

## Kent

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**Elizabeth Taylor**, Services Manager, Alzheimer's Society.

**Monica Boulton**, Social Prescriber Lead, Red Zebra Community Solutions

'Red Zebra Social Prescribing Project: Connecting people to their community to support their wellbeing.'

**Sian Stephenson**, Creative Director, Moving Memory Dance.

'Challenging Perceptions of Self: Feeding Body Brain and Soul.'

**Dr Patricia Vella-Burrows**, Principal Research Fellow, Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, Canterbury Christ Church University.

## Elizabeth Taylor, Services Manager for East Kent, Alzheimer's Society.

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ELIZABETH TAYLOR has been Services Manager, East Kent at the Alzheimer's Society since September 2014. Prior to this she was a trainer in the Health and Social Care sector. During her twenty years in health and social care, her interest in all aspects of dementia encouraged her to seek more specialised employment. Liz been involved in local and national projects working alongside people affected by symptoms of dementia.

At the Alzheimer's Society we have over 40 years of experience of supporting people affected by the various forms of memory loss. We speak directly to people affected by dementia so that we can adapt and deliver our support for anyone who is worried about their memory, through the diagnostic process and through to end of life. People affected by dementia are the experts by lived experience, they know what works well for them, they know what has been missed and they know what they need. Unfortunately, pre-diagnostic support has been missing for some time.

We are going to give that the recognition, that people who are going through pre-diagnostic process, or who are worried about their memory, need support. They need to be signposted to opportunities to help them with their memory loss, mood and to help them to live their life as best they can. We actively refer service users to arts activities to help improve both the mental health of the person with the memory and cognitive problems, but also family members who may be around them.

So, how can arts support someone with memory worries? For some people they may rediscover a love for arts, this gives them that familiar feel-good feeling, the endorphins in their brain working to make them feel good. All of that can help with memory. All of that can help with their cognitive abilities. Or it could be that somebody decides to try something for the first time. They did not realise they could write poetry. They did not realise they could draw. They have a go, and they now experience that amazing rush of feeling good because they have made something. They have created something, whether it's words, a performance or a picture.

Extensive research has shown that different aspects of the arts can have positive effects on people experiencing memory loss. The big one, singing. It is so well documented that it increases sustained attention, it recalls lost memories, and it significantly increases executive functioning. It is a social activity, and it is stimulating for the individual and those around them. Watching or taking part in performing arts has also been proven to improve an individual's mental wellbeing and is a

cognitive and emotional stimulus. Participating in the appreciation of visual arts can allow the individual to improve communication and stimulate their memory. There are no wrong answers. The stigma of dementia is still very much out there, so attending groups that are nothing to do with your memory loss, but are for something that you enjoy, will reduce that social isolation.

Remember, groups don't need to be dementia specific, they just need to be dementia-friendly. Just a little bit of work to make sure group leaders understand the needs of their participants if they are experiencing memory problems, is all that is needed to make it accessible for all. At the Alzheimer's Society, we are striving to make as many dementia-friendly communities as possible, so that we can help everyone to continue to access the services and groups that they have always gone to, but also to open up those new opportunities for individuals who are experiencing these cognitive and memory issues. In recognition of how important this is, on our [Dementia Connects](#) website we now list a number of pre-diagnostic support services that are available. The one good thing that has come out of COVID19 is being able to do things virtually, and people having the confidence to do things virtually. It is not always a postcode lottery now, because a lot of services will continue online. Even if it is not a physical connection you have with people, you are still getting that virtual connection.

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## Monica Boulton, Social Prescribing Lead, Red Zebra Community Solutions.

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MONICA BOULTON, has lived and worked in Canterbury for the past 10 years, is currently working on a SP project in Kent for the charity Red Zebra. One of the first of its kind in the country, the project has helped inspire a movement of encouraging people to improve their wellbeing through taking greater control of their health through non-medical interventions. As the National Association of Link Worker (NALW) Managers Champion for England, Monica supports managers of SP projects and the work of NALW. It was SP that inspired her undergraduate studies on the impact of music on our wellbeing, particularly as part of the treatment for conditions such as dementia and mental health. Monica believes that everyone can benefit from SP and is dedicated to encouraging the community to work together to support those within it.

‘Red Zebra SP project: Connecting people to their community to support their wellbeing.’

