Celebrating Age

Programme Evaluation: Final Report

January 2023

Authors: Imogen Blood, Lorna Easterbrook, Mark Robinson

Lorna Easterbrook Consultancy

Imogen Blood & Associates

THINKING/ PRACTICE/

Acknowledgements

Imogen, Mark and Lorna have been supported throughout the project by Shelly Dulson and Chloë Hands at IBA who have provided project management, administrative support and research assistance to the evaluation.

We would like to thank our commissioners for their feedback and support: Sara Harrison and Rebecca Blackman at Arts Council England and David Cutler at Baring Foundation. The evaluation has benefitted considerably from its partnerships with Family Arts Campaign and Creative Ageing Development Agency – and we would like particularly to thank Anna Dever (FAC) and Virginia Tandy (CADA).

Finally this report would not have been possible without the participation of the Celebrating Age funded projects, and those taking part or working/volunteering for these organisations and their partner agencies, and those from national organisations who kindly took part in our final Most Significant Change panel, including: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; National Care Forum; Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance; the National Academy for Social Prescribing; and Creative Ageing Development Agency.

Executive Summary

Programme
- 32 projects received a total of £3M funding for up to 3 years (or, where extended due to the pandemic, up to 4 years), with varying start and end dates.
- Projects worked across a wide range of artforms, and delivered workshops, programmes, events, festivals, exhibitions and performances in arts and cultural venues, housing and care settings, and a range of public spaces. Some commissioned new works of art from older artists, and/or exploring ageing or oral histories.
- The pandemic brought challenges and opportunities, with a noticeable increase in both the range of activities and the media through which they were delivered.

Participants
- 31K people participated in over 2.5K activities (with an average of 4 engagements each).
- Nearly three-quarters of participants were aged 65 and over, with 65-69 being the largest participating age group.
- In total, half of participants said that their day-to-day activities are limited because of a long-term health condition or disability (a quarter said they were limited 'a lot').
- Diversity in relation to ethnicity and gender identity varied considerably between projects. Overall and across both rounds of the projects:
  - 26% of participants identified as men and 69% as women.
  - 85% were of white British origin and a total of 15% coming from minority ethnic backgrounds (though ethnicity data was missing in many cases).

Partnerships
- Funded projects were required to work in partnership, and succeeded in working with a total of 548 partners - an average of 17 partners per project, showing the range of stakeholder interest in this activity.
- Half of projects partnered with their local Age UK, over three-quarters partnered with another arts, cultural or heritage organisation.
- New partnerships resulting from the Celebrating Age project were most frequently with care organisations and with older people's groups.
- Some projects worked in partnership with care homes and their providers, developing activities which introduced artists or arts activity into those settings.
- These partnerships required adaption to the day-to-day routines of care homes, creating new ways of working, but also challenges. This was especially so during covid, given the lack of access to homes.
- Partnerships benefitted from the 6-months planning at the start of the project, and from review and refresh – many projects were impacted by organisational change and turnover within partner organisations.

Themes/ impact

- The programme has highlighted the **huge diversity and individuality** of 'older people,' and how the arts can enable people to build and restore their **sense of identity in later life.**
- A common theme in older people's stories was how projects had **helped redress past exclusion from the arts**, due to direct discrimination, to messages that they were not 'good enough', or a perception that they would not be welcome.
- Many projects challenged **ageist assumptions**, however, consistently recognising older people as experts in their own lives is an ongoing journey, as is recognising one's own role as an older (50+) artist or staff member.
- Many projects worked **intergenerationally,** recognising that this can make a key contribution to tackling ageism, although projects tended to bring young people and older people together, with less involvement for age groups of working age.
- The **creation of communities** was a recurring theme in projects - sometimes this was around an aspect of diversity and/or an artform, however, the particular importance of **connection to place** for many in later life was also clear.
- There was evidence that participation in Celebrating Age projects had resulted in positive impacts on **physical and mental wellbeing**, and on **relationships and social isolation.**

Implications and Recommendations for policy makers and funders

- The programme has demonstrated the value of **longer-term funding**. With a 6 month planning period at the outset and up to 4 years' funding, projects have been able to develop potentially sustainable partnerships, support individuals on longer journeys of self-development, and there is evidence in some of a whole-organisation approach to mainstreaming the inclusion of older people, e.g. within programming.
- The **peer learning and dissemination to the wider sector** through regular Celebrating Age events (run by Family Arts Campaign) and a national evaluation which used participatory methods helped to create profile and community for the developing creative ageing sector. These were welcomed by most projects, however, it is important to **set explicit expectations of projects regarding participation** in peer learning and evaluation activities at the application stage to ensure budget for and commitment to these.
- There has, however, been limited success to date in involving older people in this national movement. There is more work to be done **to develop older people's voice and leadership in the sector**, and we hope that the Creative Ageing Development Agency will be able to continue working to advocate and build capacity for this to happen.
- The importance of **supporting project staff, and freelance practitioners** emerged as a theme: their skills, relationships and resilience are key to sustainable delivery.
- Having **a range of 'entry points' to arts and culture** for people with different life and health circumstances should be considered when designing projects and programmes, including digital, face-to-face, and hybrid approaches.
- The **needs of emerging older professional artists** should be given greater emphasis in policy and development.

- There is clearly potential for further exploration of how intergenerational approaches can be applied in **place-based working**, but without losing some specific focus on older people;
- The importance of working with older people should be **made explicit within Arts Council England's** *Let's Create* **strategy** and its implementation.

Conclusions and learning for organisations working with older people

Programme design

- Supporting long-term vision and partnerships through funding which allows for this kind of longevity can lead to stronger legacy, in terms of delivery, design and partnership. It has encouraged many to be more strategic about their approach to partners and commissioning.
- Consider the complex realities of older people's lives in designing programmes – bearing in mind health, previous experiences of the arts, skills, isolation, social dynamics in communal settings, and other factors: it is important to take into account of an older person's *whole life* (both now and in the past). This is arguably even more important in working with older people than it is doing participatory arts with other groups.
- Being explicit about the desired 'mainstreaming' of work for older people that might result from individual projects - bringing 'older people' from the education department to main programming/ exhibition room as it were – could be valuable, echoing the Investment Principles within *Let's Create*.
- In future, programmes such as Celebrating Age are, we suggest, more likely to support hybrid programmes of in person and digital/online activity, or to be specific about desired methods, and will need to reflect this in guidance.
- Building in evaluation and peer learning costs to the expected budgets/grants would encourage wider take up of the learning opportunities.

Project design

- Consider, from the outset, what all partners might like to see by the end of the project: better/more relationships? Continued activities? Trained and committed volunteers? Active older artists? New opportunities?
- Think early on about how you might sustain this work or create sustainable legacy activity after the project funding ends;
- Trial activity and don't be afraid to change tack if responses are not as expected or something does not work.

Building relationships

- Share your values about successful ageing.
- Allow enough time to get to know each other's organisations, and each other, to build good relationships: it's not just about outputs and outcomes.
- Individuals' enthusiasm plays a big part in successful partnering: strategic or Board-level partners need to be as motivated as operational staff.
- Find ways to make involvement fun.

- Find out your partners' long-term goals – identify how working with you on this project can help them move towards those goals.
- Meet regularly and with a focus, to foster good relationships and trust.
- Become a catalyst: be the organisation that acts as a bridge between different partners.
- Be clear and explicit about your assumptions – about older people, about the purpose of the project, the nature of art, the goals, the roles, sessions. Check for unconscious bias about older people and challenge stereotyped age assumptions.
- The importance of supporting project staff, and freelance practitioners in particular.

Older people as partners and co-creators
- Involve older people and include their voices in project design and development – either directly or through representative groups such as local forums.
- Make sure people are able to engage – provide enough time (including time to take action between meetings, and report back), recap on previous meetings, provide independent or 'neutral' spaces where everyone feels comfortable.
- Find out and listen to the aims, hopes, and wishes of later life participants; be prepared to be surprised; ask all the partners, including the older people, how can we all run with these?
- Support older people to be challenged in return: taking everyone out of their comfort zones can support the project's development into new areas.
- Work to build confidence as well as creative skills so older people can shape activity and co-create the creative experience or output.
- Support the practicalities of engagement: travel, welcome, breaks, accessibility, communication needs.

Sharing knowledge
- Provide arts-related experiences for non-arts partners.
- Explore age-friendly training for artists.
- Pool your knowledge about venues/ physical spaces/ participants/ audiences – value each other's expertise.
- Be open to being challenged on your project's art form by the non-arts specialists.

Communication
- Find simplicity and a common language across partners, including academic partners – communicate straightforwardly about the project, so it's easy for everyone to pass this information on.
- Step back every now and then to assess your assumptions and understanding about roles and goals.

Data Collection
- The collection of data adds real value to a project by providing details of engagement, impact and quality. Organisations working with older people should get to know the 'why' and 'how to' of data collection to better understand its purpose.
- Data collection techniques and tools may need to be adapted to the variety of projects, activities and events on offer.
- Collecting and discussing 'stories of change' from participants, artists, project managers and partner agencies can generate rich data and insights for change management.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and structure of this report

This report is the final output from the national programme evaluation of Celebrating Age. It tells the story of the programme and distils key learning points from the evaluation to inform future practice and policy. It builds on and synthesises a number of other outputs from and related to the national evaluation; some published, some not, including:

- 1st Interim Report (August 2018) (unpublished)
- 2nd Interim Report (June 2020): a series of mini-reports on: Outcomes for Older people; Equality and Diversity; Organisational Learning; Coronavirus Impact and Response; Legacy and Next Steps; Use of Most Significant Change Method, all published along with an Executive Summary on [Arts Council England's website](#)
- Feedback reports on Most Significant Change stories collected from the programme and discussed within the programme, (widely distributed but not published) from September 2019 and September 2021, and
- Regular Celebrating Age events and webinars run in partnership with the Family Arts Campaign since 2019

Over the duration of Celebrating Age (2017-2022), the same evaluation team was also commissioned to deliver related evaluations by each of the funders, to which we also refer readers:

- [*Impact of creative & cultural activity during the pandemic on loneliness, isolation & wellbeing*](#), (February 2022) in which we evaluated the impact and implementation of additional funds made available to Celebrating Age and Creative People and Places by Department of Culture, Media and Sport during the pandemic.
- *'Quite an adventure': some lessons from digital arts projects with older people,* [published by The Baring Foundation](#) (June 2019) as part of the national evaluation of their Digital Arts Creative Ageing Programme, jointly funded with the Social Tech Trust.

This report contains the findings from final monitoring data collected by Arts Council England (ACE) from the funded projects in 2022, and combines these with previous returns. It also includes summary information about each of the projects which were funded. It is illustrated throughout with vignettes from stories of change collected by projects about their impact – on those participating in, volunteering for and employed via the programme. Whilst a detailed review of other literature and initiatives related to creative ageing was beyond our scope, our reflections here do take account of some of the many developments within the sector over the life course of Celebrating Age.

Our intended audiences are funders, arts organisations, organisations working with older people or inter-generationally in communities, and others who are interested in creativity and ageing.

