Evaluation of the Arts and Older People Programme
Interim Report
May
2015

Wallace consulting
### CONTENTS

1. **BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION** ................................................................. 6
   1.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 6
   1.2 Rationale for Intervention ...................................................................................... 6
   1.3 The Arts Council of Northern Ireland ................................................................. 6
   1.4 The Arts and Older People’s Programme ............................................................. 7
   1.5 Evaluation Methodology ....................................................................................... 8

2. **CONTEXT FOR THE ARTS & OLDER PEOPLE PROGRAMME** .................. 10
   2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 10
   2.2 Demographic Changes ......................................................................................... 10
   2.3 Health and Wellbeing ........................................................................................ 11
   2.4 Isolation and Loneliness ...................................................................................... 13
   2.5 Poverty .................................................................................................................. 15
   2.6 Social Inclusion ................................................................................................... 17
   2.7 Participation .......................................................................................................... 18
   2.8 Perceptions and Attitudes to Ageing ................................................................. 20
   2.9 Discussion ............................................................................................................ 21

3. **POLICY FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY** ............................................................. 23
   3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 23
   3.2 International Policy Direction ............................................................................... 23
   3.3 NI Policy Context .................................................................................................. 24
   3.4 Active Ageing Strategy 2014-2020 ...................................................................... 25
   3.5 Arts Policy and the Arts and Older People Programme ....................................... 28
   3.6 Funding Environment .......................................................................................... 30
   3.7 Opportunities to Build On ................................................................................... 31
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 VALUING CREATIVITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 The Role of Wellbeing in Active Ageing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Active Ageing and the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Older People and the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 PROGRAMME APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Application Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Funded Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Beneficiary Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Data Coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Respondent Profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Arts Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Health &amp; Wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Pre- and Post-Project Comparisons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9 Project Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10 Volunteer Input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11 Event Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.12 Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 SPRING CHICKENS: MACHINATIONS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wallace Consulting
| 7.1 | Introduction | 75 |
| 7.2 | Project Aims & Description | 75 |
| 7.3 | Participant Feedback | 76 |
| 7.4 | Partner Feedback | 78 |
| 7.5 | Conclusions | 79 |
| 8 | ANDERSONSTOWN COMMUNITY THEATRE: THE BUS RUN | 81 |
| 8.1 | Introduction | 81 |
| 8.2 | Project Aims & Description | 81 |
| 8.3 | Participant Feedback | 82 |
| 8.4 | Partner Feedback | 84 |
| 8.5 | Conclusions | 85 |
| 9 | GREATER SHANKILL: SOCIAL SOFA | 87 |
| 9.1 | Introduction | 87 |
| 9.2 | Project Aims & Description | 88 |
| 9.3 | Participant Feedback | 89 |
| 9.4 | Partner Feedback | 90 |
| 9.5 | Conclusions | 92 |
| 10 | PROJECT PARTNERS | 94 |
| 10.1 | Introduction | 94 |
| 10.2 | Artist Perspectives | 94 |
| 10.3 | Lead Partner Perspective | 98 |
| 10.4 | Discussion | 100 |
| 11 | PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE | 102 |
| 11.1 | Introduction | 102 |
| 11.2 | Governance Structures | 102 |
| 11.3 | Application and Assessment Process | 102 |
1 Background to the Evaluation

1.1 Introduction

In June 2014 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (the Arts Council) appointed Wallace Consulting to undertake an ongoing evaluation of the Arts and Older People Programme (AOPP, the Programme) 2013-2016 throughout its lifetime.

This document provides an overview of progress towards the AOPP’s aims and outcomes as reflected in its Logic Model. It summarises recent research and policy developments and presents an analysis of the work conducted to date. Recommendations for programme development are presented.

1.2 Rationale for Intervention

The Mental Capital and Wellbeing1 Foresight report identifies mental ill health and the wellbeing of older adults and the under-utilisation of their mental capital (i.e. ability to learn, think and use of emotional resources) as two important future challenges for Government. The report concludes that the best people to demonstrate the potential of older adults are older adults themselves – via raising the profile of older adults who continue to demonstrate high levels of achievement, showcasing the potential of older adults to help and connect across generations and tackling negative attitudes in Government. There is a call for a greater focus on the positive potential of older people, to address the stigma associated with “old age”.

Based upon the Foresight Project, The New Economics Foundation identified five ways for individuals to safeguard wellbeing in everyday life: To connect, be active, take notice of the world, keep learning and to give back to the wider community.2

There is growing evidence that participatory arts activity can help deliver against these objectives in order to provide both personal and social outcomes. The pilot phase of the AOPP, provided qualitative and quantitative research which illustrated the wealth of benefits for older people engaged in creative learning and expression. Examining such low level non-clinical approaches to improving and safeguarding wellbeing is particularly pertinent when we consider ongoing pressures upon public services, especially in health and social care.

The evaluation of the AOPP 2013-2016 Programme will be used to raise awareness of the potential of the arts to address and/or highlight social justice issues, to inform future work and to establish success relative to its outcome indicators.

1.3 The Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The Arts Council is the lead development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. It provides support for artists and arts organisations, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through its Exchequer and National Lottery funds. The Arts Council advocates that the arts have the power to transform lives and communities, creating opportunities for people throughout the country and its mission is ‘to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life’.

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2 NEF, (2008). Five Ways to Wellbeing: A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people’s wellbeing
Operating as a Non-Departmental Public Body, the Arts Council is sponsored by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL). Funding is also provided by the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the form of Lottery proceeds. The organisation is charged with four statutory functions under the Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. These are:

- To develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts;
- To increase public access to, and participation in the arts;
- To advise DCAL and other government departments, district councils and other bodies on matters relating to the arts; and
- Such other functions as are conferred on the Council by any other statutory provision.

In addition, the Arts Council has statutory functions under the National Lottery Act 1993 as amended by the National Lottery Act 1998 and is charged with the responsibility for distributing Lottery proceeds allocated to the arts in Northern Ireland. The principal function is to fund applications for a broad range of capital and revenue projects in the arts which will make an important and lasting difference to the quality of life of the people in Northern Ireland.

The Arts and Older People Strategy was prepared in recognition of the priorities set out in Creative Connections. It aims to assist older people to overcome barriers and increase access and participation in arts-related projects which address both creative and social needs. Whilst the strategy sets out a number of measures that will help tackle broad issues and encourage partnership working, the fundamental objective is to increase the number of avenues for older people to become involved in the arts. The strategic themes centre upon key social justice issues that affect older people on a daily basis and may impede access and participation in the arts.

The Arts Council’s five year strategy Ambitions for the Arts strives to deepen the value of arts to individuals and wider society, target resources to meet social and community challenges, deliver improved access and reach new audiences and enhance community engagement. As such the Arts Council commits to placing high-quality arts projects within the grasp of socially excluded groups, to support and develop the skills of arts organisations, individual artists and volunteers to deliver benefits to the community. The organisation commits to continuing the work developed under the Arts and Older People strategy developed as a means of increasing arts access and participation by older people.

1.4 The Arts and Older People’s Programme

Initially launched as a three year pilot programme in 2009 and jointly funded by the Arts Council and The Atlantic Philanthropies, the A OPP aimed to increase opportunities for older people to engage with the arts, by providing funding to arts-based projects which addressed age relevant issues such as poverty, isolation and loneliness, as well as promoting positive mental health.

With advice and guidance provided by the programme Steering Group, more than 50 grants were awarded to community and voluntary groups and arts organisations over the duration. The range of arts-based activities was extremely diverse, encompassing painting, crafts, poetry, storytelling, music, carnival, circus, song and dance. A week-long Celebration of Age festival marked the end of the programme, providing an opportunity to showcase the projects funded, through exhibitions, workshops and performances.

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3 ACNI, (2010), Arts and Older People’s Strategy.
Drawing on the learning arising from the pilot programme, the second phase of the AOPP is jointly funded by the Arts Council, DCAL, the Public Health Agency (PHA) and the Baring Foundation. The current AOPP also runs for three years (2013-16) and the strategic themes and objectives are:

- **Isolation and Loneliness** – Providing opportunities for social interaction via arts-led activities and working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness;

- **Social Inclusion** - Combating the social exclusion of older people through arts interventions that promote inclusion, free movement and sharing and working to create a more peaceful, fair and inclusive community that does not discriminate against age and ethnicity;

- **Poverty** - Providing opportunities for older people living in disadvantaged/marginalised rural and urban areas to access and participate in arts activities and working to improve the quality of life of older people living in disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas of Northern Ireland;

- **Health Issues/Dementia including mental health and emotional wellbeing** - Providing opportunities for older people to participate in arts led activities which may help improve physical, mental and social wellbeing and working to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for active ageing through participation in arts activities; and

- **Strengthening the Voice of Older People** - Provide opportunities for older people to develop skills which will strengthen their voice on issues that affect them. Providing artistic, professional and personal development skills and working to strengthen and develop the voice of older people particularly on issues that directly affect this section of society on a day-to-day basis.

The AOPP is aimed at constituted community and voluntary groups who are working at a local level to support older people, non-governmental organisations, Local Authorities and arts organisations. There is an emphasis upon strong partnership working via consortia based proposals. Due recognition is also given to older people’s groups located in, or working with groups in identified areas of need (namely the 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) and 26 Areas at Risk) and in rural areas.

Grants from £10,000 to £30,000 are available. However, a minimum of 10% match funding is required, half of which must be in cash. As well as partnership approaches, applications developed through consultation with older people, those that support excellence in working with older people and challenge artists, arts organisations and arts providers to develop new, imaginative or more effective ways of engaging older people are encouraged. The programme hopes to develop sustainable programmes that leave a legacy (e.g. via training and developmental opportunities for care staff) and have a significant geographical spread.

An annual one month long Arts and Age Festival will showcase creative projects and events run by communities and arts organisations during the Programme’s lifetime. Activities will take place in arts venues, healthcare settings, care homes, sheltered housing and community centres and will include a variety of art forms such as theatre, dance, film, music, visual arts and circus.

### 1.5 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the AOPP aims to measure impact and to draw out best practice in order to inform and influence programme development. It also strives to provide robust evidence in order to shape future government interventions. A Logic Model methodology has been applied as this provides a solid basis for strategy development and evaluation planning and can set the stage for policy change. This enables advocates, funders and evaluators to make realistic predictions about potential accomplishments, record information to assess progress toward goals and to use the learning to improve advocacy.
Qualitative and quantitative baseline indicators have been established and the evaluation will measure impact against the outputs and outcomes outlined in the Programme Logic Model (see Appendix 1). The methodology comprises of the following:

- **Desk Research**: A review of the research and policy landscape;
- **Database Analysis**: Profile of applications, awards and rejections;
- **Case-studies**: Case-studies of selected projects to include beneficiary discussions;
- **Stakeholder Consultations**: Interviews with the Steering Group and internal and external stakeholders;
- **Pre- and Post-Participant Surveys**: Analysis of participant feedback upon project commencement and closure; and
- **Event Feedback**: Analysis of short-term sessions attended by activity/event attendees;
- **Artist Survey**: Analysis of feedback provided by artists post project; and
- **End of Project Report**: Detailing evidence of needs addressed, activities undertaken, participant benefits, partnership building etc.

Throughout the course of the evaluation, we drew upon the detailed knowledge and understanding of the Evaluation Steering Group which was established as an advisory body for the evaluation, the Steering Group and Arts Council staff. The remainder of this document contains the following information:

- **Section Two**: Context for the Arts and Older People Programme;
- **Section Three**: Changing Demographics and Policy;
- **Section Four**: The Arts and Social Justice;
- **Section Five**: Programme Applications and Awards;
- **Section Six**: Beneficiary Feedback;
- **Section Seven**: Big Telly Case Study;
- **Section Eight**: Andersonstown Community Theatre Case Study;
- **Section Nine**: Spectrum Centre Case Study;
- **Section Ten**: Project Partners;
- **Section Eleven**: Programme Governance;
- **Section Twelve**: Policy Impact; and
- **Section Thirteen**: Programme Appraisal.
2 Context for the Arts & Older People Programme

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of relevant population statistics and research relating to the strategic priorities of the AOPP – health and wellbeing, isolation and loneliness, social inclusion, poverty and advocacy are presented. Fear of crime is also considered in relation to its impact on social isolation and health and wellbeing.

2.2 Demographic Changes

The number and proportion of older people in the population is consistently increasing.\(^5\) Between 2012 and 2013, the number of adults aged 65 years and over increased by 2.3% to 279,100. In the decade between 2003 and 2013, the population of this age group increased by 21.7%.

There are also increasing numbers of people living into their 80s and 90s.\(^6\) Between 2012 and 2013, those aged 85 and over increased by 1.8% to 33,300. Between 2003 and 2013, this age group increased by 39.9% - more than five times greater than the overall population growth rate over the same period (7.3%). Figure 2.1 illustrates an increase in the percentage of the population in each of the over 50 age bands since the 2001 census.

Figure 2.1
2001 v 2011 Census Age Structure

\(^6\) Source: Spotlight on Older People in Northern Ireland, Help the Aged (2008)
Indeed, NISRA’s 2012 population projections illustrate that the percentage of the population aged 50+ is likely to rise substantially in the coming years. While those aged 50+ were estimated to make up around 32% of the population in 2012, this is likely to rise to almost 45% by 2062 (Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2**
**NI Population Projections 2012 to 2062: 50+ years**

One of the most significant trends is the increase in life expectancy. 2013 statistics indicate that the average man will live to 78 years (+5 years since 1991) and the average woman to 82 years (+4 years since 1991).

In contrast to the growth in the older age groups, the number of children is projected to slowly increase until 2022, before decreasing thereafter. From 2027 onwards it is projected that there will be more persons aged 65 years and over in the population than children.7

### 2.3 Health and Wellbeing

The future of health and social care provision, to include domiciliary care, is one of the most commonly identified future priorities.8

The Northern Ireland Health Survey provides information on the general and mental health of the population. Information relating to those aged 45+ has been presented below. Respondents were asked how their general health was on a scale of “very good” to “very bad” (Table 2.1). Those rating their health as “very good” and “good” decreases with age, from 69% of those aged 45-54, to 48% among those aged 75+.

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7 NISRA, Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2013
8 Patient and Client Council, The People’s Priorities: A View from Patients, Service Users, Carers, and Communities on Future Priorities for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland, November 2011
Table 2.1

**General Health – Over the last 12 months would you say your health has, on the whole, been…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65-74</th>
<th>75+</th>
<th>All ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Bad</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DHSSPS, Health Survey Northern Ireland 2013/14

The survey also asked respondents about **long standing illnesses**. Again the likelihood of these increases with age, with 40% of 45-54 year olds stating they had a long standing illness compared to 67% of those aged 75+ (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2

**Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65-74</th>
<th>75+</th>
<th>All ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DHSSPS, Health Survey Northern Ireland 2013/14

Respondents in the older age groups were more likely to have spoken to a doctor in the previous fortnight (22.5% of those aged 65 to 74 and 22.4% of those aged 75 and over had done so compared to younger age groups. The Health Survey also shows that over the period 2010/11 to 2012/13, there has been a clear relationship between someone’s age and their level of mobility, with those in the older age groups more likely to have mobility difficulties than other age groups.

As part of the Health Survey, the **General Health Questionnaire** (GHQ12) is used to detect psychiatric disorder in the general population. It assesses areas such as levels of depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance and happiness. A GHQ12 score of 4 or more - a ‘high GHQ12 score’ - indicates a high level of psychological distress. Table 2.3 indicates that those aged 45-54 are most likely to have a GHQ12 score of 4 or more, however this decreases with age.

Table 2.3

**GHQ Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65-74</th>
<th>75+</th>
<th>All ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DHSSPS, Health Survey Northern Ireland 2013/14

At 31 March 2013, there were 224 residential homes for older people in Northern Ireland, with an average of 2,862 available places. At 30 June 2013, there were 9,835 older people benefitting from either residential or nursing home care packages. The vast majority (85.9%) were provided for by the private sector.

