

Facing Facts Again

Evaluation Report

A Project funded by the Arts Council England,
Derbyshire Primary Care Trust and 28
Individual Sponsors

Arts Council England
Unique reference number (URN): 14795017

Project Information



Artist Jan Flamank worked closely with the members and staff at four Age UK Derby and Derbyshire Day Centres across Derbyshire. Each participant had actively chosen to be a part of this project that included people aged between 72 and 102. The Day Centres provide real support for older people from 24 villages across Derbyshire, many of whom have lived and worked in rural communities all their life.

The twelve people portrayed were all actively involved in the development of their portrait, as real participants rather than passive subjects. The small images in the portraits were informed by extended conversations with them, offering a glimpse into their diverse, full lives.

The portraits were displayed in various venues that were significant to that person, making them a visible part of their community. The venues they chose included a fish and chip café, a working textile museum, a cricket pavilion, village hall and local pub.

After an exhibition on the Chatsworth estate in November 2011, each portrait was given to the older person to keep, as part of their family heritage.



Our shared aim was to offer a joyous and positive counterbalance to the invisibility of older people, and the negativity and denial about ageing so pervasive throughout our culture; and which often renders elderly people as weak or irrelevant. This was a rare and active counterbalance to this, it rejoiced in real people and the overlooked beauty in ageing, and celebrated the individuality and wisdom in long lived lives.

Evaluation from Age UK Derby & Derbyshire

The opportunity to do something far beyond the essential work dictated by our care for older people and a contract was just too tempting. All our Centres are individual, and encouraged to be, offering our members a high level of control over 'their' day with us, but the project allowed us to drill a little deeper with a smaller group of members and focus on their lives.

For Age UK Derby and Derbyshire we identified a number of outcomes from the project. Some were anticipated, others an unexpected bonus:

- Increased opportunities for individual time and attention for members
- Developing cultural opportunities in our day services
- New and exciting activity to stimulate of further creativity
- Professional and personal development for staff and volunteers
- Develop or enhance partnerships
- Lasting works of art showing older or frail older people as vibrant individuals

There were few problems with the project and none serious but learning points for the future are:

- Engage a wider audience earlier in the project so that they see the creation of the work not just the completed work.
- To maximise the value of the work seek permission for reproducing the artwork for fundraising, marketing etc.
- The exhibition space is important, holding it at Chatsworth was an important element for the subjects, the wider audience, the artist and AUKDD.
- Don't underestimate the amount of time spent in coordinating sessions with the routine activities and special events in a day service.

Jan was wonderful to work with; her passionate interest in older people and her artistic enthusiasm were infectious. She drove the project in many ways from securing funding through to exhibiting the work. Her background in frontline health roles meant she was a sensitive visitor to the Centres, appreciative of staff's work and commitments.

For members the experience was wholly positive; their comments and the reactions of family and friends express well what being part of the project meant to them. They felt valued as individuals and the conversations re-awakened memories and emotions long forgotten or suppressed. The support they received from Jan and day service staff was essential and appreciated. The exhibitions allowed members to see the portrait in a public setting, witness first hand the reaction of a wider audience and have their 'fifteen minutes of fame'!

In a few instances the project formed the very last stages of the sitter's life. For them and their families of course the creation of the portraits became especially poignant though for all the subjects the portraits have become treasured family possessions.

The generosity of Chatsworth House in providing exhibition space was much appreciated and contributed a great deal to how the exhibition was viewed. Literally in that members of the public could see them (their location in the restaurant meant viewers could take their time and appreciate the detailed scale of each portrait) but also figuratively as members and their families valued the pictures being exhibited at this prestigious local landmark.

The project extended the cultural range and depth of experiences in each of the four Day Centres, for staff and volunteers and all the members. All the staff involved enjoyed the experience which offered an unusual opportunity for personal development and enhanced their key-worker relationships with members. The

workshop introduced a range of staff, strategic commissioners and partners to the project and the wider cultural, emotional and intellectual needs of older people.

And last but definitely not least the individual portraits were beautiful. As works of art and images of each individual they were a wonderful celebration of lives well lived.