1.2. Overview of Celebrating Age Programme

Celebrating Age was a £3 million programme of funding run jointly by the Arts Council England (contributing £2.5 million) and the Baring Foundation (contributing £0.5 million), running between March 2017 and March 2022 (extended by a year, given the pandemic). It aimed to support cultural spaces and other organisations working collaboratively, in a partnership or as a consortium, to:

- Take arts and culture into places where older people will find it easier to engage; and/or
- Support arts and cultural spaces to be open, positive and welcoming places for older people.

This could involve:

- Empowering older people to help shape what is on offer or lead quality activities
- Embedding proven approaches to engaging older people as visitors, audiences, or participants in creative processes (e.g. ambassadors or buddying schemes)
- Testing and applying new ways to engage older people
- Commissioning older artists or art that has particular relevance for older people
- Showcasing or curating and celebrating art created by and with older people

There were two rounds of funding: the first round of 15 projects was commissioned in March 2017, and a further 17 projects were confirmed for Round 2 in April 2018.

1.3. Overview of the programme evaluation

Imogen Blood & Associates (in partnership with Thinking Practice and Lorna Easterbrook Consultancy) was commissioned in 2017 to create a national evaluation framework for Celebrating Age, to promote peer support between projects, and to draw learning from the programme at a national level. We were not commissioned to evaluate in detail the impact of each project; but rather to draw learning from the programme as a whole – for funders, policymakers, practitioners, and citizens.

Our approach has had three strands:

1. Supporting the development of monitoring tools and presenting analysis of project monitoring data collected by ACE, relating to the number and profile of activities, events, partners and participants.
2. Designing and supporting peer learning and sharing events for projects, which were organised by the Family Arts Campaign from September 2018 onwards.
3. Rolling out and reporting on an evaluation technique called Most Significant Change (described in section 3).

This approach has enabled us to present both numbers and stories from the programme, and through the peer learning and Most Significant Change methodology, we have co-produced our conclusions with a wide range of stakeholders. As the projects, the creative ageing sector and the wider context evolved (and especially through the pandemic), this approach was able to flex and evolve with them, unlike more traditional evaluation designs.

2. The Celebrating Age Programme: an overview

2.1. Activity

Each of the 32 projects provided data on their activities to ACE. **Over the whole duration of the programme (2017 – 2022), projects reported a total of 2,667 activities involving 30,935 participants.** Each individual participant engaged on 4 separate occasions on average, though we understand there was considerable range here with many one-off attendances, and others engaging multiple times. Data about the diversity of those participating is presented in section 4.3.

Projects worked across a wide range of artforms, and delivered workshops, programmes, events, festivals, exhibitions and performances in arts and cultural venues, housing and care settings, and a range of public spaces. Some commissioned new works of art from older artists, and/or exploring ageing or oral histories. Key features of each project are summarised in a table which is presented in the Appendix.

Projects were located across England. Celebrating Age projects have been recorded, along with Age Friendly Communities, in a map produced by the Creative Ageing Development Agency (CADA)[1].

Round 1 projects commenced in March 2017 and had all finished by March 2020; Round 2 projects started in April 2018 and, although the original intention had been for them to all be completed by March 2021, extensions were granted as a result of the pandemic. Within these broad timescales, individual projects each had very different end dates, which has presented an implementation challenge for the programme's peer learning and evaluation.

The following visual shows the start and end dates as planned before the final round of extensions resulting from the pandemic and gives a sense of this complexity:

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[1] See: https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/6110661/

R1 & R2 Project Timeline

Round	Project Name	Start	End
R1	Artcore	20th (Mar-17)	20th (Mar-20)
R1	Cubbit (Going Places)	1st (Mar-17)	23rd (Dec-19)
R1	Farnham Maltings (My Shout)	1st (Apr-17)	31st (Feb-19)
R1	Hoot	1st (Apr-17)	31st (Mar-20)
R1	Independent Arts (Time & Tide)	1st (Apr-17)	7th (Aug-19)
R1	Leeds Playhouse (Theatre and Dementia)	1st (Mar-17)	31st (Apr-17)
R1	Live Theatre Winchester Trust (Hat Fair)	1st (Mar-17)	21st (May-18)
R1	MIMA	1st (Mar-17)	31st (Mar-20)
R1	New Vic Theatre (Live Age Festival)	1st (Mar-17)	28th (Mar-19)
R1	The Pavilion (Pavilion)	25th (Mar-17)	3rd (Jan-20)
R1	Posh Club	1st (Apr-17)	1st (Oct-18)
R1	Rural Arts North Yorkshire (Art on Your Doorstep)	1st (Mar-17)	31st (Feb-19)
R1	The Albany (Meet me at…)	1st (Apr-17)	31st (Mar-20)
R1	Wiltshire Music Trust	1st (Apr-17)	31st (Mar-20)
R1	Wolverhampton Art Gallery (Still Lively)	1st (Mar-17)	31st (Dec-19)
R2	Arts Alive (Creative Conversations)	1st (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)
R2	City Arts (Imagine Celebrates)	1st (Mar-17)	31st (Dec-20)
R2	Cinderford Artspace (MindSCAPE)	1st (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)
R2	FACT (Digitally Ageing)	2nd (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)
R2	Gateshead Council Libraries (Art75)	9th (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)
R2	Gulbenkian Theatre (Still Stomping)	2nd (Apr-18)	18th (Dec-20)
R2	Helix Arts (Finding Your Feet)	3rd (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)
R2	Ideas Test (Young at HeArt Music Project)	2nd (Apr-18)	31st (Dec-19)
R2	MAC Cannon Hill (Festival January 2021)	2nd (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)
R2	New Writing South (Celebrating Our Stories)	2nd (Apr-18)	14th (Dec-20)
R2	Stratford Circus Arts Centre (Stratford Arts Club)	1st (Apr-18)	31st (Dec-20)
R2	Studio 3 Arts (Scaling Up)	1st (May-18)	20th (Jan-20)
R2	Suffolk Artlink (Make Do and Friends)	3rd (Apr-18)	30th (Sep-20)
R2	The Bluecoat (Where Art Belongs)	1st (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)
R2	The Devon Guild of Craftsmen (A Good Age)	2nd (Apr-18)	31st (Dec-19)
R2	Voluntary Arts Network (The Age of Creativity)	1st (Apr-18)	31st (Dec-19)
R2	Writing East Midlands (The Elder Tree Project)	1st (Apr-18)	31st (Feb-21)

Some of this group were granted extensions due to Covid, with a final finish date of Mar-22.

2.2. Programme design and implications

There were a number of features of the design of the programme which were relevant to the implementation and impact of projects and to our evaluation:

- **Providing funding for up to 3 years or, in the case of those projects receiving extensions to their timelines, up to 4 years** has enabled many of the grantee organisations to take a more strategic approach to the inclusion of older people. They have had the opportunity to go on a journey in terms of their relationships with organisational partners, local artists and groups of older people, and in terms of their mainstream thinking and programming. In some cases, older people's art and older artists have made the transition from community/ education to the 'main space' (literally or figuratively) over the life course of the programme; it is unlikely this would have happened in a 1- or even 2-year project.

- **Including the delivery of the project in partnership with other organisations as a criterion for funding** has, as we saw in the previous section, resulted in the creation and further development of a number of new partnerships, including with housing, care and voluntary sector partners working with older people, and inter-generational partners such as schools.

- Projects were given **6 months preparation and planning at the start** of the funded period which they particularly valued. This allowed them to lay the foundations for partnerships which had been mentioned in bids but needed time to work through. Some (e.g. **Independent Arts**) also engaged older people during this period to inform more detailed design of activities.

- There was, as highlighted in section 2.1, **considerable flexibility in relation to project end dates.** This meant that the programme was able to fund shorter projects, such as the **Leeds Playhouse** festival of dementia and hope, alongside longer projects. Funded periods were extended where the context demanded it – for example, to allow for periods of furlough and venue closure during the pandemic; one Round 1 project (**City Arts**) was allowed to join in Round 2 to allow time to adapt to major organisational change within key proposed partners. However, this flexibility has presented challenges for the national programme of peer support and for the evaluation and its dissemination: some projects had completed more than 4 years before we were in a position to start writing this final report; nearly two thirds of projects had finished by the time we reached the last 2 years of the programme.

- The opportunities for **peer learning and reflection** across the programme were welcomed by the vast majority of projects, some of whom continued to engage with Celebrating Age events and the closed Facebook page set up by Imogen Blood & Associates long after their funding had come to an end. This was particularly welcomed given the shared focus on working with older people. However, the plans for delivery of this, and the expectations that projects would participate in this (and the costs of doing so, especially pre-pandemic when events were held face-to-face), had not been set out clearly at the outset.

- Nevertheless, **the commissioning of Family Arts Campaign (FAC) in 2018 as the delivery partner for learning events** has brought considerable benefits to the programme. FAC brought the networks, profile and resources to raise awareness about Celebrating Age across the arts and cultural sector, reaching well beyond the funded projects. Other organisations with an interest in creative ageing were invited to participate in and present at bi-annual events (held online post-pandemic) and this has undoubtedly boosted the formation of the 'creative ageing sector'.

- The **role of older people within this learning community and within the emerging sector urgently requires further consideration and investment.** There were examples of older people attending and contributing to Celebrating Age events – for example, older people acting as ambassadors within the **New Vic** and **FACT** projects took part in Q&A sessions in Celebrating Age events in Stoke and Liverpool respectively. However, typically the audience at these events was noticeably younger or middle aged, and predominantly white. As programme evaluators, we had hoped at the outset to engage older people as more equal participants in peer learning; however, this proved challenging and would require more extensive planning and resourcing in future programmes. In the last couple of years, the emergence of Creative Ageing Development Agency (CADA) heralds an opportunity to further develop the involvement and leadership of older people in the sector. The evaluation team has been supporting CADA to identify and try to connect groups of older artists and ambassadors from Celebrating Age programme to their movement.

2.3. Partnerships

Aims for the programme included the development of new and existing partnerships, specifically:

- New or stronger partnerships across cultural spaces and with specialist artists and cultural organisations
- New partnerships with non-arts specialists who already engage with or represent older people

A total of 548 partner organisations were involved in the programme, an average of nine partners per project. Monitoring data shows the types of organisational partners involved, and distinguishes new partnerships – brought about as a result of Celebrating Age – from existing ones:

Types of partners that Celebrating Age projects are working with

	Local Authority	Housing Association	Health Trust/ Provider	Other care provider	Another arts/ culture/ heritage organisation	Education/ training organisation	Older people's group	Age UK	Other/s
Number of projects:	22	14	13	18	26	15	23	16	14
	69%	44%	41%	56%	81%	47%	72%	50%	44%
Of those, which were the types of partners that the CA organisation had worked with before?	20	9	6	6	19	13	11	10	5
How many were new types of partners for the organisation?	2	5	7	12	7	2	12	6	9

↑ Largest new partner type   ↑ Largest new partner type

The most frequently mentioned new partner organisations were care providers and older people's groups; 12 new partnerships with both types of organisation were reported as a result of the programme. Half of projects worked in partnership with their local Age UK.

The partnerships with others across the arts and cultural sector are also evident here: **81% of projects worked with another arts, culture or heritage organisation**, including 7 new partnerships.

Partners played varied roles supporting projects, most frequently co-working, which implies sustainability in relation to practice, skills and relationships.

