

The Baring Foundation

ON DIVERSITY AND CREATIVE AGEING

A selection of projects bringing arts and
creativity to under-served older communities

Curated by Harriet Lowe



About the Baring Foundation

The Baring Foundation is an independent foundation which protects and advances human rights and promotes inclusion. Since 2010, the Foundation's arts programme has focused on supporting participatory arts with people over the age of 60, particularly those facing disadvantage or discrimination.

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On diversity and creative ageing

A SELECTION OF PROJECTS BRINGING ARTS AND
CREATIVITY TO UNDER-SERVED OLDER COMMUNITIES

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Photo courtesy of Duckie.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Creative ageing & BAME communities | 9 |
| Culture& | 10 |
| Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art | 13 |
| Sadler's Wells | 17 |
| Spare Tyre | 20 |
| Creative ageing & disability | 23 |
| Dulwich Picture Gallery | 24 |
| Luminate | 27 |
| Lawnmowers Theatre | 30 |
| Creative ageing, sex & gender diversity | 33 |
| Highland Print Studio | 34 |
| New Writing South | 38 |
| Creative ageing & language | 41 |
| cARTrefu | 42 |
| Creative ageing & class | 45 |
| Duckie | 46 |
| Final reflections | 49 |
| Selected resources | 52 |

Introduction

The biggest mistake in creative ageing would be to treat older people as a homogenous group. Therefore over the course of the ten years of funding the creative ageing sector, we have sought to make the Arts and Older People programme as genuinely inclusive as possible.

However, our impression is that providing for the full diversity of the older population is unfinished business and a future challenge for the creative ageing sector and more widely arts and culture organisations, funders and policy-makers.

This publication pulls together eleven case studies of projects which set out to engage sectors of the older population that might be seen as traditionally underserved. Some have been funded by the Baring Foundation and others not.

This report has its limitations and is not any kind of assessment of how the creative ageing sector is tackling diversity. However, we hope it includes some inspiring examples and food for further thought.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'DIVERSITY'?

Under the Equality Act 2010, there are nine protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The mission of our Arts & Older People programme as a whole has been to open up high-quality arts to older people (those over 60 – but with most of our work focusing on those over 70). So in this report, we have not focused on age as it is a given, but on other aspects of diversity. These include some of the protected characteristics but others too.

RACE

It is important to note that the proportion of older people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities is still relatively small within the whole UK older population. According to the 2011 census data, 8.4% of the population identifying as Asian were over 60 and 8.1% identifying as Black, for example (compared to 24.9% who identified as White).¹

However, all populations are ageing, and the number of older people in ethnic minority groups is predicted to grow several-fold over the coming decades. Concurrently, the number of people from ethnic minority communities living with dementia will also grow – by seven-fold by 2051 according to one estimate² compared to a two-fold increase in the majority population.³

“The biggest mistake in creative ageing would be to treat older people as a homogenous group.”

The case studies included here reflect a recognition by some arts organisations that fewer BAME older people in their areas were accessing what they offer.

Spare Tyre's Love Unspoken project grew out of a growing feeling that their local South Asian diaspora communities had not significantly engaged with

the arts and dementia movement and a desire to understand why. The work of the **Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art** (CFCCA) with the older Chinese community developed out of a realisation that the older Chinese community in Manchester was very isolated – socially and culturally – and CFCCA's programme was not reaching many older people. Elixir Extracts at **Sadler's Wells** came from a recognition that the Elixir creative ageing festival for older dancers didn't reflect London's diversity.

As the numbers of people from BAME communities in older age groups increase, this will have increasing implications for the arts and cultural sector, as well as for other policy areas.

DISABILITY

As well as physical disabilities, the Equality Act defines disability as physical and mental conditions with a substantial and long-term impact on someone's ability to do normal day-to-day activities. It includes progressive conditions and also learning disabilities.

Old age and disability often (though not always) go together whether that is physical frailty, a condition like Parkinson's Disease or the onset of memory loss and dementia. This is important and may in part account for the decrease in participation in arts activities among those over the age of 70.

¹ Gov.uk, 'Ethnicity facts and figures > Age groups', 22 August 2018. www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/age-groups/latest#other-ethnic-groups-age-profile.

² Race Equality Foundation, *Dementia and Minority Ethnic Carers*, *Better Health Briefing* 46, June 2018. raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/REF-Better-Health-463.pdf.

³ *Ibid.*

Much of the work we have funded has helped to overcome barriers created by age-related disability, particularly dementia. However, we also include here the **Lawnmower's Theatre** – its film project, *A Dead Good Life*, engaged older people with a learning disability in telling the story of their experiences and **Dulwich Picture Gallery** which has trained older people with a mental health condition to become facilitators in their creative ageing and wellbeing programmes.

SEX

Women tend to participate in arts and cultural activities more than men.⁴ At the same time, more older men than women over 50 report moderate to high levels of social isolation, especially those without a partner. Age UK's research suggests that men find it harder to access social support, sometimes because of a lack of activities that interest them.⁵

How to engage men, including older men, in arts activities is a problem that many arts and culture organisations grapple with. However, there are some inspiring examples – including the **Highland Print Studio's Wise Guys** featured here, and as this case study mentions, the Men's Sheds movement has grown over the last decade (there were 30 in 2013 and over 400 today).⁶

The *Handbook for Cultural Engagement with Older Men* by Ed Watts at The Whitworth in Manchester is a useful source of ideas about how to recruit, engage and programme for older men.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION & GENDER DIVERSITY

Estimates suggested that 0.7% of the population aged 65 and over identify as LGB (Office of National Statistics 2017) (compared to 4.2% of 16- to 24-year-olds).⁷

The picture is complex, but evidence suggests that LGB older people are more likely to be single and live alone. They are less likely to see family regularly (though they have more friends) – and overall, they may be a higher potential risk of social isolation and loneliness. They are also more likely to have a history of

⁴ Age UK, *Creative and cultural activities and wellbeing in later life*, 2018. www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/rb_apr18_creative_and_cultural_activities_wellbeing.pdf.

⁵ Age UK, 'Older men in the margins' project 2016-2019. www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/older-men-at-the-margins-how-men-combat-loneliness-in-later-life.

⁶ menssheds.org.uk

⁷ Office for National Statistics, *Sexual orientation*, UK: 2017. www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2017#younger-people-are-more-likely-to-identify-as-lesbian-gay-or-bisexual-than-any-other-age-group.

mental health problems or to be worried about their mental health in the future.⁸ It is deeply troubling, as the case study by **New Writing South** says, to discover that LGB older people feel they have to re-hide their identity when they go into residential care.

About 1% of the population experience some degree of gender variance – and within the trans population, a new wave of older people is emerging.⁹ Trans older people experience many similar issues to LGB older people including prejudice, poorer physical and mental health and estrangement from biological families.

As well as New Writing South, there are a few other examples of creative ageing for LGBT communities. For example, the Foundation funded Luminate in Scotland to work on an LGBT cabaret as part of its creative ageing festival. Silver Pride(s) are emerging, particularly in the US – however, Belong Village care home in Crewe ran a Silver Pride event this year for example with arts and entertainment.¹⁰ At the time of writing, Great Place, an action research programme led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority, are planning 'Back in the Closet', a project in which four artists will deliver artist residencies in four retirement schemes and work with staff and residents to explore why LGBTQ residents feel unable to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity.

