

The Baring Foundation

KEY WORKERS

Creative ageing in lockdown and after

by David Cutler



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About the Baring Foundation

We are an independent foundation which protects and advances human rights and promotes inclusion. The Foundation has three grant making programmes: international development in Africa, social justice in the UK and arts in the UK. From 2010–2019 the Foundation's Arts programme focused on creative activity by older people. There are a number of publications on our website and a selected list at the end of this report.

To find out more about the Foundation, see *A History of the Baring Foundation in 50 Grants*.

About the author

David Cutler has been the Director of the Baring Foundation since 2003 and runs its Arts programme. He has written several reports on creative ageing including *Around the World in 80 Creative Ageing Projects*. His most recent report is a mapping study of participatory arts and mental health activity in the UK called *Creatively Minded*.

Key workers

CREATIVE AGEING IN LOCKDOWN AND AFTER

by David Cutler



Together Apart by Samphire dancers, *The Festival of Islesolation*, courtesy of Independent Arts.

“ This has given me
a reason to wash my hair. ”

Feedback from a participant in the
Our Time programme run by Leeds Playhouse



Contents

Summary	2
Key statistics from our survey	3
A world of delight in a dark time	4
Lifeline: creative ageing during lockdown	6
Case studies A-Z	15
<hr/>	
Age Cymru	
An Talla Solais	
Artis Community	
Arts Alive and MediaActive Projects	
Celebrating Age Wiltshire	
The Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art	
City Arts	
Dylan Quinn Dance Theatre	
Entelechy Arts	
Equal Arts	
Flourishing Lives	
Independent Arts	
Leeds Playhouse	
National Theatre of Scotland	
Northern Ireland War Memorial	
The Whitworth	
<hr/>	
Pause: a poem for lockdown	54
Beyond lockdown	56
Recommendations	59
Online resoures: selected online lockdown resources for creative ageing	60
Publications: selected list of Baring Foundation publications	61

Left: Photo montage of zoom session screens from *SingAbout*, courtesy of Independent Arts (see page 40) and *Heydays*, courtesy of Leeds Playhouse (see page 42).

Summary

Lockdown in March 2020 profoundly affected the lives of everyone in the UK but restricted most the lives of vulnerable older people, who were also especially at risk from Covid-19. The value of creativity in older age is already well established and became more vital and urgent in the pandemic. Wishing to document and learn from this period, the Baring Foundation, which has funded hundreds of creative ageing projects, ran a small survey of 62 arts organisations as well as inviting 15 organisations to write short case studies of their experience of offering activities during lockdown. This is the basis of this report and largely recounts the experience of arts organisations and artists.

The creative ageing sector has been developing since the 1970s in the UK, but has grown swiftly in the last decade to become part of the offer of most arts organisations. This meant that at lockdown there were many artists skilled in working with older people and with established relationships including with care homes and housing associations, as well as with charities for older people.

Lockdown meant that these arts organisations needed to develop new ways of working with older people which had until then almost always been in person. Most organisations swiftly developed online offers of activities, usually from scratch. These were either interactive, for instance using Zoom, or performances or 'how to' sessions that might be on YouTube or similar

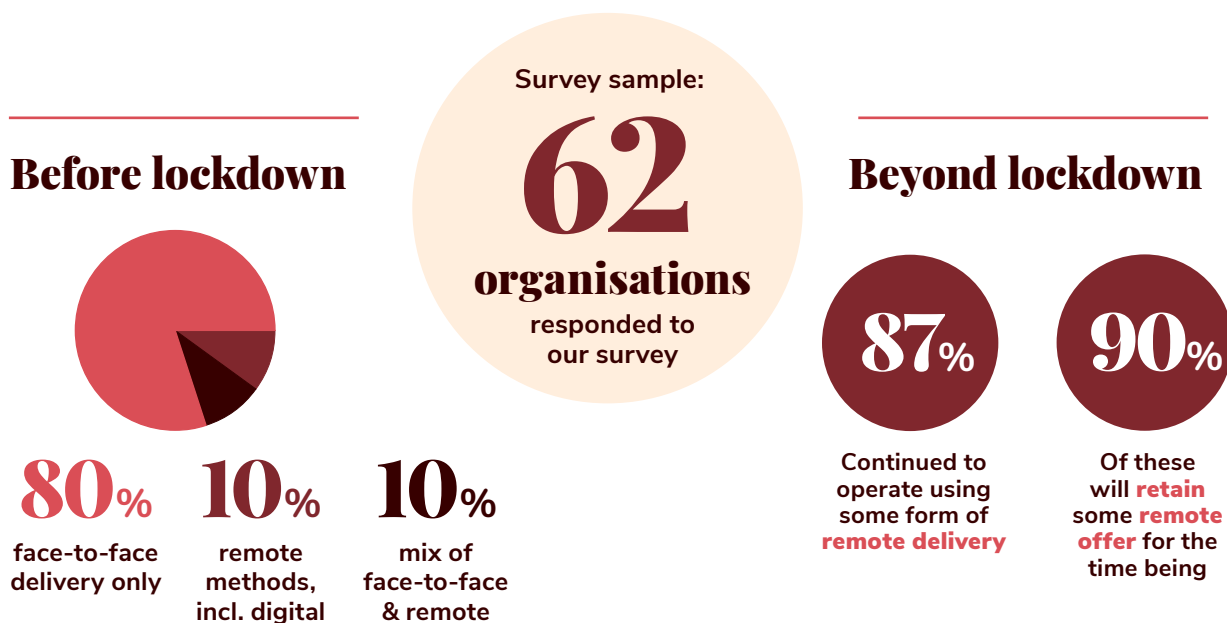
platforms. Keenly aware of the digital divide, these were almost always accompanied by non-digital methods such as telephone contact and activity packs through the post and often extended to other services such as befriending or delivering food. Artists learnt a great deal during this rapid mass experiment about how to engage remotely; its benefits and limitations. This activity provided fun, company and purpose to the older people it touched, proving to be a lifeline in dark times.

Creative ageing in lockdown has been an essential service and artists, key workers. Even so towards the end of 2020 the future for creative ageing looks uncertain, with the nation depending on social distancing and many older people and care homes being extremely cautious about interacting with other people. Also the financial impact of the lockdown on the economy will be deeply damaging, with the arts sector feeling especially at risk.

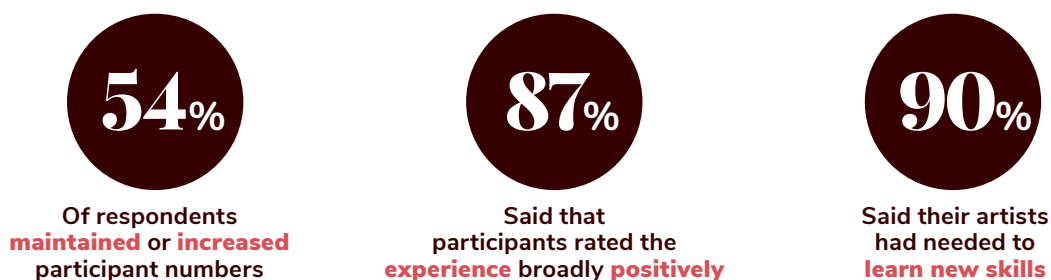
Therefore the creative ageing sector needs to innovate and adapt through researching, refining, documenting and disseminating new ways of working. For the foreseeable future this is likely to be a blended approach of remote working methods that are both digital and non-digital. More needs to be delivered by care home staff though they are already overstretched. Crucially, arts organisations will be reliant on the support of funders, especially in the arts and health sectors.

Key statistics from our survey

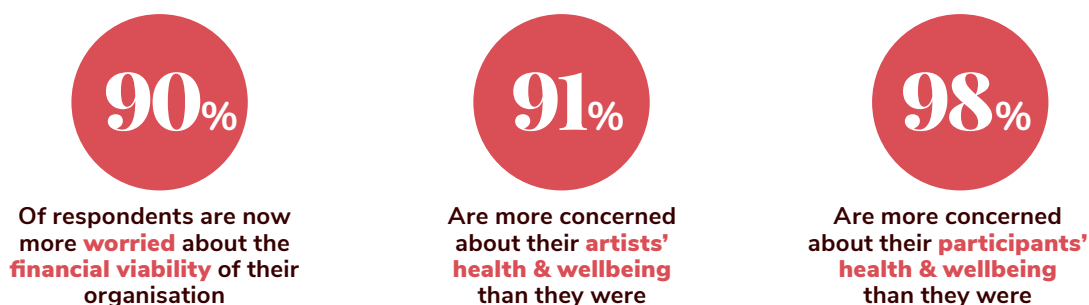
WE SENT OUT A SHORT SURVEY TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES OF CREATIVE AGEING ORGANISATIONS DURING COVID-19



The lockdown experience



The situation now



A world of delight in a dark time

YOU WILL READ ABOUT THESE IN THE REPORT, BUT WE WANTED TO SHARE A FEW OF THE INVENTIVE IDEAS FOR ACTIVITY WITH OLDER PARTICIPANTS THAT CREATIVE AGEING ORGANISATIONS DEvised DURING LOCKDOWN.



Armchair gallery pre-lockdown, City Arts.



Gnomes at Home, Entelechy Arts.

ARMCHAIR GALLERY APP IN AUGMENTED REALITY

City Arts Nottingham took the opportunity to take their Armchair Gallery app to the next level by creating augmented reality experiences of different galleries and heritage collections. A panel of older participants have been helping.

WORLD CLASS CONCERTS IN CARE HOMES

Age Cymru teamed up with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales to live stream specially created concerts into care homes. Residents could request a birthday shout-out too.

GNOMES AT HOME

Entelechy Arts in south-east London sent out gift boxes with tiny unpainted, hand-cast gnomes ready to decorate and designed for windowsills and ledges. The gift boxes also served as an invitation to join their Creative Clusters programme which uses telephone conferencing.

DOLPHINS AT HOME

An Talla Solais in the village of Ullapool, Wester Ross, started by sending out weekly creative activities to their Dolphins at Home group for people living with dementia and encouraged them to share what they'd made in their windows. This inspired a whole-community project called Paperchain with many more people making their own window displays.

“ The creative sector has, predictably, shown great inventiveness in confronting the constraints of lockdown. ”



Singing Hinnies, Equal Arts.

THE SINGING HINNIES

Equal Arts in Newcastle started singing food deliveries – making musical drop-offs in sheltered housing schemes, as well as doing Garden Gigs and Singing for your Street Visits. Whilst the weather is kind, the Singing Hinnies are singing five days a week across Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and Darlington and receiving requests from as far away as London.

FESTIVAL OF ISLESOLATION

Independent Arts on the Isle of Wight used some funding from the Arts Council England to create an online gallery space to include work from people of all ages across the Island, including work from care homes and older participants from their projects.



Sing for Victory CDs, Northern Ireland War Memorial.

NORTHERN IRELAND WAR MEMORIAL

The Northern Ireland War Memorial museum created free singalong CD of 1940s songs based on their dementia-friendly singing and reminiscence workshops. The CD was accompanied by a songbook along with some suggested exercises taken from *Love to Move*, a British Gymnastics Foundation seated exercise programme for older people. This was posted out to care homes across Northern Ireland as a way to raise spirits and encourage staff and residents during lockdown.

Lifeline

CREATIVE AGEING DURING LOCKDOWN

WHY WE WROTE THIS REPORT

The pandemic and the resultant lockdown across the country has changed more or less fundamentally the lives of every single person in the UK. Its causes and consequences are going to be studied and debated for many years to come. Two observations came together to initiate this report. Firstly, that by and large older people were more at risk of both catching Covid-19 and of suffering its worst effects. One quarter of the people who have died from the infection had been living with dementia. Secondly, as everyone's lives became more constrained, the value of creativity became more obvious to great swathes of people, either taking up writing, painting, singing or making music for the first time, coming back to them or treasuring them even more. There were many examples of this but one national one was the popularity of 'Grayson Perry's Art Club' on Channel 4. The arts sector as a whole has been responding to the crisis as explored in a new research report by Common Vision, *Creativity, Culture and Connection*.¹

Putting these points together and being aware of so many examples of new creative ageing activity made us want to capture a few and offer some thoughts about the interaction between our new way of living over the last few months and creative ageing.

This report is written from the point of view of a funder, which for the last ten years has supported the involvement of older people, especially more vulnerable older people in the community or in care homes, in the arts, sometimes called 'creative ageing'. We have mainly done this through funding participatory arts, where skilled professional artists facilitate creative activity with older people who do not have their training. We have often done this with funding partners, especially the four national Arts Councils. So this report comes

from that perspective and particularly considers the work of arts organisations, but this is not to deny how much work is happening through for instance voluntary arts groups or by care homes themselves. It is just that we are less aware of this.

The Baring Foundation has supported arts and older people work because we believe that it is the right of every human being to express themselves creatively at whatever age until our last breath. This does not blind us, however, to the increasing body of research evidence as to the mental and physical benefits (as well as societal) of creative ageing. We first brought these together in a report commissioned from the Mental Health Foundation in 2011, *An evidence review of the impact of participatory arts on older people*. More recently these have been described in a 2019 study for the World Health Organization by Professor Daisy Fancourt and Saoirse Finn – *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing? A scoping review*. There are many more examples to be found online at the Repository for Arts and Health Resources at the Sidney de Haan Centre at Canterbury Christ Church University in Kent.

The methodology for this report was simple. The Baring Foundation has funded several hundred creative ageing projects over recent years and we selected a small number of these to provide case studies to a common format. They come from the four nations of the UK, work with different communities and are conscious of the diversity of these, use a range of art forms, work in care homes and in the community, and work in both rural and metropolitan areas. Secondly, the author interviewed a handful of highly experienced people from the arts and care sectors. Thirdly, we ran a small survey of arts organisations with 62 respondents. These came from across

¹ covi.org.uk/dev4/arts-organisations-and-covid-19.

the UK, most worked with both people in care homes and in the community and across art forms. And lastly there are a number of materials, accounts and articles online that have been drawn upon.

