

# Evaluation of Comic Relief's Care Home Challenge 2

## Executive Summary

Comic Relief's grant funding initiative, Care Home Challenge 2 (CHC2) was designed to support cultural change in the care home sector by improving the quality of life and wellbeing of people living and working in care homes through meaningful activities. Grants were awarded to a range of activities including music, chair-based exercise and life story work to encourage staff-resident engagement, increase physical and mental wellbeing, and promote positive workplace culture.

The evaluation of the CHC2 grant funding scheme aimed

- To establish the impact of the grant funded activities on care home residents, staff and the wider care home culture;
- To build on the evaluation of the first round of funding; and
- Add to the evidence base on wider positive change in the care home sector.

The evaluation showed that CHC2 funded activities had a positive impact on residents, staff, family and the wider community, and reinforced person-centred care approach, which can be a catalyst for cultural change in care homes. There are many challenges in the care sector that can hinder the realisation of these positive influences.

To increase the wellbeing outcomes and sustainability of activities the challenges of

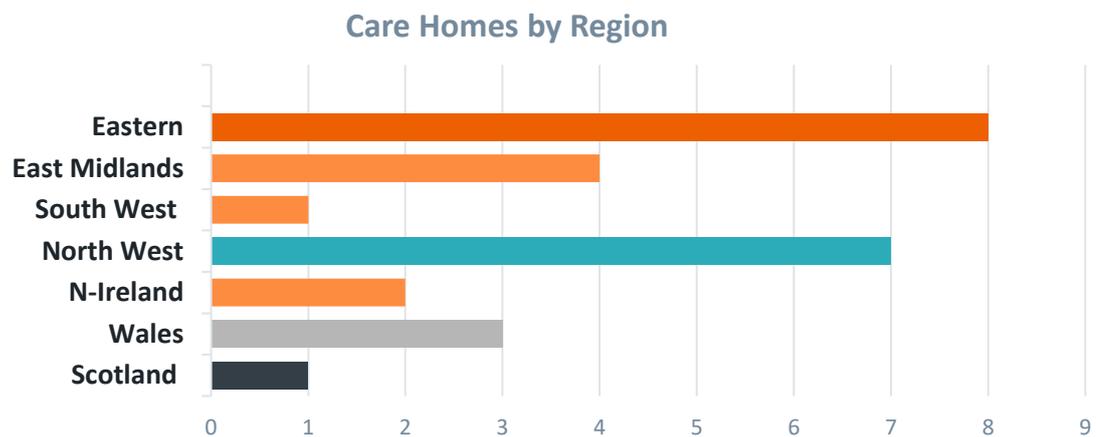
- Management support,
- Staff availability and
- Limited resources to deliver activities regularly will have to be addressed.

Further funding and cultural change is needed to shift focus from task oriented to holistic care.

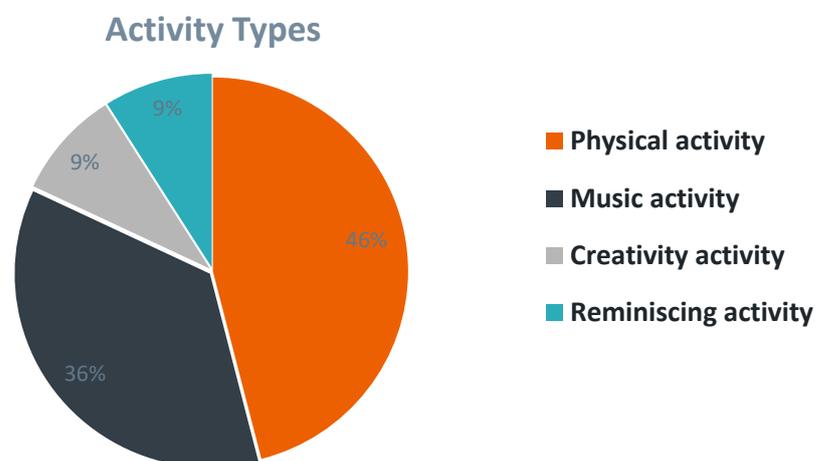


## Care Home Challenge 2 grants

- In total Comic Relief funded 11 grants in 26 care homes across UK.
- The grants ranged from £13,700 to £20,000, with an average of £18,000.



- The grants funded a wide range of activities from various physical activities to music and reminiscing.



- 73% of the activities were delivered with an external partner organisation.
- 73% of the activities had a staff training element that enabled the care home to carry on delivering the activity once the grant funding had finished.

