

Index

P3-Introduction

P4-What were the methodologies?

P5-What were the quantitative findings?

P7-What were the qualitative findings?

P8- What conclusions can we draw from the findings and what are next steps?



Introduction

In 2019 Age UK Oxfordshire's Age Friendly Creative Network was awarded funding from Oxford City Council's Culture Fund to support delivery of an Age Friendly Creative Consultation in Oxford City. The consultation aimed to focus on people who may not have easy access to cultural activities in order to examine barriers that people may face when trying to access cultural experiences, find out what type of cultural activities people would like to see developed and find out what support might be useful to enable greater participation. The Oxfordshire Age Friendly Creative Network was developed in response to the Age UK report [Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life](#) report, advocating for an increase in cross sector partnership working in order to support older people with multiple barriers to cultural engagement, to take part locally.

The consultation targeted Oxford City because there is a high density of cultural providers and professional resources which presents opportunities for future partnership working. The specific areas of Oxford that formed the focus of the study were Barton and Sandhills, Carfax, Churchill, Northfield Brook, Rose Hill, St Clements and St Mary's in Oxford City. These areas were chosen because they are perceived as having less cultural provision comparable to other areas in the city.

The consultation aimed to seek opinions directly from groups of older people. As a result of the consultation, we have both qualitative and quantitative data that will us enable to work with cultural partners to build on existing provision to develop age friendly cultural experiences in Oxford that reflect the needs and aspirations of the older population who live in the City. At the time of the consultation the Covid 19 crisis and subsequent lockdown had not been fully realised. It is likely that these factors will have an impact on age friendly cultural provision, so this has been taken into account when examining the findings and making recommendations.

Arts Council England's research survey [Older People Arts and Culture](#) shows that 76 % of older people say that arts and culture is important to making them feel happy, however 38% of older people find it is more difficult to attend or take part in arts and cultural events or activities now compared to when they were younger. Figures suggest that once you reach 60 years of age you are less likely to take part in the arts, and this is mirrored in recent research published in the museums sector [The UK's Ageing Population: Challenges and Opportunities for Museums and Galleries](#), with the lowest rates of museum and gallery visits in the over 75's age group. But interestingly, Age UK's [Index of Wellbeing in Later Life](#) research shows that 'creative and cultural participation' is the number one influencing factor on an individual's sense of wellbeing in older age.



What methodologies were used for the Oxford Age Friendly Creative Consultation?

In the first instance we consulted with colleagues at Oxford City Council, the Oxford City Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for older people and colleagues from Age UK Oxfordshire Community Information Team who work in communities within Oxford City. We also approached some of our partners at Community Centres, Sheltered Housing schemes and older people's groups. This enabled us to identify groups to take part in the consultation. The nine groups who kindly agreed to take part in the consultation were Barton Bingo group (based at Barton Neighbourhood Centre), Age UK Chip and Chat group (based at Wood Farm Youth Centre), Clockhouse Phoenix Rising Group (based at Clockhouse Community Centre in Greater Leys), Dementia Oxfordshire Memory Café (based at Shotover View Shelter Housing Scheme) Donnington 50+ group (based at Donnington Community Centre), Hogley Bogstars (based at Bullingdon Community Centre), Oxford 50+ Network (based at Oxford Town Hall), Potters Court Sheltered Housing Scheme (based in Greater Leys) and Silver Threads group (based at Rosehill Community Centre).

We also had a presence at Healthfest at the Warnford Hospital in September 2019 and Oxford International Older Peoples Day event at Oxford Town Hall in October 2019 where the vote for your favorite activity on a post it note was offered.

Over 100 participants actively contributed to the consultation via the nine group meetings and at community events. A range of consultation methods were used including a presentation to set the scene, a questionnaire, selecting a favorite activity on a post it note, group discussions and the opportunity to try a creative activity. Each group selected from the consultation methods with some groups participating in all and others choosing those that were most suited to the setting and the time available group. The creative activities were making a Christmas decorations (for pre-Christmas groups) and clay modelling (for post-Christmas groups).

Creative categories that were used in the questionnaire were similar to those used in the Age UK report [Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life](#) report to enable us to draw comparisons with the broader picture. We added a digital arts section to the questionnaire which has offered some interesting insights into digital engagement with creativity and culture. We would like to say a big thank you to all the groups and participant who engaged with the consultation.



What were the quantitative findings? (see appendices in full report)

The majority of the participants were female (76%).

Just over half lived alone (58%) and were in the 75+ yrs. age range at (60%).

The top 5 activities that participants were currently engaged with were; (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement).

