



Scoping a Creative Age Festival Meeting Report

8th July 2013

Keele University
New Vic Theatre



Introduction

On 8th July 2013, a group of twenty delegates met at The New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme to discuss the potential of developing a Creative Age Festival in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. These included representatives from community arts organisations; Keele University; Staffordshire University; EngAGE over-50's group; Local Authority; cultural venues; and the health and social care sectors¹.

The meeting was facilitated by:

Jackie Reynolds (Research Associate, Keele University)

Jill Rezzano (Head of Education, New Vic Theatre)

Miriam Bernard (*Ages & Stages* Project Lead/Prof. of Social Gerontology, Keele University)

Kat Hughes (Youth Theatre Director and Education Practitioner, New Vic Theatre)

It began with Jill explaining the background to the *Ages and Stages* project, in order to provide a context for the idea of a Creative Age Festival. *Ages and Stages* is a research partnership between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre. The original project was funded for three years (2009-12) by the multi-research council New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Programme, and then received 'follow-on funding' (2012-13) from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The research focused on the role that Stoke-on-Trent's Victoria Theatre (now the New Vic Theatre) has played in the lives of older people living and working in the Potteries during the last forty years. The 12-month follow-on project 'translating research into practice' has involved: establishing an intergenerational theatre company; devising and touring a new performance piece; developing and delivering an inter-professional training course; and scoping out the potential for a Creative Age Festival in North Staffordshire.

The original idea for a Creative Age Festival developed as a result of the links between the *Ages and Stages* project and a Canadian partner project called 'Theatre as a Pathway to Healthy Aging': a collaborative project between the GeriActors and Friends, an intergenerational theatre company in Edmonton, Alberta and researchers at the University of Alberta and Trent University. Edmonton's Creative Age Festival was established in response to the growing evidence about the benefits of arts participation for older people, and is now in its seventh year. It is held during Alberta's Seniors' Week, which takes place in the first full week of June. It involves Arts Community Cafes/workshops; choral fests; film screenings; musical performances; art exhibitions; and a professional development symposium with invited keynote speakers. An integral part of the festival is FEST (the Festival of Edmonton Seniors Theatre). This showcases original theatre produced by

¹ Please see Appendix 1 for participant list.

Edmonton seniors and offers workshops led by trained facilitators. The GeriActors and Friends are involved in leading and taking part in FEST.

Mim, Jill and Jackie visited Edmonton in June 2013 and took part in various Creative Age/FEST events and workshops. As well as discussing the festival with participants, they met with the main organisers, in order to understand and learn from their experiences of developing such an event. The purpose of the meeting on 8th July was therefore both to report back the learning from Edmonton and to explore levels of interest and the potential drivers and barriers to a Creative Age Festival in North Staffordshire. This report is a record of the discussions and ideas that were generated by the meeting.

Opening Discussion

Delegates divided into pairs. They discussed their own work and then, using post-it notes, they identified one aspect of a Creative Age Festival that they would find interesting, and one question that they would have about it.

People's interest in the festival could be grouped into a number of themes. The individual comments are recorded under each theme:

Developing Strategy/funding

- Collaboration and support; inputs, partnerships; initiatives; new experiences and participation; linking to other organisations, environments e.g. health, quality of life etc. JUST DO IT!
- Cross-sector organisation/collaborations – really cutting edge (digital). Leading the way, building sustainable links
- Fundraising
- Funding possibilities through cultural grants

Ideas for Activities/practice

- Deliver participatory work in care homes to find out interest and ensure people with dementia have a voice and access the opportunity.
- Stage exhibitions at museum/J2/park (x2)
- Photographic exercise with Newcastle Camera Club
- I would like to deliver workshops: perform, general, specific for Parkinson's, share film work (already created), how to engage people to come
- Delivering/being involved in workshops
- Archives – repository for work collected
- Provide artists' development
- Family intergenerational experiences
- Innovation, good practice

Improving Access/Participation

- More arts facilities
- More accessible
- Arts into communities

Benefits/Impact

- Impact on wellbeing
- Value and benefits to older people of increased social contact, and being actively involved and valued.
- New, unique, positive, inclusive art participation. An opportunity for organisations to work together. A chance for older people to know what services are available
- How impact can last beyond the festival
- Highlighting the benefits of creativity as a means of sustaining/achieving wellbeing – individually and in communities

