



Local Authorities
+ Older People
+ Arts
= A Creative Combination

David Cutler

The Baring Foundation

About the Baring Foundation

The Baring Foundation is an independent grantmaker founded in 1969. Since then it has given over £100 million primarily to strengthen voluntary organisations in order to tackle discrimination and disadvantage.

Part of this funding supports the arts. From 2010 this has focussed on arts with older people. 44 arts organisations have been funded from the Outer Hebrides to Cornwall. A new national festival for arts and older people has been commissioned in collaboration with Creative Scotland and Age Scotland called Luminare. A major one-off joint fund for arts in care homes has been established with the Arts Council England and a programme of smaller grants set up in collaboration with the Arts Council Northern Ireland. The Foundation has a partnership with the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to send travelling fellows abroad to look at good practice in arts and older people. Many other projects are described on our website – www.baringfoundation.org.uk.

About the author

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Storybox, July 2013. Photo © Roshana Rubin-Mayhew, courtesy of Cornerhouse and Library Theatre Company.

Key messages

- An ageing society is a cause for celebration but brings with it an increased demand for local services and funds, particularly affecting local authorities;
- This compounds the pressure on local authorities at a time of severe funding cuts;
- The arts are effective at connecting isolated and lonely older people with the wider community, embracing different generations;
- There is good evidence that the arts have a positive impact on the physical and mental well-being of older people, including those living with dementia;
- This means that arts and older people work is a good way for local authorities to deliver key policies such as prevention to support older people continuing to live at home;
- The arts can also help social care services run better, for instance by the retention of care staff through offering more fulfilling jobs;
- Local authorities have roles and interests regarding health and well-being; the arts and culture, older people's services; social inclusion and community leadership;
- This combination make local authorities uniquely well-placed to take a lead on arts and older people; the Valuing Older People's Cultural Offer in Manchester is a prime example
- However most local authorities have yet to acknowledge these connections and to fully engage with arts and older people.

The case for Local Authority involvement in arts and older people

Introduction

Local authorities are grappling currently with severe cuts and probably will do so for a long time to come. This is intensified by rising demands, from, among other things, an ageing society. So why should the leadership of local authorities find time and resources to engage with arts and older people? This first section seeks to answer that question by setting out the benefits of participation in the arts for older people and why these can help local authorities deliver some of their policies, even saving resources into the bargain. This is followed by some suggestions for resources and further guidance. Finally, some local authority case studies are used as examples of what can be achieved practically, usually with very little funding.

Definitions and Scope

There is no uncontested definition of **old age**. Sometimes rather than attempting an arbitrary chronological boundary, the phrase 'third age' is used for people who are fit and active but who could receive a state pension and 'fourth age' for someone who has become physically frail or living with impairments in intellectual performance. The Baring Foundation in its arts programme has been funding work for people over 60 and the majority of our focus has been on people in residential care as they tend to have least access to the arts. This report embraces the full range of the **arts**, including, visual arts, drama and story telling, music and singing, digital arts, photography and film-making, among many other forms. There is a great value in this work being led by professional artists but there is also an important role for amateurs

and the voluntary arts and we will be publishing a new report in 2014 on further possibilities in this field. Much of what the Baring Foundation funds is 'participatory arts' where the participant is part of the creative process. This can be empowering in a number of ways for older people but being a member of an audience for the arts also brings its benefits.

Finally most of this material has been drawn from England and Scotland. Devolution means that policies, powers and resources regarding local government, older people and the arts are different in the four jurisdictions of the UK. However the general principles and thrust of the argument remains the same.

The benefits of the arts for older people

The arts have an intrinsic value and for many people are indispensable in some form to giving their lives purpose, meaning, joy and delight. Beyond this it is increasingly accepted that the arts have many other benefits, for instance their role as an economic driver, including in regeneration, is recognised by many local authorities, including in generating tourism.

Below are outlined some key benefits of the arts as regards older people which have a particular relevance for local authorities, improving mental and physical health and well-being, including in tackling loneliness.