A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF CREATIVE AGEING PRE-LOCKDOWN

Our decade of funding for creative ageing was bookended by two reports.

In 2009, we published a mapping study called *Ageing Artfully*. This noted that a handful of pioneering arts organisations had been developing the practice of creative ageing since at least the early 1980s. However, they were mainly small and while some more generalist arts organisations ran projects when funding was available, these tended to be few and far between and short term. It was very common for arts organisations to be running special programmes for children and young people but rare for them to ask themselves whether they were engaging older people sufficiently, especially where there were challenges such as living with dementia or rarely leaving a care home.

In 2019, we commissioned a study *Older and Wiser?* from King's College London by Dr Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt which showed a substantially changed picture. In short, while the specialist arts organisations remained (and their number had not increased significantly) what had happened might be called mainstreaming, whereby most arts organisations now do consider their offer for older people. Dementia-friendly arts workshops and museum tours have become commonplace as well as a whole range of new initiatives. This has been accompanied by funding from arts funders and others as well as an increase in research such as the Wellcome Trust's *Created Out of Mind* project. This has happened across art forms and in all four nations.

This meant that arts organisations confronted the pandemic from a position of strength when it came to working with older people. Some had built relationships with care homes and more vulnerable older people in the community.

There were many more artists who had experience of especially engaging older people, including those living with dementia, and they had honed their techniques and networked with other interested artists.

However arts organisations needed to adapt to work in a way that was new to the great majority of them – working remotely, which to many felt like the antithesis of community or participatory arts.

ONLINE OVERNIGHT

Certainly the biggest effect of lockdown to creative ageing is the degree to which activity has gone online.

The main reason for this is obvious. Vulnerable older people could no longer leave their homes to attend workshops and care home residents were no longer able to go outside or receive any visitors even family and friends, let alone artists. Everything stopped immediately. Although, as we will discuss next, while digital activity was by no means the only option, it was used frequently and what's more in many cases this was from a standing start and accomplished in a matter of weeks or less. In our survey almost 80% of organisations only used face-to-face methods pre-lockdown. 87% of the respondents continued to work after lockdown using some form of remote method.

Previously, the use of digital technology was somewhat unusual for creative ageing. In our survey only 10% used digital methods, with a further 10% using digital and face to face before lockdown. The Baring Foundation published two short investigations into this, most recently *Technically Older: an update* by Joe Randall (2015). The report distinguishes between two uses for digital technology; as a means of making arts and as a medium for communicating such as streaming or recording performances.

The most significant issue here is the 'digital divide'. At least until recently, many care homes had a small number of digital devices and poor broadband connections. Care workers also had limited time to help residents with devices and sometime were unconfident themselves.

The situation in the community is far from ideal too. A 2019 study from the Office of National Statistics² estimated that just over 10 million adults in the UK did not use the internet and half of these were aged 75 or over. (However, the intergenerational gap in digital use has been declining somewhat since 2011.) Among our case studies, Equal Arts thought that 80% of their participants couldn't access the internet, though this contrasts with the National Theatre of Scotland project where most of its users could access the internet and they had increased their numbers by going online.

It must have been tempting to rush in, given the palpable need to offer something to isolated older people and to care homes but Leeds Playhouse (and doubtless others) took a more systematic approach and started by auditing which devices were used by its 250 older participants. It then went on to give test sessions to help people become more comfortable with the technology if needed. Arts Alive and MediaActive in Shropshire provided digital 'buddies', volunteers to provide technical support to their participants.

A key distinction in terms of online provision is between content that is provided either live or recorded where the platform is a tool for delivery, such as YouTube, or where there is the possibility of interaction between artists and participants, as for instance with Zoom.

Arts organisations reported using many different methods such as social media pages, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, and the frequent use of YouTube for performances or for 'how to' workshops. Celebrating Age³ Wiltshire has logged almost 4,000 visits to the YouTube concerts it has posted. The Whitworth began to make podcasts for its older participants. The famous Sadler's Wells Company of Elders produced a series of classes to be found on their YouTube channel. Very quickly a dizzying amount of content was digitally available. One commentator called this 'passive content' and felt that it lacked the vital co-production element of good creative ageing practice involving a live event with an artist allowing older people agency in creativity.

“It is exceptionally time-consuming work and is also not the way we ordinarily work since we develop ideas and activities very much in response to the people we work with. This way of working inevitably has to be very structured and focused on creating simple outcomes, with Zoom sessions to create the connection with people.”

Survey respondent

Zoom and other platforms offer the possibility of interaction between older people and artists and have perhaps been used most for singing as in the case of Independent Arts on the Isle of Wight. The Whitworth maintained its long running *Handmade* group via Zoom, ensuring that it used materials that were easily available at home. Short sessions are recommended as an antidote to Zoom fatigue.

“Social embarrassment could be amplified by the bright yellow frame of Zoom, whilst other expressions or behaviours which may have felt exposing in person were reduced by the comfort of being at home. The stresses of getting ready and journeys to a physical meeting point were reduced. Participants have generously offered aspects of their home lives to influence session content, such as inspiring Our Time participants in the creation of pom poms led by Jo and her mum, Pauline.”

Leeds Playhouse

There are so many aspects to digital technology and it is of course in a state of constant development. City Arts were already well ahead with their Armchair Gallery App which allows virtual tours of heritage sites and galleries combined with creative exercises. They have now gone one stage further in developing an Augmented Reality version of the Armchair Gallery.

² www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04#how-does-digital-exclusion-vary-with-age.

³ Celebrating Age is a joint Arts Council England and Baring Foundation funding programme for creative ageing, www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/celebrating-age#section-1.

Leeds Playhouse *Our Time* participant. Photo by Jo Lee.



One of the most obvious advantages of digital delivery is that it cancels distance. So, for instance, cARTrefu, like many organisations in Wales, has struggled with the North-South travel problems and these were eliminated by online delivery. In our survey slightly more arts organisations said they had gained participants in lockdown than had not.

“The richness of shared creative experiences, the social memory and fun, the profound sense of achievement and confidence boosting sense of being visible, heard and present – this is missed. Desperately. The missing too, from the artists point of view, of creative exchange, the lovely alchemy that happens when ideas evolve and surprise.”

An Talla Solais

NON-DIGITAL

Given that arts organisations were rarely working online pre-lockdown, and the importance of the digital divide, it is natural that the case studies in this report use a wealth of non-digital methods.

One almost forgotten method of communication that has seen a come-back has been the use of the postcard. Artis Community in Wales observed that a large majority of their participants couldn't use the internet and used 'the Royal Snail' for beautifully decorated postcards with messages of love. Celebrating Arts Wiltshire is developing a county-wide postcard scheme with new funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Another rather forgotten medium is the radio and Entelechy Arts took to the airwaves for half an hour a week courtesy of Resonance FM in South London.

In almost all case studies, regular telephone contact was essential. For instance, Flourishing Lives joined forces with the Claremont Project to resource a telephone befriending service for 850 older people. Entelechy Arts went one step further by using telephone conferencing technology to initiate Creative Clusters of eight

participants, plus artists and volunteers around an artform such as drama or poetry, with sessions taking place weekly,

Even where organisations are using digital groups like the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art in Manchester, with their Dumpling Social Club accessing WhatsApp and Google Hangouts, it was combined with art activity packs through the post.

THE ARTIST'S TALE

Much of the material on which this short report is based comes from artists, rather than directly from older people, so it has important messages about their experience.

Artists were faced themselves with the reality and challenges of life in pandemic Britain. They or their families could fall ill or be anxious about the possibility of catching Covid-19. The organisations they worked for could lose contracts and they might have to be furloughed and survive on reduced incomes. In our survey 91% of organisations had become more concerned about the health and wellbeing of their artists.

In the context of this report, they needed to radically and swiftly adapt the way they were working with older people. It might not only be older people that lacked digital skills; some artists also might not feel confident using unfamiliar platforms.

The flipside of this was that artists learnt new ways of working and skills, for instance how to make films. In our survey 90% of respondents felt that artists had needed to learn new skills. In general, there was a lot of concentration on reflective practice networks for artists. For instance, Flourishing Lives held 15 such sessions in a few months and several roundtables on the need for better inclusion of BAME people in participatory arts. Age of Creativity has initiated a very timely set of workshops (online) on best practice in working non-digitally, recognising the challenges of digital exclusion. Age Cymru, partnering with ArtWorks in Wales, organised a number of learning sessions.

“Our musicians have said that this has been a dark and uncertain time for them. Comfortable Classical at Home not only allowed them to perform live again but also many said it reinstated their identity as a musician and artist. As the musician had to programme and present, as themselves, in a way that was authentic, relaxed and engaging (so that the audience themselves also felt comfortable), many were pushed out of their comfort zones and reported that they learnt new skills as an artist. This collective experience amongst our musicians is something that will go on to enhance not only our participation work but also our concerts and performances.”

Survey respondent

And some artists needed to cope with participants who they might know well, dying, including from Covid-19. Entelechy Arts created an online Book of Remembrance and Equal Arts brought in a psychologist for grief counselling.

Despite these challenges, 84% of the respondents to our survey believed that artists' experience of continuing to offer creative ageing services through lockdown was broadly positive.

THE CARE HOME'S STORY

Much less of the material in this report comes from care homes and any observations need to be much more tentative. It should immediately be acknowledged what a stressful and traumatic experience this period has been for many people working and living in care homes. Estimates at the time of writing in September 2020 are that there have been 25,000 'excess' deaths in this period than would normally be expected and a minimum of 15,000 of these have been attributed to Covid-19. Most care home residents live with dementia. This has both been a risk factor for worse outcomes when someone is infected, and it has also been noted how dementia symptoms have accelerated during lockdown. Care workers

were at heightened risk of falling ill themselves which would then compound the stretched resources in those homes. They have been putting their own lives on the line to care for their residents and deserve the nations' thanks for this as well as much better support from the Government.

Given that our research has less information to rely on, here are some thoughts about possible patterns.

Firstly, only a minority of care homes engage with the sort of professional arts organisations that are cited here and if they weren't involved before the lockdown, it is highly unlikely they would have been able to develop new relationships in a crisis situation. Secondly, even if they did have a relationship, those care homes with an outbreak of Covid-19 would not have had the capacity to continue to use the arts, and residents would almost certainly be confined to their rooms with everyone taking the most rigorous precautions. In the early weeks of the lockdown, until at least its peak during April, care home managers had immense responsibilities, and however much they recognised the value of creativity, it was unlikely that they could afford to give it priority.

Equal Arts stopped their Zoom provision to care homes for this reason and used resources differently, but digital engagement became more realistic as the weeks went by.

“The number of workshops and participants has decreased greatly; many care homes chose not to take up the offer of art packs delivered or posted to their door.”

Survey respondent

“I think the pandemic has brought forward a positive digital change within care homes and groups, for residents but perhaps more so for Activity Coordinators and staff as they have found new ways of working and have been able to access creative activities they may not have considered before due to free online Zoom sessions etc. ”

Survey respondent

Arts organisations clearly felt a considerable degree of responsibility to their care home partners. Age Cymru organised two well attended Zoom training sessions for care home workers.

“Celebrating Age Wiltshire has become an invaluable resource for us during very challenging times, supplying us with engaging and high-quality streaming entertainment for our residents whilst on lockdown. We could engage more residents than ever before and use the footage for the night staff to also entertain residents who awoke during the evening – a real rescue to our staff. ”

Christopher Guest, Events Manager, Blenheim House, Melksham

“Not surprisingly the NHS reported increased use in antipsychotic medication which had significantly diminished over the last decade or so. It is equally sad to hear how care staff and managers feel betrayed and angry amidst a background of the poorly considered hospital discharge plan. ”

Equal Arts

OLDER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

It is easier to identify and describe care home residents in comparison to the catch-all term of ‘older people in the community’. This report only deals with older people who are vulnerable and are more likely of course to be shielding.

The situation here is much more elusive. Most of the older people involved will have been already engaging with a programme that an arts organisation was running outside care homes. Rather more people, for instance live with dementia outside care homes than live inside. In London, Flourishing Lives specifically works to strengthen this type of provision. Twenty to thirty years ago, frail and isolated older people were much more likely to go to lunch clubs or daytime activities supported by local authorities. These still exist, often run by the local branch of Age UK, but have become much less common due to funding cuts. These type of activities instantly became out of the question in lockdown.

Some more vulnerable older people will live in sheltered housing. Arts Council England and the Baring Foundation have funded Entelechy Arts to work with the Southwark Housing Association in South London, for example.

“There’s a risk that sheltered housing continues to be an under-discussed, lesser known way of living and becomes inaccurately grouped with care homes and the more prevalent practice of running regular activities for residents. We are looking at ways we can support and provide training in creative delivery for staff in sheltered housing. We cannot say when it might be possible for us to run activities again within those buildings and staff tell us that they feel ill equipped to support residents to engage with activities we have offered during lockdown by post or telephone. ”

Survey respondent

Many of the case studies in this report include examples of working with people living in the community. In addition to arts organisations providing creative ageing activities, another possible contributor might be the local chapter of Age UK. As a federated organisation, patterns of service and priorities vary considerably from place to place. Some branches will give the arts more priority. Age UK Oxfordshire is a prime example of this and also runs the national platform Age of Creativity.

THE POINT OF IT ALL: OLDER PEOPLE

Here are a few of the quotations from participants about joining in some of the case studies in this report.

“Thank you so much for sending us these weekly worksheets, it has kept us inspired and busy and we are less likely to worry over situations if your mind is occupied.”

Crafty Cuppa participant, Artis Community

“I feel it’s so good that someone calls me at least once a week. It means that someone somewhere is thinking about me. Then there was this wonderful box with wool and a little plant and the gnome and lovely colourful painting pens. My granddaughter and myself are designing it together. She says: “Grandma don’t carry on without me. We’re doing it together”.”

Older participant, Entelechy Arts

“I feel the best I’ve been since lockdown started. More like my naturally positive self. All the cells in my body have danced... and this feeling is sooooo good!!!”