## Key Findings

### Impact of funding on residents

Being engaged in a variety of activities impacted positively on residents' mental, social and physical wellbeing. To increase wellbeing outcomes, the challenge of staff availability and limited resources to deliver activities more frequently and regularly would have to be addressed. This would require additional funding and capacity, as well as further cultural change in care homes to shift focus from task-oriented to holistic care.



### Impact of funding on staff

Many of the projects improved staff confidence through training and skills development. Taking part in activities with residents helped staff to better know residents and their abilities and needs. Activities also improved staff wellbeing, improved mood and were part of creating a

better work environment. However, projects often encountered challenges in engaging staff, due to their lack of time and confidence to take part. These are part of the ongoing issues the care sector faces due to being an underfunded sector with a relatively high staff turnover.

### Impact of funding on family, friends and community

For family members and friends, the projects offered opportunities to engage in activities and help with the transition to care home, either through seeing loved ones happy with doing the activity, or having a meaningful activity to do with them during visits. However, for many family members, other commitments have limited their ability to engage in the activities fully.

The grant funding has helped to develop community links that will last beyond the projects e.g. with local schools. It has also increasing partnership working with external activity providers, community groups and volunteers to further increase social wellbeing in care homes.

### Impact of funding on care sector

The grant funded activities have offered an opportunity for change to

the care providers and the participating homes. In the majority of participating homes, activities will be sustained beyond the lifetime of the grants – which has the potential to further improve wellbeing among staff and residents.

The homes that will most likely continue to benefit from the outcomes have:

- Staff who showed a desire to continue activity beyond the project and felt that they had been supported in developing their skills to make this happen.
- Worked to find funds to carry on delivery.
- Management that supports activities and ensures their staff's ability to take part in them.

Further change in the care sector can be achieved by **sharing knowledge of good practice and challenges**, and **networking with other care homes and stakeholders**.

## Recommendations

### 1. Care home management buy-in is vital for the successful delivery of projects

Care home management buy-in is vital for the successful delivery of projects. Even if the care provider and an individual staff member are supportive of the activity, **the managers of individual homes have to provide the resources** such as booking rooms, managing staff rota and giving staff time to participate, and managing communications within the home about the project. **They also influence staff's attitudes toward the activities.**



### 2. Active participation from staff is key to achieving positive wellbeing outcomes

Staff presence makes residents feel more relaxed and confident to participate, and **activities worked much better and achieved greater impacts for residents when staff**

were present, not just the external partners leading activities. Staff availability and resources to deliver the activities regularly were key challenges, and to address this additional funding and further cultural change in care homes is required.

While upskilling of staff and confidence building were important benefits of activities funded by CHC2, **care homes have to be realistic about staff's willingness to participate**; some might need extra encouragement and time to participate.



### 3. Involve residents in planning activities

Factors that contributed to the success of activities included: activities that were personalised and flexible to residents' needs, resident-

led and available for all ability levels. Also, **involving residents in the planning of activities increased their wellbeing by giving them a choice**, and allows them more ownership of the activity.

### 4. Pay close attention to the sustainability of activities

**Most projects had only one person in charge of the activity** who was particularly passionate about the project (often the activities coordinator), and **if that person was to leave, the future of the activity might be at risk**. The turnover of care staff should also be noted as an issue for sustainability. If those members of staff who were trained to assist with the activities left the care home, there might be delays or challenges in continuing them.

### 5. Establish a strong collaborative working relationship with the activity provider

Partnership working can be a real asset for the projects, though in some homes it was very clear that the activity provider was the driving force behind the activity. Care homes should be encouraged to **share the delivery and management of activities to increase learning, positive impacts and sustainability**.

## 6. Community connections are

### beneficial for residents wellbeing

Projects like this have potential to increase community links and family members' participation, but care homes need to be aware that **developing these links takes time and effort**; particularly family members can have limited time and ability to participate. Despite challenges and delays, this type of social engagement can have a **beneficial impact on the quality of life for residents and staff in care homes.**

## 7. Monitoring the impact of activities improves performance and assists with future fundraising

Those care homes that had managed to capture the impact of the activities through regular data collection were in a **better position to make an informed decision about the future of resident care.** Evidencing impact also **assisted with applying for further funding to deliver future activities.**



---

Care Home Challenge 2 reports and materials can be downloaded from [www.socialresearchpartners.co.uk/care-home-challenge-2/](http://www.socialresearchpartners.co.uk/care-home-challenge-2/)

## Social Research Partners

Email: [info@socialresearchpartners.co.uk](mailto:info@socialresearchpartners.co.uk)