

hoot creative arts  
Breathing Space



# Unlocking Creativity

An Introduction to  
Creative Activities  
for People with  
Dementia



# Contents

Page 1. Contents

Page 2. Introduction

Page 3. The Benefits of 'Being Creative'

Page 5. Activity 1: Clay Coil Pot

Page 8. Activity 2: Fabric Art

Page 12. Activity 3: Printing with Stamps

Page 15. Activity 4: Casting

Page 18. Glossary of Terms

Page 20. Stockists of Arts & Crafts Supplies

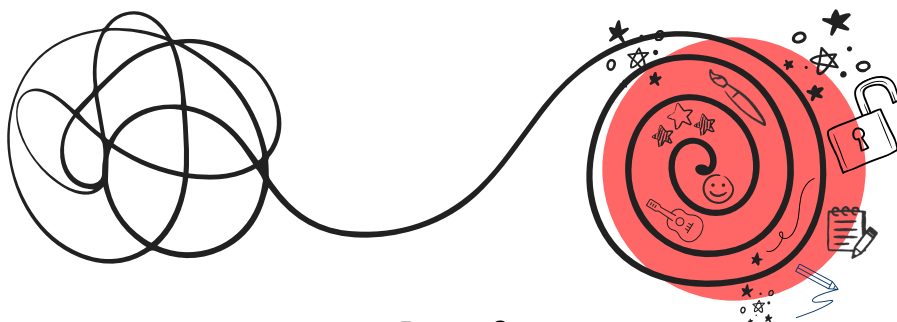
# Introduction

Welcome to "Unlocking Creativity: An Introduction to Creative Activities for People with Dementia," a resource created to empower group leaders, volunteers, facilitators, care home staff, and all those engaging with individuals within the dementia community.

At **hoot creative arts**, we recognise the profound impact of creative engagement on people with dementia. Within these pages, you will discover a collection of activities carefully curated to provide sensory stimulation, and support individuals in expressing themselves in a safe and inclusive environment.

This guide has been co-created with our existing dementia groups. You will see suggestions, quotes and top tips from our group members and volunteers as you read through.

These activities are a taster of the types of activities that you could try with your groups and are a good way to gauge what people do and don't want to explore further. Most importantly it's an opportunity to try something new together and have fun doing it.



# The Benefits of 'Being Creative'

Engaging in creative activities holds significant value for individuals with dementia due to several important reasons:

- **Cognitive Stimulation:** Creative activities stimulate various cognitive functions, including memory, attention, problem-solving, and creativity itself. This engagement can potentially slow down cognitive decline and help maintain cognitive abilities for a longer period.



- **Emotional Expression and Wellbeing:** Creative activities provide an outlet for emotional expression, allowing individuals with dementia to communicate feelings, memories, and experiences non-verbally. This expression can enhance emotional well-being, reduce stress, and improve mood.



- **Sense of Achievement and Self-Worth:** Completing creative tasks, regardless of the outcome, fosters a sense of accomplishment and boosts self-esteem. It emphasises the individual's abilities rather than focusing on limitations imposed by dementia.



- **Social Interaction and Connection:** Participating in group creative activities promotes social interaction, communication, and a sense of belonging. It provides opportunities for individuals to connect, share experiences, and engage in meaningful interactions with peers, caregivers, and volunteers.



- **Reduction of Behavioural Symptoms:** Creative activities can reduce agitation, aggression, and other challenging behaviours associated with dementia. They offer a positive and calming outlet for individuals experiencing frustration or restlessness.



- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Engaging in enjoyable and meaningful activities enhances the overall quality of life for individuals with dementia. It provides a sense of purpose, joy, and fulfilment, contributing to a more positive outlook.



- **Stimulation of Different Senses:** Many creative activities engage multiple senses, such as touch, sight, and hearing. This multi-sensory stimulation can be especially beneficial for individuals with dementia, providing varied and engaging experiences.



- **Preservation of Identity:** Creative activities allow individuals to express their personalities, preferences, and past experiences, helping preserve their sense of identity despite the cognitive changes they may be experiencing.



In essence, creative activities serve as a holistic approach to dementia care, focusing not only on cognitive stimulation but also on emotional, social, and psychological well-being. They provide avenues for expression, connection, and enjoyment, contributing significantly to the overall quality of life for individuals living with dementia.

# Activity 1: Clay Coil Pot

## Introduction:

This guide contains everything needed to create a personalised coil pot. Choose the shape and decoration for your pot to make it unique. The pot can be a bowl, tea-light holder, container, or plant holder.

