



**Evaluation of the Arts and Older People Programme
Final Report
January
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Wallace consulting

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1 Background to the Evaluation

1.1 Introduction

In June 2014 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (the Arts Council) appointed **Wallace Consulting** to undertake an evaluation of the **Arts and Older People Programme** (AOPP, the Programme) 2013-2016 throughout its lifetime.

This document appraises progress towards the AOPP's aims and outcomes at Programme end. It summarises recent research and policy developments and presents recommendations for development.

1.2 Rationale for Intervention

The number and proportion of older people in the population is consistently increasing.¹ **However, we are living longer, but not necessarily healthier lives.** As such there is growing interest in the role of creativity in promoting individual and community health and wellbeing.²

The AOPP was set up to increase opportunities for older people to engage with the arts. It achieves this by providing funding to arts-based projects that address related social issues such as poverty, isolation and loneliness, as well as promoting positive mental health. The pilot evaluation has helped strengthen local empirical evidence for the personal and social benefits of arts participation in later years.³

The AOPP supports the policy drive towards active, positive and productive ageing. The programme emphasises the promotion of wellbeing and life-long learning and to incorporate the needs and rights of older people. It recognises older people provide valuable resources and stresses the importance of their ongoing participation in the local community. It is intended that this evaluation will demonstrate how the arts can help address issues relevant to older people, and to inform future practice.

1.3 The Arts and Older People's Programme

Initially launched as a three year pilot programme in 2009 and jointly funded by the Arts Council and The Atlantic Philanthropies, the AOPP aimed to increase opportunities for older people to engage with the arts, by providing funding to arts-based projects which addressed age relevant issues such as poverty, isolation and loneliness, as well as promoting positive mental health.

With advice and guidance provided by the programme Steering Group, more than 50 grants were awarded to community and voluntary groups and arts organisations over the duration. The range of arts-based activities was extremely diverse, encompassing painting, crafts, poetry, storytelling, music, carnival, circus,

¹ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/a-profile-of-older-people-2014-update.pdf>

² (2014) Wellbeing: Why it Matters to Health Policy

³ Wallace Consulting, (2013). Evaluation of the Arts and Older People Programme 2010-13.

song and dance. A week-long Celebration of Age festival marked the end of the programme, providing an opportunity to showcase the projects funded, through exhibitions, workshops and performances.

Drawing on the learning arising from the pilot programme, the second phase of the **AOPP is jointly funded by the Arts Council, Department for Communities (formerly DCAL), the Public Health Agency (PHA) and the Baring Foundation**. The current AOPP was also delivered over three years (2013-16) and aligns with the pilot's strategic themes and objectives:

- **Isolation and Loneliness** – Providing opportunities for social interaction via arts-led activities and working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness;
- **Social Inclusion** - Combating the social exclusion of older people through arts interventions that promote inclusion, free movement and sharing and working to create a more peaceful, fair and inclusive community that does not discriminate against age and ethnicity;
- **Poverty** - Providing opportunities for older people living in disadvantaged/marginalised rural and urban areas to access and participate in arts activities and working to improve the quality of life of older people living in disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas of Northern Ireland;
- **Health Issues/Dementia including mental health and emotional wellbeing** - Providing opportunities for older people to participate in arts led activities which may help improve physical, mental and social wellbeing and working to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for active ageing through participation in arts activities; and
- **Strengthening the Voice of Older People** - Provide opportunities for older people to develop skills which will strengthen their voice on issues that affect them. Providing artistic, professional and personal development skills and working to strengthen and develop the voice of older people particularly on issues that directly affect this section of society on a day-to-day basis.

The AOPP was aimed at constituted community and voluntary groups that work at a local level to support older people, in addition to non-governmental organisations, Local Authorities and arts organisations. There has been an increasing emphasis upon partnership working via consortia based proposals. Recognition was also given to older people's groups located in, or working with groups in identified areas of need (namely the 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) and 26 Areas at Risk) and in rural areas.

Grants from £10,000 to £30,000 were available. However, a **minimum of 10% match funding** was required, half of which must have been in cash. The programme aimed to achieve a geographical spread, to include rural areas and to develop sustainable programmes that leave a legacy (e.g. via training and developmental opportunities for care staff).

An annual one month long **Arts and Age Festival** showcased creative projects and events implemented by communities and arts organisations during the Programme's lifetime. Activities took place in arts venues, healthcare settings, care homes, assisted living facilities and community centres and included a variety of art forms such as theatre, dance, film, music, visual arts and circus.

1.4 Delivery Partners



The Arts Council is the lead development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. It provides support for artists and arts organisations, advocating that the arts have the power to transform lives and communities, creating opportunities for people throughout the country. The Arts Council's mission is *'to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life.'*

Core statutory functions involve developing and improving the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts and increasing public access and participation. The agency distributes Lottery proceeds allocated to the arts in Northern Ireland and funds a broad range of capital and revenue projects.

The Arts Council's five year strategy *Ambitions for the Arts*⁴ strives to deepen the value of arts to individuals and wider society, target resources to meet social and community challenges, deliver improved access and reach new audiences and enhance community engagement. The *Arts and Older People Strategy*⁵ aims to assist older people to overcome barriers and increase access and participation in arts-related projects which address both creative and social needs.



The Public Health Agency (PHA) was established in 2009 under a major reform of health structures in Northern Ireland. It is a multi-disciplinary, multi-professional body which focuses on health and social wellbeing improvement, health protection, provision of public health support to commissioning and policy development and Health and Social Care research and development.

The agency was established to provide a renewed and enhanced focus on public health and wellbeing by bringing together a wide range of public health functions under one organisation to create better inter-sectoral working and to tackle the underlying causes of poor health and reduce health inequalities.

The Baring Foundation

The Baring Foundation is an independent foundation working to improve the quality of life of people experiencing disadvantage and discrimination. Since 2010 The Foundation has funded the delivery of

⁴ ACNI, (2013). *Ambitions for the Arts: a Five Year Strategic Plan for the Arts in Northern Ireland 2013-2018*

⁵ ACNI, (2010), *Arts and Older People's Strategy*.

participatory arts projects for over 60 year olds. The organisation has an active research programme and stresses the benefits of the arts on individual and community wellbeing. The Baring Foundation currently has funding relationships with all four Arts Councils in the UK.

1.5 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation measures impact and draws out best practice in order to inform and influence programme development. It strives to provide robust evidence in order to shape future government interventions. A Logic Model methodology was applied as this provided a solid basis for strategy development and evaluation planning and provides the background for policy change.

Qualitative and quantitative baseline indicators were established and the evaluation measures impact against the outputs and outcomes outlined in the Programme Logic Model (see Appendix 1). The methodology comprised of the following:

- **Desk Research:** Snapshot of the research and policy landscape;
- **Database Analysis:** Profile of applications and awards;
- **Case-studies:** Case-studies of selected projects to include beneficiary discussions;
- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Interviews with key informants;
- **Pre- and Post-Participant Surveys:** Analysis of participant feedback upon project commencement and closure; and
- **Event Feedback:** Audience analysis of showcase events;
- **Artist Survey:** Analysis of post-project feedback; and
- **End of Project Report:** Detailing need, activities, impact etc.

Throughout the course of the evaluation, we drew upon the expertise of the Evaluation Steering Group which was established as an advisory body. The remainder of this document contains the following information:

Section Two:	Living for Longer;
Section Three:	Living Well, for Longer;
Section Four:	Programme Applications and Awards;
Section Five:	Beneficiary Feedback;
Section Six:	Project Partners;
Section Seven:	Leaving a Legacy;
Section Eight:	Raising Awareness; and
Section Nine:	Programme Appraisal.

Project case-studies are contained in Section Ten to Sixteen.

2 Living for Longer

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief statistical and research context to the strategic priorities of the AOPP – health and wellbeing, isolation and loneliness, social inclusion, poverty and advocacy.

2.2 Changing Demographics

The number and proportion of older people in the population is consistently increasing.⁶ Between 2012 and 2013, the number of adults aged 65 years and over increased by 2.3% to 279,100. In the decade between 2003 and 2013, the population of this age group increased by 21.7%.



There are also increasing numbers of people living into their 80s and 90s.⁷ One of the most significant and positive demographic trends of the last few decades is our increasing in life expectancy.

Between 2003 and 2013, those aged 85 years and over increased by 39.9% - more than five times greater than the overall population growth rate over the same period (7.3%). 2013 statistics indicate that the average man will live to 78 years (+5 years since 1991) and the average woman to 82 years (+4 years since 1991).

Population projections illustrate that the percentage of the population aged 50+ is likely to rise substantially in the coming years and it is anticipated that by 2039 there will be almost half a million people aged over 65 years living here. By 2039 one in four people will be aged over 65 years.⁸ In contrast to the growth in the older age groups, the number of children is projected to decrease after 2022. From 2027 onwards it is projected that there will be more persons aged 65 years and over in the population than children.⁹

2.3 Potential Challenges

Our ageing population and in particular the effect it has on economics is something that is being considered very closely by government. The major areas of concern include the potential for fewer people to be the workforce, an increased dependency rate as the ratio of older people to younger people grows and higher public spending on health and social care. Although the older

⁶ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/a-profile-of-older-people-2014-update.pdf>

⁷ Spotlight on Older People in Northern Ireland, Help the Aged (2008)

⁸ OFMdfM, (2015). A Profile of Older People in Northern Ireland: Annual Update 2015

⁹ NISRA, Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2013

population contribute to society both financially and in terms of their knowledge, skills and experience, it is hard to overlook the difficulties that some people experience as they get older:

2.3.1 Declining Physical and Mental Health



The Northern Ireland Health Survey provides information on the general and mental health of the population. Research has found that self-reported “good” health decreases with age and the likelihood of having a **long standing illnesses increases with age, as does GP visits**.¹⁰ The Health Survey also shows a clear relationship between someone’s age and their level of mobility, with those in the older age groups more likely to have mobility difficulties than other age groups.

The established **prevalence rates for dementia in the UK also increase with age**, from 1 in 1,400 in the 40-64 age group rising to 1 in 6 in people aged over 80years.¹¹ At present, it is estimated there are 19,000 people living with dementia in Northern Ireland.¹² An ageing population could see the numbers of people diagnosed rise to around 60,000 by 2051. Although dementia is a progressive condition, a lot can be done to help the person with dementia to live well.

At 31 March 2015, there were 221 residential homes for older people in NI,¹³ with an average of 2,768 available places. The majority were either dual registered or privately operated.¹⁴ At 30 June 2015, there were 9,959 care packages¹⁵ in effect in the Elderly Care Programme of Care, the vast majority were nursing home care packages and 91% were provided for by the private sector.

Sixty thousand people die each year from symptoms directly attributable to dementia and 25% of older people are diagnosed with depression, rising to 40% in residential care homes. Lower socioeconomic groups have higher incidence of poor mental health and are more likely to have earlier onset of dementia than higher socioeconomic groups.¹⁶

2.3.2 Loneliness

Social networks are important for people of all ages as they provide friendship and emotional and practical support as well as feelings of belonging and inclusion.¹⁷ Living alone is associated with higher instances of loneliness and social isolation.

¹⁰ DHSSPS, *Health Survey Northern Ireland 2013/14*

¹¹ Source: Alzheimer’s Society

¹² European Community Concerted Action on the Epidemiology and Prevention of Dementia (EURODEM) study from Hoffman A. et al. The prevalence of dementia in Europe; a collaborative study of 1980-1990 findings, *International Journal of Epidemiology* 1991

¹³ Aged 65 years or more and who are not included in any other client groups

¹⁴ Excludes Northern Health & Social Care Trust

¹⁵ Excludes domiciliary care packages

¹⁶ Institute of Health Equity, (2015). *Inequalities in Mental Health, Cognitive Impairment and Dementia among Older People*.

¹⁷ OFMDFM/Deloitte *Examining the case for a Commissioner for Older People* (2009)

Surveys consistently show that around 6-13% of older people report that they are often or always lonely.¹⁸ Help the Aged state:

- 21% of people aged 65+ report that they are often or always lonely;
- 16% of people aged 65+ do not leave/get out of their house more than once a week; and
- 7% of people aged 65+ never leave the house.¹⁹

2.3.3 Poverty

Demographic trends reflecting longer life expectancies are beginning to be reflected in **public welfare provision**. As the law currently stands, the Statutory Pension Age for both men and women in Northern Ireland will increase to 66 years by October 2020.²⁰ Significant numbers of older people depend solely on a combination of state pension and means tested benefits. Women and rural households are over represented in benefit provision.²¹



Twenty percent of pensioners were in poverty in 2014/15, approximately 59,200 pensioners. This compares to 21% the previous year. Those living alone have a higher risk of poverty, in comparison to pensioner couples.²² Low income pensioner households were also more likely to be home-owners, not in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit or Housing Benefit, with no occupational or personal pension and a lack of savings or investments.²³

Northern Ireland has the highest rate of **fuel poverty** in the UK due to higher prices, lower incomes and poor energy efficiency standards. Sixty-two percent of households headed by a retired person were living in fuel poverty in 2011.²⁴

2.3.4 Social Exclusion

Lack of access to transport, poverty, poor health, caring responsibilities²⁵ and fear of crime²⁶ can combine to contribute to social exclusion and social disconnect. **Difficulty travelling** due to a physical disability or a long-standing health problem increases with age (38% of those aged 60+). Amongst this older age group, females were more likely to experience difficulty travelling than males.²⁷ Research reveals that **rural older people** feel that there is continual erosion and withdrawal of local amenities, access, eligibility and uptake of state benefits are perceived to

¹⁸ Campaign to End Loneliness (2011) Safeguarding the Convoy.

¹⁹ Spotlight on Older People in Northern Ireland, Help the Aged (2008)

²⁰ See: Pensions Bill (Bill 42/11-16): Explanatory and Financial Memorandum, p.17

²¹ Department for Social Development, Family Resources Survey Urban Rural Report: Northern Ireland, 2002/03 - 2011/12

²² Department for Communities, The Northern Ireland Poverty Bulletin 2014/15,

²³ Department for Social Development, Households Below Average Income, Northern Ireland Report, 2011-12

²⁴ Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Home Energy Conservation Report 2008 and 2012 Northern Ireland House Condition Survey Statistical Analysis

²⁵ COPNI Independent Research, (2014). Development Economics

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Department for Regional Development, Travel Survey for Northern Ireland In-depth Report 2010-2012

be complex and a lot of poverty is hidden.²⁸ Internet access decreases by age (31% of 70 years+) and although the proportion of older people accessing the internet is increasing, ‘digital exclusion’ potentially puts them at risk missing out on relevant digital content and services.²⁹

The Volunteering in Northern Ireland Research Report³⁰ states that those aged over 65 are less likely to volunteer than other age groups, mostly due to health



reasons or the perception that they are “too old” to become involved. Statistics also show that older people’s participation levels in community, civic and political groups are relatively low.³¹ Despite this older people aged 55 years+ have a greater sense of belonging to their local neighbourhood and feel that they can influence decision-making more than younger people.³²

2.3.5 Prejudice

At the moment there is no standard numerical criterion used to define an ‘older person’, but 60+ years is generally accepted.³³ In 2008 NILT explored the age at which someone may be considered as being “older”.³⁴ Very few thought of anyone under 60 years as being an older person, whereas nearly 60% of respondents regarded someone in the 65-74 age group as being an older person.

Although respondents generally felt that people are treated with more respect as they get older, over one quarter felt people were treated with less respect as they aged. Almost a third of people (including older people themselves) thought that older people are treated unfairly.³⁵ Loneliness, isolation and boredom were perceived to be the main problems facing the older population. However, issues related to vulnerability and financial pressures were highest for older respondents.

Stigmatising attitudes towards people with dementia are also common. Research³⁶ illustrates that many perceive those in the later stages of dementia as ‘confused’, ‘frightened’, ‘unpredictable’ and ‘lost’. It is rare for respondents to list positive attributes.

2.4 Synopsis

The future of health and social care provision is one of the most commonly identified priorities for Northern Ireland.³⁷ The economic impact of an increasingly

²⁸ Heenan, D. (2010). Rural Ageing in NI: Quality of Life Amongst Older people OFMdfM

²⁹ Central Survey Unit, Continuous Household Survey, 2013/14

³⁰ The survey is commissioned by the Department for Social Development’s Voluntary and Community Unit and carried out by the Analytical Services Unit

³¹ Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2009

³² Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2013

³³ <http://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/ageingdefnolder/en/index.html>

³⁴ NILT, (2009). All our futures: attitudes to age and ageing in Northern Ireland

³⁵ Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2013

³⁶ ARK, (2010). Attitudes to and Knowledge of Dementia in Northern Ireland.

³⁷ Patient and Client Council, The People’s Priorities: A View from Patients, Service Users, Carers, and Communities on Future Priorities for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland, November 2011

ageing population depends upon the resource needs of individuals at various stages of their life and their capacity to self-support. Despite this, older people can be portrayed as a financial drain on, rather than contributing to society.

However, as life expectancy has drastically increased, more people will retire while they are still physically and mentally healthy and given appropriate opportunities may still be willing to work and contribute to tax revenue, or provide their skills on a voluntary basis. Active involvement in community life has been linked with increased life satisfaction, better engagement and a positive contribution to health and wellbeing in later years.

This presents a strong rationale for removing the barriers to participation and connecting older people to stimulating activities which help to release potential, improve quality of life and facilitate and promote their ongoing value to the communities they live within.

3 Living Well, for Longer

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the AOPP's linkage with key policy drivers and the potential for the arts to promote active ageing and wellbeing in later life as demonstrated through available research evidence.

3.2 The Importance of Wellbeing

Older people are healthier and more active than previous generations and, as they are beginning to represent the majority of the population, there is an increasing focus on preventing ill health in order to reduce its impact on the health system. As such, there has been a visible policy directive towards the promotion of wellbeing and active ageing.

*"There is much the individual can do to remain active and healthy in later life. The right lifestyle, involvement in family and society and a supportive environment for older age all preserve wellbeing. Policies that reduce social inequalities and poverty are essential to complement individual efforts towards Active Ageing."*³⁸



The National Wellbeing Programme was launched in 2010, emphasising the importance of quality of life, positive relationships with family and friends, having a sense of purpose and control over one's life.³⁹ Wellbeing is highly personal and individual. It can be influenced by our outlook on life, how we feel about ourselves and our connections with those around us at any given time. Mental wellbeing enables and supports good relationships, improved resilience, health, meaning, purpose and control. It is predictive of improved healthy life expectancy, quality of life and life satisfaction. It is also linked with physical health.⁴⁰

This shift towards wellbeing for all citizens, using an outcomes based approach is reflected in the 2016-20 draft Programme for Government. The



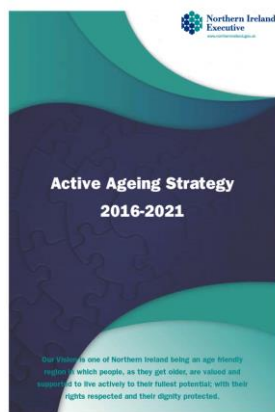
³⁸ Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director General of WHO (1999). World Health Day.

³⁹ <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/five-ways-to-well-being-the-evidence>

⁴⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/225525/DH_wellbeing_health.PDF

executive commits to supporting citizens to lead long, healthy and active lives, and to achieve this through: prevention and early intervention, improving access to health and social care services, tackling health inequalities and, delivering better outcomes from the Executive's investment in health and social care. Importantly, cultural engagement is recognised as positively impacting on general wellbeing and bringing benefits in learning and education.

The *Active Ageing Strategy* (2016-2021) is set within the context of the Northern Ireland Programme for Government, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons and Equality and Human Rights legislation⁴¹ and places emphasis upon the need to plan for future demographic shifts in order that older people may have a high quality of life. Aligned to the United Nations Principles its strategic aims are:



- **Independence:** active independent living by older people;
- **Participation:** active participation of older people in all aspects of life;
- **Care:** equal access to high quality health and social care services;
- **Self-fulfilment:** support older people to develop to the fullest of their potential and

- wellbeing through education, training, leisure and cultural opportunities; and
- **Dignity:** promote and protect the human rights of people of all ages.

The Active Ageing Strategy and Action Plan is implemented through the Executive's cross-Departmental *Delivering Social Change* initiative.

The Public Health Agency is the lead for the implementation of *Making Life Better* (2013-2023). This is a comprehensive and holistic strategy which focuses on improving health education, healthy lifestyles and health literacy throughout the lifespan.



It builds on the *Investing for Health* strategy (2002–2012) and retains a focus on the broad range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence health and wellbeing. The framework seeks to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take control of their own lives and move towards a vision of Northern Ireland where all people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and wellbeing potential and to reduce inequalities in health.

⁴¹ To include: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; the Human Rights Act 1998; the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006; the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

UK research by the Institute of Health Inequalities reports the financial cost of caring for people with dementia to be over £26 billion in 2015.⁴² This figure includes healthcare costs, publicly and privately funded social care, unpaid care and other dementia care costs. Adequately investing in initiatives which improve the economic, social and physical environments in which older people live has the potential to prevent poor mental health and delay the onset of mild cognitive impairment and dementia. It is estimated that postponing the onset of dementia by up to two years could decrease the number of deaths by around 12,000 per year and represents a potential saving of £52 billion. Approximately £3 billion is spent on the treatment of poor mental health for older people in the UK each year, compared with investment in physical health, which is around two fifths of the NHS total spend (£46.5 billion).⁴³ The report concludes a need for strategies which address the drivers for social isolation, physical inactivity and lack of mental stimulation. These strategies include supporting social interactions and lifelong learning, stimulation in later life and supportive care from services, carers and families.

3.3 Safeguarding Wellbeing



The likelihood of having good physical and mental health in later life is not evenly distributed across the population and there is a social class gradient in life expectancy and disability free life expectancy. Poor mental health, cognitive impairment and dementia and the impact of social isolation, lack of mental stimulation and physical activity, before and after retirement and in later old age can exacerbate the risks of poor mental health, cognitive impairment and dementia in later life and these are experienced disproportionately by people in lower socio economic groups.

The UK Annual Population Survey has found that people living in Northern Ireland continue to give higher average ratings of personal wellbeing for all measures except anxiety, when compared with the rest of the UK.⁴⁴

In general people aged 65 to 79 years tended to report the highest average levels of personal wellbeing. However, wellbeing ratings fell amongst the oldest age groups (those aged 75 and over) - this fall was steepest for feelings that activities they do in life are worthwhile. Those aged 90 years and over reported higher life satisfaction and happiness compared with people in their middle years.

Based upon its extensive research as part of the Foresight Project, The New Economics Foundation identified five ways for individuals to safeguard wellbeing in everyday life:

⁴² The London School of Economics and Political Science & Kings College London, Dementia UK: The Second Edition 2014 November

⁴³ Robineau, D. and Statistics from Nuffield Trust, Ageing Britain: two fifths of NHS Budget is spent on over 65's in Guardian 2016

⁴⁴ ONS, (2016). Personal well-being in the UK: 2015 to 2016



- **Connect...** With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day;
- **Be active...** Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden.

Dance. Exercising makes you feel good;

- **Take notice...** Be curious... Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you;
- **Keep learning...** Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun; and
- **Give...** Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.⁴⁵

Engaging in creative activities can contribute to our wellbeing and being creative can help us embrace the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

3.4 Older People, Wellbeing and the Role of the Arts



Recent research suggests that 'cognitive reserve', built throughout the life course, through educational and employment opportunities and providing older people with a wider and more flexible set of skills, abilities and resources can help delay onset of cognitive decline and dementia and to cope better with the conditions should they occur.⁴⁶

Studies on the impact of the arts on older people have led the Mental Health Foundation to conclude, *'it is evident that engaging with participatory art can improve the wellbeing of older people and mediate against the negative effects of becoming older'*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ NEF, (2008). Five Ways to Wellbeing: A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being

⁴⁶ Institute of Health Equity, (2015). Inequalities in Mental Health, Cognitive Impairment and Dementia among Older People.

⁴⁷ Mental Health Foundation, (2011). An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People.



There is currently considerable interest in the Arts and Health sector, reflected in the Institute of Public Health in Ireland's recent focus on creativity, and as such the empirical evidence base is improving.⁴⁸

One extensive literature review⁴⁹ concluded that the arts can help improve the **communication skills** of mental health service users, helping in their **relationships with family and service providers**. Activities provided a different **means of expression and enhanced self-esteem**, helping people become calmer and diminishing the need for medication. Different art forms were shown to have different effects. For example, literature, creative writing and poetry **improved self-efficacy and mental wellbeing**. Theatre, drama and visual arts were particularly beneficial for **self-interpretation and understanding**, whilst music, singing and dancing helped with **memory recall**. The activities **supported self-expression** and, on a physical level **increased their range of movement**.

There is a growing understanding that creativity is intact long after other cognitive functions decline. Several comprehensive reviews^{50 51} outline the following **benefits of arts participation for people with dementia** - improved alertness, happiness, positive emotional state and independence; improved quality of life and social interaction, collaboration, verbal and nonverbal communication; improved face and name recognition, long term memory and ability to recall life events; increased physical movement, motor skills and ability to complete visual tasks; increased participation in spontaneous activity and routine tasks and increased expressions of pleasure. Decreased fear, anxiety and agitation; reduced 'wandering', physical agitation and 'disruptive behaviour'. Enhanced bonds between patients and caregivers were also recorded and research also suggests that benefits can be extended to care givers.^{52 53} There is evidence that participation in stimulating arts activity could help delay the onset of dementia and slow its progression.⁵⁴

Health benefits are also apparent in a range of community settings. For example,⁵⁵ taking part in social group interventions including art activities, group exercise and therapeutic writing **increased older people's subjective health and significantly**

⁴⁸ Institute of Public Health in Ireland (2016). "Breaking down boundaries - innovation, participation and creativity in public health", Belfast

⁴⁹ Arts Council of England (2005) Arts in health: a review of the medical literature

⁵⁰ Beard, (2011). Art Therapies and Dementia Care: A systematic review. *Dementia: The International Journal of Social Research and Practice*.

⁵¹ Mental Health Foundation, (2011). An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People

⁵² Grant, Elliott & Morison, (2012). Holding Eternity in an Hour. A Practical Exploration of the Arts in the Healthcare of Older People with Dementia

⁵³ Elliott et al, (2010). 'CREATIVE AGEING' A Practical Exploration of the Arts in the Healthcare of Older People

⁵⁴ Arts4Dementia, (2013). Awakening the Mind.

⁵⁵ Pitkala KH, Routasalo P, Kautiainen H et al (2009) Effects of psychosocial group rehabilitation on health, use of health care services, and mortality of older persons suffering from loneliness: A randomized controlled trial, *Journal of Gerontology: Series A*, 64(7), 792–800



reduced mortality over a two year period compared to a control group who received traditional community care. The intervention group also used fewer health care services in the follow up period compared to the control. The savings far exceeded the cost of the intervention and many participants continued to meet after the study finished.

Another study,⁵⁶ examined wellbeing scores on three groups undertaking a theatre based intervention. The authors concluded that shifts in people's health and wellbeing occurred by participants engaging in personally significant, meaningful occupation, through making informed choices and having control, **increased self-confidence, creativity, motivation and positive changes in routine**. Positive impacts were also noted in relation to relationships with family members.

Evidence shows that loneliness and isolation can have detrimental effects on health and is linked with lower levels of self-rated physical and mental health.⁵⁷ A range of studies support the value of group arts activities in **reducing loneliness and improving self-reported health** amongst socially isolated older people.^{58 59} ⁶⁰ Recent guidelines from the National Institute of Clinical of Excellence (NICE) recommend group-based activities focusing on creativity as a way to **improve the mental wellbeing and independence of people aged 65 and older**.

Skinner and Elliott, (2014)⁶¹ in an evaluation of a community wellbeing pilot programme reported **increased self-esteem, improved social interaction and cohesion and increased wellbeing** as a result of improved access to and participation in a sustained arts programme. There were partner benefits with **greater links into the community, improved partnership working, increased citizen knowledge about and stronger sense of pride in the local area**.



Increased self-confidence has frequently been evidenced as an outcome of arts participation and this may lead to harder social inclusion outcomes such as progressing on to **joining new groups, volunteering, employment or education**.⁶²

⁵⁶ Wimpenny and Savin-Baden, (2014). Using Theatre and Performance for Promoting Health and Wellbeing amongst the 50+ Community: an Arts Informed Evaluation. The International Journal of Social, Political, and Community Agendas in the Arts

⁵⁷ Skingley, A. (2012). Older people, isolation and loneliness: implications for community nursing. British Journal of Community Nursing, 18, 2, 84-90.

⁵⁸ Teater and Baldwin, (2012). Singing for Successful Ageing: The Perceived Benefits of Participating in the Golden Oldies Community Arts Programme. Br J Soc Work (2014) 44 (1): 81-99.

⁵⁹ Greaves and Farbus, (2006). Effects of creative and social activity on the health and well-being of socially isolated older people: outcomes from a multi-method observational study. The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health May 2006 126: 134-142

⁶⁰ The Baring Foundation (2010). An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People.

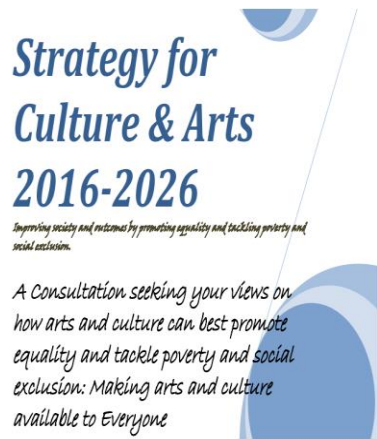
⁶¹ Skinner and Elliott, (2014). Let the Dance Begib Evaluation: A Community Wellbeing Evaluation.

⁶² Dewson et al, (2001).

The use of digital arts to combat social exclusion of older people has been of particular interest over recent years. Enabling older people to confidently use technology can help them **connect more easily with relatives and friends and therefore help address loneliness**. Additionally, by **challenging perceptions of the abilities of older people** and by enabling their creativity through digital media, older people may be viewed differently by society.⁶³

3.5 Older People and Arts Participation

“Ambitions for the Arts: a Five Year Strategic Plan for the Arts in Northern Ireland, 2013-2018” highlights the arts’ flexibility in meeting community need and its ability to deliver important social outcomes by bringing people together, helping



Strategy for Culture & Arts 2016-2026

Improving society and outcomes by promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion.

*A Consultation seeking your views on
how arts and culture can best promote
equality and tackle poverty and social
exclusion: Making arts and culture
available to Everyone*

tackle economic, racial and ethnic divides, engaging with the most disenfranchised members of our community and helping to address anti-social behaviour and improve the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals.

The Department for Communities is currently refining a Strategy for Culture and Arts which was launched for consultation in late 2015. The document introduces the concept of **Cultural Togetherness** and continues the strong focus on promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion through arts and culture. Wellbeing is a core theme.

“People of all ages and backgrounds and abilities should have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy arts and cultural experiences of their choice.”

The *Arts and Older People’s Strategy* was developed in recognition of the economic, physical, social and information barriers to older people’s arts engagement coupled with the evidenced benefits of participation. It focuses upon the arts ability to address issues such as Isolation and Loneliness, Social Inclusion, Poverty, Health Issues/Mental Health Issues, Strengthening the Voice of Older People and promoting Life-long learning opportunities. The Arts and Older People’s Strategy complements the Arts Council’s *Intercultural Strategy*, *Youth Arts Strategy*, *Community Arts Strategy* and the *Arts and Health Policy*.

However, there are a number of challenges to improving older people’s access and participation in the arts. Survey findings⁶⁴ illustrate that attendance at arts events declines with age, with attendance lowest amongst those aged 65 years and over (48% of over 65s had not attended an arts event within the last 12 months). Participation levels also appear to decline with age, with those over 65 years least

⁶³ Baring Foundation (2012). Digital Arts and Older People: What is distinctive about working with older people using creative technology?