Mental and physical health and well-being

There is a growing body of scientific evidence as to the positive effects of the arts on physical and mental health and well being. A key study by Dr Gene Cohen took place in the USA and was published in *The Gerontologist*, Vol. 46, no 6 pages 726-734. It was a randomised control trial of 300 people with a median age of 80. One group was involved in arts programmes and the other was not. Its findings were statistically significant. The study showed that the arts participants had: better health; fewer doctor visits; less medication usage and increased activities and social

engagement. The conclusion was drawn that a very significant reduction in public expenditure could be made by greater involvement in the arts by older people.

In 2011 the Baring Foundation commissioned the Mental Health Foundation to conduct a synthetic assessment of peer reviewed literature which was published as *An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People*. They came to the following conclusions regarding mental and physical well-being:

- Increased confidence and self esteem for participants;
- Participating in community arts can counterbalance low mood and anxiety after loss;
- For people living with dementia the arts can improve cognitive functioning, communication, self esteem, enjoyment of life, memory and creative thinking;
- Particular art forms may lend themselves more than others to significant physical health improvements (such as cardiovascular, joint mobility and breathing control) including dance, singing and playing musical instruments;
- And involvement in participatory arts can have the added bonus of a consequent increase in general daily activity.

Overall the report came to the conclusion 'it is evident that engaging with participatory art can improve the well-being of older people and mediate against the negative effects of becoming older'.

And a word on loneliness...

Loneliness is not confined to older people but it is a pressing issue for many due to changes that occur later in life which increase the risk of isolation. It is estimated that over one million people aged over 65 are lonely. Loneliness also correlates strongly with other problems and is associated with poor physical and mental health.



VOP Read All About It WCML at People's History Museum, 13 August 2013, Manchester Case Study. Photo courtesy of Ginevra Jacobucci.

Older people can feel isolated living alone in the community even if they have, for instance, health and care professionals visiting them but to whom they feel no emotional attachment. This can also be true in shared living conditions such as care homes.

The arts are an effective way to address loneliness but tend to be overlooked by older people's services, both voluntary and statutory. There many examples of such work in *Tackling Loneliness in Older Age – The Role of the Arts* published by the Baring Foundation in 2012 in partnership with the Campaign to End Loneliness. A survey by the Campaign has shown that 47% of Health and Well-being Boards have recognised the issue of loneliness in older age.

The role of local authorities in arts and older people – opportunities

Local authorities (especially unitary and upper tier ones) are ideally placed to encourage arts and older people due to their combination of roles and interests in: health and well-being; arts and culture; older people's services; social inclusion; and community leadership.

Health and well-being

The allocation of a responsibility and some resources regarding public health to local authorities by the Government in the Health and Social Care Act 2012 is a great opportunity, as well as a challenge. Public Health Directors have a statutory place on Health and Well-being Boards which in turn take the lead in determining local need as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. These have become the main mechanism for local authorities to influence the new Clinical Commissioning Groups as the local decision makers for NHS funding.

It is important to acknowledge that this system is only just getting established and there are a multitude of issues that deserve attention within public health strategies (early intervention and prevention, housing and advice services, to name but a few). Their advocates will see them all as candidates for attention and resources. But the introduction of public health into local authorities is a crucial moment to demonstrate the correlation between cultural activities and health benefits. At a strategic level the National Arts and Health Alliance has been formed and will be promoting this issue. Also the Arts Council England has commissioned from a consortium led by National Council of Voluntary Organisations a broad look at 'cultural commissioning' including health and public health.

Public health, though central, is not the only opportunity for local authorities to consider the role of the arts in the health of the older population. For example, there is a great interest among

many artists in what contribution they can make to the lives of people living with dementia and increasing evidence of the benefits of this. The Alzheimer's Society's Singing for the Brain is one example among many. Around 800,000 people are living with dementia, the vast majority of them are over 60 and most live outside residential care. However within care homes it is estimated that 80 % of residents have dementia. Many local authorities will have dementia strategies and these can make useful reference to the arts and cultural activity. In response to the Prime Minister's Dementia Challenge, a number of local authorities are seeking to become Dementia Friendly Communities which offers another opportunity to include the arts and arts organisations in a holistic response.

One example is Leeds City Council which is committed to becoming a Dementia Friendly City and had already begun to explore arts and ageing. To coincide with International Day of Older People and a related conference, Leeds City Museum exhibited a mixed media installation by artist Jo Lee of East Street Arts. The installation called Wave was commissioned by the City Council the work explored memory and connectedness with older participants.