Contribution of Partner Organisations

	Funding	Venues	Marketing/ branding/ access to older people	Signposting for those who needed further help	Training/ advice for your organisation	Co-working/ facilitating alongside you	Evaluation	Others
Number of projects:	19	27	27	22	21	29	20	17
	61%	87%	87%	71%	68%	94%	65%	55%

3. Evaluation: the Most Significant Change

3.1. Introduction to Most Significant Change (MSC)

Most Significant Change (MSC) is a participatory, qualitative evaluation approach, used where it is difficult to pre-determine outcomes or where complexity makes it hard to measure 'indicators of change.' It is particularly useful for evaluating people-orientated projects and services where improvements to quality of life are the desired impact.

MSC is also a collaborative and non-hierarchical way of identifying what has the greatest significance for people involved in accessing, delivering, and funding services - what matters most to all those involved, and why. The technique uses 'stories of change' as data, collected from and analysed by project stakeholders through a process of shared discussion, in three stages:

- **Story collection**: what changes have come about as a result of involvement in the project? Which of these matters most to the storyteller, and why? In short story form (verbal, visual, or written), people's account of this part of their life or practice before and after their involvement – and what they think has led to these changes - is drawn together.

- **Story reflection/ selection ('the Panel' discussion)**: anonymised stories are shared with and discussed amongst a different group of stakeholders, who identify what stands out most from the stories for them, and what this says about the key learning for the project.

- **Feedback and dissemination**: the learning from the discussion session is disseminated as widely as possible (including with those who shared their stories).

We specifically chose MSC for the qualitative element of the national CA programme evaluation in order to:

- Build projects' capacity to collect and use their own qualitative data
- Analyse the very diverse 32 projects that made up the overall programme
- Enable qualitative evaluation across projects with very varied start and finish dates
- Support the element of older people's empowerment within Celebrating Age by building older people's voices into the evaluation – both as story tellers and, potentially, as panel members discussing the stories of others.

3.2. Different approaches to MSC

There was some hesitation trying out MSC, especially in the early stages of the programme. Some projects took longer than others to adopt it; some used interesting and varied approaches, such as making videos that were then discussed by small groups, or passing a talking stick around a circle of participants to collect oral stories at the end of a group session . Some projects already had well-established and well-regarded qualitative evaluation models and approaches in place and as a result may have been more reluctant to use an additional method.

Over the course of the whole programme, the types of stories that projects collected and shared began to develop from a more usual 'case study' approach - in which a paid project member shares their observations of those who are taking part - to more stories being directly told by older people and other stakeholders, including artists, professionals, and volunteers. Some projects made a point of using a panel of older participants to discuss stories collected from others who were involved in the project such as professionals or artists. Other projects found this harder.

Starting with stories that had been identified by local projects' panels, we used a national event to set up the next round of panels. Then, taking the stories that had stood out the most, we set up further online panels drawn from project members, with their story choices and feedback then taken to a final national panel.

3.3. Key themes and learning about the programme from MSC

Overarching themes identified from the final collections of stories by the panels included:

1. **Diversity, identity, and equality**
    - The stories highlighted the huge diversity and individuality of 'older people,' and how the arts, through Celebrating Age, enable people to build and restore their sense of identity in later life.
    - Many of the stories shone a light on the existence and nature of ageism; projects were often able to raise awareness of this and enable older people to challenge ageist assumptions.
    - However, ageism runs deep; truly recognising that older people are experts in their own lives and practicing this consistently is an ongoing journey for us all.
    - The panel was struck by the fact that many of these projects had realised that engaging younger people is also essential if we are to tackle ageism, because they are also marginalised due to age and because this should increase sustainability.
    - The panel particularly valued first-person stories, often we tell older people's stories for them: "*who is deciding that Phyllis is amazing and quiet?*".
    - The panel was pleased to see the stories of under-represented groups captured here (e.g. transgender, carers, people living with dementia). However, there is still more to do, e.g. to capture the stories of men, people for whom English is not a first language, and people from a range of class backgrounds, since social class can also really affect how people see themselves.

2. Communities
- The creation of communities – around place, age group or other aspect of diversity, artform, organisation/ project – was evident in many of the stories.
- Within this, the particular relevance and importance of connection to place for many in later life was clear.

3. Time and other resources
- Importance of resourcing is a clear theme.
- The added value and impact of being funded for a sufficiently long period of time is key, in terms of the depth and quality of engagement, the establishment of relationships, the individual journeys of self-development.
- We can and should be more ambitious about our ideas of 'long term' funding and engagement.
- The importance of supporting project staff, and freelance practitioners in particular.

4. Sustainability
- The value of future planning and a longer-term vision/ strategic plan into which funding opportunities can be slotted.
- The potential for the voices and leadership of older (and younger) people to drive this.
- The need to actively review and refresh partnerships.
- Elevating the status of learning and engagement in arts organisations – not just as an add-on but as a central part of programming.

The stories of change shared gave us insights into personal identity, creative skills, views of ageing, development of other knowledge, and which steps individuals (whether in a paid position or not) were planning to take next. Stories told us about:

- Lifetime barriers – such as being 'put off' the arts at school. This really highlighted the importance of intergenerational work because of the ways in which what happens in young, formative, years is still playing out in people's lives decades later.

- The internalised ageism that so many of us carry: for example, if we think we cannot do something *because of our age*, or we think other people will not be interested *because of their age*.

- The value for artists of being part of a team.

Artists in particular held stories about their work with very wide-ranging age groups, yet we may not routinely think to ask for those stories of change despite their value to intergenerational work and thinking. Some project staff also shared stories about how their views of their own ageing had changed as a result of their CA work:

> *"We focus on the opposite ends of the age group, and we leave out the prime age group, us, and we tend to be the project managers and the researchers and we're the ones doing things to the other ends of the disenfranchised age groups."*
> (National Panel member, 2021)

4. Older people

We are diverse and creative in later life, just as we are in younger life – but what the Celebrating Age programme highlighted was how much we need the places and people that will ensure our creative opportunities, support, and encouragement, to be available and accessible. Projects offered a wide range of creative and cultural possibilities for sometimes specific groups of older people, across England.

Some projects worked with those living locally in care homes or specialist housing units, some invited older participants into nearby arts venues (including museums and theatres) and community spaces (including public libraries) or focused on sharing local experiences such as time spent working in the Raleigh bicycle factory (**City Arts**). There were events, performances, exhibitions, courses, sessions, talks, demonstrations, and – in the case of the project co-run by **Voluntary Arts Network** and Age UK Oxfordshire – an England-wide festival (the third annual Age of Creativity festival).

4.1. Routes into the arts

Overall, the largest proportion, almost a quarter of those taking part in Celebrating Age projects, found out about the event or activity from a friend or family member (of those who provided specific information). This varied considerably between projects; for example, at **The Bluecoat**, where much of the project took place in care settings, nearly 80% of participants had heard about the activities from a health, care, or housing worker. This highlighted the importance of such staff feeling they know enough about projects – and have sufficient confidence in these – to pass on this information and encourage people to take part. This threw more light on the importance of projects being funded for longer periods of time, enabling time to build relationships, get to know everyone who might be or become involved, and explore what the project might deliver and with whom. Confidence and relationships often needed building across the board - with staff in other settings (such as in sheltered housing), those working for stakeholder organisations (such as local councils), older volunteers and participants (and with their families and friends).

Older people's many different roles throughout Celebrating Age included advocating for projects: supporting and encouraging peers and sometimes specific subgroups of other local older people to take part, whether in formal roles, such as the **New Vic**'s ambassadors, or more informally as in this story:

> "In 2019, an MSC discussion group for the Gateshead Library's Art Diamonds project chose a story about 'J', a man in his 80s, as most significant for them. He had always had an interest making things, especially in wood, but had never found the opportunity with a busy job and three children. Through Art Diamonds, J had tried papercutting, visited an exhibition, made a mosaic tile and thrown pots on a wheel. He thought it was great to work with artists and learn some of their skills; to keep his brain active and his hands busy, and not to be a couch potato."

One reason the panel chose his story was because *"'J' was also a very welcoming advocate for the project. Often, he was the only man in the group; he wanted to share the message and the invitation to others, particularly men, who he felt sure would benefit from a shared interest."*

Monitoring data sought to capture Celebrating Age participants' previous participation in arts and culture. **About 8% of those who answered this question said they had not engaged in any arts or cultural activities in the previous 12 months.** The numbers of those actually engaged for the first time or re-engaged after a break by Celebrating Age activity is however likely to be higher, since – depending on when they were surveyed – some describing themselves as previously active may have included their Celebrating Age activity within their reply.

Widening routes into the arts for older age groups can mean changing the look and feel of buildings and other spaces so that these are experienced as welcoming and inclusive and not associated with an outmoded view of older age. In the Celebrating Age programme this also meant being curious about which older people might be missing from current creative opportunities, in order to create new routes. For example, in public library settings, **Independent Age** brought in heritage partners to give talks and share artefacts for handling in groups, followed by sketching, painting, and pottery-making as direct responses to the talks and artefacts:

> *"This has helped engage people who aren't existing arts users – 'I'll just come for the talk, I'm not very arty' – but then people have ended up staying and making something."*
> (Project lead)

Other projects sought to open other routes. As part of their project, **Rural Arts North Yorkshire** arranged for artists to visit older people in their own homes and work one to one with them there, particularly those living in very rural areas. During periods of lockdown, **Cinderford Arts** sent participants sunflower seeds through the post and ran a competition to grow the tallest flower on a specially set up Facebook page.

Other responses included commissioning diverse artists and facilitators (including older artists, such as in the **Devon Guild of Craftsmen**'s project, **A Good Age**), and/or co-developing work that also reflected local cultural and heritage backgrounds whether in terms of language, music, craft skills, or local industries.

Several projects shared stories of how involvement helped someone address a 'wrong' experienced many decades earlier in which a route into the arts had been shut down (and had often stayed shut) (Box 1):

Box 1

Examples of projects where participant involvement helped to address previous 'wrongs' experienced

In a silhouette workshop run by **Pavilion**, one Sikh man was keen to have his silhouette done: he had tried to do this in Scarborough during the 1970s and had been turned away on the grounds that 'we don't do turbans'.

The project worker explained,
"*No one could have predicted that that story would come up, but it meant he was able to talk about it, probably for the first time, in a safe and supportive group where people empathised and then actually get his silhouette done, which then felt quite symbolic.*"

From Arts Diamonds:

"Righting a wrong of 50 years' standing"

Credit: Art Diamonds, Gateshead Libraries

"School discouraged the talent I had, which was to draw cartoon or 'Disney' characters. I felt discouraged as no other type of art seemed available…. I have never thought of myself as an 'artist' of any description right up until the moment I was introduced to Art Diamonds.

I suddenly realised there are so many different types of art work….I decided to take the plunge as I knew the workshops would be relaxed and not judgemental. I am so pleased I did, what a difference this has made to my confidence…..I can enjoy my own level of creativity, supporting my mental health in the process".

4.1.1. Care homes

Many projects within Celebrating Age worked in partnership with care homes and their providers, developing activities which introduced artists or arts activity into those settings. Some projects engaged residents as participants; some as audiences – for example, Leeds Theatre Trust took performances from its festival of dementia on tour around local care homes. There were stories from projects describing positive impacts on the engagement, enjoyment, reminiscence and confidence of residents. These included descriptions of a 'sea-change' in the lounge following an activity, of one woman reading aloud something she had written at a book launch, and a man taking up playing the violin again after many years.

