

## **Case Study**

### **Intergenerational Forest School Sessions for Vulnerable Elders**

#### **Hereford County Council and Courtyard Arts**

What is Wye Knot Forest school?

Our aim is to give disadvantaged people a chance to be part of our Forest school curriculum. This could be in a nursing home or facility that doesn't usually get access to participate in this type of activity.

Wye Knot aims to bring the community together by familiarising people with the beauty of the outdoor world. We offer fun and fulfilling activities for any age and any ability themed on the outdoors.

My name is Rose and I'm very passionate about delivering a variety of activities to disadvantaged and isolated adults in the community. With help from the Courtyard Arts and funding from Hereford City Council this project and case study were created.

Why should people be excluded from the forest school experience just because of their disabilities? They shouldn't.

With my evidence, this case study will help communities deliver forest schools in their specific areas of work.

There are many benefits to the forest schools program these include:

- Building self-esteem
- Bringing the communities together
- Giving people confidence empowerment and decision making
- Making new friends and learning new skills,
- Building resistance, and having a sense of belonging.

Forest school also involves exercising, therefore it is the perfect activity to use in the elderly community.

My experience so far has been an emotional one, I knew I would have some positive impact on the residents, but I was overwhelmed by how much of an uplifting and empowering effect it had on them and the staff, it really brought people together.

An example of this was when one lady in her 90s wasn't very interested at the start of the session. But by the end, she enjoyed it more than anyone else and said thank you to me with a tear in her eye and a huge smile on her face. To add to this everyone that took part in the session asked when are you coming back? we had a really lovely time which was great firsthand feedback.

One particular forest school session we concentrated on achieving group building, gentle exercising, the use of tools and building self-esteem. The activities included the use of fine motor skills and memory games finishing off with some one to one time.

This study aimed to see the positive impact of using nature and forest school activities to enhance vulnerable, elderly adult lives. These sessions were established in two nursing homes with the following adults starting at the beginning of the study. The sessions began in April 2022 and finished at the end of July 2022.

**Newstead Nursing Home.**

**CQC Good**

**38 Residents.**

6 Ladies whose ages ranged from 86-95 years. No mobility issues.

**Do they know what Forest school is?**

No

**Do you want to join in?**

5 said yes, 1 said No

**Stretton Nursing Home.**

**CQC Requires Improvement/ Inadequate.**

**38 Residents**

At the start of this study attendance was 2 ladies and 1 man between the ages of 80-95. These residents were in wheelchairs.

**Do they know what Forest School is?**

No

**Do you want to join in?**

No

CQC

At the start of the study, all residents that started the Forest School experience did not know what Forest School was but were keen to start and see what they could discover. The leader of the groups Rose Sales had intended to run most sessions outdoors with wheelchair access and accessibility risk assessed. However, at the first session both groups in the separate care homes did not want to go outside. This meant that Rose had to quickly adapt a new plan to make sure that the residents could participate in forest school activities rather than being outdoors and using the forest school resources.

**First Session:** Residents in Newstead Nursing Home had started the day feeling “bored” and “not happy” One participant refused to join in, all those adults expressed their enjoyment of the session at the end and the general mood improved, including the participant who did not want to participate eventually joining in. One resident remarked after using the power tools that they felt empowered being back with work cutters and feeling and smelling the wood. At the end of the first session in Stretton Nursing Home, one resident asked when Rose was returning because they were looking forward to participating and the other residents felt happier.

Rose observed three residents throughout the duration of the study to determine the effects of the activities on their wellbeing. Here are the sessions broken down for three residents.

Feedback from Newstead Nursing Home Staff:

“Wonderful to see one lady’s confidence and coordination grew with one-to-one support from Rose”

“So, uplifting for us and the residents to see how Rose has adapted the outside and brought it inside”

Feedback from Stretton Nursing Home Staff:

“Brilliant adaptation of bringing the outside inside, the residents really enjoyed this”

### Case Study: Resident C.

- **First Session**

Resident C has limited sight and hearing and mobility due to a previous stroke. so, communication can be somewhat of a barrier. Resident C was happy to become involved in the group discussion if communication was clear and concise. Resident C is looking forward to participating in the nature activities as they can't access much in the home.