Carrie, National Theatre of Scotland

“It was a strange and wondrous occasion and we all I am sure realise the significance of the evening. It was too much like magic in the past to expect such things to happen, and indeed was an historic moment in Scottish LGBTQI+ social history.”

David, National Theatre of Scotland

“I have found our Zoom meetings to be so beneficial. It has allowed us to continue to be creative at home but in a group, using the sort of materials we have at home, or are easily accessible from local shops. An additional and really important aspect of Zoom, particularly for those of us who live alone, is that it has reduced isolation. This was particularly important during the early days of lockdown when it wasn’t possible to meet with anyone outside of your own household. I also feel that we’ve got to know each other better.”

Nuala, The Whitworth

“I feel like someone does care.”

Our Time participant, Leeds Playhouse

“However, many of the older people continued to talk of ‘desperate loneliness’, ‘desolation’ and expressed real anxiety – ‘especially on an evening, anxiety became real fear’.”

Equal Arts

“One of the most exciting developments has been older people themselves becoming cultural activists – our elders graduates have initiated their own daily creative coffee morning which has been running for 17 weeks. They take turns to host creative activity and have been videoblogging about their lockdown experiences which they are posting on YouTube. ”

Survey respondent.

In our survey, 87% of respondents felt that feedback from participants was overall positive. Slightly more (54%) felt that they had maintained or increased the number of participants that they work with overall than felt they had declined.

However, 98% of respondents unsurprisingly were more concerned about the health of participants than they had been.

NEW PARTNERS

The complete disruption we all experienced due to lockdown also created new opportunities, new interest and new partners for organisations that had been working in creative ageing for some time. Artis Community began to work with Occupational Health staff in local hospitals. Age Cymru guided BBC Wales in an exciting initiative to stream concerts into care homes. Arts Alive and MediaActive in Shropshire developed a relationship with a housing provider, Connexus Housing.

MORE THAN THE ARTS

Participatory arts practice always offers more than creative expression, not least socialisation and friendship. One of the striking things from these case studies has been literally how much more arts organisations are offering to isolated older people in a time of crisis. Dylan Quinn Dance Theatre, with funding from the Arts Council Northern Ireland, provided digital tablets to some older people to access their streamed content. Many have combined telephone befriending with creativity packs

or classes. Leeds Playhouse used a systematic approach to contact all their participants acting as a referral agency if they needed welfare support of some nature. The National Theatre of Scotland's events became parties and branched out into cookery classes. Food was definitely a theme with a recipe book from Artis Community and food parcels being delivered by Arts in Mind in Northern Ireland and by Equal Arts who added some socially distanced singing!

DOLPHINS AT HOME AND THE DUMPLINGS SOCIAL CLUB: A WORLD OF DELIGHT IN A DARK TIME

The creative ageing sector has, predictably, shown great inventiveness in confronting the constraints of lockdown. On the Isle of Wight, Independent Arts got Arts Council England funding to create a new festival of art produced by older people in lockdown – The Festival of Islesolation. An Talla Solais in Ullapool started by sending out weekly creative activities to their Dolphins at Home group for people living with dementia and encouraged them to share their artwork in their window as a public sign of creative life continuing. These were then photographed for an online gallery. In Manchester older Chinese people knew they could find fun and friendship in the Dumplings Social Club. And who wouldn't want to receive one of Entelechy Arts' 250 'Gnomes at Homes' packages which included amongst its creative goodies an unpainted tiny garden gnome!

Meet Me on the Radio, courtesy of Entelechy Arts.

Case studies



Age Cymru

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Age Cymru is the largest charity working with and for older people in Wales. We have been running creative ageing projects for many years, including an annual Wales-wide festival which started in 2006. Age Cymru run various projects outside of the festival that might challenge the stereotypes of ageing, like No Regrets, a photography project exploring the taboo of tattoos, or Gwanwyn Clubs, which aims to create sustainable and challenging creativity clubs for isolated older people.

cARTrefu is Age Cymru's flagship arts in care homes project and is the largest of its kind in Europe. cARTrefu aims to improve access to high-quality creative activities for older people living in care homes, and through robust evaluation, has proven that the programme has a statistically significant impact on the wellbeing of care home residents.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

In the first instance, the annual festival, due to take place in May, was postponed, and we were in regular contact with all event organisers to re-affirm our support to them as plans change.

Care homes had started to cancel workshops in early March, so we already had a sense of the challenges that they were facing. We worked across departments to ensure that we were responding to the immediate needs of the care homes. We committed to sending out a fortnightly email to care homes that pulled together a range of resources, including our Activity Packs and example activities from the artists, live-streams and online content that was available from other organisations.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales approached us as they were keen to reach out to those living in care homes, and those isolated within their own homes, so we developed a programme

called *From Homes to Homes*. Care homes are able to access high quality live-streams of specially curated concerts, and are able to request shout-outs for anyone with a birthday.

We recognised our responsibility within the arts sector, offering out one-to-one sessions for artists and practitioners wishing to talk about creative ageing projects. Then we partnered with National Dance Company Wales, ArtWorks Cymru, Tanio, Voluntary Arts Wales, Wales Wide Training Programme and Youth Arts Network Cymru to host two networking events to explore the impact of Covid-19 on the sector.⁴

This led to a joint response to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Welsh Government to highlight the importance of participatory arts.

Digital networking opportunities have been greatly valued by artists and practitioners and many organisations are reporting that digital engagement is allowing them to reach new participants. It has been easier to connect with organisations across Wales, and has united the participatory sector in a single purpose.

There is widespread recognition of the impact of digital exclusion in Wales and how it is hitting older people the hardest. Many organisations and individuals are adapting to doorstep contact and phone calls.

Care home staff are keen to find ways to provide creative opportunities for residents and recognise the impact that restricting visitors has had, demonstrated by 40 care home workers attending a 'Skill Session' on creativity that we partnered on with Public Health Wales. Zoom fatigue has been considered whilst developing a new online delivery plan for cARTrefu, so sessions are shorter and rely on more preparation from the participants in advance, e.g. gathering materials.

⁴ artworks.cymru/Participatory-Arts-Capturing-the-Learning-Beyond-the-Lockdown.



Gwanwyn Clubs pre-lockdown, courtesy of Age Cymru.

Online delivery of the cARTrefu programme makes attendance for participants much easier in some respects. Travel to workshops in Wales can often be challenging, and can require care home staff to be released for a full day for half a day's session. Although online workshops haven't started yet, we anticipate greater attendance at both workshops for care home workers and artists.

“ This is going to really help the project in regards to sustainability. ”

cARTrefu artist

Moving forward, we are considering blended approaches – digital and socially distanced or telephone engagement. For example, our cARTrefu Activity Plans can be delivered through Zoom and over the phone. Short example videos can be made and sent in advance, and tailored plans can be emailed or posted.

We have a lot of work to do to build the confidence of those who have been house-bound, and we have an opportunity to support those who we haven't reached before into creative activities. Creativity has been crucial for the well-being of everyone throughout this time, and in particular, for those who have been shielding.

An Talla Solais

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

The project was born out of a conversation between the local dementia-support link worker, jointly funded by Alzheimer's Scotland and the NHS, and An Talla Solais, the local community arts group and gallery. Funding was secured early 2017 to trial creative activities with people living with dementia and is now funded by the Life Changes Trust and the Robertson Trust. The group currently works with seven people with a diagnosis of dementia, their carers and members of their families, and a number of volunteers.

Pre-Covid, we met weekly for sessions inspired by a combination of visual arts and poetry and monthly sessions in the gallery for conversations about art. In addition, an annual fundraising project drew in the local community and the group had developed an excellent relationship with the local schools, with a plan that the group would hold a session in the school art room once a term, involving activity linked to the school curriculum to enable children and older people to work and learn together. The group has led on dementia-friendly conversations within the community, held two annual exhibitions in the An Talla Solais gallery, and is a vivid and much loved part of village life.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

We locked down two weeks before the official lockdown. As we made the decision, one of the participants said, 'but we'll get homework won't we?' and Dolphins At Home began. From early on we ensured that every household had a pack of art materials and the local postie, one of our volunteers, helped enormously here. I devise creative activities which are sent out in a letter every week – amazingly we are now in Week 21. People were encouraged to display their work in their windows which was photographed and shared back to the group

in subsequent letters. Activity has been so warmly welcomed, with everyone describing that the day the Dolphin letter arrives as like a lifeline, helping people feel connected when it has been impossible to connect with others in the usual way. It isn't in any way the same as meeting together, but people have regularly imagined how others in the group might respond to the stimulus and this has additionally helped to break down feelings of isolation.

“Activity has been so warmly welcomed, with everyone describing that the day the Dolphin letter arrives as like a lifeline.”

An additional richness is that very early into lockdown the Dolphin home works inspired the An Talla Solais community arts in lockdown project, Paperchain, which meant that the broader community had opportunities to be creative, growing support for and increasing the visibility of the Dolphins. Ullapool window displays and the sharing of artwork on Facebook has helped connect people, and there has been a really vivid sense of togetherness, of shared experience, which has strengthened relationships and created new bonds of connection.

But it isn't easy. The richness of shared creative experiences, the social memory and fun, the profound sense of achievement and confidence boosting sense of being visible, heard and present – this is missed. Desperately. The missing too, from the artists point of view, of creative exchange, the lovely alchemy that happens when ideas evolve and surprise. This work is enriching and stimulating and I feel a sense of loss in not being able to directly and socially feel and hold the creative moments of the group. However, the feedback is that it is sustaining the group, helping to keep people connected, has helped during the severe restrictions of lockdown to minimise the effects

of social isolation, and remarkably, the group seems to feel cohesive. They love the weekly letter. Artworks in windows are beautiful to see. We now knock on doors every week to deliver post, carry messages and news, take photographs, share them back with everyone. Some highlights – art works on postcards and sent to each other, handmade puppets singing or reciting a poem, Desert Island Discs, tea bag textiles, patchwork quilts from old magazines, paper chain people. We are now embarking on a recipe book inspired by recipes and kitchen stories.

Lockdown has had a powerful impact on participants – one shielded in the local care home and another couple who live 50 miles away – not able to be part of the weekly connection. We managed to connect with the couple by video call whilst on a weekly village dash recently and that provided an enormous boost to their morale. And recently we have been able to make contact with the care home resident and a care worker is facilitating the weekly letter with her. One participant has lost a lot of confidence about leaving the house and his family are uncertain about his ability to attend sessions again. There has been a general sense of loss, shock, anxiety, fear.

All this contributes to an added intensity to the work of the project somehow – creative engagement still, but a real sense of friendship, a growing understanding that we are also supporting a range of needs in differently vulnerable people. We all feel we have to keep the connections going as we evolve new ways of working. We feel our group are resilient and that having created a creative space for them, the current weekly connection remains a creative space. Just not the creative space we had. I think we believe that in a very small village, especially when the tourists go home, we perhaps have the advantage of being able to plan creative moments – gatherings at the harbour or in the park or on the Shore Road – where we can be visible, shine creatively and look outwards again.

“ We feel our group are resilient and that having created a creative space for them, the current weekly connection remains a creative space. Just not the creative space we had. ”

Artis Community

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Artis Community is an Arts Council Wales National Portfolio organisation based in Pontypridd, covering the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil.

We bring high-quality arts experiences to the community, having had a strong history in community dance and the visual arts for over 30 years. Our work with vulnerable older people is varied and reactive to the needs of our participants. We work closely with partners to make a difference to people's lives through participation in various projects, such as our inclusive dance programme for adults with learning disabilities, dance for health initiatives such as Dance for Parkinson's and Chairobics, and our 'Crafty Cuppa' activities for isolated older people aged 50+.

The restrictions imposed due to Covid-19 has been a challenging time for everyone and our immediate thoughts turned to our participants attending our weekly programmes, and how best to support and engage them creatively during this time.

Our weekly 'Crafty Cuppa' groups are led by high-quality art tutors who have a person-led approach to their work. Our participants are important and we have a duty of care for them which goes way beyond the classroom. For many of our older participants, attending the weekly group is vital for their health and wellbeing, an important social lifeline, a connection with others and the chance to come together to be creative as a community. It provides a safe space in which to learn new skills and make valuable friends along the way.

“We found the most successful method to engage with our older participants [during lockdown] is through the Royal 'Snail'.”

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

We started the first few weeks of lockdown checking in on our participants by phone call and starting up a project working with local families and volunteers to send out decorated and personalised postcards to members with messages of love and support.

Creativity packs sent by the Royal 'Snail', photo courtesy of Artis Community.



These brought a lot of joy to those that received them and that much needed feeling of connectivity with others.

Shortly after, we were lucky enough to gain funding to support the delivery of remote weekly workshops through worksheets and video tutorials. These were promoted via our social media pages and creativity packs were sent to 60 participants' homes every two weeks, as well as sharing content to partners to ensure a greater impact. Activities were designed to use minimal equipment and materials found around the home. Participants were also given the opportunity to be part of larger projects which have all helped in them feeling connected to others.

Impact

Whilst we adapted our method of delivery, a large majority of our participants were unable to take part due to lack of equipment or confidence with using devices. We found the most successful method to engage with our older participants is through the Royal 'Snail', postcard swapping and phone calls.

Lockdown has reminded us how important it is to look after each other and sometimes a voice on the end of the phone is all that is needed to brighten someone's day.

Keeping up the morale of participants has been a challenge some weeks – it has been a rollercoaster of emotions for everyone involved and although these weekly creativity packs have provided some comfort it is hard to create the same sociable atmosphere that happens naturally at usual Crafty Cuppa events. It has also been difficult to ascertain whether some participants have completed the activities and it is challenging to evaluate the impact this interaction is having on participants' health and wellbeing.

“Thank you so much for sending us these weekly worksheets, it has kept us inspired and busy and we are less likely to worry over situations if your mind is occupied.”

