

Oxford Institute of Ageing Report

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# 'This is living'

Good Times: Art for Older People  
at Dulwich Picture Gallery

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**Professor Sarah Harper**

**Dr Kate Hamblin**

Oxford Institute of Ageing, University of Oxford



DULWICH PICTURE GALLERY

## Acknowledgements

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*Good Times* was not set up as a formal research project, it was devised to discover more about how best an art gallery could serve an ageing population. Material was collected by the Gallery on the views and experiences of participants, artists, coordinators, gallery teachers, care workers, nurses, helpers and intern volunteers. This along with interviews and participants' observations form the basis of the qualitative evaluation undertaken by the Oxford Institute of Ageing.

The following people have contributed to the *Good Times* programme in various ways; they have given their time, energy and enthusiasm to help make this programme unique.

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**DULWICH PICTURE GALLERY**  
Sackler Centre for Arts Education

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'Nobody had  
to be talked  
into it or had to  
be convinced  
to join in,



they were all

keen

Southwark  
Pensioners Group

## Foreword

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**Dame Vivien Duffield DBE**

Chairman, The Clore Duffield Foundation

Art changes lives. It has the power to provoke, to lift the spirits, provide solace and comfort. It is the elusive, transformative spark that is so difficult to quantify or define.

*Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery* has changed lives - for so many it has become a life-line. The programme uses art as a means to reach out and provide stimulation, friendship and value to the lives of some of the most isolated individuals.

The benefits of the *Good Times* programme are not limited to older participants alone. The 'ripple effect' of the project continues to spread, touching families and carers, for whom *Good Times* offers respite from the difficult job of caring for a loved one and the benefit of knowing that an older family member or friend has a new interest, a new identity as an artist and renewed sense of self-worth.

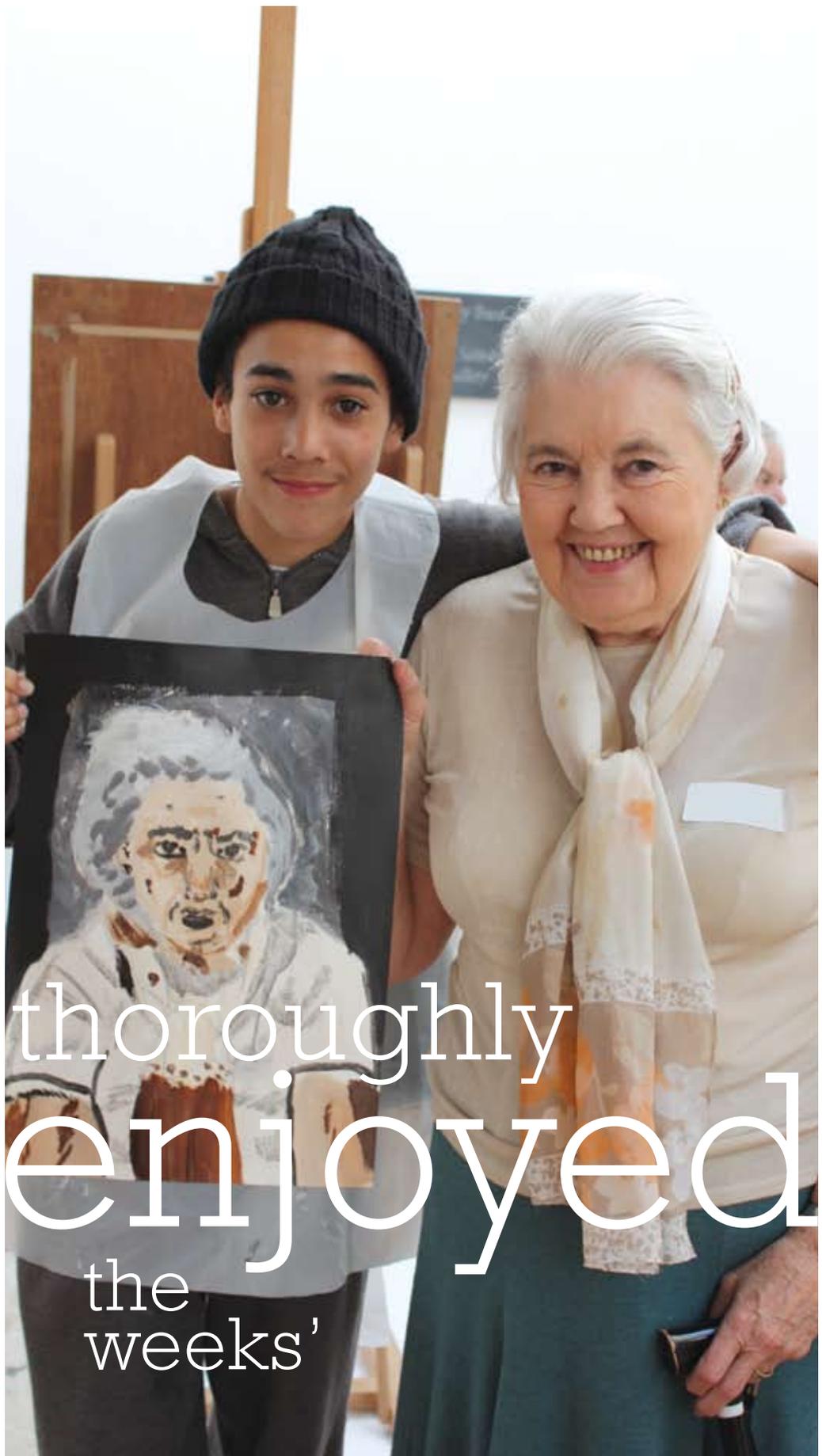
Through *Good Times* training workshops, carers learn how to use creative techniques with their groups; the long-term effect of these training courses is very important for future sustainability. The response to the sessions for carers has been phenomenal. The advantages of *Good Times* are felt by the museum staff and volunteers who work on the programme, and by museums and galleries in general as more organisations are inspired to begin similar projects.

Research into the benefits of the arts on the wellbeing and health of older people is crucial in order to provide evidence to support further work in this field, and to raise awareness of the difference the arts can make to an ageing population.

This report by the celebrated Oxford Institute of Ageing will contribute to the current debate on the positive effects that participation in the arts can have on our lives. I am delighted that my Foundation has been able to support both the *Good Times* programme at Dulwich Picture Gallery, and the work of the Oxford Institute of Ageing - in the context of our wider support for Oxford University. It has been wonderful to see the convergence of both organisations in the context of this project: what we now need is for that convergence to ignite a wider interest in such programmes.

*Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery* is an inspiring example of the transformative power of art, and an innovative model for how care and creativity can be combined to improve the lives of others.

*'Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery is an inspiring example of the transformative power of art, and an innovative model for how care and creativity can be combined to improve the lives of others.'*



‘I’ve thoroughly  
enjoyed  
the weeks’

Intergenerational portrait project with teenagers from programme ‘The Challenge’ and residents from Edward Alleyn Almshouses

# Foreword

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**Professor Sarah Harper**

Director, Oxford Institute of Ageing

During the three years that the Institute of Ageing in Oxford has been involved with the Dulwich Picture Gallery, the impact of the *Good Times* Programme has been clear.

Social isolation is a major issue for many older adults, and we now understand that this not only contributes to psychological distress but also impacts upon quality of life and physical health as well. The *Good Times* Programme clearly reveals the important role that our Museums and Galleries can play in enhancing the lives of older people from diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds. It also, through involvement in such schemes as 'Prescription for Art,' begins to indicate the potential that such activities can have in alleviating symptoms of depression and dementia.

The stories we have told in this report include some that were indeed life changing, some that talked of compassionate support, of the transformation of daily lives for older people and their families. Not only did it affect the older participants, but also very clearly the staff in the Gallery, and the professionals who took part. As one of the storytellers put it, the *Good Times* Programme '*changed the way I think about my own life.*'

Indeed, despite having worked with and alongside older people for 25 years, I found my own perceptions and understandings of later life change both professionally and personally just through my interaction with the Programme. During my visits I also brought two of my children, who very clearly engaged with the activities and I see them interacting with their own grandparents in a new way as a result.

We believe that *Good Times* is a model that should be explored across the museum and gallery sector, with its potential to enhance the lives of people of all ages as it brings together people from different generations, and different backgrounds and perspectives, to access the enjoyment of our cultural life.

**'Good Times is a model that should be explored across the museum and gallery sector.'**

'It was  
lots of  
fun.

I love the creative,  
relaxing aspects of the

art'



Top: Gallery tour for Chelsea Pensioners.  
Bottom: Mosaic making workshop at Dulwich Picture Gallery for 'Lively Minds' Group.

## Foreword

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**Ian A C Dejardin**

Director, Dulwich Picture Gallery

Dulwich Picture Gallery is old, positively venerable, in fact – we were founded in 1811. But the Gallery is buzzing with an activity that belies its years. Since becoming an independent charitable trust in 1994, it is as if Dulwich has rediscovered its youth, with a continuous parade of exhibitions, cutting-edge education programmes and events binding it not only to its local community, but to the art-loving public at large. Its marvellous collection of Old Masters never loses its relevance, of course: these paintings are about the great themes of common humanity – love, war, motherhood, responsibility, guilt, self-image. They provide the reference point for the Gallery's unique *Good Times* programme, an initiative that has, since 2005, worked with 65 community partners to make a difference to the lives of older people across South London.

Why do we do this? We have no remit to provide social services, certainly; but with the simple belief that 'Art Changes Lives for the Better' the *Good Times* programme has reached out to one of the great invisible populations of our big cities – the older and isolated – and has become, to an overwhelming degree, a life-line, providing interest, a trip out, a chance to learn, a chance to reminisce, to meet other people, young and old. The results have been surprising, inspiring and could, we hope, provide a blueprint for others to follow. We think that every museum and gallery should be doing this. I hope they will, because one fact is clear – old age awaits us all.

**'With the simple belief that 'Art Changes Lives for the Better' the *Good Times* programme has reached out to one of the great invisible populations of our big cities – the older and isolated.'**

'I don't  
want to go  
to lunch  
– I want  
to see

more paintings'



Storytelling tour for  
Kingswood House  
Drop-In Group

## About Dulwich Picture Gallery

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**Gillian Wolfe CBE**

Director of Learning and Public Affairs

Dulwich Picture Gallery is a fine art gallery housing a collection of Baroque Old Master paintings of international importance: set within a unique building by Sir John Soane surrounded by its own garden in pretty Dulwich Village, a green oasis only minutes from the city centre. Charles Dickens ended the story of *The Pickwick Papers* at the Gallery and Vincent van Gogh walked all the way from central London to see it in 1873. It has been called the world's most beautiful small gallery and it was the first in England to be open to the general public and the first gallery to have the innovation of top lighting. The collection is remarkable: Rembrandt, Rubens, Watteau, Canaletto, Poussin, Claude, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Van Dyck, Raphael, Murillo, and many more.



**'Dulwich Picture Gallery is not a sleeping beauty cut off from real life. Quite the opposite: it is vividly alive.'**

Dulwich Picture Gallery is not a sleeping beauty cut off from real life. Quite the opposite: it is vividly alive and has a reputation for an ambitious exhibition programme and for excellence in ground-breaking education initiatives that embrace the widest social spectrum. Education programmes seek to push out the boundaries of what an art gallery or museum can achieve and by doing so, revising and reviewing the role of the museum/gallery as a vibrant agent in a social context.

## Community Education and Outreach at Dulwich Picture Gallery

The Community Outreach and Social Engagement arm of the Education Department serves non-traditional audiences and over the past twenty-five years has gathered extensive experience and expertise in engaging some of the most difficult to reach members of society. This huge outreach programme reaches out to people all over South London, often at extremely sensitive or difficult sites.

Dulwich Picture Gallery is in the London borough of Southwark where the unemployment rate is nearly 2 ½ times the national average, ethnic minority groups comprise 30% of the borough's population and the social housing stock is the greatest of the London boroughs. Neighbouring boroughs of Lambeth and Lewisham have similar demography.

Almost every day of the year for the last ten years a Community programme of some description happened at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Community programmes of one kind or another also happen inside the Gallery week in, week out.

Community programmes take place in Surestart centres, libraries and nurseries with parents and pre-school children, using art to help less privileged families learn together creatively.

Adolescents in youth clubs on inner city housing estates benefit from engaging artist-led workshops. Inspiring weekly evening art sessions for 14-19 year old boys have been consistently provided for the last eight years, giving rise to artwork of such quality that an exhibition, *Raw Urban*, was exhibited at City Hall for a month in 2009, where 6800 visitors admired the work, and Time Out listed it in their top five best exhibitions to see in London.

Daytime courses regularly provide alternatives for young people who are not in any education, employment or training; adolescents who may be facing exclusion, or are dealing with homelessness or other difficulties.

A Bespoke Programmes service is available for those with very special needs. There is no blueprint or one-size-fits-all template. These programmes are individually devised, tailored to precise needs and sensitively delivered.

## Why Dulwich Picture Gallery Community Education programmes are so special

- Free** All Community Education programmes are without any charge.
- Regular** Community programmes happen every week all year round.
- Long term** Programmes last for several years, developing and sustaining relationships.
- High quality** Life enhancing
- No cost to taxpayer** Although almost a social service to many

# Good Times: Art for Older People

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## programme

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This report follows the first five years of *Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery*; a programme that engages groups from 65 partner sites and has reached numerous individuals via the innovative 'Prescription for Art' scheme.

*Good Times* began in 2005 in response to deep concerns felt by the Gallery education team about the way older people are treated in our society. Dire reports in the media and shocking statistics from agencies for the ageing convinced us that we should devise programmes for older people at the Gallery. Through art we wanted to enrich life for people deserving respect for their age, experience and life-long contribution to society. Many of these people grew up during the deprivations and sacrifices of war.