BEYOND THE OFFICIAL CHARACTERISTICS

There is great **linguistic diversity** in the UK – alongside Celtic languages, there are increasing numbers of bi-/multilingual speakers from around the world. While important for all older people, this is even more relevant for older people with dementia who

although they may have spoken a second language for years may start to revert to their mother tongue. This can often leave them isolated and cut off from the people around them if the younger generations, whether their families or care workers, only speak English.

“People are not easily categorised and may wish to identify with one group, many groups, or none.”

⁸ Centre for Policy on Ageing, *Diversity in older age – Older Lesbian, Gay and Bi-sexual people and Older Transgender People*, 2016. www.cpa.org.uk/information/reviews/CPA-Rapid-Review-Diversity-in-Older-Age-LGBT.pdf.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See: www.belong.org.uk/news/2018/06/crewe-celebrates-silver-pride.

However, academics at the University of Strathclyde report hearing stories of people with advanced forms of dementia transformed by care workers who could speak their mother tongue, often facilitated through the arts.¹¹

We have included an example of this here – the **cARTrefu artists in residence** programme in Wales where there are an estimated 891,000 Welsh speakers. We know there are other programmes such as the Gaelic programme run by An Lanntair in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland.

Class is a contested term, but one way or another, it is often part of the way we see ourselves. We have also included the work of **Duckie's Posh Clubs** which focuses on access to the arts for 'working class' older people in London and Sussex, which are aimed at people who are likely to feel excluded from accessing 'mainstream arts and cultural provision'.

Finally, in general, people are not easily categorised and may wish to identify with one group, many groups, or none. We are all the sum of – and more than – our parts!

11 Murphy, D., Loingsigh, A., Birnie, I., and Bak, T H., 'Bilingualism and dementia: how some patients lose their second language and rediscover their first', *The Conversation*, 11 November 2019. theconversation.com/bilingualism-and-dementia-how-some-patients-lose-their-second-language-and-rediscover-their-first-126631.

Creative ageing & BAME communities

Elixir Extracts at Sadler's Wells. Photo © Ellie Kurttz, courtesy of Sadler's Wells.



Culture&: The Memory Archives project

A MULTI-SENSORY PROGRAMME TO OPEN UP CULTURAL HERITAGE TO PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA, PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM BAME COMMUNITIES

by Kirsty Kerr, Assistant Curator, Culture&

Whilst there is development around creative approaches to dementia care, provisions and resources that are specific to BAME communities are scarce. This is a problem because research shows that there is an increasing demographic prevalence of dementia within this audience. *Race Against Dementia – a Call to Action* (2016) states that ‘the number of people from BAME communities in the UK living with dementia will increase sevenfold by 2051 to reach 172,000’. There is also public health evidence demonstrating that BAME people have higher risks of developing dementia, and more difficulty accessing care. According to *Trends in Dementia Diagnosis Rates in UK Ethnic Groups* (in *Clinical Epidemiology*, 2018), ‘compared with white women, the instances of dementia diagnosis is 25% higher amongst black women. For men, the instances are 28% higher in the black ethnic group’.

Moreover, BAME communities have lower engagement with Arts, Heritage and Archives. According to *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (The Warwick Commission, 2015), ‘in 2015, BAME adults were less likely to have visited a heritage site (59.8% compared to 74.1%) or have engaged with the arts broadly defined (70.4% compared to 78.5%)’. As well as addressing an urgent health and social need, The Memory Archives also addresses a cultural need.

About the project

The Memory Archives launch was delivered in partnership with the London Metropolitan Archives and Friends of the Huntley Archives (FHALMA) in June 2019, and involved a multi-sensory programme curated specifically around African-Caribbean heritage, commemorating Windrush Day. This involved creating a dementia-accessible space for cultural heritage to be recollected and relived, through music, visual art, food and participatory activities.

These multi-sensory activities were designed to offer experiences that animated and opened up the archives, making them accessible to non-traditional audiences who would not normally engage with arts and heritage. They were also designed to create a safe, intergenerational space for individual histories and memories to be recalled, shared and celebrated.

The programme was curated around two collections that are of significance to the African-Caribbean community: the Culture& music archive, holding 30 years of our history around global cultural music, and the Huntley Archives, the first major collection from the African-Caribbean community to be deposited with the London Metropolitan Archives. Using these collections as a starting point, we curated a dementia-accessible and culturally-specific event that brought to life the heritage held within them. We built relationships with BAME care homes, and commissioned diverse artists and facilitators, involving them in the design of a programme that comprised:

- The West Indian Front Room – a recreation of a typical Caribbean family's front room of the 60s, drawing on memories of the domestic setting and acting as a point of welcome and hospitality.
- Caribbean folk music workshops and sing-a-longs.
- Interactive archival and handling materials, including a curated display of traditional Caribbean fruits and vegetables for guests to touch and smell.
- A curated event soundscape celebrating the history of Black British music, and listening stations for guests to play vinyl records and cassettes from the archives.
- A selection of homemade Caribbean refreshments, made from traditional ingredients with distinctive flavours to evoke memory.
- Interactive music and reminiscence talks.

“It's quite enriching, you know, ... with the stories, individual stories, about their journeys, from the Caribbean, be it Jamaica, St Lucia, Guyana, Grenada, all of them coming here, and, you know, telling their own stories.”

Participant

Reflections

The Memory Archives project shows that not only do we need to change the look and feel of heritage spaces to make them more accessible, but we also need to move beyond objects and documents and engage with lived experience – through heritage that is multi-sensory, rather than based only on visual stimuli.

It is notable, and somewhat ironic that, amidst discussion around dementia and memory loss, there is a 'forgetting' by wider British society of BAME communities' cultural heritage and it is therefore rarely acknowledged. The Memory Archives is such an important project because it addresses this disparity: the underrepresentation of relevant care and provision for an audience that is overrepresented in dementia and mental health.

What next?

Our Memory Archives Windrush Day launch was the first in what we hope will be an ongoing programme that continues to work with diverse, older communities, and to open up the arts, heritage and archives to underrepresented and often excluded audiences.

We would like to build on the success of the project and implement suggestions received from participants about making the event regular and over a longer time period. We would like the project to tour other heritage venues and to resource it better to be able to provide travel support for people living with dementia and their carers, enabling more people to participate.

The Memory Archives project. Photo © Michael McMillan, courtesy of Culture&.



Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art

RE-ENGAGING WITH AN ISOLATED OLDER COMMUNITY THROUGH FOOD AND ART

by Zoe Dunbar, Director, CFCCA

The Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (CFCCA) is a small arts charity in the heart of Manchester that promotes conversation and sparks debate about contemporary China through a rich programme of exhibitions, artist residences, events and engagement projects.

“Older Chinese people spend 25% of their time alone in comparison to 5-10% of White British and South Asian older people.”