Crafty Cuppa participant

Learning

- In lockdown everything takes longer! The admin required, the postal service.
- Embrace technology! Be aware not all participants have the skills or confidence to use Zoom.
- The importance of a phone call – it could just make someone's day.
- Tailoring activities so participants feel they are creating something together.

Our tutors working on the project have improved their technical skills but have missed that in-person interaction which helps determine group activity.

We have gained new participants working online and our work has been shared with numerous partners and is now being used by occupational health staff with patients who have dementia in hospitals across Cwm Taff Morgannwg.

“After all “The tighter the corner, the quicker you get around it.”

Crafty Cuppa participant, Bernard, aged 91

Our approach as lockdown is eased will be a blend of the old and the new. We are hoping to gain funding to trial some new distanced activities with our groups, using outside spaces where possible and continuing online classes and projects. Our participants are desperate to get back together again and re-connect with each other. Lockdown has given us the chance to reassess what we can do, rise to the challenges and come up with new and exciting ideas and ways of working with our community again. Our focus is on keeping our participants and staff safe at the same time as igniting their love of the arts.

I think that the arts are certainly more valued now than ever and our creative approaches to working are really an asset in these uncertain times.

Arts Alive and MediaActive Projects

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Arts Alive and MediaActive Projects first began collaborating in 2017 to develop new partnerships and new provision for Arts & Older People across the rural county of Shropshire. In 2018, with Celebrating Age funding, we embarked on a new programme of artists' workshops and residencies in a range of settings and contexts, both community based and in care settings, and supported by CPD for both artists and partners organisations.

The *Creative Conversations* offer included performing and visual, creative media and digital artforms, and the programme benefited from the involvement of experienced creative practitioners including: a musician and storyteller, a musicologist and curator, a dance artist, a poet, visual artists, an animator, and MediaActive's digital arts associates.

The majority of participants are in their 70s and 80s plus.

There have been many highlights, including:

- Storyteller, Sal Tonge, and Dance Artist, Rachel Liggitt, working with residents of a care home to explore storymaking and movement, inspired by everyday objects.
- Poet, Jean Atkin, co-creating poems with elders living in care, reflecting the richness of their lived experiences.
- Age UK choir members working with Musicologist, Adrian Plant, to create and pilot a Vodcast (audio and visuals) that celebrates the benefits of singing and their experiences of joining a choir.
- Artist, Jill Impey, upskilling older volunteers in digital arts so that they can adopt new creative approaches when supporting elders living both independently and in care settings.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

Prior to lockdown, in direct response to feedback from *Creative Conversations'* participants and partners, and inspired by the *At My Home* Helsinki pilot profiled at The Art of Ageing Artfully conference,⁵ we had begun to consider how we might better support people unable to travel to take part in our programme of activities.

We simply sought to create new routes to taking part in the arts for those most at risk of isolation and loneliness, by utilising available technology, providing one-to-one support in using the tech, and by working with artists, performers and cultural organisations to develop "virtual friendly" models of participatory activity.

Connexus social housing joined us as a pilot partner and funder.

When Covid-19 struck, the relevance of developing a virtual model became all too apparent! We moved quickly to support our artists in their development of a virtual approach that related to their artform practice. We have supported test runs, trialling new arts participatory approaches using video conferencing, bringing together focus groups who have provided feedback from a range of societal and art form perspectives. We are having to find new ways to offer tech support when face-to-face home visits are not appropriate so we are now recruiting Digital Buddies, volunteers who will help provide tech support and encouragement, where needed.

We have established new partnerships (Connexus Housing: 25 supported living communities across Shropshire) and we have achieved new investment from the Community Foundation for Staffordshire & the NET Coronavirus Appeal, and Shropshire Council.

⁵ The Art of Ageing Artfully creative ageing conference was funded by the Arts Council England and the Baring Foundation, and organised by the MAC in Birmingham in February 2020.

Impact

Some of our artists were immediately eager to adopt the use of technology, others less so, but what has been clear is how crucial it has been to offer time and support to the artists. In trialling new virtual participatory approaches, they have taken on board feedback, adapted their workshop models, and gained new technical skills and confidence.

Of equal importance, the participants have understood that they are taking part in something new that needs their considered input – they are actively helping to shape the artists' participatory practices.

Musicologist and Curator, Adrian Plant, had been running a weekly choir session with the Orchard Singers, whilst also working with the group on a Vodcast pilot. Working around the technical challenges of the Vodcast project had not been easy for the group, so it was wonderful to see how readily some of the choir members adopted new technology to move their sessions online. The group now meets online twice a week, a social on Mondays (to help members get used to using the tech) and singing on Tuesdays. One member of the choir now issues a regular newsletter, maintaining a welcoming presence, whilst offering user-friendly tips on dealing with the technical side.

“Due to the limitations of the tech, so many of the group, through having to sing solo and a cappella for each other, are also and increasingly beginning to realise just how beautiful their own unique voice can be, and it's really going to change the way we work when we eventually meet again as a group! ”

Adrian Plant

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

We can't wait until we can again be in the same spaces with our artists and participants, but we fully embrace the future opportunities presented by using digital tools and platforms to enhance the reach of our programme.

Through partnership working with our social housing, local authority, care home, community and cultural partners, we will continue to develop new digital routes to creative participation and sharing of cultural resources. By working virtually with our artists and participants, we will continue to establish new creative opportunities, sharing ideas, experiences and artworks.

“All of this we will do with an open heart and an open mind... but yes, we can't wait until we can again be in the same spaces with our artists and participants! ”

Celebrating Age Wiltshire

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Celebrating Age Wiltshire (CAW) is a partnership of cultural, heritage and community organisations comprising Wiltshire Music Centre (WMC), Wiltshire Creative, Pound Arts, Age UK Wiltshire, Wiltshire Council Library Service and Community Engagement Services, Community First, and the museums of Wiltshire and Salisbury. The project uses high-quality creative arts, heritage, and cultural activity as a vehicle to improve or maintain the health and wellbeing of older people, including those who are most socially isolated or vulnerable due to dementia, reduced mobility, ill health or caring responsibilities.

CAW Phase 1 (June 2017-2020) funded by Arts Council England and the Baring Foundation, provided free monthly events in six different community areas of Wiltshire, bringing older people together in local, accessible community venues, care homes and sheltered housing. Activity has included celebratory events, concerts, small-scale theatre, poetry readings, creative writing sessions, art workshops, singing, seated dance sessions and exhibitions of work.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

Covid-19 restrictions forced us to rethink planned activity for CAW events during the final three months of Phase 1 (April-June 2020) with eight planned events cancelled. CAW responded by creating online content, filmed and edited by WMC, and released through WMC's YouTube channel.⁶ This series enabled our freelance artists to perform when so much of their work was cancelled, whilst also maintaining a connection with many of our CAW audiences.

“I was beginning to become a bit despondent about delivery in the current times and this opportunity has given me my bounce back.”

Wiltshire dance artist

Each film is sent to the CAW contacts database of individuals, carers, support organisations and residential homes and promoted through social media and the WMC weekly newsletter. Engagement is very positive, with significant numbers of older people able to access the programme (3,684 YouTube views to date). When so many social interactions were restricted, the concerts were well received in care homes:

“CAW has become an invaluable resource for us during very challenging times, supplying us with engaging and high-quality streaming entertainment for our residents whilst on lockdown. We could engage more residents than ever before and use the footage for the night staff to also entertain residents who awoke during the evening – a real rescue to our staff.”

**Christopher Guest, Events Manager,
Blenheim House, Melksham**

The CAW online offer is unable to provide the 'togetherness' of a live experience so central to older people's needs at this time. Although content has been thoughtfully designed, with performers interacting with the audience, tea breaks, sing-a-longs and space for reflective responses, the experience is limited. Some older people have found accessing digital technology a challenge. CAW Phase 2, (September 2020-2025) funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, has been re-structured since

⁶ www.youtube.com/channel/UCZxtl--lzm4eNjg6rjasnCA/videos.

Covid-19 to deliver five key strands of activity that can reach older people in multiple ways, not just digitally. These are:

1. online content
2. outdoor concerts and small-scale theatre
3. 1:1 'creative conversations' via telephone
4. 1:1 'creative conversations' in individuals' homes
5. Wiltshire Postcards, a postal project for Wiltshire.

CAW 2 will work closely with partners across Wiltshire to create a bespoke offer based on each area's needs. As community gatherings are re-introduced, building confidence in attending public events will be paramount, and our work with older people in their homes via telephone, one-to-one sessions and via post, will be focused on encouraging a return to social and cultural experiences in the community. Reaching the most isolated older people and their carers who were unable to attend events due to disability, lack of transport and anxiety around leaving their homes was a significant challenge in Phase 1. We now have more opportunity to reach this most vulnerable group.

Celebrating Age Wiltshire has received National Lottery Community Fund funding from 2020-2025, and is supported by Wiltshire Council, and trusts and foundations. The evidenced need and evaluation to date for Celebrating Age Wiltshire gives us confidence for continued funding in the future. In re-focusing the CAW project during this testing and restrictive time, we can continue to offer creative and cultural experiences to help heal, build confidence and inspire older people to engage fully in their lives.

“Fear, if it wasn't a feature before, is now one added challenge that many lost, vulnerable, isolated older people will be feeling. Our task is to begin to confront that fear, to repair and rebuild the older person's trust in themselves and the community in which they live. Communities are asking what they can do to create experiences that help people reflect, honour or suitably mark what has been our 'new world' for the last 6 months – CAW can play a part in the response to this for Wiltshire's older people.”

Karen Linekar, Community Engagement Manager, SW Wiltshire



Residents at Blenheim House enjoying a performance by a Celebrating Age Wiltshire artist. © Christopher Guest.

The Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

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

Through its work, CFCCA inspires tolerance and greater understanding of multicultural perspectives and for over 30 years has remained central to debates around art and multiculturalism, providing alternative readings of Chinese culture.

Formed as the Chinese View Association in 1986, CFCCA was conceived to promote further understanding of Chinese heritage and culture for UK audiences at a time when Manchester's Chinese community was growing rapidly. Formed as a vehicle to promote community cohesion in the city, the organisation was based in China town, developed by and for this diverse community.

There are now (2019) approximately 30,000 Chinese speaking residents in Greater Manchester. The first generation, who migrated from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 60s, are now elderly. Of these older Chinese residents, 24%-50% reported high levels of loneliness, with older Chinese people spending 25% of their time alone in comparison to the 5-10% of White British and South Asian older people.

In 2018, CFCCA in collaboration with the Baring Foundation embarked on a project to explore social isolation in the older Greater Manchester Chinese community, to not only better understand the challenges faced by older people in minority ethnic communities but also investigate how art can be used as a tool for wellbeing.

Following this project, funding from the Big Lottery Community Fund provided capacity to recruit an Age Friendly Project Officer to build our aspirations to work with older people. This marked the beginning of CFCCA's *Dumpling Social Club*, a two-year project focused on bringing older people together within the centre to make and share food, conversation and art.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

A year into the project, Covid-19 brought fresh challenges, exacerbating issues of isolation we had worked hard to counteract while South East and East Asian communities across the UK began to face brutal Covid-racism due to the racialisation of the virus by the media. In order to maintain connections and relationships at a time of real need, we quickly adapted our weekly sessions onto a digital platform, unsure if it would work or have the same impact.

The success of *Dumpling Social Club* was always predicated on the physical, human connection older participants were able to have with each other, being connected and present in a space, talking and sharing. There were real concerns that this wouldn't and couldn't translate as well in a virtual setting. Also, the group were initially nervous and unconfident about using a digital platform they hadn't accessed before and the practical issues they might face in doing this. There was real reluctance in continuing to engage.

We needed to further connect the group and support them to test virtual delivery. We set up a WhatsApp group where we would connect with the group regularly to touch base and make practical arrangements. In parallel, the Project Coordinator had one-to-one calls with some of the participants, investigating their



A Dumpling Social Club marbling workshop pre-lockdown. Courtesy of CFCCA.

nervousness further and supporting them with information about the suggested platform and approach.

We chose to use Google Meet to host the sessions – there is no requirement for a sign-in, to download an app or use a meeting code. We wanted to make the sessions as open and easy to access as possible. Additionally, art packs were sent out to participants' homes.

These proved popular, eliminated the need to go out and source materials and made the sessions much more accessible. The art packs also worked as an incentive for new participants.

“To begin with, take-up was low but by the third session we started to see people's confidence increase.”

Virtual fortnightly sessions began, initially focused on catching up with each other and getting used to the platform. To begin with, take-up was low but by the third session we started to see people's confidence increase and interaction was more natural. After sessions,

participants share their artworks in the WhatsApp chat and this encourages uptake, as well as further connection and support between participants.

The success we have seen in virtual delivery of this project has encouraged us to investigate the prospect of developing pre-recorded workshop content which participants can access at their leisure to cover further skills.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

There are challenges to come. We are aware of the prospect of repetitive learning and the limited scope of accessible-at-home activities and so we are continually researching ideas to keep the group engaged and interested. We are happy with the project and participant's progress so far and it has been a joy to see The Dumpling Social Club continue to flourish despite the numerous challenges Covid-19 brings. We plan to continue virtual sessions up to November and will re-assess then.

City Arts

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

City Arts in Nottingham helps communities and artists to create and explore art of all kinds – from music to writing, from drawing to dance. We aim to give everyone the chance to be creative, regardless of who they are or where they're from.

Over the last ten years we have developed arts programmes that support older people in care and healthcare settings, hospices, sheltered housing and in the community. It offers people in later life the opportunity to be creative and involve them in commissioning and producing collaborative new artwork that aims to support wellbeing.

We have devised particular work to support older people living with dementia that includes the creation of our Armchair Gallery app⁷ and Imagine arts programme.⁸ The artforms we have explored with older people include creative workshops, performance, shadow puppetry, carnival, dance, music, gallery visits and workshops, poetry and writing and digital work.⁹

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

Whilst some of our programming has halted or had to be postponed due to Covid-19, we continue to explore digital ways of engaging with older people creatively.