Older people are more likely than other age groups to care for someone else on an informal basis (i.e. 19% of respondents aged 60 to 64 and 15% of those aged 65+). In the 60 to 64 age group, females are more likely to be carers than men. However, for the oldest age group

9 Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Health Survey Northern Ireland, 2012/13
10 Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Statistics on Community Care for Adults in Northern Ireland, 2012-13
(65 and over), males (15.7%) were more likely than females (14.1%) to be carers.\textsuperscript{11}

According to research carried out by Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI), older carers in Northern Ireland contributed £1.02 billion to the economy during 2012.\textsuperscript{12}

‘Dementia’ is used to describe a collection of symptoms, including a decline in memory, reasoning and communication skills, and a gradual loss of skills needed to carry out daily activities due to structural and chemical changes in the brain.\textsuperscript{13}

There are many different types of dementia. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer’s disease which accounts for over 50% of dementia and vascular dementia, which is diagnosed in about 20% of cases. Mixed dementia where there is both Alzheimer’s disease and vascular factors is also common. Dementia mostly affects people over the age of 70 although it can appear in people in their 40s or younger. The established prevalence rates for dementia in the UK are:\textsuperscript{14}

- 40-64 years: 1 in 1400;
- 65-69 years: 1 in 100;
- 70-79 years: 1 in 25; and
- 80+ years: 1 in 6.

At present, it is estimated that in Northern Ireland there are 19,000 people are living with dementia - fewer than 1,000 of these people have early onset dementia.\textsuperscript{15} An ageing population in Northern Ireland could see the numbers of people diagnosed with dementia going from the current estimate of 19,000 to 23,000 by 2017 and around 60,000 by 2051.

The symptoms of dementia may include problems with memory, reasoning and judgement, disorientation, language and communication difficulties, changes in mood, behaviour, or personality, wandering behaviours and hallucinations and delusions. These symptoms are not exclusive to dementia therefore, an early and accurate diagnosis is important to ensure appropriate intervention and support which is tailored to individual needs. Although dementia is a progressive condition, a lot can be done to help the person with dementia to live well.

### 2.4 Isolation and Loneliness

Research undertaken for OFMdfM,\textsuperscript{16} states that social networks are important for people of all ages as they provide friendship and emotional and practical support as well as a sense of belonging and inclusion. A lack of social networks can have a significant impact on mental wellbeing, since it can be linked to loneliness and isolation.

Living alone is associated with higher instances of feeling lonely. Loneliness and social isolation is a growing concern, which is estimated to increase in the future. Although in the longer term the number of households is projected to increase, the average household size is expected to decrease (from 2.53 in 2008, to 2.47 in 2013 and 2.36 in 2023). This is a direct result of the changing age population structure and the increasing numbers of people who will likely be living alone.\textsuperscript{17} Rural households are slightly more likely than those in urban areas to contain at least one adult of a pensionable age.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{11} Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Health Survey Northern Ireland, 2012/13
\textsuperscript{12} COPNI Independent Research, (2014). Development Economics
\textsuperscript{13} Source: Alzheimer’s Society
\textsuperscript{14} Source: Alzheimer’s Society
\textsuperscript{16} OFMDFM/Deloitte Examining the case for a Commissioner for Older People (2009)
\textsuperscript{17} NISRA, Household projections, http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp21.htm
\textsuperscript{18} Department for Social Development, Family Resources Survey Urban Rural Report: Northern Ireland, 2002/03 - 2011/12
Research\textsuperscript{19} notes that addressing isolation and loneliness is not easy. For some, the loss of a partner is the trigger, for others the gradual loss of contact with family/grandchildren or loss of mobility is a major cause and, often there is a combination of factors. The growing mobility of the working population combined with the fact that family sizes have reduced in recent decades, means there is a real need to ensure older people have some form of social contact that provides mental stimulation and maintains community networks.

Surveys consistently show that around 6-13\% of older people report that they are often or always lonely.\textsuperscript{20} Some of the indicators used by Help the Aged in relation to isolation in Northern Ireland are that:

- 21\% of people aged 65+ report that they are often or always lonely;
- 16\% of people aged 65+ do not leave/get out of their house more than once a week; and
- 7\% of people aged 65+ never leave the house.

The 2005/6 Health and Wellbeing Survey asked respondents a series of questions about their family and friends in order to assess levels of social support. The results show that in common with the rest of the population approximately 30-40\% of older people suffer from a "severe lack" or "some lack" of social support. Forty-five to 64 year olds appear to be at most risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.4</th>
<th>Perceived Levels of Social Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>45-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe lack</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some lack</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No lack</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Source: NISRA, Health and Wellbeing Survey 2005/06}

A review of fear of crime and older people\textsuperscript{21} highlight the complex interlinked causes and effects. The study suggested that, although older people might perceive themselves to be more vulnerable to crime and less able to cope, age itself was not always the main factor in causing fear. Key issues contributing to fear include isolation, a lack of control over one’s life, a lack of information and the perception that older people are not valued in society. Other factors that can increase fear include a lack of trust of the younger generation and the character of an area where someone lives can affect their sense of vulnerability.

Furthermore the strategy notes that fear of crime amongst older people can have significant consequences for their health and wellbeing.\textsuperscript{22} Fear and a lack of trust can have an impact on the mental and physical health of older people as they may reduce their levels of physical activity and social interaction out of concern for their safety, which can result in isolation, further limiting activities and social interaction.

The Northern Ireland Crime Survey measures people’s perception of crime and anti-social behaviour.\textit{Safer Ageing} is monitoring older people’s perception of their personal safety through the indicators set out in Table 2.5.
### Table 2.5
**Perceptions of Personal Safety - Percentage of people aged 60 or over**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling very unsafe walking alone in their area after dark</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With high levels of worry about burglary</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With high levels of worry about violent crime</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceiving a high level of ASB in their local area</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying that 'fear of crime' has a great impact on their quality of life</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Department of Justice, Northern Ireland Crime Survey 2009/10 to 2013/14*

### 2.5 Poverty

Demographic trends reflecting longer life expectancies are now starting to be reflected in public welfare provision. From the 1940s until April 2010, the State Pension Age (SPA) was 60 years for women and 65 years for men. Between April 2010 and November 2018 the SPA for women will increase gradually to 65 years. As the law currently stands, the SPA for both men and women in Northern Ireland will increase again to 66 years by October 2020.\(^{23}\)

Significant numbers of older people depend solely on a combination of state pension and means tested benefits. Women are over represented in benefit provision as they are less likely than men to have an occupational or private pension. Rural households are more likely to receive the state pension than urban households.\(^{24}\)

Table 2.6 provides details of the percentage of older people living in poverty and severe poverty in Northern Ireland over the past six years. The figures are calculated by the Department for Social Development (DSD) as Households Below Average Income. The proportion of pensioners in relative poverty (BHC) has decreased from 30% in 2008/09 to 20% in 2012/13. For After Housing Costs, the proportion of pensioners in relative poverty decreased from 20% to 14%, over the same period. However, approximately 49% of single pensioners living alone compared to approximately 41% of pensioner couples living alone fell within the bottom two quintiles of the UK income distribution in 2011/12.\(^{25}\)

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\(^{23}\) See: Pensions Bill (Bill 42/11-16): Explanatory and Financial Memorandum, p.17

\(^{24}\) Department for Social Development, Family Resources Survey Urban Rural Report: Northern Ireland, 2002/03 - 2011/12

\(^{25}\) Department for Social Development, Households Below Average Income, Northern Ireland Report, 2011-12
Table 2.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pensioners Below 50% Median Income NI</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioners Below 70% Median Income NI</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DSD, Households Below Average Income – 2007/8 to 2012/13
Note: Figures calculated based on Before Housing Costs (BHC) basis, Older people – Male (65), Female (60)

While pensioner poverty rates have been slowly increasing from first being measured in 2002/03, there has been a decrease between 2008/09 and 2012/13. However, in 2012/13, 20% of pensioners were in relative poverty before housing costs. There are a number of identifiable characteristics of low income pensioner households, as follows:

- Couple pensioner household living alone;
- No-one is working;
- Female;
- No disabled adult living in the household;
- Not in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit or Housing Benefit;
- No occupational or personal pension;
- House-owner; and
- No savings or investments.26

A household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain an acceptable level of temperature throughout the home, it would have to spend more than 10% of its income on all household fuel. Northern Ireland has the highest rate of fuel poverty in the UK. The three causes of fuel poverty are fuel prices (which have escalated since 2004), low incomes and poor energy efficiency standards. Table 2.7 shows how Northern Ireland’s levels of fuel poverty have risen significantly since 2001.

Table 2.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(167,000)</td>
<td>(146,000)</td>
<td>(226,000)</td>
<td>(302,310)</td>
<td>(407,000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.8 illustrates how fuel poverty affects those in the 18-24 age category as well as older people. However, more than three-fifths (62%) of households headed by a retired person were living in fuel poverty in 2011. The 2008 Home Energy Conservation Report suggests that “this probably reflects the fact that elderly households tend to have much lower incomes on which to live.” Between 2004 and 2006 about 12% of deaths of people aged 65 and over were associated with cold temperatures in the home.27

26 Department for Social Development, Households Below Average Income, Northern Ireland Report, 2011-12
2.6 Social Inclusion

Within rural communities poor access to services can lead to social exclusion. Recent research reveals that rural older people feel that there is continual erosion and withdrawal of local amenities, access, eligibility and uptake of state benefits are perceived to be complex and a lot of poverty is hidden. Housing deprivation and fuel poverty were highlighted as key concerns amongst an apparently asset rich older population.28

Difficulty travelling due to a physical disability or a long-standing health problem also increases with age (38% of those aged 60+). Amongst this older age group, females (42%) were more likely to experience difficulty travelling than males (33%).29

While 77% of all individuals aged 16 and over in Northern Ireland had access to the internet in 2013/14, the level of access decreases by age. Sixty-seven per cent of those in the 60-69 age group had access to the internet and this dropped to 31% for those aged 70 and over. Although the proportion of older people accessing the internet is increasing, these differences give rise to notions of ‘digital exclusion’ among older people, which potentially puts them at risk missing out on digital content and services.30

Lack of transport, poverty, poor health and fear of crime can contribute to social exclusion. However, there is also a tendency to mix within limited social circles and territorial boundaries. Indeed, it is widely accepted that due to residential, educational and social segregation, there are little opportunities for the two majority communities in NI to mix. Despite this, Table 2.9 illustrates that the majority of people believe that mixing will improve relations between Protestants and Catholics.

Table 2.9
Percentage saying that better relations between Protestants and Catholics will only come about through more mixing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

29 Department for Regional Development, Travel Survey for Northern Ireland In-depth Report 2010-2012
30 Central Survey Unit, Continuous Household Survey, 2013/14
Table 2.10 illustrates that in 2012 those aged 18-24 years and those aged over 65 years are the most likely to have the majority of their friends from the same community background as themselves.

Table 2.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There has been a rapid change in the composition and size of the minority ethnic population during the last decade and there is a sense that the older population is becoming increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse. This provides an important background for considering ways to influence social interaction, policy and participation in public life.

2.7 Participation

Analysis by the Volunteer Development Agency\(^{31}\) suggests that, even though the over 50 age group as a whole are less likely to volunteer, those who do will volunteer on a consistently regular basis. Indeed, the over 65s on average provide between 21-40 hours of formal volunteering per month. Volunteering and active involvement in community groups has been linked with increased life satisfaction, better engagement with community life and a positive contribution to health and wellbeing in later years.

The Volunteering in Northern Ireland Research Report\(^{32}\) collects information to estimate volunteering levels throughout Northern Ireland. The results, for the two years of data available, show that volunteering levels vary between age groups, with volunteering levels highest amongst those aged 50-64 in 2014, but slightly lower in 2013. Those aged over 65 are least likely to volunteer.

Table 2.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>16-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-49</th>
<th>50-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 16-24 sample size too small to be representative.


There are multiple reasons given for not volunteering, with the table below showing the main reasons given by those aged 50+ years. There are significant variations in reasons between those aged 50-64 and the over 65s.


\(^{32}\) The survey is commissioned by the Department for Social Development’s Voluntary and Community Unit and carried out by the Analytical Services Unit
Table 2.12

**Reasons Given for Not Volunteering**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>50-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have work commitments</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have the time</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have an illness or disability that prevents me from volunteering</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to look after children/the home</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I’m too old to get involved</td>
<td><strong>30%</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to do voluntary work</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percentages based on counts of less than 5 are suppressed in line with DSD confidentiality policy**


Statistics also show that participation levels in community, civic and political groups (which can help provide a voice for older people and represent their views) remain low amongst older people. Table 2.13 provides information about participation within community service or civic group activities. Participation levels are low across all age groups, in particular amongst those aged 25-34 years and those aged 65+.

Table 2.13

**Participation in the Activities of Community Services or Civic Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least once a week</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a month</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2009*

In 2013 NILT asked questions in relation to a sense of belonging by people to their neighbourhoods and NI. The highest levels of belonging (those that answered yes, definitely) were amongst older people (aged 55+).

Table 2.14

**Sense of Belonging to Neighbourhood and NI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood (2013)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, definitely</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, probably</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI (2013)</td>
<td>Yes, definitely</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, probably</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2013*
Questions were also asked in 2013 about feelings of influence in relation to decisions made at a local and NI level. Generally people feel that they have very little influence at both levels, however older people are slightly more likely to feel that they have some influence when it comes to decisions at a local level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Yes, definitely</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Yes, definitely</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2013 |

### 2.8 Perceptions and Attitudes to Ageing

At the moment there is no United Nations standard numerical criterion for older people, but the agreed cut-off is age 60+ years. In NI the definition for older people is similar, although the Commissioner for Older People may act on behalf of those people aged 50 years and over in particular cases.

In 2008 NILT explored at what age someone is considered as being “older”. Very few thought of anyone under 60 years as being an older person. However nearly 60% of respondents regarded someone in the 65-74 age group as being older. Just under a fifth of respondents said they did not think of someone as older until they were over 75 years and some refused to classify people until they were well into their nineties.

Respondents felt that people are treated with more respect as they get older. However, a sizeable proportion (27%) felt that people were treated with less respect as they aged. Whilst the survey indicated generally positive attitudes towards older people, 60% reported older people to be set in their ways and 46% thought them unwilling to listen to younger people. However, there is general agreement that older people are younger in their ways than in the past (90%) and that society does not recognise their contribution (92%). Loneliness, isolation and boredom were cited as some of the main problems facing the older population.

### Table 2.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Problems Facing Older People in Northern Ireland Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2008 |

However, issues related to vulnerability and financial pressures were highest for respondents aged over 65 years. Around 70% identified keeping warm in winter and fear of crime as problems. Rather fewer, although still a majority, mention making ends meet and loneliness. Younger respondents tended to underestimate the extent to which keeping warm in winter is an issue for those in the older group and overestimate the problem of isolation.

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34 NILT, (2009). All our futures: attitudes to age and ageing in Northern Ireland
35 NILTS states that this module was previously run in 2008 and there are no plans at the moment to re-run it.
In 2013 the NILT asked if certain groups in NI were treated unfairly when compared with other groups. This question was asked in the context of equality laws which aim to make sure that everyone is treated equally. The results show that almost a third of people (including older people themselves) think that older people are treated unfairly. This compares to only 13% considering that children are treated unfairly.

Table 2.17
Groups Treated Unfairly When Compared to Other Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group (only selected groups shown)</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian/ Bi-sexual</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travellers</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender People</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2013

Stigmatising attitudes towards people with dementia are also common. Research\(^{36}\) illustrates that most people are aware that dementia is not a normal part of the ageing process. However many perceive those in the later stages of dementia as ‘confused’, ‘frightened’, ‘unpredictable’ and ‘lost’. Significant numbers of respondents also used the words ‘trapped’, ‘sad’ and ‘angry’ and small minorities listed ‘dangerous’ and ‘pathetic’ as descriptors for people with dementia. It was very rare indeed for respondents to list positive attributes such as ‘gentle’, ‘happy’, ‘kind’ or ‘fun’.

Older age groups are more likely to feel that eventually all you can do for someone with dementia is to keep them clean healthy and safe. They are also more likely to feel that the person you knew eventually disappears and to see residential care as the best option. Almost half felt that those who are newly diagnosed are unable to make decisions about their own care and some believe that there is no point trying to talk to people with dementia as they won’t be able to understand. There is very little belief in the capacity for those with dementia (even those newly diagnosed) to lead independent lives.

2.9 Discussion

The ongoing contribution of older people to society is not always recognised, particularly in economic terms (i.e. unpaid work of 50+ estimated at £24 billion a year).\(^{37}\) This may in part be due to media and societal portrayal/stereotypes of frail and vulnerable older people living on the margins of communities. However, there are many more active older people, looking after family members, supporting parents to go out to work, volunteering in their neighbourhoods, socialising and having fun.