Making special provision for the elderly was to be one more strand in the Dulwich Picture Gallery Community Programme. Since the 10-year programme *Art for the Unemployed* the Gallery has developed a strong reputation for life-enhancing community involvement.

Researching the need and planning the programme structure took nine months as relationships were forged with various agencies and individuals working with older people. The initial intention was to trial various interpretive routes to discover how best a fine art museum could serve the needs of older people. Identifying suitable community partners across South London, making visits to potential outreach sites and meeting with group leaders was an essential starting point and laid the foundations for the following multi-faceted *Good Times* programme:

## Strands of the *Good Times* programme

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### **Gallery Tours**

Charismatic, knowledgeable and friendly guides lead groups of older people in an exploration of the Gallery collection. Specially designed chairs allow older people to enjoy a comfortable gallery experience.

### **Gallery Creative Workshops**

Professional artists teach a whole range of imaginative creative techniques in workshops in the Sackler Centre Studio for Arts Education.

### **Outreach Creative Workshops**

Artists and coordinators take art materials and large high-quality reproductions of Gallery paintings into the community. Inspiration from the collection acts as a starting point for the creative process and encourages participants to visit or return to the Gallery.

### **Celebration Events**

Seasonal events for older people celebrate their relationship with the Gallery. Music, art, dance and festive refreshments offer entertainment and a chance to meet others.

### **Intergenerational Creative Workshops**

Young and old learn side by side in practical art workshops led by a professional artist.

### **Tackling Gender Differences**

Research shows that women are far more likely to become involved in community activity than men. One strand of the *Good Times* Programme sought to experiment with methods to involve older men.

<b>Exploring Cultural Differences</b>	<i>Good Times</i> offered the opportunity to explore how older people from non-European cultures could find inspiration in a collection of Western European Old Master paintings.
<b>Dance, Drama and Art</b>	In order to experiment with different routes of interpretation, professional actors and dancers teach older people to interpret the Gallery collection through movement and dance.
<b>Prescription for Art</b>	In partnership with local doctors' surgeries, a 'prescription' for art workshops is offered to individual elderly people who may be frail, depressed or lonely. Doctors refer patients to the Gallery to participate in regular creative art classes. This programme ensures that those individuals who are not part of any community group are still able to benefit from the Gallery programme.
<b>Training to Sustain the Benefit</b>	Training for carers passes on skills and builds confidence for care home staff or group leaders to continue the valuable creative processes. This ensures the sustainability and expansion of the <i>Good Times</i> concept.
<b>Hospitality</b>	Every visit, tour and creative workshop includes refreshments of tea, cakes and fresh fruit, with time to chat and become acquainted; a vitally important aspect of the programme.
<b>Volunteers</b>	A loyal number of committed and enthusiastic volunteers build positive relationships with both groups and individuals, often with unexpected results.
<b>Access</b>	Dulwich Picture Gallery is entirely on one level with full facilities for the elderly including disabled parking right outside the door.
<b>Network</b>	Over five years the <i>Good Times</i> Programme has partnered with 65 community groups both at the Gallery and in outreach sessions, and has served many individuals via the 'Prescription for Art' Programme.
<b>Quality</b>	Numbers are certainly not everything. <i>Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery</i> is about a quality of experience. This can only come from working with small groups, offering a warm welcome, giving attention to each individual and making every one of the participants feel cared for and special. Every member of staff is committed to and proud of this programme, all working together to make the Gallery experience memorable and enriching.

'Today has been  
lovely for me'



'Prescription for Art'  
painting workshop at  
Dulwich Picture Gallery

# *Good Times: Art for Older People* *at Dulwich Picture Gallery*

## programme overview and case studies

**Dr Kate Hamblin**

Oxford Institute of Ageing, University of Oxford

**'Nearly 300,000 older people have gone a full month in the last year without speaking to family or neighbours.'**

The *Good Times* project began in 2005, responding to deep concerns about the increasing problems of isolation facing our ageing society. The scale of isolation and loneliness among older people in the UK is revealed in these stark statistics by Age Concern and the Office of National Statistics (ONS):

- There are now more people in the UK aged 60 and over than there are under 18 (ONS).
- Over 65s are estimated to spend an average of 80% of their time in the home.
- One in three people over 65 will die with some sort of dementia.
- Nearly 300,000 older people have gone a full month in the last year without speaking to family or neighbours
- Many older people interact only with their postmen on a day-to-day basis.

Dulwich Picture Gallery had a proven record of success in using art to engage challenging audiences, and wanted to extend this expertise to enable isolated older people to find a way of re-connecting with their community.

### Getting started

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An initial period of research, absorbing the available literature on the arts and ageing, the arts and healthcare and surveys of older people's concerns and needs, was followed by tracing the complicated networks of organisations of many kinds working with older people across South London. It became clear that being depressed and feeling alone could affect older people from all income groups and all cultural backgrounds. The *Good Times* team initially developed small experimental pilot projects before launching the programme on a greater scale.

### A flexible approach

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The necessity of flexibility to respond to the interests of different groups quickly became apparent and the Gallery team developed a variety of art options that would engage a range of different needs. Time spent visiting potential partners at their venue and meeting participants proved well spent, enabling the *Good Times* team to judge what might be best suited to each group and to match the skills of Gallery guides and artists closely to the needs of each partner group. In the Department of Health review of the success factors for projects that combine art and health it states '*service providers have transformed their ways of working and outcomes by looking at an issue from the patient's or user's perspective.*' (Department of Health, 2007: 15).

The *Good Times* team devised strands of interpretation that addressed the fundamental requirements of most groups and which could be tailored to the specific requirements of any particular partner organisation.

## A warm welcome

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Many participants in *Good Times* had rarely or never visited an art gallery before and found the thought of doing so rather intimidating. The Education Department's previous experience with a wide variety of audiences indicated that a warm personal welcome was crucial. Dulwich Picture Gallery is on a manageable scale – you can see right from one end to the other – it does not seem too overwhelming for anxious first-time visitors. The Gallery is on one level and fully wheelchair accessible, with hearing loop facilities. Cars and minibuses drop passengers right outside the accessible entrance – those who are frail need take only a few steps to enter. Participants in every Education programme at the Gallery are always met at the door by trained Gallery guides who give a warm and reassuring welcome to apprehensive newcomers.

'Visitors benefitted from being in a place used by all generations. Many, especially those who rarely saw their grandchildren, clearly delighted in the presence of schoolchildren.'

## Responding to need

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Older visitors tire quite quickly and the elegant, low, backless benches, or the portable stools that were available in the Gallery were inappropriate for older people. Additional funds were raised to buy handsome, well-designed chairs. These very attractive chairs support the back and arms and are lightweight for regular lifting and stackable for ease of storage. Being able to sit comfortably and safely in front of the paintings made all the difference. *Good Times* visitors could really relax and enjoy the gallery guides' explanations for a full hour or more, as do younger groups. Sometimes the older visitors did not want to leave – *'I don't want to go to lunch – I want to see more paintings'* said a lady from a group of Asian Elders, grabbing the guide's arm and pulling her towards another picture.

## The social element

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Visitors benefitted from being in a place used by all generations. Many, especially those who rarely saw their grandchildren, clearly delighted in the presence of schoolchildren and everyone seemed to respond positively to being in a space that was *not* just for older people. The friendly ethos of the Gallery enabled those who were lonely to feel they could once more appreciate company. One of the male participants, recently bereaved, commented **'When you've lived with someone for 73 years, you don't know how to live without them. Today has been lovely for me.'**

Every visit includes an essential social element. Tea and cakes provide a chance for people to continue the conversations sparked by the paintings and to engage with others in their party. Positive social effects rippled into participants' wider lives as they had something new to discuss with family or friends (identified as important by Cohen (2008)). *'Now we'll have something different to talk about tomorrow'* smiled one group member. The *Good Times* experience gave people the confidence to return and share their gallery experience with others. *'I've lived in Peckham for fifteen years and not been here, but I'm coming back next Sunday with my missus'* one older gentleman said, enthusiastically.

## Next steps

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With initial concerns dispelled by the success of these Gallery visits, the next step was to trial something bold and imaginative.

## Joining in a creative art class at the Gallery

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Over 50% of *Good Times* participants have never been involved in any art activity since their schooldays, often 60 or 70 years ago and this was often not a positive experience. The reaction of many older people to trying any kind of creative activity is 'Don't waste your time on me.' Confidence in their creative abilities is usually very low; yet with patience and encouragement from professional artists, older people find the courage to try a new skill. One lady said about a very nervous friend **'She used to be afraid, didn't you, of trying anything new?'** Her friend replied **'Well yes, I did, because I thought I'd be hopeless.'**

## Seeing the benefits

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Soon the *Good Times* team realised that the programme could be effective in reducing anxiety and depression. Indeed, staff regularly observed tense and anxious participants become relaxed and calm. Some participants also noticed the positive physical effect of painting or drawing. *'My hand used to shake all the time, but now when I pick up a paintbrush I can paint a straight line! Look – no shaking now!'* announced a participant in a workshop.

**'My hand used to shake all the time, but now when I pick up a paintbrush I can paint a straight line! Look – no shaking now!'**

*Good Times* creative workshops are small, typically 15 participants personally taught by a team of experienced professional artists. Plenty of volunteer assistants are on hand to sit beside participants to help and chat. The workshops include a variety of media, from traditional watercolour painting to mosaics, pottery or textiles – exactly what younger participants might try but adjusted for the requirements of older people. Quality art materials are essential to ensure good results. Both enthusiasm and expectations are high. When participants are genuinely proud of their efforts, they also feel valued, this in turn enhances their self esteem. One participant commented **'I really never thought I had any art talent to develop and now I hope to further what I've learnt. Thank you so much to all concerned.'**

## Gender differences

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Elderly men are particularly vulnerable to isolation, often lacking the informal network of social contacts that older women build up. The artist chosen to lead this group was an older man himself and he went with the *Good Times* team to meet with a men's group in the local pub, finally winning their confidence to give a workshop a try. From wary beginnings this group soon developed into a thriving unit with participants making strong friendships and supporting each other through hospital admissions and bereavements. The impact was felt outside the programme as participants were bought art materials by relatives so that they could continue their new leisure activity at home. One member turned his living room into

an exhibition of his work. When he passed away a friend called to thank the Gallery **‘for making such a difference to his final years. He said that his trips to the Gallery were the highlight of his months.’**

## Joining in a creative art class at an outreach site

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Many creative or art workshops happen at the Gallery in the Sackler Studio, yet many more happen out in the community. Art ‘on the move’ means that the *Good Times* team take along all materials and equipment, including large reproductions of Gallery Old Master paintings, to external sites to inspire and engage participants. Detailed planning is fundamental to success.

Experimentation with creative techniques boosts participants’ confidence, enabling them to find a new interest and make new friends. *‘This lady usually sits and only speaks when she is spoken to. Here she’s talking in and initiating conversations – it’s remarkable!’* observed a carer. Being involved in motivating activity also often means that eating and sleeping improves, as does concentration. Some people have reported clinical benefits such as lower blood pressure.

Both carers and participants noted that the workshops provided *‘the opportunity to feel “special” and this is an aspect that cannot be underestimated.’* *Good Times* workshops also led to very impressive results. They encouraged staff from the partner organisations to plan activities suitable for a day room or church hall. One day centre manager was amazed by an older lady, saying **‘Before this I’ve never known her to do anything but sit and do puzzles by herself before.’**

## Reminiscence

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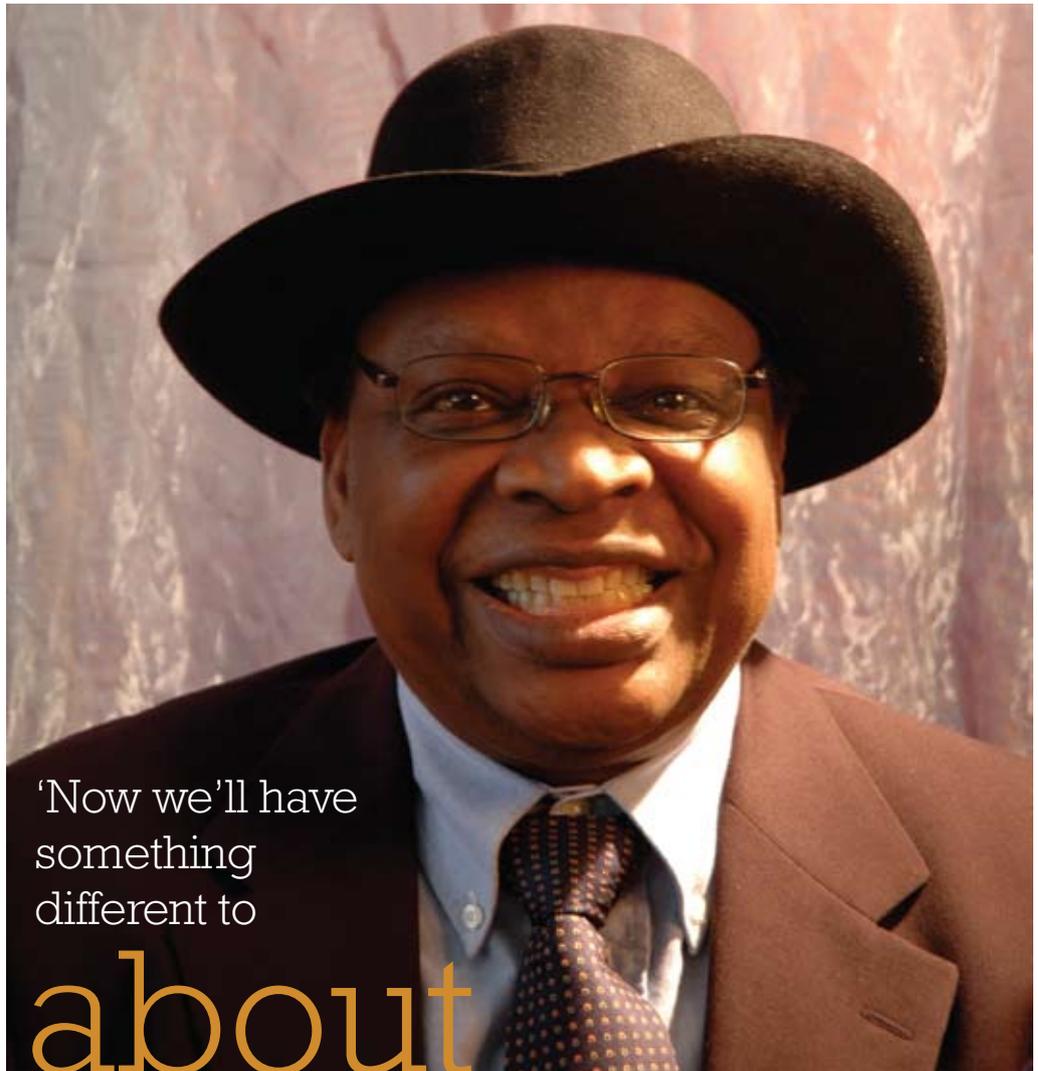
Some *Good Times* workshops involved reminiscence, considered beneficial for older individuals in helping to preserve cognitive abilities (Manthorpe, 2000). ‘Words and Stitches’ was a project run in the local **Dulwich Library**. This long-term series of creative fabric workshops led to the making of a ‘story quilt’ involving both sewing and reminiscence. Participants talked about the importance of needlework to them in earlier days, such as making dolls’ clothes, or a wedding sari, telling the stories behind the remembered items. The mix of varied cultures and ethnicities among the participants prompted one participant to say that the sessions had opened her eyes and challenged her own prejudices.