We have been promoting the Armchair Gallery app which is free to download on iOS and Android tablet devices. The app was featured in The Observer's Art and Culture section during the pandemic. It offers virtual visits to high profile cultural venues where users can discover, play and create with their favourite artworks. The app also includes instructions for doing tried-and-tested creative activities with older people in the comfort of their own homes and in care environments.

We have received emergency funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to develop our Armchair Gallery app. A number of national arts venues will feature in Augmented Reality experiences for older audiences. During this time, it is important to future-proof our projects if face-to-face working is not viable. We are working remotely with a panel of people 55+ to support us with the development of this new app.

Our *Celebrating Age* project includes poetry and writing. We have called upon Nottingham's older communities to respond to writing a poem called 'Pause' (see page 54). Local poet, Panya Banjoko, has collated the poetry entries into a collaborative poem. A collective filmed poem will be released on social media later this summer. This time to pause and reflect has given us a good opportunity for older people to express their feelings, experiences and thoughts relating to the current lockdown.

Impact

The current situation has been challenging, especially as we work in a participatory, face-to-face way the majority of the time. Some of our staff have been furloughed as the continuation of some programmes are not viable during this time. Our physical workshops have halted due to being in care homes and with vulnerable participants. In the same way that 'digital' can offer solutions, it also brings about challenges as many of the older people in the later age category don't have access to video calls. During this time, we have discussed ways of adapting our work, this might be through live-streamed events/workshops and telephone calls; however, for the more vulnerable participants, face-to-face support is necessary to complete tasks.

⁷ armchairgallery.co.uk.

⁸ imaginearts.org.uk.

⁹ city-arts.org.uk/programme/artful-ageing.



Songwriters group, courtesy of City Arts

We have managed to offer some of our artists ongoing opportunities; however, this is not at the scale of our usual business. We have lost contact with many of our participants as we were working towards collective performances that require physical rehearsal time. However, some of the older people that have access to Zoom have continued with weekly music sessions and our 55+ participants will be supporting the development of the new Armchair Gallery app.

We have had to divert our programme to aspects of our work that can be maintained easily through digital means. It is of great concern to us that the more marginalised participants that we work with are even more isolated and not able to participate in community life at the moment. For freelance artists, it is also a very challenging time and the implications of the pandemic will be felt for some time to come.

Going forward we need to be mindful of adapting our approach to creative engagement and we are discussing this within our organisation, however it will take us time and resources to find feasible solutions.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

This unprecedented and unforeseen situation has forced our hand as creative practitioners to find positive solutions.

In many ways, it has increased and stimulated new conversations about how we work with people and how, if we can't do this face to face, we can continue this valuable work. The arts most definitely offer expressive, therapeutic and stimulating ways to explore uncomfortable, as well as positive, opportunities to address the current situation of enforced lockdown.

Going forward, many cultural organisations, already under challenging economic duress, may be forced into difficult situations or may be unable to recover from this situation. However, it is a good opportunity to share creative engagement ideas collectively and to work even more collaboratively to achieve positive outcomes. Since lockdown we have managed to convince partners, who previously did not see the value of digital work, that positive solutions for engaging with older people are even more relevant at this time. For us, this is good news!

Dylan Quinn Dance Theatre

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Dylan Quinn Dance Theatre is a professional dance company based in Northern Ireland's most rural county of Fermanagh. The company delivers a wide range of professional and participatory creative arts projects for all sections of the community and has been operating in and from Fermanagh for 10 years. Artistic Director, Dylan Quinn, has over 25 years' experience of delivering and producing creative dance activities, locally, nationally and internationally. The company has developed dance projects in care homes settings, with local support organisations and with older people in the community. We have delivered publicly funded programmes and pay-to-attend health and wellbeing dance activities. We have created and produced performance projects both live and film-based for older people living in the border regions on the island of Ireland.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

Due to the current public health emergency Dylan Quinn Dance Theatre has been unable to deliver in-person dance activities for older people. The company therefore focused its resources on continuing to provide access to dance via its website. In order to ensure the broadest reach possible the company developed a free-to-access programme of dance available by streaming directly from their website.¹⁰ The programme involved 14 independent movement activities that have been designed specifically to be accessible to older people and those with restricted movement. These activities have been developed with the support of an Occupational Therapist and as a result of several months of work in care settings and community classes across Fermanagh.

These have been created and presented in a variety of ways to support engagement:

1. with direction instruction
2. with support information for occupational therapists
3. with musical accompaniment.

As a result of previous support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, we were able to provide a number of older people living in the community with Samsung Tablets to access the dance material. These tablets also provided individuals with a communication device to help tackle issues of loneliness and isolation during lockdown.

“As a result of previous support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, we were able to provide a number of older people living in the community with Samsung Tablets.”

Impact

The process has provided a new area of work that the company had not explored extensively. The process was interesting and offered considerable potential for development. Whilst it is an area to be explored further, it requires significant investment. It is difficult to ascertain how successful the programme of work was as the streaming system we are using does not provide an overview of engagement. It is worth noting that the level of proactive internet activity by older members of the community within our catchment is limited and would be under the national average. The process of providing access and promoting the available programmes was time intensive and required knowledge and experience that involved investment and dedication. As a result, the artists involved did gain new skills and confidence in this area of work.

¹⁰ www.dylanquinndance.com.

The impact of our work with in care homes was unfortunately extremely heavily impacted. Whilst we had delivered a number of very successful activities in local care homes, in our opinion the staff who were interested in delivering these, required further time and investment to build their confidence when we were no longer available. Whilst this is something we are looking to develop and support with online training, we have found it challenging to secure investment in such services from care home providers.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

I personally believe the issue of creative ageing was not in a particularly positive situation prior to lockdown and will therefore only suffer further in light of the recent circumstances. I think we need a fundamental change in how we look after and pay for the care of older people. It is uncomfortable to consider that

older people's care has been about providing them with shelter and food to look after their basic needs, and after that it is a lottery dependent on the commitment of the individual home. It is important to take into account that the extremely limited resources we had at our disposal impacted significantly on our ability to deliver activities. The focus of the organisation became about survival. In our experience management of the context became the primary focus of most support organisations that we would have dealt with and it has only been recently that they have been able to consider engaging in new creative activities. This is related to the fundamental point I have made earlier. The value of creative activities for older people, particularly in care home settings, is still a battle we have to win.

Entelechy Arts

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Since its inception in 1989, south east London based Entelechy Arts has been pioneering ways of working creatively with vulnerable older people.

Entelechy Arts works with marginalised elders: those living home alone, in residential care and in sheltered accommodation. A radical arts programme that includes theatre, music, dance, poetry sculpture and many other art forms, supports participants to actively take part in the social and creative life of their communities as visible and valued citizens.

Projects that we are proud of include: *Walking Through Walls*¹¹ that supports care home residents to creatively connect with their neighbourhoods through the creation of site-specific performance events; the *Meet Me*¹² project (developed with the Albany arts centre) reimagining creative day care for isolated elders; our international collaborations with Japan, Brazil and the USA that artistically connect older south Londoners with their peers across the world; theatre co-productions including *BED*¹³ a touring street theatre performance and *The Home*,¹⁴ a forty-eight hour immersive performance set in a fictional care home.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

After lockdown Entelechy implemented a seven-point plan to respond to the immediate needs of older beneficiaries, core staff and freelance teams. All participants received two weekly 15-minute telephone conversations. A post of Care and Regeneration Manager was created to develop safe ways of working across

professional and non-professional boundaries when supporting the unpredictable needs of vulnerable beneficiaries.

Several participants died of Covid-19. We created shared ways to grieve together, apart. We created a 'Remembering' page on our website.¹⁵

Working in partnership with the Albany, we restructured our creative programme, maintaining the pattern of friendship networks. Many participants were not able to access digital tools such as Zoom. We therefore designed a weekly *Creative Clusters* programme using telephone conferencing technology to bring together groups of up to eight participants with an artist and volunteers. We now have an expanding programme of singing, knitting, drama clusters and poetry clusters.

We took to the air with *Meet Me on the Radio*,¹⁶ a weekly radio show co-produced with the Albany hosted by two older participants. It is broadcast every Tuesday at 11.30am-12 midday on South London community radio station Resonance FM.

To reach more participants we created 250 *Gnomes at Home*¹⁷ packages. This is an in-the-palm-of-your-hand, tiny garden initiative designed for windowsills and ledges. A gift box contains an unpainted, hand-cast gnome; brush pens; a crowd-sourced succulent plant; stamped postcard and writing prompt; and, a letter from *Meet Me on the Radio* with an invitation to join *Creative Clusters*.

¹¹ entelechartyarts.org/projects/walking-through-walls.

¹² entelechartyarts.org/projects/meet-me-at-the-albany.

¹³ entelechartyarts.org/projects/bed.

¹⁴ entelechartyarts.org/projects/the-home.

¹⁵ entelechartyarts.org/remembering.

¹⁶ www.thealbany.org.uk/shows/meet-me-on-the-radio.

¹⁷ entelechartyarts.org/projects/gnomes-at-home.



Gnomes at Home, courtesy of Entelechy Arts.

Artists have continued to maintain relationships with residents and care teams in residential care homes through a programme of real and digital postcards. These have had a powerful impact of demoralised and overstretched teams.

Impact

“I feel it’s so good that someone calls me at least once a week. It means that someone somewhere is thinking about me. Then there was this wonderful box with wool and a little plant and the gnome and lovely colourful painting pens. My granddaughter and myself are designing it together. She says: “Grandma don’t carry on without me. We’re doing it together”. ”

Older participant

The virus has had huge impact on our participants. Many have lost friends, some life partners. Isolation has increased. But the creative phone sessions, the radio show and other activities have maintained a gentle pulse, a small semblance of normality. Something to look forward to.

Dancers and musicians working digitally in care homes have suddenly developed new skills in creating short films using sound, music, movement of light, dance, clowning, spoken word and painting. Films often inspired by older participants living with dementia and their own unique ways of communicating and connecting. Artists are thinking more deeply in person-centred ways.

Musicians curating telephone singing groups speak of the increase in confidence and quality of performance when people sing to their friends down a telephone line. Powerful reflective group conversations provoked by the music have started to emerge.

The amount of time and energy that has had to be invested in establishing a new ordinary has been significant and we have valued the increased commitment of existing and new funders to enable us to maintain and expand the number of people benefiting from our programmes.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

The creative learning from the time of lockdown has been immense. Creative ageing now has an opportunity to become much more flexible, (even) more imaginative and inclusive. The new skill sets and technological adaptations will have the power to forge new intergenerational opportunities between sixty-year olds and ninety-year olds. Real (non-socially distanced) practice will be able to symbiotically connect with digitally remote ways of working.

The age of Covid-19 has demonstrated that it can be possible for people to live out their days as creatively engaged citizens no matter what the circumstances of their lives. Whether they live home alone, with family, or in a residential care home, there is the ability to connect and create. To be recognized and valued. To be a contributing member of society.

Equal Arts

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Equal Arts has been delivering cross-artform creative ageing activities since 1985, working with vulnerable older people in care settings as well as independent living, older people involved with age friendly activities in cultural venues, and across communities. Our flagship project *HenPower* attracts significant media attention and has increased our delivery footprint across the UK and overseas. Using a Relationship Centred Care approach, *HenPower* involves older people, care staff, families, school children and wider stakeholders in cross-generational creative programmes stimulated by the daily routines of looking after hens. Our support of cultural venues, improving their age-friendly offer, involves venues such as Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Baltic CCA, The ARC, National Glass Centre, Northern Print, Lakeland Arts Trust, The Bowes Museum, Oriental Museum and The Hatton Gallery. Our support with user-led groups sees over 60 self-led organisations delivering creative ageing programmes valued at over £500,000 annually.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

By the end of March, our creative ageing programmes came abruptly to an end. Care homes were restricting visitors and cultural and community venues were closing their doors. As a staff team, we were all now homeworking.

Initially, we trialled live streamed creative activities through Zoom. However, within a very short time the situation in care homes had significantly escalated. Care staff no longer had a moment spare and were no longer able to deliver 'quality of life' activities. Supporting resident engagement in live-streamed video activity wasn't a priority and was no longer a viable option.

We contacted as many independent living older people as possible with phone calls and began formalising this process as the 'Art-2-Art' phone 'befriending' service which encouraged creative activities. In conjunction, we set up 'Create at Home' activity packs which were posted each month as over 80% of participants didn't have access to the internet.

However, many of the older people continued to talk of 'desperate loneliness', 'desolation' and expressed real anxiety 'especially on an evening, [when] anxiety became real fear'.

“ Singing food deliveries were creative and aimed to brighten people's days. ”

We opted to start delivering food supplies with a difference. Singing food deliveries were creative and aimed to brighten people's days. This was trialled at Wood Green and tenants were delighted to see familiar faces and enjoy singing from a safe distance. Other visits were scheduled to sheltered housing schemes and Shadon House Dementia Care centre. Service Manager Keith Hogan said:

“ In 20 years managing this service I've never witnessed any activity have such a positive impact, such a morale boost for staff and joy for residents. ”

More sessions were delivered with dementia care homes and 'The Singing Hinnies' were covered on local TV, radio and newspapers.



The *Singing Hinnies*, courtesy of Equal Arts

There was a rush of enquiries from relatives concerned about their parents and could The Singing Hinnies make a visit? One daughter said:

“Me dad’s got bi-polar and me mam has Alzheimer’s, I really don’t think they’re coping, I’m really worried.”

The Singing Hinnies delivered Garden Gigs and Singing for your Street visits and she wrote back:

“Me dad loved it, he’s never stopped talking and me mam sings the songs down the phone. I love that they’ve got a weekly visit which cheers them up and keeps them going.”

Whilst the warm weather allows we’re delivering Singing Hinnies sessions five days a week across Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, County Durham and Darlington and responding to enquiries in London and the South East.

Impact

The positive response to The Singing Hinnies demonstrated that outdoor safe, socially distanced activities can be delivered and a number of other artforms have been trialled with gardening as well as a variety of arts and crafts activities.