It is important that this positive side to ageing is communicated and that older people’s voices are heard loud and clearly by the public, legislators and budget holders. There are now more opportunities for people throughout NI to become fully involved in civic life. For example, the Pensioner’s Parliament organised by Age Sector Platform reaches out to give older people a chance to make their voice heard on issues that affect them and also provides

\(^{36}\) ARK, (2010). Attitudes to and Knowledge of Dementia in Northern Ireland.
a vehicle to make older people more aware of key information and practical advice on support services in their own areas, including information on health, benefits, transport and community safety. For the fourth year running 'Keeping Warm in Winter' was the top issue of concern for pensioners with three quarters of older people selecting it as a problem for them. 'Fear of Crime' and 'Food Prices' continue to be the next biggest issues although both have seen concerns decrease from the highs of 2013. Last year there was a huge increase in concerns about ‘Access to Health and Social Care’ and this continued in 2014. Concerns regarding the impact of the Transforming Your Care reforms continue to grow with many older people concerned about the waiting times in hospitals and the quality of domiciliary care packages.
3 Policy for an Ageing Society

3.1 Introduction

People aged over 65 years are healthier and more active than previous generations, and the proportion of those aged over 80 years is rising rapidly. Developments in biotechnology and assistive technologies are enabling people to live longer and healthier lives. Demographic change presents Government with a complex range of issues, challenges and opportunities. For example, the global economic crisis has led governments to question the viability of welfare models which had been relatively stable for a generation or more - examining whether or not social and economic structures remain sustainable when “retirement” may extend to thirty years. This chapter outlines age relevant developments in the policy and legislative landscape.

3.2 International Policy Direction

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, is the first international agreement that specifically recognises the potential of older people to contribute to the development of their societies. The MIPAA calls for changes in attitudes, policies and practices at all levels, in all sectors so that the potential of ageing may be fulfilled. Its aim is:

“To ensure that persons everywhere are able to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights.”

Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the recommendations of MIPAA, which identified three priorities:

- Older Persons and Development;
- Advancing Health and Wellbeing into Old Age; and
- Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments.

MIPAA represents a milestone in addressing the challenge of building a society for all ages and links population ageing and the wellbeing of older persons to international frameworks for social and economic development and human rights, particularly the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. 38

In 2012, the United Nations Commission on Social Development (CSD) undertook the second review and appraisal of progress made in implementing MIPAA and renewed the call to

“ensure social integration of older persons and that the promotion and protection of their rights form an integral part of the development agenda at the national and global levels”.39

The “Europe 2020 Strategic Agenda” commits all Member States to the pursuit of “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” across Europe. It is assumed that if policymaking is successful, it will result in both a sustainable economy and an improved quality of life for all people of all ages. It would enable older people to remain active and contributing members of wider society and ensure the protection of those at greatest risk of poor health and social exclusion.

38 United Nations Principles for Older Persons were adopted by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 46/91) on 16 December 1991

39 Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing, Report of the Secretary General to the sixty-eight session of the Commission on Social Development, A/68/167.
"There is much the individual can do to remain active and healthy in later life. The right lifestyle, involvement in family and society and a supportive environment for older age all preserve wellbeing. Policies that reduce social inequalities and poverty are essential to complement individual efforts towards Active Ageing.\textsuperscript{40}

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines active ageing as continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs. The WHO and the International Federation on Ageing describes an age-friendly world as a place which:

- Enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities;
- Treats everyone with respect regardless of age;
- Makes it easy to stay connected to those around you and those you love;
- Help people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages; and
- Helps those who can no longer look after themselves to live with dignity and enjoyment.\textsuperscript{41}

3.3 NI Policy Context

The Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15 sets the strategic context for the Budget, Investment Strategy and Economic and highlights the key goals and actions the Executive will take to drive forward the priority areas. The most immediate challenges lie in supporting economic recovery and improving health and wellbeing and tackling disadvantage. Some of the most relevant of the 76 commitments provided in the PfG are listed as follows:

- Introduce and support a range of initiatives aimed at reducing fuel poverty across Northern Ireland including preventative interventions (DSD);
- Extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services (OFMdfM);
- Tackle crime against older and vulnerable people by more effective and appropriate sentences and other measures (DOJ);
- Bring forward a £13 million package to tackle rural poverty and isolation in the next three years (DARD); and
- Deliver a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion (OFMdfM in conjunction with other Government Departments through a suite of inter-related programmes).

At an NI level key elements of high level government policy are relevant to older people - focusing on tackling poverty, rurality, social fragmentation and exclusion and improving people’s health and wellbeing. For example:

*Lifetime Opportunities*’ goals for older people relate to reducing levels of isolation and loneliness and ensuring every older person has access to the full range of support services, social networks and cultural and sporting activities available in their area. The *Rural Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Framework* also seeks address poverty and social exclusion in rural areas through innovative, partnership led approaches with other government departments and stakeholders.

*Neighbourhood Renewal* and *Areas at Risk* tackle disadvantage and deprivation, increasing community cohesion, capacity and infrastructure and achieving a more sustainable approach to community participation and development. *Safer Ageing* focuses on ensuring the safety of older people in their homes, neighbourhoods and communities and helping to reduce crime and fear of crime. *Together: Building a United Community* focuses on community relations, safety and cohesion.

\textsuperscript{40} Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director General of WHO (1999). World Health Day.

\textsuperscript{41} http://www.ifa-fiv.org/ who-age-friendly-world/
A Healthier Future outlines the vision for health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland over the next twenty years (2005–2025) and places emphasis on promoting public health, engagement with people and communities and the development of responsive and integrated services which will aim to treat people in communities rather than in hospital. Making Life Better is the public health strategy for Northern Ireland 2013-2023. It is designed to provide direction for policies and actions to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland and to reduce inequalities in health. There are a number of government policies relevant to older people, including Improving Dementia Services in Northern Ireland – A Regional Strategy, Transforming Your Care, Fit and Well: Changing Lives, Who Cares? The Future of Adult Care and Support in Northern Ireland and the Service Framework for Older People. The aim being to identify how people are supported in the community and to improve the services provided.

3.4 Active Ageing Strategy 2014-2020

The Active Ageing Strategy, currently in draft format is set within the context of the Northern Ireland Programme for Government, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons and Equality and Human Rights legislation.\(^{42}\)

The Strategy places emphasis upon the need to plan for future demographic shifts in order that older people can lead:

"...a high quality life with access to services they need free from discrimination, to have the choice to be in control of their lives, regardless of their health, to have the flexibility to decide for themselves when they should retire and to have the opportunity to be involved in public or civic life if they choose."

Aligned to the United Nations Principles its strategic aims are:

- **Independence**: To promote active independent living by older people;
- **Participation**: To promote the active participation of older people in all aspects of life;
- **Care**: To promote equal access to high quality health and social care services;
- **Self-fulfilment**: To support older people to develop to the fullest of their potential and wellbeing through flexible practices in the workplace and appropriate training and re-skilling and by providing education, training, leisure and cultural opportunities; and
- **Dignity**: To promote and protect the human rights of people of all ages.

These strategic aims are being implemented through the Executive’s Delivering Social Change initiative to address social issues in a joined up way across government. The Strategy will be delivered through the specific government departments and agencies that have the resources and expertise to deliver the key programmes and services that improve the lives of older people. These include the following Departments: Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), Social Development (DSD), Justice (DOJ), Regional Development (DRD), Employment and Learning (DEL) and Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) supported by OFMDFM.

The Strategy was developed in conjunction with the Ageing Strategy Advisory Group which includes older people and members of groups representing the interests of older people including Age NI, Engage with Age and Age Sector Platform and chaired by the Commissioner.

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\(^{42}\) To include: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; the Human Rights Act 1998; the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006; the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.
for Older People. This group will provide a monitoring and review role of the delivery of the Strategy through meetings with Junior Ministers and civil servants on a twice yearly basis.

3.4.1 Independence – focusing on Age Friendly Environments, Poverty, Housing, Transport and Fear of Crime

The Department of the Environment, OFMDFM and the PHA, will work to help the new 11 councils secure commitment to the WHO Age Friendly Environments programme, ultimately working towards the longer term goal of making Northern Ireland an Age Friendly region. This will be progressed via the new community planning role for Councils. Public authorities will be tasked with:

- Recognising the wide range of capacities and resources among older people;
- Anticipating and responding flexibly to ageing related needs and preferences;
- Respecting older people’s decisions and lifestyle choices;
- Protecting those who are most vulnerable; and
- Promoting older people’s inclusion in, and contribution to, all areas of community life.

Subject to securing additional funding, the Programme for Government further commits to delivering a signature programme to address poverty amongst older people through free and confidential benefits checks and signposting.

The strategy also recognises the need to ensure that when new homes are built or renovations are made to existing homes, that they take account of how the home may need to be used by the occupants when they are older. There are plans to develop an Accessible Housing Register for social housing.

DRD’s Accessible Transport Strategy aims to reduce the barriers to transport (physical, attitudinal or psychological barriers, information provision, type of transport services and affordability) which remain for people with disabilities and older people. DRD will work with OFMdFM and other departments to increase service provision which is currently restricted.

The DOJ, in partnership with OFMdFM will take forward a signature project aimed at addressing the fear of crime amongst older people to include intergenerational approaches.

3.4.2 Participation – focusing on Social and Political Participation, Isolation and Integration

OFMdFM has committed to involving older people and their representative groups in the development and implementation of the Active Ageing Strategy and Action Plan. The Ageing Strategy Advisory Group will also continue to be involved in the monitoring of the Strategy, meeting with Ministers twice each year to oversee its implementation.

There is further emphasis upon providing information in accessible formats and increasing the number of older people who can use computers. To this end the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) will implement a digital inclusion programme with specific actions to promote digital skills and awareness for older people and people with disabilities. The Go ON NI programme will work with various organisations to recruit digital champions, provide tuition and detail the help that will be available to assist older people with disabilities access online government services.

3.4.3 Care – focusing on Healthier Lifestyles, Improving Access to Services, Improving Attitudes to Older People, Safeguarding

The approach set out in Transforming Your Care to support older people builds on current policies and strategies such as: care management; safeguarding; the dementia strategy; direct payments; medicines management and the carer’s strategy. It seeks to help people to take more responsibility for their own health and support them to make the best choices for
their individual needs. There are several Transforming Your Care programmes aimed at promoting older people’s independence. These include providing responsive care closer to home, providing tailored Domiciliary Care services for older people requiring support to live independently in their own homes, re-ablement services to provide short periods of intense help to rebuild confidence after ill health, supported living schemes the introduction of Integrated Care Partnerships to encourage a joined up approach to care and support.

The Service Framework for Older People sets out standards which can be used by patients, service users, carers and wider families to help them understand the standard of care they can expect to receive. DHSSPS has worked with the Royal College of Nursing and the NI Practice and Education Council to identify standards around which staff could improve the experience of all patients and clients receiving health and social care, including older people. Performance on these are monitored each year.

DHSSPS, in conjunction with the DOJ, is developing a new Adult Safeguarding Policy Framework focusing upon prevention rather than reactionary measures. Arising from recommendations under the Bamford Review, a new Mental Capacity Bill is being prepared jointly by DHSSPS and the DOJ. This builds on the existing common law presumption of that all adults are presumed to have capacity to make decisions for themselves unless it is established otherwise.

More generally, the DHSSPS will lead a major programme of cross-government action to improve the health and wellbeing of the population throughout the life course. A number of signature programmes are proposed by DHSSPS and OFMDFM to target older people. These are:

- The ‘My Home Life’ (MHL) programme is a UK wide social care movement aimed at giving older people in care homes more control over their lives;
- Healthy Homes for Older People will promote the health and wellbeing of older people and reduce accidents through a home visitation scheme which will also make small home improvements to make the home environment safer;
- Carers Short Break Programme which seeks to influence change in this model of respite provision. It is particularly designed to improve choice and control and improve the health and wellbeing of carers; and
- Rollout of the Single Assessment Tool for Northern Ireland (NISAT) into Physical and Sensory Disability programmes of care.

More specifically, the Northern Ireland Dementia Strategy sets out recommendations aimed at improving the services and support arrangements currently available for people with dementia, their families and their Carers. Proposals are currently being developed which will complement the recommendations in the report.

3.4.4 Self-fulfilment – focusing on Employment, Volunteering, Education, Leisure and Culture

The removal of the default retirement age of 65 years in 2011, supports older people to work longer if they choose. DEL will consider developing a signature programme aimed at increasing the employment prospects of economically inactive older workers. The programme would aim to retrain, reskill and motivate this age group, taking into account changes in pension age.

DSD published the Volunteering Strategy in 2012 which aims to encourage more people to become involved in civic action. Volunteering is considered to be an important channel for older people to remain active within their communities. It is acknowledged that more support is required to help older people take-up opportunities and that greater recognition of older people’s contribution to society is needed.

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43 Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 (S.R. No. 168)
Keeping active and learning new skills through initiatives such as *Lifelong Learning* help people to stay physically and emotionally active. As a result, Further Education colleges will appoint older people’s champions to improve outreach and communications with this age group. DEL will also work to promote educational opportunities to older workers. In order to encourage greater levels of participation, the Executive commits to working with Councils to increase the take-up of leisure activities. Alongside the Arts Council’s *Arts and Older People Strategy*, Sport NI has identified older people as a priority group within the *NI Sports Strategy 2009-2019*.

### 3.4.5 Dignity – focusing on Human Rights

The Executive commits to "*upholding the dignity of older people in all areas of life taking into account of their human rights.*" This is particularly relevant in delivering health and social care services, to include residential care and nursing homes. The Strategy emphasises the need for care providers to explain, listen to and involve the older person in decisions which affect them.

There are plans to introduce legislation to protect against age-related discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services, while allowing for differential treatment which is fair and justifiable.

An Action Plan has been developed to accompany the Active Ageing Strategy and this will be updated every three years.

### 3.5 Arts Policy and the Arts and Older People Programme

The PFG highlights that the potential of the arts and culture sector needs to be realised while the *Public Service Agreement 9* and *DCAL’s Corporate Goals* focus on enabling as many people as possible to improve the quality of life by experiencing and accessing cultural assets.

DCAL, through the Arts Council and its other arms-length bodies, has a core priority of *promoting equality and tackling poverty and social exclusion*. This is underlined in the DCAL Mission Statement:

"*To promote social and economic equality, and to tackle poverty and social exclusion:*

- Through systematically promoting a sustainable economic model;
- Proactively targeting meaningful resources at sectors of greatest inequality, within areas of greatest objective need;
- In the wider context of effectively developing tangible opportunities and measurable outcomes for securing excellence and equality across culture, arts and leisure; and
- Through a confident, creative, informed and healthy society in this part of Ireland*“.

This core priority is now foremost when framing policy and allocating resources and drives the Departmental agenda. The seven priorities are:

- Tackling poverty and social exclusion;
- Promoting equality of opportunity;
- Increasing north-south co-operation in order to develop innovative and efficient public services;
- Promoting positive health impacts of participation in culture, arts and leisure, in particular in relation to suicide prevention;

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44 [www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk](http://www.lifelonglearningprogramme.org.uk)
• Promoting the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) agenda and the Department’s Arm’s Length Bodies’ contribution to education and lifelong learning;
• Protecting the Irish language; and
• Enhancing and developing the Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture.

“Ambitions for the Arts: a Five Year Strategic Plan for the Arts in Northern Ireland, 2013-2018” highlights the arts’ flexibility in meeting community need and its ability to deliver important social outcomes by bringing people together, helping tackle economic, racial and ethnic divides, engaging with the most disenfranchised members of our community and helping to address anti-social behaviour and improve the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals.

There is recognition of and, a commitment to tackling barriers to engagement in the arts and encouraging development and diversification of audiences, in order to deliver DCAL’s expressed vision to target poverty and social exclusion. The Arts Council builds its approach on a commitment to the twin principles of access and participation. It is advocated that the potential benefits of the arts should not only be enjoyed by those who have the benefit of material resources, educational advantage or family tradition. Rather, the challenge is to open access to everybody.

Falling under the theme of Promoting Access the Arts and Older People’s Strategy was developed in recognition of the economic, physical, social and information barriers to older people’s arts engagement coupled with the evidenced benefits of participation. It focuses upon the arts ability to address issues such as Isolation and Loneliness, Social Inclusion, Poverty, Health Issues/Mental Health Issues, Strengthening the Voice of Older People and promoting Life-long learning opportunities. The Arts and Older People’s Strategy complements the Arts Council’s Intercultural Strategy, Youth Arts Strategy, Community Arts Strategy and the Arts and Health Policy.

The AOPP was set up to increase opportunities for older people to engage with the arts. It achieves this by providing funding to arts-based projects that address related social issues such as poverty, isolation and loneliness, as well as promoting positive mental health. It supports active, positive and productive ageing. The programme emphasises the need to promote wellbeing and life-long learning and to incorporate the needs and rights of older people. It recognises older people provide valuable resources and emphasises the importance of their ongoing participation in the local community.