⁶⁴ NISRA, (2014). NI Omnibus Survey. Arts Council Module

likely to participate in arts activity (80% of over 65s had not participated in arts activities within the last 12 months). This is similar to NILT findings which also indicate that the amount of free time spent on learning, or developing a new skill declines with age, as does participation in cultural groups. Crafts are by far the most popular arts activities for the over 65s, with other age groups demonstrating a wider range of arts interests.⁶⁵ Creativity, increasing self-confidence and concentration are the primary motivation for arts involvement amongst older people.⁶⁶

Arts Council research identifies a number of obstacles which impact on older people's participation. These include having a **longstanding illness or disability, lack of disposable income, poor venue design, poor access to transport, fears over safety and the feeling that the arts are elitist.**⁶⁷ Therefore there is an impetus on arts venues and the sector as a whole to promote the benefits of participation and to remove perceptual, as well as physical barriers for older people. Analysis of Arts Council data indicates a decrease in the proportion of funded organisations targeting older people. However, in terms of actual participants, older people accounted for 10.2% of beneficiaries in 2013/14, a slight increase on the previous year's figures.⁶⁸

3.6 Synopsis

We have seen that there is a growing body of evidence which demonstrates the personal and societal benefits of arts participation. Increased social interaction and the formation of new friendships may be the most important aspect for an older person in taking part in an arts project.⁶⁹

The AOPP was set up to increase opportunities for older people to engage with the arts. It achieves this by providing funding to arts-based projects that address related social issues such as poverty, isolation and loneliness, as well as promoting positive mental health. The pilot evaluation has helped strengthen local empirical evidence for the personal and social benefits of arts participation in later years. The research showed that fewer respondents reported they **lacked companionship, felt left out and/or felt isolated** upon exiting the activities and there were **positive increases in self-reported physical health, mental health and enjoyment of life and wellbeing scores.**⁷⁰

The AOPP supports the current policy drive towards active, positive and productive ageing as part of preventing physical, mental and emotional ill health. Importantly this approach could help mitigate against pressures on the health and social care system further down the line.

⁶⁵ NISRA, (2014). General Population Survey

⁶⁶ NISRA, (2012). *General Population Survey*

⁶⁷ Arts Council research into the actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland (2005)

⁶⁸ ACNI, (2014). *RFO Survey*

⁶⁹ David Cutler, (2012). *Tackling Loneliness in Older Age – The Role of the Arts*. The Baring Foundation

⁷⁰ Wallace Consulting, (2011). *Evaluation of the Arts and Older People Programme 2009-11*.

4 Programme Overview

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the totality of applications to the AOPP over the three funding rounds (opening 16th October 2013, 25th April 2014 and 24th June 2015). Information is taken from the Arts Council's grant management database, moderator assessment notes and Grantee End of Project Reports.

4.2 Applications

The AOPP has consistently generated interest from service providers, with 120 organisations applying for funding and 114 meeting the eligibility criteria over the duration. Arts/community arts based organisations accounted for 57% (n65) of lead applicants, community and voluntary sector groups accounted for 35% (n40) and Councils were 8% (n9).

The majority of applications were made from within Belfast City Council's geographical remit (n37; 33%), followed by the Derry and Strabane Council area (n23; 20%). The remaining areas were considerably lower:

- Fermanagh and Omagh (n10; 9%);
- Newry, Mourne and Down and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (n8; 7%);
- Mid Ulster (n7; 6%), Causeway and Coast (n6; 5%);
- North Down and Ards (n5; 4.5%);
- Antrim and Newtownabbey and Lisburn and Castlereagh (n4; 3.5%);
- One applicant was situated within Mid and East Antrim Council area (0.5%).

Sixty-one applicants were based in a Neighbourhood Renewal Area (54%).

Overall, 59% of eligible applications (n67) were unsuccessful. These applicants were less likely to have experience of project delivery on the scale required, nor to have strong partnerships in place. Others did not provide adequate evidence of the need for the project and how these needs relate to the strategic themes.

Five organisations which were unsuccessful in the first Round (i.e. Oh Yeah Music Centre, DU Dance, NI Hospice, Arts and Disability Forum and Verbal Arts Centre) were provided with feedback and were subsequently successful under subsequent Rounds. Eight organisations (i.e. Armagh, Banbridge Craigavon Council, BEAM Network, Oh Yeah Music Centre, NI Hospice, Big Telly, Play Resource Warehouse, Derry City and Strabane Council, Streetwise Community Circus) were awarded funding in more than one AOPP round.

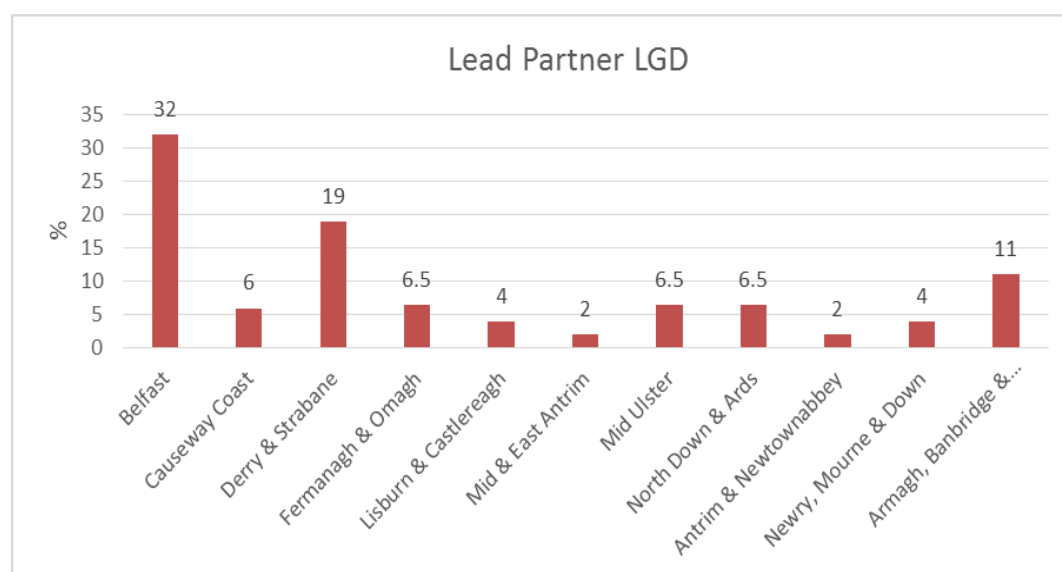
4.3 Awards

Appendix 2 provides greater detail on the 47 AOPP awards.⁷¹ Nineteen projects were approved in Round One, 12 in Round Two and 16 in Round Three. The majority of first and second Round projects were 12 months in duration. Round Three projects were held over a shorter period, showcasing their work during Festival of Age in April 2016 and completing shortly after.

4.3.1 Grantee Profile

Grantees included the arts, older people, health, and general community/voluntary sectors. Twenty-five projects were led by Arts organisations (53%), sixteen by community/voluntary based organisations (34%) and six were led by Councils (13%). Almost half the grantees stated community arts as their primary practice (49%; n23). The majority of lead partners were based within Belfast City Council area, although activities were conducted throughout Northern Ireland.

Figure 4.1
Grantee Location: LGD



4.3.2 Funding Awarded

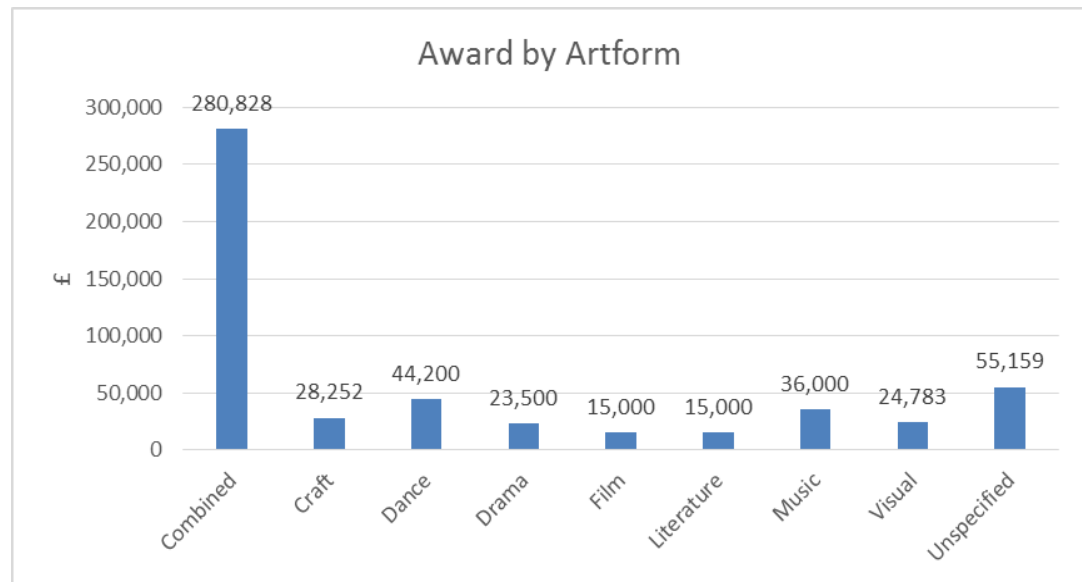
Overall, £877,432 was awarded (64% of funds requested). Awards ranged from £3,365 (to Pomeroy Community Resource Centre) to £23,491 (awarded to NI Hospice). Eighteen organisations (38%) received funding between 0-£9,999, 11 (23%) were awarded £10,000 - £14,999 and the remaining 18 (38%) organisations received over £15,000. Figure 4.2 indicates that the majority of funding was provided to projects using combined art forms. The average award was £11,973,

⁷¹ excluding the award to Dementia Services Development for the Artist Residential

with dance, drama, craft, music and film projects generally receiving higher awards.

Figure 4.2

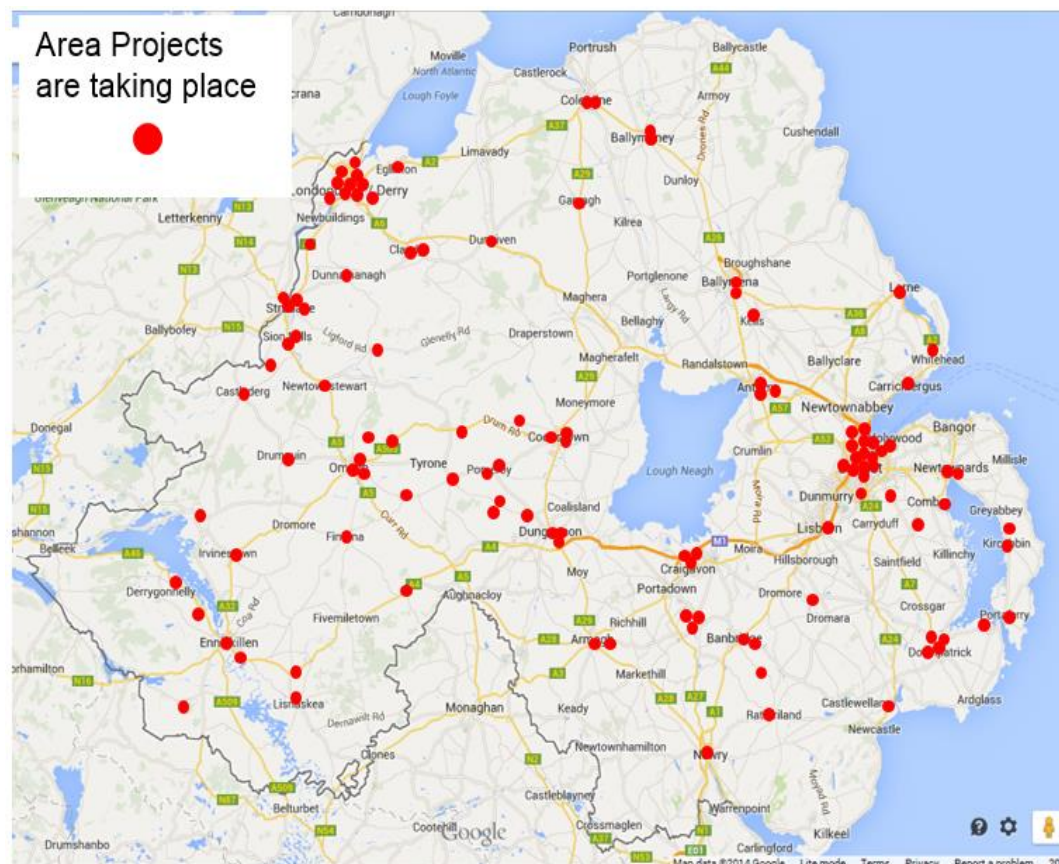
Award by Art Form



4.4 Project Snapshot

The extent to which projects aim to address issues of isolation, social inclusion, poverty, health/dementia and strengthening the voice of older people was scored as part of the assessment process. **The majority of successful organisations aimed to address all five social justice issues** through their activities (n37; 79%). The CDO mapped the geographical locations of project activity, based on her knowledge over the three year period. Figure 4.3 illustrates that whilst activity is widespread, there is thought to be less work funded within Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid and East Antrim Council areas.

Figure 4.3
Project Mapping



Almost half of grant recipients worked in **residential care settings** (n20), whilst 42% (n18) had delivered activities in **day centres**. Ninety-one percent (n39) had targeted older people at risk of isolation, 70% (n30) reported working with people with dementia or another long-term health problem and one-third of projects targeted carers. Over half the projects were delivered in rural areas (n24; 56%) and 42% in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (n18). Nineteen percent operated on an intergenerational basis (n8).

The majority of projects used combined art forms (57%; n27), whilst others focused upon visual arts (4%; n2), drama (6%; n3), craft (4%; n2), dance (6%; n3), film (2%; n1) and music (2%; n1). For example:

- Through the Music to your Ears project, Derry City and Strabane District Council (DSDC) delivered weekly craft and music sessions in partnership with U3A Strabane/Foyle, Strabane Lifford Resource Centre, Sion Mills Community Forum, the Londonderry Bands Forum and local brass and pipe bands. **The project targeted men** and engaged them in metalwork, woodwork and crook making, papermaking, glass and clay as well as music. The music sessions quickly developed into a support network, with men offering lifts, encouraging recently bereaved neighbours to join in and sparking interest as they arrived at

the Alley Theatre with their guitars. After the completion of their final concert, DCSDC committed to continuing to deliver the sessions. They feel that the passion of the facilitators contributed to the project's success – providing guitars, strings, tuning instruments and lots of patience and encouragement;

- Northern Visions' Grand Visions project aimed to **strengthen older people's voice through broadcasting**. They utilised a range of mediums such as digital storytelling, reminiscence, digital music creation, animation and cinematography and produced programming for television, online and DVD over an 18 month period. A significant range of partnerships have been established to include arts organisations and venues, community groups, residential care and assisted housing providers and education facilities. Older people researched, delivered and collectively produced the resources with the support of Northern Visions technical staff. A number of issues were highlighted through the project to include elder abuse, dementia, consumer rights, the importance of active ageing and the need for social activities. All resources are available online;
- Larger than Life, delivered by Open Arts combined drama and visual arts to create live and illustrated artwork. During the drama illustrators provided sketches which were used to generate participant discussion and after training participants created their own illustrations. Those involved faced a range of issues that impact on inclusion (e.g. dementia, bereavement, caring responsibilities, living alone or in supported accommodation). The model was based on Life Story Work and provided a **powerful means for participants to express themselves**. A graphic novel and display boards were produced and those involved valued having the visual means to communicating and helping others understand their circumstances.

4.5 Synopsis

Round Three funding was limited to under £10,000. This resulted in smaller community group with no prior AOPP funding receiving awards. Previously it was thought that the larger funding bands may have unintentionally discouraged applications.

Interest in leading AOPP projects outside Belfast and counties Londonderry and Down has remained relatively lower. However, other areas have been beneficiaries of the programme, as evidenced in the project recruitment plans. Seventy-five percent of applications within Antrim & Newtownabbey and Newry, Mourne and Down Council areas were rejected, alongside 67% of applicants within Fermanagh & Omagh Council area. Targeted developmental work may need to take place in order to build more localised partnerships and capacity.

5 Beneficiary Experiences

5.1 Introduction

AOPP programme participants, where possible, were asked to complete questionnaires upon entering and exiting funded activities. The “entrance” surveys collected demographic information, level of arts participation, self-rated health and wellbeing, sense of community belonging and project expectations. The “exit” questionnaires replicated the above and additionally collected feedback on participants’ experience of the activities undertaken.

5.2 Beneficiary Numbers & Representation

Participant numbers have been obtained from the End of Project Reports (n43) which are submitted by grantees upon project completion.

It is estimated that 13,067 participants have benefitted from the 47 AOPP funded projects.⁷² An estimated 3,136 session hours were delivered across the current awards.⁷³

At the time of reporting⁷⁴ a total of 1,438 entrance and 1,046 exit questionnaires were received across 33 projects. The breakdown can be found in Appendix Three. Estimating response rates is extremely difficult as the completion of entrance and exit forms, although encouraged was not compulsory for older people to complete. Additionally it was agreed that the questionnaires would not be suitable for all projects, such as those working with people with dementia or in cases where it would be difficult for beneficiaries to complete and/or provide informed consent. Therefore some projects provided alternative evidence to illustrate the impact of their work.

Therefore respondents who completed the evaluation questionnaires are not fully representative of the AOPP beneficiaries and by the process of self-selection are likely to be more active older people, in better health.

5.3 Respondent Profile

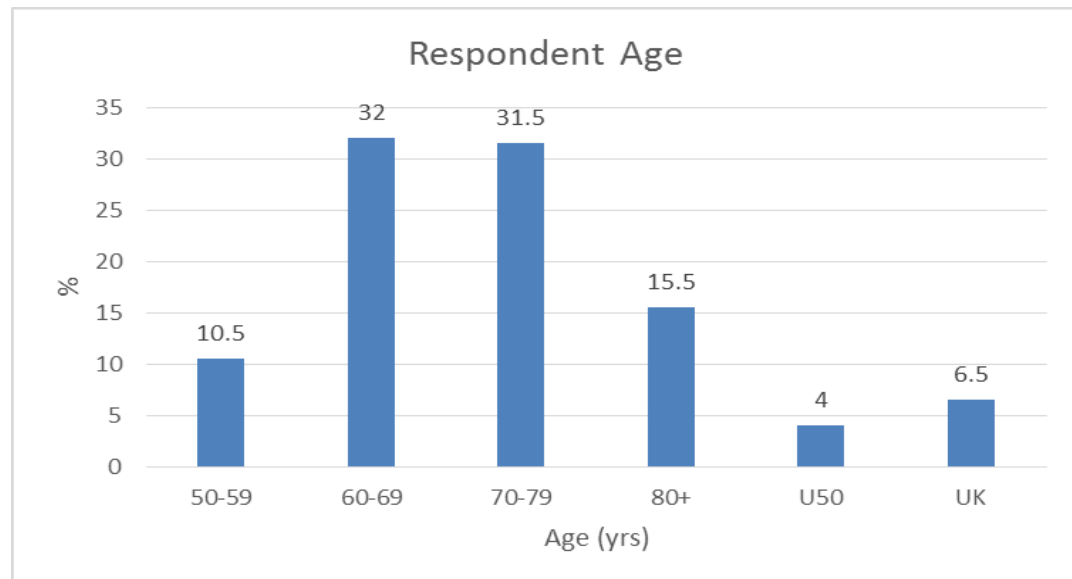
Figure 5.1 illustrates the respondent age profile upon entering the Programme.

⁷² 43 completed End Reports; 12,340 participants. Outliers removed

⁷³ 43 projects completed this information; 2,869 hrs

⁷⁴ 14 November 2016

Figure 5.1
Respondent Age



Sample: n1,438

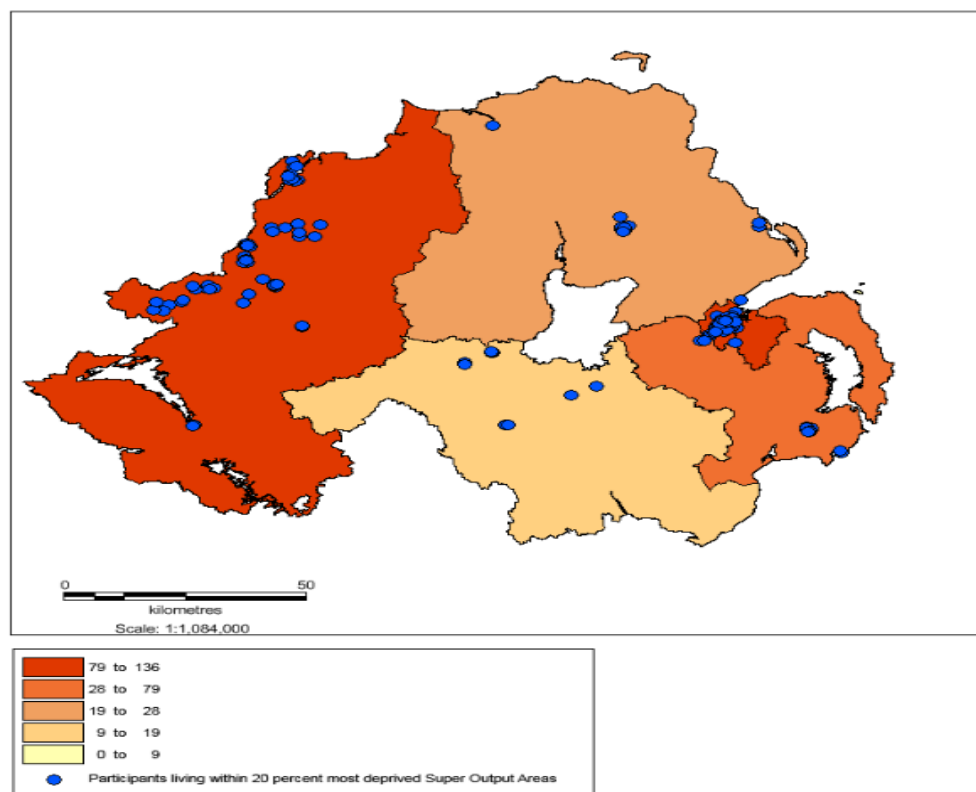
The remainder of the chapter focuses upon those respondents aged 50 years and over (n1,373). Analysis illustrates that the majority of the respondents were female (n960; 70%) and aged between 60-79 years (66%; n908), with an average age of 70 years. The oldest recorded participant was 101 years.

Most respondents lived in their own home (78%; n1,074), whereas 7% (n95) lived in assisted living accommodation and 6% lived in a residential care facility (n85). Forty-one percent lived alone (n1,373), many in excess of 10 years (26%; n149). Forty percent of respondents stated that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability (n552) and 8% (n108) were carers.

After geo-spatial mapping of valid postcodes (n1,112; 81% coverage) by the Arts Council,⁷⁵ it was identified that 23% of those providing postcode information lived in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) (n258). Forty percent of these were located in Belfast NRAs (n104), 32% in the North West NRAs (n82) and 28% were located elsewhere (n72). Indeed 364 respondents (33%) lived in the most deprived 20% Super Output Areas (SOAs) in NI and 14% (n159) lived within the top 10% most deprived SOAs (see Figure 5.2 for distribution).

⁷⁵ Postcodes sourced from the NISRA Central Postcode Directorate (2016)

Figure 5.2
Respondent by Deprivation



Fifty-three percent of participants (n590) were located in Urban SOAs, whereas **47% of participants lived in Rural SOAs** (n521). Table 5.1 illustrates the distribution of participants living within the 20% most deprived SOAs by Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Area.⁷⁶

Table 5.1
Respondent Deprivation by HSCT

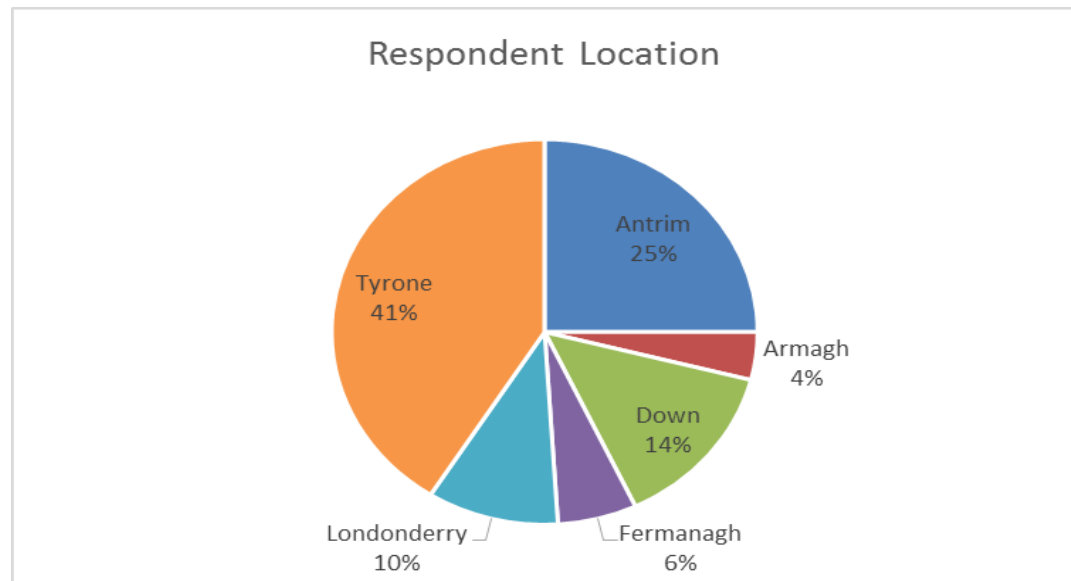
HSCT	Count	Percentage
Belfast	80	29%
Northern	19	7%
South Eastern	28	10%
Southern	9	3%
Western	136	50%
Total	272	33%

Sample n817 exit participants

Figure 5.3 provides a breakdown by County.

⁷⁶ Calculation based on Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM), part of the Noble Indices of Deprivation (2010)

Figure 5.3
Respondent by County



The spatial analysis indicates that **response levels are highest in County Tyrone (41%; n458) and Antrim (25%; n279).** However, it must be noted that this spatial analysis is based solely upon submitted participant entrance forms which have provided a valid postcode and doesn't fully reflect activity on the ground.

5.4 Arts Engagement

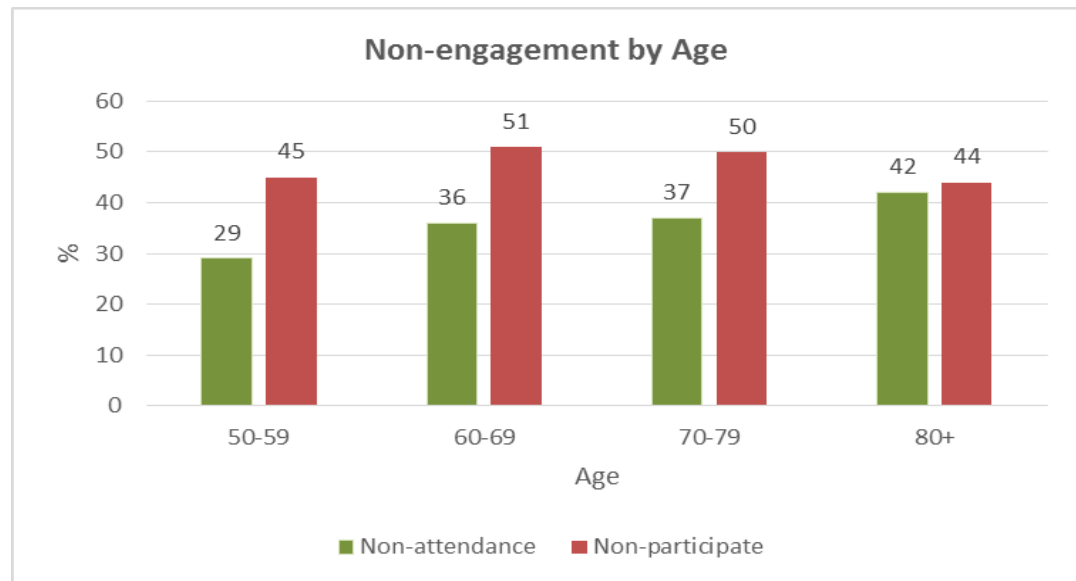
Sixty-one percent of AOPP respondents (n832) had attended an arts event within the last 12 months and 50% had participated in arts activities (n687) over the same period. Forty percent (n550) had both seen and participated in the arts over the last year. **Therefore the respondent sample has higher levels of arts engagement in comparison to the wider population surveys which the Arts Council routinely conducts.⁷⁷** However, the data doesn't provide insight on frequency of engagement.

Females had higher levels of engagement than males. Sixty-three percent of females (n604) had attended an event (compared to 55% of males (n220)) and 54% (n254) had participated in activities (compared to 42% of males (n166)).

Figure 5.4 illustrates that **arts event attendance declines with age.** However, respondents aged 80+ had similar participation levels to the 50-59 year olds.

⁷⁷ 52% of over 65s have attended an arts event in the last year (62% of AOPP respondents aged 65+) and 20% of over 65s have participated in arts activities (51% of AOPP respondents aged 65+).

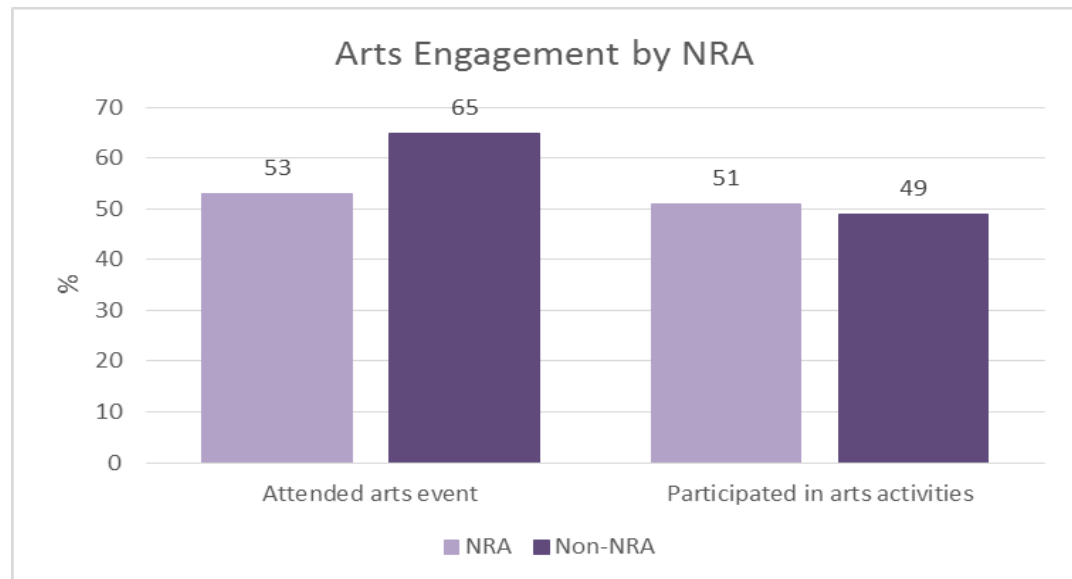
Figure 5.4
Non-Arts Attendance & Participation by Age



Event attendance was slightly higher in rural areas (64%; n338), compared to urban areas (60%; n353). However, urban dwellers had higher participation rates (52% (n303) compared to 47% (n245) in rural areas).