It is very evident that care staff and care home managers we are working with have experienced extremely difficult circumstances with a significant loss of life amongst residents they care for. In consultation with care home managers we’re delivering Bereavement & Loss management courses via Zoom facilitated by trained Psychology professionals. These sessions will be followed up with practical creative activities developing transition and celebratory artworks in order to remember and celebrate the lives of residents who have died.

Not surprisingly, the NHS reported increased use in antipsychotic medication which had significantly diminished over the last decade or so. It is equally sad to hear how care staff and managers feel betrayed and angry amidst a background of the poorly considered hospital discharge plans.

The Bereavement & Loss training has also been made available to 15 artists as they will need to feel confident in supporting care staff, residents and their relatives in creating transitional artworks which give a semblance of meaning to their experience of the last four months.

Almost surprisingly we’re now seeing care homes as well as culture and community venues planning activities in safe distanced and small group activities within indoor and outdoor spaces.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

Ensuring high-quality creative and meaningful activities are delivered throughout the winter months and into 2021 will need flexibility in delivery and planning. We are keen to support care homes and care staff increase their confidence, skills and technical ability to benefit from digital activities including live streamed creative sessions. There is still a huge gulf in the ability of the sector to access digital resources compared to many other organisations. The huge reliance on the internet by society during the pandemic has led to people viewing it as a fourth utility, something they have a right to access.

“There is still a huge gulf in the ability of the [care] sector to access digital resources compared to many other organisations.”

We all want and need human contact but equally we know that increasing our ability to access digital resources will offer the sector and older people with more opportunities and support a fair and equal recovery.

Flourishing Lives

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Flourishing Lives is a London-wide coalition of arts, health and wellbeing organisations taking a creative approach to supporting richer, more independent lives for people over the age of 55. We combat social isolation amongst older people by promoting community, expression and engagement through the arts.

We connect creative practitioners, day centres, arts organisations, health initiatives and community groups so that knowledge, research and resources can be shared. We offer a variety of workshops, trainings, showcase arts events, support groups and inclusion programmes to help galvanize organisational collaboration, communication and resilience across the arts and wellbeing sectors.

We have developed the coalition over the past four years with the kind support of City Bridge Trust and the Mercers' Company, and we currently have 387 member organisations. We were invited to represent the UK at the inaugural 'High-Level Forum on the Silver Economy' in Helsinki in 2019, convened by the Finnish government and the Global Coalition on Aging for government and business leaders.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

Given the vulnerable older client group that we support and the pressures facing the frontline service providers and creative practitioners that we work with, we have quickly adapted our activities in response to Covid-19 to ensure that our coalition framework of support remains in place and addresses the needs of socially isolated older people.

During lockdown, we have delivered our full programme either online or via phone/mail:

- we have delivered 15 online Reflective Practice Group sessions, providing creative practitioners and service providers with access to trained counsellors and a vital opportunity for peer support;
- we have partnered with the Race Equality Foundation and HEAR Network to deliver two online diversity and inclusion roundtables focusing on strengthening BAME inclusion in arts and wellbeing services across London;
- we partnered with Hackney Shed on an intergenerational pen pal project, connecting their younger participants by post with older residents in Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea on a joint storytelling project;
- we also partnered with the East Side Institute – a US-based educational research centre – to deliver online workshops offering creative exercises to change perceptions around ageing, memory loss and dementia;
- we have also worked alongside the Claremont Project team to provide direct support for its c. 850 older members through befriending phone calls.

The depth and breadth of knowledge, support and connection across the Flourishing Lives coalition has allowed our network to quickly adapt and continue to support socially-isolated older people across London during this challenging time.

Responding to Covid-19 has highlighted the need for programming to consider on and offline provision to prevent further isolation of the following two groups: firstly, people who either physically or financially (or for other personal reasons) cannot attend activities and so hugely benefit from an online offer, as is evidenced by new audiences.

The other group is people who have either always been digitally excluded or are newly excluded because of spaces like libraries closing, which for many people is their only way of getting online. Offering both options is key to inclusive practice.

“The other group is people who have either always been digitally excluded or are newly excluded because of spaces like libraries closing.”

Another learning has been realising the sheer potential of international partnerships and the impact that bringing together thought leaders from across the world can have. Our collaboration with the East Side Institute in New York – which led to the co-design of online workshops defying stereotypes around ageing and memory loss – not only created a space to share best practice internationally but also challenged how isolating the disease can be. Attendees reported that being part of a world-wide conversation left them with a profound sense of connection and community.

Finally, we have learnt about the amazing commitment and ingenuity of creative practitioners to adapt their working practices, but as the distinction between work and home life blurs further still, supporting their wellbeing is essential. Feedback from our online Reflective Practice Groups has stressed how vital the sessions have been for their mental health and the resilience of their work with older people where the impact of Covid-19 has been particularly traumatic.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

As lockdown is eased, there is concern that the effects of Covid-19 are at risk of compounding the sense of loneliness experienced by socially-isolated older people, with many still shielding, or wary of engaging in the public realm. We have rapidly mobilised as a coalition to mitigate this increased risk, offering on and offline opportunities for social connection, intellectual stimulation, and emotional support.

In the longer term, we feel that more coordinated work needs to be done on a government policy level to combat the digital inequality that many older people face, both through increased access to devices, and also through digital skills training. It is also vital that funders continue to support networks such as ours to bolster resilience across the sector, and help support richer, more socially-connected and aspirational lives for older people.

Independent Arts

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Independent Arts (IA) on the Isle of Wight has offered activities to improve health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation since 1987. We work with a talented group of freelance artist practitioners to offer workshops in care homes and community settings. Our work covers everything from the applied arts to music and dance and everything in between. *SingAbout* is an award-winning singing for wellbeing project, now in its ninth year, with over 300 people across the Island taking part before lockdown. The groups are popular due to their inclusive nature, welcoming anyone who wants to sing. *Time & Tide*, our Celebrating Age project, works on interpreting Island history through various artistic mediums. Workshops were held in sheltered accommodation schemes, care home and libraries, with work exhibited at Dimbola, Isle of Wight College and our People's Gallery.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

When lockdown began the main focus for us was to reach those who needed us and to look at an alternative way of delivering sessions. Within a week of lockdown our *SingAbout* sessions had moved to the online platform Zoom and we have been running weekly meetings where we could offer an element of the familiar in a time that was anything but.

Our Grants Officer began to apply for funding to support these sessions and our practitioners through the changes that Covid-19 restrictions brought.

We began to work with our practitioners to produce a varied programme of creative workshops posted to our YouTube channel. These sessions include versions of our community groups and several playlists aimed at care home audiences.

To create a non-digital project, we repurposed our school ties project, creating 240 art bags (containing art materials, postcards, colouring book) delivered to schools, care homes and supported accommodation. As part of the project participants are encouraged to write postcards to each other to stay in touch:

“ ‘O’ loves children, and was so emotional to receive a card from one of the children just for her. She cried when we gave this to her, these were tears of complete joy. A feeling that is hard to achieve at times. ”

Resident, Cornelia Manor care home.

As lockdown has eased, we have also begun delivering ‘curbside’, running sessions outside windows, in car parks and in gardens. Bringing creativity back but in a safe manner.

An Arts Council England grant has allowed us to run *The Festival of Islesolation*,¹⁸ with its own online gallery space, which includes work from people of all ages across the Island. It has been a joy to exhibit such a broad range of work describing people’s experiences of lockdown. This includes work from care homes and participants from our community projects as well as the general public.

We have delivered digital and paper copies of our newsletter to keep in touch with as many people as possible during this time. Our community connector has made welfare calls and helped support those who needed a listening ear. She has also helped people get on Zoom and YouTube to enjoy our workshops.

The main issues with delivery during lockdown have been learning and becoming confident with the technology both for us and practitioners. Before this all our delivery was face to face. Some of our practitioners have been more comfortable than others with this



Together Apart by Samphire dancers, The Festival of Islesolation, courtesy of Independent Arts.

new way of working and some have chosen not to be involved. There has been no pressure from us to be involved and we have continued to support our practitioners as much as possible.

Our participants in the community have enjoyed being able to take part in more of our projects and they have found things more accessible. Others have really struggled with loneliness as they don't have internet connections and have lost their usual groups. We have tried to keep in telephone contact with as many as we can and link them to other participants.

Care homes have been busy and with many participants being confined to rooms and out of communal areas. Some homes found it hard to access the YouTube workshops, but they have also been a real lifeline and provided a sense of normality in lockdown. We estimate that we are currently reaching 50% of our care homes via our YouTube provision, with approximately 300 beneficiaries regularly viewing the content

We have all had to adapt quickly and our main focus was to ensure that our workshops and sessions online were as professional, high quality and meaningful as those we deliver face to face. It took us a while to strike the right balance, but we feel it was worth spending that extra time to get it right.

Our focus for the future will be to continue to offer a mixture of sessions, keeping some online work but also hoping to return to working face to face as restrictions allow.

As workshops in care homes were a major income stream for Independent Arts, there is of course concern for our future financial stability but we hope the charity can continue to adapt and change in order to survive and remain relevant in the future.

Where we have lost face-to-face work, we have been able to open our groups and workshops to a whole new audience. *SingAbout* participants zoom in from as far away as East Lancashire and people in New Zealand are enjoying our poetry.

Leeds Playhouse

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

Leeds Playhouse is a cultural hub, where people engage in world-class theatre and creative engagement projects. Leeds Playhouse has been at the forefront of creative ageing since 1990, when *Heydays*, its flagship creative arts programme for over 55s, began. Thirty years later *Heydays* continues to thrive and has produced numerous off-shoot programmes including *Feeling Good Theatre Company*, a company of older performers creating shows exploring issues of ageing, and a collaborative partnership with *The Performance Ensemble* to produce work led by older artists including 2016's *Anniversary*.

Since 2010, the Playhouse has developed pioneering creative programmes for, with and by people living with dementia, including the world's first dementia-friendly performance and subsequent guidance for the theatre industry. *Every Third Minute* (2018) – a ground-breaking festival of theatre, dementia and hope – was curated by people living with dementia. In March 2020, a play carefully created over three years with the input of people living with dementia – *Maggie May* by Frances Poet – opened for just three performances before government advice forced its early closure.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

We paused activity as soon as it felt unsafe to meet, entering a 'holding' phase which focused on supporting existing participants who rely on Leeds Playhouse for their social contact.

We swiftly learned about using Zoom and conducted an audit of participants' access to devices and data in our dementia-related projects. We offered multiple test sessions to coach individuals to use the best methods for them – phone, video call, smartphone, laptop, PC – whilst simultaneously establishing with artists activities that could connect, while

feeling achievable, safe and fun. In early lockdown seeing another human face was a priority – even if the sound didn't work – for many who live alone, but with perseverance we found loans of devices where needed and managed to meaningfully connect all our regular attendees. Weekly sessions with people with dementia have continued throughout lockdown and beyond and we have welcomed newcomers during this time.

We dealt with the immediate disappointment of the cancellation of *Maggie May* by hosting a virtual gathering on Zoom, where the creatives and cast could celebrate and commiserate with our consultants affected by dementia. It felt important to mark this occasion in a timely manner as so much energy had been invested, and we were aware that by the time the show may be restaged its immediate relevance may have faded or disappeared for some contributors with dementia.

We telephoned each of our 250+ *Heydays* members to assess the level of support they required, categorising their need for an urgent referral to a partner agency for food or health-related support, or a welfare check via a phone call on either a weekly or fortnightly basis from a friendly, regular caller. All *Heydays* members were sent a package of at-home creative activities within a week of lockdown. For those with online access, a Facebook group was established and run by members to maintain regular connection. A fortnightly e-newsletter (with printed copies sent to people without digital access) included creative stimuli such as writing haiku poetry or photographing an object and receiving a poem or photo in return to complete an exchange. *Heydays* sessions via Zoom now connect participants with artists, using breakout rooms for activities such as creative writing and visual arts. The earlier forms of contact via phone, post and email continue, with telephone calls made by a team of staff and volunteers.



Leeds Playhouse *Our Time* participant, Pauline, with her daughter Jo. Photo by Jo Lee.

Existing professional partnerships have been solidified, enabling us to reach care home residents with co-ordinated activity packs, make referrals and access equipment whilst supporting partners to reach participants and share our learning around digital delivery.

Impact

The digital divide was incredibly apparent at the start of lockdown. Assisting people to use various methods to engage in remote activity took tremendous effort, time, perseverance and patience. Overnight artists had to learn new ways of working, adapting everything we would normally offer to be accessible and enjoyable in a totally different format.

We all (artists and participants) experienced frustration and exhaustion with technology whilst also dealing with the fear and loneliness of the situation itself. Successful moments of togetherness became genuine celebrations.

“I feel like someone does care.”

Our Time participant

Shorter sessions allowed for the fatigue of using the screen; however preparation time dramatically increased as personalised coaching and trial sessions were vital whilst learning to use new formats safely and accessibly.

“This has given me a reason to wash my hair.”

Our Time participant

Some participants with dementia experienced confusion about the use of a screen for communication and relatives needed to support their partner in different ways. We desperately miss the power of touch and the subtle, focused encouragement we can offer in person. Social embarrassment could be amplified by the bright yellow frame of Zoom, whilst other expressions or behaviours which may have felt exposing in person were reduced by the comfort of being at home. The stresses of getting ready and journeys to a physical meeting point were reduced. Participants have generously offered aspects of their home lives to influence session content, such as inspiring *Our Time* participants in the creation of pom-poms led by Jo and her mum, Pauline (photographed, p43).

Dealing with grief and loss remotely has been a particular challenge. Inevitably we have experienced the illness and death of participants and have found the absence of the usual rituals of comforting each other and sharing grief difficult to replace. We have not solved this but we are determined to find a way to mark the important lives lost at a point when we can be together.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

Participants long to return to the Playhouse and trust us to ensure their safety while they take part in sessions, but many rely on public transport and are anxious about having to mix with others who may not be as careful. There is a feeling that much of society has returned to normal, whilst for many of our participants the need to shield, protect a loved one and stay separate is keenly felt. We have conquered aspects of the digital divide, found ways to connect at distance, and will continue to do so until we feel safe to return to in-person activity.