There are now (2019) approximately 30,000 Chinese speaking residents in Greater Manchester. The first generation, who migrated from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 60s, are now elderly. Of these older Chinese residents, 24%- 50% reported high levels of loneliness (2018) while recent research in older Chinese

communities in the UK generally has identified distance from social and cultural networks due to trans-national migration, different cultural norms concerning social engagement, language barriers, discrimination and racism. Older Chinese people have been found to spend 25% of their time alone in comparison to the 5-10% of White British and South Asian older people.

It is known that minority ethnic communities are more likely to experience health, social and economic inequalities, increasing the likelihood of loneliness and isolation. However, in the UK to date, there has been very little focused research on loneliness specific to BAME communities and equally limited exploration of how art can be used as a tool to combat issues of isolation and promote wellbeing within these community groups.

About the project

In 2018, CFCCA in collaboration with the Baring Foundation embarked on a project to explore social isolation in the older Greater Manchester Chinese community, to not only better understand the challenges faced by older people

in minority ethnic communities but also how art can be used as a tool for wellbeing. Over the space of a year CFCCA built new knowledge and confidence to inform longer-term project work in this area.

The project began with a series of consultation sessions delivered through luncheon clubs which took place at the Sheung Lok Wellbeing Centre in Manchester. Through this platform CFCCA connected with over 150 older members of the community. Extensive consultation was also performed with arts, health and gerontology specialists from across the UK to better understand alternative readings of ageing and social isolation which have tended to be ignored due to limited research focusing on older minority ethnic populations in the UK.

Workshops were a key element of the project. During the consultation sessions delivered at Sheung Lok Wellbeing Centre, the community reported how food is such an instrumental part of the community to bring people together and promote conversation through making and eating but that language barriers were a fundamental issue for their integration into the city. For this reason the workshops focused on creative approaches to food, language and communication.

A series of script-writing workshops delivered with Sheung Lok Radio, a station led by older members of the community, developed creative confidence and encouraged participants to share their life stories and improve their English language skills. The content of these workshops was developed as a response to key learning from our research phase which identified the impact of reduced language proficiency on community interaction across the city. Through this project, the participants then shared their writing on real life experiences on Sheung Lok Radio.

“Script writing workshops developed creative confidence and encouraged participants to share their life stories and improve their English language skills.”

Further workshops were delivered by British-Chinese artist, Pui Lee, where participants learned the basics of traditional Chinese block printing but using contemporary materials. Gift cards and artworks were created using botanical imagery as a starting point (though many artworks incorporated text and calligraphy). These workshops introduced participants back to CFCCA and were a testbed for delivering arts activity that had both traditional and contemporary elements, responding to the interests of the group but challenging them to think differently about contemporary art.



A block printing workshop. Photo courtesy of CFCCA.

Reflections

This project has been instrumental for CFCCA in developing its relationship with the Manchester Chinese community, building renewed trust and confidence and also learning more about the demographics of the community, their needs and challenges. Through the project, CFCCA learned the importance of food and the role it can play in inclusion, wellbeing and connectivity alongside the importance for the community of being able to tell the story of its heritage, have a safe space to dwell and the mechanisms to communicate and connect with other communities around them.

What next?

CFCCA plans to build on this work with older members of the community through its weekly 'Dumpling Socials', an art club about food, conversation and creativity funded by The Big Lottery and also an Elders in Residence programme which will see older members of this unique community get involved in the day to day operation of the centre and its programme. This will be coupled with an enhanced CFCCA volunteer programme for older people who will act as gallery interpreters using material from the CFCCA archive to connect, build confidence and share their story with others.

Sadler's Wells, Elixir Extracts Festival

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS FROM LONDON'S BAME COMMUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN DANCE

by Joce Giles, Director of Learning and Engagement, Sadler's Wells

Sadler's Wells has been delivering dance activities for older adults for 30 years. Well-known strands of this work are the Company of Elders, Sadler's Wells' performance group for non-professional older dancers and the Elixir Festival, a large-scale event celebrating lifelong creativity.

In June 2017 we ran the second edition of the Elixir Festival. There was a huge level of interest in the festival and 285 non-professional dancers from 20 different dance groups performed at the event. While we were delighted by the number of older adults who were actively engaging in dance, we observed that there were very few people from BAME backgrounds taking part in the groups performing at the festival.

Towards Elixir Extracts

Following the Elixir Festival in 2017, we made it a priority to focus our resources on encouraging older adults from BAME backgrounds in our local boroughs to engage in dance. With support from the Baring Foundation, we were able to develop a new programme of activities that included: Company of Elders workshops in local community centres, projects in a range of dance styles with four local community partners, and opportunities for local BAME older adults to visit Sadler's Wells as both audience members and performers.

“Very few people from BAME backgrounds were taking part in the groups performing at the [Elixir] festival.”

We launched the new programme of activity at a Caribbean social event held at Islington Town Hall in July 2018 in partnership with All Change Arts. This event was attended by older adults from community centres across Islington and other neighbouring boroughs and enabled us to signpost attendees to the upcoming opportunities we were delivering at their local community centres.

In July 2018 we delivered Company of Elders workshops at two community centres in Islington, as well as at Sadler's Wells. 90 people took part in the workshops and three participants were then invited to join the Company of Elders. In March 2017, 0% of

Company of Elders were from BAME backgrounds: following workshops in local community centres over the last two years, 15% of the company are now from BAME backgrounds.

From January to March 2019, we delivered regular dance activity in four local community centres, offering taster sessions in a range of dance

styles such as African dance, Bollywood, flamenco, and soul funk. Participants from the taster sessions were given free tickets to attend *Sampled* at Sadler's Wells in February 2019, a performance showcasing a range of dance companies and dance styles.

The next stage of our work with the community centres started in April 2019 with each centre having weekly sessions focusing on one of the dance styles taught in the taster sessions. These sessions worked towards creating a short performance piece that was presented at our Elixir Extracts festival at Sadler's Wells in June 2019.

Out of the participants who took part, 51% were from BAME backgrounds, 48% had not taken part in dance activity before, and 70% had never been to Sadler's Wells.

As the majority of participants had never been backstage at a theatre or performed on stage, we organised a 'Welcome to Sadler's Wells' event two weeks before the Elixir Extracts festival.

All the groups from the four community centres performed at the Elixir Extracts festival in June 2019 and this was a hugely positive experience for everyone involved. The performances were all sold out and the participants from the community centres performed in a programme alongside other older dance groups from across the UK.

“Many of the elders never thought they would have the chance to perform on stage, so you made some of their dreams come true.”

**Member of staff from Holloway
Neighbourhood Group**

Reflections

Key to the success of this work has been establishing strong partnerships with the community centres. A member of staff from Sadler's Wells attended the majority of the sessions in order to build up positive relationships with staff and participants at each centre. Another important aspect was using a range of dance styles of interest to a broad range of older adults, who had had little previous experience of taking part in dance activities.

What next?

We are committed to building on this work and will continue to work with the community centres who took part in the outreach activities. We are also looking to extend this work into East London boroughs. Outreach workshops with the Company of Elders will continue on an annual basis and we look forward to recruiting new members to the company from these sessions.