Red Zebra has been involved in SP for over five years now, and we have seen many developments within that approach since then. If you know me at all, you will know my passion for SP and how it can support anyone, no matter what stage of life they are at. It is a preventative, rather than reactive approach. That is why it is important that it becomes a priority to refer into a SP service upon an initial discussion around potential diagnosis of a cognitive impairment. Not just for the patient, but also for their support network as well.

The way that Red Zebra are doing this, is by working closely with the GP surgeries in the area, as well as the community through charities, organisations, groups, and public services etc. All of whom can refer into us. When a referral comes through from a GP, this is usually through EMIS (Egton Medical Information Systems), which is the system used for patient records. This comes directly into our SPLW, who will then process that referral. A holistic assessment is taken upon consultation to identify what matters to the patient and what steps they could take to improve their wellbeing. Once this has been identified, we will use our database as well as our SPLW knowledge to signpost, refer and encourage them to take up an activity that will support this. For example, for a referral coming through at the possible onset of dementia, we would encourage creative activities. Encourage them to attend groups with other like-minded people and ensure that they have all of the information that they need as they progress. Ensuring the family are supported and empowering the individual to take control of themselves through helping them to access what is out there.

We measure their wellbeing throughout this process, and always focus on what is important to them. Our involvement can be anything from two weeks to six months. It is truly a client led service, and we ensure that we have completed that co-produced plan with the client before we close their case. However, all our wellbeing is ongoing, so we often see people more than once. We essentially act as a bridge throughout people's lives to help them navigate services that are available to support them. This can be relevant at any stage of a condition such as dementia. Our database, [Connect Well Kent](#), is our database where we list activities which people can refer into. These are all quality checked and approved by our team. The reports from this database also enable us to identify possible gaps in the community, in relation to the demand on services and demographics of need in the area. As a charity, we can then use that information to apply for funding ourselves, or support others to apply for funding to bridge these gaps. This will help create sustainable activities in the community, which is what we're aiming for, thus reducing health inequalities.

What I would encourage, is to use the systems that we have within GP practice to encourage a referral into SP pre-diagnosis, to ensure there is support. We are currently working with the surgeries that we are involved in to have a range of conditions, including dementia, that will automatically suggest a referral into SP when this is inputted into the patient database. This may not encourage engagement, but it will certainly give the opportunity to discuss the benefits of what a nonmedical intervention can have for conditions such as dementia.

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## Sian Stevenson, Creative Director, Moving Memory Dance Theatre.

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SIAN STEVENSON has worked in theatre, opera and participatory arts for over 25 years and is currently the Creative Director of Moving Memory Dance Theatre Company. As a director, performer, and choreographer, she has worked with many companies including Bobby Baker Daily Life Limited, English Touring Opera, Plain Clothes, Gloria, Grange Opera and Actors Touring Company. She has extensive experience in participatory arts, with specialist knowledge in movement, inclusivity and disability, and a long track-record of creating new performance in a wide range of educational and community settings. Sian is currently a Senior Lecturer in Theatre Studies at the University of Kent. Sian's work with Moving Memory is focused on the creation and promotion of a distinctive, movement-based, peer-led, collaborative, creative practice which enables people (especially women aged 50+) to tell their own stories and express their individual identity. A unique feature of this practice is the integration of digital technology, especially the use of a bespoke digital projection kit, nicknamed 'Doris'. The company has also created an online training programme, which enables the establishment of sustainable [Moving Well](#) groups across the country. The work has a strong inter-generational element.

'Challenging Perceptions of Self: Feeding Body Brain and Soul.'

Moving Memory Dance Theatre is a company whose vision is of a society within which older people lead longer, healthier and more fulfilled lives, because they participate in artistic, creative and physical activities. We achieve this through offering high quality performance and participatory opportunities. Animating autobiographical stories through movement, music, spoken word and digital forms. Empowering our participants to become the makers and the producers of the work.

Our core performance company currently comprises seven women aged 50–87, who have been collectively devising and performing for 10+ years. All identify a renewed sense of purpose, self, community, and creativity through sustained engagement with the company. Much of what the company stands for is captured in the core signature piece, 'Cracking the Crinoline', which placed the company centre stage on public platforms, streets, car parks, protest marches, shopping centres all over the UK and beyond. Celebrating the vibrancy of our performers and confronting ageism. A late member of the core ensemble, while undergoing medical tests, told me that at each appointment she brandished the publicity shot of 'Cracking the Crinoline' to ensure that clinicians knew they were not dealing with an old woman on her way

out, but a dynamic, creative person. A person of value, purpose and skill. An artist in her own right.