- **Second Session**

Resident C enjoyed using some of the tools but did find it slightly hard and stopped and looked at some accessible prints that Rose had brought of birds and trees. This promoted a discussion on the birds they used to have in the garden.

- **Third Session**

Resident C seemed to struggle with their hearing more so today. Rose tried different activities with the tools and the prints and Resident C decided they wanted to just watch. Rose has decided to differ enate her practice so Resident C can participate on good days and bad days.

- **Fourth Session**

Resident C took part in the activity in using power tools and glass. Rose used the glass and rested it on their non-working hand and Resident C told them proudly that they did have some feeling. When Resident C used her other arm, Rose was shocked at the capability and strength they used to participate in the activity. Resident C enjoyed participating in the group talk after and said how proud they were of their achievements.

- **Fifth Session**

Resident C proudly showed the group how they could use loppers with some support, despite their body being weakened by the stroke. Resident C enjoyed the group singing session at the end.

- **Sixth Session**

Due to the group being smaller Resident C got to have more one-on-one time with Rose in the garden picking flowers for her natural canvas. Resident C enjoyed talking to Rose about the garden and what they could see.

### Resident C Case Study Continued.

- **Seventh Session**

Resident C was really excited to participate in Forest School and went outside for the session with Rose. When it ended they did not want to go back inside! Resident C said they couldn't wait to come to the session the following week.

- **Eight Session**

Resident C took part in the group activities and was happy to read clear instructions enlarged for themselves to read and feel independent throughout.

- **Ninth Session**

Resident C got confused with the concept of the flower canvas and painting. However once Rose wrote down the instructions and made it accessible for Resident C they took part independently.

- **Tenth Session**

Resident C enjoyed being outdoors in the group environment and managed to get some sparks of the flint sticks! They said at the beginning of the sessions they would have never felt confident to participate in this activity, but their confidence has grown since starting Forest School.

### Case Study: Resident A.

- **First session:** Resident A wasn't interested in participating but was quite happy to watch, by the end of the session they were participating and using tools and looking at pictures of the outdoor areas.
- **Second session:** Resident A was waiting for Rose to arrive and wanted to use the tools and look at the outdoor pictures. This time Resident A praised others on their achievements in their small group.
- **Third Session:** Resident A was unwell when Rose attended and was still in bed. Rose gave Resident A some birch tree cutting's and let her feel them and sat and chatted to her. After an hour Resident A came into the group and decorated a bird box and smashed some bird food with a Mallott.
- **Fourth Session:**  
Resident A happily greeted Rose and enjoyed smelling and correctly identifying the different herbs that Rose brought in. Resident A enjoyed cutting sticks and identifying different birds.
- **Fifth Session:** Resident A was very excited to see Rose and her young daughter. Child M and Resident A looked at different flowers and Child M enjoyed being taught about the history of the flowers. Resident A used the loppers and told Rose it made her feel very important! She said she enjoyed using the tools as back in the day they didn't have that choice.
- **Sixth Session:** Resident A met Rose outside and wanted to do the session outdoors, however the other residents did not so Rose compromised and went out to pick flowers from the garden. This was the first time Resident A made any positive **progression in going outside and ended up spending twenty minute in the garden.**
- **Seventh Session:** Resident A greeted Rose by name and was very excited to be outside and was the first resident to toast marshmallows and enjoyed being outdoors throughout the session.

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### Resident B Case Study Continued.

- **Seventh Session**

Resident B became really excited about seeing the session being set up outside and asked Rose what they were doing as they moved outside. Resident B enjoyed talking to the other participants and seemed more relaxed and chattier in Rose's company.

- **Eighth Session**

Enjoyed creating natural paints with outdoor resources and food and was laughing and smiling and said they enjoyed being silly!

- **Ninth Session**

Resident B enjoyed seeing their finished art being displayed In the care home wall and told everybody it was their work

- **Tenth Session**

Resident B told Rose that they were sad that the course was over, that they felt more confident being outdoors with others and felt more relaxed and happier being within nature.