It has been fantastic to develop new partnerships in our local neighbourhood that have enabled so many older adults to engage with dance and Sadler's Wells for the first time.

“ I thought I'd give it a try and I can honestly say it's saved my life, it was the best thing I ever did because it's given me a focus and a reason to do things.”

Participant from a local community centre Neighbourhood Group

Spare Tyre: The Garden and Love Unspoken

CREATING THEATRE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA IN SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES

*by Arti Prashar, Director of Love Unspoken
and former Artistic Director of Spare Tyre*

Spare Tyre has been working within arts and dementia/arts and wellbeing agendas for 10 years. During that time, we have been into over 500 care homes and day care centres across the UK with our two dementia friendly shows *Once Upon a Time* and *The Garden*.

However, over the last two to three years it became increasingly clear that the shows were reaching only a limited number of people from BAME communities, mainly people in London who attended day care centres. We began to ask ourselves why we were not reaching more BAME communities especially with *The Garden*, our critically

acclaimed non-verbal piece of theatre, as it was designed as an inclusive non-verbal show. We began to consider how we might engage with some of the 25,000 people from BAME communities living with dementia who are not accessing arts, arts and health/wellbeing programmes. We also knew that it would not be easy as most people with dementia from these communities are cared for at home and are not living in care homes.

“It became increasingly clear that the shows were reaching only a limited number of people from BAME communities.”

About the project

We decided to focus on the South Asian diaspora living across the UK. We were fully aware that there are many similarities within the diaspora, but there are also critical differences that need to be acknowledged if we were to have any meaningful creative dialogue with them. We knew we had to be able to speak different South Asian languages and/or have translators. We also had to have awareness of religions and have gender and cultural sensitivity.

First we began to research the existence of South Asian care homes, day care centres, community and cultural groups that had contact with South Asian people living with dementia, and women's groups in order to talk about care, dementia, and arts and dementia. We telephoned, we emailed, we met with them, and offered them creative workshops and our touring show *The Garden* as an example of arts/theatre. Once dialogue had been established, we offered workshops in order to create a rapport with the South Asian community. *The Garden* was also used to test out what elements of the show worked, and what needed to be culturally specific.

“I thought to myself, why not try something new just once in our lives.”

Bhakti Shayma Care Home, Balham

We are now planning and delivering a new dementia-friendly show called *Love Unspoken* aimed at the South Asian diaspora.

A rehearsal for *Love Unspoken*. Photo courtesy of Spare Tyre.



Reflections

We have had to think about many things in making this show and the hardest has been to find artists from South Asian backgrounds who have the multitude of skills needed for a show like *Love Unspoken*. They need to have a good understanding of South Asian culture and/or languages. They need to be skilled performers, be able to devise, improvise and work in a participatory context.

Much research has gone into the South Asian cultures.

Speaking openly and confidently about dementia and its effects within the context of an arts activity is not always easy – it only happens if the lead co-ordinator is open and understanding about the limited aims of any arts intervention.

Maintaining contact with the groups before during and after a project is vital to the impact of any meaningful participatory project especially when working with a community that is not mainstream.

What next?

The vision for *Love Unspoken* has always been to engage with and enable community performers from the South Asian communities (carers and their loved ones) to perform in the show itself. This is easier said than done! But we have not given up with this idea and the research has already facilitated many fruitful conversations and connections nationally.

We are working with a community that rarely – if ever – engages in the funded Arts in the UK. Despite there being many programmes for older people especially over the past 20 years, South Asian elders have not been engaging. It is time to include them and reach out to them with arts that are relevant to them. We will work slowly and carefully to engage and include them in this project. *Love Unspoken* is a first step to making a connection and then growing a relationship with the South Asian diaspora.

Spare Tyre is producing this show in association with theatre venues. Our hope is to tour the show to studio spaces and work for a length of time with a local South Asian community in the surrounding area. The first performances in this project will take place in Hornchurch, and in the boroughs of Wandsworth and Kingston towards the end of 2019 and into 2020. We hope that *Love Unspoken* will find further funding and being able to work with communities beyond London.

Creative ageing & disability

Creative community workshop at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Photo courtesy of Dulwich Picture Gallery.



Dulwich Picture Gallery: Together through Art

SUPPORTING ADULTS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL ILL HEALTH TO BECOME CREATIVE PEER FACILITATORS

by Kelly Robinson and Jane Findlay, Dulwich Picture Gallery

As a Gallery we have delivered creative learning programmes for older adults at risk of social isolation and loneliness for over a decade, working in collaboration with our local community partners responding to and supporting local need. Our learning programmes take inspiration from our Collection, exhibitions and built environment and use the five ways to wellbeing (developed by the New Economics Foundation) to underpin the development and delivery of our programmes.

“Nearly half of adults aged 55+ say they have experienced depression and or anxiety.”

This project recognised that nationally nearly half of adults aged 55+ say they have experienced depression and or anxiety, and that social isolation, a loss of sense of purpose and unemployment, especially later in life can lead to difficulties with self-worth leading to a greater instance of mental health issues.

About Together through Art

The approach for Together through Art was to build a project which provided opportunities for older adults to use the Gallery and the training and development programme to form new social connections, build new transferable skills, and to enhance their self-esteem and happiness. For our visitors and participants, we wanted to promote wellbeing and reduce the stigma which surrounds mental health, to confront the assumptions about the limitations of people as they age, and build bridges between local health and community services and the creative sector.

Working in partnership with the South London and Maudsley (SLaM) Mental Health Trust Recovery College, the Gallery piloted a paid training and development programme for five older adults aged 55 and over who have

lived experience of accessing secondary mental health or addiction services. The project aimed to equip the participants with tools and experiences to use creativity to support their wellbeing and enable them to use their life experiences and skills to support other audiences through delivering wellbeing programming at Dulwich Picture Gallery as creative peer facilitators.

Each participant took part in a paid nine-month paid training and development programme delivered by the Gallery and the SLaM Recovery College to become creative peer facilitators. Working alongside the Gallery's artist team, the peer facilitators used the co-production model to co-design and co-deliver creativity and wellbeing workshops for families, young people and older adults.

Reflections

For the Gallery one of the biggest assets for the project was the experiences, ideas, and enthusiasm that the peer facilitators brought to the project and the wider Gallery.

The feedback from our youth and family workshops highlighted the positive impact of intergenerational engagement. For our older adult participants, the experience proved immeasurable as the peer facilitators were able to relate on a peer level and could inform and enrich our Ageing Well programme based on their lived experiences.

The biggest learning curve for the project team was the need to support the peer facilitators to understand a creative arts approach to participation. The Gallery worked to develop their understanding of how this differs to a medical model of access which focuses primarily on medical conditions. Together we unpicked the language of co-production, peer-to-peer and lived experience as the peer facilitators grappled with how these terms took on a different meaning outside of a medical form of engagement.

For all peer facilitators the project had a positive impact on their confidence and also their engagement within the wider community. They have all taken their experience at the Gallery and used it to form and build new connections in the creative local community from signing up to art foundation courses, creating films looking at co-production in creativity and health settings, through to delivering craft workshops with local audiences. They still regularly engage with the Gallery through supporting the legacy of the project and volunteering.