People's concerns and questions could also be grouped into similar themes:

Developing Strategy/funding

There were numerous comments about the issue of funding – for example;

- What 'breadth' of festival will match with what support can be available – financial, venues, administration, partnerships
- What resources are needed to make the festival happen?
- Funding – what are we offering that is different?
- £ - where from?
- Sustainability/funding

Planning

- What is the timescale for a festival?
- Who is it for? Is it specifically for older people/everyone/or somewhere in between

Improving Access/Participation

- Making sure the festival is INCLUSIVE for people with dementia
- How to involve residential homes?
- Are there professionals who can come into the home at the right price?
- Gaining access to older people – especially those harder to access
- How do older people get involved?
- How would people get to the activities and festival?
- Geographic spread, multi-sites. How best managed?

- Logistics – how would the festival be accessible? Transport hire? Costs? Will the project be funded externally? Staffing costs? Is it sustainable?
- Resources – including staff time?
- Forward planning?
- Co-ordination
- Attracting participants
- Making it intergenerational
- Diversity/equality

Impact

- Is there a legacy?
- Is it just a one-off or will it reflect/impact attitudes to older people in the long-term?

Parallel Discussions

Participants then divided into four groups of five. There were four tables in the room, each with a key question written on flip chart paper on the table. Each group spent fifteen minutes discussing each question and recording their responses on the flip chart paper or post-it notes, before moving onto the next table. Each discussion was hosted by one of the workshop facilitators, who summarised the discussion so far to each group as they arrived, so that they could then add to and further develop the key points of the discussion so far.

The collated responses to each of the four key questions are detailed below, grouped under key themes that could be identified:

1) What would be good about a Creative Age Festival for you/your organisation/the communities that you work with?

Participants identified a wide range of potential benefits, across all of these aspects, and the responses are detailed below.

Potential benefits for Older People

- Having something for older people to be involved in within the city
- Can encourage people to try new things; showcase possibilities
- Can offer something whatever one's age; enable people to develop.
- Can learn/network/learn about different art forms
- Links to regular opportunities; raise awareness of what's out there/link people into other things/ trigger other projects/ideas
- Grandparents and children – more opportunities
- Extend friendships and networks
- All about wellbeing
- Benefits of dance for participants

- Individual experience AND the bigger picture
- Need to celebrate ageing
- Opportunities to address all the senses – get “food” involved
- Changing the perceptions of getting older - celebrating
- Tendency to write off older people – need to be positive and value older people
- Challenging preconceptions about older people e.g. what people with dementia can do or are interested in.
- Show e.g. commissioners that this activity has a role beyond enjoyment – leads to well-being, better mental health
- Open eyes to new ways e.g. technology
- Develop confidence for other areas of life e.g. EngAGE
- [Older people could] run workshops themselves
- Active 65+ audience – re-engaging

Potential benefits for practitioners/organisations

- Springboard in this area of work and spawn new things/ways of working
- Very little development in this area (CPD) so could lead to more opportunities
- Showcasing venue (x2)
- Increasing funding opportunities for that venue
- New audiences (x2)
- Showcase work already do to a much wider audience
- Museum – wants to develop adult education/using resources in other ways
- [Bring] practitioners together; care staff/activity coordinators; and lead organisations. CPD strand on top of that

Potential benefits for Stoke-on-Trent

- Showcase diversity in Stoke-on-Trent
- Would be very good for Stoke-on-Trent – celebratory, positive
- Stoke-on-Trent gets a bad press – [this would be a] positive thing
- Help shed a positive light on the city but not seen to be extravagant; build on what we have and what’s going on
- Would bring different groups and organisations together in new ways
- Connecting particular communities – particularly those in residential care homes/with dementia

Wider/Strategic Benefits

- Build on people’s existing skills
- Pride in city/themselves. Including animals, wildlife, countryside
- Intergenerational interaction

- Kick-starting funding in arts and older people.
- Promoting other services/ links
- Putting North Staffs back on the map for creative work with older people.

2) What may be the barriers to success?

The key themes to emerge from this discussion were communication; access and participation; venues; planning' the 'offer'; achieving impact and funding. Responses relating to each theme are listed below.