The partnerships behind these projects required adaptation on all sides. The necessity of not just 'top-level' backing (e.g. from managers or senior staff) for the projects but also of support from front-line staff who are essential to encouraging older people to take part is clear. The day-to-day routines of care homes, their staff and residents, and the pressures

upon them, sometimes made working with artists more difficult, or less of a priority. High staff turnover in some settings was a further barrier to embedding arts practice.

Despite these challenges, the national evaluation also collected some powerful stories of projects' impact on individual workers and on wider organisational practice. For example, one of the results of Celebrating Age Wiltshire was that a number of care homes were – certainly pre-pandemic - offering their spaces as community venues and their own community buses to collect local people to attend these events. There were also examples of projects supporting care home residents to attend cultural activities in the wider community. Bluecoat worked in partnership with care village provider Belong throughout their Celebrating Age project and members of the Belong team reported the impact of this partnership on their skills and awareness. In one story, an activity coordinator explained:

> *"The artists have contributed to opening up the minds of our team, their understanding of what art is - it's opened their minds to 'it's not just painting a picture'. You're expressing yourself as a person, no-one's telling you what to do - that's freedom. Being expressive of oneself, being able to say 'this interests me', I've done that, that's wellbeing isn't it? I'm sure you'll have heard change stories about individual people - customers and family members - whereas you need to get the staff. It's like a pyramid, with staff at the top - they need to learn and it trickles down. And for the sustainability, after you've gone".*

Covid presented particular challenges, as care homes restricted access. However, there was also evidence of opportunity and growth, even during these difficult times. Cinderford Artspace reported that some of the care homes with whom they were working were now providing tablets to residents so they could speak with relatives: this had created an opportunity to 'piggy back' onto this as well as build on work that another of their projects was involved with, by delivering arts and crafts materials to care homes and providing related live tutorials and support to care home staff and residents via Zoom on the newly provided tablets. They reported widespread interest amongst a much larger number of local care homes in this model.

4.2. Outcomes for older people from Celebrating Age

Our [second interim report](#), published in 2020, identified four key themes relating to the outcomes for older people. These are borne out by the final reports from projects and our final analysis. They also relate to ideas and activities around creative aging which have developed over the lifetime of the programme. This section explores these themes and reflects on the emerging field of creative aging.

4.2.1. Health and Wellbeing

Celebrating Age demonstrates that arts and creative activity is widely reported as having a range of positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of older people. Projects were not asked to consider specific health outcomes as part of their funding for Celebrating Age, but many reported that activities had benefitted older people's health and wellbeing, especially for those for whom other, often more physical activities might have been more challenging, or certainly rarer:

> *"This is a project that clearly demonstrates that there are people out there needing to work on their own very individual sense of health and wellbeing that they probably wouldn't be able to do through sport or physical activity."*
> (Local Authority Community Engagement Manager, **CA Wiltshire**).

Medical opinions were also shared. For example, for **Posh Club**:

> *"We noted an improvement in wellbeing in all of those who attended. One patient responded so well to developing a new social network that we were able to discharge her from services. This is an amazing achievement. Our staff are all extremely positive about the impact of this resource and we would envisage being able to make more referrals in the future if this service were to continue. Services like this are few and far between and an invaluable source of support and there is nothing available in the locality that meets these patients needs in this way."*
> (Dr. Philippa Caesares Lead Consultant Psychologist and Heather Lewis, Team Leader Specialist Older Adult Mental Health Services in Hastings).

4.2.2. Identity and relationships

Over the period of the programme, the extent to which the wellbeing impacts seemed to depend partially on people's sense of self, their identity and their relationships as older people became apparent, from the stories of change and the project reports.

People shared how they were finding, re-finding or, in some cases, *reasserting* their identity as individual adults rather than being seen by those around them in the context of the roles they play in others' lives – for example, as someone's husband (or widow), or as a mother or grandparent. For some, this involved asserting an identity that was separate from that of being seen as part of a group defined, perhaps somewhat baldly, as 'older people'. This included, through the act of taking part in creative activities, positively influencing others'

expectations about and understanding of ageing. This could also enhance individuals' existing relationships; for example, if family expectations were exceeded.

People taking part in many different projects reported a changed sense of who they were, gained through the creative process in which they had been involved; but also, critically, that the creative process had also provided ways for this 'explored difference' to be expressed, shared, and witnessed:

> *"My role in the world had changed, and I don't think I had realised how much. My role is a mother. It's hard to say, but I think I had lost my identity. My own identity. This project, this dance, restored that sense of identity. And it gave me something new to share with my daughters who so loved hearing about it, so in some ways it's added to my role as a mother. It's given me a new role and it's added more to who I was before. Being part of this project has brought me so much joy."*
> (Participant, **My Shout**).

In response to Coronavirus, **Moving Memory** moved its ongoing work choreographing new pieces with older performers onto Zoom. Feedback from this group was that sustaining this practice during lockdown had been absolutely vital. This was a space where everything else - particularly related to Coronavirus - could be forgotten; but significantly, it was also a mutual space where they could get a different kind of support from that of family or friends, because it was where their identities - and not their situation - was the focus.

Negative images of 'older people' can mean that activities and events 'for older people' can put off the very people they are intended to attract. The wife of a couple who both attended **mac's** *Culture Club* – with her husband ill, she was also his carer – described the difference that coming to a 'not typical' club had made to them and their relationship:

> *"Because P can't hear or remember things anymore it makes it hard for us to do things together. I get quite stressed because I'm always looking out for him so coming to Culture Club is great because it's a chance for us to do something together and we don't often do that anymore. His motivation has pretty much gone.*
>
> *I wouldn't have normally joined an older people's club as I don't think of ourselves as this but this one is more vibrant, and something I really look forward to. We both used to go to clubs together but gradually P had to drop out due to his issues so this helps to give him new interests. I love it."*

Other stories from participants explored how their existing family relationships might be strengthened and new 'families' formed. For example, a participant at **MIMA** shared her experiences, which she entitled, 'Life is better in Pinnies':

> *"I started coming to the group because my counsellor told me that it would do me good to join a group, to get to know people and talk to people, to get me out the house. I came to the group and I really enjoy it.*

Joining the Pinnies has made such a difference in my life - I am a nervous person and I spent all my time on my own or caring for my mam. I do not find it easy in groups, but I'm made to feel so welcome, I bring my mam along who is 96, everyone is so kind to her and we love trying new things and just having a natter. I have never been any good at art - that doesn't matter.

It feels like a family, it's loud and busy and everyone makes sure that you have a cup of tea- sometimes we don't really do anything except drink tea and chat, then other times we can't stop crafting- I have missed the bus a fair few times. Coming to the group takes my mind off the worries I have in my head. I feel safe and have made some wonderful friends."

Through the projects, family members, friends, artists, health/housing/care professionals, and volunteers also gained opportunities to redefine what they understood about others' later lives as well as what they might expect for their own future older selves, helping to challenge aspects of ageism.

4.2.3. Connection and place

The Celebrating Age projects were located in specific places, often in partnership with local care and housing providers as well as locally based cultural and creative organisations and practitioners. Over the lifetime of the programme, the role of 'place' in relation to community creativity has become more apparent in Arts Council England strategy. *Let's Create* places far more explicit onus on place-based working then previously, and on the development of locally informed and co-created responses. Stories shared by projects throughout Celebrating Age spoke also to the sense of disconnection that older people experience, sometimes over many years, from their place and position in the world, especially when feeling that their status or purpose has been lost in later years.

Some projects specifically connected people with the area in which they live. For example, **Sea Folk Sing**'s project, which began by exploring North Kent's maritime and folklore history through singing, and then moved on to the current local natural environment as inspiration to co-create new folk songs.

Several of the sheltered housing tenants, taking part in **Meet Me At Lewisham Homes**, shared how the regular sessions had brought people out of their individual flats, in between as well as during the sessions: there was more socialising, and less living in isolation. One tenant particularly spoke about loneliness:

"I wouldn't miss this precious time that I have to spend there [in the activity] which I enjoy. As I said it takes away the loneliness. Which is what is killing some of us, because if all day you haven't seen anybody except your cleaner, your carers come for how many minutes, and afterwards you don't see people for the rest of the day, you know?"

For some people, feelings of belonging and connection developed into wanting to play a bigger role where they lived. For example, at one of the housing schemes where **MIMA** ran projects, the tenants decided that their sessions would revolve around improving the appearance of their communal space. **MIMA** shared how, for these participants, ownership was making space feel like a home away from home. The support of the artist equipped them with the necessary skills to take charge and make changes, and to become an expert. As a result, they curated their own space, of which they have complete ownership: it has become the hub of the community, a drop-in centre where everyone is welcome.

Project staff also needed time to develop their relationship with a place as well as with its people, exploring what might be possible as a precursor to co-creation.

4.2.4. (Re)discovering creative talents, and confidence

Many people shared stories about increased confidence. At **Writing East Midlands (WEM)**, one woman who took part in a writing project, recording memories and stories, had been quiet until quite late in the process. In the project's final week, the care home hosted a book launch inviting friends and family of residents, as well as a local councillor and the Lady Mayor. The writers who had led the workshops gave readings from the book; when they invited participants to join them, the woman volunteered to read her published piece. Her daughter and son-in-law were amazed that she read aloud; and surprised that she had talked at all in the sessions.

Sometimes confidence had come from knowing there would be an output: for example, the **WEM** group knew the plan was to publish their book, and participants took a strong sense of pride in this. In other cases, it also came from rediscovering (or discovering) creative talents and enjoyment. Working with one of the **Devon Guild of Craftsmen**'s artist-led workshops, a (pre-computer) retired graphic designer shared how learning new ways of using her earlier skills had improved her confidence:

> *"The art has been very positive, and I would love to continue. Before I retired, I was a Graphic Designer – pre-computers - I used letterpress and silkscreen. Computers were just coming in.*
>
> *Before the project I was isolated and lonely and now my social confidence has increased through meeting people regularly. I feel more positive and connected to my life and surroundings. I have learned to use Photoshop and although I'm a technophobe I'm considering doing a course."*

As explored in section 4.1., above, some individuals spoke about missed opportunities earlier in life, and the chance to try – or retry – something creative now. Projects gave people creative opportunities for something new, as well as finding out about older people's existing and prior skills, knowledge, and backgrounds so that these could be shared and developed and projects co-created.