“ They have all taken their experience at the Gallery and used it to form and build new connections in the creative local community.”



Creative community workshop at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Photo courtesy of Dulwich Picture Gallery.

“The project has helped me to re-engage with my own creativity and recover my confidence and sense of self-efficacy. The SLAM sessions in particular helped me to reframe my lived experience of mental illness as something positive, which could enhance the delivery skills I was learning rather than something to be ashamed of and hide.”

Peer Facilitator

What next?

The project has enabled us to build new and stronger relationships with the local creative community. We are expanding our creativity and wellbeing programmes with the SLAM Recovery College and have hosted pop-up displays and programmes at the Gallery from the Social inclusion, Hope and Recovery Project (SHARP), a service based in Brixton working with people with psychosis.

We are now working in collaboration with other services within SLAM to use the model of Together Through Art to work with young people and support their transition from youth to adult mental health services. We aim to use the model of co-production to collaborate with young people to create creative resources and interventions to support other young people with their mental health.

Luminate: Dementia Inclusive Choirs Network in Scotland

CREATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CARERS TO SING WITH THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

by Anne Gallacher, Director of Luminate

Luminate has been awarded funding by the Life Changes Trust and the Baring Foundation to set up a dementia-inclusive choirs network for the whole of Scotland. We are collaborating with three partner organisations – Age Scotland, Scottish Care and Making Music – and working closely with composer, educator and community choir leader, Stephen Deazley, on the development and delivery of the programme.

Luminate's approach is rooted in older people's right to access high-quality arts provision regardless of their circumstances or where they live. We believe it is important that people living with dementia and their carers have the opportunity to sing in a choir in their local area, and we want to encourage and support a growth in dementia-inclusive choirs across the country.

We know that choirs and singing groups across Scotland are really different from each other – they have different goals, they sing different repertoire, and they are led by choir leaders who have different interests and skills. So ensuring access to a choir for people living with dementia across Scotland requires a wide-ranging approach.

A key principle is that the network will support both choirs whose work is specifically designed for people living with dementia, as well as community choirs who would like to be dementia inclusive. We believe that this approach is really important to ensure that people living with dementia are included in a meaningful way in the life of their local community.

“It is important that people living with dementia and their carers have the opportunity to sing in a choir in their local area.”

About the project

At the time of writing, the network's programme of activity is just getting underway. However, since funding was awarded we have spent a lot of time researching the current picture, and – importantly – exploring what people living with dementia and their carers would like the network to provide. We have also worked with choir leaders across Scotland to understand the needs that they identify.

We launched the network at a dementia-inclusive singing event in the Music Hall, Aberdeen, in May 2019, with over 400 people including dementia singing groups and community choirs taking part. We used the event to start a process of consultation that has informed our evolving plans. Over the summer we undertook an online survey to find out what choirs across Scotland want from the new network, and we met with people living with dementia and their carers, as well as with choir leaders and dementia care professionals, to hear their views and experiences.

So far, we have heard that:

- Successful dementia inclusive choirs and singing groups have a strong focus on the social aspect of singing, with time built in for tea, coffee and chat. Being open and taking on board the views and experiences of all the singers is crucial.
- Volunteer support can be essential to success, with volunteers taking on many roles from singing buddy to making the tea.
- Many existing community choirs already operate in a very inclusive way, and with a bit of help could become dementia inclusive without the need for much adaptation. Needs identified by choir leaders included help in supporting singers with different styles and paces of learning, particularly when a choir is learning new music.
- Many choir leaders and organisers want to understand more about dementia and particularly communication approaches.
- Logistical challenges for all choirs included finding suitable and affordable rehearsal space, recruiting singers, and raising funds to pay for professional musicians (choir leaders and accompanists) as well as other choir expenses. A challenge in many parts of Scotland was the availability of transport to get singers to and from rehearsals. Addressing this is particularly important to ensure that people living with dementia are able to attend; in many groups this is one of the roles taken on by volunteers.

- Most people feel that having some kind of goal can be a really positive thing – usually a performance of some sort – but stressed that it is important that these opportunities are relaxed and optional.

What next?

Autumn 2019 saw a pilot programme of activities in different communities based on the findings of our consultation. These activities will be evaluated to inform the roll-out of the network in 2020.

A key strand of our pilot programme will be training in dementia inclusion and in community music skills for leaders and organisers of choirs and singing groups. We were struck by the positive impact of the dementia-inclusive community singing event that we ran to launch the network, and will be running similar events in different locations across Scotland to enable singers – including people living with dementia – to sing in their local community.

As we roll out the programme from 2020, our vision is that the network will ensure that high-quality singing opportunities are available to people living with dementia across Scotland.

We are just at the beginning of this journey, but we're definitely on our way!

Launch of the Dementia Inclusive Choirs Network, May 2019. Photo courtesy of Luminate.



Lawnmowers Theatre: A Dead Good Life

A FILM TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF AGEING FOR PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

by Dawn Redhead, Chief Executive Officer, Lawnmowers

The Lawnmowers Independent Theatre Company is a unique organisation run by and for people with learning disabilities. With over thirty years in arts-based activism and helping to create change, Lawnmowers takes a wide range of forms, from workshops to theatre tours, training work with organisations seeking to serve people with learning disabilities and an abundance of inclusive cultural activities, dedicated to the enrichment and empowerment of many collaborators and community partners.

Our older founding members' current experience of the health and social care sector and new research on the life expectancy of people with learning disabilities have led to Lawnmowers taking a whole-of-life approach to its work, introducing new permanent activities for younger and older members through arts-based participatory programmes and interactive research and activism.

Several of the organisation's core members are now approaching 60. Although this is perhaps as much as twenty years above the life expectancy a generation ago, it is still a precarious achievement even today. As recent research shows, people with learning disabilities, although living longer than a generation ago, still die on average 15-20 years sooner than people in the general population. It is estimated that more than 1,200 children and adults with a learning disability die prematurely every year. Many of the early deaths of people with learning disabilities could be reduced through improved healthcare and preventative actions.

“People with learning disabilities, although living longer than a generation ago, still die on average 15-20 years sooner than people in the general population.”

About the project

It is these experiences of ageing and our health and social care sector that inform *A Dead Good Life*. This project is led by five of the Company's accomplished and older artists with learning disabilities. Film is the key performative element and Elvis Presley, the favourite artist of our founding member Paul King, plays his part too!

The drive behind the project is to highlight:

- The lack of equality in treatment for people with learning disabilities;
- The age-related challenges and real life experiences in health and wellbeing which some of our older artists are now facing and which they witnessed first-hand through the long term illness and subsequent death of their friend and Lawnmowers founding member Paul King (1963-2013);
- The lack of provision and perhaps experience in the general sector that is needed for people with learning disabilities to enjoy a healthy and engaging older life.

A scene from *A Dead Good Life*. Photo courtesy of Lawnmowers Theatre.



A Dead Good Life both demonstrates and critiques key principles identified by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) as being essential to ageing well in the 21st century (Five Ways to Wellbeing: Keep Learning, Take Notice, Be Active, Give, Connect).

