

# Working with artists - some hints and tips

## Remember

Sometimes activities don't go to plan. They can take longer than planned or can be much shorter. Also, sometimes activities can be messier than expected!

## What do you need to think about when the sessions end?

### Celebrate

It's important to celebrate the art work from the sessions. You could exhibit any paintings, photographs, poetry or other artwork for example or share a dance, drama or singing performance with other residents, family and friends. You could also gather personal stories about the experiences of residents, staff and others and feature them on a story board or in a newsletter.

### Reflect

Reflecting on the success of the project and sharing any feedback may help you and the artist learn what worked well and what could be done differently for future arts projects. Talk with the residents about what they thought of the art sessions and get feedback from any staff or others involved. Hear the artist's views on how the sessions went.

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Professional artists can bring valuable new skills and experience into your care home and lead stimulating, enjoyable arts sessions with and for residents.

## What do you need to think about when planning sessions with an artist?

### Planning

Allow enough time to plan sessions with the artist. Make sure you have at least one planning meeting together before the project starts. This gives the artist a chance to meet you, your residents, see the space where the session will take place and discuss and agree the project plan with you.

### Space

Think carefully about the space where the sessions will take place. Your residents will get the most from their sessions if the space works well for whatever the specific activity is. Talk this through carefully with the artist beforehand. If you have a dedicated activities room this is ideal. If you don't, talk to the artist about what would work best. Visual artists are likely to need tables and access to water. Dancers will want enough space for residents to move. All artists will want to make sure that, as far as possible, there won't be distractions that make it difficult for people to hear or be heard.

## Resident and care home information

Make sure the artist is aware of:

- timings, for example tea breaks and meal times
- issues residents have that may be important to know, such as communication, health and behavioural; and
- issues about group dynamics that may be helpful to know so the session runs smoothly.

## Costs

It is important to agree the artist's fee beforehand. Remember to include any meetings before the start of the project, preparation and planning time between sessions and discuss any additional costs such as for materials.

## Working agreement

It's always good to confirm what you have agreed with the artist in writing. This means the care home and artist are clear about what responsibilities they have and what each is providing. This can be done through a formal contract, but a straightforward letter of agreement is usually sufficient. The letter of agreement should include the financial arrangements. For more advice go to [www.sau.org.uk](http://www.sau.org.uk)

## Insurance and Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG)

Check that the artist has their own public liability insurance in place. Follow your standard procedures in relation to PVG checks.

## What do you need to think about before the sessions start?

### Introductions

Introduce the artist to key members of staff. The support of the care home manager, activities co-ordinator, if you have one, and all other staff is important to make sure that the sessions are as successful as possible.

### Orientation

Show the artist around the care home and make sure they know about anything important such as where the toilets are and emergency procedures.

### Support

The artist and the residents may benefit from support during the arts sessions. If this can be planned prior to the start of the sessions this would be helpful. The support is useful to enable people to take part in the session and have the best experience but also for things such as taking people to the toilet or getting refreshments for the group.

## What do you need to think about during the sessions?

### Artist

Check with the artist during every session that everything is going well. Don't assume it is.

### Residents

Discuss the session with the residents and make sure all is well. Ask them about what they are doing and if they are enjoying it.

### Others

There may be friends and/or relatives who would like to join the sessions and enjoy the experience with their loved one. This should be discussed with the artist and encouraged if appropriate.

### Support

Don't forget to make sure the artist and residents have some support from staff throughout each session.

### Document

Take photos of the art activities at different stages and share them with the residents, staff, families and friends. Don't forget to get consent to do this.