

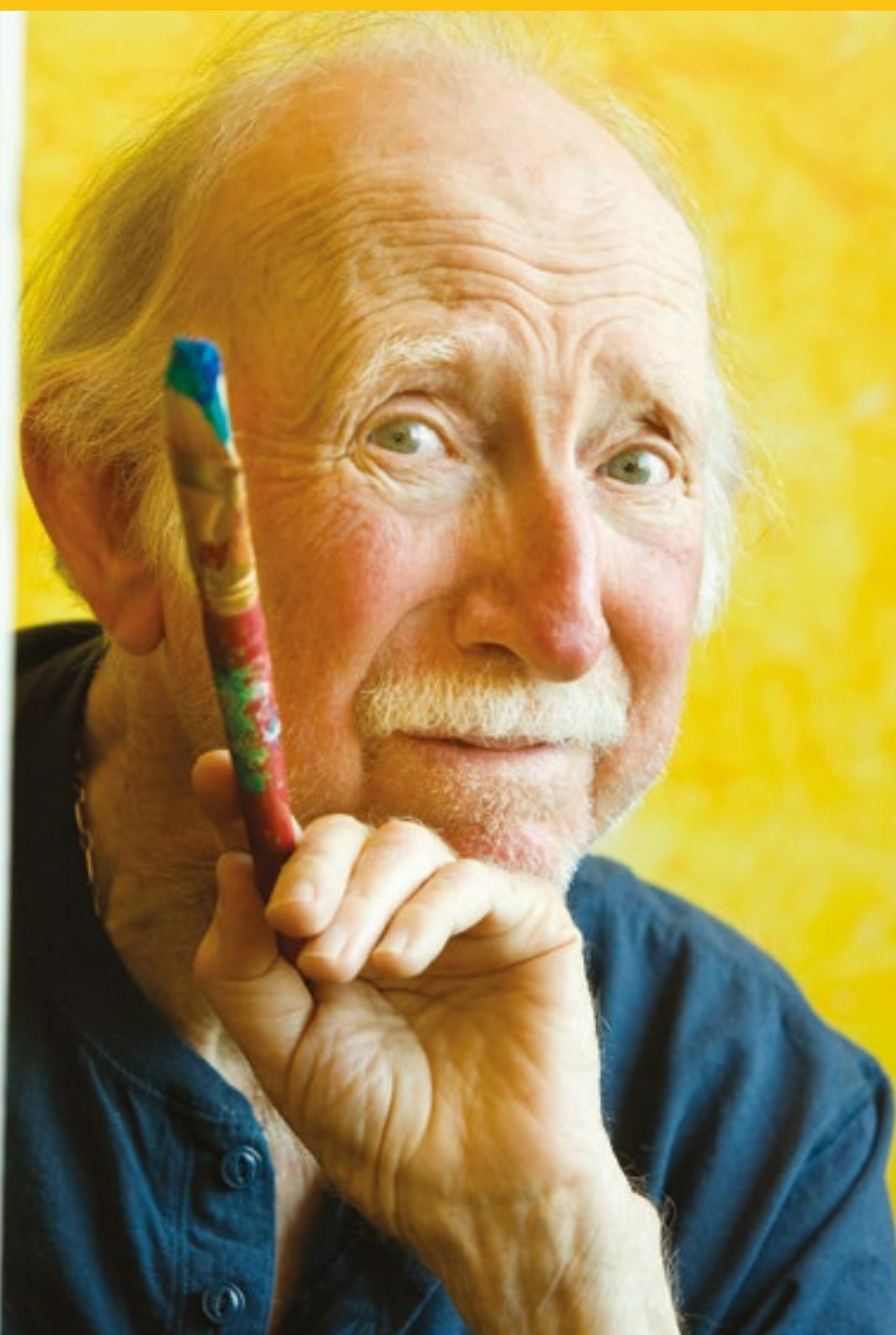
Arts Council of Northern Ireland



LOTTERY FUNDED

# The State of Play

Arts & Older People Programme



March 2018

# Promoting active ageing. Challenging negative stereotypes of ageing. Encouraging lifelong learning. Promoting positive mental health.

