

Truth Be Told

Storytelling for life

What is Truth Be Told (TBT)?

TBT is a set of storytelling sessions for intergenerational groups, that put a short tale of hope at the centre of some songs, a treasure trove of props and a multitude of imaginative interactions. Each week follows a different theme such as 'water' or 'animals' and a truth such as 'I am safe' or 'I am precious'.

TBT sessions have been successfully running in the playgroup context for 3 years but have now been fully adapted for use in the care home setting. TBT has just completed a remarkably successful pilot phase at Luxury Care's Regency Manor Care Home in Poole, the results of which are detailed on the following pages.



Who is it for?

TBT is a high quality and creative activity that is involving of everyone in the room... pre-school children, their parents and the residents of care homes. Each resident in each home, each child and each parent have different needs, experiences to draw on and contributions to make, so the sessions are adaptable, moment by moment, week by week. TBT has Christian roots and references, a context that is very familiar for many older adults but is enjoyable and beneficial for those with any faith or none.

How can something aimed at children be beneficial to older adults?

TBT is responsive to the needs of the residents. It uses music from the past, makes space for and appreciates reminiscence and plays with the imagination of everyone to evoke memories and create new, positive and reassuring experiences. It has been adapted for intergenerational groups in a number of ways, details of which can be provided on request.



What is the purpose?

With dementia overtaking heart disease as Britain's biggest killer and 1 in 3 of those born today set to experience it, no one can afford to ignore its existence or the existence of those currently living with the disease. Unlike many other intergenerational initiatives, TBT mobilises the 'parent' generation who are

motivated to attend stimulating activities with their children and offer them rounded experiences of life. Part of the session leader's role is to create that sense of community among the parents (who need intergenerational relationships too) so that when we walk into the room of that care home, we bring the 'belonging' with us.

There is a need, a desire and a motivation.

TBT provides the means.





**Report on the successful pilot phase of Truth Be Told
At Luxury Care's Regency Manor Care Home, Poole
From 16 January – 6 March 2019**

- Over 7 weeks there were 127 attendances from 12 residents, 9 parents and 10 children.
- The Activities Leader at Regency Manor was responsible for inviting the residents each week, observing them during the session, and assessing the impact that it had afterwards.
- Observations were made of the residents on the following levels:
 1. **Awareness** (Resident attends willingly, is aware of the group and other participants)
 2. **Engagement** (Resident engages to some degree with songs/story/etc)
 3. **Interaction** (Resident interacts with others and joins in with songs/stories/imaginative play)
 4. **Integration** (Resident actively participates and integrates in the group)
 5. **Impact** (Resident shows signs that the group has been enjoyable/beneficial)
 6. **Lasting Effects** (There is a positive effect for a certain period of time after the group)
- It is remarkable to report that on all six levels, on average, each week, residents exceeded expectations. (A detailed breakdown is available on request.)

A sample of stories from residents:



Before the second session, **Pat** was quite unsettled and agitated. She said that she didn't know what she should be doing but as soon as the children arrived, her demeanour changed. Week by week Pat became increasingly involved and relaxed. She was able to articulate the effects of her dementia to parents in a way that helped us understand how she was experiencing the session and so we were able to respond to her needs and encourage her sensitively to participate. By the final week of the pilot, Pat was clearly enjoying herself so much that she got up to dance with one of the mums. She even helped to wave the parachute over the children and played with balloons. She surprised us! But she surprised herself even more.

Elizabeth rarely attends activities and is not someone that smiles anymore. However her smile returned during the session and she clearly enjoyed herself. Far from exhausting, TBT was energising for Elizabeth and she decided to attend the afternoon activity as well. This was often the case for many of the residents who attended.

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Patrick is an often and active attender of activities but TBT allowed him to share his own stories. Reminiscing in a purely positive environment brought his memories to life for the children. We heard of his travels to Canada with his wife, he pretended to be a wolf (much to the children's delight!) and he also played the part of the farmer in one of our stories. TBT gave Patrick the opportunity to see his granddaughter Sophie and his great grandson Zachary who had previously found it a difficult setting in which to visit him. TBT gave them all something positive and special to do together.