AOPP objectives are directly aligned to a range of government strategies and priorities (see Figure 3.1 for illustration) and in particular to the themes of the Active Ageing Strategy which will be delivered on a cross-Departmental basis.
3.6 Funding Environment

The greatest challenges over the coming period relate to increasing financial pressures as a result of the global economic downturn. Although economic indicators suggest that the NI economy is recovering, it is at a slower pace than that of the rest of the UK.\(^45\) The Stormont House Agreement also committed the Executive to the payment of the £114 million cost of not implementing Welfare Reform.\(^46\)

Therefore the 2015/16 Budget agreed by the NI Executive outlines the challenging financial circumstances that it is working within, as available revenue falls by over £1 billion. The Budget is described as:

"...fac[ing] up to the harsh realities of our financial situation and puts the people’s priorities first."

The Budget amounts to an increase of over £150 million compared to the Draft Budget position. Spending on Health will increase by over £200 million, Education has increased by more than £60 million, whilst Policing gets an additional £20 million. The budget for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment will increase by 10.1% and the Department of Employment of Learning will receive an extra £33 million.

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\(^{45}\) Department of Finance, Budget 2015 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, (October 2014)

\(^{46}\) If the implementation of welfare reform is completed during 2015-16 part of the £114 million reduction will be reinstated to reflect the proportion of the year subsequent to welfare reform implementation.
However the DCAL resource has decreased by £8.2m on last year’s allocation (see Table 3.1) and within that, arts funding also decreased by £1.5m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>£m</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCAL</td>
<td>113.3</td>
<td>112.1</td>
<td>107.4</td>
<td>107.4</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>132.4</td>
<td>130.3</td>
<td>124.5</td>
<td>124.1</td>
<td>116.7</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1
DCAL Non-Capital Expenditure 2010-2016

The Arts Council, with its annual budget from Government cut by £1.38 million to £10.9 million (an 11.2% decrease), the Arts Council has been forced to make difficult funding decisions as a result of the challenging 2015/16 budget. The Arts Council had warned of the damage to the sector resulting from significant cuts to an already overstretched arts budget through its “13p for the arts campaign.” Although 11,500 signed the petition in response to the draft budget, the campaign failed to influence the final outcome for the arts.

As a result, the Arts Council has had to reduce funding to its Annually Funded Organisations and umbrella bodies, as well as a number of arts venues in order to protect front-line services. It will also make internal savings for the second year running and during 2015/16 £244,000 will be saved across staffing and overheads.

Although the PfG acknowledges the transformative power of the arts in terms of delivering against a range of policy areas, the implications of the difficult funding climate upon individuals, organisations and groups is far reaching, with the Belfast Festival at Queen’s and Culture NI recently announcing their closure.

3.7 Opportunities to Build On

There a number of structural developments within central and local government which could present opportunities for the arts (and the AOPP) to widen its impact and profile, primarily:

- The NI Executive is committed to reducing the number of government departments from 12 to nine before elections are held in 2016. The reorganisation would bring the arts function of DCAL together with DSD, elements of OFMdFM (to include Social Investment Fund team, Racial Equality, United Communities/Good Relations, Disability and Poverty, Gender and Sexual Orientation) and the Employment Service element of DEL into a new Department for Communities. DCAL, alongside the Arts Council, is currently working on developing an Arts and Culture Strategy. This will look at the potential of the arts and culture sector as a driver for the achievement of broader social and economic goals such as social inclusion and cohesion, urban regeneration, tourism, inward investment, employment, development of high added value creative industries, education and health. Existing DHSSPS functions, less public safety would combine with the Older People section from OFMdFM to form a new Department of Health. The AOPP aims to utilise the arts to positively impact upon a range of social issues affecting older people, to include isolation, exclusion and discrimination;

- Local Government Reform will ensure that Councils are citizen focused and more responsive to the needs, aspirations and concerns of local communities. From April 2015, each Council will have a new statutory duty of Community Planning and a new Power of Wellbeing. With regards to the latter, under Section 3(6) of the Local Government Act 2000 there will be a discretionary power available to local authorities to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area – to include encouragement of the voluntary sector, access to the arts or leisure opportunities,
access to education, promotion of good physical, social and mental health and developing and promoting policies which have a positive impact on health inequalities. In *Ambitions for the Arts*, the Arts Council recognises that local authority funding for the arts is challenging and sees the potential for greater engagement in the context of the new 11 council configuration. It commits to looking at new ways in which mutually beneficial relationships might be cemented. The AOPP encourages applications from local authorities in partnership with arts providers and local groups. The aim is to encourage partnership development, relationships and networks that will continue to deliver benefits for older people and connect them to local services and opportunities;

- The European Union has set a goal for Europe to be Age Friendly by 2020, and the Dublin Declaration on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe 2013 was signed by elected representatives from over 60 municipalities. In the UK an Age Friendly Cities Network consisting of twelve cities, including Belfast, has been established. Belfast is the first place in Northern Ireland to produce an Age Friendly Action Plan – ‘A City where Older People Live Life to the Full (2014-2017)’. The Public Health Agency (PHA) commits to supporting joint working at local level between councils, statutory bodies, community and voluntary sectors and others, to optimise opportunities to plan and shape services around the needs of local communities. It encourages the new Councils to commit to the Age Friendly approach. Stating that there is a need to consider how the concept can be extended to other communities, including those in more rural areas.\(^{47}\)

It is recognised that the only sustainable long term health strategy for an ageing population is one that works with people who are actively engaged in looking after its own health and wellbeing. There are a number of developments which recognise the potential of the arts to contribute to emotional health and wellbeing, to include:

- ArtsCare is the main delivery agent for Arts and Health within healthcare settings in Northern Ireland. Created in 1991 by the Department of Health and supported by the Arts Council, ArtsCare has engaged individual artists to work alongside service users, healthcare staff, family members and carers to develop a wide range of arts programmes including artists’ residencies and the Clown Doctor initiative. In addition, ArtsCare continues to provide evidence-based research, advocating for the benefits of Arts and Health practice at a national, regional and international level. ArtsCare’s mission is to enable people in health and social care to transform their lives through participation in creative activities and the organisation is involved in a programmes of research and health and social care staff and student training;

- The PHA and ArtsCare Here and Now Festival of arts for older people is now in its third year. During the 2015 Festival, creative workshops in visual art, dance, jewellery making, photography, sculpture and crafts will be delivered to around 3,000 older people in up to 75 host organisations. The workshops will be facilitated across all five Health and Social Care Trust from cities to towns to villages and in community centres, residential care homes and village halls;

- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in partnership with ArtsCare developed an *Arts in Health Strategy (2013-15): Unfolding Arts in Health* and defines “Arts in Health’ as arts-based activities that aim to improve individual and community wellbeing, enhance the healthcare environment and contribute to the quality of healthcare delivery across all services and facilities. The Vision is for “Better health and wellbeing through access to the arts for all who come into contact with Belfast Trust.” The strategic framework aims to raise awareness of the role that the arts can play in prevention, healing, health and wellbeing, to integrate the arts into mainstream health and social care and to make greater use of the arts to promote health and wellbeing and engage with communities. Significantly, the Trust pledges to source specific funding to deliver Arts in Health;

- Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) work with individuals and organisations to improve the design of care environments, to make communities dementia-friendly, to influence policy and to improve services for people with dementia. DSDC advocate for

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the role of the creative arts in engaging with and influencing the experience of dementia. Over the next few years DSDC will take a more focused role in stimulating ideas on creativity and dementia, to include documenting and sharing innovative practice, supporting ethical practice in the Arts, developing the role of creativity in Dementia-Friendly Communities and promoting creativity in education, training and professional practice;

- Kaleidoscope, after winning the Big Lottery’s People’s Millions aim to set up the UK’s first dedicated Arts Centre for older people in Newry. The centre would build upon the success of Kaleidoscope’s Acting Up project which began in 2012 and now has over 120 members – with an average age of 71. The Imagine Arts Centre will offer a year round programme of arts classes, events and activities exclusively for older people. It launched a unique programme of arts classes and events exclusively for older people. Participation in the classes is free of charge and open to anyone over the age of 60. The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust is working with the Baring Foundation to highlight the belief that arts can play a unique role in older people’s lives, including those with dementia; and the contribution that the arts make to improve society. Kaleidoscope were awarded a Fellowship under the ‘Arts and Older People’ partnership, in order to explore work in other areas.

3.8 Discussion

Whilst population ageing presents challenges to society, it also creates many opportunities. Population ageing will challenge society by potentially increasing demand for acute and primary health care, testing pension and social security systems and increasing need for long-term and social care. But older people also make important contributions as family members, volunteers and as active participants in the workforce. They are a significant social and economic resource and longer life expectancy means we all have a greater opportunity to contribute to society.

Planning for the increasing older population is relatively visible within the political agenda. However, there is a need to ensure that future policies, programmes and investment across government are age friendly and their complementary to wellbeing understood. In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the added value that participation in arts and cultural activities can bring to communities – having mental health and wellbeing benefits and providing opportunities to develop common bonds, interests and to exercise imagination, expression and creativity.

Although the Budget cuts impact upon a range of sectors, recent press coverage suggests that there is a feeling that the arts scene is under threat – despite affirmation of the benefits of arts participation within policy documents.4849 However, at regional and local levels support for the arts remains strong. The current AOPP places emphasis upon increasing sustainability through links with Councils, encouraging local partnership working and developing relationships within health and social care settings. Developing the skills, confidence and capacity of artists, groups and organisations working with older people to support older people in self-expression, participation and challenge is another central theme. The AOPP’s alignment with the PHA, Baring Foundation and ArtsCare – as well as high profile Age Sector NGOs, means that the Programme has direct links to an influential and supportive network.

48 http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/acni-absorbs-initial-cuts-spare-sector
49 http://www.u.tv/News/2015/03/23/Six-groups-lose-all-Arts-Council-funding-34067
4 Valuing Creativity

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of existing research on the potential benefits of participating in arts activities for older people, presented around the strategic themes of the AOPP.

4.2 The Role of Wellbeing in Active Ageing

Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities to enhance quality of life as people age. Active ageing allows people to realize their potential for social participation and physical, social, and mental wellbeing throughout the life course and to participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care. The aim is to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age. Maintaining autonomy and independence for the older people is a key goal.

The New Economics Foundation’s wellbeing measure\(^{50}\) distinguishes between personal and social wellbeing and identifies research based indicators related to wellbeing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Wellbeing</td>
<td>Supportive Relationships</td>
<td>Wellbeing at Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying Life</td>
<td>Trust &amp; Belonging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resilience &amp; Self Esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Functioning</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Physical and mental wellbeing are closely linked to active ageing research. The Audit Commission identified a number of factors that improve the wellbeing of older people and their sense of having control over their lives.\(^{51}\) These include:

- Living in a safe comfortable home;
- Being close to friends, shops and amenities in safe well-designed ‘age friendly’ towns and streets;
- Connections to social activities, networks and keeping busy;
- Getting out and about;
- Income, including the availability of benefits advice; and
- Information, from an independent source to help navigate the system and know about the services and opportunities that are available.

Other main building blocks or drivers of wellbeing and quality of life are influenced by peoples’ expectations in life, their sense of optimism and good health and physical

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\(^{50}\) New Economics Foundation (2011). *Measuring our progress: The power of well-being*

\(^{51}\) Audit Commission and Better Government for Older People (2004) *Older People: Independence and Wellbeing*
functioning. Volunteering, social networks and involvement with others were also deemed essential parts of maintaining wellbeing.\textsuperscript{52, 53}

Maintaining social networks, retaining a sense of independence and feeling secure in your own community are essential to wellbeing yet these may slip out of reach of many people as they grow older. Loneliness can have a significant and lasting effect on health. It is associated with higher blood pressure, depression, higher rates of mortality, higher incidence of dementia and greater use of health and social care services and early admission to residential or nursing care.\textsuperscript{54} The Campaign to End Loneliness, launched in 2010, has called for the early detection of those who have little contact with others to become a more prominent goal in social care. Service commissioners and policy-makers also need to have greater awareness that older men and women may require different approaches to tackle poor health and isolation. Men are less likely to be involved in clubs and groups for older people as they perceive them as being designed for women, as places where attendees were passive recipients of services and a “last resort.”\textsuperscript{55}

Based upon its extensive research as part of the Foresight Project, The New Economics Foundation identified five ways for individuals to safeguard wellbeing in everyday life:

- **Connect...** With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day;
- **Be active...** Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good;
- **Take notice...** Be curious... Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you;
- **Keep learning...** Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun; and
- **Give...** Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.\textsuperscript{56}

Research by the Department of Work and Pensions states that older people are influenced to become or remain active by the following:

- Getting help in taking the first step;
- The value they get from undertaking an activity (e.g. health benefits, self-worth); and
- Receiving social contact, for example, companionship, time with friends and family.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55} Arber S., Davidson K., Daly T. and Perren K. (2003) Older Men: Their Social Worlds and Healthy Lifestyles, Research Findings: 12 - From the Growing Older Programme, ESRC
\textsuperscript{56} NEF, (2008). Five Ways to Wellbeing: A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being
\textsuperscript{57} www.retirementreinvented.com
4.3 Active Ageing and the Arts

The Baring Foundation commissioned a research review to illustrate the impact of participatory arts on older people. The following impacts were identified:

- **Mental Wellbeing**: Participants benefited from increased confidence and self-esteem and there appeared to be particular added value in cases whereby they performed to an audience. Involvement in community arts may be particularly important in counterbalancing low mood, anxiety and social isolation. Many individuals exceeded their personal expectations about what they could achieve, which enhances their mental wellbeing;

- **Physical Wellbeing**: It was concluded that particular art forms may lend themselves to significant physical health improvements (e.g. cardiovascular, joint mobility and breathing control), including dance, singing and playing musical instruments. Even engaging in activities which are not obviously physically exerting, can lead to increased levels of general daily activity which should have a positive effect upon physical wellbeing;

- **Communities**: There is evidence that participatory arts programmes provide opportunities for meaningful social contact, friendship and support within the art groups themselves as well as improving relationships between established groups. Additionally, participatory art that involves both people with dementia and their carers proved to be an effective way of breaking down relationship barriers and in day and residential care settings can foster improved social cohesion; and

- **Society**: The research indicated that large-scale, high profile festivals have the potential to positively transform attitudes to older people, particularly when they include intergenerational events. It was concluded that participatory art can help challenge and break down the societal stigma of being older.

4.3.1 Improving Health and Wellbeing

Studies on the impact of the arts on older people have led the Mental Health Foundation to the conclusion, ‘It is evident that engaging with participatory art can improve the wellbeing of older people and mediate against the negative effects of becoming older’.

Research suggests that experiencing arts and culture can create a sense of wellbeing and transform the quality of life for individuals and communities. As such, interest in the Health Arts sector is steadily growing. An extensive literature review concluded that the use of the arts helps to improve the communication skills of mental health users, helping in their relationship with family and service providers. It also provides patients with new ways of expressing themselves, stimulates their creativity skills and enhances their self-esteem. The use of the arts in mental health services also brings about positive behavioural changes whereby patients become more calm, attentive and collaborative - diminishing the need for medication and physical restraint.

Different art forms were shown to have different effects. For example, literature, creative writing and poetry enabled patients to regain control over their own inner world, increasing mental wellbeing. Theatre, drama and visual arts all provide patients with powerful ways of expressing themselves and understanding their own world. Similarly, music, singing and dancing helped mental health patients to recall events from their lives. The arts assisted self-expression and, on a physical level increased their range of movement.
Several reviews\textsuperscript{61, 62} outline the following benefits of arts participation for people with dementia - improved alertness, happiness, positive emotional state and independence; improved quality of life and social interaction, collaboration, verbal and nonverbal communication; improved face and name recognition, long term memory and ability to recall life events; increased physical movement, motor skills and ability to complete visual tasks; increased participation in spontaneous activity and routine tasks and increased expressions of pleasure. Decreased fear, anxiety and agitation; reduced 'wandering', physical agitation and 'disruptive behaviour'. Enhanced bond between patients and caregivers. In addition, research suggests that benefits extended to care givers, in particular with regard new learning about patients which could be used in other settings and interactions. There is evidence that participation in stimulating arts activity could help delay the onset of dementia and slow its progression.\textsuperscript{63}

Grant et al., successfully used ethnographic based film evidence to capture and translate the impact of arts interventions on participants with dementia. They concluded that the analytical process offered insights into the positive changes in relationships, educational development and well-being. The documentary-style film text proved extremely successful in capturing and translating the experience of the project participants.\textsuperscript{64}

Positive clinical outcomes have been achieved by the introduction of classical and meditative types of music, being shown to reduce stress, anxiety and perception of pain. Live music appears to have more significant benefits than recorded music. Familiar tunes, which are pre-selected by the patient, are shown to be a very effective approach in mental healthcare - triggering familiar memories and enjoyment. Also the introduction of visual art into healthcare proved to play an important role in improving observational skills in health practitioners and in increasing patients' wellbeing.