About the programme	3
Key findings	4
Challenges	6
Solutions	7
Achievements	8
Case studies	10
Summary	13
Legacy	14

# About the programme

## Supporting social change through the arts

Strengthening the voice of older people in society and tackling issues of isolation, loneliness, social inclusion, poverty, health and dementia, through the arts.

The Arts & Older People Programme has been set up to create opportunities for older people to participate in arts activities that contribute to their health and wellbeing. It targets poverty, isolation and loneliness, introduces opportunities for social interaction and helps to build confidence, resilience and a stronger sense of purpose in life.

The programme provides funding support to community and voluntary groups, local authorities and arts organisations, to develop sustainable creative programmes for older citizens throughout Northern Ireland, and particularly in rural areas, Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and Areas at Risk. It supports government priorities, particularly in relation to equality and social inclusion, and it anchors the arts as delivery agents in health and social care.

It aims to challenge perceptions of what it means to be an older person and, with the contribution of professional artists, covers the full range of creative activities, from storytelling to circus skills.

The Arts & Older People Programme was first run by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland as a three-year pilot in 2010, with the support of The Atlantic Philanthropies, with the aim of promoting social inclusion for older people through the arts. The pilot programme proved to be very successful and in 2013 the programme was relaunched with funding from the Arts Council in partnership with The Baring Foundation and the Public Health Agency.

# Key findings

## Living well for longer

As older people are beginning to represent the majority of the population, there is an increasing focus on promoting wellbeing and active ageing, on early prevention and mitigating the pressures of ill health on the health and social care system.

The likelihood of having good physical and mental health in later life is not evenly distributed across the population, with life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy experienced disproportionately by people in the lower socio-economic groups. Loneliness and isolation have also been shown to be significant factors in older people's health and wellbeing.



# Benefits of participating in the arts

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the personal and societal benefits for older people participating in the arts, including:

- Improved memory recall, alertness, concentration and emotional wellbeing, which can delay the onset of dementia and slow its progression, eg. music and singing.
- Increased range of physical movement, which can improve motor skills, flexibility and fitness levels, eg. dance and circus skills.
- Enhanced communication skills, which can improve relationships with family and service providers, eg. drama and poetry.
- Improved social interaction, which can lead to volunteering or joining new groups and help to reduce loneliness and isolation, eg. crafts.
- Stronger links to the community, which can enhance sense of pride, purpose and belonging, eg. storytelling.

- Increased self-confidence, creativity and motivation, which can lead to positive changes in routine, even alleviating anxiety and diminishing the need for medication eg. creative writing and visual arts.

The key motivations for older people wanting to take part in arts activities are to increase:

- Creativity and new skills.
- Social interaction and companionship.
- Self-confidence.
- Concentration.

“It is evident that engaging with participatory art can improve the wellbeing of older people and mediate against the negative effects of becoming older”

Mental Health Foundation



# Challenges

The Arts & Older People Programme recognises a number of challenges to improving older people's access to, and participation in, the arts. Attendance at arts events and participation levels appear to decline with age:

- 48% of over-65s had not attended an arts event in the last year.
- 80% of over-65s had not participated in arts activities in the last year.

Obstacles to attendance and participation include:

- Longstanding illness or disability.
- Lack of disposable income.
- Poor venue design.
- Poor access to transport.
- Fears over safety.
- Perception that the arts are elitist.
- Lack of information.

