

# Human Right to Cultural Life



## A Slice\* about Are Ye Dancin'?

\* Over 20 different strands of work took place between March and October 2022 as part of Rights Made Real Phase 2. Each of these strands was situated under one of 4 Human Rights. This Slice offers a slice of insight into one of those strands.

# HUMAN RIGHT TO CULTURAL LIFE

## A Slice about 'Are Ye Dancin' ?'

The Are Ye Dancin'? Performance was offered to care homes by Tenterhooks as part of the Rights Made Real project.

### **A brief description of 'Are Ye Dancin'?**

A non-verbal performance suitable for audiences age 5 to 105. Inspired by silent movies, variety shows, and Glasgow's iconic dance halls.

A wee woman is all packed up and ready to make a new start. All she needs to do is wait (without incident) for her taxi to arrive. But life is never that simple, especially for someone who can't resist dancing to the beat of their own drum.

Tenterhooks went on tour in September 2022, and performed in 7 care homes in Islay, Oban, Greenock, Helensburgh and Glasgow.

The show involved Diane Thornton (pictures below) as the 'wee woman', and Suzie Ferguson in the role of stage-hand.

The show had a 'soft start' and 'soft finish' as the audience got to see the 'behind the scenes' of stage set-up, where Suzie engaged in banter with the audience as a 'warm up' for the show ahead, and make an event of the waiting for the show to begin. Music was played during the tidy up, so that there was a gradual rather than abrupt ending. After the show Suzie gratefully accepted help from audience members in the tidy-up, with one gentleman helping to pack things up and another lady assisting with carrying things to the door.

Suzie sat among the audience during the show where she focused on amplifying the contributions of people- for example during one show a lady commented out during the show "well that's not very funny" when a wee misfortune happened the wee woman as part of the show. Suzie then echoed this, and agreed out loud that it wasn't very funny. At other points where people were saying "didn't you do well" to Diane, this was also picked up on by Suzie and amplified. The purpose of this amplification of people were saying was to validate whatever response people offered to what they were experiencing, and to give permission for people to experience the show in whatever way they wanted to- be that offering to help, sharing opinions during the show etc., if people had come up beside Diane during the show this would also have been fine.



## Creating Connections with the Right to Cultural Life and the Principles from the National Care Standards

Some key elements of this opportunity connected with the right to cultural life and ‘be included’ were:

- Opportunity offered to locations (islands of Argyll & Bute) that might not ordinarily have access to a range of cultural shows
- Nature of the show designed to be accessible to everyone
- Emphasis placed on offering a theatrical experience that encouraged people to express their experience of the show- with the understanding that the right to critique is an important part of self-expression and an indicator of engagement in the experience (rather than everyone having a uniform positive experience being the only good outcome)

## What we’ve Heard

The following are reflections gathered from Suzie Ferguson and Diane Thornton

### Amplification and Validation

An important component of the show was the flexibility and openness to hearing from and including audience members in the show, and that their contributions, whatever they may have been, were recognised and celebrated.

Some residents did speak out during the show- and this was picked up on and affirmed by Suzie. This also raises the point that some audience members might not enjoy interruptions and so there is a skill to validating the person who has expressed themselves, while also being sensitive to those for whom it is important to focus solely on the show.

## A Theatrical Experience

Components which contributed to both the accessibility and the sense of theatre were that it was a very visual show. The stage set-up and Suzie's presence in the audience were also intentionally designed to help create a distinction between 'real-life' and the performance. Suzie was also able to celebrate the effort of the audience in preparing for their theatre experience by commenting on people having their hair done and how they'd gotten dressed up for the show- this noticing of their efforts appeared to be well received.

## Engagement

Feedback from residents and staff included:

"that was something different", "very impressive", "it was brilliant- residents were so engaged".

Are Ye Dancin'? has elements of slapstick humour that were well received by many audience members, and there were also some who were less sure about it.

This connects with the idea of how do we decide what might be enjoyable for a range of diverse people who might be in the audience in a care home- do we base decisions on what we see as 'safe-bets'- is there room for taking some risks? Is there also scope, as described above, to see critique as an important component of engagement, and a natural part of being human to have the opportunity to have a variety of experiences, and like some things and not others.

## Something you Might want to Ask or Think more About

What is your perspective on the points discussed above?

Are there further conversations you would like to have around the idea of desired outcomes from people in care homes participating in events linked with cultural life?

