

Case study:

The 21st Century Tea Dance

Entelechy Arts works with a diversity of groups living in south east London. The company works with marginalised and excluded communities including older people who have learning or age-acquired disabilities. Entelechy works across art forms including theatre, dance, music, the spoken word, craft work and digital media.

Entelechy's 21st Century Tea Dance programme has become an important event in the lives of many isolated people in Deptford. They work with about 150 individuals, of which about a quarter experience loneliness. Some live in an institutional setting, others on their own, and many have suffered the onset of chronic illness or loss of a partner and find it impossible to leave their homes without the help of others.

Watch a short film of a recent Tea Dance [here!](#)

What is going well?

Entelechy Arts identify the most lonely people in their community through a regular programme of small-scale interventions, events and activities. Entelechy artists work in hospital wards, alongside adult social care teams, in sheltered housing units, care homes and with small voluntary run clubs in church halls. This enables them to reach individuals who are excluded from or unaware of social support available.

The Tea Dance is both a social event and a shared act of creating large scale performance. This brings isolated individuals into contact with many others: active older people, young people, artists and performers an exciting scoop of people who reflect the diversity of south London streets.

The events now happen in a range of venues, including large art houses, theatres and community centres. In one care home, residents and staff now co-curate a Dance. During an evaluation, one carer commented: *"There are not many people who have visitors there. It really shocked me. Only arts projects like Entelechy lighten the load"*.

What can we learn from the 21st Century Tea Dance?

David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts, makes a number of recommendations for anyone looking to run their own 21st Century Tea Dance:

- Choose high profile civic spaces as venues

- Continuity is important. Entelechy's Tea Dances happen on a quarterly basis. Having something to prepare for and look forward to is a key element of the programme
- Involve older people in the programming and design of the events (all 21st Century Tea Dances are co-produced with older participants)
- Establish sustained relationships with other services, activities or programmes to find the most isolated people
- Invest in high quality marketing material
- Have fun/get creative/work with artists!

For more information about the 21st Century Tea Dance and Entelechy Arts, visit: www.entelechyarts.org or watch this [short video](#).