Summary of Budget

	Income	Expenditure
Arts Council Grant	£ 22,356.60	
Other grants	£ 4,268.68	
private income	£ 3,504.00	
support in kind	£ 5,680.09	
Total	£ 35,809.37	
Artistic expenditure		£ 24,500.00
organisational & professional development		£ 1,268.68
marketing & audience development		£ 750.00
assets		£ 250.00
project costs		£ 3,296.00
value of support in kind		£ 5,680.09
Total		£ 35,744.77
Income - Expenditure		£64.60

Statement from artist, Jan Flamank

This has been a really wonderful project, bringing together my love of working with older adults and my passion for making art that celebrates real people, not the digitally altered ‘celebrities’ we are so used to. My work is community based and participatory, and it has been a rare delight to work alongside everyone at Age UK Derby and Derbyshire.



I knew I would meet fascinating people, and I have been very moved by the life stories they have generously shared with me. It wasn't possible, or appropriate, to include all that we talked about in the artwork— but the portraits offer a flavour of the person, and the uniqueness of their lives. The small collaged images were informed by the many lovely and meaningful conversations I had with each person, and I intentionally left space in the final portraits, both to highlight their faces, but also because they all still have life to live, and enjoy.

It has been such a joy to see it all through, from the very first idea to the final exhibition. My warmest thanks go to all the 12 participants, and the staff and members who made me so welcome in their Day Centres. I hope they enjoyed it all as much as I have.

I am also very grateful to our two main funders, and in particular to the individual people who believed in the project and so kindly gave their support to it.

Quotes from participants

“I’m so glad you came. I’ve started thinking about things I haven’t recalled for so long. My married life was all art and cricket, and it’s a very long time since I talked with anyone who knows about art. I’d really not like to lose you now. You’ve filled such a hole for me”



“What’s important is that you’ve expressed us as real people, the situation of older people today, without being sentimental. I’m so delighted with it.”

“That’s made my day, well my year actually. Thank you so much. My family will be amazed that we actually got in to see it again. It’s brought back so many happy memories. I used to scrub those stairs, all the way up. And sometimes your family don’t think about going, and it’s not where they want to go any more. I don’t know who was more excited about us going in – you or me.”



“What I most enjoyed was you talking with me, and explaining it all very clearly. My children are very surprised at me having my portrait done. They can’t believe it, but they liked the photos.”

“Oohh, I’m flattered, and I’ve enjoyed it all. Something different. And it brought back nice memories for me. I haven’t told my family yet – its’ a secret. I’ve had some lovely walks round Chatsworth, so it’ll be alright to be there.”

“It’s amazing that somebody wants to paint me wrinkly old face. It’s lovely actually. I never thought that would happen.”

Quotes from visitors to the Chatsworth exhibition

"I felt that the portraits offered a beautiful insight into the wonderful lives of these people who I didn't know but felt real admiration and affection for, which came entirely from your portrayal of them. I loved it, I really did."

"It was a touch of inspiration to highlight their histories and the interplay between that and the portraits made for a new approach to portraits painting. Vivid and memorable interpretation of people who are mostly ignored or stereotyped."



"I loved your portraits and found them very interesting. The actual portraits were very striking and I loved all the little references to each person's life. I imagine the work generated fascinating memories of rich lives. The richness came over in the portraits somehow"

"How lovely and unusual to see portraits of very elderly people; it emphasised how rarely they are represented. Congratulations on producing such a powerful and important

body of work. I could really see the attention that had gone into creating the portraits and the care you took to show them in their individuality."

Contact details

Our day services support older people in the most rural communities in the following locations:

- Bakewell
- Hartington
- Hope
- Hulland Ward

To find out more about our day services please contact:

Mary Ward, Day Services Manager

T: 01629 813221

Address: Orme Court, Granby Mews, Granby Road, Bakewell, DE45 1ES

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/derbyandderbyshire/How-we-help/Day-care/>

Or contact the CEO Katy Pugh

T: 01773 768240

Address: 29a Market Place, Heanor, Derbyshire, DE75 7EG

www.ageuk.org.uk/derbyandderbyshire