'Wave': installation by ESA studio holder Jo Lee. Photo courtesy of Leeds City Council.

Arts and cultural services

Where the responsibility for the arts lies in a local authority will vary greatly as structures have become diversified, but what is universal is the pressure which these funds and officers are finding themselves under. Some authorities will continue to directly run arts organisations, for instance concert and theatre venues, but more and more are placing these in independent trusts. Although only a minority of museums and galleries overall are run by local authorities, so far it is more likely that these will remain within

local authority control. Many museums and galleries already think hard about how they can engage with older people, some spurred by the example of the Museum of Modern Art's work in New York with older people, a programme called Meet Me At MOMA. An encouraging sign of this increased interest has been a national consultation with museums and galleries led by the British Museum, called Age Collective, and due to report by the end of 2013.

Although direct management of arts provision will become less common, local authorities continue to fund the arts, albeit in most cases with shrinking budgets. Often local authority arts officers will play a key role in drawing additional resources into an area, for instance recently in the Arts Council England's Creative People and Places fund.

Each of these roles allows the art service or its equivalent in a local authority to consider the cultural needs and ambitions of older people and to combine these where appropriate with other aspects of the authority's response to older people, for instance in adult social care. There are a number of fine examples of this in the case studies at the end of this report.

Older people's services and social care

A local authority has a number of roles regarding its older residents. It can choose for instance to fund a variety of voluntary organisations to provide services. However financial pressures faced by local authorities have meant that they have very often felt compelled to restrict themselves to statutory requirements around social care. Even there it has been common to raise thresholds for eligibility in order to ration supply against dwindling budgets.

All local authorities will acknowledge though, that it is usually both better for an older person as well as cheaper for the local authority, for that older person to stay at home as long as possible rather than go into residential care. This has the consequence that people living in residential care tend to be much frailer than

they would have been one or two decades ago. Although the case has been proved that early action and preventative services for older people have clear overall savings compared with much more expensive clinical and social care interventions, in a climate of cuts some local authorities are focussing on acute need.

The arts have a role to play here. This can either be through their use in day care to make this more attractive and enlivening or sometimes taken into a person's own home. There are many examples of arts in day care or sheltered accommodation, for instance the CLOD Ensemble in London which has a varied programme of professional performers memorably called Extravagant Acts for Mature People. Instances of artists going into older people's own homes under careful supervision include those by Arts and Health Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and visits for home concerts by musicians from the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester.

Only 11% of care home provision in England is run by local authorities. Where that is the case they are ideally placed to consider the integration of the arts into the running of the home. However local authorities have a much greater role in commissioning places in residential care and, in so doing, considering what quality of life an older person may have there including in terms of the arts and cultural activities. The amounts that local authorities may feel able to pay per placement though may weaken their leverage in negotiating for better quality of services, as



Film night, Epping Forest District Council.
Photo courtesy of Jo Cowan.

these fees may sometimes barely cover the basics of care. These matters are considered in more depth in a joint publication from the National Care Forum, the National Association for the Provision of Activities for Older People (NAPA) and the Baring Foundation published in 2011 called *Creative Homes*. This included ten case studies of good practice. In short the arts can play a valuable role not only in the lives of residents but also in the working lives of their paid carers. It can help carers engage with residents in new ways and learn more about them, for instance through the creation of memory boxes and reminiscence. Carers can develop their own creative skills which is likely to increase their job satisfaction. Ladder to the Moon, a participatory arts company, has undertaken research showing that this even reduces absenteeism and improves staff retention, an important issue to remember in low paid work where employers can find recruitment challenging. A study by MB Associates for Suffolk Artlink estimated a Social Return on Investment of £4.2 for every £1 for a programme called Creative Carers where artists instil a creative approach in care homes.

Interest in the role of arts in social care is certainly increasing, for instance in the English umbrella bodies for not for profit care providers (the National Care Forum – NCF) and for the private sector (the English Community Care Association – ECCA). The Baring Foundation has established a one-off joint strategic fund with the Arts Council England for programmes of arts in care homes. The two relevant sector skills councils, Skills for Care and Creative and Cultural Skills, have recently jointly published an important mapping study of arts in care homes and its implications for the training of artists and particularly for care workers.