“Our characters are based on our own life experiences as a group ... It’s important to use our life experiences because there are other people out there who are experiencing the same thing. By putting what we have been through forward it allows other people to realise that they’re not the only ones, and that they can do things about it and make their life good again.”

Debbie, Lawnmowers Theatre

What next?

The film is just the start of our journey. It has been specially designed so that it can be viewed in parts or as a whole to allow people to delve into each of the individual challenges and engage with the NEF’s Ways to Wellbeing.

Workshops that accompany films screenings have been designed and will be delivered by the project artists. A dedicated website is planned where the film will be freely available online which will allow people with learning disabilities, their families and carers, practitioners, interested organisations and think-tanks to engage nationally and internationally.

Ali Campbell, Reader in Applied Performance at Queen Mary University of London and long-term collaborator and friend of The Lawnmowers, wrote about his involvement in the project and the power of theatre and the arts in making the personal political: “...the company’s theatre-making methodology takes the personal experiences of Learning-Disabled performers as a starting point for the much wider examination of contemporary society and a critique of its flaws and failures. Such a critique, from a group within that society who are regularly overlooked and disempowered, can afford us a unique perspective on what urgently requires examination and improvement across all of that society.”

This is a very powerful project. The impact we create is not simply through the transformational process of art-making but also by sharing the work, the stories that people with learning disabilities make about their lives. Social impact and artistic excellence together can make the most incredible changes to the lives of people with learning disabilities. The Lawnmowers trains practitioners and medical clinicians of the future. Our older artists have a wealth of experience and will use it to continue helping to create change to benefit their community.

Creative ageing, sex & gender diversity

The Coast is Queer Literature Festival in Brighton. Photo courtesy of New Writing South.



Highland Print Studio: Wise Guys

PRINT-MAKING WORKSHOPS FOR OLDER MEN WHO HAD NEVER ENGAGED WITH THE VISUAL ARTS

by Alison McMenemy, Director, Highland Print Studio

Highland Print Studio is an open-access visual arts workshop with facilities for printmaking, including techniques such as etching, linocut, lithography and screenprint. The workshop is based in Inverness; however we work with schools and community groups across the Highlands. Studio users and class participants come from across the north of Scotland, other parts of the country and abroad and range from complete beginners to professional artists.

About the project

Wise Guys started in 2012 with a pilot programme of weekly printmaking classes for older men. The project was in response to evidence that older men are significantly underrepresented when it comes to participation in creative activity. It was

also a reaction to the growing body of research showing that older men were susceptible to experiencing loneliness and isolation and the negative impact on wellbeing this brings. It was thought that printmaking, with its tools, equipment and processes, may be a road into creativity that would help men to engage.

Getting word of the opportunity out to potential participants was initially a challenge. Circulating information via organisations and networks for older people had proved fruitless, simply because older men, and their general reluctance to join things, were not linked into this network. Also, the Men's Shed movement was yet to reach the area and to develop the level of profile it has today. Key to reaching the target audience was a feature in the local newspaper putting a call-out for older men. We knew we were good to go when two men in bunnets came in off the street and declared they wanted to be Wise Guys! Within no time the courses were full and a waiting list had formed.

“Older men are susceptible to experiencing loneliness and isolation and the resultant negative impact on wellbeing this brings.”



A Wise Guys print-making workshop. Photo courtesy of Highland Print Studio.

Highland Print Studio was keen that the opportunity went to participants who had never engaged with the visual arts. The organisation recognises that confidence is the great hidden barrier to participation in the arts and that there is still within the general public a sense of exclusivity. So, although this was a project about encouraging older men to engage, it was also about reaching those men who had never crossed that barrier. This message was central in promoting the opportunity. In some cases, it still took a significant nudge from wives and daughters familiar with Highland Print Studio to get them through the door! Although we had set ourselves a greater challenge, this paid off and that early cohort of Wise Guys were an eclectic bunch and included a retired anaesthetist, farmer, car salesman, exciseman, welfare officer, telly engineer and Free Church minister.

As a pilot project, obviously we had no idea how successful it would be. However, as the weeks progressed, those tensions turned to relief and admiration as participants embraced the challenge of overcoming their own fears of the unknown, not only in learning new technical skills, but the biggest challenge of all, being creative.

A Wise Guys print-making workshop. Photo courtesy of Highland Print Studio.



The weekly classes had a real sense of being a social gathering. Wednesday mornings were filled with the noise of chatter, munching of biscuits, slurping of tea and the shared endeavour of creative expression.

A social objective was there from the start. Social evenings were part of the programme and these included a talk by a professional artist, beer, wine and nibbles. We had to warn our artists to prepare for a barrage of questions! The guest artists' work ranged from contemporary printmaking to large-scale installations and all were received with genuine interest.

“The Wise Guys programme has given me entirely new skills and a whole new direction to follow. There’s a great team at Highland Print Studio and I’ve made many new and valued friends.”

Richard ‘Jacko’ Mackenzie, Wise Guy

Highland Print Studio has continued to work with this group as and when funding is available, running both beginners' classes and also intermediate classes that enable current Wise Guys to continue to develop their creative skills. Original participants are accessing the Studio just like any other self-reliant studio user. There is a tendency for Wise Guys to come in en masse, but that's tribute to the social impact of the project.

Over the years, Wise Guys have acted as ambassadors for the project, giving talks at various events and featuring on BBC television and radio. One has set up a Men's Shed in his village and in 2019, they had an exhibition of their artwork at the Scottish Parliament.

We have enabled the Wise Guys to engage with something that it occasionally still bemuses them to be doing and in return they enrich our Highland Print Studio community. We continue to encourage their creative development and in return we exploit their woodworking and electrical skills shamelessly!

What next?

Our vision for the project is to expand this success out to a wider community. As successful as the project has been, we are aware that we are not reaching men from the most challenging socio-economic areas – this is our next challenge. We have, however, numerous mentors who can share their experience of being Wise Guys.

New Writing South: Celebrating our Stories

CELEBRATING THE STORIES OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE AND TACKLING STIGMA AND ISOLATION IN BRIGHTON

by Lee Smith, New Writing South

New Writing South is based in Brighton, which has a rich LGBTQ+ community, culture and history. Although New Writing South has worked extensively with the South East's LGBTQ+ communities, it was felt that many of our projects, and the projects of the wider arts sector, neglect older LGBTQ+ people. And as a group at greater risk of social isolation, loneliness and stigma than both other older people and other LGBTQ+ people, we recognised a real need to better reach this community.

About the project

Celebrating our Stories is an exciting two-year project collecting and celebrating the stories of older LGBTQ+ people in the South East of England by turning them into a series of performances.

The project will culminate in a festival in 2020. There will be a main public performance but also satellite performances in community and day centres, residential homes and other non-arts / cultural spaces. There will also be opportunities for people to come together to socialise and discuss issues affecting older LGBTQ+ people.