## Materials & Equipment:

- Air-dry clay
- Zip-loc bag
- Cutting/shaping tools (e.g., plastic fork, wooden peg)
- Mats (place mats will do)
- Recycled pot for the slip
- Sheet with labelled drawings of tool shapes



## Instructions:

### 1. Preparing the Clay:

- Mix clay and water to create slip (glue for clay).
- Ball up a fist-sized amount of clay for the pot base (keep it covered when not in use).

### 2. Creating the Base:

- Roll out a piece of clay, press flat with your fingers, and cut a shape for the base – a circle is the easiest, you could draw around a cup.
- Score the top edge with your tool, this helps attach the first coil (see Image 1).

### 3. Building the Coil Pot:

- Roll clay into a coil sausage (about 1 cm thick) and apply slip to attach to the base.
- Apply the coil round the scored edge, then continue coiling up, adding slip for adhesion, pressing gently downwards to make it firm.
- Smooth the first coil onto the base to strengthen. (See Image 2)



Image 1



Image 2

### 4. Finishing Touches:

- Smooth the inside of the pot for strength- and the outside coils if needed.
- Let it dry for a day, then paint with acrylic paints.



#### Meanings

Slip - a "glue" for sticking your pieces together. Slip is made from a small amount of water and clay mixed into a muddy consistency.

Score - make scratches in the clay on the pieces you want to stick together.

Coil - longish 'sausages' of clay.



## Prompts & Suggestions:


- Assist in holding the tools if needed.
- Encourage tactile exploration with clay.
- Offer handwashing or wipes for comfort.
- Explore alternative clay activities e.g. textures, imprints.
- Use a plastic plant pot to coil around if needed.

## Encouragements & Tips:

- Emphasise the process over the outcome.
- Mistakes can be opportunities for creativity.


## Take it Further:

- Cut shapes or add decorations to the pot.
- Experiment with shaping techniques.



“I think the air-dry clay could be really good for us, we could make something one week and bring it back out a couple of weeks later to paint.”

Group Volunteer



“We’ve got to find things that they [the participants] can do and feel comfortable doing without ‘putting them on the spot’ because we want them to leave with a smile on their face.”

Group Volunteer

# Activity 2: Fabric Art

## Introduction:

Explore creating artwork on fabric using simple paints and pens. Your finished piece can be hung on a wall, framed, or used to decorate various fabric items.

## Materials & Equipment:

- Fabric for painting/ printing
- Twig/dowel and string for hanging.
- Fabric paints & pens, brushes, paper plates
- Leaves, flowers, etc., for printing
- Printed patterns, paper, pencils
- Reference images/photos for inspiration

## Optional

- Printed letters to copy or trace
- Carbon paper
- Beads & feathers for embellishment



## Getting Personal:

- Gather leaves, flowers, and textures from your garden or outdoor space. Feel and explore different textures to inspire your artwork.
- Look for interesting textures and think about the feel, smells, and the shape of things.

## Instructions:

### 1. Setting Up:

- Lay out paints, pens, brushes, water pot, and fabric.
- Protect the table surface.
- Plan a design on paper or start directly on the fabric.

## 2. Printing with Nature:

- Use a brush to apply a thin layer of paint to the underside of a leaf.
- Place the leaf on the fabric, press gently, and peel back.
- Experiment with colours for unique effects.

## 3. Tracing and Drawing:

- Draw round flowers, leaves, anything that looks interesting.
- Find a pattern that you would like to trace, using fabric pens or carbon paper (see Image 1).
- Add lettering, you could trace around pre-cut letters/stencils or use the carbon paper to trace directly onto the fabric.
- Combine techniques: draw, paint, print, trace.



Image 1

## 4. Finishing Touches:

- Let the artwork dry for 8 hours; some fabric paint may need to be ironed.
- Attach string or beads to each end for decoration.
- To display: Pieces could be hung, sew, or glue a channel for a dowel and add string to the ends, peg to a line or even frame it.

## Further Prompts & Suggestions:

- Observe and collect various patterns for inspiration.
- Consider framing your work or using it to decorate fabric items.
- You could work together on a tablecloth for the group (paper or cloth), adding to it over several weeks.
- Embellish with beads, buttons, ribbons using sewing or glue.
- You could copy the patterns from someone's clothes or tattoos!

## Encouragements & Tips:

- Explore freely; there's no right or wrong way.
- Enjoy experimenting with colours, patterns, and natural forms.





## TOP TIPS

- Create a group piece of work by decorating a big tablecloth together and use it for special occasions such as a tea party.
- Keep everyone out of trouble, ensure that everyone has aprons, sleeves rolled up and opt for paints that wash out before setting.
- Need drawing inspiration? You could trace the pattern of somebody's clothes or tattoos (with their consent!)