4.3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

4.3.1. Diversity of Celebrating Age participants

Overall, across both rounds of the projects, 26% of participants identified as men and 69% as women. The balance of gender identity varied quite significantly between projects. For example, **Cubitt Artists** recorded a split of 22% female to 78% male, where **Helix Arts** recorded 100% female participants.
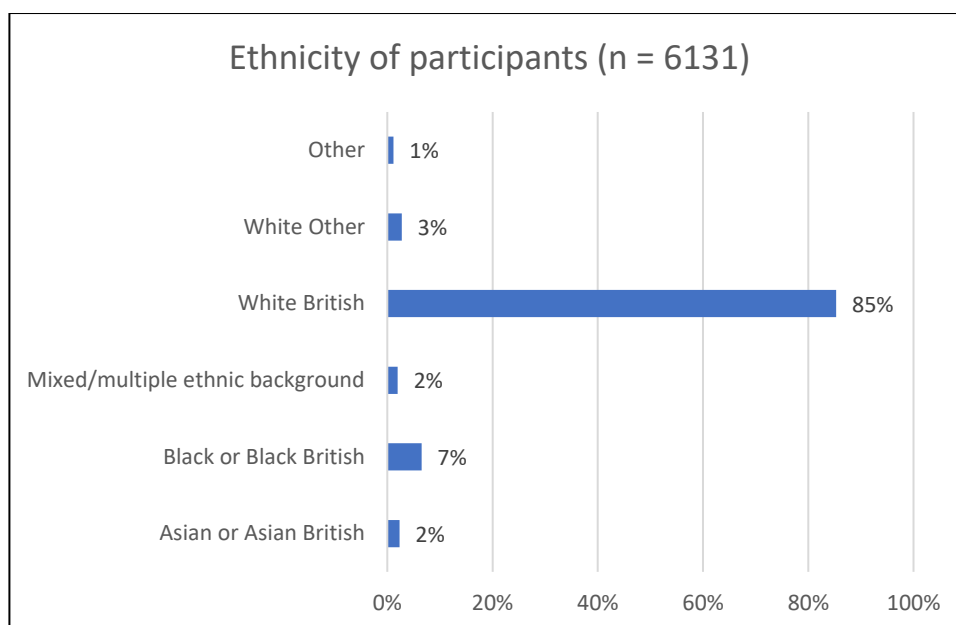
The following chart shows the breakdown into age groups of those Celebrating Age participants who provided age data for monitoring:
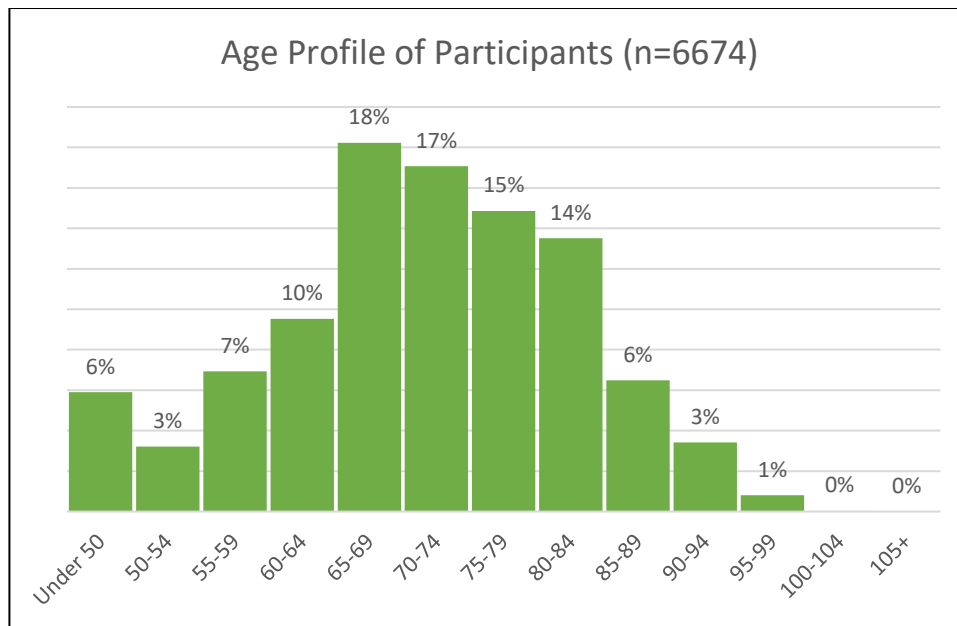
Nearly three-quarters of participants were aged 65 and over, with 65-69 being the largest participating age group.

Ethnicity data was collected for 7,314 participants; however, of these participants 3% preferred not to state their ethnicity and for an additional 17% their ethnicity was unknown. For those participants whose ethnicity was known/supplied (6,131) the breakdown is shown below: **85% were of white British origin and a total of 15% coming from minority ethnic backgrounds (see chart below).**

Unsurprisingly, given their geographical spread, the ethnic breakdown of participants varied considerably by project. In a number of projects (e.g. The Albany, FACT, Cubitt Artists, Pavilion) participants from black and minority ethnic backgrounds accounted for more than half of those for whom ethnic origin was provided.

Ethnicity of participants (n = 6131)

Ethnicity	Percentage
Other	1%
White Other	3%
White British	85%
Mixed/multiple ethnic background	2%
Black or Black British	7%
Asian or Asian British	2%

Participants were asked whether their day-to-day activities are limited because of a health condition or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. For those who answered the question, **almost half of responses indicated some limitation to day-to-day activities with 25% saying they were 'limited a lot'; 24% saying they were 'limited a little'. Fifty-one per cent replied 'no'.**

4.3.2. Inclusion

Some projects intentionally sought to work with adults in their 50s and older; some focused on much older age groups – either by design, or to some extent by default because of deciding to work with those living in either sheltered housing or care homes. It is those aged at least 85 who are most likely to live in a care or nursing home (Laing and Buisson, 2022[2]).

The decision to focus delivery on care homes and specialist housing also meant some project were working with a specific sample of the older population: only around 4% of the total population aged 65 and older live in care or nursing homes; a further 5% of those aged 65+ live in all forms of specialist (frequently age-related) housing, with the vast majority continuing to live in the usual range of mainstream housing (House of Commons, 2018[3]).

Older people are less likely to be attending cultural or heritage events, particularly those aged 75 years or above. During 2019-2020, CADA (Creative Ageing Development Agency) commissioned a cultural survey for audiences in England. Pre-Covid, half of audiences were aged 55+, but there was a significant reduction in the proportions of age groups attending cultural or heritage events or venues after they reached the age of 75. Most of the 55+ audience was attending drama, music, museums/heritage, and dance.

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[2] Laing & Buisson (2022). *Care Homes for Older People UK Market Report*. London: Laing & Buisson
[3] House of Commons. (2018). *House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Housing for older people. Second Report of Session 2017-19 Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report*. Retrieved from www.parliament.uk

Projects whose participants included people in their 50s or 60s found this also meant that some artists, project leads and staff, and other partner stakeholders (which included members of the national evaluation team), found themselves either close to or falling within this potentially very wide eligible age group:

> *"I made no secret of the fact that part of my interest in this process is that I am also an ageing member of the LGBQT+ community, so I wanted to get involved explicitly with my own ageing within that community. And I suppose my relationship as an older person to memory work, I wanted to position this not as reminiscence: the statement we used at the beginning is – 'Here I am and I'd like to tell you how I got here, and within these stories of my past there might be insights into who I might be in the future'."*
> (Project staff)

Some responses to issues of inclusion were pragmatic – for example, eliminating transport issues in rural areas by artists visiting older people in their own homes (Rural Arts), or making clear in flyers and leaflets that projects or exhibitions were free of charge (Artcore). Others sought to make sure that existing spaces were known about and understood as being for older adults as well as for people of different class and ethnic backgrounds and gender identities:

I've lived in the area my whole life and never set foot in the building until *Still Lively* started. I really enjoy it, even if I can't achieve what I want in a drawing. I now really know how to look. We need to use these spaces. That's what they're for and it's what will keep them open.

*Male participant, **Still Lively**, Wolverhampton Art Gallery*

Credit: WAG (Still Lively Portraits)

4.3.3. New stories of ageing

> *"I am someone. When you're old, you still are someone."*
> (Participant, **Hat Fair**)

Growth in life expectancy in the UK has largely stalled in recent years (ONS, 2021[4]), but inequalities in older age have continued increasing (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2022[5]). Overall, women live longer than men; life expectancy is also affected by location, being several years lower for men in the north-east of England, for example, compared with men living in the south-east.

Income and wealth inequalities are also increasing, alongside the increase in state pension age (which, for those qualifying for the more recent of the two UK state pensions, currently stands at just below 67 years old) and – certainly pre-pandemic[6] - increasing numbers of people continuing to work into their 70s (and beyond, in some cases). Census figures from 2011[7] shows a smaller proportion of people in England and Wales aged 60 and older as BME (8%) compared with the overall population (14%); however, younger BME groups are ageing alongside their white counterparts.

These intersections – length of life, type of housing, income, working lives, class, sex, health, ethnicity, geographical location – paint a complex picture of later life that is a long way from the beige or grey manner in which older age (and older people) can sometimes be portrayed and (mis)understood.

Through exploration and challenge, working with skilled artists, and through co-created approaches and practices, arts projects helped to liberate older people as creative individuals - and who may continue using that creative skill and identity to make change. As the Director of one cultural organisation in receipt of the Celebrating Age grant explained:

> *"Older people are political......it's not about being cosy anymore."*

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[4] Office for National Statistics (2021). *National life tables – life expectancy in the UK 2018-2020.* London: ONS.
[5] Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2022. Health inequalities dashboard: statistical commentary, June 2022. Retrieved from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/
[6] Office for National Statistics (2022). *Over 50s Lifestyle Study*. Retrieved from www.ons.gov.uk
[7] At the time of writing, analysis from the 2021 Census was not available

"When I heard about the *Hear Us Out* project with New Writing South - I joined it with interest......it turned into one of the most interesting things I've done in years....There is a creative buzz in the air, engagement and good humour, inspiration ... hold on! This doesn't sound like crumbly oldies! So we don't meet the myth – sorry about that.

I've spent ages listening to the very real humour, the stories with meaning, the wisdom of my friends in our shared space. And I love the open respect among us: whoever and whatever you are is not just accepted, people lean forward and listen".

Hear us out is a participatory project celebrating older LGBTQ+ people's stories

Cubitt described how their Celebrating Age funding not only enabled the voices and stories of older people to be heard, but also created opportunities for older people to take - and be seen to take - artistic control:

> *"Working towards larger events with consistent artists, has in turn enabled the older participants to become more involved in the direction of the work, and be seen by the public at those events, as co-devisers and deliverers of the creative activities, and not just recipients or participants."*
> (Project lead)

Leeds Playhouse's project (previously, West Yorkshire Playhouse) involved the co-creation of a festival with a small group of curators living with dementia. This approach took much longer than was expected, but it brought a number of benefits to the project (as well as to the curators themselves):

> *"Because of the direct involvement of people with dementia in the press interviews, the press coverage was really positive – this stuck out like a sore thumb in a dementia supplement where a lot of the language and messaging was really negative. That is because when people come into contact with the curators who are working on the project and they have dementia, it humanises the contact."*

For some, projects offered a space and people with whom to enjoy positive belonging:

Box 2

The Posh Club

Rachael is a 72-year-old transsexual woman from Hastings who attended **The Posh Club** as both a volunteer and a guest. She experienced gender dysphoria from the age of 7 and now identifies as a woman. She described the concept of The Posh Club as being *"deeply impressive"*. She believed the magic lay in the wide array of things that happened at the event, from the pianist who played 1920s/1930s music, to the *"age appropriate"* pop music, (often from the 1960s), the delicate food (especially the *"moreish scones"*) and of course the acts, offering glamour, drag, wit, glitter.

She also felts that the volunteers' energy in getting people up to dance – sometimes "dragging" them up to dance, and their friendliness help to make the Posh Club special.

Volunteers preparing for the cake dance

After first attending as a guest, she asked if she could attend as a volunteer. For Rachael, becoming a [volunteer] waitress, was the *"proving of womanhood"*, especially in getting to do 'The Cake Dance', a procession of volunteers holding cake stands and dancing through the tables, teasing the guests with their treats in an almost seductive, fun and playful way.