One NI based study illustrates how joint arts programmes enable the development of respectful and creative relationships between participants, carers and artists. This shared experience has benefits for all involved. For example, arts activities awaken participants’ memory of, and ability to engage with, the different art-forms, carers saw those they care for “in a new light” with new insights into their interests and personalities.\textsuperscript{65}

Health benefits of the arts are not limited to health and social care services as positive impacts are apparent in a range of community settings. For example,\textsuperscript{66} taking part in social group interventions including art activities, group exercise and therapeutic writing increased older people's subjective health and significantly reduced mortality over a two year period compared to a control group who received traditional community care. The intervention group also used fewer health care services in the follow up period compared to the control group. The savings from this exceeded the cost of the intervention. The research additionally maps the group's progression as the participants became more comfortable with each other and their participation improved their sense of mastery and self-esteem. The authors attribute this to the practitioners’ use of facilitative processes such as peer-support and the use of facilitators as supporters rather than leaders. Nearly half of the original groups continued to meet on their own after the study finished.

\textsuperscript{62} Mental Health Foundation, (2011). An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People
\textsuperscript{63} Arts4Dementia, (2013). Awakening the Mind.
\textsuperscript{64} Grant, Elliott & Morison, (2012). Holding Eternity in an Hour. A Practical Exploration of the Arts in the Healthcare of Older People with Dementia
\textsuperscript{65} Elliott et al, (2010). 'CREATIVE AGEING' A Practical Exploration of the Arts in the Healthcare of Older People
Using a pre-/post- intervention comparison, the pilot AOPP evaluation reported small increases in the proportion of people who rated their physical health, mental health and enjoyment of life as *good or fairly good* at project exit. Similarly there were decreases in the proportion of people rating their physical health, mental health and enjoyment of life as *not good*. As a group, participants also demonstrated a slight increase of Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) score upon exit and just over half of individuals showed a positive difference in their scores.67

Another study,68 examined WEMWBS scores on three groups undertaking a theatre based intervention. Each of the groups demonstrated improvements in their scores and these were found to be significant on two tests. The authors concluded that shifts in people’s health and wellbeing occurred by participants engaging in personally significant, meaningful occupation, through making informed choices and having control, and feeling increased self-confidence, creativity, motivation and positive changes in routine. Positive impacts were also noted in relation to relationships with family members and theatre and performance provided opportunities for diverse marginalised members of a community to connect and participate in a shared activity and transform their views of themselves and others.

Skinner and Elliott, (2014)69 in an evaluation of a community wellbeing pilot programme in Strabane reported increased self-esteem, improved social interaction and cohesion and increased wellbeing as a result of improved access to and participation in a sustained arts programme. There were further benefits for the local authority, with greater links into the community, improved partnership working, increased citizen knowledge of the town and a stronger sense of pride in the area.

### 4.3.2 Reducing Loneliness

There is recognition that social isolation and loneliness is a significant factor affecting both mental and physical health amongst older people and especially the “oldest” old. Evidence is also available to show that loneliness and isolation can have detrimental effects on health and is linked with lower levels of self-rated physical and mental health.70 Activities which help to increase social contact among older people are likely to be beneficial for their sense of physical and mental wellbeing.

One evaluation of a singing community arts programme was found to have positive benefits for self-development, health and sense of community as well as revealing a statistically significant increase in self-reported health. The authors concluded that the programme’s success was due to a reduction in social isolation, increase in social contact, the therapeutic nature of the intervention and the potential to “achieve a new lease of life.”71

Another study evaluated the impact of an intervention which promoted active social contact, encouraged creativity and mentoring with socially isolated older people.72 The Geriatric Depression Scale, SF12 Health Quality of Life, and Medical Outcomes Social Support Scale were used at baseline, six months and 12 month stages. At six months, there were significant

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improvements in SF12 mental component, and depression scores, but not in perceived physical health or social support. At 12 months, there were significant improvements in depression and social support and a marginally significant improvement in SF12 physical component, but the SF12 mental component change was not maintained. Qualitative data indicated physical and emotional responses, including increased alertness, social activity, self-worth, optimism about life, and positive changes in health behaviour. The extent to which interventions were tailored to individual needs seemed to be a key indicator of positive outcomes, as was overcoming barriers relating to transport and venues. The development of a positive group identity, and building of confidence/self-efficacy were thought to be building blocks of success.

The pilot AOPP evaluation utilised a pre-/post-project evaluation using the Hughes et. al., three point loneliness scale. This indicated a decrease in the proportion of respondents stating that they lacked companionship, felt left out and/or felt isolated decreased over the project duration.73

Research by The Baring Foundation74 also illustrates how the arts can help combat loneliness and argues that this is often overlooked when commissioning services. Although going to see an arts exhibition or performance and creating a piece of art will offer opportunities for interaction, sustained contact through participatory arts is likely to have greater depth and be more likely to break down isolation and loneliness than sporadic arts attendance.

Based upon its significant experience in funding participatory arts projects, The Baring Foundation suggests that increased social interaction and the formation of new friendships may be the most important aspect for an older person in taking part in an arts project. The research suggests that artists therefore need to be sensitive to creating the right atmosphere for relationships to form and allow plenty of opportunities for socialising.

4.3.3 Enhancing Social Inclusion

There is a need to create physical and social environments that encourage the participation of older people. The arts can support the creative and personal development of excluded individuals and there is a growing policy and research interest in the social impact of the arts and on the contribution of the arts to social inclusion.

Increased self-confidence has frequently been evidenced as an outcome of arts participation and that participants develop creative as well as non-creative skills, such as communication or organisational skills. The attainment of these sorts of outcomes by individuals may lead to harder social inclusion outcomes such as progressing on to joining new groups, volunteering, employment or education.75

Social inclusion and connectedness are often seen as key determinants of community cohesion. An early study76 evidenced the social impact of arts participation via social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination and affirmation of local image and identity, inspiring imagination and vision. It determined that arts projects can contribute to social cohesion in several ways - at a basic level they could help bring people together, but they can also encourage partnership, co-operation and promote understanding of different cultures.

The use of digital arts to combat social exclusion of older people due to rapidly developing technologies has been of particular interest over recent years. Digital arts can include digital

74 David Cutler, (2012). Tackling Loneliness in Older Age – The Role of the Arts. The Baring Foundation
75 Dewson et al, 2001
76 Matarasso, F, Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts. Stroud: Comedia, 1997
photography and film-making, digital production, recording and manipulation of sound and computer-generated art. In addition, projects have made use of digital technology in a variety of stimulating ways in order to share and display older people’s artwork, to bring older people together in the creative process and to improve older people’s competency and connectivity. Enabling older people to confidently use modern technology such as social networking or Skype, can help to connect them more easily with relatives and friends and therefore can help address loneliness. Additionally, by challenging perceptions of the abilities of older people and by enabling their creativity through digital media, older people may be viewed differently by society.77

The literature identifies good practice in promoting social inclusion to include ensuring that projects connect with and address local needs, promotion of equitable partnerships and flexibility of working methods, allow sufficient time for planning and developing participatory methodologies and the creation of robust models for partnership working and promote quality, excellence and pride in achievement.78

4.3.4 Overcoming Poverty

Poverty may be construed as having an absence of choice due to one’s resources (physical, financial, emotional). By awakening creativity, the arts can create a unique space to help rediscover choice. Through the arts people can imagine new possibilities and gain the skills and strength to achieve them.

However, before individuals actually consider a specific arts event or activity, they must first be inclined to participate. Our decision making is largely determined by our perceptions of the arts and these can often be influenced by individual preference, exposure to the arts in the home and the cultural and artistic opportunities available in the local area. 2015 research by Warwick University found that children born into less affluent families with few qualifications are the least likely to work in and be successful in cultural and creative industries. These children are also less likely to take an interest in and appreciate the arts and have parents who value public-funded arts and heritage.79

Arts Council Research into the actual and perceived barriers to publicly funded arts in Northern Ireland (2005) identifies a number of issues that impede take-up and participation by older people in the arts. These include:

- Longstanding illness or disability which can affect the individual’s access to or enjoyment of art forms;
- Poverty and lack of disposable income which makes the cost of attending cultural events or venues prohibitive to some sections of the older person community;
- Access to transport, particularly in rural areas where there is limited transport available. In urban areas issues such as personal safety (i.e. travelling in the evening) can impede attendance; and
- Older people’s perceptions of the arts as being elitist.

These are substantiated by the annual General Population Survey findings. However, lack of interest (32%) is the primary barrier for those aged over 65 years, followed by poor health (24%). Other age groups are more likely to state lack of time as being a reason for non-engagement.

Therefore there is an impetus on arts venues and groups to promote the benefits of participation and to remove perceptual, as well as physical barriers for older people.

77 Baring Foundation (2012). Digital Arts and Older People: What is distinctive about working with older people using creative technology?
78 Jermyn, (2001).The Arts and Social Exclusion: a review prepared for the Arts Council of England
79 http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/coalition-two-tier-policies-cutting-poor-5181173
4.3.5 Strengthening the Voice of Older People

Creativity exists throughout the lifespan and it is not just for professional artists. Rather, the reduction in creativity with increasing age may be explained by lack of personal motivation and stimulating, accessible, affordable opportunities.

Art can generate personal exploration through self-expression and can help to outwardly communicate personality, feelings and opinions, as well as providing internal understanding and meaning. Creating an art piece can transform emotions into something tangible and hopes and fears can be transcribed for the first time. Furthermore, experiencing the finished product, produces a sense of productivity and worth. The benefits of the arts is that they are subjective, personal, enable risk taking and do not translate into a right or wrong way of doing things.

Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias gradually diminish a person’s ability to communicate, whereas art can give people with dementia a means of expressing their thoughts and emotions when they can no longer communicate well verbally. The exploration of artists and their artistic work gives an insight into the process of artistic creativity, helping scientists to understand the causes of numerous diseases and to find potential treatments. This is achieved through an analysis of artists’ work, how their work changes throughout time and on the use of shapes, forms or colours, which can be related to specific changes occurring in the brain. 80

For example, artist David Clegg embarked on the Trebus Project visiting care homes and hospitals to meet more people with dementia and collect their stories. 81 Working intensively and over long periods of time with the same people he built up a record of lives that may otherwise have been lost. What began as an art experiment has grown to become the largest archive of first person dementia narratives in the world. His work demonstrates that the arts can be used to communicate or capture the essence of the person and help us gain insights about the life that they have lived and are still living.

4.4 Older People and the Arts

The Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland series reports the characteristics and behaviours of adults attending and participating in arts and culture in Northern Ireland based on the findings of an omnibus survey of the resident adult population. The 2014 survey findings detail a number of positive indicators for the popularity of the arts:

- There is a steady year on year increase in arts engagement – with 79% of the adult population engaged with the arts either as a participant or attendee within the 12 months prior to the survey;
- The regularity with which arts engagement takes place is increasing – with 43% of adults engaged with the arts three or more times in the previous 12 months; and
- Access to the arts in rural areas is improving – with slightly more adults living in rural areas are engaging in the arts compared to those in urban areas.

However, further analysis 82 illustrates that attendance at arts events declines with age, with attendance lowest amongst those aged 65 years and over (48% of over 65s had not attended an arts event within the last 12 months). Based upon the survey findings, older respondents were more likely to attend events related to film (23%), drama (16%), museum (15%), classical music (12%) and art (11%) or craft (10%) exhibitions.

81 http://www.trebusprojects.org
Similar to attendance levels, participation levels also appear to decline with age, with those over 65 years least likely to participate in arts activity (80% of over 65s had not participated in arts activities within the last 12 months).

However, arts attendance and participation amongst 50-64 year olds has proportionately increased over the last few years. Analysis of NILT also indicates that the amount of free time spent on learning, or developing a new skill declines with age, as does participation in cultural groups.

As referenced by the 2014 General Population Survey, crafts are by far the most popular arts activities for the over 65s (see Figure 4.1). Other age groups demonstrate a wider range of interests (e.g. singing or playing a musical instrument is most popular for the 50-64 age group).

Figure 4.1
Participation in Arts Activities: Over 65s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other arts activity</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation or running of festival/carnival</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting, drawing, or sculpture</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography or film making</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative writing (poetry or stories)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing or playing a musical instrument</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama, theatre or dance of any kind</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2014 General Population Survey

Figure 4.2 illustrates that creativity, increasing self-confidence and concentration are the primary motivation for arts involvement amongst older people.
There is an increasing range of activity relating to the arts and older people within Northern Ireland. As noted previously the Arts Council provides support through several funding programmes. The *Regularly Funded Organisations* (RFO) database provides information on arts organisations which work with older people.

Analysis indicates a decrease in the proportion of the organisations funded which target older people. However, in terms of actual participants, older people accounted for 10.2% in 2013/14, a slight increase on the previous year’s figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regularly Funded Organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. targeting older people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% targeting older people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants 60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants 60+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.5 Discussion

There is an acknowledged need to address issues of social exclusion and both the physical and mental health of older members of society. In recent years there has been much interest in the potential contribution of the arts to the health of communities and individuals. There is some evidence that participative arts may be of benefit to older people. However studies to date are limited in number and have lacked scientific rigour.
Reduced social contact, being alone, isolation and feelings of loneliness are associated with reduced quality of life. However, the duration and quality of social contact matters most, with group activities appearing particularly useful in helping older people out of isolation. There is an additional need to provide flexible services with strong partnership arrangements and involve older people in the planning, development, delivery and assessment of interventions.

A growing body of research points to the part wellbeing plays in equipping a person to develop resilience, handling adversity and building a flourishing life, for instance by maintaining positive social networks. Attention to wellbeing requires a stronger focus on preparation for the major transitions in older age and a more age-aware investment so people can grow older, retaining as much of their quality of life as possible.

Potentially effective strategies to foster healthy and active ageing can be undermined by a range of stereotypes that are often applied to older people. For example, a person may be considered too old to learn new skills. Taking active steps to break down these negative beliefs will not only benefit older people, but will help to build more cohesive and equitable communities.

However, it would appear that older people may have their own stereotypes about “the arts” which may prevent them from engaging, despite the evidence based social and personal benefits. Analysis demonstrates that older people may have limited knowledge and/or experience of the wide variety of art forms potentially available to them. Therefore it is important that the AOPP serves to broaden older people’s engagement with the arts and further stimulate their interest, connecting them to local activities after the lifetime of their particular project.
5 Programme Applications and Awards

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the totality of applications to the AOPP over two funding rounds. The first application round opened on 16th October until 13th December 2013 (eight weeks). The second application phase commenced on 25th April and closed on 19th June 2014 (eight weeks). Information is taken from the GIFTS database and moderator assessment notes.

5.2 Application Summary

There has been a high level of interest in the AOPP, with 86 organisations applying for funding to date (55 eligible applications in Round One and 26 in Round Two).

Overall, funding of £3,739,272 was requested, with an average request of £23,082. Community and voluntary sector groups, accounted for 47% (n38) of lead applicants, arts/community arts based organisations accounted for 44% (n56) and Councils 9% (n7). Almost half of the proposed projects concentrated on using combined art forms (46%; n37) – with 11% primarily using drama (n9) and 9% using music (n7).

Applications were received from each of the six counties in Northern Ireland (see Figure 5.1). The majority of applicant organisations were based in County Antrim (47%; n38), followed by County Derry/Londonderry (20%; n16), County Down (11%; n9), County Tyrone (10%; n8), County Armagh (6%; n5) and County Fermanagh (6%; n5). Forty-three applicants were based in a Neighbourhood Renewal Area (53%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Figure 5.1] Applicant Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Applicant Location Chart]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, 62% of eligible applications (n50) were unsuccessful. These applicants were less likely to have delivered projects on the scale required nor to have strong partnerships in place. Others did not provide adequate evidence of the need for the project and how these needs relate to the strategic themes. Generally it was felt that smaller voluntary groups needed to work with a more experienced organisation in order to provide tendering, project management and financial management expertise. However some groups appeared reluctant to work in partnership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five organisations which were unsuccessful in Round One (i.e. Oh Yeah Music Centre, DU Dance, NI Hospice, Arts and Disability Forum and Verbal Arts Centre) were provided with feedback and were subsequently successful under Round Two.