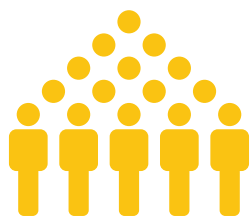


# Solutions offered by the Arts & Older People Programme

- Grants of £10,000 to £30,000 were awarded to community and voluntary groups, councils and arts organisations, covering all local authority areas. The funding was capped in 2016 at £10,000 to encourage first-time applications from a greater number of smaller community organisations.
- The funding targets isolation and encourages greater inclusivity in the arts by supporting projects involving older people living in rural areas and in the most socially and economically deprived areas.
- Arts projects are developed specifically for older men, as they are typically three-times less likely than older women to participate in the arts.
- Focus is placed on involving older people and older people's groups in project planning and in tailoring activities to their needs.
- 'No commitment' taster sessions encourage the participation of older people who are reluctant to try something new. These sessions also help the lead organisations to better understand the needs of their participants.
- The multi-sectoral approach promoted by the Arts & Older People Programme enables greater knowledge and resource sharing.
- The projects stimulate new partnerships and ways of working and enable additional services to be delivered locally.
- The requirement for 10% match-funding encourages groups to develop partnerships and deliver in-kind contributions.
- The programme supports professional development of artists and others working with older people, to increase their skills and share knowledge.
- New resources have been developed, including a Good Practice Guide for artists working with people with dementia.
- The profile of Arts and Older People has been increased through Arts & Age showcase festivals and conferences that have brought local and international practitioners together in Belfast to discuss best practice.



# What we've achieved so far



**21,500**

older people participated  
in the arts



**£1.8m**

invested in increasing  
access to the arts for  
older people



**117+**

projects delivered



**38,000**

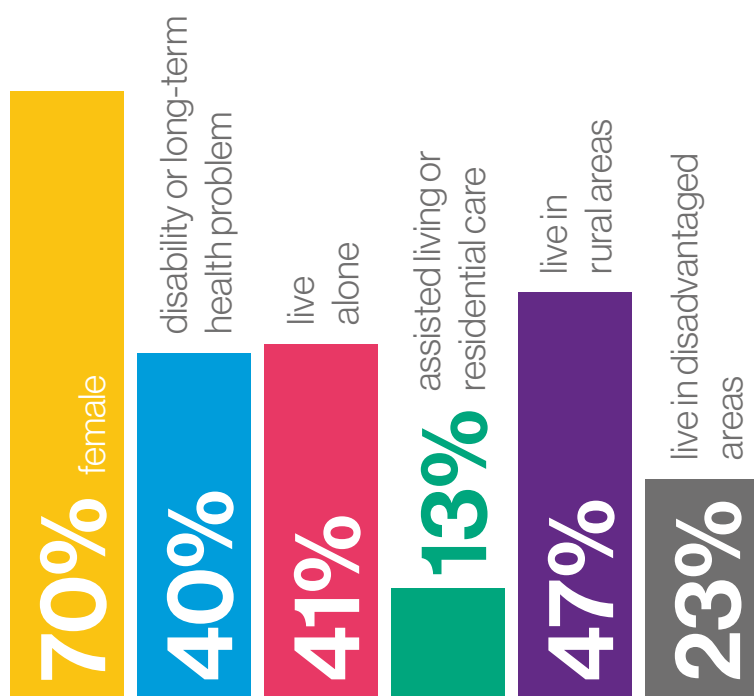
wider audiences  
members reached



**160+**

trained  
artist-facilitators

## Who is taking part?



**70** average age  
of participants

**£1,084**

The additional spending  
that would be needed to  
achieve the equivalent  
wellbeing benefit as arts  
participation, per person  
per year. (DCMS)

# Isolation & loneliness



**78%**

of participants say they have gained renewed confidence to try new things



**82%**

of participants built good friendships



**81%**

felt better about themselves because of what they had achieved



**53%**

went on to join new groups and activities



**77%**

wanted more to do with the arts

## Health & dementia



- 70% of projects work with people with dementia or long-term health problems.
- Participants report notable increases in their physical and mental wellbeing and their enjoyment of life.
- People with dementia show improvements in concentration, engagement, mood and communication.

## Social inclusion



- 86% of projects operate on a cross-community basis.
- Projects target marginalised people with dementia, mental health problems and those living in residential care.
- Projects are co-designed with older people.
- Participants report increased feelings of belonging and greater sense of influence in their community.
- New partnerships are being developed at a local level, sharing facilities and experience, networking and links.
- Barriers to the arts are being removed.

## Poverty



- Zero cost to participants.
- 42% of projects are delivered in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.
- 47% of participants live in Rural Areas.
- Stronger community links are being established with local arts organisations and venues.