## Working in a hospital

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The **Intermediate Care Unit** at Dulwich Hospital was the external venue for four months from October 2005 until January 2006. Patients on this unit stay for several months for rehabilitation before being discharged. Obviously there were challenges such as the variation in manual dexterity and mobility of the patients, as well as the possibility that some would be discharged before the project’s completion. The plan was to provide creative workshops, encouraging mobility, confidence and social engagement whilst also creating a high quality piece of community artwork to enhance the day room within the hospital. A silk hanging made of individually designed squares, created by each patient, provided the answer. Silk

**‘This lady usually sits and only speaks when she is spoken to. Here she’s talking in and initiating conversations – it’s remarkable!’**



'Now we'll have  
something  
different to

talk about  
tomorrow'



'Portrait of a Lifetime'  
photography project with  
St Christopher's Hospice

painting using a large brush not requiring fine hand-eye coordination and individual pieces of fabric could be colourful and abstract, making it possible, even for those who felt they were not 'artistic' or with poor eyesight, to contribute. One patient said that her mind was taken off the pain she was suffering, a finding supported by the work of Staricoff (2004).

Patients from the hospital visited the Gallery, initially for inspiration and latterly for celebration of their achievements. The first visit enabled nursing staff to accompany and engage with the patients in a non-clinical setting. Patients took photographs using digital cameras, they focussed on the architectural details around the Gallery for design inspiration. The final overall piece was devised by the group, giving them a true sense of ownership. A beautiful piece of community artwork was unveiled at a celebratory event at the Gallery and a plaque commemorated all those involved.

## Working in partnership

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A poignant partnership came about between the Gallery and **St Christopher's Hospice**, in Sydenham, South London. Over two months in 2007 a *Good Times* portrait project used gallery portraits as inspiration for photographic portraits of long-term hospice patients. The Gallery was 'brought to them' in the form of high quality reproductions of the paintings. These sparked reminiscences and inspired patients to use costumes and props to create their own 'portrait of a lifetime.' Participants greatly enjoyed this role-play experience. Sometimes tears turned into smiles, one patient said: *'I haven't laughed so much for years. This is the best day I've had in ages.'* Patients took digital photographs as a lasting tribute for participants, families and friends. An artist working on the project created a short and powerful film later screened at a public event at the Gallery.

**'I haven't laughed so much for years. This is the best day I've had in ages.'**

In 2009 the *Good Times* team worked on a 'life story' project of several months' duration with **Nightingale House** in Clapham, a residential nursing home for very frail older members of the Jewish community, to create a screen for the public area at the home. Participants 'Stitched Stories' using embroidery skills many residents had learnt in their youth. Those less physically able still participated verbally, sharing their life stories with the rest of the group. One participant commented **'I've thoroughly enjoyed these weeks although I was a bit dubious at first. I didn't know how I'd cope with holding a needle because of the arthritis in my fingers.'** Many enjoyed the new activity and interaction, especially those who had experienced loneliness. As a lasting testament to the residents of Nightingale House, the screen was unveiled at a moving celebration event. One lady died shortly after the project. When her son visited the care home he found it very moving to read her stitched memory on the screen.

## Intergenerational partnerships

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Some workshops were designed to bring different generations together. Many older people have little contact with the younger generation as families become dispersed. The *Good Times* Programme piloted intergenerational workshops involving sixth form students from local schools.

After visiting the Gallery together, each teenage student paired with an older person, these pairings changed weekly to encourage communication throughout the group. Experimental techniques, such as drawing with their non-dominant hand, or with a continuous line,

**'Many older people have little contact with the younger generation as families become dispersed.'**

'It was an opportunity for me to do something completely different, to allow our imagination to run riot, and yes, an excellent opportunity to have a good chat.'

made the classes fun and dismissed any of the participants' fears about producing 'fine art'. Doing things differently meant the pairs had to work closely, promoting interaction and cooperation. One participant commented **'It was lots of fun. I love the creative, relaxing aspects of the art. The best parts were when it was most creative instead of worrying about whether the image looked accurate. It was definitely more fun when we were in pairs as there was a lot of communication this way.'**

When the final pieces were exhibited at the Gallery, participants felt very proud. One teenager reflected, *'It was an opportunity for me to do something completely different, to allow our imagination to run riot, and yes, an excellent opportunity to have a good chat.'* Many of the younger participants were surprised by how much they had in common with the older members and enjoyed hearing their reminiscences. Older participants also enjoyed the youthful company, with one explaining *'I didn't think I could do it but I kept going and I did. And I've learnt something.'* Perceptions were permanently altered, younger participants became more accommodating and understanding, while older individuals became less prejudiced. One student said, *'They are just like us – they laugh just as much as us and eat as many biscuits.'*

As a result of this contact with the Gallery and interest in the paintings, some of the teenagers and their classmates began to attend Sunday workshops to train as Young Explainers at weekends and during holidays to help visitors to the Gallery, building on their communication skills and knowledge of art.

## Art in Action: Dance

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One of the contributing factors to loneliness is lack of physical mobility. To address this, the *Good Times* team developed a strand of interactive workshops using the paintings to encourage expressive and reasonable physical activity. A specially devised gallery tour focussed on line and rhythm in the paintings as inspiration for an exploration of movement in dance. These ideas were developed in a dance workshop designed and run by **Rambert Dance Company**, tailored to enable everyone, from those in wheelchairs to those more physically able to take part. **'Two metal knees and a dodgy ankle – but I managed it!'** one participant declared.

## Art in Action: Drama

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Drama also provided a new perception of the pictures, and a way of engaging participants in an active interpretation of the paintings. Professional actors developed Dramatic Art workshops, using the paintings to stimulate the imagination to encourage participants to stage their own interpretations of what they saw in the pictures. Participants examined portraits in the Gallery and, through discussion, built up a character study of the figure depicted. Using these studies, participants developed and performed short monologues of imagined moments in the lives of their chosen portraits' subjects.

Participants from **Blackfriars Settlement**, a community group in Southwark, were shown the *Portrait of a Woman* by Cornelis de Vos. They explored the artists' 'clues' in clothes and posture to explore the woman's character. The actor leading the workshop acted out the imagined moments that might have taken place before the painting began, as an example. Participants selected a portrait from the Gallery collection to consider in a similar manner,

'It was one  
of the

best  
days out  
that I have  
ever had.'



*Good Times* workshops  
in the community –  
a participant from  
Peckham Settlement  
Community Centre  
with his prints

alone or with a partner. Drama enabled participants to engage with the portraits, using their observational and interpretative skills and often developing strong feelings about the individuals portrayed. One group member who had been working from a painting of King James I said, *'I've gone right off'im!'*

As well as encouraging discussion, communication and movement, drama therapy has been well documented as providing benefits for those with dementia which affects increasing numbers of older people: *'The use of drama therapy responds to the deeper psychological need of people with dementia to express and understand their own world'* (Staricoff, 2004: 27; see also Knocker, 2002). So often drama is considered an activity for the young; by involving older people, the perceptions of this age group's interests and abilities were altered. Some of the older people even found that they could begin to take part in a new recreational activity, one far more satisfying than the usual offering of bingo.

## Celebrating with music

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Combining art with music always proved a winning combination. The *Good Times* team saw that activities organised for older people rarely offered the opportunity for social contact with other similar groups and few chances to share ideas and experiences. To remedy this, multiple groups that had previously been involved with *Good Times* were invited to the Gallery together, for a celebratory occasion, to enable them to meet each other informally, to build relationships and encourage participants to socialise. Music played a pivotal role in these entertaining sessions. Fortunately, one of the part-time wardens at the Gallery was a professional opera singer and willingly volunteered to arrange a concert with her musical colleagues. Tours of the Gallery with a musical theme were followed by a welcome tea with beautiful floral table arrangements donated by a local florist and home-made cakes provided by various members of the Gallery staff. An entertaining programme of well known songs was performed against a changing backdrop of musical scenes from the Gallery paintings: *'I was spellbound. We were all spellbound!'* said one visitor. **'What was really delightful was seeing so many people enjoying themselves – quite beautiful to see so many faces lit up,'** said another. Research shows that singing has been found to be particularly beneficial for people with dementia (Lord, 1993; Cohen, 2000; Staricoff, 2004).

*Good Times* Christmas celebrations involved local schools. Festive themed tours of the paintings were followed by concerts of Christmas music from the students in the historic chapel attached to the Gallery. Participants joined in the carol singing enthusiastically. A *Good Times* volunteer **'witnessed a gentleman with dementia singing every word of a Christmas carol. Previously in the session he had been unable to speak, not even gesture whether he wanted tea or coffee.'**

In partnership with the charity **Live Music Now!** The ensemble **London Reeds** provided a memorable performance for *Good Times* participants. This interactive session involved demonstrations of how the different wind instruments worked, and virtuoso musical performances with audience members trying their hand at conducting the musicians. One participant said *'I get so depressed and frightened by all the bad news you hear but this afternoon has made me believe there is goodness in the world.'* Another simply said, *'It was one of the best days out that I have ever had.'*

**'What was really delightful was seeing so many people enjoying themselves – quite beautiful to see so many faces lit up.'**

**'I get so depressed and frightened by all the bad news you hear but this afternoon has made me believe there is goodness in the world.'**

## Enjoying learning again

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**‘They would never have dreamt of coming to anything academic like a lecture when we started... They must be feeling more confident now. I couldn’t believe it when I saw nearly all of them come to an hour-long lecture on Paul Nash yesterday!’**

One of the significant benefits of a long-term programme is the ability to develop the original concepts as the participants’ needs change and grow. In the *Good Times* programme older people who had at first been reluctant even to visit the Gallery slowly gained the confidence and enthusiasm to attend events such as lectures relating to the temporary exhibitions – something they would never have considered. As one coordinator noted, her group *‘would never have dreamt of coming to anything academic like a lecture when we started. Having attended several art workshops, tours and celebration events over the years they must be feeling more confident now. I couldn’t believe it when I saw nearly all of them come to an hour-long lecture on Paul Nash yesterday!’*

## U3A

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**University of the Third Age** groups found the *Good Times* programme’s flexibility particularly useful, as their more academically-minded participants were able to have tours and lectures specially tailored to their needs. The U3A also took part in longer term research projects with the Gallery to the benefit of both parties. One such project involved several months of U3A group members researching the entries from a selection of the Gallery visitors’ books, which span the period 1860 – 1905. As no previous work had been done on the books, this was invaluable research for the Gallery and a satisfying experience for the U3A group.

## ‘Prescription for Art’

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‘Prescription for Art’ developed out of the broader *Good Times* programme, as a way of enabling those individuals who feel reluctant to attend day centres or to join any organised groups specifically for older people. Such people, who would certainly have never been identified or included in conventional outreach schemes, could now benefit from a truly innovative arrangement in partnership with local GPs’ surgeries, attended by many older people.

‘Prescription for Art’ was devised in collaboration with the general practice managers and nurses at the surgeries. Practice nurses with primary responsibility for older patients agreed to identify those they felt were feeling depressed, absorbed by their medical condition or lonely, perhaps because of recent bereavement or illness, or the responsibilities of 24 hour care for a partner. These elderly patients were given a ‘Prescription for Art’: the opportunity to attend creative workshops at the Gallery. This suggestion was attractive to many because they felt that they were not going to a centre specifically for older people but taking up an activity in an environment frequented by those of all ages.

## ‘Prescription for Art’ comes of age

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‘Prescription for Art’ became so successful that it quickly developed a separate identity and required its own dedicated coordinator to run the burgeoning programme along with a team of passionate volunteer helpers. Creative workshops included silk painting; poly-brick, mono and lino printing; glass painting; poetry; sewing; sketching; felt work; clay work;

collage and painting with both watercolours and acrylics. Such sophisticated techniques push the participants further than traditional art programmes for older people, their physical needs and limitations are always taken into account. Wide brush painting, for example, is well suited to people whose eyesight is no longer sharp enough to perceive fine detail, large brushes are perfect for arthritic hands that find it difficult to grip smaller tools.