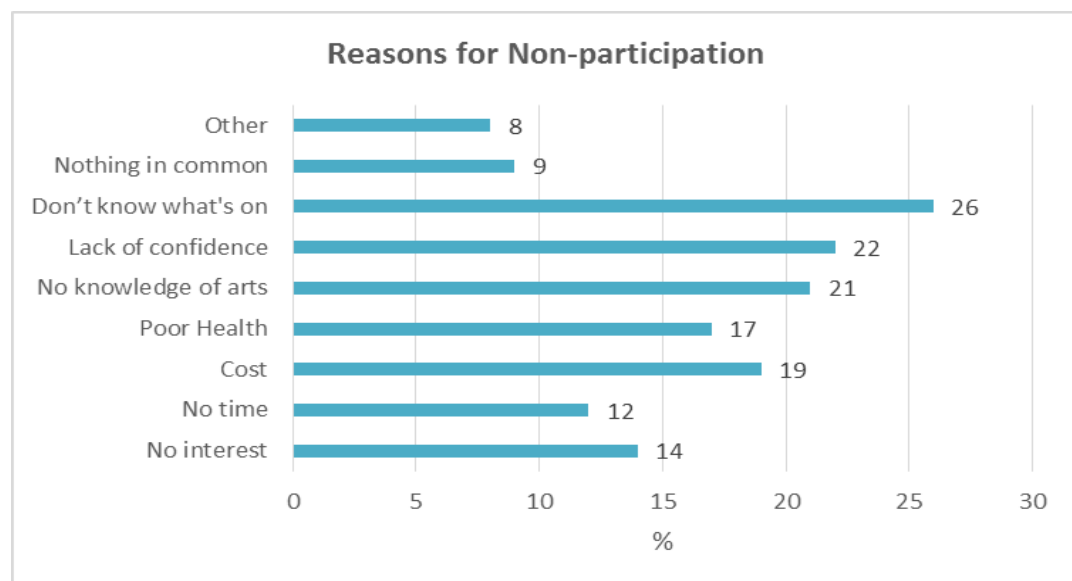
Around half of those living in a NRA had attended (53%; n136) and participated (51%; n131) in arts activities over the last year. **Figure 5.5 indicates that respondents living within NRAs displayed relatively lower levels of arts attendance, compared to people who don't live in a NRA.** Those living outside NRAs were more likely to attend events, than participate in activities.

Figure 5.5
Arts Attendance & Participation: Deprivation



Respondents were also asked to describe potential reasons for non-regular attendance/participation in arts activities (see Figure 5.5). **The analysis indicates that the primary reasons were a lack of information about what's on (26%; n354), lack of confidence (22%; n302) and lack of knowledge about the arts (21%; n282). Cost (19%; n257) and poor health (17%; n228), lack of transport and caring responsibilities were also cited as a barriers.**

Figure 5.6
Respondents' Reasons for Non-Participation in the Arts



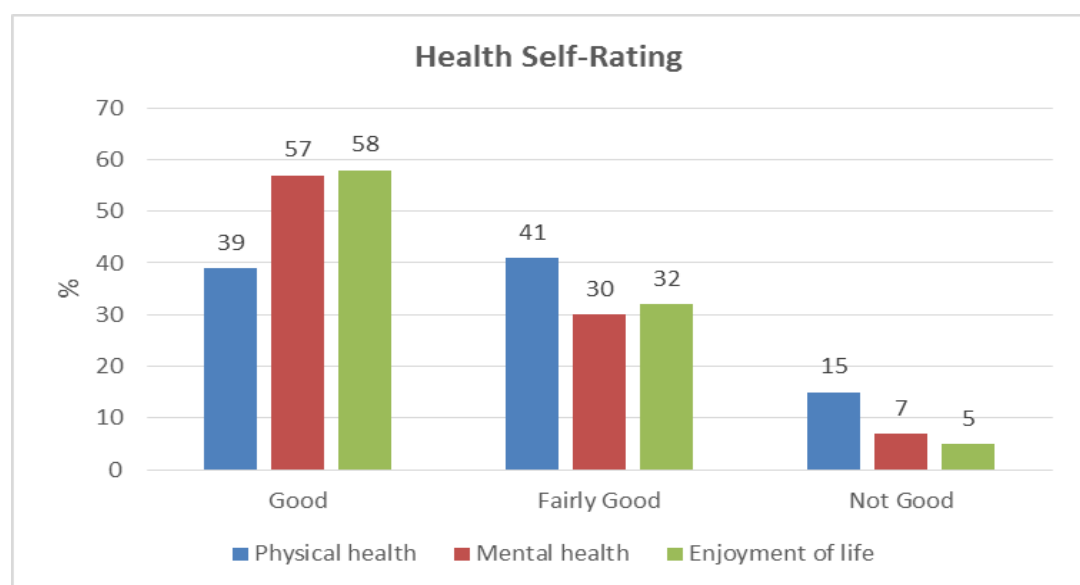
For those living within NRAs the general trends mirrored those of the wider sample, with lack of information about what's on (31%; n79) cited as the greatest barrier to arts engagement.

These findings are consistent with those of the pilot phase and are in contrast with the *General Population Survey* results, which indicate lack of interest/time to be the primary barriers for older people. This may be due to the fact that many AOPP respondents already had previous experience of the arts and therefore had some degree of interest in the arts.

5.5 Health & Wellbeing

Figure 5.7 illustrates that the **majority of the sample rated their physical health** (80%; n1,105), **mental health** (87%; n1,191) and **enjoyment of life** (90%; n1,235) as **good or fairly good**. However, physical health ratings were lower than mental health and enjoyment of life. These results are similar to the general health population self-rating of *good, very good, fair* for adults aged 55+ in NI (85%).

Figure 5.7
Respondents Self-Rated Health



Increased age was a factor in rating physical health as *not good* (24% of 80+ respondents (n52) compared with 13% of 50-59 year olds (n20)). However, those aged 50-59 years (15%; n22) were most likely to report their mental health and enjoyment of life as *not good* compared to the other age groups (15%; n11) compared to the other age groups.

There were no gender differences in the reporting of physical health as *not good* compared. However, **a greater proportion of males reported poor mental health** (9% (n35) compared to 6% of females (n59)) and **lack of enjoyment of life** (9% (n36) compared to 3% of females (n31)).

Twenty-one percent (n55) of those living in a NRA reported poor physical health compared to 11% (n95) of those living outside a NRA. These trends continue for perceived mental health and enjoyment of life (see Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8
Respondents Self-Rated Health: Deprivation

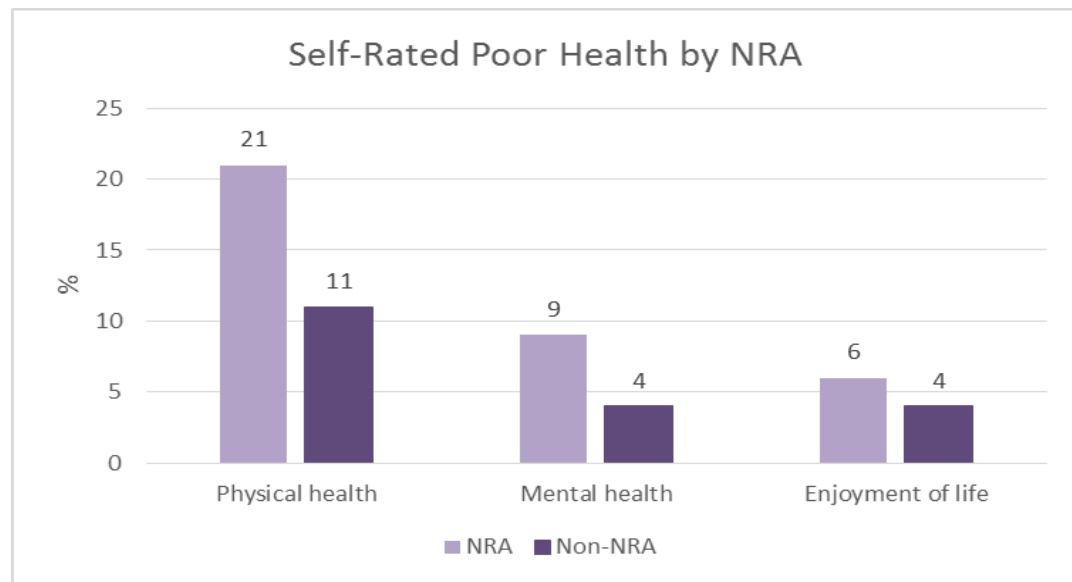


Table 5.2 indicates respondents' appraisal of how they have been feeling over the last two weeks, upon entrance to the AOPP project activities. The following questions are taken from the 7 item Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) which is often used to measure population wellbeing. However, rather than scoring, proportionate responses are presented. As can be seen, **lower proportions of respondents reported feeling optimistic about the future** (48%; n610) **feeling relaxed** (51%; n658), **able to deal with problems** (53%; n679) and **feeling useful** (56%; n699) *often or all of the time*.

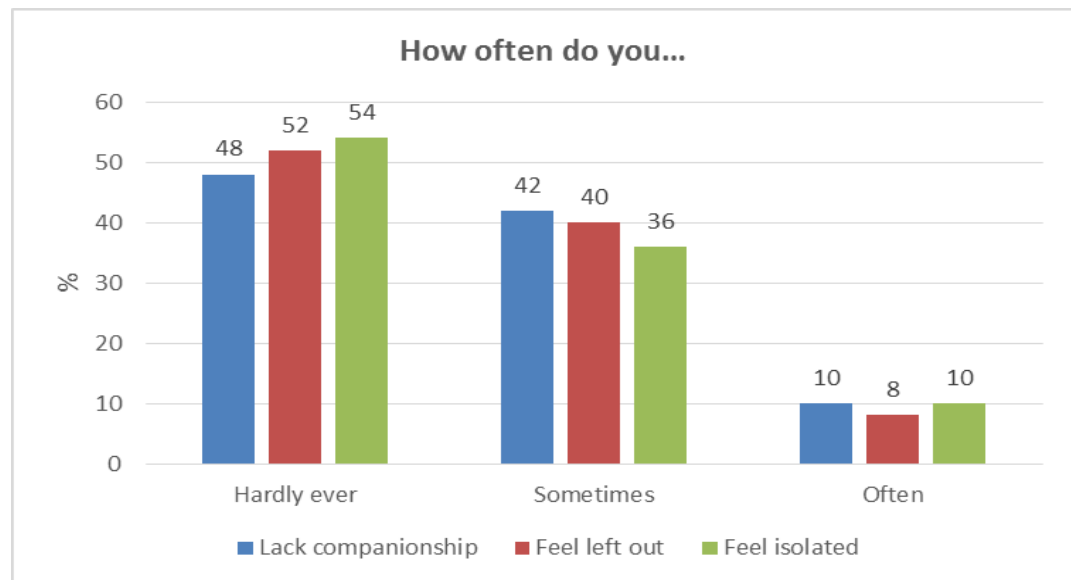
Table 5.2
Wellbeing: Entrance

Statement	%		
	Rarely/ None of the Time	Some of the time	Often/All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	14	38	48
I've been feeling useful	10	34	56
I've been feeling relaxed	10	38	51
I've been dealing with problems well	9	38	53
I've been thinking clearly	6	29	64
I've been feeling close to other people	7	30	63
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	4	22	74

Sample: Those answering the question

Figure 5.9 illustrates responses to Hughes et al. (2004) three point Loneliness Scale.

Figure 5.9
Loneliness Scale: Entrance



Sample: Those answering the question

The findings illustrate that feelings of loneliness – at least *sometimes* is quite widespread amongst participants entering the AOPP projects and this is comparable with other surveys of this nature.⁷⁸ Further analysis indicates that respondents are slightly more likely to experience loneliness in terms of a **lack of companionship** (52%; n670), in comparison to **feeling left out** (48%; n619) or **isolated** (46%; n580). Our analysis highlights some factors associated with loneliness:

- **Living alone** was connected with lack of companionship (61%; n325), feeling left out (53%; n280) and/or feeling isolated (53%; n277);
- **Those with a disability or long-term illness** were more likely to lack companionship (59%; n316), feel left out (59%; n313) and isolated (56%; n293);
- **Males** were more likely to lack companionship (53%; n201), feel left out (52%; n195) and isolated (50%; n188), than females (51%/n458; 46%/n413 and 43%/n381 respectively);
- The **50-59 age group** was most likely to report *often* feeling a lack of companionship (11%; n16), feeling left out (12%; n17) and isolated (17%; n25);
- Those rating their **physical health, mental health and enjoyment of life as *not good*** were more likely to report lack of companionship, feeling left out and/or isolated than the rest of the sample. Poor mental health and enjoyment of life was associated to feelings of loneliness to a greater extent than poor physical health.

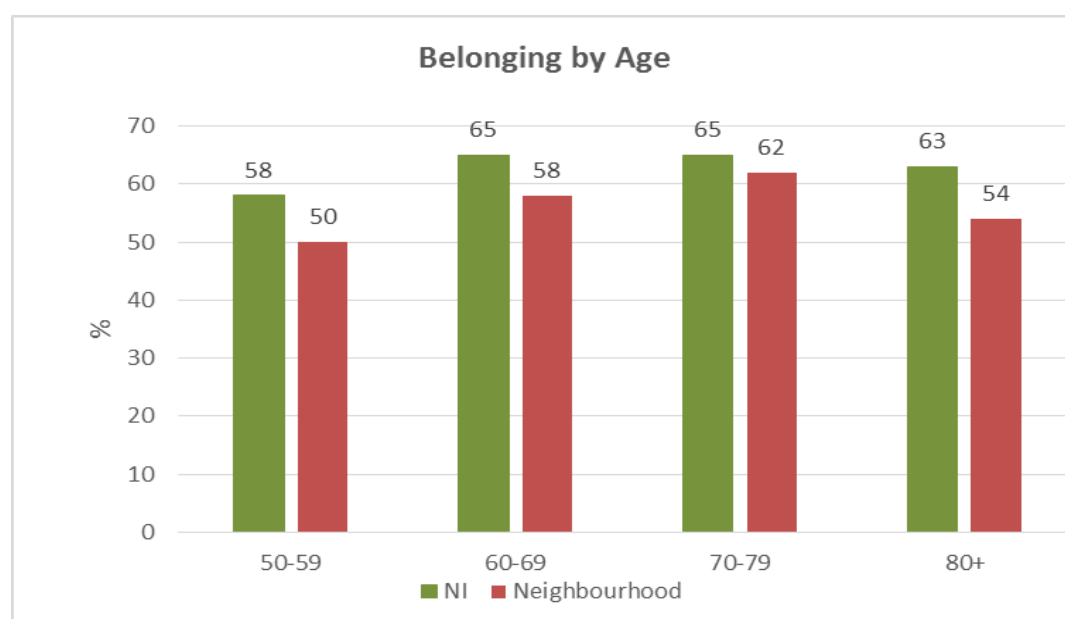
⁷⁸ Comparators: NI Household Panel Survey (2001) indicates 7.7% of those aged 65+ often feel left out; English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), (2009-10) 46% of those aged 80+ reported being lonely often or some of the time, compared to 34% of all aged 52 and over.

5.6 Belonging

Policy makers now recognise the importance of feeling that you belong to a place and that your voice is heard and listened to in the local decision making process upon community wellbeing and cohesion. Maintaining social networks, retaining a sense of independence and feeling that you have influence within your own community are essential to wellbeing, yet these feelings can decline as we grow older.

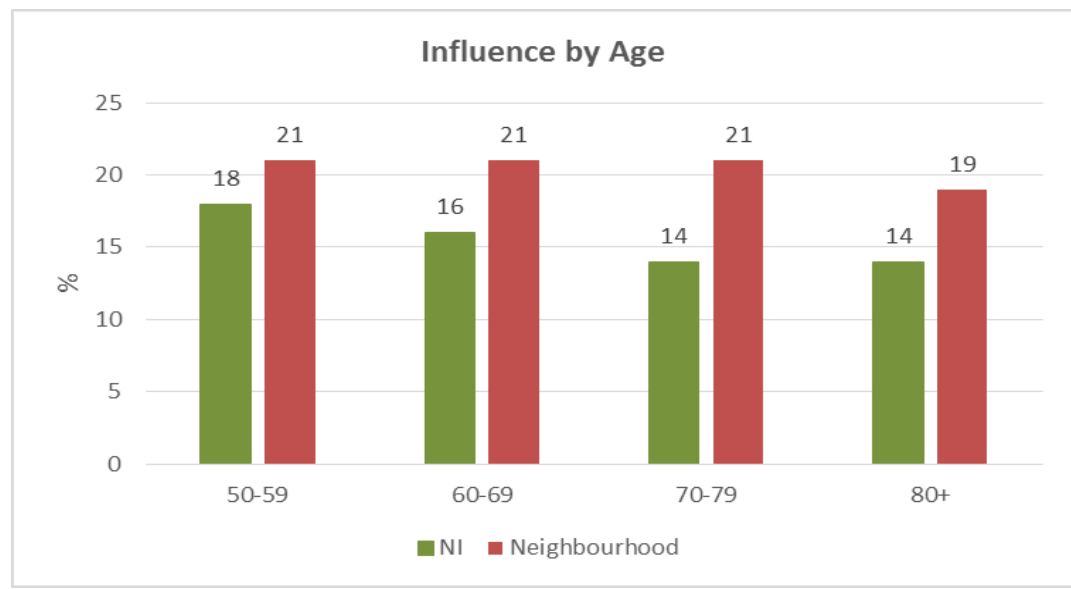
The survey analysis indicates that respondents felt a greater sense of belonging to NI (64%; n880), compared to the neighbourhoods in which they live (58%; n796). This is aligned to the AOPP pilot evaluation findings, but in contrast to NILT statistics which indicate that older people feel more connected to their neighbourhoods, than to wider NI society. Those aged 50-59 years and over 80 years had the greatest disconnect to their neighbourhoods and to NI as a whole (see Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10
Feelings of Belonging



Although reported feelings of influence are lower than those of belonging, respondents were **more likely to feel that they have influence within their neighbourhoods** (21%; n285) compared to wider NI society (15%; n206). This is in line with NILT findings. **Feelings of influence also decrease with age** (see Figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11
Feelings of Influence



5.7 Pre- and Post-Project Comparisons

The entrance and exit evaluation datasets were reconciled on the basis of the submitted postcode and demographic information. This enabled comparisons to be made over time using the same sample of people (n514). **However, it must be noted that any pre- and post-project differences cannot be directly attributed to participation in the AOPP and are reflective of only a proportion of project activity.**

The matched pre-/post- sample profile is relatively similar to the larger respondent pool in terms of gender (71% female; +1%). However, there was a higher proportion of 60-79 year olds (74%; +8%), although the average age was the same at 70 years. Living arrangements were also broadly aligned with the wider sample – the majority lived in their own home (+5%), 6% in assisted living accommodation (-1%) and 4% in residential care (-2%). Similar proportions lived alone (40%; -1%) and had a long-term illness or disability (39%; -1%). Eight percent were carers, which corresponded to the wider sample. Seventeen percent of respondents (n78) lived in NRAs, compared to 23% of the wider sample and 50% (n234) lived in an urban area (compared to 53% of the wider sample).

The matched sample displayed even higher levels of arts attendance within the last 12 months (67%; +6%) than the wider sample upon entry to the AOPP projects. However, participation in arts projects within the last 12 months was slightly lower (48%; -2%).

Figure 5.12 illustrates reasons provided for non-participation in the arts before and after AOPP participation. **Lack of information about available activities, lack of confidence, cost and lack of knowledge** about the arts were cited as the primary barriers to becoming involved in arts activities. **Upon project completion not knowing what's on and cost remain the most prominent barriers, although diminished.** Although reported obstacles have decreased overall, lack of confidence (-9%), lack of knowledge (-8%) and lack of interest (-7%) have seen the greatest reductions post-project.

Figure 5.12
Pre-/Post- Reasons for Non-Participation in Arts Activities

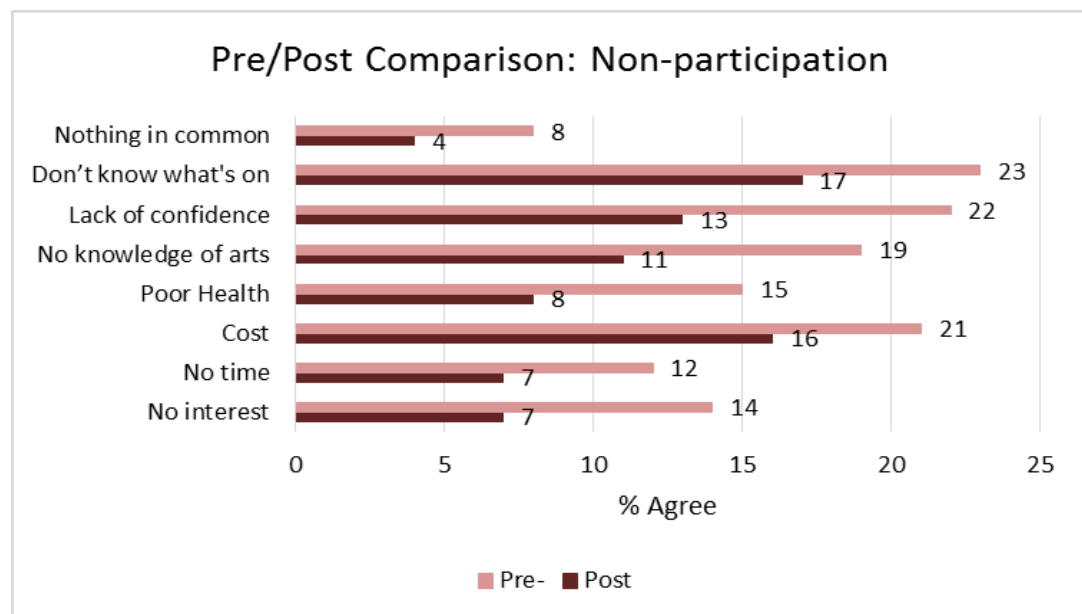
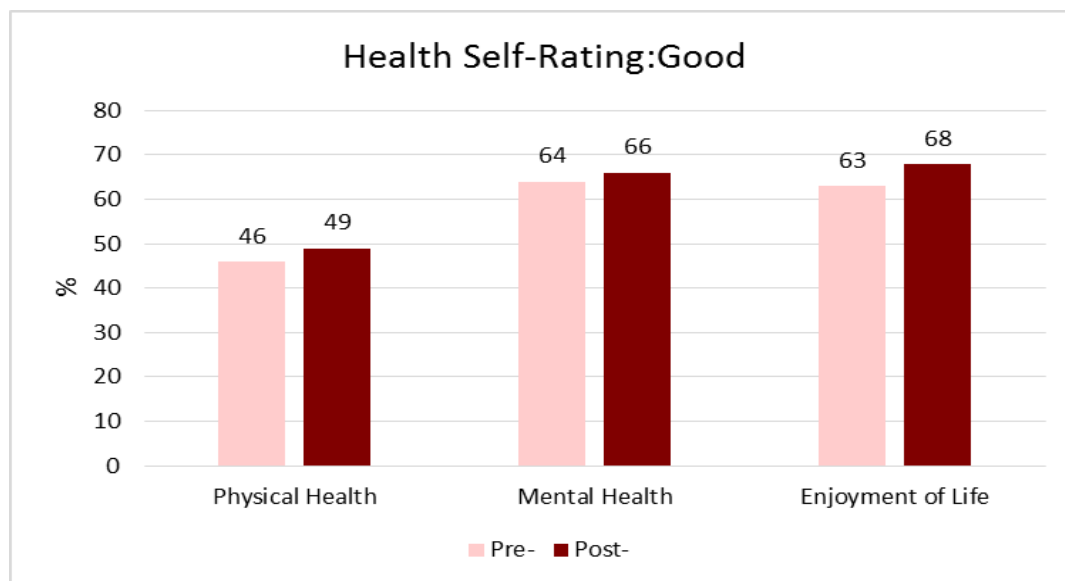


Figure 5.13 illustrates that there were increases in the proportion of people who rated their physical (46%; +3%) and mental health (64%; +2%) as *good* at project end. However there was a **5% increase for self-rating of enjoyment of life (68%) as *good* at project exit.**

Figure 5.13
Pre-/Post- Health Rating



Sample n427 matched health question respondents

Overall, there were no significant pre- and post- differences in respondents' overall scores⁷⁹ for self-rated mental health (mean entrance score 1.42; mean exit score 1.39). **However a significant difference was found in relation to perceived enjoyment of life** (mean entrance score 1.41; mean exit score 1.35; $t(426)=2.85$, $p=0.002$) and **physical health** (mean entrance score 1.67; mean exit score 1.63; $t(426)=2.12$, $p=0.02$).

Additionally, when we examine respondents who rated their health as *not good* there are significant improvements in mental health (5%; -1%; $t(25)=3.64$, $p=0.0006$) and enjoyment of life (3%; -4%; $t(18)=4.02$, $p=0.0004$). However, although there was a slight improvement in self-reported physical health for this group, this was non-significant (12%; -1%).

Table 5.3 provides a comparison of responses on the WEMWBS statements upon entry and project completion.

Table 5.3
Wellbeing: Pre-/Post (%)

	(%)
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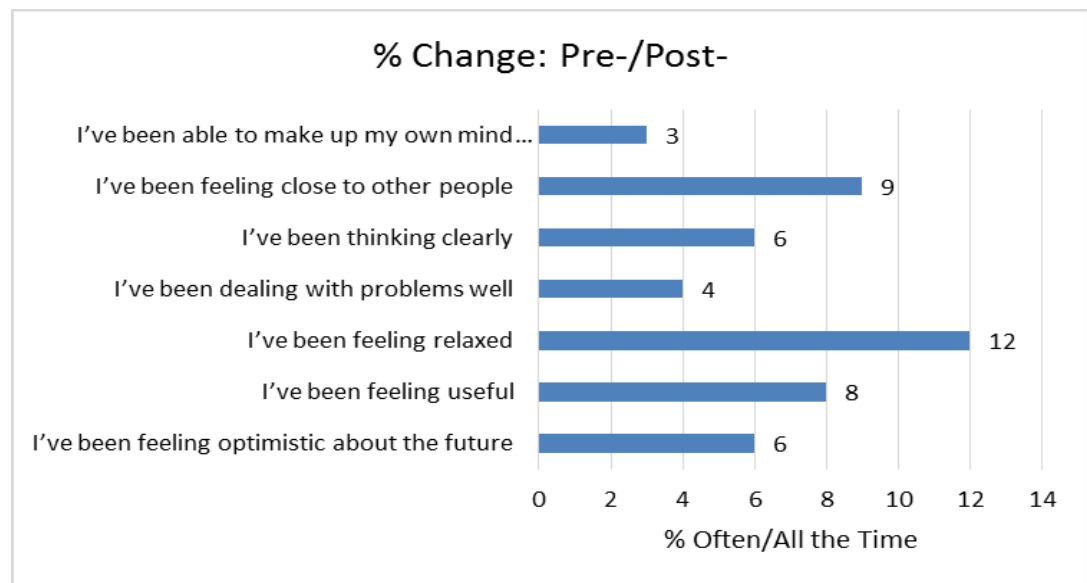
⁷⁹ Good=1; Fairly Good=2; Not Good=3

Statement	Rarely/ None of the Time		Some of the time		Often/ All the time	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	14	13	36	33	49	55
I've been feeling useful	9	6	32	26	59	67
I've been feeling relaxed	11	7	37	30	51	63
I've been dealing with problems well	9	6	35	34	56	60
I've been thinking clearly	7	5	27	23	66	72
I've been feeling close to other people	6	4	31	24	63	72
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	5	4	20	18	75	78

Sample % answering question

There have been small positive changes across all of the items and particularly with regards to the proportion of respondents stating that they have been feeling relaxed (+12%) *all of the time/often* (see Figure 5.14).

Figure 5.14
WEMWBS – Pre-/Post (%)



The WEMWBS can capture the full spectrum of positive mental health without floor or ceiling effects⁸⁰ and is suitable both for monitoring trends over time and evaluating the effect of mental health promoting programmes or interventions. However, it is not designed to identify people who have a mental illness and does

⁸⁰ A ceiling effect occurs when a high proportion of subjects in a study have maximum scores on the observed variable. This makes discrimination among subjects among the top end of the scale impossible. The **floor effect** happens when most data points fall in the very low range of possible values.

not a have a 'cut off' level to divide the population into those who have 'good' and those who have 'poor' mental wellbeing. A smaller sub-set of participants (n371) was developed in order to undertake WEMWBS scoring.⁸¹ This subset fully answered each of the WEMWBS scale components and were matched pre- and post-project.

On a possible range from 7-35 points, participants scored a mean of 24.30 (SD 5.45, 95% CI 24.86, 23.74) upon entry and 24.93 (SD 5.32, 95% CI 25.47, 24.39) upon exit.⁸² **A paired samples one-tailed and two-tailed t-tests indicated significant differences between the pre- and post- WEMWBS scores.**⁸³

Forty-three percent (n158) of respondents showed individual increases in wellbeing scores and 33% (n122) of respondents' scores remained the same. However, in 24% (n91) of cases the scores decreased. **Females, those aged 60-79 years, with a long-term illness or disability and those living in residential care or alone, were proportionately more likely to have decreased WEMWBS scores upon project exit.**⁸⁴

At the individual level, a change of three or more points can be considered significant.⁸⁵ **Twenty-two percent (n83) of the sample added three or more points to their score, whilst 12% (n45) scores decreased by three or more points.** Some participants displayed relatively high increases with 4% (n14) adding 8 or more points to their entry score. Overall, the percentage with the highest wellbeing scores increased marginally from 24% (n89) to 25% (n94).⁸⁶

Figure 5.15 illustrates pre-/post- project ratings on the various elements of the Hughes et al. 3pt Loneliness Scale. The analysis indicates that the proportion of respondents stating that **they hardly ever lack companionship has seen small positive differences (52%; +2%),** as has the proportion hardly ever **feeling left out (56%; +4%) or isolated (72%; +4%)** upon exit.

Figure 5.15
Pre-/Post Loneliness scale

⁸¹ Mean population score on WEMWBS for England is 23.6 (see: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/researchers/interpretations/wemwbs_population_norms_in_health_survey_for_england_data_2011.pdf)

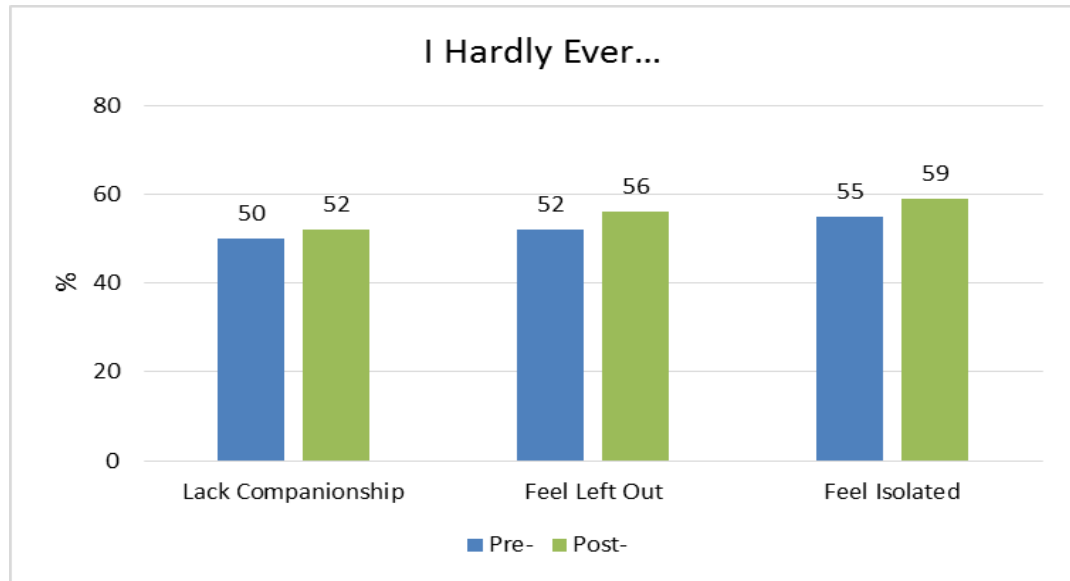
⁸² Stewart-Brown et al. Health and Quality of Life Outcomes 2009 7:15 doi:10.1186/1477-7525-7-15

⁸³ Mean difference 0.63, SD 3.84 t(df370)=3.16, p=0.0009 and p=0.002. A 95% C.I. about mean WEMWBS score improvement is (1.02, 0.24)

⁸⁴ Fermanagh District Council, MEAPP and Andersonstown Community Theatre accounted for 43% of this sample.

⁸⁵ <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/faq/>

⁸⁶ Classified as a score of 28 and above.



