

## Our project Story

### Hand i Pocket



**Tell us about the funded project – what did you set out to achieve? Who participated? How successful was the project? Will your project continue?**

On Saturday 24 October 2015, Tiree Tapestry Group, in conjunction with Tiree Tech Wave, hosted a community Funshop on Tiree to make some sensory textiles for people with mid to late stage dementia. The Funshop was lead by Prof Cathy Treadaway, Dr Kereine Canavan and Dr Helen Watkins from Cardiff Metropolitan University and Dr Wendy Moncur from the University of Dundee. Sue Pagan, from Alzheimer Scotland, Oban, was our Dementia Advisor.

We made some sensory pockets to give to people with late stage dementia.

We put out lots of cloth, thread, buttons, beads and other embellishments. Participants were invited to make a pocket that was decorative to look at and interesting or soothing to touch and to play with, perhaps with a surprise to find inside. Cathy and her team provided lots of help, inspiration, stories and examples. Those making pockets for a friend or relative were encouraged to personalise them to reflect the recipient's interests or life story. The idea was to make pockets that would give someone something to do with their hands and that would occupy their time in an enjoyable way. We hoped they would be comforting, that they might trigger memories and connections and help to maintain a sense of self, or that they might provide a starting point for a conversation and help to keep a relationship going when it can be hard to know what to say.

We provided an opportunity for members of the community, those with personal experience of dementia and those without, to come together and enjoy an afternoon of creative activity and to share their experiences.

We provided an opportunity for people to find out more about dementia. People shared their own experiences and Sue showed a short video and invited us to sign up as "Dementia Friends". She was also available to answer individual questions and concerns.



26 people came to the Funshop.

20 people signed consent forms and stayed and stitched for the whole session.

The remaining six stayed for part of the time or dropped in to see what we were doing.

Some Tech Wave participants (not counted above) also came to have a look during their break.

The age range was 4-80 and included three children under 10 and one man. The rest were women

Some people were experienced stitchers; some had never sewn before.

Participants included those with personal experience of dementia and those without. One person came specifically to talk to the Dementia Advisor.

Three members of our Community Nursing Team, including our CPN, came to stitch and a fourth, who was on duty, came for a short while. Two members of the Social Care team at Taigh a' Rudha participated and a third dropped in on her way to work. This was really encouraging but we were disappointed that no professionals from anywhere else in Argyll came to take advantage of Cathy and her team's expertise.

We received 17 completed feedback forms. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Everyone said they had enjoyed it. People mentioned that they had enjoyed the company, friendliness, and sharing of ideas and materials as well as the fun of creating their own pocket and making something to help someone with dementia. One person felt there were perhaps too many people and one of the children hadn't liked pricking her finger, but these were the only negative comments received. Almost everyone said that the Funshop had increased their awareness of dementia.

13 people signed up as Dementia Friends with Alzheimer Scotland.

Most people took their pockets home to give to relatives or friends, on and off the island. The children wanted to keep theirs and half a dozen were donated to Taigh a' Rudha. We also made a display in the foyer of the Rural Centre for visitors to see.

As well as the "Funshop Evaluation Forms", we also handed out "Sensory Pocket Feedback Forms" which we hoped the recipients or their carers would complete in a few weeks' time.

No forms were returned, perhaps because of the time lag, or because several pockets went off the island, but we did receive some verbal feedback. One person who had made a pocket for a friend's relative reported, "She loves it. She plays with it continuously. It's never out of her hands." Pockets were given to three residents at Taigh a' Rudha. One resident is confined to bed and she spends a lot of time playing with her pocket. She folds it and strokes it and fingers all the different embellishments, rolls it up and unrolls it again. It definitely occupies her and seems to give her pleasure. She also seems appreciative of the embroidery and recognises it as something handmade, that someone has put a lot of work into. This is also a source of pleasure. Two other residents have taken less notice of their pockets, possibly because they are more mobile and tend to put them down somewhere and then forget about them or perhaps because they can still find their own things to do. All three, when first given their pocket, looked to see what was inside; as if they recognised that it was a bag and therefore ought to have a present in - something worth noting for the future.



### **What were the health benefits?**

An increase in mental wellbeing all round.

Funshop participants enjoyed the shared experience of being creative and the good feeling of making something to help someone else. No one wanted to pack up and go home at the end of the afternoon. People asked if we could do it again.

People with experience of living or caring for someone with dementia were able to share their stories and to support one another. People with concerns about their own health were able to talk to the Dementia Advisor.

We all left with an increased awareness of dementia. Tiree is a small, neighbourly community, but there is still something of a stigma about mental illness and it was good to challenge that.

Although we didn't have much feedback from people, or carers of people, who had been given pockets, what we did have suggests that, particularly for someone confined to bed or a chair, a pocket can help lessen boredom and give a lot of pleasure.

### **What did people say about the project?**

Asked what they most enjoyed about the Funshop, people replied, "being creative", "using my imagination", "all the different ideas", "a very creative environment".

People also liked the "informal atmosphere and friendliness of everyone", "a most friendly and inventive three hours", "the company", "sewing in a group", "the chat and sharing", "good fun, good crowd", "everyone worked together, it was a great afternoon".

Lastly, people liked that making something to help someone with dementia: "an inspiring concept", "brilliant activity - loved it".

Asked what they didn't like, or would like to have been done differently, no one could think of anything apart from one child who said, "Poking myself with a needle"!

We asked if the Funshop had increased people's awareness of dementia. Most people simply put "yes" or "definitely". One of the children put, "Grannie lived with us when she had dementia".

We'd originally hoped to include some simple electronic devices in one or two pockets but there simply wasn't time in the end. Since then, two or three of us have experimented further, including attending the Tech Wave again in March 2016 and using online tutorials to explore the possibilities.

I found it particularly helpful to forge links with Sue and with Cathy and her team and to hear about what other people are doing in other places that we might be able to learn from and to use on Tiree.

### **Contact details for your project:**

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