## Stimulation and challenge

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The menu of creative activities offered during ‘Prescription for Art’ creative workshops were deliberately quite challenging and mentally stimulating. Dr Susan Ghosh, the *Good Times* Programme Coordinator explained, *‘We realised that a lot of art activities provided for older people in day centres or nursing homes tend to be very basic, as if for young children. Our expectations are quite different. We see no reason why older people, even if they have never been involved in any art before, even if they have physical or mental disabilities, should not be able to tackle similar sorts of creative challenges as do other adult groups, with a few adjustments to make certain aspects easier.’* The participants were often surprised by the quality of their own work, with one asking *‘Did I do that? Really? Amazing!’* Participants are delighted to learn that many artists produced their best work in their mature years and, as the coordinator noted, *‘Pictures of Matisse working from his bed have been a great inspiration!’*

The physicality of the artistic activities, along with travelling to the Gallery, provided the participants with some new physical exercise. One of the participants noted that following the session involving clay modelling, she did not need to attend her physiotherapy class. Including the writing of poetry and prose was also an important aspect of the project, creative writing has been shown to have a positive effect. Staricoff (2004: 8) notes *‘It enables patients to regain control over their own inner world, increasing their mental wellbeing.’*

## Refreshments: Time to socialise

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**‘The quality of refreshments we’re given here is so important – especially when you come from a place that’s really at the bottom like I do.’**

During every session there is always a refreshment break. This provides an enjoyable pause but also has a more central function. As 60% of people over 65 entering nursing homes are malnourished, the provision of warm drinks and fresh fruit helps encourage a healthy diet. Community Outreach Manager Clare Ferdinando noted *‘Everyone is delighted when the refreshments go round. It seems that most of the group don’t treat themselves to delicious cakes or fresh fruit. This could be because they live alone or often because of the cost. We always make sure the fruit is taken home especially when we’re working on an exotic fruits still life!’* This was echoed by a participant who said, *‘The quality of refreshments we’re given here is so important - especially when you come from a place that’s really at the bottom like I do.’*

## New skills

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**‘Thank you for persevering with me... if I stayed home, I’d dissolve.’**

Those taking part enjoyed learning new skills and found a new self-belief in their abilities. One participant said *‘My art work proves I haven’t become a cabbage.’* Feelings of loneliness were reduced by the workshops, with one participant saying, *‘Thank you for persevering with me ... if I stayed home, I’d dissolve.’* These practical results re-enforce the findings of a study by Secker et al. (2007) which demonstrates that involvement in art can allow individuals to



'This

is what I look forward to every month – it's so dreary where I am'



*Good Times* participants enjoy celebration events at the Gallery with music, flowers and refreshments

both rebuild their identities and expand their horizons. In addition, the participants often found that their concentration improved and their aches and pains subsided during the sessions. This is in line with an empirical study of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital by Staricoff (2004), which found that involvement in art activities had positive effects in terms of patients' ability to manage pain, and alleviate stress and anxiety.

'He really has enjoyed every session. He comes home with more confidence... It is so good for him to be with other people and trying something new without me around. It encourages his speech (which is his greatest drawback) and of course all the helpers are so lovely... We wanted you to know how much it has benefitted and been enjoyed.'

'One of my husband's pieces of art work was used by the family as their Christmas card, impressing everyone and giving the family something to discuss with him.'

## Confidence and friendship

Feedback from *Good Times* participants proved that many had increased confidence and crucially had developed a new, more positive outlook. All *Good Times* programmes allow time for social engagement in a safe and supportive environment and to develop hitherto lacking important friendships and networks. The sessions provided invaluable opportunities for interaction, prompting one member to say **'Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. Not everyone does, you know.'** The Gallery setting is completely different from the conventional 'clinical' settings that focus on 'older individuals' and this was a constant delight and hugely appreciated by all those who visited. The coordinator noted, **'Your Prescription for Art has certainly helped combat isolation. The group act as a real support to each other. Everyone signs a card when someone is unwell and recently two ladies realised that they lived on the same road and now visit each other!'** New friendships were formed and these endured outside the Gallery sessions and beyond the confines of the programme.

## The benefits

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The benefits of the *Good Times* programme were particularly noted by those caring for class participants. The wife of one with Alzheimer's Disease was moved to write: *'He really has enjoyed every session. He comes home with more confidence...It is so good for him to be with other people and trying something new without me around. It encourages his speech (which is his greatest drawback) and of course all the helpers are so lovely... We wanted you to know how much it has benefitted and been enjoyed, and thank you very much.'*

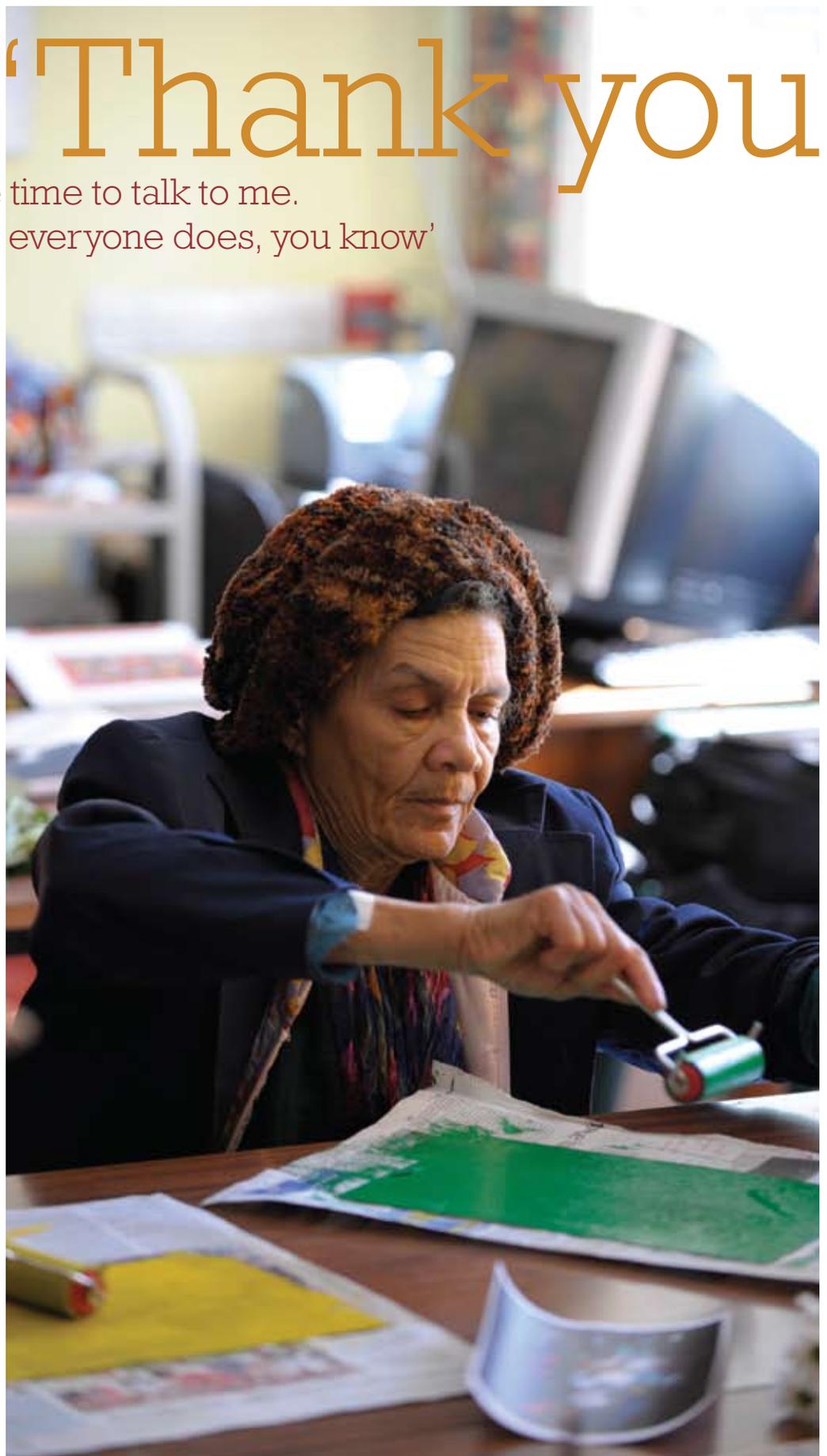
Her husband's speech was of particular concern: **'He never talks when we go out socially. He is frightened that he will be unable to find the right words so says nothing, whereas here he is relaxed and his conversation improves so much. These classes are just so important.'** The workshops provided the opportunity for her husband to interact socially, providing her with a period of respite from caring. Interaction in the workshop and the creative process enabled him to communicate with the rest of the family when conventional communication channels such as the telephone, were becoming progressively more difficult. *'One of my husband's pieces of art work was used by the family as their Christmas card, impressing everyone and giving the family something to discuss with him.'*

Benefits of the *Good Times* programme were not limited to the participants and their immediate family – volunteer helpers also reported an enormous sense of satisfaction; a key contributing factor in the large number of willing and enthusiastic volunteers eager to assist with the programme. Seeing the participants' confidence increase and the great sense of achievement at the end of each session is remuneration enough. The Gallery team recruited a large group of committed volunteers able to provide consistency enabling them to build solid mutual relationships with the participants.

# 'Thank you

for taking the time to talk to me.

Not everyone does, you know'



Printing workshop  
out in the community  
with Age Concern  
Southwark and  
Lewisham Black  
Elders group

# The people behind the programme – the stories

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## The ‘Prescription for Art’ participant

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*So here I am – the wrong side of 70 – and I still have all those arty-crafty ideas bubbling away inside my sparsely covered cranium. I have always revelled in all kinds of different ways of making marks, changing colours and trying new techniques and enjoy the challenge of mastering them.*

*At school, there were not many ways of creating art- coloured pencils and paper shapes mainly. Later after the war there were powder paints, pen and ink. Paper was normally grey ‘sugar paper’. But the enthusiasm that I had, to draw and paint, was there and I did my art work at home with my own bits and bobs.*

*I was a member of the Southwark carers group that was organised by the Elm Lodge Surgery. They referred me to the ‘Prescription for Art’ programme at Dulwich Picture Gallery. I have gained enormously through the ever-welcoming, ever-enthusiastic organisers at the Gallery.*

*Several of the group who live alone, see their regular outing to the Gallery as the highlight of their week, meeting and chatting with like-minded people who are in the same age bracket and circumstances.*

*Creative thought also lifts the spirits out of the normal round of television and self-centred contemplation. Producing artwork on a regular basis is good for the psyche and definitely gives me something to show my friends and talk about - much better than hundreds of photos of grandchildren.*

*All the benefits of belonging to this well-rounded group come at no cost and in this cash-strapped time, that really is a rare treat. The other particular quality is the high standard of the tutors. They all have the special ability to get across to the more mature folk and bring copious amounts of sunshine and fairy dust to our sometimes tedious routine.*

*Here is a golden opportunity to shake off the aches and pains, forget the lower standards of living when old and to become involved in activities that open up new vistas. Reading, Sudoku and telly are fine as time-passers but making your own masterpiece sits you on a throne of contentment – and gives you a framed, hand-crafted, way of covering up that stain on the wall.*

### **Terry Harris**

‘Prescription for Art’ Participant

‘Creative thought also lifts the spirits out of the normal round of television and self-centred contemplation.’

**'Prescription for Art' is going from strength to strength... The group is like one big supportive family and all seem aware of everyone's individual needs.'**

**'... But on a Wednesday after his creative workshop he talks as if nothing was wrong. Extraordinary isn't it?'**

## The nurse

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*I'm so pleased about 'Prescription for Art' and its future. I love attending the sessions and learn so much!*

*'Prescription for Art' is going from strength to strength. When I arrive at each session the room is already buzzing with the participants catching up on last month's news. The group is like one big supportive family and all seem aware of everyone's individual needs.*

*The artist mixes with the group and encourages everyone, as do the volunteers. One apprehensive new recruit was unsure what to expect but half an hour later was busy smashing tiles to create her own mosaic. She said she had not had so much fun for years!*

*As a nurse I visit many lonely and isolated elderly people at home. Trying to persuade them to try a new activity is not easy but I know that for the majority, attending a group session does wonders. I spoke to one relative who said her Mother now had a new focus and did not just go on about her aches and pains but was telling her what had happened at the workshop and how she and another lady had exchanged phone numbers and are in regular telephone contact.*

### **Kirsty Gould**

Elderly Care Nurse Coordinator, Elm Lodge Surgery

## The carer

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*James has had Alzheimer's Disease for some time. At first it did not seem to be too bad. Then, about a year ago he started to decline very rapidly. He was such an active man; so eloquent. We travelled a lot, he did for his work and he was so good at talking to people, anyone. He could converse with a diplomat and a driver and both would feel completely at home in his company. That was his special skill I suppose.*

*That's what makes it so sad, that he should have lost his ability to converse. He finds talking so very difficult now.*

*He loves his 'Prescription for Art' classes. He never talks to the children these days, but I get them to ring on a Wednesday after we get home from the class; and do you know he will talk and talk on the phone describing in detail exactly what he has done. The next day he will not say a word. If they ring he'll take the phone and say nothing. But on a Wednesday after his creative workshop he talks as if nothing was wrong. Extraordinary isn't it?*

### **Wife of 'Prescription for Art' participant**

**Sadie, aged 96, said, 'I'll try anything.'**

## The coordinator

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*A preconception was overturned by working with vulnerable people. I used to think that the end product of making art was important but I now know that there is mutual delight in the process of making. As George, a member of the 'Prescription for Art' group said, 'It makes me feel happy.' The actual art activity can be unfamiliar or difficult but the elderly should certainly not be underestimated. Sadie, aged 96, said, 'I'll try anything.'*

