues into its fifth year, and we were honoured to have our work included in their art exhibition at The Sidings, Waterloo Station. Artworks created by our participants were featured alongside a display of the winning artworks from the IAC. In addition to the funds raised, these events created connections with people wanting to know more about what we do and to get involved to either support us, work with us or bring a loved one to one of our programmes.



We're delighted that our print collection, created by participants at our Tree House programme in Southwark, was chosen by Bovis to brighten up the temporary pedestrian walkway outside 120 Regent Street, while refurbishment work takes place. The display highlights our work in a prominent public setting, to raise awareness and showcase the incredible work of our participants.

Through collaborations with external partner organisations, we have also showcased our participants' artwork across a range of community settings. Selected artworks from our print collection were also featured in a Creative Health Exhibition at The Library at Willesden Green, and in an Alzheimer's Society display at Peckham Library, helping to raise awareness during Alzheimer's Month.