5.3 Funded Applications

Table 5.1 provides information on the 31 awards made via the AOPP. Nineteen projects were awarded funding in Round One and 12 in Round Two. The majority of projects are 12 months in duration, with the exception of the South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association which will be conducted over a six month period.

5.3.1 Sector of Interest

Grantees represent a range of interests including the arts, older people, health, and general community/voluntary. Seventeen projects were led by arts organisations (55%), ten by community/voluntary based organisations (32%) and four were led by Councils (13%).

Thirteen grantees stated community arts as their primary practice (42%). The majority of projects will use combined art forms (48%; n15), whilst others will focus upon visual arts (6%; n2), drama (6%; n2), craft (6%; n2), dance (6%; n2), film (3%; n1) and music (3%; n1).

5.3.2 Funding Awarded

The amount of funding awarded ranged from £7,500 (to Andersonstown Community Theatre) to £23,491 (awarded to NI Hospice). Two organisations (6%) received funding amounts of 0-£9,999, 11 (35%) were awarded £10,000 - £14,999 and the remaining 18 (58%) organisations received over £15,000. Between them, applicants requested funding totalling £743,118. Sixty-three percent was awarded (£467,427).

Figure 5.2 indicates that a total of £249,218 was awarded to projects using combined art forms, followed by music (£36,000), dance (£35,200), craft (£28,252), visual arts (£24,783), drama (£17,500), film (£15,000) and literature (£15,000). £46,474 of the funding went towards unspecified art forms.

Figure 5.2
Award by Art Form
The average award was £15,078. Dance, drama, music and combined arts projects had higher awards on average.

Table 5.1
AOPP Project Awards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation/Group</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Primary Practice</th>
<th>Artform</th>
<th>Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEAM Creative Network</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>£12,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crescent Arts Centre</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£10,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andersonstown Community Theatre</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>£7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterside Theatre Company Ltd</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Venue/Festival</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>£10,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Telly Theatre Company</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Voluntary/Amateur Arts</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>£14,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Play Resource Centre</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£17,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Arts</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down Community Arts Ltd</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>£10,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Resource Warehouse</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>£15,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Shankill Partnership</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£12,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI Association For Mental Health</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Health/Disability Arts</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>£14,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£15,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALLY Foyle</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Concern Causeway</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>£16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strabane District Council</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£21,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age NI</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£15,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind Wise New Vision</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Health/Disability Arts</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>£13,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisburn City Council</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh District Council</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Telly Theatre Company</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Voluntary/Amateur Arts</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Arts Centre</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Belfast Community Arts Initiative</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streetwise Community Circus</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Community Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh Yeah Music Centre</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DU Dance</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Visions Ltd.</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Voluntary/Amateur Arts</td>
<td>Film</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Disability Forum</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Voluntary/Amateur Arts</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£15,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>£8,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Hospice</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£23,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigavon Borough Council</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>£15,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banbridge District Council</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>£19,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**                            |          |                    |              | **£467,427** |
5.3.3 Location of Project Activities

The majority of lead applicants were based in County Antrim (45%; n14), with 12 of these in Belfast (86%). Almost one quarter were based in Londonderry (23%; n7), although it is likely that project activities will be conducted throughout Northern Ireland.

Figure 5.3
Grantee Location

The Community Development Officer (CDO) mapped the distribution of known project activity. Figure 5.4 illustrates a potentially higher concentration around Belfast, the East and Londonderry.
Fifty-two percent of projects (n16) had a lead applicant based in a Neighbourhood Renewal Area. Ninety percent of applicants (n28) are based in an urban area. More detailed participant postcode analysis will be undertaken in the next chapter to help gauge project coverage.

### 5.3.4 Partnership Working

The AOPP projects reflect a range of collaborations and partnerships. For example, DU Dance’s intergenerational project building on the anniversary of the First World War linked with an intergenerational project in Dusseldorf Germany and Northern Visions will digitally broadcast productions across NI, the UK and America. Craigavon Borough Council’s partnership with Age on Stage is based on a collaborative area based Arts and Older People’s Partnership with representation from Action Mental Health, Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon Community Network, Craigavon Intercultural Project and the Alzheimer’s Society. New Belfast Community Arts Initiative (Community Arts Partnership) have established partnerships with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and aims to build the expertise of 20 community artists in working with people with dementia.

Overall partner organisations represent a variety of sectors, to include older people’s groups, palliative care providers, Housing Associations, statutory agencies such as Health and Social Care Trusts and Councils, carers, residential care, and experienced individual artists.

### 5.3.5 Social Justice Issues

The extent to which projects aim to address issues of isolation, social inclusion, poverty, health/dementia and strengthening the voice of older people was a core criteria considered at application evaluation. Twenty-nine of the successful organisations aim to address all five social justice issues through their activities (94%).
### Table 5.2
**Proportion of Social Justice Issues per Grant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Social Justice themes addressed</th>
<th>Number of Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>29 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following project activities illustrate relevance to the strategic themes:

- **Mindwise New Vision** will build on their AOPP Phase I programme, through the delivery of creative workshops across their seven Resource Centres and the homes of 18 isolated older people across NI. The project will culminate in an exhibition and programme that will challenge negative perceptions of older people while also celebrating the achievements of those who participated;

- **BEAM Creative** will recruit isolated older people with support from churches, pharmacies and partner agencies to take part in an eight week programmes of arts activities including digital photography, fine art and knitting/stitch design;

- **Ards Arts'”Memory Lane Arts”** aims to address the issue of dementia and memories of older people. The project includes drama, digital media and ceramics and will engage a variety of older people, from residents in care homes to independent older people across the Borough. The projects aims to explore what memories mean to us, how our experiences have made us who we are today and what memories say about a person;

- **Age NI** will train older people as peer facilitators. Who will carry out a period of engagement with older people across Northern Ireland Photography workshops will be held in Belfast equipping volunteers with the skills to go out and capture images. An exhibition will be launched on 3rd October 2015 which is International Older Peoples Day. This exhibition will then tour Northern Ireland; and

- **Big Telly’s Fantasy Hotel** will deliver creative training to Care staff in residential homes by professional theatre makers to create a participatory immersive piece of theatre, which will then tour to other residential homes, and offer training to care staff in participatory creative skill development.

At application stage, six projects were identified as targeting and/or including people with dementia (i.e. Arts and Disability Forum, New Belfast Community Arts Initiative, NI Hospice, Age Concern Causeway, Ards Art and Greater Shankill Property Development Centre). To date 11 projects are completed.

### 5.4 Discussion

The volume of applications reduced in Round Two. However, interest remains high. Discussions with the CDO indicate that some smaller voluntary groups are put-off by the application process and terminology used. Many of those making enquiries feel that the budget (£10,000 - £30,000) is high and they are unable to match-fund the required amount. Other groups are run informally and aren’t constituted, hence limiting the avenues for funding without partnerships.\(^3\)

Interest in leading AOPP projects outside Belfast and counties Londonderry and Down is lower, reflecting pilot programme trends. However, those living in rural areas will be beneficiaries of the programme, as evidenced in the application forms and project

\(^3\) AOPP is flexible in that newly constituted groups can apply for funding.
recruitment plans. Eighty percent (n4) of County Fermanagh based applications were rejected, 75% (n6) of those in County Tyrone were rejected. Down and Londonderry/Derry applicants were proportionately most likely to receive awards.

When we look at awards by the sector of the lead applicant, 42% of arts/community arts organisations and 86% of Councils were successful, compared to 26% of community/voluntary sector applicants. Literacy, music and drama based projects were proportionately less likely to receive an award.

Although there appears to be good coverage of each of the AOPP themes, discussion with the CDO highlights that men, the very old and isolated non-connected older people remain hard to reach, although this will be explored in more detail within the next chapter.
6 Beneficiary Feedback

6.1 Introduction

AOPP programme participants, where possible, are asked to complete questionnaires upon entering and exiting funded activities. The “entrance” surveys collect demographic information, level of arts participation, self-rated health and wellbeing, sense of community belonging and their expectations for the project. The “exit” questionnaires replicate the above and additionally collect feedback on participants’ experience of the activities undertaken.

It must be emphasised that completion of the entrance and exit forms are not compulsory for older people to complete and, given the range of target groups (i.e. people diagnosed with terminal illness, living with dementia and potentially living in long-term residential care) it is acknowledged that many projects will provide alternative methods to illustrate the impact of their work.

Therefore those respondents completing the evaluation questionnaires are not fully representative of the AOPP beneficiaries and by the process of self-selection may be more active older people, in better health.

6.2 Beneficiary Numbers

In order to eliminate double-counting, participant numbers have been obtained from the End of Project Reports (n4) which are submitted by grantees upon project completion.

Due to the small number of returns, the figures reported here are recognised to be a significant under-estimation of the actual activity occurring on the ground. This will be rectified at Final reporting stage.

It is estimated that 3,178 participants have benefitted from the 31 AOPP funded projects. An estimated 2,945 session hours will be delivered across the current awards.

6.3 Data Coverage

At the time of reporting a total of 483 entrance and 313 exit questionnaires had been received across nine projects. The breakdown can be found in Appendix One.

As noted above survey completion, although encouraged, was voluntary. For example, it was agreed that the questionnaires would not be suitable for all projects, such as those working with people with dementia or in cases where it would be difficult for beneficiaries to complete and/or provide informed consent.

It is difficult to estimate the overall response rate, as most projects have not yet submitted detail on participant numbers or evaluation material. Based upon the completed grantee reports it is estimated that 161 entrance questionnaires should have been received from the three projects providing participant numbers. In actuality, 85 entrance questionnaires have been received from these projects (53% response rate).

---

84 4 completed End Reports; 410 participants
85 3 projects completed this information; 286 hrs
86 20 April 2015
6.4 Respondent Profile

Figure 6.1 illustrates the respondent age profile.

![Recipient Age](image)

The remainder of the chapter focuses upon those respondents aged 50 years and over (n=467). Analysis illustrates that the majority of the respondents were female (n=356; 76%) and aged between 60-79 years (n=791; 60%), with an average age of 72 years. The oldest recorded participant was 98 years.

Most respondents stated that they lived in their own home (n=367; 78%), whereas 7% (n=31) lived in sheltered/warden accommodation and 8% lived in residential care (n=36).
Forty percent reported that they lived alone (n185; 40%), many in excess of 10 years (n55; 30%). Thirty-six percent of respondents stated that they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability (n168) – this is in comparison to 60% of the NI population aged 55+ and substantiates that the sample are older people in better health. Eight percent (n39) stated that they were a carer.

After geo-spatial mapping of valid postcodes (n389; 83% coverage) by the Arts Council, it was identified that 24% of those providing postcode information lived in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) (n92). Seventy-seven percent of these were located in Belfast NRAs (n71), 17% in the North West NRAs (n16) and 6% were located elsewhere (n30) – spanning Coleraine, Downpatrick, Enniskillen and Omagh. Indeed 146 respondents (28%) lived in the most deprived 20% Super Output Areas (SOAs) in NI (9% increase on the pilot programme figures). Twenty percent (n78) live within the top 10% most deprived SOAs.

Fifty-two percent of participants (n204) were located in Urban SOAs, whereas 48% (n185) of participants lived in Rural SOAs. Figure 6.2 provides a breakdown by County.

---

Figure 6.2
Respondent Living Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Arrangements</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own home</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

87 Source: DHSSPS, Health Survey Northern Ireland 2013/14
The spatial analysis indicates that **response levels are highest in County Tyrone** (n206; 53%), Antrim (n69; 18%) and Fermanagh (n49; 13%). Although, at early stages of data collection and submission, this is in contrast to lower levels of participation from County Tyrone and Fermanagh in the pilot phase. **However, it must be noted that the spatial analysis is based solely upon submitted participant entrance forms which have provided a valid postcode and doesn't fully reflect activity on the ground.**

### 6.5 Arts Engagement

The respondent sample has had comparatively higher engagement with the arts in comparison to the wider population surveys which the Arts Council **routinely conducts.** Sixty-eight percent of respondents (n318) had attended an arts event within the last 12 months and 57% had participated in arts activities (n267) over the same period. Forty-seven percent (n220) had both seen and participated in the arts over the last year. Arts Council figures indicate that 48% of over 65s haven't attended an arts event in the last year (30% of AOPP respondents aged 65+) and 80% of over 65s haven't participated in arts activities (37% of AOPP respondents aged 65+). **However, we do not know if involvement has been a one-off event or is more regular arts engagement.**

In terms of gender, 71% of females (n254) had attended an event and 59% (n209) had participated in activities. Sixty percent of males (n60) had attended an event and 55% (n55) had taken part in arts activities.

Figure 6.3 illustrates that **respondents aged 70+ years were less likely to have attended arts events than the younger age groups. Younger respondents were more likely to have attended one-off arts events in comparison to arts participation, whereas it was the reverse case for older respondents.**
Thirty-one percent (n=33) of those who had not attended an arts event within the last year and 22% (n=33) who had not participated in arts activities lived in a NRA. **Figure 6.4 indicates that respondents living within NRAs displayed relatively high levels of arts engagement, compared to people who don’t live in a NRA.** Arts event attendance (n=146; 53%) and participation (n=123; 54%) was higher amongst respondents living in urban, rather than rural areas (n=129; 47% attended an event and n=106; 46% arts participation).

Respondents were also asked to describe their own feelings about non-regular attendance/participation in arts activities (see Figure 6.5). **The analysis indicates that the primary reasons for non-participation were a lack of information about**
what’s on (n110; 24%), a feeling that it would be too costly (n85; 18%), lack of confidence (n89; 19%), poor health (n78; 17%) and a lack of knowledge about the arts (n79; 17%), rather than a lack of interest.

Figure 6.5
Respondents’ Reasons for Non-Participation in the Arts

For those living within NRAs lack of information about what’s on (n34; 37%) was the greatest barrier to arts engagement – the trends mirrored those of the wider sample.

These findings are consistent with those of the pilot phase and are in contrast with the General Population Survey results, which indicate lack of interest/time to be the primary barriers for older people. This may be due to the fact that respondents already had previous experience of the arts and therefore no interest does not apply to them.

Examination of the comments provides evidence that poor health and access to transport are primary barriers to participation for older people. Others include caring responsibilities, the lack of someone with whom to attend and few activities within their locality. One respondent mentioned elitist perceptions of the arts which can put people off getting involved.

“There is a general prejudice and a thought that art is just for a "certain type of people" usually arrogant sort, "feel superior“ sort.”

6.6 Health & Wellbeing

Figure 6.6 illustrates that the majority of the sample rated their physical health (n357; 76%), mental health (n397; 85%) and enjoyment of life (n412; 88%) as being good or fairly good. However, physical health was rated less positively in comparison to mental health and enjoyment of life. These results are similar to the general health self-rating good, very good, fair for adults aged 55+ in NI (85%).
Increased age was a factor in rating physical health as not good (23% of 80+ respondents compared to 16% of those aged 50-59 years). Twenty-two percent of males (n=22) stated that their physical health was not good compared to 12% of females (n=44).

These trends followed for perceived mental health, with a greater proportion of males reporting lower levels (n=12; 12%) than females (n=16; 4%). However, the 50-59 (n=8; 14%) and 80+ (n=6; 9%) age groups were most likely to report their mental health as not good. The 50-59 age group (n=4; 7%) was also more likely to rate enjoyment of life as not good compared to the other age groups. Males (n=12; 12%) were more likely than females (n=16; 4%) to rate their enjoyment of life as not good.

Twenty percent (n=18) of those living in a NRA reported poor physical health compared to 12% (n=37) of those living outside a NRA. These trends continue for perceived mental health and enjoyment of life (see Figure 6.7).
Table 6.1 indicates respondents’ appraisal of how they have been feeling over the last two weeks, upon entrance to the AOPP project activities. The following questions are taken from the 7 item Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) which is often used to measure population wellbeing. However, rather than scoring, proportionate responses are presented.

**Table 6.1**
**Wellbeing - Entrance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely None of the Time</th>
<th>Some of the Time</th>
<th>Often/All of the Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling useful</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling relaxed</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been dealing with problems well</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been thinking clearly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling close to other people</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been able to make up my own mind about things</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample: Those answering the question

The findings indicate that respondents were most likely to say that they have been able to make decisions (71%; n315), think clearly (66%; n289) and feel close to others (61%; n270) often or all of the time over the last couple of weeks. However, a relatively lower proportion of respondents reported feeling optimistic about the future (49%; n203) often or all of the time.