*I know that individuals need to be nurtured in order to feel safe enough to share some of their life. But I am constantly surprised by the depth and interest of older people's experience. So the resource of an art gallery, the therapeutic results of making art and the importance of nurturing individuals who have so much to offer are all key components of the Good Times programme. People feel valued and are able to express, artistically and verbally, what is important to them.*

**Mary Brodrick**

'Prescription for Art' Coordinator

## The storyteller

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*Telling stories to older people is rewarding and fulfilling in a way I had not experienced before.*

*Working on the Good Times programme has changed the way I think about stories – the way I tell them. Older people understand narratives in a completely different way. They understand the cruelties, joys and surprises of life.*

*Working with older people enabled me revisit stories I had told over and over for years, and look at them in a different way. It changed the way I think about my own life.*

**Roberto Lagnado**

Gallery Storyteller

**'It changed the way I think about my own life.'**

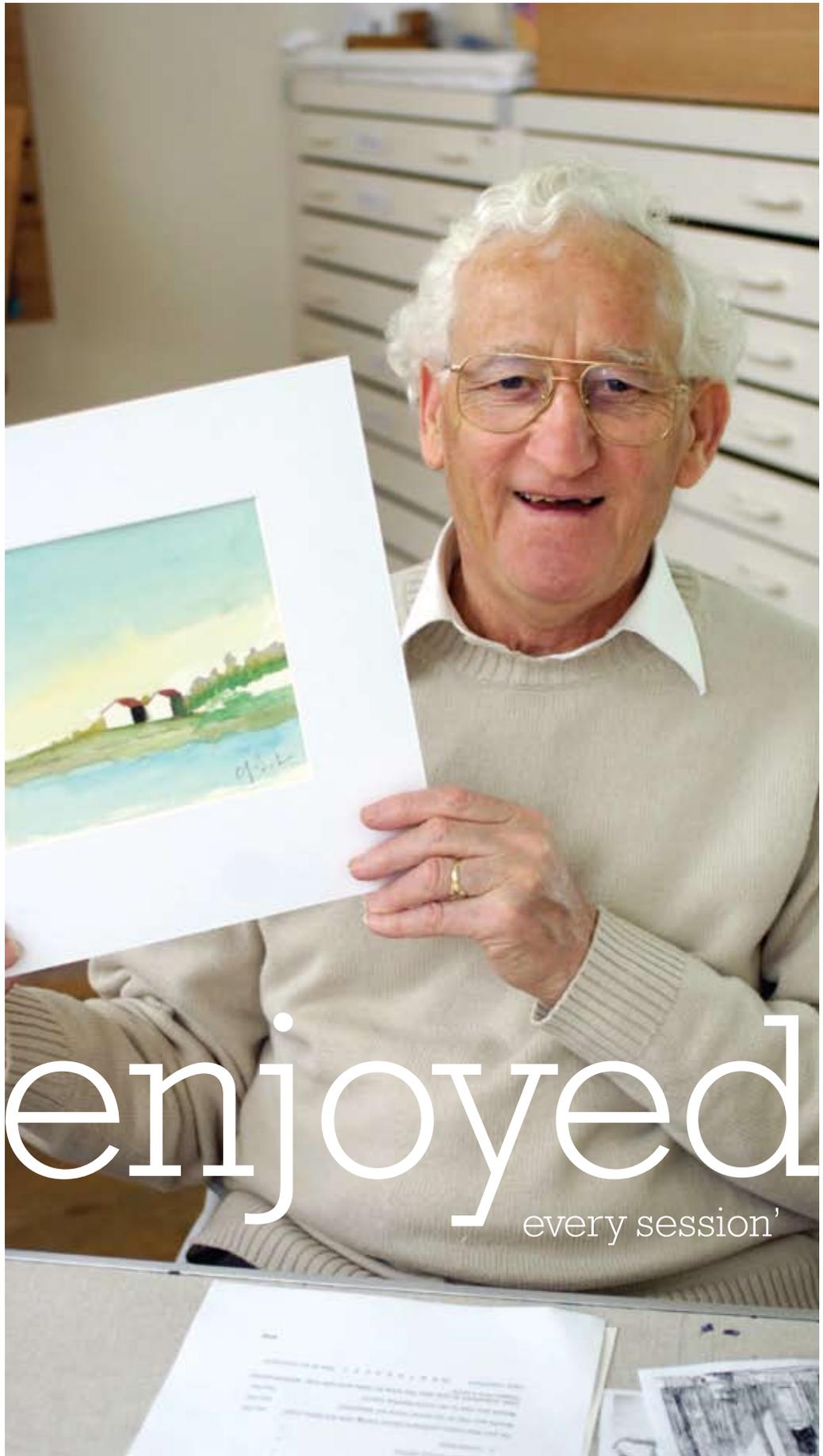
‘I’m

really  
looking  
forward  
to it,

thinking  
about  
meeting  
up with  
everyone  
again’



Mosaic making  
workshop at Dulwich  
Picture Gallery for  
'Lively Minds' Group



‘He  
really  
has

enjoyed  
every session’

Watercolour session  
for the Men’s Group at  
Dulwich Picture Gallery

## The Good Times workshop participant

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*I was very good at art at school, though I say so myself! My teacher encouraged me to go onto Art College aged 17. My father was unhappy but my mother agreed. I did well at College and loved it. They wanted me to carry on but the day I passed the exams my father said, 'Well that's over then' and sent me off to Secretarial College. You had to do useful things then, not flap around painting. 'What's the use of it?' he would say.*

*I painted at home off and on when I had the children, but nothing special.*

*I love coming here now. After all these years, I can still paint!*

*For the first time I feel I haven't wasted my time. For a long time I was angry, I think that my father had stopped me doing what I knew I could do. But now today—well it's come right—after all this time.*

**Good Times Workshop Participant**

## The volunteer

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*I started doing this simply because I thought I ought to do something 'worthwhile'. But I've found I enjoy it so much that I get far more out of it than I ever put in. It's rewarding and a fantastic break from the pressures of a career – it really puts things into perspective... I find that the weeks when we have a session I'm really looking forward to it, thinking about meeting up with everyone again.*

**James**

Good Times volunteer with one of the partner groups, Contact the Elderly

**'For the first time  
I feel I haven't  
wasted my time.'**

**'I've found  
I enjoy it so  
much that I  
get far more  
out of it than I  
ever put in.'**

# Reflections – the beginning

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**Dr Susan Ghosh**

*Good Times* Coordinator 2005 – 08



**‘They felt that their greatest unmet need was for opportunities for leisure or social activities – above mobility issues, safety at home and accommodation.’**

## Getting started

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When the *Good Times* programme began in 2005 there were over 130,000 people aged over 65 in the four London boroughs closest to the Gallery: Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham and Bromley. We identified three sectors as our routes into the older, isolated population: social services, the health service and the voluntary sector. In every borough we made contact with as many organisations and key personnel as possible in each of these sectors. It was *far* more complicated than we had imagined. Each borough was organised differently, each with different names for identical or similar departments and initiatives. Organisations also disappeared as their funding ended, or they changed name or direction as they endeavoured to continue their activities with new sources of income. It was not an easy task to identify which groups would make committed and enthusiastic partners. Nor was it easy to identify the individuals within them who could make administrative decisions and then see them through. Effective partners are crucial to the effectiveness of the Gallery’s outreach programme but one that is sometimes hard to discover. We visited all sorts of locations – day centres, nursing homes, hospital wards, sheltered housing units, community groups, even libraries and pubs – to talk to older people and their carers about what they felt they needed to help them combat loneliness, isolation, depression and inactivity.

Our findings chimed with a survey of older people in Lambeth which revealed that they felt that their greatest unmet need was for opportunities for leisure or social activities – above mobility issues, safety at home and accommodation. The most common views on how isolation could be reduced was with more local activities, outings, and help with transport – all of which we knew we could address. In fact transport was rarely an issue or a hindrance. Initially we expected it to be a problem and assumed we would need a large budget for transportation. Transport, at least in London boroughs is well provided for by community groups or Dial-a-Ride and there are always volunteers or carers available to give individuals a lift. A bus stops right outside the Gallery front gate and there is disabled parking right outside the gallery doors making it an easily accessible venue.

## Getting the word out

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We began by seeking out specific groups. For example, we contacted **Dulwich Helpline**, an organisation that works with isolated older people to help us reach out to older men – a group highlighted in an **Age Concern** survey as particularly vulnerable. Older men often lack the support networks that women build up and are reluctant to seek assistance or to integrate into organised social groups. One of our male artists came along with us to the local pub to chat to the men about trying some art classes. They were initially dubious, but we managed to persuade them to give us a try. After the first session they were hooked. *I never expected this to be such a great success with an un-artistic group like ours*’ observed David, a

I've lived in Peckham for fifteen years and not been here,

but

I'm coming back next Sunday  
with my missus'



Gallery Tour  
for Southwark  
Carers group

Helpline volunteer. Every one of this group of men now sees himself as a committed amateur artist, many having asked for watercolour palettes and paper for Christmas, and even taking their materials along to the pub to draw and paint there too!

## Getting together

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Over 50% of *Good Times* participants have never been involved in any creative activity since their school days and that may have been 60 or 70 years ago and it was rarely a positive experience then. Confidence is often very low and we spend quite a bit of time convincing people to experiment and try their hand at different media. Just finding the courage to come to a new place and try a new skill helps build general confidence. Many had never visited Dulwich Picture Gallery, even though they may have lived in and around the area all their lives, and some have never been to any gallery or museum of any description. We worked with groups both large and small, national and local, with ages ranging from 55 to over 100 – in effect spanning over two generations. Although they come from enormously varied backgrounds and cultures our experience shows without a doubt that involvement in art can benefit everyone, both mentally and physically.

The richness of experience and knowledge inherent in older visitors makes them a most rewarding audience. They have all experienced love, complex relationships, illness, death, enjoyed dancing or making music, and many have had a long working life. Most are far more familiar with stories from the bible than young people today, so they often find the religious paintings fascinating. Striking up conversations might be hard going when people have little social life and are often coping with personal difficulties or illness but paintings instantly stimulate memories and provoke comments and questions. As one visitor from an **Age Concern** day centre remarked '*Now we'll have something different to talk about when we get home.*'

This highly personal approach of *Good Times* is not a quick fix. It takes time to build relationships with diverse new groups. This is why such a programme must be frequent, consistent and long-term. Working with people with varying degrees of physical and mental frailty and different cultural and social backgrounds, is often challenging for both gallery teachers and professional teaching artists. It is making a difference to the lives of needful people that makes the outreach programme so rewarding for everyone involved.

## Getting better

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*Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery* set out to benefit older people. Along the journey it has benefited many others. Through the *Good Times* programme the Gallery sees people who have never visited before returning time and time again once they have been enticed through the doors. '*You won't be able to keep me away now I know what's here!*' said one gentleman. People never before predisposed to visit an art gallery now think of Dulwich Picture Gallery as 'their gallery,' feeling a sense of ownership. Organisations that we initially worked with out in the community now feel confident to request a repeat gallery tour, or a workshop or musical event and subsequently gain the confidence to attend a lecture on a temporary exhibition – something they would certainly never have contemplated previously.

'This highly personal approach of *Good Times* is not a quick fix... This is why such a programme must be frequent, consistent and long-term.'

## Getting it right

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**‘The Gallery’s outreach programmes tackle serious social problems – but the *Good Times* programme is far from serious itself. It is challenging and rewarding, emotive, inspirational, fun and without a doubt life enhancing.’**

Quality in every aspect of the programme has been key to the success of the project. Despite a tight budget, only the best quality art materials are provided to enable participants to achieve good results. Every group is taught by one of our team of experienced professional artists who have high expectations- not ‘dumbing down’ for this non-traditional audience. This not only helps to achieve results that people can be genuinely proud of, it also makes them feel valued, in turn enhancing their self esteem. Similarly, the team provides a traditional tea, served in proper china cups, not mugs or plastic cups, with home made cakes and quality biscuits rather than the cheapest available - small details turn the mundane into the memorable.

The *Good Times* programme also benefits artists and gallery guides who develop new teaching techniques and enjoy the challenges of helping older people find a new skill, make new friends and grow in confidence. We receive a stream of spontaneous positive feedback. From thank you cards, letters and phone calls, to a home made picnic lunch – a visual and culinary delight - provided by a visiting group of Gujarati ladies. Seeing the smiling faces of people as they leave keeps the enthusiasm of the team high. *‘I have the best job in the world!’* declared Clare Ferdinando, Community Outreach Manager for the Gallery.

The Gallery’s outreach programmes tackle serious social problems – but the *Good Times* programme is far from serious itself. It is challenging and rewarding, emotive, inspirational, fun and without a doubt life enhancing. One of the *Good Times* interns summed it up, *‘It’s the outreach that gives this gallery its heart.’*

## Lessons and the future

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**Clare Ferdinando**

Community Programmes Manager

### The journey

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Being part of the *Good Times* journey has been a privilege and a continually enlightening experience. From modest beginnings, *Good Times* has become a flagship programme serving as a life-line for hundreds of individuals in their later years.

### Transformation

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The over-arching theme of *Good Times* has been one of transformation. The social, mental and physical benefits experienced by those taking part have been remarkable and far beyond anyone's initial expectations.

Although we always had high hopes that this innovative programme would benefit the participants, we never dreamt of the positive impact it would have on so many others, including Gallery staff and volunteers whose attitudes have been markedly changed by their involvement with *Good Times*.

### Staff and volunteers

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Helping isolated, lonely or frail people is widely accepted as a worthy cause, but we often underestimate the enjoyment and insight there is to be gained in simply spending time with older people.