Communication

- How do you let people know?
- Reaching those that need it most; communicating with target audience
- Talking to people to find out what they really want
- Getting people to care
- Is the word 'ageing' a barrier?
- Being clear about AGE
- Language
- Within residential settings (notice and information)
- Media/social media

Access & Participation

- Who is the audience?
- How to involve people within care homes/with dementia
- People not in residential care but isolated at home
- Reaching BME communities
- Getting balance between charging and free events
- Feeling ownership
- Getting to the venues (numerous comments about transport)
- Balance of participation and audience events

Venues

- Getting the right environment/unexpected venues
- Accessible venues – should include hearing induction loop (x2)
- Time – coordination with venues

Planning

- Time of year
- Organisation
- Partnership
- Team co-ordinator

The 'Offer'

- Consulting with people about what will appeal & diverse offer
- The medium being used
- Quality of event
- Scale (getting it right)
- Needs to be different (a unique offer)
- Avoid both over-ambition and low expectations for Stoke
- If we don't push quality of art it could reinforce perceptions about older people and arts (and community arts in general)

Achieving Impact

- Should have a role in developing skills – how can they continue? Signposting
- Achieve for different needs and people
- Measuring impact and outcomes (documenting)
- Volunteers and recognition
- Apprenticeships – older?
- Sustainability

Funding

- Support/Funding/£

3) Resources: what can you offer and what can you suggest?

Again, people's responses have been grouped into a number of key themes, including existing activities; potential funders; opportunities for publicity; venues; individuals/organisations; participants; transport and volunteering/fund-raising.

Existing Activities

- Build on what exists
- Archive collections
- British Ceramics Biennial Festival (every 2 years)
- Green Door project
- Learning from Arts Link West Midlands
- Programming – showing what already exists e.g. Letting in the Light, Longton Market

Potential Funders

- Age UK
- Appetite (commissioning)
- Arts Council

- Awards for All - priority
- Community event funding – Stoke
- Cultural grants
- European funding
- Foundation for Community Health
- Heritage Lottery – priority
- Informal adult ed funding
- Public health
- Research grant
- Stoke Cultural development
- Stoke libraries funding
- Strasser Foundation (Charles Strasser)
- Successful business people
- The Baring Foundation – see website

Opportunities for publicity/promotion/tasters

- Arts event
- Outreach – USP?
- Staffordshire Film Archive – stimulus screening
- Age & Creativity website
- EngAGE could offer promotion – newsletter goes to 500 older people; 100 group leaders. Trusted mailing.
- Luncheon clubs – build up to the event
- Keele advertise to practitioners
- Social media
- Visit Stoke

Venues

- Venue and park venues. J2
- Hempstalls Hall Care Home – venue and funding
- Mitchell Arts Centre
- Potteries Museum – rooms/spaces/cafe/films

Individuals/Organisations

- 50+ Forum
- Ableworld
- Age Concern
- Art link
- Beth Johnson Foundation

- Chamber of Commerce
- Cultural Sisters
- Heart Foundation
- Meals on Wheels
- Stoke City Football Club
- Schools
- Staffordshire Association of Care Homes
- Town Centre Partnership
- Ward councillors
- WI?
- Identify existing contacts
- The practitioners [who] already work in this way
- Collaborations and new ways of working

Participants

- Grandparents and children
- Involve residents (Hempstalls Hall)

Transport

- Community recreation – mini-buses – Borough Council

Volunteering/Fund Raising

- Involve students as volunteers
- Brampton Gallery's volunteering team
- Potteries Museum volunteering team
- Several general references to volunteers
- Instruments? City Music
- Use the performances to raise money

4) Who should we involve? Are there any key people who are missing today?