Figure 6.8 illustrates responses to Hughes et al. (2004) three point Loneliness Scale.
The findings illustrate that feelings of loneliness – at least *sometimes* is quite widespread amongst participants entering the AOPP projects and appear to be comparable with other surveys of this nature. Further analysis indicates that respondents are most likely to experience loneliness in terms of a lack of companionship (n225; 53%), in comparison to feeling left out (n215; 50%) or isolated (n190; 44.5%).

Analysis indicates that **living alone** was connected with reported lack of companionship (57%; n106), feeling left out (50%; n93) and/or isolated (46%; n86).

**Males** were more likely to report feeling left out (n59; 59%), to lack companionship or feel isolated (n53; 53%), than females (n134/43%; n168/47% and n134/38% respectively). The **50-59 age group** was most likely to report lack of companionship (67%; n57), feeling left out (58%; n33) and isolated (49%; n28).

Those rating their **physical health as not good** were more likely to report lack of companionship (n41; 62% compared to n174; 49%), feeling left out (n43; 64% compared to n158; 44%) and/or isolated (n41; 62% compared to n137; 38%). This trend continued for respondents rating their mental health and enjoyment of life as *not good*.

### 6.7 Belonging

**Respondents felt a greater sense of belonging to NI** (n268; 57%), **compared to the neighbourhoods in which they live** (n241; 52%). This is in contrast to the NILT findings which indicate that older people feel more connected to their neighbourhoods, than to wider NI society. However, although reported feelings of influence are lower than those of belonging, respondents were **more likely to feel that they had influence within their neighbourhoods** (n84; 18%) compared to wider NI society (n60; 13%). This is in line with NILT findings.

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88 Comparators: NI Household Panel Survey (2001) indicates 7.7% of those aged 65+ often feel left out; English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), (2009-10) 46% of those aged 80+ reported being lonely often or some of the time compared to 34% of all aged 52 and over.
Those over the age of 80 years had the lowest feelings of belonging to their neighbourhoods and to NI as a whole (see Figure 6.9)

**Figure 6.9**
**Feelings of Belonging**

![Belonging by Age](image)

When we look at feelings of influence by age, Figure 6.10 indicates that those aged 60+ are more likely to feel they have influence in wider society than within their own neighbourhoods. **Feelings of influence also decrease with age in the over 60s.**

**Figure 6.10**
**Feelings of Influence**

![Influence by Age](image)

Upon entering the AOPP project, 65% of respondents (n302) **wanted to increase their skills and try something different and improve their social life** (n303). Fifty-two percent (n244) wanted to feel better, 46% (n215) wanted to be creative and express themselves through the arts and 40% (n186) wanted to show others what older people could do.
“Gets one out of the house, an aim for the day.” [Andersonstown Community Theatre]

“Doing something different out of comfort zone.” [Strabane District Council]

“Isolated at home, providing opportunities to mix with others.” [Fermanagh District Council]

“Learn about other courses, events through people you meet.” [BEAM]

6.8 Pre- and Post-Project Comparisons

The entrance and exit evaluation datasets were reconciled on the basis of the submitted postcode and demographic information. This enabled comparisons to be made over time using the same sample of people (n=211) – see Table 6.3. However, it must be noted that any pre- and post-project differences cannot be directly attributed to participation in the AOPP and at this point in time are reflective of only a small proportion of projects.

Table 6.3
Pre-/Post- Responses by Grantee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Sample (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strabane District Council</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andersonstown Community Theatre</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEAM</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh District Council</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The matched pre-/post- sample profile is relatively similar to the larger respondent pool in terms of gender (79% female). However, there was a higher proportion within the age 60-79 age group (79% compared to 60%). Living arrangements were also proportionately aligned with the majority living in their own home (83%), 5% in sheltered accommodation and 6% in residential care. However, the matched sample was slightly less likely to live alone (35%; -5%) and less likely to have a long-term illness or disability (36%; -4%). Nine percent were carers, roughly the same as the wider sample.

Sixteen percent of respondents (n=189) lived in NRAs, compared to 24% of the wider sample and 45% (n=85) lived in an urban area (compared to 52% of the wider sample).

The matched sample displayed even higher levels of arts attendance within the last 12 months (73%; +5%) than the wider sample upon entry to the AOPP projects. However, participation in arts projects within the last 12 months was lower (50%; -8%).

Figure 6.11 illustrates respondents’ reasons for non-participation in the arts before and after participation in AOPP projects. Lack of information about available activities, lack of confidence, cost and lack of knowledge about the arts were cited as the primary barriers to becoming involved in arts activities (please note poor health as a reason is not as high within this sample). Upon project completion these barriers remain the most prominent, although diminished. Although reported obstacles have decreased overall, lack of confidence (-10%) and lack of knowledge (-11%) have seen the greatest reduction post-project.
Figure 6.11
Pre-/Post- Reasons for Non-Participation in Arts Activities

Pre-/post- comparison: non participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Pre%</th>
<th>Post%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing in common</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of information</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of arts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor health</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too costly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather spend time differently</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Agree

Figure 6.12 illustrates that there were small increases in the proportion of people who rated their physical health (53%; +3%), mental health (69.5%; +0.5%) as good at project end. However there was an 11% increase for self-rating of enjoyment of life (77%) as good at project exit.

Figure 6.12
Pre-/Post- Health Rating

Health Self-Rating: Good

Sample n187 matched health question respondents
Overall, there were no significant pre- and post- differences in respondents’ overall scores\(^89\) for physical (mean entrance score 1.63 and mean exit score 1.56) and mental health (mean entrance score 1.35; mean exit score 1.32). **However a significant difference was found in relation to enjoyment of life** (mean entrance score 1.37; mean exit score 1.24; \(t(186)=3.74, p=0.0002\)).

Additionally, **when we examine those who rated their physical health** (9%; -3%; \(t(22)=3.72, p=0.001\), **mental health** (1.5%; -2.5%; \(t(7)=3.81, p=0.007\)) and **enjoyment of life** (2%; -1%; \(t(5)=2.9, p=0.03\)) as **not good** the change is significant at \(p<0.05\).

Table 6.5 provides a comparison of responses on the WEMWBS statements upon entry and project completion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.5</th>
<th>Wellbeing: Pre-/Post (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement</strong></td>
<td><strong>(%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been feeling optimistic about the future</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been feeling useful</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been feeling relaxed</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been dealing with problems well</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been thinking clearly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been feeling close to other people</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've been able to make up my own mind about things</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample: % of those answering question

**With the exception of I've been dealing with problems well** (which remained the same), there have been small positive changes across all of the items and particularly with regards to the proportion of respondents stating that they have been feeling relaxed (+18%) **all of the time/often** (see Figure 6.13).

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\(^{89}\) Good=1; Fairly Good=2; Not Good=3
The WEMWBS can capture the full spectrum of positive mental health without floor or ceiling effects and is suitable both for monitoring trends over time and evaluating the effect of mental health promoting programmes or interventions. However, it is not designed to identify people who have a mental illness and does not have a ‘cut off’ level to divide the population into those who have ‘good’ and those who have ‘poor’ mental wellbeing. A smaller sub-set of participants (n173) was developed in order to undertake WEMWBS scoring. This subset fully answered each of the WEMWBS scale components and were matched pre- and post-project.

On a possible range from 7-35 points, participants scored a mean of 24.56 (SD 6.176, 92% CI) upon entry and 25.55 (SD 6.29, 94% CI) upon exit. A paired samples two-tailed t-test indicated a significant difference.

Forty-nine percent (n85) of respondents showed individual increases in wellbeing and 29% (n50) of respondents’ scores remained the same. However, in 22% (n81) of cases the scores decreased – males, those aged 50-59 years and those living in supported housing accommodation or residential care were proportionately more likely to have decreased WEMWBS scores upon project exit.

At the individual level a change of three or more points can be considered significant. Twenty-four percent (n42) of the sample added three or more points to their score, whilst 13% (n24) scores decreased by three or more points. Some participants displayed relatively high increases with 6% (n11) adding 8 or more points to

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90 Mean population score on SWEMWBS for England is 23.6 (see: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/researchers/interpretations/wemwbs_population_norms_in_health_survey_for_england_data_2011.pdf)
91 Mean difference 0.99, \( t(\text{df174}) = 2.99, p = 0.003 \)
92 http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/faq/
their entry score. Overall, the percentage with the highest wellbeing increased from 48% (n83) to 54% (n93).93

Figures 6.14 illustrates pre-/post- project ratings on the various elements of the Loneliness Scale. The analysis indicates that the proportion of respondents stating that they hardly ever lack companionship has seen small positive differences (56%; +2%), as has the proportion hardly ever feeling left out (61%; +4%) upon exit. However, the most marked change is in the proportion of respondents stating that they hardly ever feel isolated (72%; +9%).

Figure 6.14
Pre-/Post Loneliness scale

Overall, there were no significant pre- and post- differences in respondents’ overall scores94 (mean entrance score 4.43 and mean exit score 4.29). When we looked at the mean scores separately, lack of companionship (mean entrance score 1.54 and mean exit score 1.51) and feel left out (mean entrance score 1.47 and mean exit score 1.42) were non-significant at p<0.05. However a significant difference was found in relation to isolation (mean entrance score 1.42; mean exit score 1.32; t(190)=2.76, p=0.006).

Figure 6.15 indicates an increase in the proportion of respondents who reported that they felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood (73%; +13%) and an increase in the proportion who felt they could influence local decision making (31%; +10%).

93 Classified as a score of 28 and above.
94 Hardly Ever=1; Sometimes=2; Often=3; t(190)-1.48, p=0.14
Figure 6.16 indicates an increase in the proportion of respondents who reported that they felt a sense of belonging to NI (77%; +12%) and an increase in the proportion who felt they could influence NI decision making (18%; +4%).

6.9 Project Appraisal

Table 6.6 presents the feedback from respondents at project end. The appraisals are predominately positive and indicate that the majority of respondents (n251; 85%) feel a sense of achievement, have learned new skills (n256; 87%) and feel that they have played an active role in the sessions (n245; 83%). Eighty percent (n234) of respondents expressed a desire to take part in similar activities. However the findings
indicate that respondents were relatively less likely to have joined other groups as a result of the project (n167; 57%).

Table 6.6
Respondents’ Evaluation of the Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree/Strongly Agree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These sessions have really made me want to go to arts events</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I played an active part in this project</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have tried and learned new things</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sessions have made me want to take part in more arts activities</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been able to express myself at these sessions</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sessions were not well run</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve surprised myself &amp; others by what I can do</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These activities have given me confidence to try different things</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve made good friendships out of this project</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about what I have achieved during these sessions</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have taken part in other groups and activities due to this project</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample: n294

Thirty-seven percent of respondents (n108) provided written feedback upon exit.

Analysis of the comments indicate that many respondents felt that involvement had met their expectations expressed upon entrance – particularly in terms of improving their social networks, learning something new and having fun. There were numerous requests for similar activities to continue and the value that participants placed upon the activities really shone through.

"Amazing programme. Not enough of these! Great for confidence and self-worth.” [Andersonstown Community Theatre]

"Enjoyed meeting new people, we had fun.” [Strabane District Council]

There was also high praise for the artists, facilitators and organisers, with participants reporting that they were friendly, explained things well and were encouraging.

"I felt I was listened to by the tutor and he was very approachable with any problems.” [Fermanagh District Council]

"Fantastic leader very encouraging to all abilities. Great welcoming people, wonderful catering and great craic! Left with such a good can do attitude.” [Strabane District Council]

"Excellent project with obvious appeal to a lot of people in my age group. I will be more amenable to participation in other projects as a result.” [BEAM]

"Very well structured without being too formal, very friendly, helpful atmosphere. Lots of laughter but learned a lot too.” [Strabane District Council]

Any issues raised related to the desire for a sustained programme of activities, rather than short-term. One comment was made regarding the scheduling of one activity around lunchtime. Two of the respondents from the BEAM project which specifically
recruited via GP referrals conveyed the personal impact of the AOPP investment on their day to day lives.

"This programme was an incredible asset to our community. Words cannot describe the difference it has made to many of the people involved. Many new friendships made. Thank you!"

"This programme has helped me more than you could ever know. Thank you.”

During the evaluation fieldwork, conversations were struck with a variety of participants attending various activities and there is no doubt that the AOPP projects have made a transformative impact on some people's lives. For example, one Playhouse Theatre participant spoke of how her husband had died two years ago and she had moved back home to Londonderry to be near her daughter and grandson who has a disability. Not knowing anyone in the area, she had been encouraged to attend the project by family and subsequently performed a poem about her love and hopes for her grandson at the showcase. She has developed friendships and regularly attends the group as part of the process.

"I'd never written a poem before and never thought I’d be standing up in front of an audience. But it came from the heart, poured out. I printed it out for my daughter and gave it to her on mother’s day.”

Although people with dementia were not asked to complete the standard entrance and exit questionnaires, a small number of interviews took place with artists and grantees working in this area. The AOPP funded activities were believed to have improved the quality of life for participants with dementia. Music in particular, was thought to be a powerful vehicle to trigger memories and emotion. In cases whereby verbal communication is difficult or absent, there were observed changes in the level of engagement – either through active participation or in posture and eye contact in instances of progressed dementia.

"Music is an excellent tool for triggering memory and we have seen time and time again that people with diseases such as Dementia/Alzheimer’s/Parkinson’s may not remember fundamental things but they perk right up and are able to sing every word to our song.” [NI Hospice]

Grantees stressed the need for longer term commitment when working with people with dementia, as relationships will be slower to develop as a result of short-term memory loss. Although much of the work involved group sessions, in many cases artists described connections that they had made with specific individuals during the creative process. These, sometimes transitory flickers, were then developed through further sessions as artists sought to identify personal triggers, often through assistance from family members. One activities coordinator spoke about the impact of the AOPP project and introducing a guitar to a former musician.

"There’s amazing evidence that we made connections. [Participant] would be looking at Paul, playing with a smile on his face. He’d have the guitar and be strumming away. In the EMI there’d be one woman she’s always sat alone, an isolated character...this does make a difference. We can see it."[Oh Yeah Music]

6.10 Volunteer Input

Many of the AOPP projects and community and voluntary activity in general, rely on the time and dedication of volunteers. A short questionnaire was developed to capture the
range of volunteering and to gather their impressions of the project. At Interim stage 19 completed surveys were returned spanning five projects (i.e. DU Dance, BEAM, Andersonstown Community Theatre, Down Community Arts and Strabane District Council).

The majority (n16) of volunteers were female and aged under 54 years old (n7 were aged 17-34 years). Four volunteers were aged over 55 years. None of the volunteers lived in a NRA. However, nine lived within the 20% most deprived SOAs. Seventy-one percent (n17) were located in rural areas (59%; n10 in County Tyrone).

Five individuals began volunteering less than one year ago and five had been volunteering in excess of 10 years. Over the last month respondents had contributed over 650 hours. Roles in the respective AOPP funded project included, transport and hospitality provision, setting up the rooms, interacting with participants, helping to facilitate workshops, providing assistance to the crew during performances and filming.

“Provided an ear to those who wanted a chat...helped participants with their work.” [BEAM]

Only one respondent was involved in an arts group. However 13 had been involved in arts activity within the last 12 months outside the current project. The primary reasons for volunteering were to get experience in a particular area of work, to be helpful and enjoyment. Some volunteers had family members taking part and cited this as the means by which they became involved.

Respondents stated that they had benefited from their involvement in the AOPP project in terms of improving confidence, developing friendships and social networks, improved awareness of older people’s needs – particularly in relation to loneliness and the value of projects that bring older people together.

Volunteers noted that the incorporation of trips helped to maintain interest and motivate participants to be creative. The majority reported that projects needed to be of a sufficient duration to help people build relationships, confidence and skills. Practical activities were thought to have worked better with some groups. However, others benefitted from a more conversational focus. Dance and music sessions proved popular within residential care settings. However required additional planning and preparation for staff and artists.