TBT is the highlight of the week for **Sue**. Staff tell us that she talks about and looks forward to it between sessions. She always enjoys receiving the props from the children and will happily don any hat, gloves or glasses that she's given! **Patricia's** imaginative contributions to the stories are wonderful as is her wicked sense of humour that has kept us all giggling.

A sample of feedback from professionals:

Activities Lead, Regency Manor: We've found that the benefit of nursery visits is limited, as the children are here with the staff but it's just a space for them to play, the staff supervise and the residents watch. But you really speak to and involve the residents directly and then everyone joins in too. There's something very special about TBT.

Social Care Manager, Luxury Care: TBT is amazing, well done to you, you interact from the second you are in the room and manage to keep all the children and residents engaged, something we haven't seen before.

A sample of feedback from parents:

Victoria: Sophie and I have loved being part of the first TBT Care group. Gemma is a fantastic group facilitator and has engaged everyone within the group (older adults, parents and children) equally. She creates an environment which is inclusive, fun and friendly. It has been lovely to see the children and residents dancing and singing together. As someone who isn't a Christian, I have found the stories thought provoking and have enjoyed the principles behind them. I feel passionately that children and older adults should have the chance to meet and have fun together. TBT gives people the opportunity to do this in a structured and fun environment. I would recommend the group to anyone.

Clementine: I took my two girlies to TBT at Regency Manor today. What a heartwarming experience. We have been to many types of playgroups and singalong type things before to mostly just fill time and simply entertain the kids, but this was such a beautifully deep and meaningful time. The storytelling and songs were great, Gemma is engaging of everyone and overflowing with enthusiasm and seeing everyone singing and playing catch with the balloons was fab, but the best bit was the conversations with my 4 year old in the car on the way home...the questions it sparked about 'Pat' and 'Fred' who she met (and was slightly scared of at first!) - it made me realise how alien and separated the generations are and how wonderful it was to be part of healing that gap.



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Lizzy: I go to the TBT sessions with my nearly 3 year old son, Billy. As with classic 'second child syndrome' I don't feel I have done as much with him in regularly attending toddler groups and, as I am also an activities co-ordinator at Luxury Care and am passionate about opportunities for young and old to integrate, this seemed like the perfect opportunity to tick a couple of boxes – it has become so much more and is now the highlight of my "mum" week!

Regardless of the setting and the intergenerational aspect the sessions are fabulous, Gemma is full of energy and enthusiasm and her passion for what she does shines through – the children, in fact all of us, are captivated from start to finish. The addition of the residents in a toddler group has been fantastic whether from them clearly enjoying seeing the children, laughing, dancing and singing to some of the gems they have come out with when participating. As the weeks have gone on it is lovely to see the children and mums mixing and chatting with the residents at the end of the class over the very welcome refreshments.



I feel I have made some good new friends since starting at TBT with enthusiastic, caring and like-minded people and the group has definitely done wonders in bridging the generational divide and the fear of old age with mums talking about popping in to visit on other occasions.

Toko: Such a fulfilling and worthwhile experience. It has given us the chance to see the generations brought closer together and to develop more understanding, which can only be beneficial to us as individuals and as a society. I have particularly loved the stories that Gemma brings to life so vividly. And Jona (18 months) has enjoyed interacting with everyone of all ages and exploring storytelling, music and games in a safe environment. My favourite moment was seeing everyone, especially the residents, bouncing balloons to each other with such joy and coordination!

Donna: For me, TBT gives us a chance to love our older generation well and help our children to have a much more rounded view of the world and people in it. Alongside the incredible snacks, my daughter and I love to sing, dance and be silly together. We enjoy having a different topic each week and often talk about it after the session is over. It's been such a lovely experience, and a real privilege getting to know the staff and residents at Regency Manor.



For more information about TBT:

- How to launch a group at your care home
- How to join a group
- How to become a session leader, please contact:

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