Artists/Arts organisations

- Ages and Stages participants
- Airspace Gallery
- Amateur drama companies: Newcastle Players; Stoke Rep; Penkhull Mystery Players
- Art Bay – Fenton
- Arts Council
- Burslem School of Art
- Ceramic City Choir

- Choirs/bands (rock etc)
- City Music (Bridge Centre)
- Creative People and Places/Appetite
- Fine Arts & Decorative Society
- Interest groups – creative writing and photography
- Karen Sayle – Big Red Studio
- Male voice choirs
- Older artists
- Professional dance companies
- Regent and Victoria Hall
- Re-Stoke
- Singing for the Brain (Alzheimer’s Singing group)
- Staffordshire Performing Arts
- Staffordshire University Film Theatre (ageing related films etc)
- Tea dance group (Longton)

Older People’s Organisations

- Age UK
- Beth Johnson Foundation
- 50+ Forum (Newcastle)
- Fifty and Counting (Age UK)
- North Staffs Pensioners

Other Community Organisations

- Community organisers
- CVS
- Faith organisations
- Football clubs
- Leisure facilities – golf etc
- Local Matters team
- North Staffs Archaeological Society
- Residents’ Associations
- Salvation Army
- Sports groups
- Vast
- WI

Health Sector/organisations

- Action for Blind People

- Bradwell (Oak Ward – Sheron and Tina)
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (Nikki Critchlow?)
- Combined Health Care – mental health
- Deaf Links
- Deaf Vibe
- MS Group
- North Staffs Carers
- Parkinsons Society

Local Authority

- Events teams – Stoke City Council
- Library Services
- Museum Service (taking objects into care homes)

Political

- MPs
- Councillors
- Area Councillors
- Mayor – may have charity?

Private Sector

- ‘Captains of Industry’ - sponsorship
- Pottery firms – e.g. Emma Bridgewater; Middleport; Steelite (festival mugs?)

Education

- U3A
- WEA
- College in the Community
- Citizens of the Third Age (Newcastle)
- Schools
- Stoke-on-Trent College (musical theatre students)

Care Homes/Day Care

- Wall Hill Care Home (Leek) (they do a lot of arts-focused work)
- Less arts-involved care homes as tasters – approach managers
- Day care (WRVS etc)
- Tony Oakman – Director of Adult Social Care: link to strategic managers in adult social care.

Participants

- BME groups – Hibiscus (Afro-Caribbean); CCMA; Polish; British Pakistani; Sikh Temple in Stoke.

Media

- Local media – Evening Sentinel
- Radio Stoke
- Creative Stoke

Next Steps

In conclusion, the meeting demonstrated a strong interest in the idea of a Creative Age Festival for North Staffordshire. A range of potential benefits were identified for older people themselves; for practitioners and organisations, and for Stoke-on-Trent. Some 'barriers' were identified, such as funding and transport but, overall, many of the issues that were discussed in terms of 'barriers' simply identified some of the issues that would need to be considered (e.g. communication, access etc), and suggested ways of doing so. The discussion about resources identified further ways that barriers could be addressed, by identifying a range of potential opportunities to support the development of a Creative Age Festival. This included a wide range of resources, from potential funding opportunities, to sources of volunteers, venues, and the involvement of existing organisations. A key consideration in developing the Festival would clearly be that of how best to utilise existing community assets.

The funding that has been provided so far has thus enabled us to scope the potential for a Creative Age Festival. Part of that process has involved identifying a wide range of potential project partners. In order to move forwards, we suggest the following 'next steps':

- 1) We invite comments and feedback on this report, in order to ensure that everyone who attended the meeting has the opportunity to cross-check the summary, and also to enable people who were unable to attend to contribute to the initial discussions.
- 2) We would then like to establish a small working group to explore further some of the potential opportunities that have been identified. We invite expressions of interest from anyone who would like to be involved in these on-going discussions.

Appendix 1

Meeting Participants

Jo Blagg (ArtLink)

Sarah Bonam (Letting in the Light)

Stewart Barker (EngAGE)

Frances Chadwick (EngAGE)

Melanie Firman (Potteries Museum and Art Gallery)

Alistair Fisher (Principal Health Improvement Manager – Stoke-on-Trent City Council)

Rebecca Frankenberg (B Arts)

Ian Hutchinson (Mitchell Arts Centre)

Rachel James (Museums, Culture and Tourism Team)

Ray Johnson (Staffordshire University/Staffordshire Film Archive)

Anne Kinnaird (Letting in the Light)

Rachael Lines (Frontline Dance)

Michael Murray (Keele University)

Mo Ray (Keele University)

Karen Snape (Hempstalls Hall Care Home)

Melanie Stace (Cultural Sisters)

Devina Visram (Potteries Museum and Art Gallery)

Viv Young (Viv Young Arts)