*'Working with "Prescription for Art" this week has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience. I think the work I do with these groups is some of the best teaching I do and I wanted to thank you for involving me in these projects. The older people I taught today were an inspiration.'* Gallery Artist

New staff, interns and volunteers often have their preconceptions confounded when working with this age group. Time and time again our volunteers express their enthusiasm for the programme after admitting to initial hesitation and wariness. One young intern in the Education Department said, *'I didn't think it would be so much fun talking with old people.'*

For some this will have shifted attitudes towards interaction with the elderly forever. For others, the experience was so powerful that they started to visit older people in their spare time or even think about changes of career direction. One intern said, *'I used to want to work with young children. But I think I'd like to work with older people now.'*

**'Working with "Prescription for Art" ... has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience. I think the work I do with these groups is some of the best teaching I do and I wanted to thank you for involving me in these projects. The older people I taught today were an inspiration.'**

## The wider community

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The impact of *Good Times* on the wider community was one we hadn't quite fully appreciated until well into the project. Friends, relatives and carers of the participants have benefitted immensely. *Good Times* provides essential respite for full-time carers. Knowing a loved one is enjoying a new and stimulating social setting offers new peace of mind. A chance to talk about something outside the everyday routine or to enjoy activities together can breathe new life into relationships. Having discovered how much her elderly mother with dementia enjoyed 'Prescription for Art', one lady now regularly brings her mother to visit the Gallery.

## Healthcare professionals

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*Good Times* creative workshops and talks in the community have transformed attitudes of care staff, healthcare professionals and other group leaders towards involvement with the arts. The enthusiasm and fresh perspective of the Gallery staff continues to demonstrate to these individuals what can be achieved through creative interaction. Many of the centres served by *Good Times* limit group activities to bingo, raffles or maybe a quiz. Care staff are repeatedly amazed at the concentration, talents and interaction achieved through just one of our creative sessions or talks. 'Training for Carers', a new *Good Times* strand has now harnessed this change of attitude and enabled healthcare professionals to use the lessons learnt through involvement with *Good Times* training throughout their careers.

The positive responses to the *Good Times* programme have been overwhelming. One member of staff from a centre for people with Alzheimer's disease said, *'The activities arranged by Dulwich Picture Gallery are the most exciting activities that I have ever seen. I am sure if I asked whether they would like another session every single one of them would ask to have Dulwich Picture Gallery every week. Nobody had to be talked into it or had to be convinced to join in, they were all keen.'*

The ripple effect of transformation has been astonishing and it is difficult to measure the extent of the impact *Good Times* has had on all those involved.

## The lessons: Relationships are a priority

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Our years of experience working on *Good Times* has proved that building personal relationships is without doubt the most crucial factor for success.

Getting to know individuals' names, needs and preferences is essential. Meeting with the group leader and/or the group beforehand to discuss and plan the visit is a necessity.

For many older individuals social interaction is of the highest value. We involve as many Dulwich Picture Gallery staff members and volunteers as possible for personal relationships to develop. Ideally the same helpers assist at each session. Elderly people in unfamiliar environments love to be welcomed by a friendly and familiar face every time.

**'Care staff are repeatedly amazed at the concentration, talents and interaction achieved through just one of our creative sessions.'**

**'Our years of experience working on *Good Times* has proved that building personal relationships is without doubt the most crucial factor for success.'**

## The lessons: Getting the details right

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Every aspect of every session must be well organised. Close attention to the finer details makes all the difference. Whether it's the comfortable chairs, Belgian biscuits, lovely flowers, favourite teas, friendly chats, or photographs to take home, attention to such details demonstrate the genuine care and value that the Gallery places on these guests.

## The lessons: Expectations

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'Day to day media portrayal of older people can be extremely negative. A lesson we learnt early on was not to make any assumptions about this age group.'

Day to day media portrayal of older people can be extremely negative. A lesson we learnt early on was not to make any assumptions about this age group. Why should we assume that everyone's tastes, abilities, attitudes and preferences are alike once they reach a certain age? It seems perfectly obvious, and yet consideration of individual tastes and preferences is not reflected in the services available for older people. The *Good Times* programme offers a wide range of opportunities to reflect the differing tastes of a diverse demographic. When designing a creative project with a hospice, digital photography and drama might not be the first option that comes to mind. However we soon realised these groups were as open, ready to learn and eager to be just as challenged as our school groups, if not more so.

With 65 current partner groups all keen for more workshops and new partners yet to be served, how do we satisfy the demand and maintain the quality?

Running a multi-strand programme such as *Good Times* while continuing to place emphasis on personal relationships and high quality provision is a challenge. New systems of communication with community partners and administration ensure that *Good Times* runs on a structured timetable, whilst remaining flexible.

By sending out a regular menu of opportunities for older people to our community partner groups and individuals several times a year – offering lectures, tours, creative workshops, taster sessions, training sessions for carers – the community group has the power to decide how they wish to participate by selecting sessions and activities to suit their individual needs and tastes.



'The  
opportunity  
to feel

“special”

... is an aspect  
that cannot be  
underestimated'

'Prescription for Art'  
creative workshop

'The activities  
arranged by  
Dulwich Picture  
Gallery are  
the most

exciting activities that  
I have seen'

*Good Times* creative  
workshop in the  
community for  
St. George Christchurch  
and St. Paul's group



## The future: Training

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Carers on *Good Times* training sessions learn practical creative techniques to use with their groups and return to the workplace to share their enthusiasm and knowledge with others; passing along creative ways to engage older people with art.

By offering training programmes to community partners we can ensure *Good Times* continues to affect and change the lives of a wide group of older audiences. The new ‘Training for Carers’ programme has already shown results. Group leaders who request repeated outreach workshops for the older people in their care are now able to attend training sessions themselves.

‘The future will be a time when programmes like *Good Times* are not extraordinary but quite commonplace and where the public turns naturally and expectantly to their local Museum as a welcoming and creative place of learning and wellbeing.’

## The future: Research and dissemination

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All those involved in the *Good Times* programme are fully aware of its benefits but how do we prove this and how do we tell people about it? Evaluation and quality research are essential to champion the true value of the arts. Partnering with organisations such as The Oxford Institute of Ageing and sharing our expertise can ensure that the beneficial effects of programmes like *Good Times* are taken seriously.

A formal research project in partnership with a health organisation to amass scientific evidence of the health benefits of the programme may be a future step if funding can be acquired.

## The changing face of the museum

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The future will be a time when programmes like *Good Times* are not extraordinary but quite commonplace and where the public turns naturally and expectantly to their local Museum as a welcoming and creative place of learning and wellbeing.

# Arts and healthcare today:

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## Setting the scene

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**Dr Kate Hamblin**

Oxford Institute of Ageing, University of Oxford

*'It is now recognised that the arts have an important role to play in healthcare and social well-being.'*

The Dept of Health and Arts Council England (2007). *A Prospectus for Arts and Health*

Across the UK arts-based initiatives drawing on music, drama, art, craft, literature and poetry are being introduced into hospitals, surgeries, hospices, nursing homes and community settings: *Poems in the Waiting Room*; *Live Music Now*; *Paintings in Hospitals* are all aimed at enhancing mental and physical well being. Within the health service there are now more than 100 arts managers in Britain running hospital art groups, with nearly all the major London hospitals now sporting arts programmes.

As Staricoff (2004) and Hacking et al. (2006) note, art has been used therapeutically for centuries, yet while integrating arts into healthcare is a well established model in the US (Sonke et al., 2009) it has been less well recognised in the UK (Secker et al., 2009). Furthermore it should also be noted that the 'art in health' movement has not been without its critics. In 2006, the Policy Exchange (Mirza, 2006) published a collection of papers largely condemning the Arts Council arts in health agenda as 'politicised rhetoric,' challenging all of the claims made for the personal and social benefits of the arts citing inadequate evidence and exaggerated claims (Belfiore, 2006; Brighton, 2006; Heartfield, 2006; Selwood, 2006).

Undeterred, the *Report of the Review of Arts and Health Working Party* (Cayton, 2007), sponsored by the Department of Health (DH) and Arts Council England (ACE) advocated the value of the arts for health across the country, concluding that art and health initiatives should be firmly recognised as being integral to healthcare provision and healthcare environments, including supporting staff and are delivering real and measurable benefits across a wide range of priority areas for health. The *Prospectus for Arts and Health* (Arts Council England/Department of Health, 2007) stated that hundreds of research projects, organisations and individuals are showing that the arts are an integral part of health services and reveal the effectiveness and value of arts and health initiatives, and the benefits they bring to patients, services users and their carers, and to communities and healthcare workers in every sector. Similarly, the report *The Arts, Health and Well-being* (Arts Council England, 2007) highlighted the role the arts can play, not only in the NHS, but also within communities in addressing the wider social determinants of health, and improving social capital and social inclusion. It stated that the arts have a major part to play in helping to galvanise community engagement and participation in civic life. The Arts Council goes onto call for the integration of the arts into mainstream health strategy and policy making. At Dulwich Picture Gallery they look at it from a different perspective and would like to see the integration of health into mainstream museum and gallery programming.

**'At Dulwich Picture Gallery they look at it from a different perspective and would like to see the integration of health into mainstream museum and gallery programming.'**

## What are the benefits of linking the arts with healthcare?

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Until recently little evaluation and empirical analysis on the benefits had been conducted. However numerous studies are now beginning to reveal the link between engagement in artistic activities and increased wellbeing has begun to be documented in empirical research.

*What are the benefits of linking the arts with healthcare? No one is suggesting that you should send for an artist instead of a doctor, or that a poem can substitute for a drug. What is claimed is that the arts can supplement and enhance the efficacy of conventional medical treatments.*

Lord Howarth, 2008 Debate on Arts and Healthcare

Art and art-making have been shown to promote competence and self-efficacy; reduce boredom, anxiety and depression, improve immune functioning; and promote coherence between the individual and the world (Evans, 2008: 87).

Glass' study of participants aged 65 and older found that the engagement in physical, social and productive activities increased the longevity of the participants (Glass et al., 1999).

Staricoff's (2004) study of the use of art in hospital settings found many beneficial outcomes suggesting that the integration of the visual and performing arts in healthcare induces significant differences in clinical outcomes, including significant evidence of reduced anxiety and depression during chemotherapy, improved clinical and behavioural states in intensive care, diminished stress before surgery and less need for pain-reducing medication after it. Overall drug consumption and length of stay in hospital were reduced for those engaged in art activities. In terms of pain management, many studies have recorded the positive effects involvement in art activities can have on sufferers. Staricoff's review of empirical evidence found that the use of arts improved communication between staff and patients, and promoted empathy and understanding of the latter's needs. As a result, Staricoff found that retention and recruitment were improved in medical facilities with an active arts programme.

Further research by Hacking et al. (2006) also found that in their review of arts projects involving individuals with mental health issues that the majority of participants recorded in the evaluations had improved self-esteem, quality of life, artistic skills and *personal growth in the sense of a transformation of identity.* This study identified two key processes from their study of arts programmes for those with mental health issues: rebuilding identities and expanding horizons. In terms of the former, this happened in three ways. First, the creation of works of art provided the participants with tangible examples of their achievements, which, secondly, enabled themselves and others to view them in a new light, and not just as someone with mental health issues. Thirdly, for those who had the most profound mental health issues and the longest engagement with services, they were able to consider an alternate identity, as someone who was creative, as opposed to someone who was problematic. The ability to label oneself as 'an artist' is an extremely positive thing for those who have mental health or self-esteem issues. Indeed, other studies have found that in healthcare settings, the use of arts allow individuals to form identities other than 'patient'.

**'The creation of works of art provided the participants with tangible examples of their achievements.'**

'I didn't think I could do it but I kept going and

I did

I've learnt something.'



Top: Intergenerational workshop with James Allen's Girls' School and local elderly residents. Bottom left: Brightly coloured prints from a series of outreach creative workshops with Age Concern Southwark and Lewisham Black Elders Group. Bottom right: Participant from the 'Words and Stitches' project in partnership with Dulwich Library.



With regard to individuals with dementia or Alzheimer's Disease, arts programmes were also found in many empirical studies to provide beneficial outcomes. In the Department of Health report *A Prospectus for Arts and Health* (2007), the findings from Sandwell Third Age Arts (STAA) were included to demonstrate the positive effects of engagement with artistic activities for those with dementia and mental health problems. They found '*Sessions maintain a person's wellbeing; they "keep people's spirits up"... alleviate symptoms of depression; people are diverted, focusing on the activity rather than the illness. Sessions give people a new purpose by supporting them to start a new hobby or to revisit an activity they have stopped*' (p. 79).

*Why do the arts remain a voluntary add-on, available in healthcare only where they happen to be championed by energetic enthusiasts? Why do the health service and social services fail so extensively to avail themselves of artists and the arts?*

House of Lords Debate (2008)

As is clear from the experiences of the Dulwich Picture Gallery the question must also be asked why museums and galleries fail to offer long-term, consistent and regular, core creative programmes specifically for the elderly with their varied health needs.

**'As is clear from the experiences of the Dulwich Picture Gallery the question must also be asked why museums and galleries fail to offer long term, consistent and regular, core creative programmes specifically for the elderly with their varied health needs.'**

The benefits of art engagement are not only limited to the participants themselves; often their interactions with their family members improve. Cohen (2000: 138) notes '*the deteriorated communication capacity of AD [Alzheimer's Disease] patients often makes significant others uncomfortable when contemplating a visit. What will they say? How will they pass the time together? What will it be like? Will it be tolerable? - are among the many questions that race through the minds of significant others debating whether to make the visit.*' Thus the improved communication skills that involvement in artistic activities engenders also benefits family members of those suffering from dementia.

Given the growing interest in and apparent success of art to enhance healthcare, why is it not a part of every hospital and community health setting? One reason is the lack of high quality evaluative research which demonstrates the positive impact of arts on well-being. For while we as individuals may know within ourselves that this is true - science is yet to prove it, and so the medical community waits to be convinced.

However science is now moving rapidly, and new techniques in brain imaging are clearly demonstrating the links between arts, emotion and well-being. Research papers are now highlighting the impact of the arts on neurophysiology.