“The creative ageing sector will need to explore and address the divides and inequalities experienced, to challenge how older people were treated in Covid-19 policy and practice and to amplify ways to embrace creative, adventurous opportunities in later life.”

National Theatre of Scotland

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

National Theatre of Scotland is a theatre without walls: we create theatre for traditional theatres as well as unconventional spaces as well as develop unique collaborative projects with communities across Scotland.

We started creating work in 2006 for audiences of all ages, across Scotland, the UK and internationally.

Our Artistic Director Jackie Wylie met the Melbourne-based team at *All The Queens Men* in 2018. Inspired by their work with LGBTI+ elders, we wanted to bring their concept to Scotland. We wanted to thank our older LGBTI+ community for the decades of campaigning they have done and to celebrate them.

We launched fortnightly social dance clubs in May 2019 where people come together freely for dancing, fun and friendship and a team of LGBTI+ artists ran regular dance clubs in Scottish towns and cities. Our aim, before Covid-19, was to bring all these people together for the 'Coming Back Out Ball' in June 2020.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

We were able to respond quickly. We knew the vast majority of our dance club members were online so we moved the clubs to a digital platform where we could keep connections alive. It was incredibly important to maintain our relationship with the members – we didn't want these connections to break.

We had to move swiftly in testing this model of working to ensure our digital platform was a safe, secure and welcoming space for our older people whilst at the same time ensuring the creation of the new online dance clubs fulfilled their creative purpose and standard of delivery. They had to be inclusive and great fun!

We reworked our creative practice to give room for voices to continue to be heard. A section of the online dance clubs is dedicated to members selecting a music track to be played and that person telling us why the track means so much to them and the story attached to this.

We also wanted to give room for people to dance in their homes or to sit back and relax and continue to feel welcomed. We know – in real life – some people want to dance and some rather watch so we had to replicate that online.

We are currently trialling online after-party events on a suggestion from one of our members as well as adding other member-led activities such as cookery classes and origami making.

We have extended our project by 12 months in light of the current pandemic to allow the project to culminate in *The Coming Back Out Ball*, now taking place in June 2021.

Impact

We have learnt that whilst a digital platform is an opportunity for growth (we are welcoming LGBTI elders from England, Wales, Canada, Germany and Australia), it doesn't reach all our original members.

To help, we are offering training and equipment to members of our LGBTI+ community who wouldn't normally use online platforms and we are currently seeking other opportunities.

We have contributed an activity to a pack created by Luminare, Scotland's Creative Ageing Agency, and Vintage Vibes in Edinburgh, and this will go to isolated elders in Edinburgh as well as our LGBT Elders who are not engaging with us currently.

We are also looking at postcard exchanges.



Social dance club in Glasgow pre-lockdown. Photo courtesy of the National Theatre of Scotland.

Our practitioners have been brilliant at adapting to the situation. They have been decorating their houses and dressing up for the occasion in order to maintain the party spirit we create at our live dance clubs. It is a very different challenge to lead events online and practitioners and participants have been incredible.

“I feel the best I’ve been since lockdown started. More like my naturally positive self. All the cells in my body have danced... and this feeling is sooooo good!!!”

Carrie, member

“It was a strange and wondrous occasion and we all I am sure realise the significance of the evening. It was too much like magic in the past to expect such things to happen, and indeed was an historic moment in Scottish LGBT^{QI}+ social history.”

David, member

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

We will continue with our Social Dance Clubs online for the foreseeable future and will consider returning to live real clubs when circumstances allow and when our older members have the appetite and desire to meet.

We continue to seek out new ways to stay connected with our dance club members and listen to what works and what does not work.

We are extending the project by another twelve months, fully funded by the National Theatre of Scotland. We have not secured funding for the project, despite best efforts. Our team will look again but there is a challenge as this is activity which has already happened.

We will continue the work of the social dance clubs because we’re committed to the group and we have found it to be a hugely enjoyable and moving project.

Our longer exit out of the project will hopefully give us more time to develop a longer-term strategy and legacy model that allows the project to continue without the fully funded support of National Theatre of Scotland.

Northern Ireland War Memorial

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

The Northern Ireland War Memorial is an accredited museum in Belfast which tells the story of the home front in Northern Ireland during the Second World War.

The museum offers a range of engaging workshops for older people including reminiscence, object handling, craft and 1940s cookery demonstrations. Working in partnership with a music therapist, Karen Diamond, we host a monthly singing and reminiscence workshop called *Sing for Victory* which focuses on songs from the 1940s. All programmes are designed to be multi-sensory and fun while having a strong focus on encouraging wellbeing for older people.

We take part in Belfast City Council's Positive Ageing Month every year by hosting an event. In recent years we have offered singing, reminiscence, craft, cookery and spoken word performances.

The museum is registered as working to become a dementia-friendly venue with the support of the Alzheimer's Society, and we have been offering dementia-friendly experiences



Reminiscence box, Northern Ireland War Memorial.

for audiences since 2014. In 2019, we created a free reminiscence loan box for activity therapists and community group leaders which contains objects relating to life during the Second World War, allowing the resource to be used to stimulate conversations with people living with dementia.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

At the beginning of lockdown the Northern Ireland War Memorial had to start thinking creatively about ways to continue engaging with its older audiences.

One of our first initiatives was to create a free singalong CD of 1940s songs based on our dementia-friendly singing and reminiscence workshops. We produced a songbook to accompany the CD along with some suggested exercises taken from *Love to Move*, a British Gymnastics Foundation seated exercise programme for older people. We then posted this resource out to care homes across Northern Ireland as a way to raise spirits and encourage staff and residents during lockdown.

Another initiative we undertook was to develop virtual versions of our workshops for care homes. Using Zoom, we employed objects from our handling collection, PowerPoint presentations and music to stimulate conversations and reminiscence with groups of care home residents.

“We have received the CD and our residents love it. In fact they are doing their daily exercises to the music today. Thank you so much for this kind gesture.”

Care home staff member



A Love to Move session pre-lockdown. Photo courtesy of Northern Ireland War Memorial.

Music has been particularly important for the success of our virtual singing and reminiscence workshops, with a music therapist playing live piano to accompany the participants' singing. We organised one of these workshops with a care home for the 75th anniversary of VE Day in May 2020. The museum also created a YouTube video incorporating recorded memories of VE Day from our oral history collection, wartime songs and newspaper images to commemorate the anniversary.

In May 2020 we received a Dementia Friendly Museums grant from the Northern Ireland Museums Council to enable us to deliver a digital pilot of the *Love to Move* programme, partnering with a Belfast care home and Sport NI to create six weekly workshops incorporating movement, music and reminiscence. This built upon an earlier face-to-face version of the programme we ran in January-February 2020, and the workshops proved to be a valuable addition to our online outreach during lockdown.

Impact

All our lockdown initiatives have been well received, particularly by care homes who have understandably faced huge challenges regarding their residents' health and wellbeing during lockdown. Feedback from care home staff included the following comments:

“ Thank you so much for hosting these sessions. They came just when needed – with the isolation of lockdown, the residents really needed something else to think/talk about. We would definitely love to do this again. ”

“ That was great this afternoon! The residents were saying how pleased they were that they came as they were a bit apprehensive about the whole idea of ‘video chats’. ”

The main challenges we found in trying to develop our lockdown programming have been largely related to digital poverty or technology. We contacted a number of care homes and supporting living facilities to offer our virtual workshops and, despite interest from staff, the lack of Wi-Fi or access to the necessary equipment meant that we had limited uptake from those we contacted. We have also found that sometimes the sound quality means it can be difficult to fully engage with participants using Zoom, while the size of a group and their position in front of a screen, mean that the details of reminiscence presentations can be lost.

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

Despite the challenges, we are pleased with the quality of the engagement we continue to have with older people during this uncertain period.

Due to demand, we have produced a second batch of our singalong CDs and we continue to post these out for older people to enjoy.

We continue to run our virtual workshops and there remains a steady appetite for digital engagement amongst care homes.

The Northern Ireland Museums Council has agreed to fund a second dementia-friendly online programme called *Memories, Movement and Museums* and we look forward to partnering with the same care home in Belfast from the earlier pilot. The project will now include training based on the exercises and reminiscence for the care home staff as well as funding to put together a Covid-secure loan box, ensuring a more multisensory and blended experience for the participants.

The Northern Ireland War Memorial reopened to the public in September 2020, allowing people to safely visit the museum. We look forward to offering face-to-face workshops for older people again whenever it is safe to do so and, in the meantime, remain committed to finding creative ways to keeping connecting with our older visitors.

The Whitworth

BEFORE LOCKDOWN

The Whitworth, part of the University of Manchester, founded in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth, was done so with one aim: that it act for the “the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester”.

It is that aim, in all its educational, cultural and inspirational forms, that creates an unbroken thread between The Whitworth then and The Whitworth now.

The Age Friendly Whitworth programme at the gallery was developed in 2009 with the implementation of a City-wide Cultural Offer for older people across Manchester. Our Age Friendly programme cuts across all our work including workshops, research, talks, exhibitions and collections.

Over the last eleven years we have delivered a wide range of Age Friendly projects with thousands of older people. During the closure of the gallery for redevelopment in 2013-15, we developed a project with a local care facility when we worked with older men and this culminated in an exhibition in the new gallery for the reopening.

Since reopening we have developed a regular core programme around a weekly craft session, *Handmade*.

RESPONSE TO LOCKDOWN

One of the first things we did in response to the lockdown was to find new ways to keep in touch with the regulars who attend the *Handmade* sessions. We set up video calls, social media channels and following conversations a new WhatsApp group for our regulars.

We also felt that it was important to keep our *Handmade* sessions going online, though with restricted budgets, these social sessions were delivered by our Age Friendly Coordinator rather than our regular freelance artists. The project relaunched as #handmadeathome and sessions ran live over Zoom.

Online sessions ran every Friday afternoon until July. After each session we put together a workshop instruction sheet that then went on the Age Friendly Whitworth Facebook page and was linked to the Whitworth’s social media. This enabled the activity to be shared with a wider audience beyond those that attended the Zoom sessions and although we can’t be sure how many people followed the worksheets, we do know that after those posts the numbers visiting the page increased dramatically.

The #handmadeathome group also responded to Black Lives Matter through discussions as well as artwork to share online. The group have also help make podcasts, joined other online meetings and worked on plans for developing future projects such as the Menopause Musings and the Men in Sheds.

“It was also really good that people were welcome to chat and not participate in the art activities. We also had a couple of zoom sessions where we just chatted and supported each other -that worked really well too. THANK YOU so much for the sessions! ”

Marcia, *Handmade at Home* participant



A Handmade at Home session on Zoom. Photo courtesy of The Whitworth.

Impact

The lockdown period has made us think differently about how we work with and engage older people, especially in participatory activities. At the start of the lockdown there was a concern that older people would struggle with the technology and it would exclude some people from engaging. Whilst it is the case that not everyone (no matter what age) has access to either laptops or internet, it is also the case that lots of older people over 60 are in fact very comfortable with using and trying new technology.

One of our regular participants had recently stopped coming to the weekly sessions in the gallery as their physical ill health prevented them from getting there and the online sessions have enabled them to participate again. Another concern was the accessibility of materials for participating and we were aware that not everyone would have a ready supply of equipment and resources. The solution for this was to come up with workshop ideas that used readily available materials, such as making a loom from cardboard and using scraps of material, string, wool etc to make a weaving.

The *Handmade* sessions are already firmly established as a regular Friday afternoon two-hour slot so we decided to keep to that framework as people were used to it. The main

difficulty was not having the financial resources to continue the usual pattern of employing freelance artists to deliver the weekly sessions but fortunately we had the skills internally to be able to deliver as staff on the engagement team were working throughout the lockdown.

“I have found our Zoom meetings to be so beneficial. It has allowed us to continue to be creative at home but in a group, using the sort of materials we have at home, or are easily accessible from local shops. An additional and really important aspect of Zoom, particularly for those of us who live alone, is that it has reduced isolation. This was particularly important during the early days of lockdown when it wasn't possible to meet with anyone outside of your own household. I also feel that we've got to know each other better.”

Nuala, Handmade at Home participant

“Because we’ve almost become like a large family, I miss face the face interaction, the chats and the laughs. The Friday sessions on Zoom is a great idea as the creativity hasn’t come to an end. I enjoyed teaching the bunting session for unityarts as it got me back into being productive and leading a workshop.”

Handmade artist

“Financially it has been a struggle too the last two months as I am not able to teach most my students. I’m grateful for whatever work I’ve been offered. From the Handmade WhatsApp group, I’ve been able to see everyone’s creativity, seen new ideas and made a bag from a T shirt on one of the Zoom handmade sessions... That was enjoyable. I look forward to art galleries opening again.”

Aysha, Handmade artist

BEYOND LOCKDOWN

As the lockdown eases and we are able to get back into the gallery and offer workshops, we intend to do that in a different way. We will continue to deliver the regular sessions alongside adding in the facility to include additional participants online.

The core group that has attended the online sessions during lockdown is already developing into what could be classed as volunteers and they will be supported to deliver sessions and create events as well as providing advice on ideas for new projects and funding.

Pause

CITY ARTS COMMISSIONED POET PANJA BANJOKO TO CREATE THIS COLLECTIVE POEM FOR NOTTINGHAM CALLED 'PAUSE'. MANY OF THE 93 CONTRIBUTIONS CAME FROM OLDER PEOPLE.



When the world paused, to greedily breathe in hope,
I catch myself standing by the window
leaning into solitude.
We are wet clay among the chaos.

Behind a locked door, my life is
a stretch to breathe reflect and hope
while May winds storm the hawthorn hedges.
the pendulum swings, rising and falling.