Sample n361 matched Loneliness Scale question respondents

There were significant pre- and post- differences in respondents' overall loneliness scores⁸⁷ (mean entrance score 4.71 and mean exit score 4.45; $t(360) 3.26$, $p=0.007$). When we looked at the mean scores separately, there were no significant changes in lack of companionship (mean entrance score 1.61 and mean exit score 1.56). **However there was a significant reduction in feeling left out** (mean entrance score 1.56 and mean exit score 1.48 $t(360)=2.3$, $p=0.01$) and **isolation** (mean entrance score 1.55; mean exit score 1.46; $t(360)=2.91$, $p=0.002$).

Figure 5.16 indicates an increase in the proportion of respondents feeling a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood (73%; +11%) and local influence (29%; +5%).

Figure 5.16
Changes in Neighbourhood Belonging & Influence

⁸⁷ Hardly Ever=1; Sometimes=2; Often=3

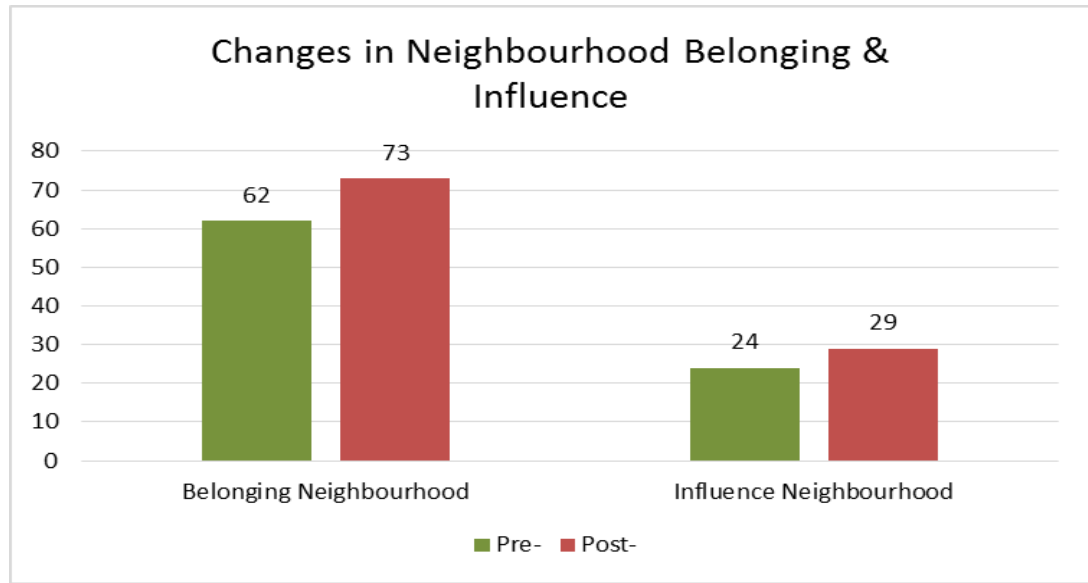
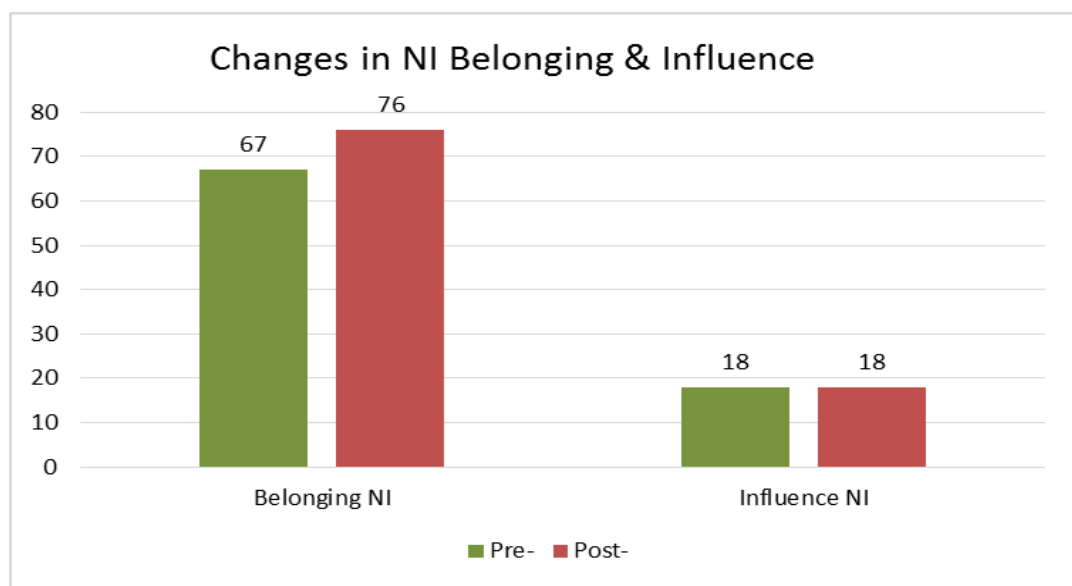


Figure 5.17 indicates an increase in the proportion of respondents who reported that they felt a sense of *belonging to NI* (76%; +6%). However the proportion who felt they could influence NI decision making remained stable at 18%.

Figure 5.17
Changes in NI Belonging & Influence



5.8 Benefits of Participation

Upon entering the AOPP project, the majority of respondents wanted to **improve their social life** (69%; n951) and **increase their skills** (68%; n932).

“Feel better health wise, learning lots of new things” [Male, 77 years, Big Telly]

“Good for stimulating the mind, makes me feel I can do things, that I am worthy.”
[Female, 65 years, Play Resource Warehouse]

“Not feel lonely.” [Age and gender unknown, Mindwise]

“I live alone so this activity helps me to interact with various age groups.” [Female, 70 years, Streetwise]

Fifty-eight percent (n802) wanted to **improve their mood and increase confidence**, 51% (n706) wanted to be **creative and express themselves** and 47% (n650) wanted to **show others what older people could do**. Table 5.4 presents the feedback from respondents at project end.

Participant appraisals were predominately positive and indicate that the majority of respondents **have learned new skills** (83%; n832), feel that they have **played an active role in the sessions** (82%; n820), have made new friends (82%; n817) and feel a **sense of achievement** (81%; 814). Seventy-seven percent (n768) of respondents expressed a desire to take part in similar activities. However, respondents were relatively **less likely to have joined other groups as a result of the project** (53%; n532).

Table 5.4
Respondents’ Evaluation of the Project

Statement	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)
These sessions have really made me want to go to arts events	70
I played an active part in this project	82
I have tried and learned new things	83
The sessions have made me want to take part in more arts activities	77
I’ve been able to express myself at these sessions	75
The sessions were not well run	11
I’ve surprised myself & others by what I can do	71
These activities have given me confidence to try different things	78
I’ve made good friendships out of this project	82
I feel good about what I have achieved during these sessions	81
I have taken part in other groups and activities due to this project	53

Sample: n1002

Fifty-eight percent of respondents (n584) provided written feedback upon exit. Analysis of the comments indicate that companionship was a primary benefit of participation for many. There were numerous requests for similar activities to take place and it was clear that people had found the sessions enjoyable, relaxed and worthwhile. Through active encouragement, peer support and the

opportunity to learn something different, confidence and motivation levels appeared to be higher.

“Enjoyed the company and had a great time trying out all of the things I thought I could never do.” [Female, 64 years, Playhouse Theatre]

“I enjoyed singing with others. The tutor was brilliant. I liked the people who sang with me. I think it helped build my confidence.” [Female, 62 years, Legacy Strabane District Council]

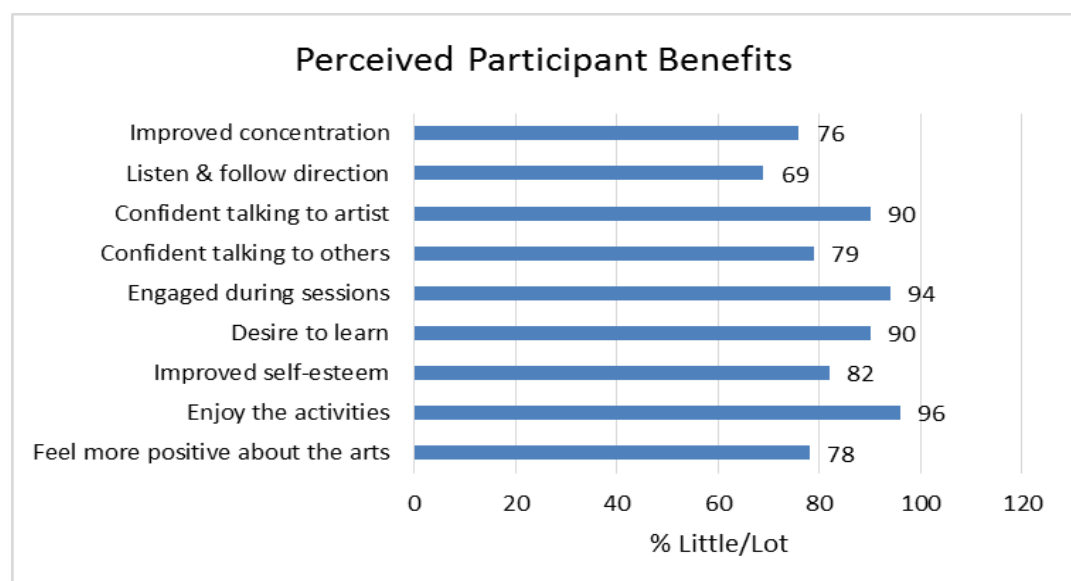
The artist experience was core to delivering a positive experience and respondents generally felt that the **sessions were relaxed and non-pressurised**, despite tackling activities that took them out of their comfort zone.

Any issues raised related to the desire for a **sustained programme of activities**, rather than short-term and inadequate consideration of people’s physical ability/needs.

“With my health problems, it felt good to get out of the house and socialise. Found the projects difficult with my dexterity but managed to get something done. Enjoyed seeing what others had created. Interesting.” [Female, 78 years, lives alone, Playhouse Theatre]

Artists and grantees are also asked to provide insight on any participant benefits they noticed and their comments support those provided by participants (see Figure 5.18).

Figure 5.18
Perceived Participant Benefits: Artists



Artists worked with a variety of active older people who are members of social groups, others with people with mental health problems, life limiting illness and/or dementia. Some had caring responsibilities, were bereaved and/or were living in supported accommodation or residential care. However, loneliness, social isolation and exclusion were considered to be significant issues for the majority of participants. Intergenerational projects, such as Waterside Theatre's



Telling Tales helped forge relationships between primary school children and older people living in local residential care homes. This was thought to help improve participants' sense of belonging to the wider community.

"The majority of the older people have limited access and engagement with their local community and some have no relatives and so receive few if any visitors. The weekly workshops allowed them to have something to look forward to and to feel less isolated and lonely." [Waterside Theatre]

"The majority of older people involved in Young at HeART were not currently involved in any organisation or community group. For these participants being part of the programme reduced social exclusion, isolation and loneliness. The participants got the opportunity to belong to a group where numerous new friendships were established. It was an achievement in itself to get many of these people out of the house and into a group scenario." [BEAM]

There were also reports of participants developing new friendships and attending other groups and events together in the community, with the Banbridge District Council, Streetwise and Big Telly projects stimulating the establishment of new groups. Having a sense of purpose, enjoyment and increased social contact was thought to have had a positive impact on mental wellbeing.

"The sociability of the arts is a huge factor in increasing wellbeing and the sense of fun involved in participation contributes to positive mental health." [Open Arts]

"There was always a great buzz every day after the session ended, a sort of camaraderie developed along the way and most of them would get there before the session would start, have instruments in hand, ready to roll." [Artist, Derry and Strabane District Council]

Learning and mastering a creative skill within a supportive and safe environment helped to build confidence and self-esteem. As did helping to transfer skills and knowledge to peers, young people and other members of the community. Indeed, passing down and hence preservation of knowledge to others, particularly appeared to help encourage men to get involved.

Artists reported that some participants purchased materials and continued to create artwork outside the projects and gifting these to friends and family, most



were keen to continue with more challenging classes. However, many artists thought that participants needed a high level of support during initial sessions as they worried that they wouldn't be able to create a worthwhile piece of art. It was thought that negative attitudes towards learning and school day experiences often needed addressed.

They went from thinking that their work was rubbish to finding it interesting and seeing different things in the imagery...They became much more confident once they saw those pieces mounted." [Action Mental Health]

"They were like sponges waiting to soak up the information" [Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council]

Examples of increased dexterity, mobility, agility and movement through participation in drama, dancing, crafting and circus sessions were provided in relation to physical health. Whilst three quarters of artists described improvements in focus, communication, concentration and independent working as the sessions proceeded. Those working with people with dementia reported that engagement levels varied from session to session, with people's moods described as less confused, less agitated or anxious and more settled. Group participation in the form of singing, clapping, stamping feet, dancing, music-making appears to have worked extremely well, coupled with more prolonged artist-participant contact in order to assist memory and rapport building.

"People can be ill, tired, wander, or be on medication and the heat in the centres can be draining. Some workshops were difficult...however in other sessions...folk were well up for all the interaction including singing, dancing, hand-jiving." [Artist, Oh Yeah]

"Sometimes there is depression in the air when you arrive. You can see a change in posture and mood by the end of a session." [Artist, Big Telly]

"Some of the participants may have said little, but would tap their feet or hands along to music. The carers were very clear that these small actions spoke volumes for the people in question." [Artist, Prime Cut]

Grantees stressed the need for longer term commitment when working with people with dementia, as relationships will be slower to develop as a result of short-term memory loss.

5.9 Synopsis

The analysis strengthens the position of the AOPP in relation to health and wellbeing benefits for participants and is consistent with the previous pilot evaluation findings. The evaluation forms are targeted towards the most active and able of the participants (potentially explaining the comparatively higher arts engagement levels), yet there does appear to be a case that participatory group arts activities can help improve and maintain positive active ageing.

During the evaluation fieldwork, conversations were struck with a variety of participants attending various activities. The sessions were always lively, with lots of laughter. However, participants clearly had pride in their work and were able to explain the various processes they had gone through to achieve their completed artwork. After participation, perceived barriers to arts engagement are decreased. However, lack of information about local activities remains a core barrier to participation.

Care obviously needs to be taken when analysing individual change as we cannot say that they are a direct result of participation in the AOPP projects. However, the pre-/post- matched group indicates slight but positive differences in terms of self-rated health and overall improvements on the WEMWBS. Projects provide people with opportunities to increase physical movement and improve their dexterity through dance, drama and even circus skills. Just a change of routine and meeting new people appears to have a positive impact on mood and feeling more connected to others. Our analysis indicates that feelings of loneliness are reduced and participants' sense of belonging increased. However, there remain missed opportunities as the sessions aren't generally signposting people to further activities.

6 Partner Experiences

6.1 Introduction

Each practicing artist is required to submit an Artist Report when their involvement ends in order to help disseminate learning. Questions explored feelings on project delivery, personal development, training, beneficiary impact and progress towards meeting the AOPP strategic aims. Similarly, grantees complete an End of Project Report upon completion. This provides a project summary to include activities, perceived impact and further development potential. This chapter summarises artist and lead partner feedback and Appendix Three provides a breakdown of the reports received.

6.2 Artist Perspectives

One hundred and nineteen Artist Reports have been received across thirty-five projects. The majority of artists (89%; n106) had worked with older people prior to the AOPP project.

6.2.1 Project Delivery

Table 6.1 illustrates artist delivery experiences.

Table 6.1
Project Delivery

Question	Yes	No, but it wasn't a problem	No, & it was a problem
Were the objectives of the project clear from the start?	n113 (95%)	n4	-
In retrospect, did you get all the information you needed during the planning process?	n101 (85%)	n15	n1
Did you feel you had a good working relationship with the partner organisation(s)?	n113 (95%)	n2	-
Did you receive the support you needed from the partner organisation(s)?	n111 (93%)	n2	n1
Did you receive support from the AOPP Community Development Officer?	n95 (80%)	n15	-
Did the space available suit your needs?	n106 (89%)	n11	n1
Did you find the older people easy to engage?	n114 (96%)	n5	-
Did the older people contribute to the planning of the sessions?	n74 (62%)	n42	-

Overall, the artists reported good working relationships with their partner organisations, benefiting from clear objectives, adequate preparation and planning in advance of sessions and access to the required resources.

“Having a clear plan, knowing from the first meeting that the end work would be exhibited, was integral to how I approached [the sessions].” [Banbridge District Council]

Where problems were identified, the majority involved inadequate space/planning to meet the needs of the activities (e.g. no internet access, use of desks for creative writing), sessions that were too short or too few and poor communication. This appeared to be a particular issue for artists working on location in residential care settings. Furthermore, there were instances whereby **artists were not provided with care staff support** during the sessions and were put in an extremely vulnerable position.

“I felt I was somewhat uninformed and unclear about the class itself and my role as facilitator. If I was to be asked to do another class, I would insist that [an initial] meeting take place.” [Playhouse Theatre]

Specific considerations when developing projects with older people were highlighted, to include management of large groups, the need to work at a slower pace and to simplify tasks, provide demonstrations and use repetition, use of short and direct speech to communicate, overcoming technological barriers, facilitating mixed ability groups and accounting for individualised and one to one support. Some artists reported that they found groups initially difficult to engage, either through a reluctance to engage in new activities, or as a result of specific health conditions. Indeed **artist flexibility and ability to adapt to participant needs** was a key to project success.

“The older people had various stages of dementia so it was challenging at the start of the project...but this was resolved after spending time with them and talking to their care providers.” [Northern Visions]

Artists reported that older people influenced the direction and content of the sessions to a lesser extent. However, this question may need reworded as it seems that some artists thought it involved technical aspects of art-making, rather than listening and adapting to participants’ interests and circumstances. Good practice examples included artists meeting with delivery partners and participants to discuss room set-up, ability and interests prior to commencement. Similarly, it was clear from the feedback that the workshops were organic in nature with the artists **tailoring activities as relationships developed**.

“Classes evolved to suit the requirements of the group. One topic often opened discussion for another.” [Playhouse Theatre]

“As time went on the older people engaged more with myself and each other, bringing more ideas to the table.” [BEAM]

“At times people suggested music or songs which could be brought to the next workshop. In this people felt more engaged and part of the project.” [Prime Cut]

6.2.2 Reported Benefits for Artists

Table 6.2 illustrates that all the artists felt that their involvement had contributed at least *a little* to their artistic practice, knowledge and understanding.

Table 6.2
Artist Development

Question	A Lot	A Little	Not at All
Did the project contribute to your artistic development?	n70 (59%)	n46 (39%)	n2
Did the project increase your knowledge of older people’s artistic needs?	n66 (55%)	n44 (37%)	n7
Did you learn about ways to link your art form to participant ability?	n71 (60%)	n42 (35%)	n5
Did the project increase your knowledge of the social issues affecting older people?	n56 (47%)	n55 (46%)	n6

Artists mainly commented that AOPP project delivery had made them more aware of individual abilities and the need to adapt their practice accordingly.

“It encouraged me to create dance motifs that were chair-based. It allowed me to explore using parts of my body that I may forget about, so it was challenging for me creatively and allowed me to stretch myself creatively, so I could offer the group a valuable artistic experience.” [NI Hospice]

Artists who were working with older people, or those with dementia for the first time felt that they had **developed their knowledge and expertise**. Others, working in mixed medium projects had found **networking with other artists** useful, whilst some had used with new materials and planned to incorporate these in future work. Some encouraged participants to think about and present their work in more contemporary styles, using a variety of mediums. Those located in residential care settings stressed the need for creative stimulation and the introduction of new faces to break-up daily routines. However, it was highlighted that “older people” is a very broad term for such diversity of experience and their experiences had caused artists to rethink stereotypes.

“It also makes you realise how getting old doesn’t always change your state of mind, a lot of old people still feel sixteen, it’s their body that has aged not their spirit.” [Waterside Theatre]

The sessions were described as sociable occasions and artists felt that they got to know people’s stories and circumstances, either through the artwork or in conversation. Loneliness, loss of mobility and independence, vulnerability,

exclusion and health related issues to include living with dementia were highlighted

“This project gave me invaluable insight into the issues that older people face...It also highlighted the importance of keeping active in old age ...” [Northern Visions]

Fifteen artists formally reporting receiving training during the project (13%). This included reminiscence, Dementia Awareness (through Alzheimer’s Society and Community Arts Partnership and the Butler Gallery’s “Meet me at MOMA”), disability awareness, Autism, working with vulnerable adults and children, First Aid and working with challenging behaviours. **Dementia related training** with practical, real life examples of the challenges that people face was believed to have been extremely helpful for artists in building their confidence and in delivering sessions. Some artists reported benefiting from informal learning opportunities (e.g. induction/observation related sessions in conjunction with partners or shadowing another experienced artist). This mentoring aspect was thought to have been beneficial.

Further training needs were identified, to include up-to-date hazard training in craft materials (e.g. paints, glue, wood, clay) and more in-depth training on considerations when working with older people and dementia awareness. Two artists also stated that they had not known about the monitoring and evaluation requirements for the AOPP until the end of the project. Overall 89% (n106) artists reported that they would like to continue to work with older people three were unsure).

6.3 Lead Partner Perspective

Forty-three grantees submitted End of Project Reports for inclusion in the evaluation.

6.3.1 Project Delivery

Although grantees were experienced in project management and delivery, several challenges and learning points were cited:

- **Recruitment and Retention:** A noteworthy proportion of organisations found it difficult to attract and retain target participant numbers. This appeared to be directly linked to older people’s personal circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities, poor health, lack of motivation and confidence) or weak community infrastructure/representation. Participants mostly preferred to undertake activities within familiar surroundings and mirroring artist feedback, some older people were reluctant to take part in activities they hadn’t tried before. Therefore short “no commitment” taster sessions were thought to have provided a successful entry mechanism. Attracting and retaining male involvement continues to be particularly challenging. However, Waterside Theatre reported that framing art pieces as they were finished, rather than waiting until the project end, helped to motivate the

older men that they worked with and kept momentum and interest going. Organisations noted that it was hard to reach isolated older people who don't belong to groups. However, there were many good practice examples of outreach and the use of referral agencies such as GPs and social workers;

- **Being over Ambitious:** Grantees wanted to deliver the best project that they could and to reach as many older people as possible. However, those funded during the final phase had a shorter timeframe for completion than phase one and two. Coordination of artists, groups, transport, hospitality and venues for larger-scale projects was time-consuming and some grantees underestimated the time and attention this required. ;
- **Managing Participant Expectations:** Some art forms (e.g. crochet, choirs) appeared to work best when there were people with similar levels of experience and expertise. For example Harmony Community Trust reported that participants at an initial photography session expected to be shown how to operate their various cameras, tablets and phones. Similarly if group sizes were too large, the artist was unable to provide sufficient attention to those who needed more help;
- **Artist Approach:** Partners felt that recruiting the right artist for their group was very important as they must have good social and communication skills in order to help build rapport, motivate and ensure successful delivery. Many grantees reported that the artists that they employed worked outside their contracted hours to ensure high quality arts delivery. The importance of ensuring that participants achieve success during the initial session was highlighted, with some activities such as screen printing requiring more prolonged efforts and putting some people off;
- **Understanding Older People's Needs:** Grantees that did not usually provide services for older people stated that the experience made them realise that they had lacked understanding of the diversity of the older population and their needs upon project commencement. Some hadn't planned for mixed ability and the need for additional facilitator support, appropriate scheduling times, poor weather/dark nights, participant ill health etc. The ongoing requirement for and, value of training was highlighted.

6.3.2 Organisation Benefits

Lead Partners highlighted a number of internal benefits which arose from AOPP project delivery. These included a **greater understanding** of the needs of older people through preliminary discussions and taster sessions, greater confidence in designing and delivering future activities, more people wanting to become involved in the classes/groups which they run, increased profile from positive local publicity and new partnerships developed with other groups, facilities and organisations. Gains were noted across both high and lower capacity delivery agents and many stated that they would use the processes adopted in subsequent projects (e.g. pre-project participant involvement and consultation, use of taster sessions).

“Recruiting previous participants to form a team to help deliver to new audiences worked well. This is an approach we will seek to use again in the future. The project proved a good opportunity to reach out across the new wider Council area.” [ABC Council]

Grant recipients operating on volunteer efforts, reported that they would consider applying for future funding as a result of the experience and skills developed from delivering their AOPP project and to maintain the relationship built up with artists and other local stakeholders.

Arts organisations particularly benefited from **extending their reach into the community, raising their profile and increasing audiences**. The additionally benefited from **building specialist knowledge** and collaborative partnerships with a vast range of statutory and community providers.

“The Re:Vision project was a massive learning curve for us...we gained an incredible insight into dementia, collaborated with a number of organisations that we would otherwise not have the opportunity to work with and produced a piece of work that we are extremely proud of and sends out an important message.” [Prime Cut]

“Since this project commenced both community groups have brought groups from their area to performances at the theatre...The community arts officer has helped Hillcrest House with their Summer Scheme...we have also helped with funding applications for projects with their women’s group.” [Waterside Theatre]

6.4 Volunteers

Fifty-three percent of AOPP projects (n23) relied on the time and dedication of volunteers. Reports indicate that 209 volunteers were involved, contributing 3,393 hours to project delivery. Eighty-five percent (n177) were aged 60+.

A short questionnaire was developed to capture the range of volunteering and to gather their impressions of the project. Fifty-two completed surveys were returned spanning thirteen projects.⁸⁸

The majority (75%; n39) of volunteers were female and 45% were over 55 years. Nineteen percent began volunteering less than one year ago and 23% (n12) had been volunteering in excess of 10 years. Over the last month respondents had contributed at least 1,455 hours support. Roles in the respective AOPP funded project included, transport and hospitality provision, setting up the rooms, interacting with participants, helping to facilitate workshops, providing assistance to the crew during performances and filming.

Twenty-nine percent of respondents were involved in an arts group (n15). However 73% had been involved in arts activity within the last 12 months outside

⁸⁸ DU Dance, BEAM, Andersonstown Community Theatre, Down Community Arts and Strabane District Council, BEAM, Spectrum Centre, Pomeroy Resource Centre, Big Telly, Border Arts, LGNI, Northern Visions, Playhouse Theatre.

the current project (n38). The primary reasons for volunteering were to get experience in a particular area of work, to be helpful and enjoyment. Some volunteers got involved as a result of family members participation.

Respondents stated that they had benefited from their involvement in the AOPP project in terms of **improving confidence, developing friendships and social networks and increased understanding of the value of social activities to older people.**

"It was a great experience and I would recommend people to become involved in other such projects as it gave great support to older people in the area." [Female, 45-54 years, Border Arts]

"It gives me a feeling of being useful in the community. In this project I have felt connected to the older person." [Female, 65-74 years, Pomeroy Resource Centre]

Volunteers noted that loneliness was a problem for many older people, particularly those living in rural areas with poor transport accessibility. The majority reported that projects needed to be of a sufficient duration to help people build relationships, confidence and skills. Practical activities were thought to have worked better with some groups, whilst others benefitted from a more conversational focus. Dance and music sessions were popular within residential care settings but depended on additional planning and preparation.

6.5 Synopsis

Those involved in the delivery of the AOPP projects support the benefits of participatory arts engagement for older people. Loneliness and a gradual distancing from social life is a reality for any older people and there are many practical and psychological difficulties involved in reaching those who are most in need and encouraging them to become involved.

The multi-sectoral, collaborative approach promoted by the AOPP has proven invaluable and it enables knowledge and resource sharing. However, it is clear that practical training and capacity building is required for the sector in order to ensure that needs are being met and addressed on a longer-term basis. This work is highly specialist and projects are working with particularly vulnerable people, many with degenerative health issues.

Projects have stimulated new partnerships and ways of working and enabled additional services to be delivered locally. There is evidence that the Programme has successfully left a legacy, both at a personal and organisational level. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

7 Leaving a Legacy

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes awareness raising and capacity building activities, delivered through artist development, Programme promotion and the Arts and Age Festivals.

7.2 Building Capacity

A full-time AOPP Community Development Officer (CDO) managed and co-ordinated the delivery of the programme and reported to the Head of Community and Participatory Arts. Key duties included providing advice and support, promoting, marketing and representing the AOPP at community and strategic level and partnership working with relevant agencies and initiatives.

7.2.1 Shaping Programme Activity

The CDO was the principal point of operational liaison with the Arts and Older People Steering Group which was established early in the process. The Steering Group's role ensured that the programme met the needs of older people. Members provided advice from an advocacy perspective and helped the direction of the programme keep a firm focus on the social justice issues, as well as identifying opportunities for promotion and advocacy. The Arts Council Board, Chief Executive, Director of Strategic Development, Director of Operations and Head of Community and Participatory Arts were also involved in overseeing programme delivery. An Evaluation Sub-Committee provided quality assurance, guidance and research expertise to the external evaluators.

Comprehensive Guidance Notes assisted with application development and the CDO guided potential applicants through the process. The assessment criteria stressed Strategic Impact, Partnership Working, Quality and Viability. Each Round prioritised identified Programme gaps, whether geographical, or targeting specific issues and groups such as males and isolated older people. The 2013-16 Programme has focused on involving older people in project planning and tailoring activity to their needs. There is greater recognition that work must be sustained and projects needed to demonstrate best practice, relationship building and potential legacy opportunities. Applications also needed to include a strong advocacy message at the end of the project through an event, publication, exhibition or opportunity to showcase the benefits of the project for participants, linking into the Arts and Age Festivals.

The requirement for 10% match funding in Phase Two encouraged groups to access funding from other sources, develop partnerships and deliver in-kind contributions. It also enabled more activity to be undertaken for the available budget. The lower level awards in the final grant round (up to £10,000) illustrated

that smaller scale activity is valued and enabled lower capacity groups to lead projects and build their capacity and reach.

The CDO and Art's Council Development Officers assessed applications and made award recommendations. Over the course of the Programme, organisations that did not receive awards were signposted to Age NI funding workshops and were given the opportunity to meet with the Arts Council to discuss how they might improve their application and project content for subsequent rounds. Others have been signposted to Big Lottery, Baring Foundation and the Turkington Fund as alternative funding streams.

Three Briefing Events (one for each funding round) were held to inform grantees of their obligations to contribute to the Programme's evaluation and promotion. An AOPP Media Pack provided advice regarding acknowledgement of funding, guidance for writing news releases and selected quotes alongside contact details for key NI press. A number of grantees also received advice on commissioning artists post-award and there was ongoing support provided on financial monitoring and fulfilling the terms and conditions of grant.

7.2.2 Artist/Practitioner Development

In order to encourage practice development, the Programme supported artists and others working with older people to increase their skills and share knowledge. Two targeted training programmes took place:

- In 2014 Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) was funded to facilitate a residential weekend for 11 artists from Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland and England. The aim was to enable artists working with people with dementia to come together to explore practice issues. Discussions were documented and used to inform and stimulate conversations during the "Dementia Black and White" symposium at the 2014 Arts and Age Conference which brought together 100 arts professionals, health and social care commissioners and media representatives. A film and evaluation report facilitated dissemination;⁸⁹ and
- ArtsCare was commissioned to develop and deliver a pilot training programme with healthcare staff and volunteers across the five Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs). The Arts Health and Wellbeing programme was delivered in partnership with key older people's services and groups in March 2014 in order to build creative care into routine practice, increase access to introductory arts activity for older people and to support artists through increasing staff's understanding of the value of arts for older people. Fifty-five people participated and an exhibition of the artwork was held in the ArtsCare Gallery Space in Belfast.