Sidney De Haan Research Centre led on the evaluation of our early work [Moving Well: A Prosper Adventure Project](#) (2014), concluding:

The social impact outcomes of the project are far-reaching. They relate to the development and refining of a model of participatory performing arts that can contribute to national targets for supporting older people's health and wellbeing and consequential prolonged independence into older age.

We have gone on to extend our offer, to developing a distinctive peer led programme which focuses primarily on Moving Well workshops. These inclusive, non-prescriptive workshops engage people in a movement-based practice that has multiple physical and emotional benefits. We start with people in a room, encouraging a theatre approach to animating experiences, culminating in some form of performance wherever possible. We believe it is this combination of creativity and performance that is the cherry on the cake. Engaging people at a very deep and meaningful level, resulting with a wide range of participants reporting a sense of fun, liberation, wellbeing and community

Sport scientist Ian Farr, [The Intergen31 Intergenerational - Theatre Project Reduces Implicit Negative Age Attitudes](#) (2016), noticed that we offer an alternative to other forms of physical activity, ultimately the development of positive social identity, self-concept and quality of life is evident. The past year has seen the work shift online, extending our reach and our practice, and to our delight, current and new groups report a sense of connection, creativity and community. Serving as a positive and sustaining experience during the pandemic. Our distinctive, peer led, collaborative approach, with its embedded element of public performance, exhibition and installation feeds the brain, the body, but also, the soul. Making space for new and different conversations, giving a creative expressive voice to those who have been marginalised. The older body, brain and soul is given pride of place and validated.

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## Dr Patricia Vella-Burrows, Canterbury Christ Church University.

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DR PATRICIA VELLA-BURROWS RN BA (Hons) Music. PhD (Music and Dementia) FRSPH, is Principal Research Fellow at Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, Lecturer and post-graduate academic supervisor, Canterbury Christ Church University. She is Director of Research for the Canterbury Cantata Trust and Research Lead for their Sing to Beat Parkinson's® training programme, Director, 'Music4Wellbeing', delivering research-based music services in health and social care settings and training healthcare staff to enhance their practice and the experiences of their cared-for through music. Her professional background is in Adult Nursing, specialising in neurodegenerative disorders (ND), specifically, models of dementia care. Trish's post-graduate academic research has centred on arts and health, exploring the effect of music on health and wellbeing and the integration of music into care programmes. As Director of Music4Wellbeing, Trish works with people affected by dementia and Parkinson's, designing and delivering evidence-based music/singing programmes and providing formal training programmes for care staff.

This conference is the result of years of conviction that creative and cultural activities for brain health have a fundamental role to play as pre-diagnostic practice for people at risk of a diagnosis of dementia, and those living with the condition and carers. Put simply, the aim is to enhance wellbeing, enhance autonomy and extend independence for as long as possible.

We heard the 15 regional meetings that Veronica and the A4D team organised over the last 15 or so months, which brought together key personal from academia, from SP, culture, health, and wellbeing. They took place in every NHS region in the UK, which I think is quite a feat. These regions have collectively yielded 450 hours worth of data from over 400 speakers. This has provided insight into best practice, and importantly, highlighted current operational shortcomings in the early stages of the national upscaling of SP. What we have heard over the last two days, I am sure you would all agree, adds considerable weight to the argument for some level of systemisation in the process of SP in this context. This is a concept sanctioned by the Minister for Health, Matt Hancock, if you look at the [Alzheimer's Society](#) website you will see his quote. It is also the subject plan for inclusion in the delayed Green Paper on social care, but of course it is not without its challenges.

What are the next steps? Well, A4D and the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, at Canterbury Christchurch University, are proposing research at doctoral level, and this will be built upon previous



research and what is happening right now. It will explore the depths of what is currently known about the operationalisation and impact of SP to creative and cultural activities for brain health. It will of course review the breadth of current literature. It will importantly use the intelligence gained from the 15 regional meetings, and all other relevant conferences and symposia. The research will work in partnership with people living with dementia. They will work alongside the Social Prescribing Network (SPN), Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA), the National Centre for Creative Health and crucially with local voluntary and public services in PCNs, including of course SPLW. The aim is to provide recommendations for a rationalised operational model. This will need to sit within a loose framework to accommodate local infrastructures, economies and proficient services, and of course the individual and changing needs of each person for whom SP, in this context, could play a fundamental role in maintaining their wellbeing for as long as possible. We are at the early stages of planning, but please do feel free to contact me for more information. I can keep you informed as we develop this proposal.

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