Rachael felt she was *"accepted so easily"* at The Posh Club, making several friends with guests and volunteers.

Other projects – such as those run by **MIMA, mac** and **Artcore** - offered new ways of experiencing the existing local cultural offer:

"Culture club is a great way to try different activities, have new experiences and make friends. I would never have thought that I would be involved in helping to curate an art exhibition. The whole experience of visiting local art galleries, talking about the works of art and trying to draw up a wish list was fascinating."

Ownership of cultural spaces

Credit: Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

'The Butterfly Effect' at Midlands Arts Centre

After the initial Covid lockdown, CADA's cultural audience survey found that those aged 55+ were most reluctant to return to venues. In this stage of our evaluation, shared in the November 2020 webinar on Covid with Family Arts Campaign, CA projects' stories of how they had adapted delivery in response to lockdown revealed the appetite for online arts, culture and heritage as well as small scale outdoor performances, activities by post, telephone, radio, and other media. A story shared by the **Sea Folk Song** project lead told how, during the first lockdown, an older participant had phoned the office to check how staff were doing. This again highlighted the importance of the relationships built across and between those involved in projects, echoed in feedback shared by **Meet Me At Lewisham Homes** at a subsequent, March 2021, webinar on Diversity:

But really it's all about…

- Relationship
- Patience
- Listening
- Trust

Some projects were designed as intergenerational pieces of work – for example, **Hat Fair**, **Moving Memory**, and **FACT**. But all the projects were also working across adult generations: this aspect of intergenerational working - from younger adults to those in middle age to older adults – whilst present, and important, was generally not recognised.

4.3.4. Older people's leadership

As the programme continued, and our evaluation started to come to an end, it became clearer the extent to which projects were promoting older people's voices and leadership. Examples included:

- **New Vic/ Live Age**'s group of older ambassadors did lots of training, influenced the work, supported peers involvement, and played an increasing role in leadership around the annual Live Age festival
- **FACT/ HOP (Happy Older People) partnership**: FACT's diverse group of 'Digital Ambassadors' are older people who have been working with FACT for some time now, including on some activist, inter-generational projects
- **Mac's Culture Club** – members have been growing into a curatorial role and influencing programming, including curating The Butterfly Effect exhibition at the centre
- **Posh Club** involved older audiences from less obvious/more marginalised lives, with a focus on participants as performers and volunteers
- **New Writing South's** older writers are receiving support to become independent and community-led
- **Moving Memory** received such interest in their work from an older age range during their project that they were setting up a new volunteer programme with older participants - not necessarily to join the core dance company, but to take on other roles. They also began building community participation (online the day before an event, and in real life on the day) for the core company to draw on and incorporate into their next performance
- **Helix Arts** were moving away from imagining self-sustaining groups to more emphasis on artists and social prescribing

4.3.5. Conclusion

Celebrating Age began as a programme focused on including older people in arts projects. The stories that projects told, collected, and shared with us, through the Most Significant Change strand of our evaluation of the national programme, highlighted the huge diversity and individuality of 'older people', and how the arts, through Celebrating Age, can enable people to build and restore their sense of identity in later life. This also underlined the value of collecting, sharing and reflecting on stories.

Many of the stories shone a light on the existence and nature of ageism; projects have often been able to raise awareness of this and so support older people to challenge ageist assumptions. However, ageism runs deep: truly recognising that older people are experts in their own lives, understanding that these lives run close to and alongside our own, and consistently practicing this awareness, is an ongoing journey for us all. We found this journey often took the form of first being surprised by older people's abilities and approach, then stopping being surprised, and finally wondering why anyone had thought they might be surprised in the first place; suggesting different stages of maturity in terms both of ageism and in understanding ageing.

Celebrating Age demonstrated that the age range projects worked with were far more diverse, creative and productive than anyone had perhaps expected or credited. People and projects found ways to recognise, serve, and build on this, and to challenge thinking within arts organisations and funders.

Celebrating Age also reminded us of all the older people who don't or can't access events and activities in-person but who would, if given opportunities, give and gain creatively as well in many other ways. The stories that people shared also demonstrated a level of interest in a range of arts that went way beyond drama and music. Projects provided ways, skills, and spaces for older people to re-connect with their diverse identities and tell their own personal and group stories through sensitive, inclusive, and often issue-based arts practice: this does not happen without artists and others being highly skilled facilitators.

Arts can support us all, whether in later adult years or earlier, to explore those parts of ourselves we may have previously been made to feel must stay small and quiet.

4.   Impact of the pandemic

Many of the projects supported through Celebrating Age were still running in March 2020 when the Covid 19 /Coronavirus pandemic led to national lockdowns and ongoing restrictions which had multiple impacts on activities and organisations. These included furloughing of staff in some cases, as well as closure of care homes to outside visitors, and restrictions on what people could do together. As the pandemic and responses to it have evolved since March 2022, some projects extended their timelines and others swiftly and iteratively adapted their ways of working. As the pandemic became a longer-term situation, we were also to draw on observations and insights from a separate commission to evaluate [Arts Council England/DCMS funded activity targeting loneliness and isolation](#).

In this section, we discuss some of the potential implications of the learning which was accelerated and intensified by the pandemic experience.

5.1. How projects adapted

Celebrating Age projects described a range of ways they had adapted their activity to the new and emerging realities of lockdowns and a pandemic. These included:
- Keeping in touch with participants and/or enabling them to keep in touch with each other, by phone, social media, email, video conferencing and/or post
- Finding ways to continue existing work and/or to share outputs often using digital technologies or informal outdoor spaces
- Sharing new activities and ideas for people to pursue – together with information about how to do these, and sometimes practical resources to enable this
- Some have found new ways of doing things and succeeded in reaching new audiences; however, the digital divide and the impact of the Coronavirus on the care sector present challenges

The wellbeing and welfare of the older people with whom projects had established relationships was of overriding importance. The duty of care, and the spirit of mutual aid which emerged in places during the first lockdown in 2020 led many projects to prioritise the people more than the projects or the planned outputs. The impact on projects which were working with older people in residential or care homes was particularly significant, given the restrictions which the pandemic brought to such settings. People were often unable to see the closest of family, let alone artists. Artists and projects did, however, find ways to connect using digital technology.

They put energy and imagination into keeping in touch with participants and helping people stay in touch with each other. Methods included a return to non-digital approaches including postcards, letters, phone calls and doorstep performances; the use of what might be termed familiar digital methods such as email, Facebook and WhatsApp groups, and expanding digital methods such as Zoom, Signal, YouTube, livestreaming and other ways of gathering online.

For many people, especially older people, digital technology was a barrier to engagement - or simply not something they had access to. Whilst some organisations found ways to

alleviate access issues by investing in devices such as Facebook Portal which, as recommended by **Bluecoat**, were more welcomed by users than tablets or laptops, other projects found different ways around barriers to connection. **Artcore** reported that the people they had worked with in the past did not feel comfortable using Zoom, so they tried some socially distanced park sessions. These were facilitated by an artist who did sketching, or by a mindfulness coach: people would go and sit on a bench and do art, while chatting to people. They felt this highlighted the isolation people had been experiencing. They dropped off packs of materials on people's doorsteps and were told that just seeing someone do this massively helped some people.

One comment summed up some of the benefits of avoiding simply turning 'in person' activity into digital equivalents or proxies:

> *"The human touch - the phone call from artists/ volunteers - has been stronger than we had imagined, and really valued."*

MAC posted photos to participants, to enable them to choose exhibition pieces for an exhibition they were curating, whilst **Gateshead Libraries** mixed letters and calls with email. **New Writing South** shifted a planned performance of older LGBTQ+ people's stories online. **Arts Alive** with partner Flicks in the Sticks put on some live concerts at the end of driveways. **Moving Memory**'s dancers accessed dance classes online with the Company of Elders at Sadler's Wells Theatre, illustrating how responses to the restrictions of the pandemic also created new connections and opportunities.

In delivering projects, lead organisations reported a focus on the welfare and safety of staff, freelancers and artists, and designed projects to make sure there was paid time to prepare and deliver safely. As they were more vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19 than many others, older participants and older practitioners were also a central concern. Projects were careful not to put people at risk.

For some projects, there was a fusion of art and care/ support practice (e.g. creative conversations via phone, more strengths-based ways of working), and a blurring of the distinction between social or care-informed decisions versus artistic decisions (e.g. deciding who to buddy with whom). Projects tended to put people first.

5.2. From adaptation to change?

As the later projects ended, there were indicators that the experience of working during the pandemic has influenced behaviours. Some projects have continued to use a wider range of online methodologies. The DCMS programme evaluation showed that the learning from the first lockdown proved useful to Celebrating Age partners as the pandemic progressed. The work continued to reach people in large numbers, despite the physical restrictions: monitoring data suggests 179,041 engagements, with around 30,000 participants. Seventy-two per cent of projects reported conducting all of their engagements remotely (i.e. not at an arts venue or location).

One of the most striking patterns which comes from comparing the range of activities within this programme compared to the 'main' Celebrating Age projects, most of which were delivered largely pre-pandemic, is the even broader range of activities people described. This is partly as a result of the pivot to digital and online, but perhaps also reflects broader definitions of arts and creativity that could be or had to be embraced during the pandemic: from making cakes, to pop-up picnics to performances of short stories over the phone and letters and postcards sent to loved ones.

5.5. Loneliness and isolation

Quantitative findings from IBA's supplementary evaluation[8] of the DCMS funding distributed to Celebrating Age and Creative People and Places projects during the pandemic suggest that these activities had a positive impact for many participants on key outcomes related to social interaction, loneliness and wellbeing. 57% of the 817 survey respondents said they had new ideas about things they would like to do in future, and 35% reported having made new friends. 7% had taken on a voluntary role. 62% felt that there were more people they could call on for help, and 65% had more people to call on if they wanted company. Seventy-three per cent felt less likely to feel isolated as a result of taking part.

Stories from Celebrating Age partners reflected the kind of impact seen in our interim reports and throughout the MSC process and monitoring returns. For some people these projects were lifelines, connected them to others, and also helped them connect to their own past selves and interests. They are reflected in some of the comments made:

> *"What this particular group of workshops did for me…these workshops shifted my focus and took me back to other things so that I was not focusing primarily on the negative experiences. I was focusing on happier memories, from my childhood."*

> *"a pleasure to remember and to recall it…. And to hear other people's stories…. it's good, lovely…. it's escapism in a supportive space, sharing is the vehicle."*

However, there were clear limits to the universality of this kind of impact and the reach of projects into the complex lives of older people:

> *"I am lonely in general and don't think a group or socialising makes a big difference to that."*

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[8] A total of £1.5 million was provided by DCMS, administered by Arts Council England to 50 projects in January 2021. Applications for funding were invited from and limited to projects that were already being funded by ACE through their national funded programmes, Creative People & Places and Celebrating Age. Creative People and Places projects received a flat rate of £31,000 and celebrating Age projects received a flat rate of £28,928. The funding was part of a wider £750 million charities' package announced in May 2020 from the DCMS and the Office for Civil Society (OCS) Covid Response Funds.

The pandemic reinforced for many projects the importance of pastoral care for artists as well as for older participants. This was especially the case during the pandemic for older artists. Several organisations gave artists and staff training in mental health awareness, wellbeing, and safeguarding, as well as ensuring appropriate policies were in place and understood. This also supported artists in being able to flex quickly as circumstances changed. In one project, a creative producer model was used which meant there were two people in each session to provide mutual support.

