

Kate Parkin, Creative Age Programme Manager, Equal Arts.

KATE PARKIN is the Creative Age Programme Manager at Equal Arts, a creative ageing charity based in the Northeast of England. Kate is responsible for overseeing the organisation's training and arts and health programmes including the production of creative projects in hospitals, community, care and cultural settings. She has significant experience in establishing inclusive, dementia-friendly practice with and for people with dementia. Kate is currently a Northeast Champion for the national Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA). She also volunteers as a Director of Wunderbar, a Newcastle based community interest company specialising in playfully disruptive performance and multi-disciplinary projects. Previously, from 2009-2017, Kate worked as Engagement and Audiences Relationship Manager for Arts Council England. Kate has a strong background in participatory practice and has previously worked in public art, community arts engagement and theatre at Free Form Arts Trust, and Hoxton Hall Theatre in London.

'Thriving Community: Our journey so far: SP in Sunderland.'

I am going to talk about the beginning of our SP in Sunderland. Here in Sunderland, I work for a creative charity called Equal Arts. I am one of the Programme Managers. In partnership with about five other organisations, we formed the Sunderland SP Thriving Communities partnership. We are one of the successful consortiums who have been awarded a Thriving Communities funded project. We are just at the beginning stages, six weeks in. I am going to give you an overview of where are, and how we as a creative aging organisation are supporting some of the outputs towards pre-diagnostic dementia support and for their carers.

We are one of the partnerships based in Sunderland, we received in £50,000 towards our programmes, also matched by the partners. Sunderland Culture is the lead partner, who are a consortium of five cultural organisations across Sunderland. Equal Arts, as I said, is a creative aging charity support older people with long term health conditions and dementia, we reach about 2,000 people across the country per year. There is Sunderland Carers Centre which provides advice and support to carers across the city and supporting carers from as young of the age of five upwards. They have about 10,000 carers registered on their books. Then there is Groundwork, a community and environmental development charity deliver poverty reduction, conservation and eco health initiatives across Sunderland. Finally, Sunderland GP Alliance who are implementing a new SP model across

the city, which work with SPLW, health coaches and care coordinators. We have also been working with other community-based agencies as well, such as the Essence service, which is part of Age UK. We have come together through previous programmes and projects, but also a call out to support environmental aims, cultural and sport provisions, so we can support a multi-agency mechanism to support the service.

Our purpose is to establish a city wide, strategic partnership to improve the range, quality and reach of SP activities in Sunderland, especially for those impacted by COVID19 and health inequalities. The programme will help us to align to the single integrated SP service for Sunderland. Our aims are to enhance collaboration and networking between organisations, strengthen the range and quality of SP activities offered locally, and enable Sunderland GP Alliance SP team to connect people to more creative community activities and services. The final aim is to support this to be a sustainable programme over time. Our key beneficiaries will predominantly be carers. Carers across Sunderland have been hit by the pandemic, and 40% are providing more care due to increase in need or reduced local services. We know that we have 10,000 carers registered with Sunderland Carers, but we also know through the last Census that there are approximately about 32,000 people in Sunderland who identify themselves as having caring role. We will be looking after young carers from age five and families, male carers, families caring for children with special educational needs and disabilities, people living with dementia and their care givers, and old people with long term conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). We will be working with the GP Alliance, GPs, and other health professionals to improve carer identification and support by GP awareness and training as part of this programmes.

In terms of provision, it is split between the different priority target groups. For example, for those living with dementia, or those living without a diagnosis in terms of cognitive brain health, and for care givers, Equal Arts and Groundwork are really building that programme. For Groundwork we have, at the moment, plans to develop a Men's Shed, lots of recycling activities as well, working with Sunderland's recycling unit to create different projects. There will be outdoor volunteering, conservation and creating habitats.

For Equal Arts, our offer will be specifically to provide an inclusive and imaginative based provision for people living with dementia and their care givers. This will include doorstep delivery, activities on people's doorsteps, socially distanced activities which could include textiles, glass making etc. We will also be delivering singing activities through our Singing Hinnies service and with online activities. We will be supporting dementia friendly sessions for people pre-diagnosis, and to carers and former carers as well. An example of this is at Sunderland Museums and Arts Centre Washington, we have had previously a

Creative Age programme for people with early to mid-stage dementia. But as the years have passed, many people have lost their loved ones, and have wanted, as a former carer, something for them. We also know when people have not received a formal diagnosis, but have been in touch with a GP, they want to access a group. By having a pre-diagnosis session, it will be open to all, and an inclusive session. We are looking to expand this to make sure we have got three different groups.

Our ambitions and output overall are to engage 600 people from across Sunderland, to use the carers referral pathway to test the partnership, and to align with a single integrated SP service, which is in inception at the moment. Finally, it is to evaluate success for service users to become more sustainable pathway. We have started now. We are just about to recruit for a Programme Manager who will support referrals and a wider partnership. We are set to complete by March 2022. So, we are looking forward to starting to deliver the service.

Contact: kate@equalarts.org.uk