Programmes such as *Good Times* offer ideal grounds for further research into the health benefits of engagement with the arts for older people and those suffering from dementia or mental illness. The question that again must be posed is given the new interest in the relationship between the arts and health why are such activities which engage with our growing older population, not mainstream in every museum or gallery?

The need for high quality scientific evaluation of such activities as *Good Times* is now acknowledged. However, the recorded life enhancing qualitative experience of the diverse participants in the Dulwich activities already indicates that such programmes are making a profound contribution to the quality of life of older adults.

# A retrospective qualitative evaluation

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**Professor Sarah Harper**

Director, Oxford Institute of Ageing, Oxford University

During the two and a half years the Institute of Ageing in Oxford has been involved with Dulwich Picture Gallery the impact of the programme has been clear. The stories we have told in this report include some that were indeed life-changing, some that talked of compassionate support, of the transformation of daily lives for older people and their families. Not only did it affect the older participants, but also very clearly the staff in the Gallery, and the professionals who took part. As one of the storytellers put it, the *Good Times* programme ‘*changed the way I think about my own life.*’

The Programme set out to enhance the lives of older people and combat social isolation. Some individuals may claim that at the time, and perhaps in some cases, long-term, it did indeed do this at the individual level. As we described earlier in this report there is a growing literature on the role and impact of the arts on well being in general and mental health in particular. From the literature we know that an interaction of individuals with art, drama, literature and music can both combat social isolation and have health benefits. It is clear that the participants, their families and carers, the volunteers and professionals all perceived the Dulwich programme to be beneficial in these ways. The *Good Times* Programme clearly *has* enriched people’s lives. But how successful has it been overall? Dr. Susan Ghosh and Clare Ferdinando, the programme’s coordinators have identified the inevitable challenges of running such a programme; these challenges need to be recognised. Here we can consider the overall impact of *Good Times*.

‘The Programme set out to enhance the lives of older people and combat social isolation.’

‘It is clear that the participants, their families and carers, the volunteers and professionals all perceived the Dulwich programme to be beneficial in these ways.’

## Value of the arts

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Alongside the increasing recognition of the value of the arts for health and wellbeing has been a growing need for objective evaluation (Hamilton, 2003). For example, recent Cochrane reviews have examined the effectiveness of specific arts related interventions as part of reminiscence therapy for dementia (Spector et al., 2002) as part of life skills programmes for chronic mental illness (Nicol, 2002) and possible psycho-physiological causal pathways linking music therapy with clinical outcomes have been described (Hamilton, 2003; Watkins, 1997). Clearly there is a need to justify the introduction of art related services, and proper recognition of the health effects of interventions, are likely only to follow from good evidence that they achieve their intended health and wellbeing outcomes. Lord Howarth recently stated that one of the reasons why the medical establishment failed to take interventions from music, art and drama seriously was due to a lack of hard scientific evaluation. In the absence of evaluation there always will be much uncertainty over benefits, harms, and value for money. A scientific approach to evaluating the arts may help move the debate about the arts and health beyond anecdote and opinion. However as Matarrasso (1997) argues, those involved in searching for evidence of the impact of arts and health are making the assumption that there is a piece of evidence which will ‘prove’ that the arts are good for your health, and this is unlikely to be the case. Furthermore, the experience of Dulwich Picture Gallery is that ‘the health centres we work with in *Good Times* take our offer of creative experiences very seriously and are totally supportive without

**‘We take the William Morris view that social intervention through the arts is simply the right thing to do and have worked and experimented with this philosophy effectively for over 20 years.’**

having to seek any scientific evaluation. The fact that we are overwhelmed with need from such health providers suggests that they must be very satisfied with our particular intervention.’ The Gallery takes the view that they have never needed to ‘justify’ art related services to any needful categories of people and especially for older adults. As Gillian Wolfe, the Director of Learning and Public Affairs at the Gallery states ‘We take the William Morris view that social intervention through the arts is simply the right thing to do and have worked and experimented with this philosophy effectively for over 20 years.’

In order to undertake a thorough evaluation of such a programme we need a long-term study using recognised robust methods of objective evaluation. There are, however, considerable difficulties involved in evaluating the impact of such activities given the inherently complex nature of artistic and creative endeavours, the distinctive individuality of different healthcare and community settings, the range of healthcare interventions and the diversity of individuals participating in such projects (Hamilton, 2003, Clift et al., 2009). This is particularly the case in a non-clinical setting (Hamilton, 2003).

In addition, while specific arts evaluation tools do exist (Hamilton, 2003; NHS Health Development Agency, 2000; Dean et al., 2001), Oxford was not involved in the establishment of the *Good Times* Project, and was invited to join the Programme after the first year. In particular *Good Times* was not established as a formal research project so the framework for evaluation set out by the Gallery was a museum/gallery-based system endorsed by the MLA and HLF rather than a research-based framework. Thus no clear research evaluative guidelines were laid down at its commencement, an essential element of any scientific evaluation (Leeson and Wild, 2009). In addition, the programme was not set up to gather prior information from any of the participants, which might provide a base line of health and wellbeing indicators against which the programme might be evaluated.

Oxford thus decided to undertake a *retrospective qualitative evaluation*. Such retrospective evaluations of arts and health projects are now well documented, with researchers attempting to gather evidence from existing projects to document the benefits experienced by participants. As Clift et al.’s (2009) overview of such work points out, emphasis in such evaluations are typically given to a case study approach, documenting of ‘outputs’ and the marshalling of participant testimonies gathered through questionnaires, interviews and discussion groups (e.g. Bungay and Skingley, 2008; Duncan, Stickley and Leighton, 2006; Everitt and Hamilton, 2003; Sixsmith and Kagan, 2005; South, 2006; Stickley and Duncan, 2007).

### Three methods of data collection

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Oxford drew on three methods of data collection. Throughout, the experiences of all participants were seen as of equal value, as we believe that the *Good Times* Programme has benefited both the older person and the professional or volunteer recruited by the Gallery to assist. The team at Dulwich had collected a variety of evaluative responses and reflections from participants – both older people and those leading the various sessions – including post-session questionnaires, diaries, and personal testaments. Members of the Oxford team followed up with selected interviews with the two groups of participants which explored the experiences and perceptions of those involved. Finally, observation of some of the creative activity groups was undertaken with the evaluator participating in the activity. Evaluation notes were made both at the time and after the activity which detailed the group structure, activity process, interactions, and facilitation strategies.

The possibility of using to use a formal evaluative framework, such as that used by Griffiths (2009) in her study of creative activities with community members with mental health problems, was excluded as the style of the data collected by the Gallery proved to be inappropriate for such an analysis. We thus developed our own subjective set of criteria to establish:

- whether the *Good Times* Programme enhanced the lives of local older people, combated social isolation and enhanced the efficacy of conventional medical treatments;
- whether the *Good Times* Programme was different from other local arts activities.

## Combat social isolation

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The combating of social isolation has both an external and internal component.

- Externally it is very clear that many of the older participants found a real social network through the programme. This is what a museum or gallery can offer. It is clearly beyond what most health programmes can offer.
- The internal component concerns *'personal growth in the sense of a transformation of identity'* – it is through rebuilding identities and expanding horizons that the individual is able to develop the resources necessary to cope with the increase in isolation that typically occurs in our society as we age.

Again there is clear expressed evidence that many of the participants found an enhanced self-confidence through the Programme which we believe has the ability not only to enable future social interaction, but also a sense of self-worth and their own creativity.

We can identify criteria for this which are supported by the evaluative material:

- enhanced identity and self-worth
- revisiting and working through their past life
- that participants received a new appreciation of art
- many participants became, for the first time, aware of their own ability to be creative
- many individuals came to have a new relationship with a major centre of culture.

The workshop participants created works of art, which left them with tangible examples of their achievements. This enabled the creation of a new identity, that of someone who was creative, as opposed to *just an old person* or *just someone with Alzheimer's*. This new identity has three broad components: a current self identity, a future self identity and a shared identity with those around them. It is clear that the workshop participants were proud of their achievements and took them home to display their paintings, pottery and other crafts. These they could share with their future selves as a constant reminder of their abilities, and with their families and friends, and thus enhance themselves in their companions' eyes. These three possibilities we know leads to an enhanced self-worth. A psychologist would state that this activity enables individuals to regain control over their own inner world, increasing their mental wellbeing. A layman might interpret this that the older person's confidence increases and that this confidence gave a special feedback into their daily lives.

In addition, there were also examples of individuals who had previously had an interest in art, and involvement in the programme allowed them to return to 'their old self'. Revisiting our lives and the achievements and sorrows in that life is an important part of coming to terms with ourselves as we approach the end of life. Clearly for many this was an important link and the art activity itself brought back memories and stories of their past selves.

'Many of the older participants found a real social network through the programme.'

'The creation of a new identity, that of someone who was creative, as opposed to just an old person.'

# 'I was spellbound

We were all  
spellbound!



Intergenerational  
photography project  
with young men from  
Dulwich College and  
older gentlemen from  
the local community

This process is seen as an invaluable healing and reconciliation of our lives and the necessity to complete the circle of life as part of old age. Not only the reintroduction to creating art through the workshops, for some after a lifetime without a paint brush or chisel, but also the way in which this spurred conversation and stories about their lives was a key part of the success of the Programme.

## Health benefits

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*What is claimed is that the arts can supplement and enhance the efficacy of conventional medical treatments.*

Can they? Did the *Good Times* Programme achieve this? Here we can turn to 'Prescription for Art.' One of the criteria for being admitted into this aspect of the Programme was depression and/or dementia. The expressed evidence from both professional and family carers is that the sessions at the time alleviated the symptoms of depression in that the person was diverted, focusing on the activity rather than the illness. Clearly there was also a short-term effect, beyond the immediate effect of the session itself, in that the sessions gave the people a new purpose, an activity to look forward to. There was also clear expressed evidence that family relationships improved, including enhanced communication, especially with those suffering from dementia.

## What makes the *Good Times* programme special?

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We have to ask what does this offer that is not offered by a tea club or a standard art therapy session? Indeed as we include in one of the stories – there are clearly older people who came especially for the social aspect and the spin-off from this was a new interest in an art gallery. This is an important aspect of the Programme and should not be underestimated. The simple possibility of social interaction is important to combating isolation and enhancing well-being. If we believe that the *Good Times* Programme is more than that we have to explore why.

We identified 5 criteria:

- fixed established point of connection,
- strong commitment by the organisers,
- mainstreaming of the programme,
- wide range of activities,
- ownership by those involved.

Firstly the role of the Gallery is crucial. Here we have a *fixed established point*, where people who have been involved in workshops, classes or Gallery tours can return as individuals. The Programme is not seen by the participants as a temporary intervention in their lives, but as something that has now entered their lives and is there for them whenever they want it.

Secondly is the crucial part played by the *enthusiasm and commitment of Dulwich staff*. There is strong evidence that successful interventions in all areas are significantly conditioned by the commitment of those running the intervention. The Education Department at Dulwich Picture Gallery have a strong professional and personal commitment to the Programme which gives significant enhancement to the activities. In addition, many of

**'The Programme is not seen by the participants as a temporary intervention in their lives, but as something that has now entered their lives and is there for them whenever they want it.'**

the volunteers on the programme are involved in the Gallery itself and this provides another vital link between the Gallery and the Programme.

Thirdly, it is also crucial that the setting for the activities is in a *mainstream* centre. This is not an ‘old persons’ centre, which could be perceived as being an add-on but not a central part of the community. This is a place where people of all ages regularly visit as part of the local and national commitment to the Gallery and art and culture in general. This mainstreaming of activities for older people is a further essential component of its success.

Fourthly, the *wide range of activities*: gallery tours, storytelling, creative workshops, social gatherings, enable a fit to be made between the individual and activity. Again, something that a large professional body like Dulwich is able to achieve. ‘Prescription for Art’ plays a key role in this, and the possibility of integrating inter generational activities is also important.

Finally, there is a real sense of *ownership* by all involved. The professionals, staff, photographers, storytellers, volunteers, even students, all stressed that this was not a one-way flow. They too found that their lives had been enriched by their interaction with the Programme and the older adults involved. This is a key message – older people are not simply takers – they have a tremendous amount to give and the *Good Times* Programme was a key enabler of this two-way flow of support and enhancement.

## Future

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Our evaluation suggests the Programme can be considered a success on five important criteria mentioned on page 52.

It is clear that the *Good Times* model is one that should not be exclusive to Dulwich, but can be replicated across our museum and gallery sector bringing real benefits to our older people.

It is also clear that in order to establish such programmes as making a real contribution to health and social care; they have to be objectively evaluated using recognised objective criteria accepted by our medical profession. Oxford has developed with Dulwich a potential programme of objective evaluation which it believes will reveal the real benefits of the involvement of such programmes such as the *Good Times* in enhanced wellbeing.

After nearly three years of interaction with the *Good Times* Programme, I have come to believe that the real key to its success was simply summed up by one of the volunteers. The outreach programmes at the Dulwich Gallery are ‘*the Gallery’s Heart!*’ And the *Good Times* Programme is clearly at the centre of this heart.

‘It is clear that the *Good Times* model is one that should not be exclusive to Dulwich, but can be replicated across our museum and gallery sector bringing real benefits to our older people.’

## *Good Times: Art for Older People at Dulwich Picture Gallery partners*

The Department of Health's review of important factors that combine arts and health also cited. *'Building partnerships with all types of organisations both within the arts and healthcare sectors, and also with the private sector, local authorities, local libraries, educational facilities, transport services and community groups'* (Department of Health, 2007: 15) as key to the success of a project.

During the first five years of the *Good Times* programme, Dulwich Picture Gallery has engaged with 65 partner organisations and hundreds of individuals not in prescribed groups.