5.4. Implications

The experience of those Celebrating Age projects running during the pandemic or organisations working through targeted funding suggests a number of implications for the future:

In a way parallel or analogous to the impact on disabled people during the pandemic, the experience showed that many older people were excluded from activities before the lockdown. Some were already isolated and had difficulties connecting. 'Adaptations' served as innovations for such groups. As one person put it,

> *"We became aware of how many people we have tended to ignore because they don't have 'real-world access' - this has been a real eye opener and a challenge. It's not enough just to get 500 people in a physical space anymore we need to be thinking about those who cannot or will not access that."*

Ensuring that future activities do not return to the ableist default which also served to exclude older people should be a priority for funders and organisations active in creative aging. Having a range of 'entry points' for people with different life and health circumstances should be considered when designing projects and programmes. The long-term changes in behaviour will also need to be monitored closely to identify what older people may be more or less comfortable with doing.

Implications for creative ageing

5.5. Supporting artists to work with older people

It is clear from the reports of activity before and during the pandemic that artists are central to the success of projects. Ensuring that creative aging projects are able to work with appropriately skilled and experienced artists is crucial. This requires adequate budgets and planning horizons, and flexibility around implementation. Artists as well as organisational teams, curators and project managers, benefit from paid planning and supervision time, enabled by specific funding, which facilitates reflection and potential for improvement.

5.6. Older creatives and potential creatives

That many of the producers and artists involved in the projects within Celebrating Age were themselves older people could easily be overlooked. Policies such as *Let's Create* tend to elide emerging artists with younger artists, and to frame older people as being 'sustained' by creative activity. Whilst it is evident across the research and our evaluation here that older people can benefit from creative activity in terms of wellbeing, connection and confidence, it is also true that many could have sustained creative careers in later life. Participants in **The Posh Club** events, for instance, included older 'professional' artists as well as volunteers developing creative skills and passions. Ageism is a challenge, in both the commissioning of artists and the marketing and reception of work by older artists. (Some are not framed as such if they 'grow into it' by having started when young, others can be stereotyped or patronised as 'late starters'.)

The needs of older artists will include many things which apply regardless of age such as training, practice, networking, exposure, building experience. They may also require adaptations to reflect physical limitations. Older artists may also have opportunities not available to all younger artists, such as savings, time free from the pressures of paid employment and so on. It would not be useful to agendas around opportunity and equality if 'pension income' was added to 'trust fund' or 'bank of mum and dad' as enabling factors for a creative career. But the needs of emerging older professional artists should be given greater emphasis in policy and development, following examples such as the Society of Authors award for a first novel published over the age of 60.

Many stories were shared of re-finding the arts after being discouraged earlier in life. This was particularly the case for women and people from working class backgrounds. The danger is that those discouraged in the 1950s and 60s could be blocked again from a final creative phase of life, whether as 'amateur' or 'professional', for enjoyment or for serious sharing. Just as identity can be erased in older life, it can also be reasserted, and creative activity seems to give particular opportunities for self-determination and even reinvention.

This can happen over an extended age range – with people aged 55 having potentially decades of creative productivity at stake, for instance. Most of the Celebrating Age projects worked mainly with what one might call younger older people. The lower age ranges went as low as 50. This effectively embraced a whole range of people involved in projects who could be seen as older – tutors, staff, evaluators. However, none of the projects were

framed as older people-led, even where they involved and engaged with older people's networks and forums.

5.7. Outputs - importance of sharing something

The processes that the projects created often involved a showcase, an event, an exhibition or a publication. Bringing people together, encouraging imaginative connection either as a group or with an artist, connecting to local places or history, building empathy, getting people online to meet others, or to get out of their houses or rooms for a change, all played a part.

Peer learning also underlined the empowering and confidence-building aspect of producing something as a result of a creative process. Examples included booklets, events and performances. The opportunity to create those outputs underlined the contribution of people taking part. As one worker put it:

> *"Knowing the words that you're writing down will feature in something beautiful that will be shared with others is very empowering."*

5.8. Place-based work and older people

For older people there is often an intergenerational exchange happening, within the group and when that work is shared. At the same time, work which involves memory can also bond people of a similar generation, especially where they grew up in the same neighbourhood. **City Arts**' project during the pandemic focussed on a factory in Nottingham for instance.

The dedicated funding for older people 'guaranteed' their involvement in projects, unlike many place-based projects which can inadvertently become focussed on or dominated by one generational group or another. (Some arts projects are not explicitly age-defined but by their nature and how they marketed tend to attract young people, or retired people, for instance.)

Celebrating Age was largely focused on what we might call creative individuals, albeit targeted through their geographic location, be that in residential settings as in **Meet Me at Lewisham Homes** or locality as in **Studio 3 Arts** groups of local people. The ACE/DCMS funded loneliness projects brough some Creative People and Places projects into the 'creative ageing' mix, and there is clearly potential for further exploration of how intergenerational approaches can be applied in place-based working, but without losing some specific focus on older people. (In a similar way to the ways in which work relating to children and young people such as the Local Cultural Education Partnerships and Bridge organisations have combined that agenda with a place-based framework.)

As Arts Council England develops its place-based approach through *Let's Create,* it is important that the interests of older people are not subsumed into a much more general picture. This is especially relevant to the Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places which tend (although not exclusively) to be places of multiple deprivation. Such places will often demonstrate inequalities in health outcomes and life expectation which need to be

factored in. Those able to commit to creative activities in such places may, therefore, tend to be wealthier as well as healthier, or living in residential or care settings that require specific approaches and partnerships.

Projects tackled these issues in different ways: some working in care settings that are pre-existing communities, finding and connecting to existing community groups, and creating 'new' communities via groups in venues.

5.9. Older people with 'creative community'

The idea of creative community is an important element of Arts Council England's current strategy. We conclude this section by suggesting that older people's extremely wide range of experiences of community needs to be specifically considered as *Let's Create* is delivered, if it is not to accentuate the very long-standing inequalities it seeks to address. The variety of health situations, living circumstances as well as prior experiences of creativity and culture, mean that working with older people should be emphasised. The co-production of what might be termed the 'cultural offer' is vital.

5. Conclusions and learning for organisations working with older people

This final section summarises our main reflections at the end of our work on Celebrating Age. They have implications for funders, cultural organisations and those working with them to support the creative lives of older people now (and for all our future creative older selves).

6.1. Programme design

- Supporting long-term vision and partnerships through funding which allows for this kind of longevity can lead to stronger legacy, in terms of delivery, design and partnership. It has encouraged many to be more strategic about their approach to partners and commissioning.

- Consider the complex realities of older people's lives in designing programmes – bearing in mind health, previous experiences of the arts, skills, isolation, social dynamics in communal settings, and other factors: it is important to take account of an older person's *whole life* (both now and in the past). This is arguably even more important in working with older people than it is doing participatory arts with other groups.

- Being explicit about the desired 'mainstreaming' of work for older people that might result from individual projects - bringing 'older people' from the education department to main programming/ exhibition room as it were – could be valuable, echoing the Investment Principles within *Let's Create*.

- In future, programmes such as Celebrating Age are, we suggest, more likely to support hybrid programmes of in person and digital/online activity, or to be specific about desired methods, and will need to reflect this in guidance.

- Building in evaluation and peer learning costs to the expected budgets/grants would encourage wider take up of the learning opportunities.

6.2. Project design

- Consider, from the outset, what all partners might like to see by the end of the project: better/more relationships? Continued activities? Trained and committed volunteers? Active older artists? New opportunities?

- Think early on about how you might sustain this work or create sustainable legacy activity after the project funding ends.

- Trial activity and don't be afraid to change tack if responses are not as expected or something does not work.

6.3. Building relationships

- Share your values about successful ageing.

- Allow enough time to get to know each other's organisations, and each other, to build good relationships: it's not just about outputs and outcomes.

- Individuals' enthusiasm plays a big part in successful partnering: strategic or Board-level partners need to be as motivated as operational staff.

- Find ways to make involvement fun.

- Find out your partners' long-term goals – identify how working with you on this project can help them move towards those goals.

- Meet regularly and with a focus, to foster good relationships and trust.

- Become a catalyst: be the organisation that acts as a bridge between different partners.

- Be clear and explicit about your assumptions – about older people, about the purpose of the project, the nature of art, the goals, the roles, sessions. Check for unconscious bias about older people and challenge stereotyped age assumptions.

- The importance of supporting project staff, and freelance practitioners in particular.

6.4. Older people as partners and co-creators

- Involve older people and include their voices in project design and development – either directly or through representative groups such as local forums.

- Make sure people are able to engage – provide enough time (including time to take action between meetings, and report back), recap on previous meetings, provide independent or 'neutral' spaces where everyone feels comfortable.

- Find out and listen to the aims, hopes, and wishes of later life participants; be prepared to be surprised; ask all the partners, including the older people, how can we all run with these?

- Support older people to be challenged in return: taking everyone out of their comfort zones can support the project's development into new areas.

- Work to build confidence as well as creative skills so older people can shape activity and co-create the creative experience or output.

- Support the practicalities of engagement: travel, welcome, breaks, accessibility, communication needs.

6.5. Sharing knowledge

- Provide arts-related experiences for non-arts partners.

- Explore age-friendly training for artists.

- Pool your knowledge about venues/ physical spaces/ participants/ audiences – value each other's expertise.

- Be open to being challenged on your project's art form by the non-arts specialists.

6.6. Communication

- Find simplicity and a common language across partners, including academic partners – communicate straightforwardly about the project, so it's easy for everyone to pass this information on.

- Step back every now and then to assess your assumptions and understanding about roles and goals.

6.7. Data Collection

- The collection of data adds real value to a project by providing details of engagement, impact and quality. Organisations working with older people should get to know the 'why' and 'how to' of data collection to better understand its purpose.

- A range of data collection techniques and tools may be required where there is a variety of projects, activities and events on offer.

- Collecting and discussing 'stories of change' from participants, artists, project managers and partner agencies can generate rich data and insights for change management.