Finally, personalised budgets are becoming an ever more important aspect of social care. So far there have been few examples of this being successfully used to pay for the arts for older people but there is the example of Bluecoats, an arts organisation in Liverpool doing this with people with learning disabilities which opens up the possibility for older people's provision.



Elders Dance project run by City Arts. Photo courtesy of Sharon Scaniglia, Nottingham City Council.

Social inclusion and community development

Local authorities are fundamentally concerned with building communities which are inclusive to all in society, that are good places for everyone to live and to thrive. This has had many different incarnations over time, from community development in the 1970s and 'place shaping' in the last decade, but the principles at the heart of this work are the same. The local authority is a democratic institution which needs to listen and respond to all its citizens.

The arts are especially effective at giving a voice to those who tend to be ignored and at building relationships across societal divides. This is true too when it comes to older people. The most obvious instance for this is the great variety of intergenerational arts across the country, perhaps most associated with the specialist arts organisation in the East End of London, Magic Me. Typically

primary school children visit a care home over a term to produce a piece of art, in the process building up relationships that give joy and better understanding to both generations.

Care homes can become quite isolated from the communities that surround them. Indeed they even may be objects of fear, where younger people dread the prospect of spending the end of their lives. This is a dangerous tendency and needs to be challenged. An example from Finland is where the local authority in Helsinki has set up and runs Comprehensive Service Centres. These comprise residential care, including for people with dementia, along with a range of community facilities in the same building. The entrance might include the local library and the in-house restaurant is good enough for a visitor to want to spend their lunch time there. Once again the arts can play a powerful role. The Baring Foundation has funded 17 exemplary projects across the UK to link care homes through their communities. Descriptions of many of these can be found in *After You Are Two* by Kate Organ, published by the Baring Foundation.

Leadership and coordination

Perhaps most importantly of all, the local authority has a preeminent role in drawing together and making coherent the needs of the local population and the services which they are receiving from the public, voluntary and private sectors. This unique strategic position is only strengthened by inclusion of the arts.

The prime example of this must be Manchester which is described in more detail as a case study at the end of this report. The City Council has mandated 'making Manchester a great place to grow old in' as a central policy, underpinned by a Valuing Older People's Unit and with this thinking woven into all its services and policies. The Unit has brought together all the City's main arts bodies into a unique working group to create a cultural offer for older people. This is an excellent model which deserves replication and which has required a very small amount of resource from the local authority

whilst leveraging in substantial resources from others, e.g. the BIG Lottery Fund. Most importantly of all it has achieved a world class cultural offer for its older citizens.

Conclusion

The combination of these five roles and interests of local authorities: health and well-being; arts and culture; older people's services and social care; social inclusion and community development; and leadership and coordination, makes them uniquely well suited to promote arts in the lives of older people. Against this must be acknowledged the reality of deep financial cuts which are forcing some local authorities to retreat into a minimalist conception of statutory duties. This report argues that not only are the arts an entitlement for all, including older people, but they have additional benefits which can help local authorities deliver their own objectives. This is especially the case in health and social care, where the arts can be a key ingredient in a range of measures which can make older people more able to continue to live at home, or if they move into care, can make that more successful both for them and their families, as well as for the people who care for them. The arts can be effectively woven into many local authority strategies, for instance regarding dementia.

However most local authorities have yet to accept the role that arts and older people can play in delivering their objectives, even potentially in reducing their costs. As the population continues to age along with accompanying financial pressures, the case for local authority leadership in arts and older people will only become stronger.

Resources

Organisations

The **National Alliance for Arts Health and Well-being** has developed a Charter and its website includes relevant research, case studies, funding sources and a directory of people and organisations working on particular issues including, for instance, older people or dementia.

Arts Development UK is the professional association for those working in creative industries across England and Wales. Central to its membership are arts officers in local authorities. It offers a number of services including training and continuing professional development.

The National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA) is the leading charity dedicated to increasing the profile and understanding of the activity needs of older people and quipping staff to meet these while living in care settings.