And we are so small from this forced stillness.
Thoughts travellin' tirelessly, turning to face a cloudless sky
standing still in time, mindful, loving and true,
fixed in a windowpane, hearing nature's sigh.

We face it all, the sick, the lonely,
debt, fear, apathy, the caw of funeral crows,
broken and fallen apart, the cracks start to appear.
Thing aren't always as they seem, if only we hear.

Birds, bluebells, the beat of your heart,
examine them closely. I do not crave an ending
at a time like this, beyond the laps of the lawn,
beyond your own barriers to feel vexed
rushing everywhere, halfway home.

I breathe deeply; my madness hard
remember those who are no longer
with the present, stilled by the unthinkable.

Has life been kind beneath azure skies?
Starlings take flight, bathed in summer sun,
linger a while, hold that note, so we can see
our truth and watch the lilacs bloom.

When I let go, look up and around,
finally grasp this fragile planet
through innocence renewed, pause, to smell hyacinths
to stop and breathe, drift away from all hurt,

I can see a new paradigm,
winged, free, youthful, quiet moments a plenty,
birdsongs divine. What will happen next?
It is quite true to say we make history

breathing in and out the possibilities of tomorrow
hanging in the air. Don't mourn for me with an old blue hum,
feel this city for a moment and capture every blue spring sky.
When time is served, life on hold, absorbing the wonder,

these moments may not happen again,
faces on screens mapped in history.
Step backwards to calm, we are all in this together
to recall and enjoy white tailed bumblebees.

For all these days and more, normal life is gone
and yet we reign, mind at ease, still, and grateful.



Beyond lockdown

ADAPTING TO AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

NEITHER LOCKDOWN NOR 'NORMALITY'

Writing in September 2020 at a time dominated by social distancing, the most stringent restrictions of the Spring are no longer in force but nor have we returned to life before lockdown in terms of social interaction, especially for vulnerable older people. When that will happen is entirely opaque. The new approach to creative ageing through working remotely is still the prime way of working, with few examples of say, artists going into care homes and using social distancing. This transformation has now been in operation for six months with no end in sight. One of the respondents to our survey commented that the chief challenge now is keeping up morale and motivation.

The creative ageing sector entered the pandemic with skills, resources and relationships, often developed over decades. It needed to very quickly adapt to a totally changed reality. The success of the sector will lie in a continued ability to adapt.

FUNDING FEARS

Over 90% of the respondents to our survey are more worried about the financial viability of their organisations.

One of the shifts that has happened over the last ten years is that more larger, 'mainstream' arts organisations are delivering creative ageing projects. Despite the Government's funding intervention for the arts and the valiant work of the four national arts councils, arts organisations that are dependent on ticket revenue, especially those with performance venues like theatres, are facing immense challenges in keeping afloat as we endure a period of social distancing with no clear end date. And arts organisations that have relied more on grant income from funders

are highly aware that those same funders are puzzling how to make up for that shortfall in ticket revenue for other organisations. Freelance artists upon whom many creative ageing arts programmes depend have been having an even tougher time than the rest of the sector.

Another part of this issue is that so little support has come from health funding, despite the health benefits of creative ageing. Funding has tended to come almost always from arts funders or more generalist funders such as the National Lottery. This needs to change.

Also it has been rare for social care organisations, which for many years have been experiencing deep financial insecurities, to have been able to contribute to the fees of arts organisations providing creative sessions. The Government has stated that it will reform the social care sector to make it viable. If this happened there may be more capacity for funding from this source.

The Government has also committed itself to funding work to diminish the scourge of loneliness in society, undoubtedly made worse by the lockdown and again, this funding needs to recognise the positive impact of creative ageing.

DIVERSITY... AND INEQUALITY

Older people are as gloriously diverse as the rest of the population in every possible respect. The creative ageing sector is seeking to celebrate that as discussed in our publication *On Diversity and Creative Ageing*. Case studies in this report by the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art and the National Theatre of Scotland give examples of activities targeting specific communities and other case studies are seeking to be inclusive.

But we know from previous research the challenges here. For instance, research that we supported (*Arts and Dementia in the UK South Asian Diaspora*, 2019) has indicated some of the reasons for lower engagement by some older South Asian people, and it is well known that men tend to be more socially isolated and also less involved in creative ageing. The pandemic has raised new questions about our deeply unequal and fragmented society such as the higher risk of infection for members of the BAME community.

Contributors to this report also noted that more marginalised groups of older people, whether particular communities, the very old, or those in ill-health, may have become more isolated during the pandemic. Flourishing Lives cite the need to be aware that some people may have become newly digitally excluded, through for example, the closure of libraries. Therefore, it is important that thought is given to the diversity implications of this remote way of working. We have already discussed the digital divide. How can this new blended way of working be made as inclusive as possible?

“It is of great concern to us that the more marginalised participants that we work with are even more isolated and not able to participate in community life at the moment.”

City Arts

WE NEED A NEW KIND OF TOGETHERNESS

Artists and older participants will often talk about the togetherness that comes from creating art. This can be the most important aspect of the work as recognised in our 2012 report with the Campaign to End Loneliness – *Tackling loneliness in old age: The role of the arts*. This has almost always come from being in a room together. Indeed, Nicky Taylor emphasises in her case study on Leeds Playhouse (see page 42) how tactile creative ageing with people with dementia often is. So, for a while that togetherness, for creativity in care homes at least, is going to mainly come either from care workers and friends and family bringing the arts into residents lives or via a different form of connection to an artist who can't literally be in the room.

“... It is not easy to replicate gentle the touch of a hand over a hand supporting someone holding a paint brush to paint a flower and in many cases it is not possible for many staff in care homes who are so busy (especially during the current crisis) to take the time with each individual to help them join in an art project.”

This is something we workshop leaders are trained for in ‘normal’ face-to-face workshops – we have the time to sit with someone for a few minutes, explain to them the project, show them photos of beautiful flowers, chat to them about colours while reminiscing about their garden or flowers they loved.

We had the time to gently hold the card closer to the individual with dementia so that they could see the shape, and wait as they considered what colour they may like to use and where to put their first bold brush stroke. And we have the time to go back and sit with them at the end of a session and show them their piece of art and the beautiful joint art project that has been created.

This is something that is so important – a connection and acknowledgment with individuals, an understanding, a shared goal of enjoyment in creating in whatever form, with less focus on the end product and more on the moment. And I think this face-to-face creative human interaction can't and shouldn't be replaced and hopefully will therefore return and thrive once more in the near future.”

Survey respondent

THE FUTURE IS BLENDED

It has already been shown that the answer to remote creative ageing is not online only interventions, given not least the significance of the digital divide. A very strong majority (90%) of the organisations that we surveyed felt that they would be running a blended mixture of face-to-face and remote provision in the future (compared to 10% before lockdown).

Although the digital strand of work is cheap, non-digital resources such as individual activity packs come with a cost in time and money.

However, the arts organisations that we have researched have in almost all cases previously used face-to-face methods and long for the day when they can go back, say into a care home, and hold the hand of a resident and create a different level of connection.

Even so, once in-person sessions eventually become possible, it is likely that some of the elements of digital working will be retained, as well as the huge amount of content which has now been put online.

THE ROLE OF CARE WORKERS IN CREATIVE AGEING IS NOW EVEN MORE IMPORTANT

It has long been the case that professional arts organisations are only regularly involved with a small percentage of care homes. Therefore if there is to be a good creative offer this needs to be from other sources, especially provided by care home staff. There have been many training programmes and resources developed to help care homes staff in this in recent years. Among many examples is the National Arts in Care Homes Day run by NAPA (National Activity Providers Association). It is still uncertain the degree to which these free resources are being taken up by the majority of care homes. There needs to be both support for care homes but also an expectation by residents, families and care homes that creative ageing is essential and even more precious in the pandemic.

As social distancing looks set to be in place for a considerable while, even fewer care homes will feel able to welcome artists into their buildings. So, activity delivered by care workers naturally becomes the more essential.

REFINING WHAT WORKS

Understandably there has been relatively little evaluation so far regarding the effectiveness of remote working given how swift the change has been. One example is NAPA's evaluation of the intergenerational *After Party* project which is a new iteration of *Cocktails in Care Homes* run by Magic Me and The Elders at the Royal Exchange Manchester.

There is certainly a drive by artists to examine this new type of practice and this has been facilitated by a number of creative ageing networks. There also needs to be a commitment to continue to innovate and adapt. This should be evaluated by the research community and the results widely disseminated.

KEY WORKERS

The American artist Theaster Gates memorably replied when asked why the US Government should be funding the arts rather than essential services, '*But beauty is an essential service*'.

The power of creative ageing has been demonstrated during lockdown as never before, despite all its challenges. Most of our survey respondents (68%) felt that the value of creative ageing is now more generally recognised. We have all come to accept that we have depended on key or essential workers whether that is a nurse in an ICU, a care worker in a residential home, someone delivering a supermarket order or the refuse collection.

Artists providing creative ageing activities are also key workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FUNDERS

All funders have been under unprecedented pressure during the pandemic and this will remain the case for a long while. Even so, the significance of creative ageing in the crisis means they should prioritise this work.

ARTS ORGANISATIONS

The public and policy makers need to appreciate what vital work creative ageing is. Arts organisations must blow their own trumpet in the local and national media.

This has been a tough time for everyone including artists. Arts organisations need to display good practice on how best to support the wellbeing of artists working in creative ageing.

The end of social distancing is nowhere in sight and arts organisations need to continue to innovate and refine new ways of working for their own job satisfaction and for the benefit of older people. Particular attention needs to be paid to being as inclusive as possible.

“*But beauty is an essential service.*”

Theaster Gates

SECTOR SUPPORT BODIES AND CREATIVE AGEING NETWORKS

Age of Creativity, Flourishing Lives and Luminate in Scotland and others have been doing a great job in bringing practitioners together to reflect on their need to change practice and this will remain needed for some time.

RESEARCHERS

There is now a strong body of evidence around the benefits of creative ageing, much of which is based on face-to-face activity. More research is needed on what works best in working remotely and who is being neglected by this approach.

CARE HOMES

Care home staff are under great pressure but will be the main people in physical contact with residents during social distancing. Arts organisations and care home umbrella bodies need to redouble efforts to bring skills and resources to care workers to undertake this vital work.

Some care homes have begun to experiment with very controlled arrangements to bring artists back and on-site and the results of this should be disseminated.

Online resources

SELECTED ONLINE LOCKDOWN RESOURCES FOR CREATIVE AGEING

The **Age of Creativity** website has over a thousand members concerned with creative ageing and a range of resources.

www.ageofcreativity.co.uk

Age UK and 64 Million Artists produced this pack of 31 creative challenges designed to be a month of short, daily inspirations to try. Each of the challenges was created by a member of an Age UK community club, in partnership with a creative practitioner from 64 Million Artists.

www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/assets/pdfs/A0fC
Creative activity booklet A5 v3.pdf

The **Armchair App** from City Arts in Nottingham, now being developed with augmented reality features.

armchairgallery.co.uk

Arts in Care Homes (run by NAPA – National Activity Providers' Association) has a website funded by the Rayne Foundation and the Baring Foundation with a myriad of how-to guides and resources for care homes.

artsincarehomes.org.uk/howto-everydaycreativity

Live Music Now has a new series of pre-recorded performances suitable for care homes.

www.livemusicnow.org.uk/Imnathomecare

London Bubble, a participatory theatre company, produced a series of activities to do at home.

[www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/assets/pdfs/Tatita's rainbow e-booklet FINAL.pdf](http://www.ageofcreativity.co.uk/assets/pdfs/Tatita's%20rainbow%20e-booklet%20FINAL.pdf)

Luminate, the creative ageing development agency for Scotland, has a gallery of videos including from Luminate@Home, its new programme of online creative activities created during lockdown.

www.luminatescotland.org/video-gallery

Manchester Museum's Cultural First Aid Kit has creative & fun activities and workshop ideas for carers that can be completed at home.

www.mminquarantine.com/resources-for-carers

National Museums Liverpool has the dementia-friendly My House of Memories app which you can use to explore objects from the past and share memories together.

houseofmemories.co.uk/things-to-do/my-house-of-memories-app

Paintings in Hospitals have produced an A-Z of visual arts activities and inspirational ideas for care homes called Creative Care Homes.

www.paintingsinhospitals.org.uk/creative-care-homes-introduction

Small Things' Storybox Project is a fun and inclusive programme of activities for people living with dementia.

smallthings.org.uk/2020/01/25/the-storybox-project-at-home-3

The **Social Care Institute for Excellence** has a Baring Foundation funded microsite with lots of activities and art form specific advice for care homes.

www.scie.org.uk/person-centred-care/arts-in-care-homes

Publications

SELECTED BARING FOUNDATION PUBLICATIONS

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



Treasury of arts activities for older people

Liz Postlethwaite

A second Treasury is due out in September 2021



Older and wiser: creative ageing in the UK 2010-19

Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt,
King's College London



On diversity and creative ageing

Harriet Lowe



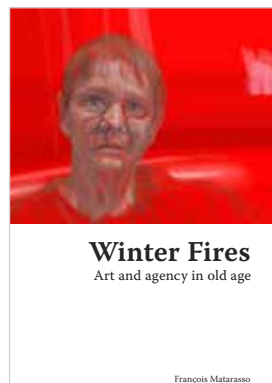
Around the world in 80 creative ageing projects

David Cutler



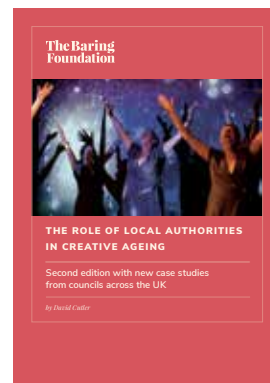
The Artist in Time

Chris Fite-Wassilak
and Ollie Harrop



Winter Fires: art and agency in old age

François Matarasso



The role of local authorities in creative ageing

David Cutler



Technically older: an update on digital arts and creative ageing

Joe Randall

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