A number of projects were selected due to their emphasis upon training delivery and sustaining learning:

⁸⁹ <http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/creativity/arts-and-dementia-northern-ireland>

- **Big Telly's Fantasy Hotel** delivered training by professional theatre makers to 30 care staff in six residential settings. The project culminated with each residential home having their own show performed and the production toured to other residential homes in that local area. Big Telly identified that activity coordinators were more responsive to residents needs and were more aware of how to source materials and other funding opportunities to continue with the work;
- **Community Arts Partnership CAPtivate** project provided community arts activity for older people and those with dementia across 10 different groups – culminating in 10 artworks. The project trained 30 community artists to become more specialised in working with people with dementia and was developed as a result of CAPs previously commissioned research into this area.⁹⁰ Dementia Friend training was delivered by Alzheimer's Society and Red Apple Arts conducted a practical session on delivering visual arts with people diagnosed with dementia;



- **Age NI** trained 45 older people as peer facilitators, equipping them with photographic skills to capture and edit images. The project had a strong advocacy slant and contributes to the Age NI "All About Ageing in NI" publication;
- **Void Gallery** established itself as a Dementia Friendly

Gallery, providing training for staff and artists in the area of arts education and dementia, following a Meet me at MoMA style of engagement. The gallery hosted several visits for adults with dementia and they will continue to work in this area;

- **Verbal Arts Centre's Reading Rooms** provided a dedicated OCN L2 training programme for librarians, community workers, writers and volunteers based around reading aloud and shared reading settings. Participants were encouraged to participate in share memories and tell stories and trainees were provided with opportunities to come together and share their experiences. Training was provided by Stroke Association, speech therapists, health care consultants and a theatre director. The project was shadowed by an American Intern studying literature and engagement with groups;
- **Greater Shankhill Partnership Property Development Company's Social Sofa/ICE Age** project facilitated training workshops for care workers in arts and crafts and reminiscence. This incorporated Dementia Awareness facilitated by Alzheimer's Society;

⁹⁰ CAP, (2014). Community Arts and Dementia

- **Arts and Disability Forum** provided preparatory training for artists within their Art and Biscuit - Let Me Stay mini tour, which involved theatre, discussion and practical visual arts sessions for people with dementia and their carers;
- **NI Hospice's Arts for Hospice** integrated arts/creative therapies into the programme of care at Hospice to create a model that can be replicated by other palliative care service providers. The funding provided arts activities and training to healthcare staff on the use of arts to enhance the care of hospice attendees and their Carers. Training was also offered to artists and care staff on dementia awareness in order to improve knowledge and skills. Medical students shadowed the sessions; and
- **Lisburn City Council's Arts and Older People** project incorporated arts training for workers in care and community settings.

7.3 Continuing the Work

The AOPP has produced wonderful artworks spanning jewellery, willow work, weaving, metalwork, woodwork, crochet, glass work, upholstery, poetry, mosaics, collage, storybooks, photographs, cinematography, ceramics, cards, patchwork, painting, sculptures, book making, paper craft, loom work, junk art, Papier Mache, animation, felt making, printing, wax work, sewing, quilting, film, soundscapes etc. Many of the performances were filmed and some have included footage of rehearsals and interviews with participants and artists. Each school child and older person participating in LGNI's project received a Generation Art Certificate.

7.3.1 Resources Produced

AOPP artwork is permanently exhibited in communal areas, hospitals, community, residential and day centres throughout Northern Ireland. Community groups, Councils and arts organisations now have increased numbers on their contacts databases and mailing lists. Other legacy leaving resources produced include:

- CAP produced a Good Practice Guide to Working with People with Dementia for artists as a result of the feedback gained post-project. This aligns to the comments provided by artists delivering similar AOPP projects and highlights the importance of specialist training, pre-planning and preparation, the need to be flexible during sessions and to have a dedicated care provider presence in order to ensure adequate safeguarding for the artist and older person. CAP will utilise this knowledge to inform future artist training;
- Big Telly produced a Resource Pack via Fantasy Hotel in order that residential care home Activity Coordinators could deliver further participative drama and storytelling sessions;
- Age Concern Causeway purchased song sheets, electric keyboard, tambourines and maracas. Pictures, videos and art pieces created will be used as props for reminiscence;
- A Silver Music Box was purchased by Derry & Strabane Council to enable sing along sessions in residential settings to be sustained and are continuing to run regular Tea Dances and Friday morning singing workshop;

- Waterside Theatre purchased 20 Felting Kits, brushes, scissors, embroidery needles, 10 screen printing Frames, 10 printing preparation tables, a small printing press, lino printing tools and cutting boards, etching needles, ink rollers and clear acrylic plates. They are helping participant groups to source funding and have applied to deliver a project in a care home in Strabane.



7.3.2 Future Plans

All of the Lead Partners expressed the desire to continue to deliver arts activities for older people. They reported that participants had signed up for newsletters and other activities with their organisations. Other groups had secured or were actively sourcing

funding streams in order to sustain arts activities with older people, for example:

- Pomeroy Resource Ltd, Killyclogher and AllyFoyle have secured funding to continue arts activities;
- Oh Yeah will deliver a 6 week programme at Newington Day Centre through AOPP based contacts;
- Down Community Arts are seeking further funding for Life Text 2;
- NI Hospice are seeking funding to run an arts and older people's programme within palliative care and dementia;
- LGNI intend to include art in a NI wide Linking Learning Growing Together project which connects care homes with their local community;
- South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association restored a 200 year old hand loom as a result they are now working with Museum Services to deliver a further project. They are also planning to submit a Heritage Lottery application with Lough Neagh Heritage Boating Association.

7.4 Synopsis

There has now been six years of older people focused arts activities through the AOPP. The CDO has in depth knowledge of the projects and has actively shaped their development based on good practice. Significant training activity has taken place as a result of the grant aid. However, this has largely been managed by the projects themselves. As the AOPP has developed over the last six years there has been an increase in the proportion of participants with long-term illness and dementia. We know that artists and facilitators require support in order to work in clinical settings – both beforehand and during.

ArtsCare has immense experience in this field, both in preparing artists and introducing care staff to the benefits of arts activities. There is potential to develop specialist AOPP training in order to improve accessibility of the arts for older people living in residential care settings. The AOPP 2013-16 placed emphasis upon sustainability and legacy building. The feedback demonstrates that the

activities have sparked interest in the arts and groups see the value of continuing with the work. The purchasing materials through the Programme and means that future sessions will be more cost effective and this is potentially an area for consideration going forward.

8 Raising Awareness

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the efforts made to raise awareness of the AOPP and improve understanding of how arts participation can address social justice issues such as loneliness, social exclusion and improve wellbeing. It incorporates findings from discussions with the Steering Group, interviews with selected decision makers, influencers and stakeholders.

8.2 Strategic Advocacy

8.2.1 Building Partnerships

The Programme has established links with older people's initiatives in the UK and further afield, to include the Bealtaine Festival, Republic of Ireland, Gwanwyn, Wales and Luminare, Scotland. The CDO has networked with other Arts Councils via The Baring Foundation and localised activities and learning has been shared. The AOPP in Northern Ireland has been highlighted as good practice within these circles and the Chairperson of the Arts Council has spoken at a range of high profile conferences.

Meetings were also conducted with OFMdfM and DCAL in order to improve knowledge and reinforce understanding of the Programmes' ability to deliver against departmental policy priorities. The programme has been promoted to the OFMdfM, CAL and Health Committees and the Chief Executive met with political representatives on an individual basis prior to the May 2016 elections.



Dr Una Lynch and artist Jean Alexander launched and showcased an illustrative booklet "Not So Cut Off" as part of the 2016 Arts and Age Festival and Conference programme. This work, through the use of case studies, creatively and sensitively captures and highlights the benefits of the AOPP in alleviating isolation and loneliness, drawing out good practice and positive impact upon participants' lives. The research and associated drawings complements the Arts Council's

advocacy efforts.

Over the grant period the CDO has driven forward grassroots promotion of the AOPP. For example, Age Friendly Belfast – Imagine Arts Event in October showcased performances by AOPP funded projects, attending the DUP Conference, speaking with Age Sector Platform, an independent MLA, signposting groups to organisations such as Ulster Museum, Azure Training (re: Meet Me at MoMA model), attending the Age NI and ARK Conference. The PHA remain strong supporters of the AOPP and the CDO and Communications Officer met with the

PHA to help increase the profiling of projects through their networks (e.g. PHA Regional Later Years Groups). Relationships have been established with Queen's University Belfast ARK project and this has potential for improved links to research

and partnership working. The Head of Community and Participatory Arts presented the Programme at the Institute of Public Health's recent research conference in Belfast.



8.2.2 Arts and Age Festivals

The AOPP pilot programme culminated in a Celebration of Age Week designed to showcase three years of AOPP funding and to raise awareness regarding the ability of the arts to have a positive impact upon the lives of older people. Almost 16,000 people attended events and/or viewed exhibited work.

The Festival has now grown significantly and forms an annual, month long 'Arts and Age' Festival. This provides participants with a platform to display their work and a valuable opportunity for advocacy through high-profile media coverage. Due to timing the March 2014 event necessarily adopted a collaborative approach with contributions from ArtsCare, Age Friendly Belfast, Age NI, Dementia Services Development Centre, Arts Council and input from the Commissioner for Older People.

The Festival programmes illustrate good strategic relationships between organisations and groups. For example, the association with ArtsCare has helped align and maximise the Arts & Age Festival links between ArtsCare's Here & Now Festival which is targeted at older people linked to health and social care either through Day Care, Residential Care or Assisted Housing and older well people's groups, the RIPE Exhibition for people who discovered their creative talents later in life and Aloud, Allowed, Aloud and In Full Bloom showcases.

The 2016 Festival has been the most ambitious and the Final grant round was strategically directed at producing and showcasing AOPP talent and creativity consistently throughout the month long Festival. Additional funding was secured from The Baring Foundation and PHA for the PR/Marketing element of the conference, which was attended by approximately 100 people.

8.2.3 Media Coverage and Promotion

The Communications Plan for the programme aims to maximise publicity for the initiative as a whole as well as individual projects. It sets out the key messages to

be delivered, the publications and places to target, suggested broadcast and media partners and campaign advocates. Grantees are provided with a media pack and guidance for publicity purposes.

The Arts Council Communications Department has provided support throughout the pilot and 2013-16 Programmes. The Department had been historically active, supporting with AOPP Newsletter publication, web content, news releases and print media articles. However, more recent staff shortages have negatively impacted on Programme promotion. This was mediated however by the procurement of external PR services which generated print and broadcast coverage.

Online and social media promotional activity heightened around the Arts and Age Festival (see Table 8.1). The figures illustrate that web visits are on the decline however, Twitter activity was higher. Twenty-three print articles appeared in regional and local papers and 14 broadcast articles were generated during March and April 2016.

Table 8.1

Arts and Age Festival: Online and Social Media Communication - 2014/15

Arts & Age Festival 2014			
ACNI Website	2 updates	710 page visits	
Facebook	6 updates	Reach 3,760	Engagements 517
Twitter	47 updates	Impressions 46,328	Engagements 678
Arts & Age Festival 2015			
ACNI Website	28 updates	529 page visits	
Facebook	14 updates	Reach 31,975	Engagements 510
Twitter	37 updates	Impressions 32,484	Engagements 415
Arts & Age Festival 2016			
ACNI Website	6 updates	418 page visits	
Facebook	8 updates	Reach 12,772	Engagements 181
Twitter	51 updates	Impressions 920,362	246 Engagements

8.3 Grassroots Advocacy

There has been considerable advocacy and promotional activity at project level throughout the course of the Programme and this is typically manifested through local broadcasting, social media and celebrations.

8.3.1 Local Showcases

Planning for their end of project showcase, whether a performance or exhibition was believed to have helped the groups to gel, as well as giving focus and something to work towards on a combined basis. However, these celebratory events had a dual role, serving to bring participants, family friends, local service providers and decision-makers together, both to celebrate achievements and challenge negative perceptions of ageing. Events were essential to participant progression in terms of building confidence, raising self-esteem and instilling pride in their continued contribution and significance in society.

“We discovered many older people were surprised that their friends and family had viewed the programmes they had been a part of.” [Northern Visions]

“When we held our exhibition at the end of the project, some of the men’s own family commented that they didn’t realise that their fathers or husbands were even capable of producing such fabulous artwork.” [Waterside Theatre]

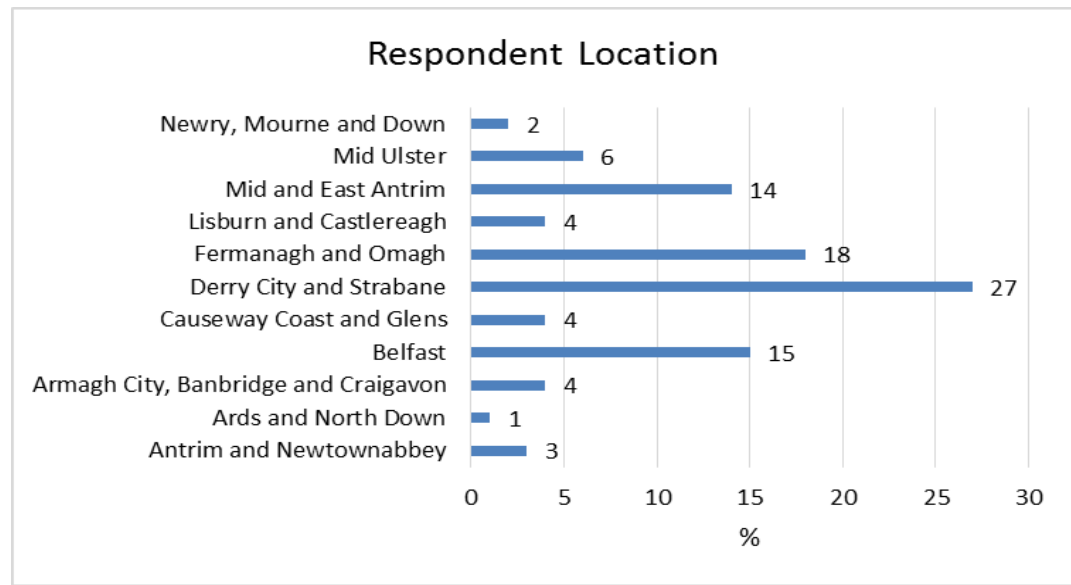
Based on lead partner feedback, it is estimated that 11,948 people attended AOPP showcases throughout Northern Ireland. Overall, 1,041 AOPP event questionnaires were submitted.⁹¹

The majority of those completing the event forms were female (n740; 71%) and aged over 55 years (n765; 73%). Only nine percent (n92) were aged under 35 years old. Sixty percent (n624) had attended an arts event within the last year, 25% (n256) were members of an arts or cultural group and 43% (n446) had taken part in arts activities.

Seventy-six percent of respondents provided valid postcode information (n787). Figure 8.1 illustrates that the majority of attendees lived in the Derry City and Strabane Council area (27%; n210). Of those providing valid postcodes, 20% (n158) lived in a NRA and 32% (n248) lived in a rural area.

⁹¹ Please note some cross-over between audiences and participants has been identified.

Figure 8.1
Event Attendee Area of Residence



Respondents primarily attended the event because they knew people who were taking part (n539; 52%) and the majority (84%; n874) felt that the **quality of the event was very good**. Eighty percent of those under 35 years felt the event **had increased their awareness of the issues facing older people** (n74) *a lot* and 89% (n82) stated that they felt **more positive towards older people as a result of attending**.

8.3.2 Resources and Recognition

A variety of promotional resources were developed as part of the AOPP and these have a vital role in awareness raising beyond the life of the funding. For example:

- Northern Visions produced a variety of online, DVD and documentary resources as part of Grand Visions;
- 1000 copies of Open Arts Larger than Life Graphic Novel were produced
- NIAMH produced a booklet “Whatever happened to McDoherty’s Mince” capturing reminiscence on local food and culture;
- Oh Yeah Maritime Blues project produced a booklet telling individual stories and the impact of the work; and
- Age on Stage produced a Joke calendar based on those told at their weekly sessions and the company is now fully established in Craigavon.

The quality and innovation of organisations and artists facilitated through AOPP funding has also been demonstrated through external recognition of their contribution to science, the arts and wellbeing. For example:

- Void staff have presented their work at the launch of Bealtaine and conferences in Edinburgh and Derry;

- Age NI's Hidden Voices has been exhibited in the Ulster Hall, the Royal Academy in London and Stormont. The work has also featured at several conferences and BBC Radio Ulster and BBC Radio Foyle;
- Big Telly received recognition from international artists to include François Matarasso and Kate Organ for Fantasy Hotel. Machinations was included in the 2015 Science Festival and British Science Week Brochures as models of good practice;
- The Spectrum Centre's Social Sofa and Oh Yeah Music Centre's Maritime Blues projects received Dementia Friendly awards by The Alzheimer's Society;
- Prime Cut's Re:Vision project was recommended to the Arts & Disability Forum, showcased at the Bounce Festival in the Lyric and will be hosted as part of the Science Festival in 2017

8.4 Contextual Challenges

During 2011, 2013 and 2014 the Arts Council submitted a question for inclusion in the MLA Research Panel Survey:

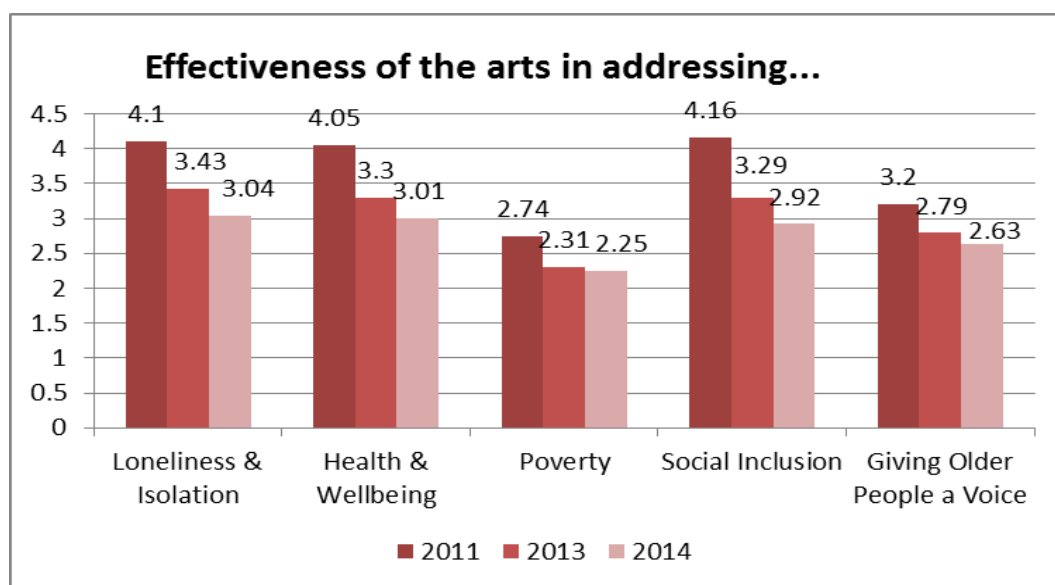
Thinking about social justice issues for older people, in your opinion, how effective or otherwise are *the arts* at addressing each of the following? (5=very effective and 1=not at all effective)

- Reducing loneliness and isolation;
- Improving health and wellbeing;
- Highlighting poverty;
- Supporting social inclusion; and
- Strengthening the voice of older people.

Figure 8.2 illustrates that MLAs consistently felt the arts to be most effective at addressing issues regarding *loneliness and isolation* and *health and wellbeing*. However, the 2014 scores were lower than those of previous surveys.

Figure 8.2

MLA Rating of the Effectiveness of the Arts in Addressing Social Justice Issues



On the whole, MLAs are more likely to consider the arts to be ineffective at addressing social justice issues:

- 34% of MLAs felt the arts were effective in reducing loneliness and isolation;
- 29% at supporting social inclusion;
- 27% at improving health and emotional wellbeing;
- 23% at strengthening voice of older people; and
- 10% at highlighting poverty.

Structured interviews with “bellwethers”⁹² helps to shed light on these results. Over the course of the Programme, both at Interim and Final reporting, discussions were dominated by issues relating to the NI economy, particularly the increasing pressures on public services.

Most recently headlines have been driven by the Executive’s management of the Social Investment Fund and Renewable Heat Incentive and the long-term financial impact on the public purse. Publicity around these schemes were believed to have done little for public confidence in political decision making and disillusionment with the system of Government remains. Ongoing financial hardships continue to manifest at Council level, with representatives aware of the increase in presentations to food banks and worries regarding welfare reform and difficulties securing social security benefits in genuine cases of need.

Both at Interim and Final reporting, those consulted noted the continuing and rising pressures on public, community and voluntary service delivery, amidst

⁹² influential people in the public and private sectors whose positions require that they are politically informed

resource cuts. Growing waiting lists and the cost of nursing care remain high on the agenda and these are felt at community level. Awareness of the AOPP was not high, although individuals did feel that there were links between wellbeing and the arts. However, it was believed that the arts would always struggle to compete against bread and butter issues.

8.5 Synopsis

The AOPP has made significant progress in realising opportunities for policy alignment and it is believed that the shift towards wellbeing is to the Programme (and wider arts sector's) benefit. Maintaining links between decision makers, funders and the arts sector is challenging due to the decreasing budgets of many public services including public health and adult social care. As a result, funders are balancing immediate and acute needs, with a need to invest in a long-term preventative work. As budgets continue to come under close scrutiny there is a danger of commissioners focusing on more traditional service models rather than exploring and co-designing new services involving the arts. **By their very nature, preventative approaches are difficult to evidence and commissioners may find it difficult to invest as a result.**

The arts sector is also facing financial challenges with services that are vulnerable to cuts and operating in reduced financial circumstances. **The AOPP however, is in an extremely strong position as the evaluation provides clear evidence that activities are helping to improve older people's self-reported health and wellbeing and is addressing loneliness.** The successive Programme benefits from supportive Steering Group representation across health, age, dementia, local government and care providers and next period must focus on distilling and tailoring the evaluation material towards key influencers.

9 Programme Appraisal

9.1 Introduction



Active ageing, wellbeing, lifelong learning, participation and community activism are at the core of the AOPP and there is strong alignment with wider policy issues. Protecting and improving wellbeing could potentially save public money in the long-term. This reflects the need to better integrate mental and physical health and to invest in preventing ill-health.

The AOPP has helped to build people's confidence and resilience and has emphasised the need to make structural changes to address the root causes of poor wellbeing, such as loneliness. The AOPP reasserts the importance of social relationships, community cohesion and activity. Interventions must therefore identify and address wellbeing inequalities and promote inclusion and accessibility, particularly amongst the most vulnerable older people.

The Programme demonstrates the value of arts and culture in enriching our lives at a time of significant financial constraints. A recent study commissioned by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) estimated that the additional income needed to achieve the same wellbeing benefit as arts participation to be around £1,084 per person per year.⁹³ Such figures help strengthen the case for investment.

This chapter discusses the impact of the programme according to the overarching objectives and outcomes presented within the AOPP evaluation framework and those outlined in the Arts Council's strategy. The populated indicators are displayed and a number of areas for AOPP development suggested.

9.2 Impact: Isolation and Loneliness

Table 9.1 illustrates the AOPP objective and desired outcome in relation to combating isolation and loneliness.

⁹³ Fujiwara, D. *et al.* (2014a). *Quantifying and valuing the wellbeing impacts of culture and sport*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Table 9.1

Outcomes: Isolation and Loneliness

Objective	Outcome
• To provide opportunities for social interaction through arts-led interventions and projects; • Working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness	• Increased social interaction through participatory arts projects amongst target groups (i.e. people living alone, carers, rural dwellers).

The AOPP aims to increase opportunities for social interaction through engagement in arts based activities. Table 9.2 highlights the populated indicator framework.

Table 9.2

Indicators: Isolation and Loneliness

Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators	
% living in Rural SOAs	47%
Decrease in participants' loneliness scores (Hughes et al) pre- and post- activity	Statistically Significant Decrease
% participants agree these sessions have made me want to go to arts events	70%
% participants agree these sessions have made me want to participate in more arts activities	77%
% of artists who feel participants enjoyed the activities	96%
% of artists who feel that participants are now more positive about the arts	78%
% of participants agreeing that they have made good friendships out of this project	82%
Participants, artists & stakeholders feel that the project has decreased isolation and improved access & participation in the arts	Achieved

The evidence indicates that loneliness is a widespread issue for older people in general. Participants primarily became involved in projects in order to improve their social networks and enjoy the company of others. It is important that subsequent programmes continue to target those found to be at most risk (i.e. males, people who live alone, have a disability or poor health). Rurality and/or poor access to transport also impacts upon older people's social connectivity and the Programme recognises this through the grant aid.

However, lack of confidence and low self-esteem can impede isolated older people from taking the first step to becoming involved in local activities.

Therefore, greater emphasis on outreach activities and targeted referral initiatives could help improve reach. A number of projects have sought to attract “unconnected” older people. For example, Mindwise New Vision provided outreach to people within their own homes, Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAPP) gained referrals from the Good Morning Projects and BEAM obtained GP and pharmacy referrals.

Based upon Lead Partner returns, we estimate that over 13,000 people participated in AOPP projects. As a result of an identified gap during the pilot phase, there have been more projects directed at males within this funding period. However, numbers remain low and initial recruitment has been difficult to achieve. Evidence suggest that successful projects tend to be more practical in nature (e.g. traditional crafts, metal, woodwork, photography, music, film) but that this opens the door for wider opportunities such as creative writing, visual arts and storytelling.

Through the relaxed settings and informal nature of the regular sessions camaraderie and friendships have been formed, with some participants socialising outside the workshops. It is considered that participating in arts, as opposed to other activities, has helped create a relaxed and playful atmosphere. Participants typically had little or no prior experience in the medium and felt they were exploring and learning together. Doing something out of the ordinary made the sessions enjoyable and the artists were supportive in their approach. As a result progression was at the individual’s pace and art pieces and performances were embellished and personalised as one wished.

In addition to case study evidence, there have been statistically significant post-project decreases on the loneliness scale. The results suggest that activities have specifically benefited those who were most isolated and excluded. However, longer-term companionship issues still need to be given some thought as, the stimulation and sustainability of activities post-funding is an extremely important aspect that needs to be carried through to the next Programme.

Despite this, new groups were established as a direct result of the funding. For example, NI Hospice established a creative arts group for carers, a core group of older circus practitioners continue to meet weekly via Streetwise, Niamh established a community based weekly art group, Big Telly’s Machinations project, led to the establishment of a rural men’s group, Age Concern Causeway established a choir, Strabane District Council continue to run tea dances and a regular Age on Stage group now operates in Craigavon.

Volunteering hasn’t been a primary focus, although many community led projects have been supported by voluntary efforts. The most large-scale being Verbal Arts Centre’s *Reading Rooms* which trained volunteers as facilitators in partnership with Age NI, Alzheimer’s Society, Stroke Association and supported housing/residential care providers. There may be potential to build upon and extend this model.

9.3 Impact: Social Inclusion

Table 9.3 illustrates the AOPP outcomes in relation to addressing social inclusion.

Table 9.3

Outcomes: Social Inclusion

Objective	Outcome
- Combating the social exclusion of older people through arts interventions that promote inclusion, free movement and sharing; - Working to create a more peaceful, fair and inclusive community that does not discriminate against age and ethnicity	- Positive relationships developed between people from different backgrounds and experiences; - Older people feel more connected to their local communities and wider NI society; - Decreased feelings of exclusion amongst older people in society and increasing awareness of age discrimination amongst those who have participated in the programme.

The desired outcomes focus upon improving access to services, increased relationship building between older people on an intergenerational, inter-cultural and cross-community basis and increased feelings of social inclusion. The relevant indicators are presented in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4

Indicators: Social Inclusion

Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators	
% of participants strongly agree/agree that they have made good friendships out of this project * cross-community, inter-cultural, intergenerational projects	82% Cross-community 81% Intercultural – 76% Intergenerational 80%
Increase in the promotion of good relations (e.g. sharing facilities, relationship development, networking & links)	Achieved
% of participants agree they have taken part in other groups and activities as a result of this project	53%
Increase in sense of neighbourhood belonging	+11%
Increase in sense of belonging to NI belonging	+19%

The 2013-16 programme has funded considerably more projects operating in residential care and assisted living settings, compared to the pilot phase. As such

just under half of the projects delivered activities within such facilities and 91% targeted older people at risk of isolation.

The AOPP aims to promote the social inclusion of older people through improving access to participatory arts activities and the arising personal health and wellbeing benefits. From the outset, the Programme places older people at the centre of programme design and applicants must submit details of partnerships, consultation and levels of support from potential participants and representative groups. Subsequently, artists and project leads are encouraged to understand the people they will work with in order to tailor activities to people's preferences, abilities and circumstances, in order that they feel valued and an active part of the process. Evaluation discussions and observations do suggest that artists have taken time to get to know people and have adapted the sessions accordingly. Artists found the work rewarding, although challenging, as it animated spaces and provided opportunities for social connectivity.

It is considered that the most successful projects with regards to sustaining inclusion are those which connect people to their wider community and provide longer-term opportunities for relationships to flourish. For example, the Spectrum Centre project made supported accommodation for people with dementia the central point of activities and the facility was visited by a range of external groups. This project facilitated sustained intergenerational contact between tenants and children from the local primary school, generating an invite to the children's nativity play. Strabane District Council facilitated joint sessions between people attending day centres and those who don't. Linking Generation's *Generation Art* and Waterside Theatre's *Telling Tales* projects linked residential care homes with local schools. However, it was noted that arts activities are not always freely available in care settings due to funding and staffing constraints.

Although the majority of projects delivered visual arts activities, some such as Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council's *Dance Goes Digital* and Northern Visions improved access to and skills in digital technologies such as iPad training, film-making, animation, creative writing, storytelling, music creation and animation. This demonstrates the value of the arts in supporting digital inclusion amongst the older population.

The evaluation evidence highlights that there were significant decreases in the proportion of people "feeling left out" and isolated. This is a great achievement as it reinforces the potential of the Programme to positively impact on quality of life. It is important that people continue to be supported and signposted to ongoing activities within their local areas to ensure that this impact is not transient. Projects must be firmly grounded in locally based partnerships in order to maximise opportunities for sustainability and inter-agency referrals. This aspect was highlighted by NIAMH *Lifestories* project, which delivered arts activities in a community setting and linked participants to other follow-on services offered by U3A and Gasyard.

Projects typically operated on a cross-community (86%) basis, although few grantees reported inter-cultural representation (16%). However, the capture of race and ethnicity within the participant surveys could have provided a more accurate reflection. Although integration between different groups of people was achieved, it was considered a secondary, rather than targeted impact. The pre-/post- increases in participants' sense of belonging to both their neighbourhood and NI illustrates the potential of the arts to promote inclusion and cohesion. These results are consistent with the pilot phase and are in contrast to NISRA population findings, in that AOPP respondents felt a greater sense of belonging to NI, compared to their local areas – potentially highlighting a greater local disconnect within our sample.

9.4 Impact: Poverty

Table 9.5 illustrates the AOPP objectives and desired outcome in relation to poverty.

Table 9.5

Outcomes: Poverty

Objective	Outcome
• Providing opportunities for older people living in disadvantaged/marginalised rural and urban areas to access and participate in arts activities; • Working to improve the quality of life of older people living in disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas of Northern Ireland.	Increased social interaction through participatory arts projects amongst target groups (i.e. Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, Areas at Risk, disadvantaged areas to include rural).

Table 9.6 outlines the relevant indicators related to addressing and highlighting poverty.

Table 13.6

Indicators: Poverty

Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators	
Increase in % participants who have been to see an arts event in the last 12 months (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)	+9% Urban +4% Rural +10% NRA +9%
Increase in the % of participants who have taken part in an arts activity in the last 12 months (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)	+21% Urban +24% Rural +17% NRA +43%
Decrease in perceived barriers to the arts (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)	Post-activity responses decreased by 37% Urban -46% Rural -31% NRA -61%
% of participants strongly agree/agree they have made good friendships out of this project (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)	83% 89% Urban 76% Rural 74% NRA
% of participants strongly agree/agree they have taken part in other groups & activities due to this project (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)	55% 60% Urban 50% Rural 64% NRA
% of participants strongly agree/agree these sessions have made them want to go to arts events (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)	73% 78% Urban 68% Rural 81% NRA
% of participants strongly agree/agree that these sessions have made them want to take part in more arts activities (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)	80% 84% Urban 76% Rural 85% NRA

Exclusion from the arts is not just a side effect of poverty, rather it has been argued that *"lack of access to and participation in arts and culture is part of the experience of poverty."*⁹⁴ The Cultural Deprivation Index developed by NISRA indicates that the four deprivation indices for sport, arts, libraries and museums all show that the most culturally deprived areas tend to be rural.⁹⁵ People living in the most deprived areas were less likely to participate in the arts, or to visit

⁹⁴ An Chomhairie Ealaíó and The Combat Poverty (1997). Poverty: Access and Participation in the Arts.