"We could make a 'Thursday Group' banner and every week we could bring it out and hang it."  
Group Volunteer

"People could trace a letter from their name."  
Group Volunteer

"Reading and writing activities don't really work, as people have lost this ability, and it can make them feel incapable."  
Group Volunteer

# Activity 3: Printing with Stamps

## Introduction:

Create beautiful paper prints effortlessly using pre-cut rubber stamps. Some stamps are patterns while others feature recognisable animals, encouraging storytelling and creative narrative.

## Materials & Equipment:

- Pre-cut rubber stamps
- Paper plates
- Acrylic Paint
- Brushes (thick & detail)
- Pencils
- Various papers, card
- Aprons
- String and pegs (for bunting)



## Instructions:

### 1. Preparation:

- Protect the table with plastic or newspapers and wear an apron.
- Use coloured or plain paper provided or create your own background by mixing and applying coloured paints thinly with brushes.
- Dry the paper on a washing line or flat surface.

### 2. Stamping:

- Choose a stamp and brush a thin layer of paint on a paper plate.
- Lift and firmly place your stamp into the layer of paint.

- Press the stamp onto the paper.
- Repeat, creating patterns or images.
- Experiment with positioning and repetition e.g. repeat in a circle.

### 3. Drying

- Leave your artwork to dry, on a rack, windowsill or pegged on an indoor string line.

### Exploring Materials:

- Try reusing old packaging materials for printing, such as plastic containers, fruit nets and bubble wrap. Play with their texture by using them as stamps.
- Explore printing on various surfaces like newspaper, book pages, envelopes, or cardboard boxes for different textures and patterns.

### Further Prompts & Suggestions:

- Create bunting by printing on paper triangles and folding over string.
- Create cards and decorate the envelope.
- Consider printing on canvas for a different surface.
- Enhance stamped images with drawings or paintings to create environments or stories- you could work together on this.
- Use the colour mix sheet to help mix colours. Add white for pastel tones.





## TOP TIPS

- Colour wash a piece of paper, and let it dry, to create a coloured background for your stamps to create a composition.
- You could print a series of greetings cards for participants to take home and/or gift.
- You can roll out the clay and cut out shapes, could theme this activity to tropical creatures or Christmas decorations. Remember to pierce a hole to thread through a ribbon.
- Air dry clay objects could be stored in a box to dry, but it would need to be a cardboard box.

“Old shirts from the charity shop are a good idea for making sure people can protect their clothes.”

Group Volunteer

“Sometimes carers can make those with dementia feel ‘disabled’, as they can often ‘take over’ from someone who is capable of independently taking part.”

Group Volunteer



# Activity 4: Casting

## Introduction:

Explore creating casts in plaster of Paris by pressing natural objects into clay or using personal items. Learn how to make a hand cast using alginate, which is a natural seaweed-based casting material.

## Materials & Equipment:

- Natural objects like pinecones or shells, paper doilies, bits of jewellery, etc.
- Plaster of Paris
- Face masks
- Clay
- Alginate
- Recycled plastic containers
- Spoons
- Mats and cardboard
- Plastic sheet or newspaper to cover the table



## Instructions:

### 1. Preparation:

- Cover the table with a plastic sheet or newspaper.
- Explore the collection of natural objects and examples of casts, discussing shapes, textures, and feel.

## 2. Plaster Casting:

- Choose an object or texture to cast and press it into a rolled-out clay piece.
- Pull up the clay edges to create a shallow bowl to hold the liquid plaster mix.
- Put water and plaster into separate plastic pots to the marked levels. Mixing 2 parts plaster to 1 part water
- Mix water and plaster: pour into the clay mould.
- Let it set for 30–60 minutes, till hard and dry.
- Carefully release the plaster cast from the clay mould when hardened.

### Further Ideas for Plaster Casts:

- Embed string, wire, or small objects into the wet plaster.
- Carve marks or set beads before the plaster sets.
- Paint the hardened plaster with inks or water-based paints.



### Alginate Hand Cast:

- Apply hand cream and cup your hands together to create a bowl shape.
- Mix alginate and water; pour it into the cupped hands and let it set.
- Peel the cast away slowly to reveal detailed impressions.



## Further Ideas for Alginate Casts:

- Experiment with multiple hand casts to see differences.
- Embed objects like pinecones or strings for hanging.

"You could use the plaster casting to make Christmas baubles."

Group Volunteer

## What is Alginate?

Alg-in-ate - is actually made from algae! It is commonly used in dentistry for taking molds of teeth. The benefits are that it dries very quickly and pulls away easily.



### TOP TIPS

- On days where there aren't many support staff per participant, opt for a simple activity that's easy to manage.
- Dementia affects people in many ways, if someone sits in silence and doesn't verbally take part it doesn't mean that they aren't engaged and listening.
- Those with acquired brain injury with dementia often present differently.

