



Ageing Artfully Conference Report

April 2012

allaboutaudiences

Introduction

The Baring Foundation granted £10,000 to All About Audiences to fund the national Ageing Artfully Conference on arts and older people, which took place in Manchester Town Hall on 19 October 2011. The conference was organised and administrated by Manchester City Council's Valuing Older People (VOP) team, Kate Organ (Arts Advisor to the Baring Foundation), and All About Audiences, in partnership with The Baring Foundation.

This report outlines the structure and content of the conference. As discussed prior to the conference, the budget resource did not allow for production of a comprehensive, detailed report on the activity, outcomes and impact of the conference.

Structure and content of the Ageing Artfully Conference

19 October 2011, Manchester Town Hall

Introductory sessions

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| 10:00 am | Registration |
| 10:30am | Delegates were welcomed to Manchester by Councillor Mike Amesbury, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure, Manchester City Council. |
| 10:35am | Performance by Manchester Golden Voices |
| 10:45am | The Welcome Address was delivered by Janet Morrison, Chair of the Baring Foundation Arts Committee. |
| 11:00am | Sherry de Wynter, Valuing Older People Cultural Offer Manager, introduced the workshops. |

Session 1 workshops – Commissioning and Collaborations

11:15am-12:30pm

Something Old Something New

Speakers: Alice Thwaite, Director of Development, Equal Arts
Paul Grey, leader in Public Health for Gateshead

Facilitator: Kate Organ, Arts Advisor to the Baring Foundation

Equal arts host the Arts and Dementia Network for the North East region, bringing together people working in the arts, health and social care and those interested in providing creative opportunities for people with dementia. The starting point for this session was the experience that Equal Arts have of being commissioned by their PCT to provide arts work with older people as part of an art on prescription scheme.

What do we know?

Speakers: Joanne Maclean, Senior Researcher, Mental Health Foundation

Facilitator: David Cutler, Director of the Baring Foundation

The subject of this workshop was the Baring Foundation's report, "Evidence Review of the Impact of the Participatory Arts on Older People". This major review was carried out by the Mental Health Foundation and draws on a huge range of projects and art forms, demonstrating the diversity and complexity of this field and finding key threads around the benefits for participants using the well-researched concept of "wellbeing".

Making Manchester an age-friendly city

Speakers: Paul McGarry, Senior Strategy Manager, Valuing Older People
Kate Torkington, older resident and member of the VOP Board

Facilitator: Sally Chandler, Programme Manager, Valuing Older People

Manchester's Valuing Older People programme is nationally recognised for its innovative approach to rethinking ageing. As part of the wider programme remit to create age-friendly neighbourhoods, Manchester has made considerable strides in reconnecting older people from some of the most deprived areas with the fantastic cultural offer on their doorstep.

Paul gave an overview of the background to the programme; the city and specific challenges of ageing in an urban environment; approaches taken to work with and for

older residents; and specific innovative initiatives. Kate gave an overview of her role as an older person and a “partner in the policy making.”

Creative Homes

Speakers: Vikki Moorhouse, Arts and Education Coordinator, Central and Cecil Housing Trust
Alison Teeder, freelance arts consultant

Facilitator: Sherry de Wynter, Cultural Offer Manager, Valuing Older People

This workshop explored pioneering approaches to improving the health of older residents of sheltered housing and residential homes through artistic expression. It explored examples of partnerships between arts practitioners and the care home providers and commissioners, and an interactive tea-party encouraged participants to experience ideas around stimulating the senses.

Session 2 workshops - The Here and Now

1:45 – 3:00pm

Stages of Participation

Speakers: Nic Millington, Rural Media Company
Jenny Hayes, Aune Head Arts
Abi Horsfield, Collective Encounters

Facilitator: Kate Organ, Arts Advisor to the Baring Foundation

Three highly experienced artists working in different settings and through different media. Each of them shared the strong emphasis on there being many ways and levels of participation to offer.

Abi described a range of projects involving people participating in many ways – as people with a story to contribute to the devising of a show, as people with opinions about resource allocation, as people with experiences who need a voice.

At Aune Head Arts, there is an emphasis on creating a tone and atmosphere for engendering trust. Strengths of the programme include the quality of participant experience, the creation of end results which respect their experience and an exciting end product.

Nic spoke about the act of making a community film. People participate in different ways and at different stages of the process – from sharing stories to suggesting themes and issues to explore.

Developing Manchester's age-friendly cultural offer for older people

Speakers: Sally Chandler, Programme Manager, Valuing Older People
Esme Ward, Head of Learning and Engagement, Manchester Museum
and Whitworth Art Gallery

Facilitator: Patrick Hanfling, Programme Coordinator, Valuing Older People

Manchester's collaborative approach to engaging older residents with cultural opportunities is supported by all the city's major cultural and heritage institutions. The cultural offer working group is the first of its kind nationally and partners work collectively to connect local older people with culture and creative opportunities.

The workshop gave an overview of the journey travelled and detailed some of the key successes, in particular the group's achievements since the appointment of the Cultural Offer Manager with funding from the Baring Foundation.