⁹⁵ NISRA, (2014). NI Cultural Deprivation Index.

museums and libraries. Living in close proximity to an arts venue, did not increase likelihood of attendance or participation. The evaluation analysis substantiates lower arts attendance amongst people living in a NRA, although participation levels were slightly higher.

The AOPP strived to improve accessibility to the arts to those living in areas of deprivation and in rural communities. It has successfully achieved this, through attaining a general urban/rural split and weighted targeting of NRAs.

The Programme recognises that people on lower income may have lower arts attendance and participation because of a lack of tradition of attendance and associated admission and transport costs, rather than a lack of interest. Therefore, activities have been free of charge to the older person. The cost of participation is a barrier, although lack of information about activities is greater. An integrated and co-ordinated response is needed to improve access to the arts for those experiencing poverty and disadvantage. The AOPP encourages this by emphasising joint approaches and sharing knowledge and resources. Indeed, participants living in NRAs do appear most positive about future arts attendance and participation. It is apparent that efforts need to be made to overcome barriers in rural areas.

Arts venues have benefited significantly from the AOPP experience in terms of attracting new audiences to performances, classes and events. Staff have commented that galleries, museums and theatres came to life during the Programme, with weekly classes and showcase exhibitions and performances. They have been able to sustain relationships with non-traditional arts goers by offering places on other subsidised events, sourcing joint funding and offering community arts staff resources. Greater incorporation of arts venues into local partnerships should be explored. Although venues were utilised for showcases, only Fermanagh District Council stated that they would provide participants with free/subsidised tickets to performances.

Although barriers to arts engagement were significantly reduced at the end of the Programme, more emphasis needs to be placed on facilitating low cost longer-term solutions for groups as hiring artists on an ongoing basis may prove unsustainable for many. The purchase of equipment for future use will potentially help sustain activities. However, promoting and sharing community skills wasn't a key focus of projects. In recognition of in-house creative talent, one of the MEAPP groups are continuing to learning from one another and share group expertise in decoupage, cake decorating and card making.

9.5 Impact: Health Issues/Dementia

Table 9.7 illustrates the AOPP objective and desired outcome in relation to health.

Table 9.7

Outcomes: Health/Dementia including Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Objective	Outcome
• Provide opportunities for older people to participate in arts led activities which may help improve physical, mental and social wellbeing; • Work to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for active ageing through participation in arts activities.	• Increased opportunities for participation in arts led activities that help stimulate older people at a physical, mental and social level.

The majority of the 47 projects funded reported that they aimed to address health, wellbeing and quality of life related issues. The related indicators are shown in Table 9.8.

Table 9.8
Indicators: Health/Dementia including Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators	
Increased % of participants stating that their physical health, mental health & enjoyment of life is "Good"	Significant: Physical health +3% Mental health +2% Significant: Enjoyment of life +5%
Increase in participants' wellbeing score (WEMWBS)	Significant increase 86% increased or stable 28-35pts +1%
% strongly agree/agree that they have been able to express themselves at sessions	75%
% of artists stating that participants' self-esteem increased	82%
% of artists stating that participants' concentration improved	76%
% of artists stating that participants' ability to listen and follow direction improved	69%
% of artists stating that participants appeared engaged during the sessions	94%
% of artists stating that participants' became more confident in talking to them/others about their work	Talking to Artist 90% Talking to Others 79%
Participants, artists & stakeholders feel that the project has increased wellbeing	Achieved

Loneliness and depression has often been seen as an inevitable part of ageing. However, there is increasing recognition of the importance of prevention, in order to reduce the numbers of older people with poor mental health.

Analysis of the AOPP datasets can help to improve targeting in this area. For example, self-reported physical health declines with age, whereas males and those aged 50-59 years had lower self-rated mental health and enjoyment of life (corresponding to age related differences in population GHQ12 scores). Living in a NRA was related to poor physical and mental health and enjoyment of life.

The AOPP addresses key drivers such as social exclusion and low levels of mental stimulation and activity and reinforces the importance of building and increasing cognitive reserve throughout the life span. Although described as fun and sociable activities, taking part required a degree of consideration, thought and action. However, the older population are not traditionally the focus of education

initiatives and barriers such as the physical environment, mobility, appropriateness of courses, poverty and discrimination can prevent older age learning. Older people living in poverty, with long-term illness or caring responsibilities, face multiple barriers to inclusion.

Arguably, the arts provide learning opportunities within a safe environment, with participants developing new skills and interests across a variety of tailored, flexible art forms designed to ensure mastery. Comments from artists and participants demonstrate the positive impact of creating and producing art on one's confidence and wellbeing. This is substantiated by the significant increase in respondents' wellbeing upon Programme exit.

The AOPP activities facilitate social connectedness, interaction and mental stimulation. Some artists and participants, particularly those working on performance based activities such as dance, singing, music-making and drama did report increased concentration, memory and coordination.

Improvements in cognitive functioning, concentration, engagement and mood was also identified amongst people with a dementia diagnosis. Where activities were sustained over longer periods, relationships developed between participants and artists and there was increased recognition and response even where dementia was advanced. Additionally, carers reported that re-introducing memory triggers such as songs, dance, personal stories, musical instruments or photos helped to refocus people when they were frustrated or confused. Experiencing the sessions together made for a more positive and understanding relationship.

Artists have indicated that the levels and quality of stimulating arts activities in residential care settings vary and are dependent on the levels of support and training delivered to care staff as well as the facilities' links to other social and healthcare providers. Many residential care settings are small, independent or voluntary sector establishments and resource implications remain barriers to activity provision. One project lead noted that the care homes they worked with offered few activities to residents and they felt that people with dementia could specifically benefit.

Projects over this grant period have targeted a greater proportion of people in ill-health and with dementia, compared to the pilot. They have operated in individual's homes, community centres, day centres, assisted living projects and residential care. The majority have used the skills of very experienced artists, however some artists have not felt prepared or supported when delivering projects. Although the AOPP increasingly funded projects with training elements and funded DSDC and ArtsCare to deliver targeted learning opportunities, more could be done to safeguard artists and participants. All artists working with vulnerable adults and/or entering into a clinical setting should have access to training which will build their confidence and help them get the most out of the opportunity.

9.6 Impact: Strengthening the Voice of Older People

All of the AOPP projects must meet the need to “strengthen the voice of older people,” via artistic expression, capacity building and advocacy. Table 9.9 highlights the relevant AOPP outcomes.

Table 9.9

Outcomes: Strengthening the Voice of Older People

Objective	Outcome
• Provide opportunities for older people to develop skills which will strengthen their voice on issues that affect them. Providing artistic, professional and personal development skills; • Work to strengthen and develop the voice of older people particularly on issues that directly affect this section of society on a day-to-day basis.	• Increased skills amongst older people – including artistic, capacity building, community development and advocacy skills; • Awareness of the programme and social justice issues amongst policy makers, service providers and wider society.

Table 9.10 summaries the corresponding indicators.

Table 9.10

Indicators: Strengthening the Voice of Older People

Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators	
• Increase in awareness, understanding & support of older people's issues by policy makers	Partially Achieved
• Increase in awareness, understanding & support of older people's issues by service providers	Achieved by those in contact with the AOPP projects
• Increase in awareness, understanding & support of older people's issues by wider society	93% artists increased knowledge of social issues 80% event attendees U35
• Increase in sense of influencing neighbourhood decisions	+5%
• Increase in sense of influencing NI decisions	No change
• % of participants who strongly agree/agree that they have tried & learned new things	83%
• % of participants who strongly agree/agree that they have surprised themselves & others by what they can do	71%
• % of participants who strongly agree/agree that the activities have given them the confidence to try different things	78%
• % of participants who strongly agree/agree that they feel good about what they have achieved	81%
• % of artists stating that participants' showed a desire to learn	90%
• % of artists stating that they would like to work with older people again	89%
• Participants, artists & stakeholders feel skills have been developed via the project	Achieved

The AOPP facilitates creativity and self-expression. It highlights that the use of simple materials, props or inspiration, accompanied by expert guidance and support can produce great outcomes. The focus is on process-oriented art that is based on exploration and not a preconceived finished product. It reminds us that there is an artist within every one of us regardless of age, mobility or functioning. Participants have been provided the chance to make their own decisions in their artwork, trust their own judgment and take risks – building confidence and competence in doing so. As a result the AOPP has generated a variety of spectacular personal and group artworks, as well as captivating audiences with original dance, music, theatre and storytelling performances.

The Programme has shown older people what they are capable of doing, the skills that they still have, that they can share with others and importantly to keep learning, doing and producing. Working together, chatting and sharing stories has enabled partners to develop a greater understanding of the richness of people's lives, their uniqueness and what they continue to contribute to society. Consultation and partnership working has also helped artists, venues, groups and Councils develop good practice project delivery. These relationships will continue into the future.

As a result of the AOPP more people have availed of good quality local arts activity, both as a participant and an audience member. The project showcases really help to reinforce participant achievements, but are critical in disseminating wider advocacy messages. These events have broken down stereotypes of what is and what isn't possible. Therefore it is particularly important that different age groups, Councillors and local influencers are in attendance and that the AOPP social justice issues are provided sufficient emphasis.

Through participatory arts, older people have portrayed their experience of the world and how they live today. Personal expressions regarding poverty, hardship, joy, loneliness, excitement, neglect, fears, independence, responsibility and vulnerability have emerged and been preserved. Installations such as that developed by Prime Cut provided audiences with an immersive experience of living with dementia. The arts have an important role to play in facilitating expression, communication and learning on issues such as these.

Although awareness of the impact of the arts with regards to improving health and wellbeing is increasing, there are many more quantifiable issues competing for funding. The strategic advocacy element of the Programme must continue and consideration given to strengthening the AOPP brand.

9.7 Growing Audiences and Increasing Participation

The Arts Councils Ambitions for the Arts strategy commits to increasing arts access and participation amongst older people, in addition to other marginalised groups. The Arts and Health policy reports the need to *“develop a strategic approach towards addressing the inclusion of older people and other marginalised groups in the arts”* and to this end the Arts and Older People Strategy and AOPP were established.

The Vision for the draft cross-Departmental Strategy for Arts and Culture 2016-2026 is:

“To promote, develop and support the crucial role of arts and culture in creating a cohesive community and delivering social change to our society on the basis of equality for everyone.”

Table 9.11 illustrates the AOPP's reach since its launch in October 2013.

Table 9.11
Indicators: Growing Audiences and Increasing Participation

Quantitative Indicators ⁹⁶
47 arts projects specifically targeted at older people
13,067 participants
3,136 hrs delivered
11,948 showcase attendees

As a Programme, the AOPP is particularly successful in helping the Executive reach its objectives, not only in improving the health, vitality and connectedness of the population, it also targets and encourages participation from the most marginalised older people.

As aligned with the objectives of the draft Strategy the AOPP encourages projects that widen and diversify participation opportunities through improving engagement amongst those groups with consistently lower levels of engagement (i.e. older adults, adults with a disability, men and geography). The Programme has a heavily slant on improving access to the arts for people on low incomes and those experiencing social exclusion due to their health or other personal circumstances.

The evaluation evidence quantifiably demonstrates self-reported improvements in health and wellbeing, decreased loneliness and greater community belonging. It provides weight to the qualitative research and anecdotal evidence that is more readily available for the arts. It also promotes the use of multi-sectoral partnerships in order to creatively deliver and highlight social justice objectives.

Reflecting the PfG, wellbeing is a core theme of the Arts and Culture Strategy and the document acknowledges the potential of arts and culture to improve people's lives in terms of health, education, confidence, learning and skills and stresses the need to make sure wellbeing is encompassed within policy making and funding decisions. The following aims are cited:

- Communicate and raise awareness of the physical and psychological benefits arts and culture bring to everyday life;
- Recognise and support the social benefits arts and culture can bring through therapeutic intervention;
- Facilitate connections across government to maximise the potential of arts and culture to contribute to improved wellbeing; and
- Value the capacity of arts and culture to enhance wellbeing and radically shape the perception of this society, internally and externally.

The framing of the arts within the context of wellbeing is a positive step forward as it reaffirms that creative arts activities can be a catalyst for personal and social

⁹⁶ Estimation based on received End of Project Reports

development for people of all ages and backgrounds. It is important that opportunities for the arts sector to improve wellbeing are understood and explored, particularly in the light of Cultural Commissioning and Social Prescription models which focus on preventing harm and reducing people's need for acute services.

9.8 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in light of discussions with Steering Group members and the full breadth of the evaluation research. Please note that some recommendations from Interim stage are carried through:

9.8.1 Strategic Direction

The AOPP has developed and progressed over the last six years of operationalisation. As a grants programme, the Steering Group is largely dependent on the quality of submissions and grantee interpretations of the guidance. However, the CDO has provided potential applicants with project development support and has acted upon evidenced gaps in coverage and weighted assessment criteria accordingly. The following observations are made:

- The social justice issues of loneliness, wellbeing, poverty, inclusion and advocacy remain relevant. However, in the second phase the Programme has funded significantly more projects targeted at older people with specific health and social care needs. These span poor mental health, dementia, learning disability, stroke and life limiting illness, many of which have been delivered in care homes. The delivery process, experience and outcomes of artmaking differs from that with older people who do not have such conditions. Therefore the Steering Group should consider whether such variances should be formally recognised and supported by a two-strand approach to project delivery (e.g. generic arts and specialist arts). If so, thought should be given to how grant aid could be proportionately split between the strands, taking into account potential gaps in need, uptake or reach;
- In the last round of the 2013-16 Programme we started to see more of the smaller community and voluntary sector groups applying and being awarded funding. The move towards smaller pots of money made the prospect seem more attainable and less daunting for lower capacity groups that don't have a long history of external project delivery and financial management. This is a positive progression as, not only does it provide good value for money, but it reflects good community development and sustainability principles. The Steering Group must ensure however, that the multi-agency partnership working element which has been so strong in other grant rounds does not get diluted through the introduction of smaller grants. There is potential for arts sessions to be embedded within projects that will deliver wider information, signposting support and services from a variety of relevant local delivery

agents and this will enable longer-term social connectedness after the grant period;

- A number of grantees detailed how they had purchased arts materials as part of their AOPP funding. This will help sustain activities at a lower cost to the groups in the future. Therefore it is recommended that the allowance of eligible capital expenditure is promoted to a greater extent at application and project development;
- Loneliness, isolation and exclusion are barriers to becoming involved in arts, or any other activities and we know that a significant proportion of the older population are affected. The evaluation reflects previous research in highlighting that males, people in poor health and those that live alone are at particular risk. During the fieldwork participants have spoken about how hard it is to make the first move to join groups when they don't have a companion to join them. It is recommended that community outreach is strengthened to help build personal connections and make that social transition easier. This could potentially be in the form of a "buddy system" using volunteers and partner referral to really make a difference;
- In light of the above it is recommended that the application process includes an outline Recruitment and Exit Plan which will indicate the steps which partners will take, not only to recruit, but to ensure connectivity between the project and other local services, facilities and activities upon completion. These aspects must be integrated into the project and reported on. The Steering Group should explore potential referral routes for the Programme to ensure that the most isolated have equality of access. One potentially isolated group identified during discussions are older people who live alone and are in receipt of domiciliary care.

9.8.2 Partner Support

These recommendations relate to supporting artists and partners to deliver against the aims of the Programme, to develop their own practice and better meet the needs of the people they are working with:

- There are still instances where the offered activities are not suitable for all of the group. This could be due to visual or physical impairments or scheduling too large, too few, or lengthy sessions without adequate artists. Problems appear most prevalent when a range of artists are brought in to deliver short-term sessions and don't really get to know the group or build up a relationship and there isn't enough advance preparation. It is recommended that the short Induction session, developed in the pilot is reinstated to include tips on project delivery. Artists should be present at this in order to share practice;
- The 2013-16 Programme has provided training delivery through funded projects and links with DSDC and Arts Care. However, there was a greater reliance on project partners to provide adequate support and training for artists. A substantive proportion of projects operated in residential settings and involved arts delivery with vulnerable adults. This is a highly specialist area of work. The Arts Council must be satisfied that artists funded under

AOPP have necessary training and/or delivery experience, particularly with regards to safeguarding and ethics. If not this gap should be addressed and a register of experienced artists developed. This has the potential to benefit artists working across a range of disciplines and opens up mentoring potential. There is now Independent Health & Care Providers representation on the Steering Group and a willingness to collaborate on protocols which would support artists working within care settings.

9.8.3 Marketing and Communications

Recommendations are made in light of financial and resource constraints with the Arts Council and partner organisations:

- The AOPP should be marketed as a package made up of localised project activity, partner development, showcases and advocacy. A 2016 AOPP Newsletter was distributed and it is recommended that this is continued;
- The Steering Group now needs to concentrate on distilling and disseminating learning and good practice. Potential applicants may benefit from a good practice toolkit which focuses on practice process-based issues such as potential partnerships, consultation, sourcing the right artist and activities, participant recruitment, motivation and engagement. A similar toolkit should be developed for artists;
- There have been two large-scale evaluations which span six years. The 12 case-studies should be adapted and disseminated as part of promotional and advocacy efforts. They must be contextualised with regards to the social justice area addressed (e.g. prevalence of loneliness within the older population);
- Showcases typically have the greatest potential for advocacy and reach and have enjoyed good political and decision maker representation. However, it is important that grantees are supported to explain why the project was developed and the need that has been addressed;
- The Arts and Age Festival has developed considerably during the grant phase, culminating in a month of activities in April 2016. Although profile building, the Festival is labour intensive and dependent on a high degree of collaboration. The Steering Group needs to consider whether the effort and costs required to adequately resource a Festival of this scale are achieving the desired impact. The scheduling of the Final grant round helped generate output for the month. However, shorter bursts of staggered, coordinated activity publicised at District Council level may be easier to manage and promote. The Arts and Age brand is relatively weak and the strength lies in tapping into localised showcases;
- It is considered that more could be done to cross-promote arts venues through the Programme in general (i.e. partners linking to offer discounts or free tickets for participants). However, during the Festival there is an even bigger opportunity to do this – potentially through Audience NI's Test Drive the Arts initiative. This partnership should be explored further.

9.8.4 Evaluation

The AOPP has been well resourced in terms of evaluation over the last six years. This has really helped to bridge the gap in quantifiable evidence for the benefits of the arts. At a time when budgets are rightly more focused upon project delivery, it is recommended that the AOPP concentrates on re-packaging and disseminating core evaluation messages as related to current policy drivers. Depending upon the strategic direction that any subsequent Programme takes, evaluation tools and methodologies should take into consideration the full breadth of the Programme and its participants. Whilst we have stressed that evaluation questionnaires were developed for completion by those who were able and wished to complete them, some grantees have attempted to introduce them in settings that are not suitable. As with our overall recommendation, a more formal two-strand approach to the Programme, and evaluation may help to avoid this.

Project Case Studies

10 Spring Chickens: Machinations

10.1 Introduction



Big Telly is the longest established professional theatre company in Northern Ireland. Big Telly's work is driven by a determination to offer audiences entertainment that surprises, stimulates and ignites the imagination. Highly audience focused, Big Telly consistently pushes the boundaries of traditional theatre. It concentrates on the visual potential of theatre through fusion with other art forms such as dance, music, circus, magic and film.

'Spring Chickens' is Big Telly's pioneering older people's programme, supporting older people to participate and engage in the theatre arts. During the Machinations project, Spring Chickens worked with around 20 community groups across Northern Ireland over a six month period. Objects were used to help explore personal stories and to create moving sculptures, visual and sound displays. Primarily targeting older men living in rural areas, Spring Chickens toured for three weeks as well as connecting with Men's Sheds and libraries to create 12 works of art, linking to Northern Ireland Science Festival and British Science Week. The art work was exhibited at the Public Records Office in Belfast and was promoted as part of the AOPP Festival of Age month celebrations.

Machinations demonstrates innovation and skill in building relationships with older men, a group particularly vulnerable to loneliness and isolation as highlighted in the research literature and AOPP pilot evaluation. Despite recruitment difficulties, the artistic team adapted to the interests and skills of the host community and the individuals that they came across. Using materials that are usually discarded, stories and personalities were expressed through moving metalwork sculptures – challenging people's views of "art". The work uncovers the need for a central coordinating point for service and activity information and targeted outreach to ensure that those not connected to groups have equality of opportunity with regards to participation.

10.2 Project Aims & Description

The company applied to the first round of the AOPP and received an award of £14,500 to undertake **Machinations** – a visual and verbal arts project aimed at capturing the identity and life experiences of older men living in rural areas. Proposed outcomes include:

- Reduced isolation amongst older men, to include those who aren't participating in groups;
- Improve quality of life through group participation; and
- Skills development to allow the men to become more proactive in their local area.

The project consisted of partnerships between Spring Chickens and Men's Sheds in Armagh, Dungiven, Craigavon and Antrim, older men's groups in Garvagh (Thompson Fold), Strabane (LGBT), Newry (Men About Town) and Clough Tuesday Club. Partnerships were also forged in Ballymena, Dervock, Ballykelly, Limavady, Kilrea, Garvagh, Down, Portadown and Portstewart. In total around 77 older men participated in and contributed to Machinations, with an additional 120 people taking part in community information and art sessions.⁹⁷



Activity incorporated the following:

- **Information Sessions:** These were community based events led by metalwork artist Paddy Bloomer and The Big Telly team made up of Creative Facilitator, Creative Shops Director and five Creative Arts Trainees and Big Telly project participants. Attendees were informed about the project and invited to contribute by building different types of moving sculptures, whilst providing creative input and design advice. Schools were approached and children encouraged to bring older members of their family along to open junk art sessions;
- **Rural Tour:** A three week tour of areas around the Sperrins took place, focusing on farmer's livestock market days. Here the Big Telly converted horsebox theatre invited market goers to choose various pieces of scrap, show how they should be fitted together and help create a piece of art; and
- **Sculptures:** Machinations moving sculptures all tell a different story about the people and places visited:
 - **Strabane Scarecrows** – paving the way;
 - **Orchard City Zoetrope**;
 - **Dungiven Roe Waterfall**;
 - **Ballymena River Sounds** (broken musical instruments);

⁹⁷ Sourced at Mid-point

- Craigavon Flying Ducks (gardening scrap);
- Antrim Wooden Scrap;
- Garvagh Nodding Sheep;
- Clough Written in Stone.



The project culminated in an exhibition linking to NI Science Week and the AOPP Arts & Age Festival.

10.3 Participant Feedback

Machinations participants based within Armagh Men's Sheds spoke about the necessity of providing spaces for men to come together, work on projects, chat, learn and be themselves.

"It's hard to take that first step of coming over the door. But once you do that's it. Nobody has ever left and never come back. It's easy going, a bit of craic, a life saver. It's a youth club for ole boys."

Although unsure about getting involved in Machinations initially, the nature of the project – focusing on engineering and practical skills – appealed to the members' practical nature and existing skillset.

As they got to know the artist and the creative team and the potential to create something entirely different from their usual shed activities, they began to come up with ideas about what their artwork could be. The idea of a Zoetrope (a model producing the illusion of motion through a sequence of drawings or photographs showing progressive phases of motion) based around dancing tools was born – symbolising the work that goes on in the shed, the men's interests and the interlinked connections between the members.

"You see those hands? We traced around his hands so we had a template, then we had to cut them out of the wood. Sixteen hands cut out. Then we decided we'd do the fingers getting cut off progressively so we'd to figure out how that would work...measure it out, make sure it was right. Then we had the idea of the blood. We went a bit overboard with the red paint."

The concept was extremely challenging and required woodworking, welding and detailed measurement and precision. Although some members had been involved in painting sessions delivered through the shed, none had been involved in this type of arts project before.

Throughout the conversations the construction of the artwork was explained and participants' enthusiasm and pride in their achievement was clear.

“Every component has to be set a certain way to catch the light. It’s an awful lot of work, but as we went on I knew the end product would be good. It was mentally stimulating. I’d be going home and thinking “what’s the best way to get those pliers dancing?” I’d be constantly thinking about this and that. It was a great change from what we would usually do here.”

“That motor moving everything around, that’s from a washing machine! Oh we learnt lots of things from Paddy. We’d never done welding before, we got taught that. We did it all, but under his supervision.”

The nature of the project illustrated that art is much broader than traditional or common perception.

“Oh I loved it! At the beginning I was hiding at the back of the crowd. Hadn’t a clue what he was on about. Then as I got more interested and brave I began inching



forward. You sort of think that art is about pictures but this was very different.”

“I joined here two years ago. I never dreamt I’d be doing things like this!”

The men were excited about attending the Machinations

exhibition and seeing their own artwork exhibited, as well as meeting up with shedders from other areas who had developed their own sculptures. The prospect of going to the Public Records Office was also attractive as some members were interested in tracing their ancestry and hoped this would be informative. The project succeeded in encouraging the group to introduce arts into their programme and were keen to link into other Big Telly projects.

10.4 Partner Feedback

Based upon their previous experience in delivering the pilot phase AOPP Targeting Older Men (TOM) project, they decided to build an intervention that would appeal to men’s practical nature and skill-set. A structural, engineering theme was decided upon, to incorporate metalwork as this was believed to be a bit different to the traditional woodcarving art forms.



"We found that we had to create a problem that they could fix...there had to be a purpose to it. So we created problems!"

Contacts were then forged with local businesses and industries, with the dual aim of getting them to donate scrap materials and to target men who were retiring from employment.

"We went to scrap yards, factories, livestock marts...broken instruments were donated through schools. We had no set formula, we just went in and tried things...a flexible formula. We had initially created a six week programme but it didn't happen that way."

Staff initially found it difficult to engage with older men due to limited numbers of men's groups and little signposting information. Therefore, in many locations artists concentrated on developing creative outreach activities and in many cases this involved knocking on doors and chatting to people they met in the street.

Individuals were generally nervous about taking part, but the team gently persevered. Participants chose donated objects to talk about, or brought in items that they owned and were important to them. Gradually, personal stories, shared memories and local traditions and heritage emerged.

"We got to know people and the identity of the community and just worked around their interests."

"If you get people to do [a creative task] first, before you introduce the bigger project it combats the "I can't do that" response. People often have a fixed notion of what art is. For example, a drama in a theatre."

It was thought that six months was too short a timeframe to truly make a difference to the lives of the more isolated men as the developmental pace was necessarily slow. It was noted that although working with the established men's group had been less challenging for the artists, the outreach activity was probably needed more in terms of filling service gaps. Although artists did use the groups as a starting point to identify non-attending men. The "tour" was believed to have been particularly successful in improving accessibility of the arts within rural locations.

"We were chatting to a man standing on his door step and he invited us into his house. We found out he was a barber, a keen cyclist but he doesn't go to groups. He wouldn't have left the house to participate."

Lack of motivation was sometimes an issue within established residential settings, particularly with regards to those in poor health or oldest age groups and achieving sustained attendance was at times difficult.

“At the beginning there was lots of interest but then it dwindled. People wanted to design, but didn’t want to do. There were loads of design ideas but no one to build them. But essentially it was about their stories and therefore the art is representative of the person, regardless of whether they built it or not. Some people just added on their own bits to a design.”

It was suggested that more could be done to educate management and care staff about the value of the arts for older people, as often artists are left on their own to facilitate large groups. The physical space and working conditions also need to be suitable for older people in order to ensure that they have a positive experience.

“Sometimes it’s a big space and then people can’t hear you. Or if it’s a large group, some people could get left out and feel bored. Ideally you’d want a facilitator for every five people. But there’s benefits to having larger groups as sometimes people feel there’s safety in numbers.”

Big Telly highlighted that their Fantasy Hotel projected (funded under the second round of AOPP) focuses upon training residential care staff to deliver arts activities.

10.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP’s strategic aims:

Isolation and Loneliness: Machinations has been particularly successful in connecting with hard to reach individuals, specifically older men living in rural areas. The artists were particularly resourceful and didn’t give up, or go for the easy option of working only with established groups when they found it difficult to recruit. Similarly, the use of metalwork to create engineering and agricultural based sculpture was well thought out and appealed to the target group – helping to gain people’s interest from the outset. The encouragement of personal storytelling stimulated by the presentation of meaningful objects also helped people to interact and share knowledge and experiences together. Artists identified the need for local/regional older people’s coordinators to connect individuals to local activities in order to address loneliness issues (e.g. as per community navigator model). Friendships were developed as a result of the project. For example two men who live near each other and regularly but separately attend the Ballymena Livestock market now meet up as a result of their introduction.

Social Inclusion: The project has highlighted the lack of social activities and groups directly targeted at older men. The Men’s Shed model is extremely successful in connecting men to local services such as health promotion and education, as well as encouraging entrepreneurial activities which help sustain the group. However, although growing very quickly throughout Northern Ireland, there are gaps in more rural areas where community capacity may be lower. One of the most important elements of Machinations was that it helped to connect individuals to

the wider community. For example, after identifying a need in Dungiven, Spring Chickens partnered with the local library in order to establish a new men's group to enable friendships to continue after the project completed. The team have also recruited some participants to their ongoing Golden Gangs project and have approached the Young Farmers Association about the potential of a version for older men.

Poverty: Involvement in Machinations was free to participants and the use of donated scrap materials, capturing stories, poetry and singing songs clearly demonstrates that creating meaningful works or expressions of art doesn't have to be expensive. The artists succeeded in introducing art to people who may not have previously engaged in "arts for arts sake" but their skills and open and friendly manner helped not only change opinions on artists, but also regarding what constitutes art.

Health Issues/Dementia: The approach adopted helped to develop confidence and showed their ability to contribute something worthwhile to the overall project - drawing on the fact that the participants had a greater knowledge of the local area, were familiar with the objects and were able to demonstrate their practical skills in creating the art work. The fact that most participants wanted the sessions to continue indicates the value and enjoyment placed on the activities. The use of metal work did create some obstacles with regards to physical strength. However, less able members of the group then became design directors – telling others where the various elements of the artwork should be placed. Artists felt that the project had increased quality of life for the participants. However, this was sometimes only apparent when re-visiting the group after a period of absence and observing a decrease in confidence compared to previous occasions.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People: There were a variety of partnerships formed during the project, to include marginalised sections of the community such as the LGBT community, those living in supported housing and people with mental health issues. As well as developing confidence through the artwork, participants were given the opportunity to talk about themselves, their lives and community. These expressions of identity were captured on paper, film, audio and through the reminiscence and metal sculptures. Older people's voices were disseminated via an active social media campaign and the formal exhibition. As many of these individuals did not belong to established groups, it is unlikely that they would have had such opportunities in their day to day lives. Although restrictions in funding has provided the stimulus to encourage groups to work together in order to find mutually beneficial solutions and increase their sustainability, many individuals still don't know about the various initiatives that they could get involved with locally.

11 Andersonstown Community Theatre: The Bus Run

11.1 Introduction

Andersonstown in West Belfast has a population of 8,952, with around 20% aged over 60 years. Sixteen percent of households are lone pensioner and the area experiences high levels of socio-economic deprivation, with economic inactivity rates at 40%. Andersonstown is a designated Neighbourhood Renewal Area, with 26% of the population in receipt of disability related benefits, 6% of those of working age are unemployed and 50% of the population are claiming at least one social security benefit. Ninety-eight percent of the population are from a Catholic community background.⁹⁸



Andersonstown Community Theatre (ACT) was established in 2013 as a cross-community drama group which focuses on writing and performing plays and sketches, line dancing, storytelling, singing and poetry. Board members are experienced in these art forms and the emphasis is upon enabling older people to become involved in creative writing, drama rehearsal and training. The AOPP funded its first professional performance - The Bus Run, written by local artist Patricia Gormley and ACT founder. The Bus Run primarily aims to highlight and showcase the talents of older people in the community. The show consisted of music, comedy, drama and song and was included in the 2014 West Belfast Feile programme. The

Bus Run follows a group of older people as they embark on a weekend away to Omeath and find themselves taking part in Omeath Has Talent whilst keeping an eye out for a rumoured visit by country legend Dolly Parton. There was a cast of approximately 50 performers many of whom never performed on stage before.