"But we mustn't like overload. But like if we do one crafty thing a month. That's probably enough."

Group Volunteer



# Glossary of Terms

Some of the terms that **hoot** uses when describing our creative activities.

**Adaptability:** The ability to modify or adjust activities to suit individual preferences, capabilities, or circumstances.

**Multi-Sensory:** Involving or stimulating multiple senses, such as touch, sight, sound, taste, or smell.

**Cognitive Stimulation:** Activities that engage mental processes such as memory, problem-solving, attention, and creativity.

**Person-Centred Approach:** A care approach focusing on the individual's preferences, needs, and strengths, respecting their autonomy and dignity.

**Non-Verbal Communication:** Communication without the use of words, including gestures, facial expressions, and body language.

**Emotional Expression:** The act of conveying emotions, feelings, or experiences through non-verbal or verbal means.

**Inclusivity:** Creating an environment that welcomes and accommodates individuals of diverse abilities, backgrounds, and preferences.



# Glossary of Terms

**Positive Reinforcement:** Encouraging and rewarding desired behaviours or efforts to promote motivation and self-esteem.

**Social Interaction:** Engagement and communication between individuals, fostering connections, sharing, and companionship.

**Quality of Life:** The overall well-being and satisfaction experienced by an individual, encompassing physical, emotional, and social aspects.



# Stockists of Arts & Crafts Supplies

## Local Stores in Kirklees and Nearby Areas

---

### **AI Stationery**

9 Kirkgate, Huddersfield  
HD1 1QJ

### **Art & Craft Factory**

Based in Huddersfield  
[www.artandcraftfactory.co.uk](http://www.artandcraftfactory.co.uk)

### **Calder Art Supplies**

5 Byram Arcade,  
Westgate Road  
Huddersfield, HD1 1ND  
[www.calderartsupplies.co.uk](http://www.calderartsupplies.co.uk)

### **Creative Craft Centre**

Wesley Chambers, Union  
Street, Dewsbury WF13 1AJ

### **Fabworks Mill Shop**

Providence Mills, Bradford  
Street, Dewsbury WF13 1EN  
[fabworks.co.uk](http://fabworks.co.uk)

### **Samuel Taylors Button Box**

Pack Horse Shopping Centre,  
Huddersfield HD1 2RT  
[www.samuelstaylor.com](http://www.samuelstaylor.com)

## Online Art & Craft Supply Stores

---



### **Amazon UK**

[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

### **Jackson's Art Supplies**

[www.jacksonsart.com](http://www.jacksonsart.com)

### **Baker Ross**

[www.bakerross.co.uk](http://www.bakerross.co.uk)

### **The Range**

[www.therange.co.uk](http://www.therange.co.uk)

### **Cass Art**

[www.cassart.co.uk](http://www.cassart.co.uk)

### **The Works**

[www.theworks.co.uk](http://www.theworks.co.uk)

### **Hobbycraft**

[www.hobbycraft.co.uk](http://www.hobbycraft.co.uk)

# Acknowledgements

This guide is part of **hoot's** Breathing Space project which is part of our Out of the Blue programme commissioned by Kirklees Council and the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

We would like to thank everyone at 'Thursday Group', a young-onset dementia group, for their support and involvement in creating this guide, especially our delivery partner Kirklees Dementia Hub (part of Community Links)

## About **hoot creative arts**

**hoot creative arts** is an arts and mental health charity based in the town centre of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. We offer a whole range of creative activities to help people to look after their mental health and wellbeing.

## Get in touch


Website: [www.hootcreativearts.co.uk](http://www.hootcreativearts.co.uk)

Email: [info@hootcreativearts.co.uk](mailto:info@hootcreativearts.co.uk)

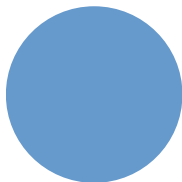
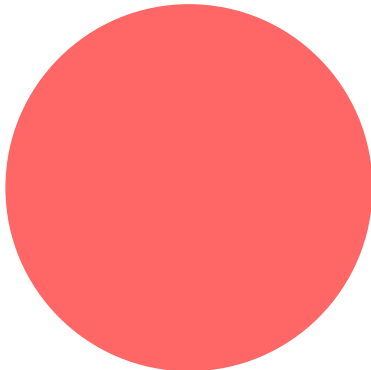
Phone: 01484 516224

 Facebook: hoot creative arts

 Instagram: @hootcreativearts

 Twitter/X: @hootmusic





# hoot

creative arts



Bates Mill, Milford Street, Huddersfield, HD1 3DX  
01484 516224 | [www.hootcreativearts.co.uk](http://www.hootcreativearts.co.uk)

Registered Charity 1146358  
Company No 07980273



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL**  
ENGLAND



Funded by  
**UK Government**