Esme gave details of how learning, engagement and volunteering work at Manchester Museum and the Whitworth Art Gallery has transformed through their involvement in the development of the cultural offer for older people.

The Role of Festivals

Speaker: Dominic Campbell, Artistic Director, Bealtine Festival

Facilitator: David Cutler, Director, the Baring Foundation

The Bealtine Festival operates in a wide variety of venues and across all arts and involves one in ten older people across Ireland in May each year. There are already annual festivals of arts and older people in Wales and London and the Baring Foundation and Creative Scotland have entered into a partnership to create a new festival across Scotland starting in 2012. This workshop looked at the power of festivals to galvanise activity and how they can specifically work with older people.

Public Platforms

Speakers: Big Telly Theatre Company - Spring Chickens Project
West Yorkshire Playhouse - Feeling Good Theatre Company
Arcola/Punchdrunk – The Uncommercial Traveller

Facilitator: Liz Postlethwaite, Community and Education Director, Library Theatre Company

This session considered how older people's creative work can reach beyond their immediate friends and family.

Zoe Eaton, Artistic Director of the Big Telly Theatre Company, spoke about Spring Chickens, a festival which took place in community venues throughout Northern Ireland and was made up of entirely of work created by older people.

West Yorkshire Playhouse spoke about Feeling Good Theatre Company, which was formed as a result of Heydeys their successful, long-running participatory programme for older people. The group performed extracts from two of their shows and spoke about what they feel they get out of taking part.

Punchdrunk and Arcola Theatre introduced The Uncommercial Traveller, a project developed by Arcola's older people's theatre group with the aim of creating a piece of work that would take the group's work to a wider audience.

Session 3 workshops - Looking Forward to New Perspectives

3:00 – 4:00pm

Digital Pathways

Speakers: Kirsty Stansfield, Senior Project Manager, Art in Hospital
Barbara McEwen Gulliver, Director, Art in Hospital
Anne Kinneard, Lead Artist, Soundworks
Ben McManus, Sound Artist, Soundworks

Facilitator: Janet Morrisson, CEO, Independent Age

Art in Hospital demonstrated how the older participant can make art which is meaningful, communicative and beautiful with the use of digital technology. Their one-to-one work with older people emphasises the unique in-the-moment experiences of people, offering them significant opportunities to make their mark.

Soundworks told of their experience in shaping activities which enhance a sense of time and place through sound in a care home and the wider role of creative technology and creative thinking in enhancing the everyday experience, and enriching the personalised experiences of the residents and staff – bringing the care home to life and life to the care home.

The key challenges and benefits of working with older people in digital arts were discussed during the session.

International Perspectives

Speakers: Jamie Balfour, Director General, Winston Churchill Memorial Trust
Karin Diamond, Andrew Larpent and Richard Coaten, former Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellows

Facilitator: Liz Postlethwaite, Director, Library Theatre Company

The session began with Jamie giving an introduction to the work of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (WCMT). The participants then divided into small groups and had the opportunity to talk to each of the former WCMT fellows on a more conversational and informal basis about their experiences of travelling overseas and how this has impacted their own practice.

Karin spoke about her visit to Japan, focus on dementia practice and working in nursing homes. Andrew spoke about his trip to Australia looking at traditional storytelling techniques. Richard spoke about his trip to Canada researching dance and dementia.

Beyond the Fringe

Speakers: Gilly Love, Creative Director – Silver Programme, The Sage Gateshead
Kate Horbury, Access Officer, Royal Academy of Arts
Ben Turner, Community Co-ordinator, Royal Exchange Theatre
Catherine Bradley, Head of Evidence and Engagement, All About Audiences

Interviewee: Joyce Gill, founder of the My Generation Social Scene

Facilitator: Sherry de Wynter, Cultural Offer Manager, Valuing Older People

Historically in the cultural sector there has been an emphasis on youth and young people. The idea of the audience as collaborator and co-creator is well established, but how does this work with older people? Are older audiences simply 'invisible and beyond the fringe'?

During this session Gilly, Kate and Ben spoke about their organisations' innovative approaches to working with older people as collaborators and co-creators. Catherine raised questions about what can be learnt from the successful Family Friendly project to apply to arts work with older people, in order to raise its profile and importance nationally. Joyce spoke about the My Generation Social Scene, which is delivering to the needs of older people in Manchester.

Professional Development

Speakers: Ken Bartlett, Creative Director, Foundation for Community Dance
Alex Casey, Co-Director, Suffolk Artlink

Facilitator: Vikki Moorhouse, Arts and Education Co-ordinator, Central Cecil Housing Trust

This workshop looked at some of the issues around the professional development needs of artists working with older people and the potential for artists to contribute to the training and professional development of the care profession.

Final Plenary 4:00 – 4:15pm

Chaired by Kate Organ, Arts Advisor to the Baring Foundation.

Feedback on the day from conference rapporteurs Professor Miriam Bernard (Centre for Social Gerontology, Keele University) and Kate Torkington (Manchester resident and member of the Valuing Older People Board).

**All About Audiences is the audience
development agency for the North West**

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