**Supplementary table 2: Qualitative themes and illustrative quotes from people living with dementia**

| **Theme** | **Description** | **Sub-themes** | **Illustrative quotes** |
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| Reflection, opinion and recall of activities | The person living with dementia expressed definite opinions about the art group and their preferences for engaging with the activity, through sharing their likes and dislikes. | Memory of the group and activities  Strong opinions about ‘art’  Expression of preferences | * *“If I didn't like it I would tell you”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“[I enjoyed] painting – you were able to do what you wanted and express yourself”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“They’re entitled to do what they want, talk about it, but I couldn’t agree with them. I’m a fan of the old matters”* (Male, attending NHS assessment unit). * *“Because my wrists have gone I can't do heavy carving so I have just gone along with it since I have been here but this new kind of art is interesting. I'm using it in my sense”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“At times an individual would irritate me but you get over it”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). |
| Well-being and inner strength | Participants discussed the effect of the art group on the participant in terms of changes to their mood, or their feelings about the art group such as creating a sense of achievement. For many participants, continuing art engagement provided a sense of looking forward to the future. | Effect on confidence, effect on mood, relaxation, enjoyment and fun, looking forward to attending, continuing art engagement after research, feeling valued, sense of achievement and helping with condition. | * *“I come alive when I go to the group”* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“The art, well it just lifts the whole place and everyone”.* (Female, attending NHS assessment unit). * *“We have a laugh which is half the battle”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“I enjoyed it. It did me good. I felt like I belonged. Nice to be part of a group. It relaxed me. I lost all my worries concentrating on that. I laughed. I look at what I did and think, well, I am not useless! it's quite good isn't it! [… It ] stopped me going down. It's something to be proud of. Because we were all a bit of a desperate group before you came (Male, attending NHS assessment unit).* * *The group sucks you out of the abyss, lifted me out of depression”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“It was very pleasant, it made me feel content. […] I’d like to carry on if this is offered again”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). |
| Factors influencing participation | There were a number of references to health conditions (both dementia and non-related) and the limits conditions had on their ability to participate or access resources. In the community, accessing transport came up frequently and the difficulties in distance to reach activities and services. The person’s perception of dementia (in themselves and others) also presented a challenge. | Accessing transport, change of address, venue, effects of (poor) health on attendance, stigma of condition, getting outside of own home, supporting research and managing stigma of condition | * *“Getting the taxi was pretty good, everybody could file in. It was quite good a load of people in a taxi you get to know people”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“The follow on group started yesterday. I was a bit disappointed some could not get there due to the transport, it cost me £12 for a return taxi fare. I can get to [the follow on group], you need to go regularly”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“I'm interested in joining <another follow on group> - location suits me better there I can get my shopping done at the same time”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“I wanted to put something back to repay what I have had from society”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“I was initially very reticent- afraid that others dementia would be more advanced but that wore off as the weeks went on and it got to the stage I enjoy going so met a lot of people through the group”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). |
| Social connectedness | Importance of social cohesion of group. Social aspect can in some cases be the dominant reason for attending. Social dynamics can affect engagement with the art group. | Enjoying social engagement, social dynamics of the art group, getting out, role of humour and laughter, size of group, the group as the meeting place, meeting people in same situation, social as equal (or in some cases) more important than the art. | * *“I enjoyed the social interaction. I’m hopeless at art”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“You get to know people better when you see what they've made”.* (Female, attending NHS assessment unit). * *“Felt very strange at the start I was a bit an outsider. I did not want to break up their conversation but I just got on with what we were doing. I was a bit confused what the aim was - a social club or trying to make artists of us. I was getting used to people as we got along and started talking to one chap”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“The members lived too far away from me to make friends, all spread out, but I talked to them all”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“When you are on your own I get fed up being on my own. Going to the group had a good laugh with everybody”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“Each one helped another because they more than anyone else understood what having Alzheimer's is like”. (*Male, living in private accommodation)*.* * *It got me out of the house, normally only go out once every three weeks”. (*Male, living in private accommodation). * *“Liked it. Change of occasion. Connection with other residents. Companionship*”. (Male, living in care home). |
| Stimulating experience | Focussed on enjoyment or dislike of the art activity including techniques or viewing, the level of activity, skills of the artist, exhibition and celebration events (where held). The art provides stimulus for conversation as well as cognitive stimulation. | Value of the art work, skills of the artist, celebration and exhibition, level of activity, art techniques, settling into the group, views on art, reminiscence, comparing art skills, learning new skills, stimulation, aesthetics of art and art as offering an avenue to conversation. | * *“I think its as important the activity It keeps you mind much more active you have to think about what you are doing in the group. if I hadn't got a group too go to I would be lazying around doing nothing”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“I was a bit apprehensive initially I never done anything like this before half way through course this changed and I then felt happier in my myself”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“I revisited the exhibition last week and took photos. I realised each artwork was a continuation and could see the linkages and reused materials throughout”* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“To me, it ain’t art”.* (Male, attending NHS assessment unit). * *“I enjoy seeing what everyone else made and if mine was better than them or not”. (*Female, living in private accommodation). * *“It really wasn't of interest to me because of the level of art in the group”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). * *“Thoroughly enjoyed the exhibition and daughter is taking friends to see it again soon”.* (Female, living in private accommodation). * *“I made a raft and it sunk, we used to get on the lake with rafts to collect cash”.* (Male, living in private accommodation). |