Website

www.ageofcreativity.co.uk. Run by Age UK Oxfordshire and commissioned by the Baring Foundation, this is a platform for anything that can inspire, inform and support art projects for older people. It contains a wealth of resources, for instance arts activities that can run in care homes along with toolkits and notices of training, conferences and seminars.

Reports

All Baring Foundation publications are free and available at www.baringfoundation.org.uk.

Ageing Artfully: Older People and professional participatory arts in the UK (2009)

Creative Homes; how the arts can contribute to the quality of life in residential care (2011)

Tackling Loneliness in Older Age – the role of the arts (2012)

After You Are Two – exemplary practice in participatory arts with older people by Kate Organ (2012)

We also commissioned *An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People*, Mental Health Foundation, (2011)



Woodland Wander workshop at the Bennachie Centre, Aberdeenshire. Photo courtesy of Sarah Wakeford.

Case studies

The following short selection of case studies has been chosen to show the range of work that can be led or supported by local authorities. They are here to inspire others. Although each case study has a number of elements they also serve to highlight certain themes. The introduction of public health as a responsibility for local authorities is a major opportunity to focus on the role of the arts in promoting mental and physical well being, including among older people (St Helens). This can include tackling loneliness (Fife). Local authorities sometimes run arts organisations themselves (often museums and galleries) though these are increasingly being transferred to trusts. They provide funding to other arts organisations through Service Level Agreement (Nottingham and Aberdeenshire). Also they provide other services to older people including social care (Epping Forest). Finally in an era of greatly reduced public resources, local authorities continue to have a role of community leadership and convene and coordinate diverse organisations, often helping them bring in additional resources as a consequence (Manchester).

Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeenshire Council Arts Development is working strategically with a range of national and local partners to develop and enhance arts provision and creative participation for older people, including those living with dementia and their carers. The work has been driven by the local authority's Cultural Strategy which makes specific reference to the health, well-being and life choices of those who are most vulnerable in Aberdeenshire's communities. These partnerships reflect the growing recognition that early intervention is a more sustainable solution to addressing long term issues around an ageing population. This climate has created a highly positive arena for arts development enabling conversations to take part which focus more than ever on equality and inclusion and the well-being benefits of participation in the arts.

Arts Development is presently working on a number of initiatives:

- **Create:Connect** – Arts and dementia programme comprising training for 103 leisure/social care staff, volunteers and creative practitioners; artist-led workshops for people with early to middle stage dementia and carers in six main towns in community venues; development on an on-line image based network facilitated by carers; an on-line package of resources aimed at carers and professionals interested in using the arts within the context of early to middle stage dementia. This has been enabled by the Change Fund and substantial



Woodland Wander workshop at the Bennachie Centre, Aberdeenshire. Photo courtesy of Sarah Wakeford.

- officer administration time from Aberdeenshire Council Arts Development and Alzheimer Scotland.
- **Moving Stories** – Change Fund funded project linking older people and professional arts practitioners to explore personal stories through performance and storytelling. Numbers of participants are deliberately low and the quality of the activity being produced is very high, and is greatly valued by the participants and the professional drama leader.
- **Out and About** – Arts Development have worked with the Aberdeenshire Signposting Project to develop and co-ordinate a new ‘buddying’ service to support vulnerable and isolated older people to access cultural activities.
- **Cultural activity in Care Homes** – Working with the support of Social Services, an audit of cultural activity provision in care homes and some sheltered housing has been taken in order to establish current activities and what support might be required in order to sustain and develop these further.

- **Gordon Forum for the Arts** – Supporting this local community arts group in the development and delivery of their ‘Value of Age’ Festival in October. The GFA events will take place in various venues in Inverurie and surrounds and includes a matinee concert, poetry readings, Doric performance, photography workshop, art exhibitions and debate.
- **Edenholme Care Home** – supported the commissioning of an artist to work creatively with residents of the care home during their transition from the old home to a new build.

Epping Forest District Council

Epping Forest Arts, the arts service within the District Council, works with the community to deliver a wide range of work including youth theatre, community dance showcases, video/film projects, Big Draw events and public arts projects. It specialises in working with older people, young people, people with learning disabilities and people with physical disabilities.

Its track record of working in care settings with older people dates back to at least 2003 and its ‘Sense of Place’ project. Since then it has delivered, among other things, a number of intergenerational projects involving schools with care homes, as well as an ongoing community programme for older people.