### **Access to Art** *Southwark, London*

A charity that provides a gateway to the arts for people with disabilities.

### **Age Concern Bromley Hour Bank Group** *Bromley, Kent*

An imaginative Hour Bank initiative to encourage local people to participate in their community and combat isolation.

### **Age Concern Kensington & Chelsea – Sixty Plus** *Kensington and Chelsea, London*

Offering a wide range of services to older people across Kensington and Chelsea, including information and advice, group shopping trips, practical help tasks in the home.

### **Age Concern Merton** *Merton, London*

To provide practical services and work strategically with older people and their carers.

### **Age Concern Southwark & Lewisham – Black Elders Group** *Southwark, London*

To provide support to Afro-Caribbean people over 60 living in the community. The centre helps to alleviate social and emotional isolation and anxiety.

### **Age Concern Southwark & Lewisham – Stones End Day Centre** *Southwark, London*

The centre provides support to older people with physical and mental disabilities, visual and hearing impairments.

### **Age Concern Southwark & Lewisham – The Long Weekenders** *Southwark, London*

A centre providing much needed respite care to families at the weekend. Most of the service users are also referred by Community Psychiatric Nurses from the Maudsley Hospital.

### **Blackfriars Settlement** *Southwark, London*

A community group in Southwark offering friendship, support and activities to isolated older residents

### **Central Hill Day Centre** *Southwark, London*

A Day centre with facilities for older people with physical health problems.

### **Chelsea Pensioners** *Kensington and Chelsea, London*

Many of the pensioners are keen to maintain contacts with the outside world, and particularly enjoy meeting schoolchildren and chatting to the visitors.

### **Contact the Elderly** *South London Branch*

A national charity arranging volunteer drivers to collect frail, elderly people who live alone to gather for tea and companionship.

'You won't  
be able to  
keep me  
away

now I know  
what's here!



Creative workshop in  
the community for Divya  
Vora and friends

**Divya Vora and Friends** *Croydon, London*

Divya is a carer herself who brings friends to the Gallery. She says, 'I know a lot of Indian ladies who won't go out by themselves and are very depressed. But they'll come on the bus if I bring them'. And she does.

**Dulwich Mead** *Southwark, London*

Housing and support for retired individuals.

**Edward Alleyn House** *Southwark, London*

A local almshouse providing flats for people of modest financial means or those who are 'in need, hardship or distress'.

**The Elizabethans** *Bromley, Kent*

A group of retired individuals who meet together and organise cultural trips.

**Elm Lodge and the Gardens GP Surgeries** *Southwark, London*

GP surgeries whose nurses helped us develop 'Prescription for Art' for older patients.

**The Elms Care Home** *Southwark, London*

A local residential care home.

**Evergreen Group, Charterhouse-in-Southwark** *Southwark, London*

Charterhouse in Southwark is part of the settlement movement to alleviate poverty. They attend to spiritual, physical and educational needs of local older people.

**Greenvale Nursing Home, Streatham** *Lambeth, London*

For patients with life-long mental health problems, and other illnesses associated with old age.

**Hayes Village Painting Group** *Bromley, Kent*

An initiative from Hayesford Park Baptist Church to give older individuals the opportunity to meet new friends and learn to express their creativity.

**Hayesara** *Bromley, Kent*

Retired group of individuals with a keen interest in art history.

**The Healthy Ageing Café – Age Concern Lewisham & Southwark** *Southwark, London*

A peer support service established to serve the specific needs of older people with dementia and their carers.

**Holmhurst Day Centre** *Southwark, London*

Community mental health team for older adults providing assessment, treatment and care for people aged over 65 who have mental health problems.

**Intermediate Care Unit, Dulwich Hospital** *Southwark, London*

Patients and carers at the local hospital.

**Kentish Gadabouts** *Bromley, Kent*

A social club for mature people. Activities include holidays, outings to places of interest by coach, rambles, lunches, visits to the theatre and musical afternoons.

**Kingswood Drop-In, Dulwich Helpline** *Southwark, London*

This very popular drop-in group happens twice a month at a community centre. The drop-in offers a social occasion for the estate and a great opportunity to sit, chat and make new friends.

**Lambeth and Southwark Carers 'New Beginnings' group** *Southwark, London*

For older carers who have recently been bereaved.

**Life Line, Clapham** *Lambeth, London*

Offering social time and activities for isolated older people.

**Life on the E.D.G.E (East Dulwich Grove Estate) – Dulwich Helpline** *Southwark, London*

A weekly meeting for older individuals on the estate to socialise over tea.

**Lively Minds** *Southwark, London*

A local group for older people living alone who meet twice a week and have 140 members, with an age range of 60-90 years.

**Making the Most of your Retirement, Kirkdale Centre** *Lewisham, London*

As part of Community Education Lewisham, this course covers a broad range of interests and themes, including art, science and religion.

**Malam Court Art Group** *Lambeth, Southwark*

A group for older people wanting to improve art skills.

**The Men's Group** *Southwark, London*

For older men who meet once a month in a local pub.

**Nightingale House** *Wandsworth, London*

A care home for older members of the Jewish community.

**Norwood Resource Centre** *Lambeth, London*

A centre for older people with health problems who live independently in the community.

**Orpington Friendship Group** *Bromley, Kent*

The club offers social meetings for retired people to make new friendships and take part in shared activities.

**Out and About** *Barnet, London*

A new group for over 60s, who arrange monthly outings to places they would be unlikely to go to visit by themselves.

**Paxton Green Time Bank** *Lambeth, London*

A Lambeth group that brings over 50s together for cultural activity and excursions to places that they would be unlikely to visit alone.

**Peckham Settlement** *Southwark, London*

A Community Centre in the heart of Peckham which provides a base for a wide range of organisations that tackle issues relevant to the local community.

**Prince George Duke of Kent Nursing Home** *Bromley, Kent*

A Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution providing accommodation for older Freemasons and dependents.

**Rainbow Arts and Crafts Painting Group** *Southwark, London*

An art group for retired individuals who want to develop their creative talents.

**Rascals** *Barking and Dagenham, Essex*

Offering disabled people access to various arts and crafts activities.



'It was an opportunity for me to do something

completely different'

Top: Distributing the table flowers after a *Good Times* celebration event for Holmhurst Day Centre. Bottom: Ceramics workshop at Kingswood Drop-In Centre.

**Southwark Arts Forum** *Southwark, London*

Southwark Arts Forum helps artists, arts organisations and creative industries in Southwark to excel, and to have a greater impact on their local community.

**Southwark Asian Elders** *Southwark, London*

A day care centre in Peckham providing care and support for older Asian people who are isolated due to age, infirmity or disability.

**Southwark Carers** *Southwark, London*

Southwark Carers provides information, advice and support to carers across the borough.

**Southwark Pensioners Centre** *Southwark, London*

A community resource centre for individual retired people, pensioner groups and organization working with the elderly.

**Southwark Silver Festival** *Southwark, London*

This festival for the over 60s runs for one month each year, offering a variety of different opportunities to get involved in throughout the borough.

**Springfield Primary Care Centre** *Lambeth, London*

A GP surgery's art group for isolated and mentally frail members of the community.

**St Barnabas Wednesday Group** *Southwark, London*

A weekly social gathering for older people who meet for light refreshments, a talk or activity and a time to socialise.

**St Christopher's Hospice** *Lewisham, London*

The pioneers of the hospice movement, helping patients and their families cope with terminal illness.

**St George Christchurch and St Paul's** *Lewisham, London*

Working with, and arranging workshops and Gallery visits, for local groups of older people.

**St Michaels Day Centre** *Wandsworth, London*

A day centre providing activities for older people.

**Stockwell Day Centre** *Lambeth, London*

Day centre facilities in Brixton for older people with dementia or memory loss.

**U3A University of the Third Age** *Branches throughout London*

For people no longer in full-time, gainful employment. Groups of people come together to share knowledge, skills and experience in an informal association.

**Wandsworth Parkinsons Society** *Wandsworth, London*

For carers and sufferers with specific needs, outings and meetings for social contact and support.

**Waterloo Action Centre Art Group** *Lambeth, London*

A drop-in art group.

**Westwood House Nursing Home** *Lewisham, London*

Residential care home

**Women's British Legion** *Bromley, Kent*

A nationwide organisation providing care and support to the ex-Service community

## Cultural and intergenerational partners:

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### **The Challenge** *Waterloo, London*

The Challenge is a programme for 15-16 year olds and takes place in the summer after year 11. The Programme involves a series of personal and team challenges and encourages young people to learn new skills and make a difference to their community.

### **Dulwich College** *Southwark, London*

Sixth Form boys partnered with older men from the *Good Times* programme on a photography intergenerational project.

### **Dulwich Hamlet Primary School** *Southwark, London*

A special partnership with 'Prescription for Art,' primary children from Dulwich Hamlet visit the group once or twice a year to provide musical entertainment and/or join in with the art workshop.

### **Dulwich Library** *Southwark, London*

*Good Times* collaborated with the library storyteller on a textiles and story project which was based between the Gallery and the Library.

### **James Allen's Girls' School** *Southwark, London*

Local school that partners with *Good Times* on a series of intergenerational programmes.

### **Live Music Now!** *Branches throughout London*

LMN is the largest provider of live music to the UK's welfare, educational, justice and health sectors, with a unique resource of specially trained musicians. They often provide entertainment for *Good Times* Celebration events.

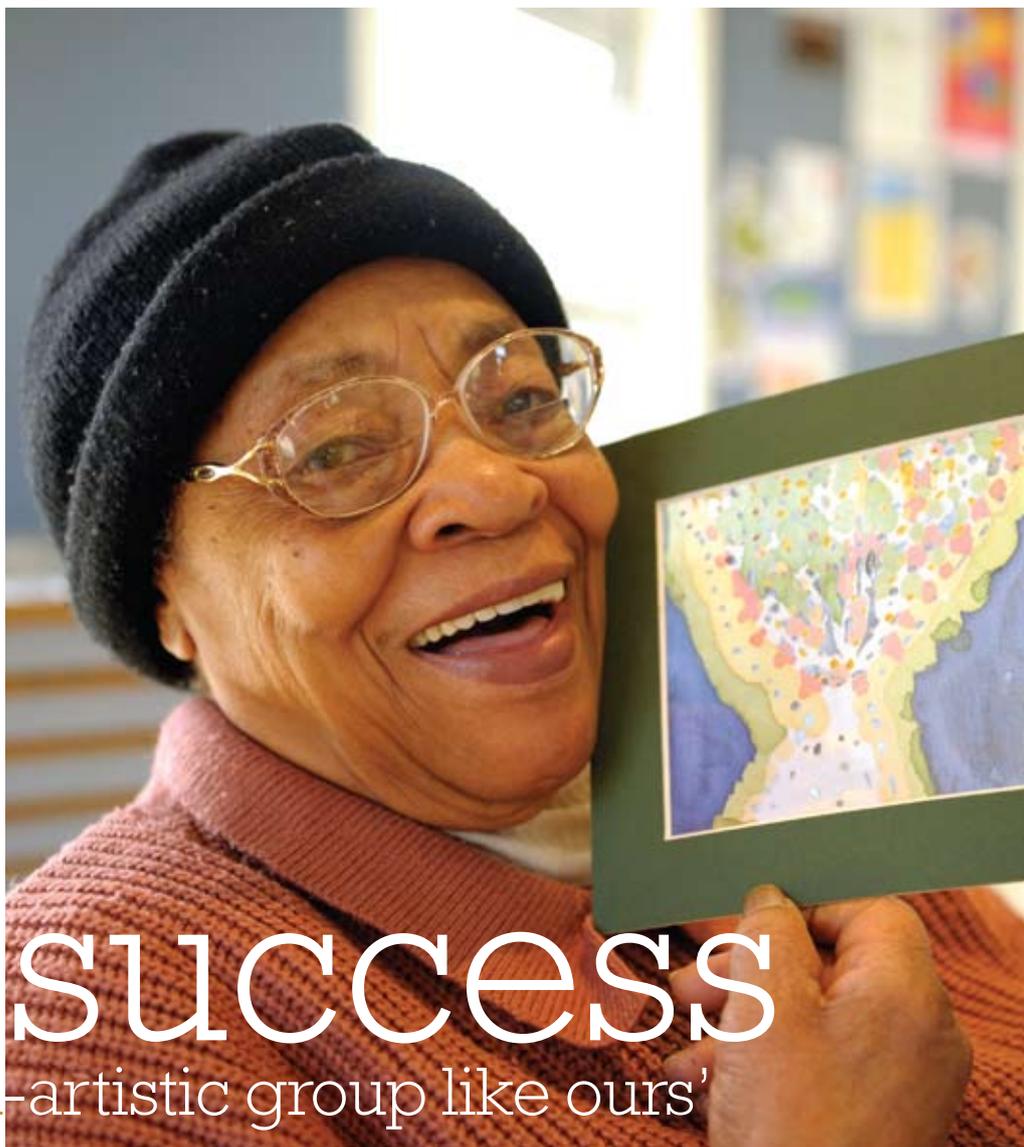
### **Rambert Dance Company** *Hounslow, London*

Collaborated with *Good Times* to offer a dance workshop based on the Gallery Collection.

'I never  
expected  
this to be  
such a  
great

success

with an un-artistic group like ours'



Top: Silk painting workshop for Southwark Carers group. Bottom: 'Quilts of Light' exhibition and Hanukkah celebration, Nightingale House care home.

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'I've thoroughly  
**enjoyed** these weeks'



Printing workshop  
out in the community  
for Age Concern  
Southwark and  
Lewisham Black  
Elders group

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‘Here is a golden opportunity to shake off aches and pains...

to become involved in activities that open up

**new** vistas’



*Good Times* participant works with photographer Adrian Wood to direct photo shoot as part of an Intergenerational Project



'It changed  
my life –

This is  
living'