# Case studies

## Big Telly Theatre Company

### —Machinations

Big Telly's Machinations project engaged older men from 20 community groups across Northern Ireland in metal sculpture workshops with artist Paddy Bloomer and the Big Telly team.

Targeting older men living in rural areas - a group particularly vulnerable to loneliness and isolation - Machinations created a space for the men to work in groups to create metal sculptures out of scrap materials. Each sculpture tells its own story about the identity and life experiences of older men living in rural areas.

The initiative was delivered in partnership with, among others, Men's Sheds in Armagh, Dungiven, Craigavon and Antrim, and older men's groups in Garvagh, Strabane, Newry and Clough. In total, around 77 older men participated.

The sculptures were exhibited at the Public Records Office in Belfast, and toured to livestock markets around the region.

#### Impact:

- Reduced isolation amongst older men.
- Improved quality of life through group participation.
- Confidence and skills development allowed the participants to become more proactive in their local area.
- Partnerships were developed, including marginalised sections of the community, such as the LGBTQ community, those living in supported housing and people with health issues.

"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!"

Facilitator

"Oh I loved it! At the beginning I was hiding at the back of the crowd ... then as I got more interested and brave I began inching forward. You think that art is about pictures, but this was very different."

Participant



# Spectrum Centre — Social Sofa

The Spectrum arts and cultural centre in Belfast transformed an arts project into a community endeavour, showing how people with dementia can learn new skills, make decisions, be creative, and participate in community life.

Thirty-five tenants of Helmsworth Court, a supported housing scheme for people living with dementia, worked with artist Maria Duddy to create an elaborate design, using thousands of coloured mosaic tiles, on a concrete sofa. The design, which features iconic images of the local area, was developed through collaboration with a range of groups and included an intergenerational element with local schoolchildren.

The tenants of Helmsworth celebrated the launch of the Social Sofa with a public unveiling by the Lord Mayor of Belfast.

## Impact:

- Increased opportunities for older people to participate in arts and cultural activities.
- Encouraged and enabled older people to be involved in decision-making.
- Built capacity through training and volunteering.
- Enabled greater communication between people with dementia and other members of the community.

“There was a sense of ‘Did we really do that?’ It was such a sense of achievement, of being in the community... belonging, participating.”

Participant

“People put their heart and soul into it ... No one says ‘I can’t’ anymore. Now it’s ‘I can’.”

Participant



# Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council — Age On Stage Craigavon On Tour

The Arts & Older People Programme enabled Age on Stage to develop weekly classes in Craigavon. It also helped to establish an Age on Stage Craigavon dance performance group, which devises performances that communicate the participants' life stories to wider audiences through expressive movement and drama.

A tour by Age on Stage Craigavon around the Borough Council area built partnerships with, amongst others, ABC Community Network, Southern Health & Social Care Trust, Action Mental Health and Lurgan Men's Sheds.

100 older people participated in the tour, with an additional 375 people attending the performances. The performance was showcased at the 2016 Arts & Age Festival in Belfast.

## Impact:

- Raised awareness of Age on Stage Craigavon and attracted new members.
- Consolidated the group, which continues to hold weekly sessions and create new artistic work.
- Empowered the participants as they grew in confidence, performing before live audiences.
- Encouraged males to get involved in creativity.
- Reduced isolation and loneliness.
- New skills were developed as participants learnt to dance and create music scores.

"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."

Participant



# Summary

## The Impact of the Arts & Older People Programme against agreed performance indicators

### Isolation & Loneliness

- ✓ At risk older people targeted.
- ✓ Loneliness significantly decreased post-project.
- ✓ 53% of participants went on to join new groups and activities.
- ✓ Participants were more positive about the arts.
- ✓ Enjoyable experience and wanted more.

### Social Inclusion

- ✓ Targeted marginalised people with dementia, mental health problems, living in residential care.
- ✓ Co-designed with older people.
- ✓ 82% of respondents made good friendships.
- ✓ Increased feeling of belonging to neighbourhood.
- ✓ Greater sense of influence in neighbourhood.
- ✓ New partnerships developed (eg. sharing facilities and expertise, networking and links).