Older LGBTQ+ participants will be involved at every stage of the project. So far our participants have had the opportunity to share their stories; train as story gatherers to collect other people's stories; and participate in 'story listening workshops' where we listen to people's stories and discuss how they might be brought to the stage. In the next stages of the project, participants will have the opportunity to work with the stories as writers, theatre

“ We felt many of our projects, and the projects of the wider arts sector, neglect older LGBTQ+ people [who are] a group at greater risk of social isolation, loneliness and stigma.”



The Coast is Queer Literature Festival in Brighton. Photo courtesy of New Writing South.

makers and performers; help with the organisation and marketing of the festival; perform in or help front or back of stage at the festival; and of course attend as audience members.

Through this project we have partnered with some excellent groups for older LGBTQ+ people, such as Brighton's Older LGBT Project and Older and Out, Eastbourne Rainbow and Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance. Together with these organisations we hope that this project will help address the lack of provision for older LGBTQ+ people.

Through collecting the stories of older LGBTQ+ people it has come to light that many older LGBTQ+ people feel the need to go 'back into the closet' when they move into residential care or have carers visit their homes. It was heart-breaking to hear about this little known issue. We hope this project will allow isolated LGBTQ+ people to feel more connected to their identity and community.

As some of our activities will take place in residential homes, day centres, etc. that aren't specifically LGBTQ+ settings, we hope to reach older LGBTQ+ people whether they're 'out' or not whilst tackling general stigma within those settings.

It was important the project was led by LGBTQ+ arts professionals to promote a safe space for our participants and from the start it has been our vision that our older LGBTQ+ participants feel a sense of ownership and control over the project. We want it to be a collaborative process and not a prescription of what we think this community wants.

To help ensure this, the majority of our steering group is made up of older LGBTQ+ people to advise on and help us make decisions about the project.

One person commented that they're thankful the project is something for older people that isn't Vera Lynn! This highlights the assumptions we often make about what older people like. There is often a standard offering for 'older people' and a standard offering for 'LGBTQ+ people', and older LGBTQ+ people are often failed by both. This makes it even more important that we listen to the needs of this intersectional community.

We have been touched by the feedback we have had about the project so far.

What next?

Looking to the future, it has been our hope that there would be a life for this project after the festival in 2020. Perhaps that's making the festival a recurring event; creating other projects with this community; or supporting the alliances our participants make and any projects that stem from that. But whatever the future holds, it will be earnestly spearheaded by the older LGBTQ+ participants that make up its heart and soul.

“I have gained a real sense of belonging to this sweet community of older people, their wisdom, humour, creativity. And it's important to me, being trans, to find I belong here in a world which is so often hostile.”

Persia, 70

“The project makes me happy – it's a positive, creative, fun group who are interesting and inspiring to be with. It's unusual and a change for me to look forward to a group and leave the group feeling better than when I came in. I feel part of the community – not outside it.”

Helen, 58

Creative ageing & language

A cARTrefu care home workshop. Photo courtesy of Age Cymru.



Age Cymru: cARTrefu

EMPLOYING WELSH-SPEAKING ARTISTS IN CARE HOMES

by Kelly Barr, cARTrefu Project Coordinator, Age Cymru

cARTrefu is Age Cymru's flagship arts in care homes project that has been running since 2015, with funding from Baring Foundation and Arts Council Wales. The aim of the project is to improve the provision of creative activity in care homes and develop artists' skills in running these sessions.

Artists deliver free participatory art sessions in care homes over 12 weeks, engaging residents, family, friends and staff in activities that allow them to explore their creativity. This can range from dance to spoken word, film-making to sculpture.

cARTrefu has been a huge success and over the last four years has delivered 1,840 two-hour art workshops in over 25% of the care homes across Wales. In-depth evaluation of the project has proven that cARTrefu has a statistically significant impact on residents' wellbeing, and has changed care staff and artists attitudes, particularly in terms of what people living with dementia can achieve.

Wales is a bilingual nation, where the Welsh Government is committed to enabling 1 million people to be able to speak Welsh by 2050, roughly a third of the population. Although the Welsh-speaking population varies by region, our artists have reported the impact that they have been able to make by being able to engage with residents in their first language.

Welsh-speaking artists were encouraged to apply for the project, and two were contracted, with others ranging from being learners, or having a little conversational Welsh to having no Welsh-language skills at all. During this phase of the project, 61% of care homes that applied reported having a community of Welsh speakers in their home, so demand was much greater than anticipated.

One artist, Alice Briggs, working in Ceredigion, an area where roughly 50% of people are first language Welsh speakers, reported that older people in this area have traditions around the old Eisteddfodau (Welsh arts and culture festivals), Royal Welsh Shows, Methodism and the singing traditions that come with it.

People's histories and culture, particularly from the rural hinterland and farming backgrounds, have been a huge influence for Alice as an artist. She is fascinated with the way people used to live, what we can learn from that now, and what we can learn from the 'old ways' to take into the future – particularly at a time where climate change problems are making us think again about the way that we live, eat, use energy, and travel.

The fact that there can be quite distinctive separate communities of people with different backgrounds in the care homes, means that it is very important not to make broad assumptions about what individuals or homes themselves might be interested in culturally.

The cARTrefu residencies, at 12 weeks long, allow for artists to really embed themselves in a care home, getting to know the residents and staff as individuals. Trusting, strong relationships are built, which allow the artists to create more personal and meaningful experiences.

A visit by HRH The Prince of Wales to residents involved in the cARTrefu programme in Neath.

Photo © Patrick Olnier, courtesy of Age Cymru.



Welsh-speakers appreciate being able to speak in their first language, and we believe it is an important right for them to have that opportunity. Carers need to be understanding and respectful of people's first language and make the effort to pronounce people's names and place names correctly. Some people living with dementia lose their English, reverting to their mother tongue and find it even harder to communicate with carers if they are trying to do so through their second language.

It is vitally important for Welsh-speaking artists to be shown the value of working in care homes, for the residents and for their own practice, and be given the skills to do so. The third phase of the cARTrefu project (2019-2021) is enabling us to build the skills of care workers as well as artists interested in working in care homes. Due to a strong cohort of experienced, Welsh-speaking cARTrefu artists, we are able to deliver these sessions in the medium of Welsh.

“Our artists have reported the impact that they have been able to make by being able to engage with residents in their first language.”

What's next?

Our vision is for cARTrefu to be embedded in every care home in Wales, enabling and celebrating creativity in care home life. We want care home staff to be able to deliver regular creative activity for residents, improving their wellbeing, not just health, whilst continuing to bring professional artists into the homes to inspire and innovate. We want to build the skills and confidence of artists in Wales, so that we can continue to engage with residents in their first language.

Creative ageing and class

A Duckie Posh Club event. Photo courtesy of Duckie.



Duckie: The Posh Club

BRINGING DANCE, CABARET, MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE TO OLDER WORKING-CLASS COMMUNITIES

by Emmy Minton, Duckie

About the project

The Posh Club is a weekly social and entertainment club for older people who are experiencing, or are at risk of social isolation. Each four-hour event is styled as a tongue-in-cheek 'posh' 1940s silver service high tea, with three cabaret acts, waiters in black tie, vintage crockery, decorations and an in-house pianist. The Posh Clubs are glamorous events held in the heart of the community and emphasise dressing up, live entertainment, social connectivity and intergenerational volunteering. The Posh Clubs are older peoples' anti-loneliness projects disguised as a taste of the high life. Community venues are transformed into five-star hotels, service-users into 'Posh' guests and volunteers into silver service waiters and Maître Ds. The Clubs are magical, joyful places cherished by the guests and always full to capacity.