Appendix: Table summarising Celebrating Age projects

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
Artcore	Creative Living	1	Derby	£100,000	Creative Living created opportunities to perform, learn digital and visual arts, and included an intergenerational dance project. During Covid, activity shifted online.	Deda dance agency, Derby City Council, Metropolitan Housing Association	Community venues and online
City Arts (Nottingham) Ltd	Imagine Celebrates	1	Nottingham	£97,200	Words of Wisdom: writing and virtual tours of writers' homes and Classical Fusion: dance, songs and sound walks with older people.	Nottingham City Council, Writing East Midlands, Nittingham City of Literature, Theatre Royal and Royal Concert Hall Nottingham	City Arts (Nottingham) Ltd
Cubitt Artists Ltd	Going Places	1	London	£91,000	Visual arts and public events – participatory sessions, public arts commissions, summer balls and picnics as part of Going Places month-long festival of events	Partners included All Change, Sadler's Wells, Candoco Dance, Notting Hill Housing, Alsen Day Centre and	Cubitt gallery, sheltered housing settings, care settings

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
					and workshops. Also included a publication.	Islington's Home Library Service.	
Duckie	The Posh Club	1	Crawley	£99,173	Cabaret and performance art – a series of 20 social club events including dance and performance, including commissioned work.	Posh Club Network, Alzheimer's Society, St Joseph's Hospice, Opening Doors, Hackney and City Mind, Swallows Lunch Club) and the Arts and Production Network	Social clubs and community venues
Farnham Maltings Association Ltd	My Shout	1	Surrey	£62,388	Four separate projects, co-created and presented by people aged 55+: a devising dance group; theatre workshops; a film of 'older Farnham voices'; and a sculptural bench	Waverley Borough Council, New Adventures, Age UK Surrey	At Farnham Maltings; outdoor venues; outdoor festivals.
Hoot Creative Arts		1	Kirklees	£99,971	Wide range of art forms (music, creative writing, visual, drama, dance), including inter-generational sessions and mentoring of	Age UK Calderdale & Kirklees; Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (sheltered	14 different settings included: sheltered housing schemes, Age UK day centres, and community venues

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
					partner agency staff to continue delivery	housing provider); Sharing Memories – local arts & reminiscence group	
Independent Arts	Tide and Time	1	Isle of Wight	£85,659	Wide range of mostly visual artforms, with projects inspired by local heritage sites & historical artefacts	Age-Friendly Island	Workshops have been held in sheltered housing schemes, care homes and public libraries. Organised trips to heritage sites and cultural venues
Leeds Theatre Trust (Leeds Playhouse)	Festival of Theatre & Dementia (Every Third Minute)	1	Leeds/ West Yorks	£99,950	Theatre festival exploring (and co-produced by people living with) dementia in Feb/March 2018: 12 productions, 4 training programmes, 15 workshops	University of Bradford; care homes/ sheltered housing providers; Innovations in Dementia; Hamari Haddain memory cafe	Festival held at Leeds Playhouse, with three plays written by people living with dementia then taken on a 2 week tour of care homes in Leeds.
Live Theatre Winchester Trust	Hat Fair	1	Theatre Royal, Winchester	£75,560	Three performance-based projects: touring Four Score Years and Ten (an existing	The Core at Corby Cube, (Northants),	Community/small arts venues; The Core at Corby Cube;

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
					verbatim show); walk-through installation of 16 audio recorded Living Portraits of older residents; Recycled Silent Movie – a film mixing current older Corby & Winchester residents with archive film of both towns	Winchester City Council	HatFair outdoor arts festival (Winchester)
mima	Celebrating Age	1	Middlesbrough	£90,000	Project included visual arts, writing and zine publishing, a mosaic (in a toilet!) storytelling, music and conversations	Thirteen, a major local care and social housing provider, Teesside University, James Cook University Hospital, Ageing Better Middlesbrough, Dementia Friendly Middlesbrough and Riverside Housing	Six Thirteen-supported living schemes across Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley, mima gallery
New Vic Theatre	Meet me at Live Age	1	Staffordshire	£99,975	Mixed artforms; annual festival and wider community arts	Age UK North Staffs and community	Festival held at the New Vic; arts programme held in

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
					programme (10 artists, 10 artforms) and leadership programme to extend festival reach	groups in its network; Keele University	wide range of venues – from care homes to Mens' Sheds, older LGBT group, etc
Pavilion Ltd	Interwoven Histories	1	Leeds	£62,249	Commissioned visual artists to co-produce new work with older minority ethnic people with shared histories in local textile industry – also oral history/ music/ poetry recording & performances	Touchstone's – local charity working with minority ethnic communities; Leeds Irish Health & Homes	Exhibition (2017/2018) at Leeds Industrial Museum; wider public events across city; and linkages with the Leeds Playhouse Every Third Minute festival
Rural Arts North Yorkshire	Art on your doorstep	1	Yorkshire	£89,635	Music, visual arts, performing arts. Using a referral system, isolated individuals could work with artists, to complement events in community venues and extra care facilities.	Thirsk Community Care, three local GP practices, North Yorkshire County Council Living Well Team, Broadacres Housing and NHS Health Visitors	Old Courthouse Thirsk, doorsteps and homes, rural touring
The Albany		1	London	£98,665	Wide variety of 12 artist-led projects (plus drop ins) with tenants	Entelechy Arts, Lewisham Homes	Exhibitions and performances at The Albany; Royal

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
					in communal areas of 14 Lewisham Homes independent living schemes: crafts, music, film, animation, movement, writing, gardening		Festival Hall; Lewisham Town Hall; Lewisham Homes independent living schemes; Deptford Lounge.
The Wiltshire Music Centre Trust		1	Wiltshire	£99,931	Wide variety of art forms: 140 cultural and creative events held across 6 district council areas, for people aged 75+ - music performances; theatre, dance, art, and craft workshops; heritage and reminiscence events; storytelling; reading groups	Wiltshire Creative, Pound Arts, Age UK, Wiltshire, County Council Library and Community Engagement Services, Community First, Wiltshire and Salisbury Museums	56 community and arts venues; final music and spoken word performances shared online (YouTube)
Wolverhampton Art Gallery	Still Lively	1	Wolverhampton	£90,800	Visual arts and collections. Art groups and special events at Wolverhampton Arts gallery and in residential settings using museums collections.	Shire Living Homes, Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service, Limewood Dementia Care Home	Art Gallery, Shire Living Homes, care home

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
Gulbenkian Theatre	Still Stomping by Moving Memory	2	Canterbury	£99,000	4 devised dance projects: Start Stomping (devised by older women's core company, and younger Intergen31 members); develop & train older volunteers to deliver Moving Well wkshops;	Kent County Council, Gulbenkian University Kent	Gulbenkian's bOing! Festival; outside Turner Contemporary (part of Margate Festival); care homes; primary schools; Ageless festival (Leeds) Films (on Vimeo)
Arts Alive	Creative Conversations	2	Shropshire/ Welsh borders	£100,000	Range of artforms (including film, storytelling, music, digital art) – workshops (taster sessions, residencies, training), performances, exhibitions	Age UK, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, wide range of rural partners – venues, community groups	Care homes, sheltered housing, specialist dementia ward, community venues, Age UK day centres, outdoor touring, video and online exhibitions during pandemic
Cinderford Artspace	MindSCAPE	2	Forest of Dean, Glos.	£90,000	Combining art and nature to inspire creativity, range of artforms. Roadshows, taster sessions, organisational training/ resource development	Forestry Commission, Forest of Dean District Council, community groups and venues, 2Gether Trust Dementia Education Team	Events outreaching across a wide range of rural venues

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
FACT	Young at Art	2	Liverpool	£100,000	Older 'Digital Ambassadors' - creative workshops; co-producing/ commissioning (often inter-generationally) new artworks – range of art forms (digital, music, poetry, photography)	Open Eye Gallery; National Museums Liverpool, Happy Older People (HOP) partnership (cultural, health and social care, housing, and education sectors)	Exhibitions in FACT gallery mainspace, pop-up performances in public spaces in the city, online
Gateshead Council (Library Service)	Art Diamonds	2	Gateshead	£90,000	Cross artform: workshops and events with artists, short courses, creative challenges and cultural visits	64Million Artists and Gateshead Older People's Assembly	Libraries, galleries, online
Helix Arts Ltd	Finding Your Feet	2	North Shields	£99,425	Dance: range of projects including ensembles of older people, action learning sessions, online/'follow at home tutorials	Public Health Durham County Council	Arts and community venues, online
Ideas Test	Young at HeArt Music Project	2	Sittingbourne	£88,555	Music & song composition for people 55+ working with professional musicians and composers,	SparkedEcho, Kent County Council, Medway Council, Swale Borough Council,	Historic Dockyard Chatham; a moving train and a railway station; Gillingham FC's stadium; a

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
					exploring North Kent's maritime and folklore history, & life experiences	Involving Medway, and Optivo	Working Men's Club; Dementia Café; town centres; arts centres; and online (via Zoom)
Midland Arts Centre (mac)		2	Birmingham	£98,000	Culture Club – monthly arts club (variety of artforms); Tea with a Twist – tea party with live entertainment; Curators' Club; engaging older people in mainstream programme	Contact the Elderly, Sampad, Little Earthquake Theatre, Wolverhampton Art Gallery	mac arts centre, engaging with older people living in community and in care homes (via Contact the Elderly)
New Writing South	Celebrating Our Stories	2	Brighton	£100,000	Training older LGBQT+ people across coastal West and East Sussex to collect, share, & listen to life stories; with professional playwright, workshops to develop, write and perform verbatim-based theatre about older LGBQT+ people's life experiences		Original plans for performances in a new verbatim LGBQT+ theatre festival (Hear Us Out) replaced, because of Covid, by live online and recorded shows, podcasts and workshops

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
Stratford Circus	Stratford Arts Club	2	London	£100,000	Music, dance, performance: older adults in Newham participate and curate monthly multi-artform activities with specialist artists	London Borough of Newham's Adult Social Care Service, Age UK East London, Minhaj-ul-Quran Educational Centre, Ekta Project, Any Old Irons	Stratford Circus venue, care settings, community spaces
Studio 3 Arts	Scaling Up	2	Barking and Dagenham	£100,000	Events across a range of art forms, shaped by a participant-led committee, leading to a borough-wide festival	Creative barking & Dagenham, Care City, Barking and Dagenham CVS, Volunter Bureaue Get Together, Eastside Community Heritage	Community and arts venues
Suffolk Artlink	Make Do and Friends	2	Suffolk	£100,000	Dance, music, writing delivered through a high quality outreach programme led by artists and co-produced with older people.	DanceEast and Rural Coffee Caravan	Community venues in rural areas.

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The Bluecoat	Where Art Belongs	2	North West England	£98,000	Range of artforms delivered by core group of mid-late stage career artists & student artist placements	Belong Care Villages, The Atkinson	Series of residencies/ workshops/ exhibitions in both care village and community-based settings, using The Atkinson's space & collections
The Devon Guild of Craftsmen	A Good Age	2	Newton Abbot	£67,219	Five artist-led projects in 5 libraries: age, wellbeing & life changes explored through paper, ceramics, photography, willow, mixed media, with people aged 65+; exhibition Commissions made to five UK-based professional artists (all born before 1947) - new pieces in response to age & change in each artist's lifetime; exhibition.	Libraries Unlimited	5 public libraries (Crediton, Tiverton, Cullompton, Exeter, Honiton) Devon Guild of Craftsmen exhibition Film on YouTube

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					A film made of projects and commissions.		
Voluntary Arts Network	The Age of Creativity	2	London/UK	£100,000	The 3rd annual England-wide Age of Creativity festival, (May 2019), featuring workshops, performances, & other creative and cultural events, run by individual artists and organisations, for older people	Age UK Oxfordshire,	England-wide month-long festival of arts practitioners' and arts/older people organisations' classes, workshops, talks, visits, and performances, to encourage more older people to take part. Events could be found through online searches, or via regionally organised printed materials
Writing East Midlands	The Elder Tree Project	2	Nottingham	£99,531	Writing and heritage: 12 residencies working with older people to create new work stimulated by museums, archives, heritage spaces, and writers. Activity included storytelling,	First Art, Transported, Tonic Health	Care homes, hospitals community venues, adult mental health unit, online during pandemic

Lead organisation	Project name	Round	Area	Grant amount	Art form/ summary description	Key partners	Settings
					reminiscence writing, poetry, group reading, trips, and role-play.		