### Poverty

- ✓ Arts activities provided at no cost to older person.
- ✓ 24% of participants living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.
- ✓ 47% of participants living in Rural areas.
- ✓ Increased arts attendance and participation.
- ✓ Fewer reported barriers to arts engagement.
- ✓ Arts materials purchased for future use.
- ✓ Better community links with arts organisations and venues.

### Health / Dementia

- ✓ Significant improvement in physical health and enjoyment of life.
- ✓ Significant increase in participants' wellbeing.
- ✓ 82% artists felt that participants' self-esteem had improved.
- ✓ People with dementia showed improvements in concentration, engagement, mood and communication.
- ✓ Participants, artists and stakeholders felt the project had increased wellbeing.

### Strengthening the Voice of Older People

- ✓ 78% participants strongly agree / agree that the arts activities have given them the confidence to try different things.
- ✓ 81% participants strongly agree / agree that they feel good about what they have achieved.
- ✓ Artists and partners are more aware of older people's needs.
- ✓ Local showcases challenged people's views on older people.
- ✓ Knowledge sharing and partnership at strategic level.
- ✓ Development of skills and expertise through training and mentoring.



# Leaving a Legacy

## Shaping programme activity

The Arts Council has established an Arts & Older People Steering Group and appointed a full-time Arts & Older People Community Development Officer.

Each funding 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 concentrated on involving older people in project planning and tailoring activity to their needs. There is greater recognition that work must be sustained and projects need to demonstrate best practice, relationship building and potential legacy opportunities. Applications also need to include a strong advocacy component at the end of the project through an event, publication, exhibition or other opportunity to showcase the benefits of the projects for participants.

The funding requirement of 10% match-funding enables more activity to be undertaken for the budget and encourages groups to develop partnerships.

The Programme has established links with older people's initiatives in the UK, Republic of Ireland and further afield, to share learning and good practice.

### Examples of Artist / Practitioner Development

- Dementia Services Development Centre was funded to facilitate a residential weekend for 11 artists working with people with dementia.
- ArtsCare was commissioned to develop and deliver a training programme with healthcare staff and volunteers across the five Health and Social Care Trusts.
- Big Telly delivered training by professional theatre makers to 30 care staff in six residential settings.
- Community Arts Partnership trained 30 community artists to work with people with dementia.
- Age NI trained 45 older people as peer facilitators.
- Void Gallery established itself as a Dementia Friendly Gallery.
- Verbal Arts Centre provided a dedicated OCN L2 training programme for librarians, community workers, writers and volunteers, based around shared reading settings.

- Greater Shankill Property Development Company facilitated training for care workers in arts, crafts and reminiscence.
- Arts & Disability Forum provided preparatory training for artists working with people with dementia and their carers.
- NI Hospice trained healthcare staff and integrated arts therapies into the programme of care at Hospice to create a model that can be replicated by other palliative care service providers.
- Annual Arts & Age Festivals showcased the achievements of the Arts & Older People Programme and brought local and international sector experts together to discuss best practice.

### Examples of Resources Produced

- Arts & Older People Programme artwork is permanently exhibited in communal areas, hospitals, community, residential and day centres throughout Northern Ireland.
- Community Arts Partnership published a Good Practice Guide to Working with People with Dementia for artists.
- Big Telly produced a resource pack to enable residential care home Activity Coordinators to deliver further participative drama and storytelling sessions.
- The Programme commissioned an illustrative booklet, 'Not So Cut Off' to highlight, through case studies, the benefits of the arts in alleviating isolation and loneliness.