The Baring Foundation (through Celebrating Age with Arts Council England) supported Duckie to deliver 20 The Posh Club events in Brighton and Hastings on the south-east coast and to commission Florence Peake and Karen de Silva to create a new performance celebrating the lives and loves of older people that toured The Posh Clubs in Crawley, Hastings, Brighton, Hackney and Elephant & Castle. This project brought contemporary dance, cabaret, music and performance to working-class communities through the delivery of a glamorous night club that happened during the day in the heart of grass-roots communities where older adults would otherwise struggle to access arts and cultural activities of this quality and diversity.

The Posh Club target audiences are older 65+ and they are reached through a programme of assertive outreach and promotion prior to each club starting. Duckie submitted a further funding bid to The National Lottery Community Fund to conduct local research and complete six months of partnership building and outreach prior to the opening of The Posh Club to find out which adults are likely to feel excluded from accessing mainstream arts and cultural provision in Hastings and Brighton. This resulted in a number of target audience groups

including working class communities and adults on low incomes, adults living with disabilities, chronic and life limiting illness or dementia and BAME and LGBTQ communities. These groups were reached by The Posh Club team visiting local charities and services to promote the events and to identify and engage with potential audiences.

Partnerships included working with the Specialist Older Adult Mental Health Services Hastings– Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust, The Lyndhurst Care Home for adults with physical and cognitive disabilities, BAME community group Hope G, Mindout LGBT Mental Health service, Dementia Day Services and housing providers.

Duckie takes an 'identifying and removing' barriers approach to engaging target audiences so the needs of these groups influenced where, when and how the events happened – for example, the clubs were held in an unassuming and accessible Church Hall next to a bus stop with free street parking; were held at lunchtime to suit older peoples' activity levels; and all booking and communication with the guests happened over the phone or through posted correspondence.

“ This project brought contemporary dance, cabaret, music and performance to where older adults would otherwise struggle to access arts and cultural activities of this quality and diversity.”

Reflections

Duckie have learned that there is a huge demand and need for sustained programmes of arts and cultural activities for older audience groups that are not engaging with mainstream arts provision and that reaching and building relationships with this constituency is both easily achievable and enormously rewarding if their needs, tastes and interests are taken into account.

The company has built a culture of 'active listening' into its practices and this involves using local knowledge, research and data to understand the needs of communities as well as talking directly to audience groups over sustained periods of time to understand properly what they 'want and need'.

We have also learned that building strong relationships with audience groups over time offers an opportunity to take risks with programming – that sustained bonds support the introduction of work that may be conceptual, uncomfortable or unusual and that this supports engagement with contemporary practices that these audiences would not normally have access to.

What next?

Launching The Posh Clubs in Brighton and Hastings through the Celebrating Age fund was a huge success and we have now established both Clubs as permanent services running 30 weeks a year through support from The National Lottery Community Fund and Arts Council England. The company has also developed its satellite participatory dance project PC*DC (Posh Club Dance Club) to support Posh Club audience members to devise contemporary dance pieces and perform them at The Posh Club and in other contexts. PC*DC began at The Posh Club Hackney and after being invited to perform to wide audiences at Sadler's Wells Elixir Festival and at Duckie's Gay Shame in 2019, the company now plans to launch sister projects to satellite The Posh Clubs in Hastings, Crawley and Brighton.

“The Posh Club had a big impact on me as I never used to go out much. I was scared when I first went but everyone made me feel good. I really looked forward to every Friday and the good feeling I got lasted over the weekend. I was able to talk to many people and did make friends with 4 people – we have been out for lunch which was wonderful.”

Participant

Some final reflections

“We will be doing this society and the ageing population a disservice if we don’t start thinking about it.”

Arti Prashar

This is just a small sample of organisations we have got to know over the Foundation’s decade of funding in the creative ageing sector. We know there are other organisations out there working with groups of older people who are underserved by the arts.

Across the spread of case studies here, we note that organisations seem to take one of two approaches – or a combination of both:

- ‘targeted’ – focusing on engaging a particular group; and
- ‘inclusive’ – whereby the focus is on bringing less well represented groups into a wider programme of work.

Culture& or New Writing South, for example, deploy a mostly targeted approach – and both would probably see that focus as important. Luminate is taking an inclusive approach to the Dementia Inclusive Choir Network, seeing this as essential to what they are seeking to do. Sadler’s Wells outreach work with BAME communities is a combination of both – providing specific opportunities for community groups tailored to their interests, as well as a drive to see the renowned Company of Elders become more diverse.

We need both to ensure that all sections of our older population are able to take advantage of the opportunities and experience the joys offered through participation in the arts.

However, we also need more. In her review of the creative ageing sector, 2010-19, *Older and Wiser*, Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt refers to ‘diversity’ as ‘unfinished business’ for the creative ageing sector, noting that while the sector has expanded significantly over the last decade, it often only reaches a narrow demographic.¹²

¹² Gordon-Nesbitt, R., *Older and wiser: creative ageing in the UK 2010-19*, King’s College London 2019, baringfoundation.org.uk/resource/older-and-wiser-creative-ageing-in-the-uk-2010-19.

We have intentionally covered different aspects of diversity in this collection. However, the greatest need for development is perhaps cultural diversity in order to respond to the changing demographics of the UK's older population. A first step may be 'an extensive effort to reach out to people from diverse communities and explain why creative approaches to ageing might be useful' (Arti Prashar, *Older and Wiser*, 2019).

We are pleased to see that the newly created Sector Support Body for Creative Ageing led by Manchester Museum plans to look at how to improve diversity in the sector as a first priority.

Again in the words of Arti Prashar: "We will be doing this society and the ageing population a disservice if we don't start thinking about it." (*Older and Wiser*, King's College London 2019)

Peer facilitators' team at Dulwich Picture Gallery.
Photo courtesy of Dulwich Picture Gallery.



Selected resources

ON CREATIVE AGEING

All resources can be found on our website www.baringfoundation.org.uk



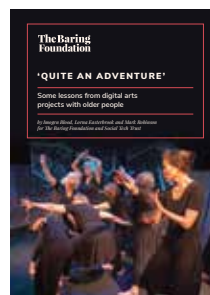
Art and dementia in the UK South Asian Diaspora
Elizabeth Lynch
with Spare Tyre
2019



Older and wiser: creative ageing in the UK 2010-19
Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, King's College London
2019



Around the world in 80 creative ageing projects
David Cutler
2019



'Quite an adventure': some lessons from digital arts projects with older people
Imogen Blood, Lorna Easterbrook and Mark Robinson
2019



Treasury of arts activities for older people
Liz Postlethwaite
2019



Late opening: arts and older people in Scotland
Andrew Eaton-Lewis
2017

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