

Dementia and Imagination

Research Summary 3: A Social Return on Investment Analysis Framework for Art Activities for People Living With Dementia

What is Dementia and Imagination?

Dementia and Imagination explored how art can contribute to the creation of dementia friendly communities. Our programme of work examined how art activities:

- Are beneficial to people living with dementia and those who care for them.
- Help us understand the experience of living with dementia.
- Help raise public awareness of living with dementia.

Dementia and Imagination was a large arts and science collaboration of universities, artists, charities and providers of cultural services working together through five inter-linked projects. This research summary highlights one phase of a project.

Why did we do this project?

It can be difficult to demonstrate the value of arts activities, as the benefits are hard to assign a numerical value to, and can be short term rather than long term. To explore the economic impact of the art groups, a type of analysis called Social Return on Investment (SROI) was used.

What did we do?

SROI is a form of analysis where the social value of an activity is explored, which can be thought of as the perceived value of the activities to the people that are affected by it. We do this by identifying the value of the 'inputs' (for example artists' equipment and time) and 'outcomes' (for example improved wellbeing, increased social support network). To assign a value to concepts such as wellbeing we use financial proxies from national sources, usually calculated through willingness to pay questionnaires or surveys that include questions on income and satisfaction with life. For example, these methods have identified that the 'value' of having one year of high confidence is equivalent to £12,500.



Who took part?

The study involved people living with dementia attending a two-hour art group for twelve weeks. The art groups ran in community settings, residential care homes and hospitals in England and Wales, and in total 125 people with dementia and 146 family and staff carers took part.

What are the key findings?

In the Dementia and Imagination study, we identified the value of 'inputs' as £189,498, and the value of 'outcomes' as £980,717. This ratio means that for every £1 invested in the arts activities, £5.18 of social value was generated. The largest proportion of the value generated was from the improvement in participants' wellbeing

What are the implications?

Decision makers are increasingly seeking wider forms of economic evidence about the costs and benefits of activities, and SROI analysis offers an alternative to more traditional approaches to evaluating the outcomes of health and social care studies

Read the full publication

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