# Building the support network

The arts support the work of partners in the age, health and care professions

· ACTION MENTAL HEALTH · AGE NI · KILLYCLOGHER SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB · WEST BANN DEVELOPMENT

· BETH JOHNSON FOUNDATION · HARMONY COMMUNITY TRUST · NORTHERN IRELAND HOSPICE · AGE C

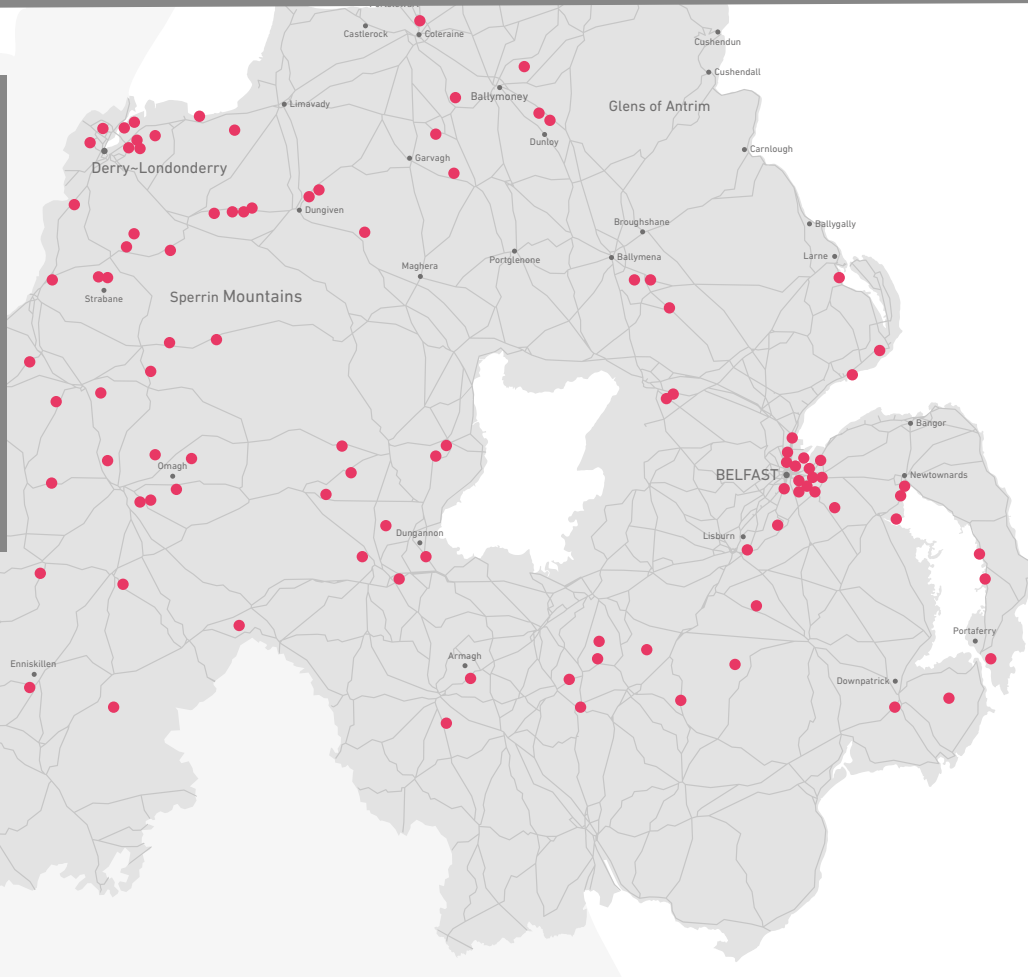
· ALLY FOYLE · ARMAGH SENIOR CITIZENS FORUM · THE MUMMERS FOUNDATION · PENINSULA HEALTH

· ENGAGE WITH AGE · ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY · OLDER PEOPLE NORTH WEST · PRAXIS CARE GROUP · HARMO

## Collaboration is at the heart of the Arts & Older People Programme

Artists are working with:

- older people's groups
- palliative care providers
- housing associations
- councils
- health & social care trusts
- residential care providers
- carers



## Source of findings in this report

In January 2017, Wallace Consulting published an independent evaluation of the Arts & Older People Programme. The programme was initially launched in 2010 as a three-year pilot programme, with development support from the Arts Council National Lottery Fund and The Atlantic Philanthropies. The evaluation focuses on the achievements of the post-pilot phase of the programme, from 2013-16, supported by the Arts Council National Lottery Fund, The Baring Foundation and the Public Health Agency.

The full evaluation report is available on the Arts Council's website, [www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

## Arts & Older People Programme

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