

Teaching for **SOLIDARITY**

The Hands Project (a working title...)

Aim

While many older people live happy, active, comfortable lives, there is plenty of evidence of chronic levels of loneliness and poverty among the elderly. One million over 65 say they often or always feel lonely and 5 million say TV is their main companion (Campaign to End Loneliness: <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk/>). With the outsourcing of care and drastic cuts, reports of abuse and neglect are rising. We want to offer regular hand massage to isolated elderly people and provide them with companionship and physical and emotional support.

Why hand massage?

'We use our hands in practically everything we do – a regular hand massage can be of enormous benefit. The hands are one of the first places to show neglect and are easy to reach ...I think that to be able to give hand massage is one of the most useful skills in the world...Wherever you are, you can always relax and comfort someone with a hand massage.'
(*Massage – the Ultimate Illustrated Guide* by Clare Maxwell-Hudson)

Massage can:

- Communicate love, care, affection and empathy, offering comfort and serenity
- Encourage activity and vitality, relieve depression and reduce anxiety
- Stimulate the circulation, reduce aches and pains and loosen joints and muscles
- Offset the need for pain medication by releasing endorphins into the system.

'After my hand massage, I can do things for myself again. My hands are less puffy and stiff, and more supple.' 'My weekly massage makes all the difference to my life. Afterwards I walk straighter and have more vitality and zest for life.' (Clare's clients)

Giving a massage benefits the giver too.

What next? We want to create a **simple model** which can be adapted in all communities. You might want to offer hand massage as an individual for people you know but if you're interested in setting up a local project, you might think about:

How to recruit volunteers

- Find a school/FE College/adult group of volunteers (8-10 people?), could be Physiotherapy or Care students retired people, faith group, your friends, colleagues.
- How/where to promote/advertise the project. Which networks? Do you need a leaflet/web-based advertisement? Use social media?
- Volunteers need to commit to being available on a regular basis over time

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- This could be an employment creation scheme or a social enterprise

NB – CRB checks. Find out what sort of safeguarding you need. This will depend on the settings i.e. need greater safeguarding if you're going to people's own home

What support would your volunteers need, and how could you provide it?

Volunteers need care and network opportunities to meet/share/discuss impact of the project

Need someone to support volunteers and monitor progress. Need structure/administration

Need someone who's a contact for volunteers – for feedback and emergencies.

Find an organisation in contact with isolated older people either at home or in care? It could be Age UK, social services, GP practice, Contact the Elderly.

Find a trainer in hand/foot/head massage and offer a training session – provide certificates.

Budget For example you might need to find some funding for:

- Publicity to recruit volunteers
- Travel costs for volunteers and for organisers
- Fees for the massage trainer
- Film – you might want to record the story of your project and capture its impact
- Evaluation – you might want to pay an evaluation expert to help collect information
- Administration of the project (phone, postage etc).
- A celebration event for volunteers and the older people you've been supporting.

Evaluation We need to prove the worth of the scheme. One idea suggested is that we set up a survey monkey online. Design the right questions as a group, volunteers fill in a form each time they do a session – where? If at a centre, which one, how many older people did they spend time with? What went well? Better next time if? What they feel they're learning about the process? Whether they think its meeting its aims? Need feedback from older people and volunteers – about the impact on quality of life, loneliness etc

Finally It would be wonderful if we could create an easy way of keeping in touch in order to support each other, share ideas, possible funding sources, resources and feedback about how it's going. What would be the best way of doing this? Is anyone willing to take on the co-ordination?

Contact If you have questions or want to discuss ideas: **Carrie Supple**,
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