This project encapsulates the essence of the AOPP. It has a strong community arts ethos, illustrates local resourcefulness, partnership building and succeeds in showcasing older people's zest for life and hidden talents - combating societal stereotypes of what older people can and can't do.

⁹⁸ NI Assembly, (2012). Constituency Profile: Belfast West.

11.2 Project Aims & Description

The proposal aimed to deliver a play which could run indefinitely based upon the story of going on a “bus run”, links were made with La Salle secondary school drama students, local supported housing providers and community groups. ACT wanted to achieve the following:

- Reduced isolation and loneliness by providing older people with opportunities to get involved in creative group work and develop friendships with others with similar interests;
- Improved social inclusion by bringing people from different religious backgrounds together and providing opportunities for different age groups to mix;
- Better access to the arts to people living in areas of disadvantage and those living in residential care settings;
- Increased confidence and skills amongst older people, in order to perform to local audiences and showcase their talents.

ACT applied to the first round of the AOPP and received an award of £7,500 over a delivery period of 22 weeks. During this time 40 sessions were delivered, amounting to just over 100 hours in twice weekly slots. The programme consisted of:

- **Creative Writing/Script & Character Development:** The Bus Run was based upon a play written and performed by Patricia Gormley. However, the original script was adapted to fit the talents and humour of the participants. A “Bus Run” to Omeath was undertaken in order to help participants get to know each other, stimulate ideas for the play and help to provide authentic content;
- **Performance Arts Training:** Christina Nelson and Patricia Gormley provided the artistic expertise and trained and choreographed participants in dance, drama and singing techniques in order to enhance their skills;
- **Production Training:** Participants and volunteers were involved in all elements of the production to include lighting, front of house, filming, set design, costumes and make-up;
- **Tours:** Rehearsals and part performances were held at a variety of residential and supported housing settings. This helped to encourage wider participation from residents, provided an audience for participants and provided an insight into the production elements of a dramatic performance; and
- **Bus Run Performance:** Professional performance of the Bus Run at St Agnes Parish Hall as part of the 2014 West Belfast Feile.

A DVD of the process to include interviews and rehearsal footage was produced.

11.3 Participant Feedback

Approximately 40 older people participated in the project, although many more were reached via performances in residential settings (estimated at 320) and a

further 200 people attended the showcase at St Agnes Hall in West Belfast as part of the Feille.

Discussions were undertaken with participants and the supervisor at Tearmann Fold, who had been encouraged to take part in the production herself. It was believed that regular access to social activities and entertainment were extremely important for older people, particularly those who are living alone, have mobility issues and/or are in residential care. Life can get monotonous and an opportunity to do something different is welcomed and needed. Although arts activities such as music and crafts were regularly organised, artist facilitation time was thought to be expensive and therefore difficult to sustain on a regular basis.

It was believed that ACT had publicised the project widely within the targeted facilities and as rehearsals were conducted in the common rooms they were easily accessed. Even people who didn't want to take part in the play could drop in to watch the rehearsals.

"There was such a build up to it. Everybody knew about it. Drama was something different and we all thought it was a really good play."

"It was good that it was in [the Fold]. A lot of people wouldn't have gone out to it, it's difficult to travel."



"A lot of people are very lonely. It's important to keep active. It was absolutely fantastic. I looked forward to it even if it was just out to a wee rehearsal."

Although participation and rehearsals required a substantial time commitment and dedication, participants felt that they had personally benefited from the experience. Involvement gave people an interest and something to look forward to. It also meant regular outings out of the Fold to St Agnes Parish Hall for joint rehearsals as well as learning vocal and dance routines. The fact that there were different age groups working together was believed to have added an extra dimension, with acknowledgements and conversations being struck up on the street as a result.

"I got real pleasure out of it, meeting new people and learning how to express myself. I also think my acting has improved."

"I think it showed that older people can enjoy themselves just as much as older people. I think the boys from La Salle enjoyed being with us. We were all just dancing around, up for a laugh. Those young people were great, never missed a session."

However, although rehearsals were enjoyable, most of the conversation focused upon the Feile performance and it was clear that participants still felt excited and proud about what they had done.

"It was hilarious. I was sitting beside X on "the bus"...What a geg! On the night, up on the stage, she pulled out a lunchbox full of sandwiches. Real sandwiches. She'd never done that before. She said we'd be there for a while so we may as well be comfortable. I was in stitches with her the whole way through."

"I was really scared. I'd never done anything like it before. On the night I was standing on the side lines absolutely petrified, but it was a real feel good factor afterwards."

"People saw us in a different light. We were the people you'd think would never get up on stage. But maybe wanted to act all our life and it really made our day."

"It was a great experience for everybody and Christina pulled it all together. We had proper lighting, soundtracks...though at the dress rehearsal it all went wrong! When the curtain went down we raised the roof off!!"

Participants described the recognition they had got after the performance, with local people congratulating them on the street and saying how well they had done.

"There was such a buzz in the chapel the next day. There was just so many people in it. We had family members turning up, kids from the school, a bus from East Belfast...There was such a big community presence. The next time I went to bingo all the ones had been there...it was a real boost."

Relationships had also been maintained with the Belmont Belles from East Belfast and it was hoped that they people would continue to work together. Participants felt that the play had helped to unite people, as on the night of the performance the audience had been open, welcoming and supportive of all those on stage regardless of what area of Belfast they were from.

11.4 Partner Feedback

The Chair of ACT stated that the group had been formed in response to an identified need for accessible and affordable drama events in the local area. It was recognised that local facilities were underused and could potential host rehearsals and performances. Therefore for the last year, small scale rehearsals and performances had been undertaken on a shoe string budget.

Although ACT welcomes all age groups, older people were actively encouraged to become involved due to the Chair's links with supported housing and residential care providers. Indeed ACT used Fold Housing Association, Tearman Fold, Our

Lady's Nursing Home, and Clonard House premises were used for free of charge rehearsal space and audience showcases, as well as La Salle Secondary School.

The AOPP application was the group's first and they were delighted to have been successful. The original Bus Run play was expanded to encapsulate the concept of a pensioners' day out, complete with a bus mix up and older people stepping in to save the day of a talent show organiser by providing "acts" at the last minute.

Once developed the full script was broken into sections and after small group practice sessions, the full group came together to rehearse in St Agnes Parish Hall. It was described as a team effort with people helping out with costume design and adaptations. However, there were nerves and inexperience to overcome at the start.

"It was gradual. We did a bit of creative writing at the start...sat and talked, wrote stories, I'd ask them to do a monologue and gradually they got to the point where they'd feel comfortable."

Eight students from La Salle were recruited to the cast and they provided creative input alongside the rest of the cast. Despite the age gaps, strong relationships were formed and the young people remain keen to be involved in further ACT productions. The Belmont Belles travelled over from East Belfast for rehearsals as did a few participants from the Shankill, making it an intergenerational and cross-community production.

"It was a case of tell us what you're good at and we made sure we gave everyone a chance to have their talents shown. One big fella said he'd love to do ballet so he was dressed up as "Sally" in a tutu and he made up a dance himself and did cartwheels round the stage. Two other boys were Ant and Dec and did a comedy routine in tuxedos, another could sing Country and Western so we had him dressed up as a cowboy who had just left a boyband."

Artists noted that the less experienced participants dramatically grew in confidence as the training progressed, particularly Fold residents that didn't usually become involved in organised activities.

"We had creative writing days and did shows around the nursing homes, singing and dancing and getting people involved. That helps build confidence and improves people's acting skills."

"To go to the nursing homes and day centres and get recognition from your peers was great. In a few places staff said that the reaction from residents was great as they didn't usually give such a lively response."

Performances in supported housing and care settings was not only a learning experience, as sessions were accompanied by post performance tea and chats. This gave people the opportunity to catch up with old friends, neighbours and

acquaintances. For participants it reinforced that what they were doing had value as well as being enjoyable.

“A couple of them you’d have thought they’d been acting for years. They’d ad lib, deviate from the script. They really got the bug for acting.”

“They wanted to be the best they could be and they trusted me. They also didn’t want to let each other down.”

“By the end they were volunteering for everything! They definitely pushed themselves out of their comfort zones, taking risks and having a laugh.”

The actual showcase during the Feile was the highlight for the group and there was great excitement in the lead up to the performance and indeed for months afterwards. The attendance and support on the night was believed to have been overwhelming for the cast and gave them an immense confidence boost.

“People were standing up at the end, cheering, stayed behind to congratulate us. They couldn’t believe who was on stage. Pointing out “There’s Mrs So and So...look at her up on stage!” We only had 100 tickets printed, so many people turned up we had to put the kids at the front to free up the seats.”

ACT have been spurred on by their experience and have expanded their membership as a result of the interest in The Bus Run. There are plans to perform The Bus Run at other venues to include The Spectrum Centre, Patricia Gormley is running her own play *I’ll Tell Me Ma* in the MAC and another cast member has written a play that they hope to work on and there are plans to work with La Salle students again.

“ACT is needed in this area. There’s nothing like it. We wanted something we could sustain and this will keep running. So many people want to do stuff. We’re determined to apply for more funding to keep going.”

11.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP’s strategic aims:

Isolation and Loneliness: ACT proactively targeted participation at older people living in supported accommodation. Using supported housing facilities as rehearsal venues meant that tenants had the opportunity to attend with little effort. At each stage new members were encouraged and as a result ACT has grown in numbers – the more people who saw the performances, the more wanted to be involved. This highlights the potential for the group to become more established within this arena. The group has since approached St Agnes Parish Hall to organise a regular weekly rehearsal slot for the theatre. Some members are meeting up outside the group and are going to the theatre together. As a result of shared interests they discuss what they’ve seen and give ideas for further productions.

Social Inclusion: Despite rehearsals and performances being primarily based in West Belfast, the Bus Run had a cross-community element and some sessions were facilitated in East Belfast and the Shankill area. Relationships between members from West and East Belfast have been maintained and transport was organised to ensure that family members from other areas could attend the Feile performance. The Bus Run cast shows that you are never too young or old to stand on stage, with ages ranging from 9 to 88 years. The artist reflected that the different age groups really gelled, bouncing ideas off one another and providing compliments on performances. The high retention rate demonstrates the commitment of participants and the sense of achievement that they received from the sessions, culminating in such a fantastic reaction from the wider community, many of whom would not be regular arts attenders.

Poverty: This AOPP project was located in a community which is a recognised area of socio-economic disadvantage. Participants were encouraged to access quality performance arts and production training free of charge. The need for affordable arts activities was highlighted during discussions and there was a perception that many venues pricing structures are outside local residents' reach. ACT also made arrangements to deliver short performances to residents of local care providers, at no cost to the beneficiaries. Although a small charge of £5 was made during the Feile performance, children and older people were admitted free of charge to maximise equality of access. ACT members acknowledge the difference that AOPP funding has made – enabling them to invest in delivering a professional production for the first time.

Health Issues/Dementia: The majority of the cast had never been on stage before and have undoubtedly grown in confidence as a result of the experience. In addition, participants took part in dance routines, memorised scripts and vocal performances, requiring physical and cognitive tasks. Having such an experienced artist meant that rehearsals were adapted to the needs of older people. For example, additional support and direction, inclusion of rhyme to assist learning of lines, gesture with choreography to provide stage presence. The rehearsals, workshops and performances in the residential homes, not only were enjoyable for participants but also sparked the interest of residents and tenants who acted as audience members and provided support and feedback.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People: Although The Bus Run delivers against each of the AOPP strategic aims, it is considered particularly successful in illustrating older people's positive and ongoing contribution to the community in which they live. The project represents value for money, with the showcase alone reaching an audience of around 200 people. The project additionally benefited from excellent publicity as a result of support from the Feile publicity team, radio, newspaper and social media coverage. The Bus Run certainly raised the profile of not only the ACT, but older people and the arts within the Andersonstown community. Members are motivated to continue to develop their skills and improve accessibility, with ideas for a pantomime, family performances and tours across Belfast.

12 Greater Shankill: Social Sofa

12.1 Introduction



"This has really raised the profile of older people in this community. Blown perceptions out of the water. People with dementia have created stunning artworks."

The Greater Shankill area has a population of 18,089. Nineteen percent of the population are 65+ years and 20% of the total Shankill population are claiming state pension. Sixteen percent of

households are lone pensioner households.

Fifty-two percent of the working age population have no qualifications at 42% of the population are economically inactive. Greater Shankill is the largest of the designated Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Thirty-four percent of the population have a limiting long-term illness or disability and 12% deliver unpaid care to friends or relatives. Fourteen percent report their health as *not good*. Eighty-one percent of the population are from a Protestant community background.⁹⁹

The Spectrum Centre, an arts and culture venue located off the Shankill Road, is a subsidiary company of the Greater Shankill Partnership Board. The Spectrum Centre opened in 2001 with a catchment area covering the entire greater Shankill district and wider Belfast. The centre sits on a site formerly occupied by the Stadium Cinema and is independent of Government or Central Government. It spans 3,700 square meters to include a main auditorium capable of hosting events ranging from concerts, film shows, exhibitions, seminars and conferences. The Spectrum Centre aims to provide a focus for the development of the arts in the Greater Shankill area through education, participation and appreciation.

This case study demonstrates how an arts project can become a community endeavour, breaking down barriers and stereotypes. It demonstrates the importance of building local links and partnerships and how people with dementia can learn new skills, make decisions, be imaginative, creative and continue to participate in community life. The project is a positive example of delivering

⁹⁹ www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk

person-centred health and social care, as each person's memories, stories, skills and input was valued throughout.

12.2 Project Aims & Description

The **Social Sofa** project is part of an ambitious one year long ICE Age programme. This incorporates training for care workers in arts, crafts and reminiscence, an open access community workshop programme (e.g. social sewing, digital arts), performances (e.g. drama, film, tea dances) and two partnership projects with local residential care homes (e.g. Social Sofa, arts) and an ICE Age Festival to include older people from West Belfast 50+ group and North Belfast Senior Citizen's Forum. Identified project outcomes include:

- Increased opportunities for older people to participate in arts and cultural activity;
- Encourage and enable older people to be involved in decision-making;
- To bring imaginative, innovative and creative art forms and experiences to older people;
- Build capacity through training and volunteering;
- Enable greater communication between people with dementia and other members of the community; and
- Build links and partnerships within the local area.

The Spectrum Centre applied to the first round of the AOPP and although they initially requested £24,956 they received an award of £12,532. The Arts Council felt that the initial request was high for a pilot programme and agreed to support a smaller scale programme of activities, to focus on the Social Sofa aspect.

The Social Sofa concept originated in Tilburg in the Netherlands and is designed to create meeting places where people can relax and meet friends. These are durable, concrete benches which are then colorfully decorated. Since the project's inception a few years ago, over 1,000 sofas have been dispatched. This project has introduced the first Social Sofa to Northern Ireland and was led, created and produced by 35 tenants of Hemsworth Court. Hemsworth Court, located off the Shankill Road is a supported housing scheme for people living with dementia. The facility was developed by BHSCT and Helm Housing Association and contains 35 modern high-quality flats with 24 hour support services to enable tenants to live independently.

The Social Sofa is a 1750kgs concrete sofa on which tenants have been reproducing an elaborate design – using thousands of coloured mosaic tiles. The design came as a result of collaboration with a range of groups including schoolchildren from Glenwood Primary School and features iconic images of the Shankill Road – Nelson Memorial Presbyterian Church, the Shankill Library – as well as street scenes, boxing gloves, a depiction of the Titanic, and a message of

love and hope. The partners were supported by artist Maria Duddy, who trained in social sofa design and techniques in the Netherlands.

- **Reminiscence Sessions:** A series of storytelling, reminiscence, film, music and arts sessions were delivered as part of the project. These helped tenants get to know each other on a deeper level as well as sparking and refining ideas for the sofa design;
- **Design Development:** The design came as a result of collaboration with a range of groups to include schoolchildren from the local Glenwood Primary School. Joint storytelling sessions were held between tenants and the schoolchildren and both would produce artistic images of aspects that they would like depicted on the sofa. A selection process took place in order to finalise the design. The finished artwork features iconic images of the Shankill Road – Nelson Memorial Presbyterian Church, the Shankill Library – as well as street scenes, boxing gloves, a depiction of the Titanic, and a message of love and hope. The design was sent to the Netherlands who replicated it onto the concrete sofa;
- **Mosaic Training:** The sofa template was shipped over to Hemsworth Court and tenants received mosaic training by their dedicated artist. This incorporated cutting the tiles, mixing the glues and placing onto the surface ensuring that it is flat. Each participant made a practice piece which replicated an element of the design. This was their personal artwork to keep;
- **Decorating the Sofa:** Each area on the sofa had a corresponding number which linked back to the template. Tenants were responsible for selecting the tile colours for each aspect. These selections were recorded onto the template in order to ensure uniformity. Although the tenants responsibility, relatives and other groups from the local area visited in order to help with sections of the production.

Tenants celebrated the launch of Northern Ireland's very first Social Sofa. BHSC Chairmen launched the event in March 2015 with the Lord Mayor and tenants officially unveiling the Social Sofa, marking the completion of a 10 month project. An exhibition of the Social Sofa journey was held in the Hemsworth Court bistro.

12.3 Participant Feedback

A conversation took place with Grace,¹⁰⁰ who had participated in the Social Sofa project. Grace was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease when she was 47 years old.

"I knew something was wrong for ages, particularly at work. I worked in IT and was used doing assessments, training, writing reports...it got I couldn't do my job. Letters were jumping out at me, didn't make sense. I was disorientated, not knowing my way back to my desk. I felt under immense pressure. I was scared and

¹⁰⁰ Name changed.



couldn't understand what was happening to me. I lost all my confidence and stopped speaking for almost a year."

After persistence, Grace and her family finally found out that she had a condition with effected specific parts of her brain coupled with Alzheimer's disease. Although the diagnosis was a relief everyone was worried about what the future would bring and were relieved when Grace and her husband moved into the newly opened Hemsworth Court. This facility had enabled Grace to live independently in an attractive, non-clinical but supportive living environment.

"There's a lot of stigma around dementia, around mental health in general. I had become anti-social...but

this was such a fantastic project. There was so much choice, so much going on. I found out that I was actually good at art, I'd forgotten. I've learned to knit again, do crochet and make jewellery."

As well as developing new skills as a result of the project, Grace felt that the activity and conversations that had been facilitated in Hemsworth had been extremely important in helping people get to know each other. Tenants contributed in whatever way they could, sorting or cutting tiles or cleaning and washing up afterwards.

"Such a buzz for everyone. The kids coming in here was just amazing. We all developed ideas and designs. Mine was a mask. During the sessions I was reminded about a holiday to Venice with my husband and I did the mask in that style, with sycamore leaves round it as that was from [another tenant's] idea. It's my mask of Alzheimer's. When I have a bad day. I have my mask on."

Now that the project is completed, Grace identified a sense of loss amongst tenants. Although there are other activities going on, there's a feeling that nothing can reach the scale of the sofa. However, the benefits of keeping people's minds active was acknowledged there needed to be a sense of fun attached.

"It's great having small projects, but they only last a few weeks...big and longer is better. People put their heart and soul into it. We've been talking about a yarn bombing project. No one says "I can't" anymore. Now it's "I can""

“I do miss it all. Everybody loved it, all the groups that came in. It was great craic, lots of interaction. It was so important to everyone. When we launched it we were all so proud...got our photo taken.”

12.4 Partner Feedback

The Spectrum Centre representative reported that, whilst they did not receive full funding for their ICE Age programme from the AOPP, they were not discouraged. Their belief and perseverance resulted in a grant from the Belfast Strategic Partnership and this meant that the original content was delivered in full. Relationships between Hemsworth Court Activity Coordinator and The Spectrum Centre are considered to be strong as both have the same objectives – to ensure that their respective facilities are an integral part of the local community and to deliver quality and accessible services. The cohesion aspect of the project was deemed to be important for both organisations as both identified the potential for disconnect and stereotyping. This may be through people’s lack of knowledge or perceptions about the arts and/or dementia.

The importance of partnership working was clear from the start and The Spectrum Centre undertook a high level of consultation and research to develop a programme that local people would enjoy and want to become involved in. Apart from Spectrum Centre, Hemsworth Court and Glenwood Primary School, contributors included Clifton House, Greater Shankill Senior Citizens Forum, Chestnut Grove, Ballyowen Day Centre, The Skyway Club, Volunteer Now and volunteers. This variety had the benefit of raising the projects profile, building networks of like-minded groups and helping connect a range of beneficiaries.

“We involved school kids, seniors groups...coming into Hemsworth, seeing the space, talking about the project, talking about dementia and sharing memories.”

The scale of the task was considered to be huge and the partners acknowledged that the artist went far beyond her initially contracted hours. The early reminiscence sessions conducted to help generate ideas for design, took on a life of their own and was extended due to the enjoyment that it generated. One to one interviews were facilitated with tenants to help the artist get to know them individually and to find out about their interests. Then activities were developed and research was undertaken into different social sofas and tenants discussed what they liked and didn’t like about them. The artist had extensive experience in specialist arts delivery.

“It was a joy to go to work and to let people dictate the outcome. To really enjoy the process, that’s the most important part and to get it launched. Real satisfaction from start to finish.”

“We developed a routine with everyone pitching in. The work had to be of a high standard, but it had to be all their own work. All the tiles had to be flat so it wouldn’t gather water, to last for years. They got training but it had to be motivating, keep their attention there.”

The timing of the project also proved beneficial. As Hemsworth was a new facility with new tenants starting to move in, the activities helped to facilitate conversations and relationships to develop between tenants and, between tenants and staff.



“There’s the streetscape of the Shankill, two girls swinging around a lamppost, there’s references to the Titanic as a lot of people’s families were involved in building it and they could remember being told stories.”

“When they were young they remembered seeing all the different washing lines around the place, so they decided to incorporate that. They chose the word “hope” to be spelt out in the clothes. That word sums it up. One day we hope there will be a cure for dementia.”

The rich sporting history of the area was captured by a pair of boxing gloves and former champions from the area were invited to Hemsworth to see the sofa being produced and chat about their experiences.

“It’s such a mass of colour. Its peoples hopes...aspirations. It works so well, an eclectic story driven by memories and has captured people’s interest and imagination.”

The intergenerational element and now well established relationship with Glenwood Primary School was thought to have brought a special aspect to the project. Bonds have been formed and tenants are recognised in the streets, with one child presenting a friendship bracelet to one lady – an item that has been treasured and discussed by the individual. After receiving training in the production, tenants then explained and supervised the process to outside contributors.

"It certainly was a labour of love, an awful lot of work, we had so many people coming here putting tiles on but you know if it wasn't put on right it'd be taken off and done again!"

"There was such laughter. You could hear it down the corridor, or you would catch people just going in to look at it. Coming near the end you could see people getting emotional. They didn't want it to end."

"There was a sense of "Did we really do that". It was such a sense of achievement, being in the community...belonging, participating."

The community support and positive publicity for the project was thought to have been overwhelming and indicated the goodwill of the local community and businesses.

"There was real recognition, we knew it had touched on other people. Even down to a local construction company getting involved in the fork lift work free of charge."

The Spectrum Centre reinforced the benefits of the project for their own day to day work and profile.

"This was the first time we'd done a sustained piece of work with older people, but with ICE Age...the workshops, tea dances, plays people have been coming in more. It's been a real learning curve, took us out of the centre more, we were seen to be engaging with different groups and it's really whetted everyone's appetite to do more."

Hemsworth are working hard to increase understanding of dementia within the local community and local businesses are receiving awareness training as part of the Age Friendly Cities initiative. The artist also felt that she had improved her own knowledge through the project – learning about the different types of dementia and that some people can be affected at an early age. One of the volunteers on the Social Sofa project had direct experience of dementia within her own family.

"I had an interest in art so I started volunteering in the Spectrum Centre and would come [to Hemsworth]. People would never have done art before. It shows you can be creative no matter what your ability. It doesn't focus on the illness, doesn't require a strong memory. During the reminiscence sessions, people would be rhyming off things about the Shankill. I was thinking "How can he remember all that and he has dementia.""

Partners agreed that there was a lot of fear surrounding dementia and were committed to changing people's perceptions and behaviour.

“People don’t understand and they can judge it all wrong. They think it’s for old people...old timers disease. People can be dismissive, but it’s the stigma around it...the awkwardness of not knowing how to react, how to help.”

12.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP’s strategic aims:

Isolation and Loneliness: The project succeeding reaching out to a particularly vulnerable group within the community. Dementia itself can be an isolating illness with individuals finding it difficult to communicate and develop and maintain relationships. The project focused upon group arts activities which facilitated sharing of information and experiences, uncovering commonalities as well as individual experiences. Working on the sofa was a primarily sociable experience. There was lots of fun and chat in Hemsworth’s arts and craft room and the activities helped to integrate new tenants into the building and into the existing group. The mosaic process built upon individual ability and strengths. There were high levels of cooperation and support, helping to nurture a common interest and goal.

Social Inclusion: Hemsworth Court is located in the midst of a residential area, just off the Shankill Road. Whilst surrounded by houses and people, the facility is surrounded by fencing and there is a buzzer security system for entering and leaving. As a result, unless individuals know tenants they are unlikely to visit. However, the fact that the Social Sofa is such a unique project has generated local interest. Furthermore it is currently set outside Hemsworth and therefore can be easily accessed and used. Extensive partnership working has helped to engage a range of older people in the project – making Hemsworth the hub or focal point. These relationships are set to continue and tenants were delighted to have been invited to Glenwood’s nativity play and have the children come over to them in the local library or street.

Poverty: Hemsworth Court is located in the Greater Shankill Neighbourhood Renewal Area, an area of high socio-economic deprivation. The AOPP funding delivered quality arts engagement free of cost to beneficiaries, many of whom had little experience of the arts. Strong relationships with The Spectrum have been established and there are plans for future funding applications to continue and expand the partnership working.

Health Issues/Dementia: The Social Sofa project focused on activities which relied on long-term, rather than short-term memory – as such it helped to develop skills that are less likely to be impacted by dementia. Partners and participants describe the enjoyment that the project brought to so many people and are convinced of the wellbeing benefits. The project lasted for 10 months and this was believed to have helped strengthen its impact. The fact that the sofa was held onsite meant that tenants could work on it whenever they liked. This was important as sometimes medication and mood affected when they could be involved. Staff and volunteers were trained up in the process to ensure continuity of support throughout the day. Staff felt that the sofa had been a positive distraction when tenants were agitated or distressed as the sofa lifted their spirits and took them

away from the situation. Photographs of the process – all the groups that visited and participated, spanning from first to last tile were exhibited around Hemsworth, acting as a memory trigger of their own involvement. Extensive planning that had went into the project to ensure that it ran smoothly and created a stimulating environment for tenants.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People: So much positivity surrounds this project and much work has been done to raise the profile of Hemsworth within the Greater Shankill and wider. The sofa itself is a creative expression of the past and future as tenants perceive it. There is a strong feeling of ownership and empowerment as a result of the consultative and decision making process. New skills have been learned, as well as latent talents renewed. Tenants now have the techniques and equipment to continue with the mosaics. They now plan to produce artwork to generate funds for further activities and to train others. The public launch, interest and press coverage in the project has given tenants a confidence boost, in the midst of an illness which in its extreme can serve to take away independence and freedom. Hemsworth Court want to use the sofa in a tour to raise awareness of dementia, potentially working with Alzheimer's Society to facilitate "sofa conversations". It is hoped that the wealth of ideas and artwork generated from the project can be gathered into an accompanying exhibition in order that more people can see and hear the stories.

13 Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council: Age on Stage Craigavon On Tour

13.1 Introduction



Local government reform saw the merger of **Armagh City and District Council, Craigavon Borough Council and Banbridge District Council** in April 2015 (Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council; ABC). Covering 554 square miles and a population in excess of 204,000 it is the largest Council outside Belfast. A number of powers have transferred, or are in the process of transferring, from central to local government. The transfer of urban regeneration and community development responsibilities from DSD will lead to enhanced responsibility for leading both physical and social regeneration activity at neighbourhood level.

Anthea McWilliams is a contemporary dance practitioner who specialises in work with older people and tutors, choreographs and coordinates Age on Stage – which is a dance performance group for seniors aged 60 plus. Beginners and those who have prior dance experience are welcomed and everyone is encouraged to join in regardless of ability, agility or mobility. Most of the music that the group rehearse and perform to is from the 1940/50/60's.

Arts & Older People funding helped extend the Lisburn based Age on Stage model to Craigavon and to establish regular dance classes in the area. It additionally facilitated the newly established dance performance group to communicate their own life stories through expressive movement and drama to wider audiences for the first time. The project highlights the ability of dance to not only provide

physical exercise, but to create bonds between a diverse group of participants, to build confidence and help reinvigorate a thirst for life amidst life transitions.

13.2 Project Aims & Description

The legacy Craigavon Borough Council's Arts Development team originally applied to the second round of the AOPP in 2014. Their *Dance the Memories* project was based on the findings of consultations with older people, community and voluntary groups and Health and Social Care Trust, which identified the need for sustained arts activities for older people in the area. The Council's relationship with Anthea McWilliams developed from an earlier pilot and it was intended that previous participants would pass on their skills and experiences to others and help establish Age on Stage in Craigavon. The newly formed ABC Council subsequently applied to the third round of the AOPP and received an award of £9,000 to undertake **Age on Stage Craigavon - On Tour** within the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon area. Proposed outcomes included:

- Encouraging males to get involved in creativity;
- Raise awareness of Age on Stage Craigavon and help attract new members; and
- Consolidate the group, continue weekly sessions and create new artistic work.

The project facilitated partnerships between ABC Community Network, Southern Health & Social Care Trust Action Mental Health, Derrytrasna Senior Citizen's Group (rural Lurgan), Posy Club (Banbridge) and Lurgan Men's Shed. Artists were Anthea McWilliams, David Lyttle (musician) and Peter Morgan Barnes (drama practitioner). A trainee dance tutor, Sarah Holland, also shadowed the group.

Almost 100 older people participated in and contributed to the project, with an additional 375 people attending performances.¹⁰¹ The project continued for 25 weeks and delivered 80 artist hours on a fortnightly basis. Activity incorporated the following:

- **Weekly Dance Sessions:** Weekly dance workshops were delivered at Brownlow Community Hub. During these sessions members of Age on Stage continued to create content for Life Was Busy and developed creative approaches for the participative Tour;
- **Age on Stage Tour:** The tour consisted of a series of workshops with each of the three community groups. Initial sessions consisted of rhythm and movement sessions using a selection of percussion instruments and props. This was followed by further workshop sessions involving Age on Stage Craigavon members who joined in and performed their own composition.
- **Age on Stage Calendar:** One hundred calendars were distributed, featuring images of Age on Stage members and the jokes shared each week at the

sessions. These were developed as a promotional tool to encourage Tour audiences to join the weekly dance classes; and

- **Showcases:** Five performances were delivered at:
 - Goodlife Festival, Craigavon – general public;
 - Arts & Age Conference, Belfast – Arts and age professionals;
 - Age on Stage Double Bill, Craigavon – groups participating in the tour as well as other older people's groups;
 - An Creagan, County Tyrone – local audience including An Creagan arts participants; and
 - Dander Dancing, Belfast – general public.

13.3 Participant Feedback

Age on Stage members first became involved through the weekly dance sessions in Craigavon. Whereas a small number of participants had taken dance classes in their youth, the majority had no experience at all.

Members stated how they had broken the movements down into mini routines and given them names to help them remember. The classes required concentration as well as movement – following directions, keeping rhythm in time to the music and working as a group.



"I'm not coordinated or musical, but I like doing the dance routines, it's a type of brain gym."

