

Case Study

“We have a lovely connection with the people at b arts, and our residents have been using their services for quite a while, they do community meals.” – April Harper, Activities Coordinator at St Dominics

Context

St Dominics Court Residential Home are one of B arts closest neighbours, and were one of the 48 grass roots community organisations that were approached as part of B arts’ Creative Engagement Worker’s initial outreach work when appointed in September 2019.

When inviting residents to our monthly Space to Connect community meals and arts workshops, our CEW formed a working relationship with Activities Coordinator April Harper and a number of residents began attending events.

CEW would regularly go and see the residents to chat to them over a cup of tea about upcoming opportunities to be involved in the activities taking place at B arts.

Issue

“Kath (CEW) came to promote Space to Connect and while she was here she got chatting (and we were) talking about the sort of residents we’ve got (and the) things they were doing.” – April Harper

“Our residents range from 50 – 105, we have a real mixture of people here, so finding something that everyone can join in with is important” - April Harper

It became apparent that whilst residents enjoyed joining in with creative activities that for various health reasons leaving the accommodation to join us in the building was not possible. The Activities Coordinator was always looking for new activities to do with the wide range of residents, in the space that they felt comfortable to participate in.

Solution

Local ceramicist Leone Davis had taken a tealight making workshop to the January Space to Connect event. Leone had experiencing adapting her workshop to different ages and abilities, and came up with a bespoke workshop for the St Dominics residents making plant pots using a coiling technique.

Ceramics Workshop with Leone Davis, photographer Kath Walton



Evidence of Learning

After national lockdown was announced in March 2020, residents at St Dominics were locked down in their individual residencies and were no longer able to meet in communal meeting spaces.

April and other members of staff dressed up every single day at 11am in a different costume and waved at the residents through their windows, this became known as ‘the daily wave’.

As part of B arts Care co-creation research and development commissions, St Dominics was identified as one of the community groups that would be at most risk of being digitally and socially isolated, that we wanted to work with.

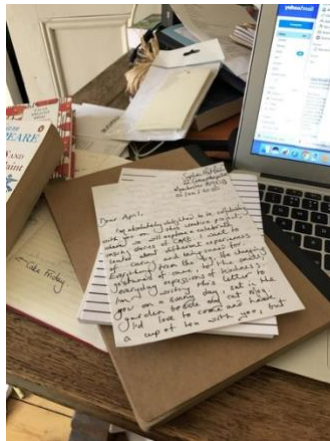
April played a key role in the commissioning process, reading applications and assisting us when coming to the final decision on Sophia Hatfield’s telephone theatre proposal.

Sophia Hatfield (Actor and Writer) and Gwenda Hughes (Director) were chosen to develop a piece of telephone theatre, a play over the phone, co-created with staff and residents at St Dominics by interviewing them over the phone. Memory box activities, letters and photographs were also sent in to St Dominics, and April facilitated this process.

When asked what motivated April to begin this project with B arts, she answered -

“Because we had met Kath before and seen how fantastic she is with the residents and Kath had a friendly manner with them and they liked her. That's really important with people coming in, the residents loved her, and I knew there were no problems there.” – April Harper

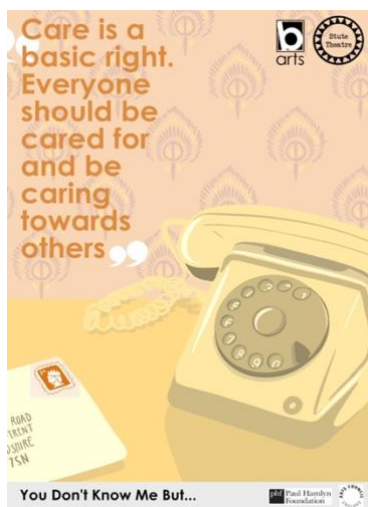
Letters and memory box sent into St Dominics, photographers Sophia Hatfield and Gwenda Hughes



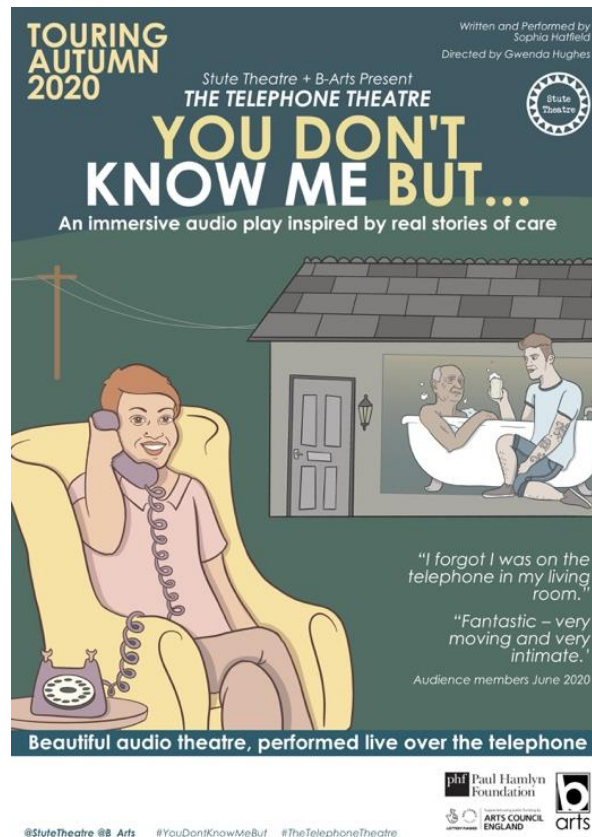
Sophia wrote and recorded a special song for staff and residents at St Dominics called 'the daily wave' in recognition of their hard work and dedication during the pandemic.

“The thank you song and video moved many staff members to tears, as they felt appreciated and seen in their roles.” – April Harper

Staff and residents were the first to hear the finished telephone theatre piece, and an accessible video of Sophia performing the piece to camera with subtitles was also provided to St Dominics. Specialised 'Care' posters, featuring direct quotes from the staff and residents was also delivered as a thank you to staff and residents.



Posters and flyer created by James Fox Neville. Sophia rehearsing, photographer Kath Walton.



Sophia Hatfield (Stute Theatre) received Arts Council funding to virtually ‘tour’ the Telephone Theatre’s fully formed piece ‘You Don’t Know Me But...’ as a co-production with B arts.

Created with those who were particularly isolated and shielding in mind, CEW worked with local partner organisations such as Beth Johnson Foundation and Fegg Hayes Futures to ensure those people had chance to hear the play.

You Don’t Know Me But received local and national media coverage.

“The telephone play is inspired by real memories and interviews from a care home in Stoke-on-Trent and tells the hidden stories of care across generations. The play celebrates the dedication and spirit of workers and residents in care homes across the UK. The audio play is an intimate one-woman show performed live over the phone, giving audience members a unique and moving theatre experience in their own homes at a time when live theatre performance is less accessible.”

The performance has been created following an in-depth period of research and development with B-Arts. A series of interviews, conversations and memory box activities have uncovered real stories of care from staff and residents at a private care home in Stoke-on-Trent. Whilst the story is fictional, the themes and issues faced by the characters in the piece are based on real conversations with real people.

During a hugely challenging time for care workers and staff, this show sheds a light on the real value of care in society and gives voice to hidden stories.”

Sophia Hatfield, Stute Theatre