### **Case Study: Resident B.**

- **First Session:** Resident B was excited to start Forest School and told Rose how it reminded her of her travelling days. Resident B was happy to participate and shared stories with the group of her experiences.
- **Second Session:**  
Resident B was waiting for Rose and got excited when she saw Rose's suitcase of tools. Resident B asked what tools she would be using and proceeded to spend the whole session using the power tools to create holes in wood.
- **Third Session:**  
Resident B enjoyed creating designs for her bird box and was enthusiastic talking to Rose about the birds she used to see in her garden. Resident B is excited to show her family the finished result.
- **Fourth Session**  
Resident B had a fall before this session so needed to stay in her room. Rose went to their room and helped Resident B make some aromatherapy dough with herbs Resident B picked herself. Rose explained she popped into see them as Rose knew they enjoyed the sessions. Resident B was very grateful and said to Rose that they would be back next week and felt much better mentally.

**Eighth Session:** Resident A got involved with the residents and enjoyed chatting with Rose. Resident A encouraged other residents to get involved.

**Ninth Session:** Resident A told Rose that she was sad this was one of her last sessions and she wanted it to continue.

**Tenth Session:** Resident A was happy to participate in all activities and her resilience and determination has been inspiring.

Over the following sessions, positive changes were seen with the residents in attendance showing more confidence in participation each week. More residents were hearing about the positive impact from staff and residents and were keen to participate themselves. A gradual increase is shown throughout the evidence and staff have commented on the positivity and calmness that descends on the residents once they have finished a session. Rose's positive nature throughout the sessions and her ability to kindly persevere with the residents when obstacles are in her way are key to the success of the progressive sessions. Residents feel they can trust her, and she engages with each residents emotional and social needs as well as physical and mental capabilities using her breadth of experience in various settings.

### **Final Session.**

In the final session, in both homes residents were encouraged to join Rose outside to participate in a choice of activities and encouraged to help build the fire, some residents even helped light the campfire! Residents were encouraged to roast marshmallows and drink warm apple juice and staff and residents were able to sit together with Rose and The Mayor of Hereford and reflect on the last ten sessions. Here were some of their thoughts.

"I can't believe we made beautiful canvases and painted with natural art"

"The hard work felt really easy"

"I am feeling sad that this is our last session"

"Thank you so much for your sessions, they have been so inspiring for not only the residents but the staff too! We were sceptical at the start, but the difference has been incredible"

"My favourite day is now a Wednesday so I can see what activities you have brought"

"I've made some new friends in the group; it's brought us together"

"I've had my first time toasting and eating marshmallows, I didn't get to do that when I was younger as we were in a war"

**Last Session**

**Newstead Nursing Home:**

38 Residents

12 Residents joined

**Do you know what Forest School is?**

Yes

**Do you want to go outside and try the activities?**

Yes

**Last Session**

**Stretton Nursing Home**

38 Residents

5 residents, two family members too, 2 staff

**Do you know what Forest School is?**

Yes

**Do you want to go outside and try the activities?** Yes.

**Conclusion.**

It is clear from the evidence that Forest School as an inter-generational experience has had a positive overall benefit for the residents and staff at both nursing homes over the ten sessions.

As Rose explains: Over the last ten weeks I have been delivering forest school sessions in two different nursing homes in Hereford, to trial if it is a beneficial activity to older generations in the community.

The ten weeks show a positive progression in resident's ability to use their motor and gross skills in the handling of tools and creative activity in a group setting with support, all activities can be differentiated to suit the individual resident's needs. My main research was to see if residents could be connected back to nature to feel empowered and I believe these findings show It can.

To continue and develop the success of this project Wye Knot Forest School is planning in the coming months to trial an intergenerational version of Forest school activities to bring communities together regardless of age. The original sessions specifically for the elderly will continue to run concurrently in care homes within the Hereford area.

Developed by Mrs Rose Sales, owner of Wye Knot Forest School.