Most participants reported that they felt quite isolated due to their personal circumstances - living alone, widowed or with caring responsibilities. They felt that loneliness was an issue for older people as they transitioned

from working life into retirement and potentially experiencing a partner's bereavement.

This was reflected in the dance and drama that they composed, describing their common experiences of children leaving home and their new sense of self and roles.

"But then life wasn't busy. My purpose shifted...my purpose was lost."

Reflecting on Age and Stage's female membership, they felt that this may have a greater impact on men. Initially a small number of men had been involved in the group, but had gradually left.

"I think men could be a bit intimidated walking into a group of women. Older people do get set in their ways. They have their pets for company and are limited in the contact that they have."

The group's Life is Busy dramatic composition reflects on the contrasting bustle of family life, compared to the more leisurely pace of later life. Participants felt that adjustment to change was difficult. However, they wanted to show that people can adapt, be strong and overcome life's challenges.

"You can be left a solitary person in the house. You do have to push yourself. If a group is already established it is difficult to just join in."

Participants thought that the outreach aspect of the project helped to introduce people to Age on Stage, reassuring them that they would be welcomed and that all abilities can join in.

"The atmosphere in the group is great. It's not about judging you, it's very relaxed and is all about getting out of the house."

"There's great satisfaction out of these classes. We didn't know each other before but we're all learning together."

Members felt that the artist's approach was essential to putting people at ease and making it fun whilst you learn. Telling jokes was a central element to breaking down barriers and setting the tone for the workshops. Indeed participants considered the artist to be one of the group, rather than a "teacher."

"I feel very proud of myself. This has been out of my comfort zone. I tell my friends how great it is. We've explored parts of our life that we weren't aware of. Life has changed but women are strong."

13.4 Partner Feedback

The Council felt that the AOPP had enabled Age and Stage Craigavon to establish itself within the local community and raise its profile further through the tours and performances. The project wasn't a new concept but had evolved and developed with the participants.

The three groups were very different, with various levels of mobility, experience and interest in the arts. The Posy Club has 30-40 members and is well established with a varied social programme. However, participants had limited arts experience. The Derrytrasna group was less mobile and activities were usually table-based and at an individual, rather than group level.



Due to a recognised need to get more males involved in the process, partnerships with Armagh Men's Shed were developed. However, although group leaders were enthusiastic, members were reluctant to take part and focused turned

to the newly established Men's Shed in Lurgan. The use of a male musician and introduction of percussion-based movement sessions helped to overcome initial barriers.

"We started gently, playing drums and showing them YouTube clips of music-making using tools. They then used tools to make different sounds and Anthea had a clever way of introducing movement by getting them to throw instruments to each other."

The live music element lifted the mood of the sessions and fully engaged the participants, taking them out of their comfort zones and initiating interactions between individuals. It was believed that these initial group sessions helped to introduce the project concept, build confidence and start them working as one group, in advance of Age on Stage's presence.

"It worked really well, when Age on Stage came out to them it showed them that it was ok to make mistakes, it was about having a go and having fun."

The connection between Age on Stage and the community groups was deemed valuable as it created an affiliation prior to watching their performance at the Community Hub.

"I've really seen Age on Stage develop. There's been a change in them, from amateurs into experts. That's been helped by showing others what they've learned...building their confidence. The performance at the Age and Age Conference made them aware how important a group they are. That was personal to them and they did it with a flourish!"

13.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP's strategic aims:

Isolation and Loneliness: Discussions illustrate that many people experience loneliness in later life, as circumstances change and social connections are lost. The outreach sessions were important in establishing personal connections between Age on Stage members and community groups. The aim being to combat potential nervousness arising from joining a new group and to give people a

flavour of what happens and who attends. Tour participants were interested in the Age on Stage members, their dance experience and the weekly sessions. Being sociable, laughing and actively engaging in a group activity is central to members' enjoyment of Age on Stage.

Social Inclusion: Each of the participating community groups were based in socio-economically disadvantaged and rural areas. Lurgan Men's Shed members additionally experienced a range of mental health and alcohol related issues. The project enabled participants to become involved in a collaborative project and to deepen bonds between people from different backgrounds. Partners stressed the importance of providing transport (particularly in isolated rural areas) and hospitality as part of the sessions. Often conversations would arise and friendships develop naturally outside the workshops and these would be carried on throughout the project.

Poverty: All of the creative sessions were provided free of charge to the older person. The final performance at Brownlow Community Hub brought all of the groups together and showcased the work of Lisburn and Craigavon Age on Stage to a wide audience. Feedback suggests that attendees did not often have the opportunity to go to arts events.

Health Issues/Dementia: The project had an empowering impact on Age on Stage members, as they grew in confidence, demonstrated their skills to their peers and performed in front of large audiences. The respect and appreciation received during the tour gave them a sense of pride in their development as performers. Tour participants also benefited from the dance related activities, relaxing and enjoying trying something new. A relative of one member of Lurgan Men's Shed, who had early stage dementia identified a positive change in his behaviour and social interaction as a direct result of the project.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People: The dramatic element of the project focused on discussing ageing and what it has meant to Age on Stage members. It encouraged them to take stock of their lives, look at what they have achieved to date and what they have the potential to achieve in the future. The performances illustrated that older people can express themselves creatively, learn new skills and feel proud of their abilities. Tour participants learned how to make simple musical scores with percussion instruments and developed creative movement skills by dancing in unison accompanied by live music. At the end of the project leaders and participants expressed the desire to engage in similar projects. As such, ABC Arts Development will continue to support Age on Stage Craigavon's growth and plan to work with Lurgan Men's Shed on a Blacksmith skills programme. The project enabled Arts Development to start forming relationships with groups outside Craigavon and pilot the use of peer facilitators with older people – an approach which will be utilised again.

14 Void Gallery: Encouraging Relationships with Art

14.1 Introduction



In 2003, a group of artists formed (DADA) **Derry's Artists for Derry's Art** with a vision of creating a contemporary art space showing established Irish and international artists. The vision for this space included artists' studios and a high quality education programme in the City's Old Shirt Factory. The group secured Peace II funding and in 2005, the Void Art Centre opened. Void has established an international reputation for

its wide-ranging and challenging exhibition programme curated by a diverse group of art practitioners and artists. Access and Participation are central to the delivery of all of Void's activities and the Void Engage programme actively seeks to bring people into the gallery through a wide range of workshops, talks, film screenings and other events inspired by our exhibitions, both within the gallery and in offsite locations. The vast majority of the programme is free of charge in order to improve accessibility and inclusion.

The ERA project (Encouraging Relationships with Art) was an ambitious Gallery led social inclusion programme which engaged vulnerable older people diagnosed with dementia and well as more active older people. The project also provided opportunities for artists to develop their skills in working with older people, particularly those with dementia.

14.2 Project Aims & Description

ERA represented a natural progression of Void's engagement and relationship with older people, working towards:

- Reduced isolation and loneliness by bringing people together in a safe and social environment;
- Improved social inclusion by engaging older people with dementia, men and those living in rural areas;

- Providing high quality arts activities free of cost to the older person and encouraging participants to find their voice through the mechanism of the arts.



Void applied to the final round of the AOPP and received an award of £5,300 over a delivery period of 20 weeks. During this time 37 sessions were delivered, amounting to just over 70 hours in weekly and standalone slots.

The ERA project took place in Void Gallery and in several offsite locations. The project concentrated on the work of Anne Wenzel in the 'Day Breaks, Night Falls' exhibition and consisted of:

- **Guided tours and dementia-friendly training:** The learning team at Void welcomed hundreds of people into the gallery for guided tours and workshops and received training on how to become a dementia friendly gallery. They began a subsequent programme of engagement with adults who live with dementia as well as focusing on the upskilling of local artists and the creation of a working group made up of community stakeholders;
- **Elder's Working Group:** A Steering Group was established which invited older artists, academics and community activists to help shape the programme.
- **Outreach:** The project delivered over 25 visual art workshops joining five local artists with active age groups and Day Care Centres across the Derry City and Strabane Council area. Owen Mor Care Centre, Seven Oaks Care Centre, The Gasyard Mens Shed, Age Concern Causeway and Ballylaw Women's Group visited the gallery and took part in a guided tour of the Wenzel exhibition. They then spent time with their artist deciding what sort of work they would like to make in response and agreed on a schedule of sessions to happen in their centres. Each artist then delivered workshops where they created mixed media artworks inspired by the Wenzel exhibition. These took the form of ceramics, sculpture, woodwork, willow work and painting;
- **ERA Project Exhibition:** A group exhibition of the artworks was launched by the Mayor at the Void in late June 2016.

A range of artwork and photographic documentation was generated by the project.

14.3 Participant Feedback

Almost 200 older people benefited from the project – taking part in guided tours and artist led workshops. A further 85 people attended the final exhibition and celebration event at Void. Discussions were undertaken with participants during the final showcase event which was accompanied by live music, spontaneous group singing and dancing.

Participants proudly described how they had created their artworks – making hand sculptures by placing their hands in a jelly like substance, making a mould and pouring the plaster in to set and learning how to make their own felt from scratch.

“We made the felt ourselves. You put wool out in all different layers, different ways, put a net over it, use soapy water and rub and rub. I’d never done felting before, didn’t know what it was made out of or what to do next!”

One rural group stated that they hadn’t heard of the Void before, but were willing to give the arts project a chance as they had never done anything like it before. They met with the artist and had agreed to work on watercolours. They felt that they had a good rapport with the artist and had learned new skills which they would like to continue to develop further.

“It was amazing how we all started with the same photograph, but what we each produced was very different. Individual to us.”

Participants valued the opportunity to become involved with the ERA project and the gallery, although some stated that they were nervous beforehand. However, the taster sessions had provided a feeling for what it would be like without the commitment. They stressed that the artist’s approach and attitude was extremely important in building confidence.

“It’s amazing what you can do if someone gives you the time.”

“I think the work here is fabulous. The whole idea of it shows everyone can be creative...lets your mind work and shows you what your hands can do.”

One group worked with clay to make ceramic houses and landscapes, something they had never done before. They like the creativity aspect but also marvelled at the process the clay went through to make the finished piece.

“I would like to try different things. It was lovely to get out and have a new challenge, tackle stuff I hadn’t done before. We had great crack together, watching each other building our houses!”

“It allowed you to be more imaginative, experiment and make something personal to you.”

Fun and camaraderie was at the heart of the workshops:

“There’s a bit of snobbery around art, but anything’s beautiful in the eye of the beholder. This was good fun, not too serious. At our stage we want to get a bit of fun out of life. Every day is a learning day.”

Analysis of feedback from older people visiting the Anne Wenzel’s exhibition and taster pottery workshop, was extremely positive with all indicating that they would visit the gallery again and some expressing how the artwork had affected them.

“I hadn’t seen anything like this before...powerful and made me feel sad.”

“It’s something new to me, the artist’s way of expressing things. How simple clay structures can turn into something great.”

14.4 Partner Feedback

The ERA project stemmed from Void’s Engage Programme. After an initial visual arts project located in residential care and day centre settings, to include people with dementia, the team recognised that the gallery was less accessible to this section of the community. The work aimed to enhance quality of life through a high quality arts programme which would engage older people and help familiarise them with the Void.

Nine staff members and artists received “Meet me at MoMa” style training via the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny. This opportunity arose from the Azure Project, based on a collaboration between Age & Opportunity, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, the Butler Gallery and the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA). Azure was inspired by the ‘Meet me at MoMA’ programme making art accessible to people with dementia, based at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. Azure piloted guided visits of the Butler Gallery collection for people with dementia and their family, friends and carers. Building on the interest in this work The Alzheimer Society of Ireland worked in partnership to host a workshop for staff working in museums and galleries. The aim was to build the capacity of staff from museums and galleries to be more dementia friendly and to provide them with the skills and knowledge needed to facilitate dementia-inclusive arts events.

“The training was very beneficial. I was glad to have received it before working with the group. I learned a lot and the tools given were vital to the workshop. I felt more confident, grounded and prepared for meeting the group.”



and seminars and new opportunities have arisen as a result.

Void now has a group of staff and artist facilitators who are more confident and skilled in working with people with dementia and are inspired to continue the engagement process. The Head of Access and Participation has extensively promoted the benefits of the ERA project for the gallery, to include speaking at conferences

For example, Void is currently developing a project with Compassionate Communities, an organisation which volunteers support and companionship for people who are ill. Foyle Hospice has requested that the gallery links with some of

their clients with life limiting illness and is an important progression of their outreach programme.

Void has also benefited through its extensive partnership working, where a range of active age groups were welcomed into the gallery. This was deemed to have been a good opportunity to make connections with new urban and rural groups. Many of these individuals have returned to the gallery and Void's mailing list has grown substantially as a result.

"Over several weeks the gallery was regularly full of groups of older people from all across counties Strabane and Londonderry, as well as local people from the city visiting the Anne Wenzel exhibition. There was a real energy present in the gallery."

Although the project was extremely ambitious within the allocated timeframe and budget it ran relatively smoothly. However, there were difficulties in obtaining momentum with one of the groups, with poor communication and apathy from some of the members. The work exhibited was of a high quality and participants were proud of what they had achieved and reported enjoying the experience.

"The Arts and Older People Programme has been critical to our success so far in this field and is a major motivator for older people to access and participate in the arts."

The project also had a lasting impact upon the artists involved, with more recognition of the issues affecting older people and the need to adapt practice to individual's physical capacity and ability to concentrate.

"My group were very active but during sessions discussions regarding illness, mobility and loss came up very often and the importance of the group to these women became very prominent. [This was an] opportunity to meet, talk, create when many otherwise would lead more isolated lives."

One of the partner organisations providing support to people with dementia described the impact of the project for them:

"It was amazing. We usually only get a small number of people participating in activities but this was different. There was total silence as people were totally focused on their work, ones that wouldn't usually get involved. We had never worked with an artist before and even had a 99 year old involved. They worked with oil pastels and painted onto a disc, the residents gained so much and we know to do this type of thing again."

14.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP's strategic aims:

Isolation and Loneliness: The project brought isolated older people together in group art sessions, creating a sociable environment whilst learning new skills. Art-making providing a focal point for interacting and making conversation with others. Many hadn't engaged in art since their childhood. The gallery feels that there is a need to continue with this work and, in particular, to promote how the arts can help reduce isolation and open-up communication channels and assist self-expression for people with dementia.

Social Inclusion: ERA placed a central emphasis upon social inclusion – reaching out to the most marginalised older people and overcoming barriers to their participation and engagement. The majority of beneficiaries had never been to Void before, to include staff from partner organisations.

Poverty: The Void is located in an area of urban deprivation and Void is committed to building relationships with marginalised groups, encouraging them to experience the gallery programme free of charge. The ERA project provided activities free of charge to the older people and has successfully helped to promote the wider gallery activities and grow its user base within the local community.

Health Issues/Dementia: Void has shown commitment to establishing itself as a Dementia Friendly Gallery, having undertaken specialist training and hosting visits in conjunction with Seven Oaks Day Centre, Age Concern and Gwen Mor Care Centre. This element of the project will be extended beyond the funding period and benefits from the training and mentoring opportunities provided. Artists reported an increase in participants' confidence, arts-based skills and self-esteem as the sessions progressed. However they felt that the number of sessions should be extended to really benefit participants with dementia and to help further establish relationships.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People: This was a strong partnership-based project, with Void benefiting from 14 social partners to include those from the age sector as well as community groups and residential care providers. The original proposal was developed from extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders and led to the establishment of an Elders Working Group. This group will remain a central part of the Engage programme and it is envisaged that members will advise the gallery on future strategy in engaging and working with older people. The formal launch at the Void brought all of the participants and their friends and family together to view the artwork. There was a strong sense of celebration, pride and achievement to have their creations professionally exhibited for public view.

15 Border Arts Carnival Group: Disappearing Farmhouses

15.1 Introduction

Castlederg is a village in County Tyrone, lying on the River Derg near the border with County Donegal. The rural village has a population of just over 2,000 and although this has increased over the last 10 years, it has been at a lower rate than the NI average. Around 16% of households are occupied by a single person over 65 years. The majority of residents have low level, or no qualifications and 49% of the population are economically inactive. Castlederg is ranked in the top 10% most deprived wards for multiple deprivation, income deprivation, health deprivation and disability and employment deprivation.

Border Arts organises community arts related activities in the Castlederg/Ballybofey area. Projects have included classical music, traditional music, workshops, drumming project, carnivals, contemporary dance, painting, drama, circus skills, concerts and tuition in several instruments. The organisation has lead peace-building activities through the International Fund for Ireland Peace Impact programme and also has an established Youth Forum. The group completely refurbished their current building to allow them to develop their large-scale community arts activity and provide disability access. By enhancing their facilities, the organisation offers increased training opportunities, arts programmes, attract visitors and offer an attractive venue for groups to hire in order to sustain their community activity. Border Arts Carnival Group was established to develop the organisations performing group which involves making props and costumes for festivals, a samba band and delivering music events.

This AOPP project focuses on 10 derelict farmhouses and landmarks of the parish of Termonamongan. It is a community led project focusing on social history, reminiscence and transitions within a rural area. The facilitator's emphasis on farming, evoking memories of working the land and passing down of traditional skills successfully attracted isolated older males to the activities.

15.2 Project Aims & Description

The project aimed to involve older residents in the production of a social history archive for the surrounding area. It acknowledged that the area had undergone a vast transformation over the years, with the decline of farming and outward migration of farming families. Specifically it aimed to:

- Share memories about living or working in farms in the 1950s and 1960s;
- Target isolated older people, and particularly older men in reminiscing about farming, local families and traditions;
- Develop a social history archive on the theme; and
- Renew friendships and acquaintances within the local area.

The Border Arts Carnival Group applied to the third round of the AOPP and received an award of £6,300. The project ran over a six month period, with an extensive research element. It is estimated that around 150 older people were involved in activities, to include:

- **Research & Story-telling:** Extensive one-to-one research, reminiscence and storytelling was undertaken over a period of months. These explored derelict farmhouses, memories of the people who lived there, old traditions and daily routines for local people. The conversations were recorded and films were made of the local landmarks;
- **Group Discussions & Showcases:** DVDs were made based upon the landmarks and story-telling. Older people from the surrounding areas were invited to the launches which involved talks from local historians and group discussions and reminiscence.

15.3 Participant Feedback

Most participants heard about the project through word of mouth or a direct approach from the Border Arts team. The emphasis upon local families, heritage, traditions and landscape attracted people's interest as most felt that they had memories, photos and knowledge to contribute. Even if their own family home was not directly featured, participants had a variety of knowledge about, or connections to the farms or old family names.

"I've always been interested in genealogy, but there were many others there who had no former experience or interest...it was excellent stuff to get into."

The group sessions were thought to have been very well-attended, with a good cross-section of the older community. That said, there was a noticeable amount of men attending – those who had been farmers themselves or worked in farms but now retired. Importantly, good geographical coverage had been obtained from the surrounding hinterland and the sessions served to bring people together to reminisce and share stories.

"All from very rural, isolated areas. You would know each other briefly maybe from being from the Parish but that would be it. Everyone lives so far apart."

"It has brought a lot of people together, a nice social time. It meant a lot to me to meet up with all those people."

The provision of transport and lunch was deemed to have helped encourage people to attend, as did the arranging sessions during the late morning, rather than at night when people preferred to stay at home. Although some participants were hesitant to speak out in a large group situation, conversations flowed easily over lunch and acquaintances made.

It was highlighted that the way that the sessions were delivered, meant that participants could contribute as much or as little as they wished, but it resulted in a learning experience for everyone.

“People had great knowledge that they shared with the rest of us. It was really about our community, generations of families that had died off.”

“Every video was different. We learned about the floods, what was special about the old houses...tiny windows...the child drowning in the well. It’s sad to think that these won’t last much longer. I’d never been to my family’s house yet they’re 10-15 miles from where I live.”

The project was thought to have shown the importance of local history and its preservation to the community. Some participants are continuing to research their family trees and have made contact with estranged relatives as a result.

“On my grandmother’s side there’s only one left along the male line. [The project] brought us in contact seven second cousins in America. We didn’t know they existed. The contact had died off when the older generation died. We posted up our family tree on a website and they had posted up theirs. I couldn’t believe it.”

One participant stated that the project had had a ripple effect within her own family as she got in touch with relatives to obtain information.

“I found I also talked a lot to my own children, so they could learn about their history.”

15.4 Partner Feedback

The research aspect of the project was extensive and quickly grew from the initial plans as more people became involved and suggested further people to talk to and buildings to include. The initial targeting of participants had been done through the churches and resident networks, meaning that those who don’t usually get involved in group activities were included. The project was promoted online and this helped spark interest locally and from people as far away as America, contributing their memories and experiences.

The area is extremely rural, with many participants living alone in the surrounding hills and the rest of their family had moved out of the area to find work. Border Arts initially visited and captured stories in an informal and relaxed way within their own surroundings. Although many were nervous about being filmed at first, they were put at ease and confidence grew.

“They told stories, local history and times spent in the houses. We took them up to them and they showed us where the cows were kept and what went on. It was a whole history that you wouldn’t have realised...all those old skills, cutting the corn. The project made you take notice of it.”

Providing transport to the group sessions was thought to have improved accessibility and attendance at the group sessions. The lunches provided by the school helped break the ice and became a core part of the process, as people opened up and chatted informally.

The social inclusion aspect was thought to have been strong as it helped integrate the community. One family who had experienced a recent bereavement were encouraged to come along as

“That was my highlight...they had been worried about how they would face the public again, but they really enjoyed it. It was good to see the community speaking to them, rallying round.”

Border Arts felt that the project had opened up opportunities for further projects and funding. For example the group has received a grant to do intergenerational work with the local school. This will bring young and old residents together to learn about traditional skills such as thatching, turf-cutting and butter-making. This is an area that they would like to extend. There are also ideas about writing and performing a play around the life stock markets that were a central part of local life for generations.

The AOPP project enabled the group to reach new people, particularly those who are most isolated and marginalised and to introduce them to other activities in the surrounding area. Although the research aspect and organisation was extensive, members felt that it had been extremely beneficial for the organisation as it had helped to develop community links which would continue past the grant period. Strong links were made with the local churches and there is raised awareness that there are older people experiencing isolation throughout the Parish.

15.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP’s strategic aims:

Isolation and Loneliness: The project aimed to tackle rural isolation and loneliness. Border Arts attempted to reach unconnected older people through churches, community groups, local families, social media and word of mouth. The nature of the project and its focus on the local area, social history, folklore and did successfully attract older men to the activities. The atmosphere at the group sessions was relaxed with a good deal of audience interaction as memories were sparked and participant knowledge and experiences adding to the discussions.

Social Inclusion: The research, storytelling and discussions illustrated the value of older people’s experiences and knowledge – ensuring that they were in the lead and providing further links to be researched for further sessions. The majority of attendees did not have good mobility and the organisation provided transport to the events. A partnership with the local school meant that the group sessions were followed by lunch, providing a chance for informal conversations and friendships to be extended.

Poverty: The project took place in an area of economic decline. The village centre is impacted by dereliction and the surrounding area has a high degree of vacant buildings and homesteads. Many farms and dwellings had been abandoned as longstanding families died off as younger members left to pursue other more economically viable careers. Border Arts provided activities free of charge, arranged transport and hospitality to ensure that older people on a low income could be involved. The sessions also provided the opportunity to promote the community arts facility and associated activities to a wider audience.

Health Issues/Dementia: The activities successfully attracted the most marginalised older members of the community, with many living alone or with little access to transport. A lot of the larger houses were focal points for “cielieing” or “raiking”, bringing back nostalgic memories of participants’ youth when the area was a bustling hub of activity. The discussions promoted wellbeing through conversation, sharing knowledge or traditional skills and participants’ confidence increased over the sessions.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People: The project was devised out of an identified need to reduce isolation amongst older men, highlighted during previous community consultation. The content, approach and ethos has captured older people’s experiences, farming expertise and local knowledge, ensuring that it is preserved into the future. The project illustrated the centrality of older people’s rich life experience to the fabric of the area. As a result of funding intergenerational work is planned to help develop relationships between young and older residents. It has also shown that older people have a valuable role in helping to preserve and communicate social history down through the generations.

Appendix One

Evaluation Framework

Aim	Short-term Outcomes	Indicator
Strengthening the Voice of Older People: Provide opportunities for older people to develop skills which will strengthen their voice on issues that affect them. Providing artistic, professional and personal development skills; Work to strengthen and develop the voice of older people particularly on issues that directly affect this section of society on a day-to-day basis.	Awareness of the programme and social justice issues amongst key stakeholders, policy makers, service providers and wider society	• Increase in awareness, understanding & support of older people's issues by policy makers, service providers and wider society
	Increased skills amongst older people – including artistic, capacity building, community development and advocacy skills	• % of participants who strongly agree that they have tried & learned new things
		• % of participants who strongly agree that they have surprised selves & others by what they can do
		• % of participants who strongly agree that the activities have given them the confidence to try different things
		• % of participants who strongly agree that they feel good about what they have achieved
		• Increase in sense of influencing neighbourhood decisions
		• Increase in sense of influencing NI decisions
		• % of artists stating that participants' showed a desire to learn
		• % of artists stating that they would like to work with older people again • Participants, artists & stakeholders feel skills have been developed via the project
Social Inclusion: Combating the social exclusion of older people through arts interventions that promote inclusion, free movement and sharing; Working to create a more peaceful, fair and inclusive community that does not discriminate against age and ethnicity	Positive Relationships developed between people from different backgrounds and experiences.	• % of participants strongly agreeing that they have made good friendships out of this project * cross-community, cross-cultural, intergenerational projects • Increase in the promotion of good relations (e.g. sharing facilities, relationship development, networking & links)
	Older people feel more connected to their local communities and wider NI society	• Increase in sense of neighbourhood belonging • Increase in sense of NI belonging
Poverty: Providing opportunities for older people living in disadvantaged/marginalised rural and urban areas to access and participate in arts activities; Working to improve the quality of life of older people living in	Increased social interaction through participatory arts projects amongst target groups	• Increase in % participants who have been to see an arts event in the last 12 months (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)
		• Increase in the % of participants who have taken part in an arts activity in the last 12 months (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)
		• Decrease in the % of participants agreeing that there are barriers to the arts (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)
		• % of participants agreeing that they have made good friendships out of

disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas of Northern Ireland. Isolation & Loneliness: To provide opportunities for social interaction through arts-led interventions and projects; Working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness		this project (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas) • % of participants agreeing that they have taken part in other groups & activities due to this project (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas) • % of participants disagreeing that these sessions haven't made them want to go to arts events (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas) • Decrease in participants' loneliness score (Hughes et al) • % of artists who feel participants enjoyed the activities • % of artists who feel that participants are now more positive about the arts • Participants, artists & stakeholders feel that the project has decreased isolation and improved access & participation in the arts
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Appendix Two

Programme Awards

Organisation/Group	Sector	Primary Practice	Artform	Award
BEAM Creative Network	Arts	Community Arts	Craft	£12,562
Crescent Arts Centre	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£10,489
Andersonstown Community Theatre	Arts	Community Arts	Drama	£7,500
Waterside Theatre Company Ltd	Arts	Venue or Festival	Visual Arts	£10,283
Big Telly Theatre Company	Arts	Voluntary/Amateur Arts	Visual Arts	£14,500
North West Play Resource Centre	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£17,220
Ards Arts	Arts	Other	Combined	£11,000
Down Community Arts Ltd	Arts	Community Arts	Unspecified	£10,250
Play Resource Warehouse	Arts	Community Arts	Craft	£15,690
Greater Shankill Partnership.	Community	Community Arts	Combined	£12,532
NI Association For Mental Health	Community	Health or Disability Arts	Unspecified	£14,566
Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership	Community	Other	Combined	£15,300
ALLY Foyle	Community	Community Arts	Combined	£12,000
Age Concern Causeway	Community	Community Arts	Music	£16,000
Strabane District Council	Community	Other	Combined	£21,846
Age NI	Community	Other	Combined	£15,940
Mind Wise New Vision	Community	Health or Disability Arts	Unspecified	£13,188
Lisburn City Council	Council	Community Arts	Combined	£20,000
Fermanagh District Council	Council	Other	Combined	£20,000
Big Telly Theatre Company	Arts	Voluntary/Amateur Arts	Drama	£10,000
Verbal Arts Centre	Arts	Community Arts	Literature	£15,000
New Belfast Community Arts Initiative	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£20,000
Streetwise Community Circus	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£15,000
Oh Yeah Music Centre	Arts	Unspecified	Music	£20,000
DU Dance	Arts	Other	Dance	£20,000
Northern Visions Ltd.	Arts	Voluntary/Amateur Arts	Film	£15,000
Arts and Disability Forum	Arts	Voluntary/Amateur Arts	Combined	£15,400
South Lough Neagh Regeneration	Community	Other	Unspecified	£8,470
Northern Ireland Hospice	Community	Unspecified	Combined	£23,491
Craigavon Borough Council	Council	Other	Dance	£15,200
Banbridge District Council	Council	Other	Combined	£19,000
Action Mental Health	Community	Community Arts	Combined	£5,950
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council	Council	Unspecified	Dance	£9,000
BEAM Creative Network	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£6,060
Beth Johnson Foundation	Community	Unspecified	Combined	£3,760
Border Arts Carnival Group	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£6,300
Creggan Education & Research Services	Community	Community Arts	Combined	£6,000
Derry City and Strabane District Council	Council	Community Arts	Combined	£8,216
Harmony Community Trust	Community	Community Arts	Combined	£4,685
Killyclogher Senior Citizens Club	Community	Community Arts	Combined	£4,654
Open Arts	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£7,688
Play Resource Warehouse	Arts	Community Arts	Unspecified	£5,320
Pomeroy Resource Centre	Community	Unspecified	Unspecified	£3,365
Prime Cut Productions Ltd	Arts	Other	Drama	£6,000
Streetwise Community Circus	Arts	Community Arts	Combined	£6,500
The Void Art Centre	Arts	Other	Combined	£5,300
Waterside Theatre Company Ltd	Arts	Venue	Combined	£6,497
Total			£877,432	

Appendix Three

Evaluation Responses

Organisation	Entrance	Exit	Audience	Artist	Volunteer	Report
ABC	23	20	19	3	0	2
Age Concern Causeway	0	0	0	0	0	1
Age NI	0	0	0	0	0	1
AllyFoyle	0	0	10	0	0	1
AMH	31	34	27	3	0	1
An Creagan	34	27	0	2	0	1
Andersonstown Community Theatre	52	52	133	2	2	1
Banbridge District Council	27	18	0	4	0	1
BEAM	44	43	36	4	3	2
Big Telly	24	9	222	9	4	2
Border Arts	39	42	43	0	4	1
Community Arts Partnership	0	0	0	19	0	1
Derry City & Strabane DC	96	45	97	6	0	1
Down Community Arts	45	32	0	5	4	1
DU Dance	0	0	40	4	1	1
Fermanagh DC	92	53	144	3	0	1
Harmony	15	11	0	2	0	1
Killyclogher	32	32	22	4	0	1
LGNI	17	15	8	0	1	1
MEAPP	96	61	126	4	6	1
Mindwise	48	31	1	1	0	1
NI Hospice	25	15	0	7	0	1
NIAMH	31	0	0	1	0	1
Northern Visions	0	15	20	7	2	1
Oh Yeah Music Centre	27	0	12	2	0	1
Open Arts	28	14	0	2	0	1
Play Resource Warehouse	92	83	0	2	0	2
Playhouse Theatre	148	78	30	10	7	1
Pomeroy	32	0	0	2	5	1
Prime Cut	0	0	0	3	0	1
South Lough Neagh	14	10	0	1	0	1
Spectrum Centre	6	5	0	0	4	1
Strabane DC	201	187	62	6	9	1
Streetwise Community Circus	68	65	17	14	0	2
Verbal Arts	0	0	0	0	0	1
Void Gallery	39	21	0	4	0	1
Waterside Theatre	13	13	12	2	0	2
Unknown	0	16	0	0	0	0
Total	1439	1047	1081	138	52	43