In 2007/8, a year long project called Transitions Epping Forest enabled artists and schools to work with the arts service to explore their creative practice. In 2012/13, the same methodology was used to allow five artists to work with three care homes and a day care setting. The work was funded by the Rayne Foundation and the Council with a contribution from the care settings. The artist came with different backgrounds, including dance and performance as well as the visual arts.

Described as being ‘artists in residence’ in the care homes, the artist visited for roughly a day a week or a fortnight over a period of nine months. They worked very closely with paid carers to

create a continued professional development programme using the arts for the carers. They also, of course, increased participation in the arts for the residents or day care service users. Expert advice was given to the project by NAPA, the National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People.



Seaside session, Epping Forest District Council. Photo courtesy of Jo Cowan.

The activities were then collected into what has been called a 'recipe book' as a product from the project which can be used again. This was chosen as a familiar format, giving it a clear basic structure such as ingredients and method and which could be designed in a style which might be reminiscent of cook books of the past. Examples of sessions include creative activities cards, film nights, memory boxes and reminiscence work. Activities were rated at different levels which would be sensitive to issues such as mobility and dementia on the part of service users.

The work has been deemed so successful that Essex County Council has commissioned Epping Forest to deliver a new Transitions project in some of its care homes.

Fife Council

Fife has recognised the impact of loneliness and social isolation on the mental health and well-being of older people. With support from resources from a local Change Fund, a specific response using the arts was undertaken by participatory arts company, Nutshell. The company recognised that standard drama workshops can be unattractive and possibly intimidating for some older and shyer people and worked over an extended period to avoid this risk.

The work has had three phases and the overall project was called Still Points in a Turning World. The first phase resulted in a drama called *Allotment* and involved a group of older people as well as a mother and toddlers group. *Allotment* was performed in allotments and other open spaces in Fife before touring 45 spaces as part of Nutshell's UK tour. This led on to a second piece called *Threads*, using the reminiscences of three friends who grew up in Burntisland in the 1950s. Alongside this a craft exhibit by older people toured with the production. Both dramas won the prestigious Festival First Award from *The Scotsman* newspaper. A third part to the trilogy is now being created.

The whole project was carefully evaluated including using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMBS) to measure changes in the participants. It achieved good outcomes in terms of building social capital through its intergenerational work with schools, as well as reducing isolations and increasing mental health and well-being

Manchester City Council

Manchester City Council is one of a small number of Age Friendly Cities recognised by the World Health Organisation. It is leading the way in the UK in seeking to create a city which is liveable for all ages and has created a network of twelve such cities in Britain. This is all in the context of a clear strategy (*Making Manchester a Great Place to Grow Older in: 2010 – 2020*) and long-term political leadership. A central Valuing Older People Unit in the Council leads

a partnership between the local authority, NHS, voluntary sector and older residents.

Since 2004 Manchester has had a specific working group focused on the City's cultural offer to older people (VOPCO - the Valuing Older People Cultural Offer). This now has nineteen members covering all art forms and with a healthy representation from the City's museums. The working group does not have lavish resources (the Baring Foundation funds a part-time Coordinator at £25k per year and a small amount of other funding is deployed) but relies on utilising the time, energy and expertise of its membership. The working group meets regularly to consider both the individual cultural offer for older people made by each of the members and exchange good practice, while also considering partnerships and collective responses. VOPCO has attracted around £700,000 from other funders into the City for arts and older people.



Gallery of Costume handling session for Valuing Older People, Manchester City Council.
Photo courtesy of Ginevra Jacobucci.

A key feature of VOPCO is the Culture Champions scheme. Since late 2011, 80 older people have been recruited and supported as community ambassadors. They use their networks of older residents to encourage them to attend and try out a variety of cultural events happening in the city through the year. This scheme

will soon be extended into neighbouring Salford.

An evaluation of VOPCO, conducted by the Audience Agency, concluded that the partner organisations had benefited through (among other things): increased knowledge; skilling arts practitioners working with older people; increased engagement, audience development and audience income; staff pride; new programmes of work and shared guides and resources.

