COLLECTIVE ENCOUNTERS

4th December 2014
Mandy Redvers-Rowe

Collective Encounters' research trip to Hogewey

Introduction

On Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th June 2014, Mandy Redvers-Rowe, Creative Producer and artistic lead for Live and Learn, travelled to The Netherlands to visit Hogewey, the radical residential complex designed to offer an alternative approach to care for people with dementia. The residential complex is virtually indistinguishable from other complexes in the area but, unlike other facilities, offers its residents gardens, a supermarket, a theatre, restaurant and café, which are all open to the wider community. Residents live in shared houses and, although they are not allowed outside the complex, within its confines they are able to operate independently. Mandy was invited to observe for two days and this is the consequent report.

Background

The care complex in Weesp was built in 2009, but the radical approach to dementia care that is practised at Hogewey has been developed over the last twenty years. Janette Spiering, Director of Hogewey, originally worked in a multi-storey care home located next door to where the new complex has now been built. Whilst working there, she and her colleagues became convinced that people with dementia should be encouraged to be as active as possible, and that they would benefit from living in smaller family units rather than the standard hospital or institutional style settings. They began to re-organise the internal layout, creating living spaces and dining areas for each smaller group. They raised money to buy portable kitchens so that each family group could experience the normal smells, sounds and atmosphere of a genuine home. They set up a small supermarket so that people could buy and choose their own food, as well as cook and eat together.

When a government-owned nursing home group called Vivium decided to build new facilities, the staff team who had been operating this alternative system were able to work with architects to design their ideal complex.

Description of Hogewey

The most important principal of the physical environment is that, within the complex, people with dementia are able to move around freely. There is level access throughout and there are no closed doors or no-go areas and no one is ever in the wrong place at the wrong time. However, for people's safety, residents are not allowed outside the boundaries unless accompanied.

The entrance area is a large bright space with a set of electric glass doors that open from the outside automatically but are operated from the inside by the receptionist.

There is a long reception desk to the right and a seating area to the left. Opposite is another set of glass automatic doors that open on to a courtyard with a colour-lit fountain at its centre. Flowerbeds and seating surround this space and it is regularly used to host markets, fairs and other celebratory events.

Around the central courtyard the public buildings are located including the restaurant, bar, supermarket, theatre, conference space, workshop rooms and therapy rooms. If you walk around the fountain and towards the other side you will reach the various houses, set along small curving pathways. Each house is slightly different in appearance, layout and decoration; they have been designed to reflect the different types of homes people have lived in, i.e. privileged, culturally European, culturally Asian, artistic, rural, urban, etc.

Description of Activities
Residents pay the standard rate for a state-run nursing home, and the facility is supplemented by the commercially run restaurant, theatre and conference centre. Each resident is offered one activity per week and any additional ones are paid for separately.

Half way through every morning activity, coffee and biscuits are served. During the afternoon grape juice, eggnog, etc. is served in wine glasses. All crockery and glasses used are elegant and refined, demonstrating a sense of dignity for the residents, treating them as grown ups – not providing drinks in utilitarian, easy to hold drink vessels.

Music
In recognition that people have varied musical tastes there are several music-based activities.

Folk music: the session observed took place in the bar area. Traditional folk songs were sung, sometimes with recorded backing and sometimes not. Most people sang along, banged spoons or their hands on tables in accompaniment, or happily sat and listened.

Classical music appreciation: the session observed took place in the music room. A variety of classical music was played, some residents stood and conducted, others hummed and a few sat and cried. This workshop was incredibly moving as the music had such an emotional effect.

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Movement
The session observed took place in the physiotherapy room. All were sat in a circle, the session leader began by introducing rhythm games, and people were encouraged to clap them out on hands and knees. She then gave everyone a stick and introduced lots of balloons. Various exercises were carried out, passing the balloon around the room, hitting the balloons up high into the air. The leader then swapped the sticks for badminton rackets and introduced further exercises. This time they involved using the rackets to direct the balloons across the space, then to aim at a volunteer who stood in the centre.

Cookery
This was the first session observed and took place in the kitchen. People were seated around a large wooden table, coffee pots with fresh coffee were placed about and all had small delicate cups and saucers in front of them. Those who could help themselves did and staff poured drinks for anyone they knew needed that help. The air was filled with the most delicious smell of baking; the group had made a gorgeous Butter Cake, which was cooking as we entered. The atmosphere was relaxed, the radio was on quietly playing in the background and people were chatting. When the cake was cooked and cooled a little, everyone ate and drank even more coffee.

Cycling
There were several duet bikes, where people cycled side by side. Each day an employee or volunteer would take individuals out of the centre for a cycle. The bikes are designed to be well balanced and, if one of the cyclists is unable to physically cycle, one person can operate the joint cycle independently. Staff were pleased as they had just been donated an electric duet bike.

Gardening
There were raised flowerbeds scattered all around the space and residents were encouraged to garden and participate if they were interested.

Therapy Room
There was a specific multi-sensory room designed for anyone with late stage dementia. In this room was a bed that could gently rock, various options for lighting and sound. Aromatherapy was practiced to support people's relaxation.

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What Aspects Could We Adopt In the UK?

- We could look at the advantages of grouping residents together in smaller family units. Providing a kitchen area, daily household activities such as shopping for food, cooking and cleaning, surrounding residents with familiar sounds, smells and routines.

- We could recognise that residents have various interests, that although many may identify an interest in music, the style of music will vary. That in consequence when activities are developed this should be considered and a range of choices should be offered.

- Residents should be encouraged, if interested, to get involved in the daily routines of cooking and cleaning, gardening, maintenance, caring for others and leading activities. This in recognition that although someone themselves need care they should not be seen as redundant, that they can still contribute.

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Conclusion

The visit to Hogewey has enabled Mandy to see how it is possible to create choices for people with dementia, within the context of providing twenty four hour care and support. Choices are restricted, people do have to move into the complex, they are unable to leave it unaccompanied and they are no longer free to go where they want whenever they want. However, Hogewey residents are able to make choices on a daily basis about what time they get up, what they wear, what and where they eat, what classes they do or don't do, who they spend time with etc.

As a company developing creative interventions for people with dementia, it has re-enforced the importance and power of creative participation. The importance that building choices and discussing social issues, although difficult and complex, can and should be pursued with this specific group. The importance of remembering that all groups are made up of individuals and that our artistic offer should be flexible in order to respond to the interests represented within each group. And that this is particularly important for people who access our provision who have restricted opportunities i.e. people who live in residential care, or for those who access day care.

In terms of further research, it would be interesting to look at other ground breaking models to see if we can continue to develop our understanding in this field. For example, some work is being carried out in USA by Brenner Pathways using the Montessori Educational approach to dementia care.

What we can do as a company is to:

- Continue to develop our choice led, person led approach to running creative workshops for people with dementia

- Continue to develop training opportunities for Carers to support the introduction of creative interventions in the lives of people with dementia

- Continue to develop resources to support this process

- Creatively engage Care Home and Day Centre management to explore ways to introduce choice for their residents within the restrictions of providing care

- Creatively engage other Arts Organisations to disseminate our findings and stress the importance of providing choice within the framework of participatory engagement