1. Reading for pleasure (43)
2. Visiting historic parks or gardens (35)
3. Visiting a museum (33)
4. Attending films (30)
5. Visiting towns or cities with historic character (28)

The top 5 activities that participants were NOT currently engaged with were but would be of interest; (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement)

1. Using a computer to create original art (20)
2. Taking part in local history research and being a member a book club (17 each)
3. Writing stories, plays or poetry (16)
4. Attending events connected to books and literature, visiting a place connected to industrial heritage, taking part in reminiscence activities and using an app to access a heritage website (15 each)
5. Becoming a member of a creative writing group, attending a play at another venue, visiting a historic place of worship, visiting a site of archaeological interest visiting a multi arts centre and event which included video or electronic art (14 each)

The most popular activity that participants were NOT currently engaged with were but would be of interest by postcode area (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement).

OX1 – Recycled craft (4)

OX2-Using a computer to create original art (4)

OX3- Attending a rock, pop or jazz concert, participation in dance including ballet and using a computer to create original art (7 each)

OX4-Attending a play at another venue including outdoors (11)

The top 5 barriers to attending were (number in brackets indicated the number of participants who chose this statement).

1. I don't want to go out after dark (30)
2. No transport of my own (25)
3. I have health concerns (24)
4. I don't want to go out on my own (20)
5. I don't know what is on offer (16)

The top 5 favourites creative activities voted for in post it note activity (participants used their own words for this and numbers in brackets indicates the number of participants who chose each activity).

1. Dance (11)
2. Painting a drawing and reading and literature (10 each)
3. Knitting and crochet (9)
4. Sewing (8)
5. Theatre (6)

What were the qualitative findings? (see appendices in full report)

Key themes emerged from the response to Q9 and 10 of the questionnaire and the group discussions as follows (Q9-Please share your thoughts on what local cultural or arts organisations can do to support you to attend their activities and events and Q10-Please use this page to share your any other thoughts that you have about the age friendly arts and cultural offer in Oxford including any experiences you have had, both positive and negative).

- Many respondents were keen for activities to take place in their community and had a strong affinity for the centre where their group meets
- Daytime activities were also cited as a preference by some respondents
- It was felt that there is a need for better publicity, and some expressed a preference physical copies of information rather than digital
- Some respondents felt that organisations need to be mindful of numbers in groups and how this can be managed if the group becomes popular
- Some respondents expressed a desire for someone to go with them to groups

These themes were reinforced in the group discussions;

- There were concerns about going out after dark and a preference for activities to be more locally based
- An outreach visit from cultural provider based in Oxford City Centre had been very much enjoyed and had given the group confidence to travel to the city centre to visit the venue
- There was a desire for clear, accessible and up to date promotion of events both in print and digitally

What conclusions can we draw from the findings and what are next steps?

Although relatively small in scope the Oxford City Age Friendly Creative Consultation echoed findings from national research in Age UK report [Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life](#). Activities like reading, visiting historic parks or gardens, visiting museums were cited as most popular in both studies and we know that these are freely available in Oxford. The consultation findings suggest that activities that may not be as freely available or perceived as freely available but are of interest include using a computer to create digital art, local history research, belonging to a book club and writing stories, plays and poetry. We also need to take into account the favourite activities voted for by participants including dance, painting and drawing, reading and literature, knitting and crochet, sewing and attending the theatre. Another strong message that came across from the consultation participants was a strong desire for creative activities to be taken out into the community and happen at the centres where they meet. This is in accord with the Arts Councils recently published [Arts Council 10 Year Strategy-2020-2030](#) which also makes a case for arts and culture to be taken out onto the community and states;

“By 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences”

Taking all of the findings into account and also the current circumstances regarding Covid 19, the lockdown and the inevitable loss of confidence in that people may feel in going to group activities for the foreseeable future the following ideas may be suitable for consideration for project development.

- Digital skills workshops to enable increased participation in cultural and creative activities at home
- Provision of iPad's for use at home
- Outreach services are popular and help with relationship building, audience development and trust. They also address the barriers respondents cited regarding travelling to activities so where possible and safe to do so they should be considered. This approach may also build confidence and encourage visits to cultural venues
- Setting up online groups and classes for dance, painting and drawing, book groups, making art using a computer, local history research, creative writing, crochet and sewing and theatre engagement were all activities that respondents were interested in seeing developed



All of these could be flexible in delivery and be adapted to in person group work both in the community and on site, digital engagement and engagement by post and telephone

- A buddy scheme/peer support to give confidence when attending groups and advise and support with digital engagement and creativity in the home
- Clear promotion of activities in digital and printed format which can be shared easily (using existing networks were possible)

We need to create projects and creative activities that can be adapted to at home engagement if need be in order to keep older people safe and reduce isolation for those who may be at risk if they leave home and attend groups. The impact of the Covid 19 situation is yet to be fully realised but many of the themes that have emerged could be adapted to suit the new world that is emerging.

