



A celebration of STAA's 'Connecting with Carers' project.

Sandwell Third Age Arts STAA is proud of its year-long project working with carers groups across Sandwell. This project was funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund. It has allowed us to share our skills and experience in the arts and to deliver new learning experiences with carers. There was also a lot of fun, enjoyment and laughter delivered along the way.

The grant enabled STAA to fulfil its objects to use the arts to provide relief to carers and families, help people to engage in their communities and to provide opportunities for education, hobbies and recreation.

STAA liaised with carers groups in Sandwell and delivered programmes of participatory activities for participants. The training was designed to work for the carer and be what they wanted it to be.

Overwhelmingly carers chose to engage in creative and imaginative activities with the emphasis on trying new things. Carers said that when choosing activities they wanted to do something they would enjoy as the time they had together was limited and precious to them. They wanted to do fun things, relax and forget their responsibilities through engaging in the arts rather than use the opportunity to do more 'serious' activities orientated to gaining employment such as computer or job search skills. They recognised that engaging in the arts is fun and being creative is satisfying psychologically. Their choices suggest carers rarely have opportunities to engage in the arts.

STAA provided services for a number of groups for the twelve months of the project and delivered skills training in a variety of art forms. These included screen printing, silk painting, hand embroidery, textile painting, collage, decoupage, card making, knitting, sewing, making light catchers and memory



boxes and using mosaics. STAA contributed to broadening the life skills, education and experience of carers to nurture ambition, strengthen friendships and increase peoples' aspirations.

We worked with a total 158 adults during the project over including working with the cared for person as well as the carer in some groups. STAA delivered a total of seventy two sessions comprising of almost a hundred and fifty hours of activities.

STAA wanted this project to benefit the health, well-being and independence of carers. The activities encouraged carers to attend carer's groups, enabling them to enjoy the benefits of socialising with others, reducing isolation and strengthening friendships. The training and activities may have helped to lower stress levels and feelings of depression in some participants and sharing learning and experiences helped carers to feel more connected with the world around them, improve peoples' well-being and enrich their lives.

The project has benefited the wider community in Sandwell by helping to sustain carers' groups as valuable community resources available to people when they need them. STAA hoped that by investing in carers, more people and organisations, our society will grow to value carers, and recognise caring as valuable to society and be celebrated and viewed more positively by all.

STAA would like to thank all the groups we worked with including the staff who helped to make this project possible, also the artists who facilitated the project for STAA: Karoline Rerrie, Ranbir Kaur, Paula Woof and Sharon Baker.

The photos are from groups at Sandwell Parents for disabled Children, Ekta carers group in Rowley Regis, Halesowen Asian Elders Carer Group, Tipton Carers Group, Black Country Mental Health Foundation Trust's West Bromwich group for working age people with dementia and carers.



		
knitting	Screen printing	Hand embroidery
		
Valentines pin cushion	Fabric painting	Screen printing
		
Fabric painting	Screen printing	Silk painting

Photographic credits: Ranbir Kaur, Paula Woof, Karoline Rerrie & Sharon Baker.