Nottingham City Council

Nottingham City Council has supported a series of arts services and projects that have demonstrated benefits for older people. These illustrate a variety of roles for a local authority in this field; and include in-house projects through arts development projects that are funded through Service Level Agreements with cultural organisations who have the skills and staff to deliver; bespoke practice and specific services through its museums and galleries which support cultural programmes and are targeted to be inclusive to older people. Nottingham is trying to achieve best practice within its own services and by working in partnership with cultural organisations. Here are some examples:

- A multi-disciplinary home care team called Jackdawe which offers support to people living with dementia and their carers is delivering 'Soundtrack to My Life' (STML). It is a toolkit that uses music with significant personal meaning in everyday life. A compilation CD is built around several pieces of music. This facilitates dialogue with the paid care staff alongside informal carers. Information is recorded as reminiscence occurs and incorporated into care plans. The process can also help reduce agitation and increase relaxation. This has been funded by Skills for Care and supported by researchers at Nottingham University.
- The Museums and Galleries Service has organised a substantial programme using reminiscence boxes which they take out into the community, including day centres and care homes.

- A programme of activities for older people at Theatre Royal and Royal Concert Hall offers two very popular workshops in creative writing and dance for people aged over 55. In the case of dance this allows participants to take to the stage as part of special concerts or dance with professionals most recently Les Ballets Trockadero from New York.
- City Arts is a participatory arts organisation receiving funding under a Service Level Agreement from Nottingham. Its Elders Dance Project has worked with older people in care homes and in the city's Indian Centre in workshop. Their workshops



Cuban Dance Workshop, part of Nottingham City Council's 55+ activities that take place at the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham. Photo courtesy of Sharon Scaniglia.

ran over an eight week period instilling confidence and social capacity in participants and staff.

- Viewing Together has been delivered at Nottingham Contemporary (the superb new gallery opened in 2009) in a partnership with Dulwich Picture Gallery and is part of research into dementia by the University of Nottingham. People living with dementia and their carers attended a series of eight artist-led workshops. Each session included time in the gallery as well as practical sessions in the studio.

St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

Much of the local authority's specific art engagement with older people recently is within its 'Cultural Connections' programme, which is funded by the Arts Council England. A good example of this was the involvement of older people in a commissioning group making visits to theatre and arts performances. The group of older people then chose which performances would be programmed back in two St Helens venues, the Citadel and the Central Library. This approach ensured that the local authority was able to programme performances that older people wanted to see.

Another key aspect of the work in St Helens is the funding of a full time Cultural Coordinator, seconded from Adult Social Care into the Arts Service and paid for by Section 256 monies under the National Health Services Act 2006 which allows Primary Care Trusts to enter into arrangements with local authorities to carry out activities with health benefits. This is a welcome and explicit recognition of the contribution that arts and culture can make to health and well-being.



'Up Pony' – a creative over fifties group in St Helens. Photo courtesy of Owen Hutchings.

There is a wealth of examples of work with older people which this initiative has allowed. These can be followed on a great blog – culturalhubs.wordpress.com. Much of the work takes place with on-going groups in residential homes, day care centres and sheltered housing and with the providers of these services. Professional artists are then involved to work with participants in producing art. Community groups also meet outside these services such as Looking Forward, a group of people living with dementia, and Up Ponky. These groups will often go on arts appreciation trips, accessing the cultural riches of near-by Liverpool and Manchester with the benefit of free seniors travel.

Here is a small sample of other work:

- Artists Arthur + Martha worked with a variety of older people in workshops that went to local Bingo nights, Tesco's and the doctor's surgery, as well as more conventional venues. Multiple art forms were used to reflect on the lives of participants and resulted in eclectic work such as a poem written in icing onto the shop front of a disused Woolworths store in the town centre!
- A 'guerrilla knitting' group including people living with dementia will produce work that then gets displayed publicly, for instance knitted poppies to go on War Memorials;
- The 'Intergenerational Dream' project linked a primary school and vulnerable adults to produce maquettes in response to The Dream, a local public sculpture by world renown artist Jaume Plensa, along with their thoughts and dreams on health and ageing;
- The 'Bring Back Clubland' project recognises that the experience of going to Clubs in 1960s and 1970s was a central part of the cultural lives of many older people. Professional musicians and performers bring back the experience to people living with dementia and their carers.

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