6.11 Event Feedback

Overall, 439 AOPP event questionnaires have been submitted to date. These were from seven projects:

- **Andersonstown Community Theatre** (n133): Intergenerational performance of The Bus Run as part of the West Belfast Féile an Phobail (Festival of the People) Community Arts Festival programme;
- **Fermanagh District Council** (n144): Audiences at weekly cinema showings of old classics, tea dances and initial ceramic masterclasses;
- **Northern Visions** (n20): Completed by carers of people with dementia participating in digital arts, creative media and storytelling; and
- **BEAM** (n29): Exhibitions of art work to include photography, fine art and knitting;
- **AllyFoyle** (n10): Exhibition of work, spanning reminiscence, dancing, singing, pottery, quilting and woodwork;
- **Strabane District Council** (n62): Attendees at tea dances;

Please note some cross-over between audiences and participants has been identified.
• **Playhouse Theatre** (n1): Showcase performances hosted at the Playhouse Theatre during the Arts and Age Festival; and

• **DU Dance** (n40): Intergenerational performance of Fallen at the Titanic Tearooms marking the centenary of the start of WW1.96

The majority of those completing the event forms were female (n293; 73%) and aged over 55 years (n313; 78%). Only seven percent (n27) were aged under 35 years old. **This skewing towards older age groups is a direct impact of some grantees using these forms (i.e. intended for audiences at AOPP showcases, performances, exhibitions) for AOPP participants.**

Seventy-three percent (n293) of those completing feedback had attended an arts event within the last year (25%; n101 had not), 32% (n126) were members of an arts or cultural group (66%; n263 were not) and 44% (n174) had taken part in arts activities over the period (54% had not).

Overall 308 attendees (77%) provided valid postcode information. Figure 6.17 illustrates that the majority of attendees lived in County Tyrone (n166; 54%). Twenty-four percent (n74) in County Antrim and 12% (n36) in County Down.

Figure 6.17

**Event Attendee Area of Residence**

![Event Attendee Location](image)

Of those providing valid postcodes, 26% (n81) lived in a NRA, whereas 74% did not (n227). Seventy-four percent (n60) of those living in NRAs had attended an arts event within the last year, 37% (n22) belonged to a cultural group and 55% had taken part in arts activities over the last year (n33). Levels of engagement are similar to those AOPP event attendees who don’t live in NRAs (which the exception that arts participation levels are lower in this group). Thirty-three percent (n100) of attendees live in a rural area. Respondents stated that they had primarily attended the event because they:

- Know people who were taking part (n183; 37%);
- Like this type of event (n146; 30%);
- Like to support local events (n103; 21%); and
- There’s no cost involved (n19; 4%).

96 These questionnaires were in a different format and therefore qualitative comments are used.
Other reasons were that they were participating in the event, out of curiosity or because it was cross-community.

Eighty percent (n321) felt that the quality of the event was very good and 76% (n304) reported that they were very satisfied with the event.

Figure 6.18 highlights that the majority of attendees (n324; 81%) felt the event which they had attended had met the overall aim of the AOPP - to engage and stimulate older people through the arts – a lot.

Figure 6.18
Extent that the Event has Engaged & Stimulated Older People in the Arts

Over half of those attending stated that the event had increased their awareness of the issues facing older people (n235; 59%) a lot. However, 18% (n71) felt that they were already knowledgeable on these issues – likely due to the fact that over 55s made up the majority of the sample. A few attendees commented that the organisers could have explained the relevance of the event as related to the AOPP more at the outset.
Sixty-four percent of attendees (n255) stated that they felt **more positive towards older people as a result of attending.** However 34% (n134) stated that they were **already positive.**

Below are some comments made by the **DU Dance Fallen** audience – demonstrating the high quality of the performance and choreography in addition to the observations regarding its intergenerational nature.

"Show was excellent. Great to see so many didfferent age groups dancing together."

"Excellent, a powerful dance performance – evocative, thought provoking, theme sensitively treated – challenges war."

"Excellent, superb, outstanding, moving, compassionate."

"An amazing performance. Use of all ages was inspired – would certainly return to any future performance by this company."

"Brilliant, loved the mix of young and old."

### 6.12 Discussion

It is difficult to build firm conclusions at Interim Stage regarding programme demographics and potential gaps as much of the evaluation material hasn't been submitted and the questionnaires arent being used by all projects. However, preliminary analysis does suggest significantly more engagement with females. The difficulties in reaching older men was highlighted during the pilot programme and indeed has been reflected upon during the current fieldwork process.

Post-project analysis suggests that perceived barriers to arts engagement have decreased. However, lack of information about what's on remains a core barrier to participation. The sample already had higher arts attendance than similar age groups within the NI population upon entry, although males and the oldest age group reported the lowest levels.
Care obviously needs to be taken when analysing any changes as we cannot say that they are a direct result of participation in the AOPP projects. However, the pre-/post-matched group analysis shows slight but positive movement in terms of self-rated physical and mental health. However, pre-/post- positive changes in self-rated enjoyment of life were found to be significant. Similarly the positive changes in those rating their physical and mental health and enjoyment of life as not good were found to be significant. Differences in entrance and exit WEMWBS scores were also found to be significant.

Although the changes in the Loneliness Scale scores were non-significant, positive changes on the isolation indicator were. This, coupled with the health rating evidence may suggest that health and wellbeing is being maintained for those with the highest ratings. However, the most significant changes are taking place within those with comparatively poorer health and wellbeing.

The evidence also suggests that respondents feel more connected to community life as their sense of belonging and influence within their own neighbourhoods and NI society substantially increased over the project duration.

Overall, participants mostly take part in the arts activities to learn a new skill and gain companionship. Although participant comments illustrate a high level of satisfaction with the activities and the artists, it is suggested that more could be done to reduce loneliness and ensure that connections are made.

Analysis of the Audience evaluations indicate a high level of satisfaction from event attendees. However, there may be scope to ensure that marketing and promotion targets a wider age range as there is an over representation of over 55s in the sample.
7 Spring Chickens: Machinations

7.1 Introduction

Big Telly is the longest established professional theatre company in Northern Ireland. Big Telly’s work is driven by a determination to offer audiences entertainment that surprises, stimulates and ignites the imagination. Highly audience focused, Big Telly consistently pushes the boundaries of traditional theatre. It concentrates on the visual potential of theatre through fusion with other art forms such as dance, music, circus, magic and film.

‘Spring Chickens’ is Big Telly’s pioneering older people’s programme, supporting older people to participate and engage in the theatre arts. During the Machinations project, Spring Chickens worked with around 20 community groups across Northern Ireland over a six month period. Objects were used to help explore personal stories and to create moving sculptures, visual and sound displays. Primarily targeting older men living in rural areas, Spring Chickens toured for three weeks as well as connecting with Men’s Sheds and libraries to create 12 works of art, linking to Northern Ireland Science Festival and British Science Week. The art work was exhibited at the Public Records Office in Belfast and was promoted as part of the AOPP Festival of Age month celebrations.

Machinations demonstrates innovation and skill in building relationships with older men, a group particularly vulnerable to loneliness and isolation as highlighted in the research literature and AOPP pilot evaluation. Despite recruitment difficulties, the artistic team adapted to the interests and skills of the host community and the individuals that they came across. Using materials that are usually discarded, stories and personalities were expressed through moving metalwork sculptures – challenging people’s views of “art”. The work uncovers the need for a central coordinating point for service and activity information and targeted outreach to ensure that those not connected to groups have equality of opportunity with regards to participation.

7.2 Project Aims & Description

The company applied to the first round of the AOPP and received an award of £14,500 to undertake Machinations – a visual and verbal arts project aimed at capturing the identity and life experiences of older men living in rural areas. Proposed outcomes include:

- Reduced isolation amongst older men, to include those who aren’t participating in groups;
- Improve quality of life through group participation; and
- Skills development to allow the men to become more proactive in their local area.

The project consisted of partnerships between Spring Chickens and Men's Sheds in Armagh, Dungiven, Craigavon and Antrim, older men's groups in Garvagh (Thompson Fold), Strabane (LGBT), Newry (Men About Town) and Clough Tuesday Club. Partnerships were also forged in Ballymena, Dervock, Ballykelly, Limavady, Kilrea, Garvagh, Down, Portadown and Portstewart. In total around 77 older men participated in and contributed to Machinations, with an additional 120 people taking part in community information and art sessions.  

Activity incorporated the following:

- **Information Sessions**: These were community based events led by metalwork artist Paddy Bloomer and The Big Telly team made up of Creative Facilitator, Creative Shops Director and five Creative Arts Trainees and Big Telly project participants. Attendees were informed about the project and invited to contribute by building different types of moving sculptures, whilst providing creative input and design advice. Schools were approached and children encouraged to bring older members of their family along to open junk art sessions;

- **Rural Tour**: A three week tour of areas around the Sperrins took place, focusing on farmer’s livestock market days. Here the Big Telly converted horsebox theatre invited market goers to choose various pieces of scrap, show how they should be fitted together and help create a piece of art;

- **Sculptures**: Machinations moving sculptures all tell a different story about the people and places visited:
  - Strabane Scarecrows – paving the way;
  - Orchard City Zoetrope;
  - Dungiven Roe Waterfall;
  - Ballymena River Sounds (broken musical instruments);
  - Craigavon Flying Ducks (gardening scrap);
  - Antrim Wooden Scrap;
  - Garvagh Nodding Sheep;
  - Clough Written in Stone.

The project culminated in an exhibition linking to NI Science Week and the AOPP Arts & Age Festival.

### 7.3 Participant Feedback

Machinations participants based within Armagh Men’s Sheds spoke about the necessity of providing spaces for men to come together, work on projects, chat, learn and be themselves.

"It’s hard to take that first step of coming over the door. But once you do that’s it. Nobody has ever left and never come back. It’s easy going, a bit of craic, a life saver. It’s a youth club for ole boys."

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97 Sourced at Mid-point
Although unsure about getting involved in Machinations initially, the nature of the project – focusing on engineering and practical skills – appealed to the members’ practical nature and existing skillset.

As they got to know the artist and the creative team and the potential to create something entirely different from their usual shed activities, they began to come up with ideas about what their artwork could be. The idea of a Zoetrope (a model producing the illusion of motion through a sequence of drawings or photographs showing progressive phases of motion) based around dancing tools was born – symbolising the work that goes on in the shed, the men’s interests and the interlinked connections between the members.

“You see those hands? We traced around his hands so we had a template, then we had to cut them out of the wood. Sixteen hands cut out. Then we decided we’d do the fingers getting cut of progressively so we’d to figure out how that would work...measure it out, make sure it was right. Then we had the idea of the blood. We went a bit overboard with the red paint.”

The concept was extremely challenging and required woodworking, welding and detailed measurement and precision. Although some members had been involved in painting sessions delivered through the shed, none had been involved in this type of arts project before.

Throughout the conversations the construction of the artwork was explained and participants’ enthusiasm and pride in their achievement was clear.

“Every component has to be set a certain way to catch the light. It’s an awful lot of work, but as we went on I knew the end product would be good. It was mentally stimulating. I’d be going home and thinking “what’s the best way to get those pliers dancing?” I’d be constantly thinking about this and that. It was a great change from what we would usually do here.”

“That motor moving everything around, that’s from a washing machine! Oh we learnt lots of things from Paddy. We’d never done welding before, we got taught that. We did it all, but under his supervision.”

The nature of the project illustrated that art is much broader than traditional or common perception.
“Oh I loved it! At the beginning I was hiding at the back of the crowd. Hadn’t a clue what he was on about. Then as I got more interested and brave I began inching forward. You sort of think that art is about pictures but this was very different.”

“I joined here two years ago. I never dreamt I’d be doing things like this!”

The men were excited about attending the Machinations exhibition and seeing their own artwork exhibited, as well as meeting up with shedders from other areas who had developed their own sculptures. The prospect of going to the Public Records Office was also attractive as some members were interested in tracing their ancestry and hoped this would be informative. The project succeeded in encouraging the group to introduce arts into their programme and were keen to link into other Big Telly projects.

7.4 Partner Feedback

Based upon their previous experience in delivering the pilot phase AOPP Targeting Older Men (TOM) project, they decided to build an intervention that would appeal to men’s practical nature and skill-set. A structural, engineering theme was decided upon, to incorporate metalwork as this was believed to be a bit different to the traditional woodcarving art forms.

“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!”

Contacts were then forged with local businesses and industries, with the dual aim of getting them to donate scrap materials and to target men who were retiring from employment.

“We went to scrap yards, factories, livestock marts...broken instruments were donated through schools. We had no set formula, we just went in and tried things...a flexible formula. We had initially created a six week programme but it didn’t happen that way.”

Staff initially found it difficult to engage with older men due to limited numbers of men’s groups and little signposting information. Therefore, in many locations artists concentrated on developing creative outreach activities and in many cases this involved knocking on doors and chatting to people they met in the street.

Individuals were generally nervous about taking part, but the team gently persevered. Participants chose donated objects to talk about, or brought in items that they owned and were important to them. Gradually, personal stories, shared memories and local traditions and heritage emerged.

“We got to know people and the identity of the community and just worked around their interests.”

“If you get people to do [a creative task] first, before you introduce the bigger project it combats the “I can’t do that” response. People often have a fixed notion of what art is. For example, a drama in a theatre.”

It was thought that six months was too short a timeframe to truly make a difference to the lives of the more isolated men as the developmental pace was necessarily slow. It was noted that although working with the established men’s group had been less
challenging for the artists, the outreach activity was probably needed more in terms of filling service gaps. Although artists did use the groups as a starting point to identify non-attending men. The “tour” was believed to have been particularly successful in improving accessibility of the arts within rural locations.

“We were chatting to a man standing on his doorstep and he invited us into his house. We found out he was a barber, a keen cyclist but he doesn’t go to groups. He wouldn’t have left the house to participate.”

Lack of motivation was sometimes an issue within established residential settings, particularly with regards to those in poor health or oldest age groups and achieving sustained attendance was at times difficult.

“At the beginning there was lots of interest but then it dwindled. People wanted to design, but didn’t want to do. There were loads of design ideas but no one to build them. But essentially it was about their stories and therefore the art is representative of the person, regardless of whether they built it or not. Some people just added on their own bits to a design.”

It was suggested that more could be done to educate management and care staff about the value of the arts for older people, as often artists are left on their own to facilitate large groups. The physical space and working conditions also need to be suitable for older people in order to ensure that they have a positive experience.

“Sometimes it’s a big space and then people can’t hear you. Or if it’s a large group, some people could get left out and feel bored. Ideally you’d want a facilitator for every five people. But there’s benefits to having larger groups as sometimes people feel there’s safety in numbers.”

Big Telly highlighted that their Fantasy Hotel project (funded under the second round of AOPP) focuses upon training residential care staff to deliver arts activities.

7.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP’s strategic aims:

**Isolation and Loneliness:** Machinations has been particularly successful in connecting with hard to reach individuals, specifically older men living in rural areas. The artists were particularly resourceful and didn’t give up, or go for the easy option of working only with established groups when they found it difficult to recruit. Similarly, the use of metalwork to create engineering and agricultural based sculpture was well thought out and appealed to the target group – helping to gain people’s interest from the outset. The encouragement of personal storytelling stimulated by the presentation of meaningful objects also helped people to interact and share knowledge and experiences together. Artists identified the need for local/regional older people’s coordinators to connect individuals to local activities in order to address loneliness issues (e.g. as per community navigator model). Friendships were developed as a result of the project. For example two men who live near each other and regularly but separately attend the Ballymena Livestock market now meet up as a result of their introduction.

**Social Inclusion:** The project has highlighted the lack of social activities and groups directly targeted at older men. The Men’s Shed model is extremely successful in connecting men to local services such as health promotion and education, as well as encouraging entrepreneurial activities which help sustain the group. However, although growing very quickly throughout Northern Ireland, there are gaps in more rural areas where community capacity may be lower. One of the most important elements of
Machinations was that it helped to connect individuals to the wider community. For example, after identifying a need in Dungiven, Spring Chickens partnered with the local library in order to establish a new men’s group to enable friendships to continue after the project completed. The team have also recruited some participants to their ongoing Golden Gangs project and have approached the Young Farmers Association about the potential of a version for older men.

**Poverty:** Involvement in Machinations was free to participants and the use of donated scrap materials, capturing stories, poetry and singing songs clearly demonstrates that creating meaningful works or expressions of art doesn’t have to be expensive. The artists succeeded in introducing art to people who may not have previously engaged in “arts for arts sake” but their skills and open and friendly manner helped not only change opinions on artists, but also regarding what constitutes art.

**Health Issues/Dementia:** The approach adopted helped to develop confidence and showed their ability to contribute something worthwhile to the overall project - drawing on the fact that the participants had a greater knowledge of the local area, were familiar with the objects and were able to demonstrate their practical skills in creating the art work. The fact that most participants wanted the sessions to continue indicates the value and enjoyment placed on the activities.

The use of metal work did create some obstacles with regards to physical strength. However, less able members of the group then became design directors – telling others where the various elements of the artwork should be placed. Artists felt that the project had increased quality of life for the participants. However, this was sometimes only apparent when re-visiting the group after a period of absence and observing a decrease in confidence compared to previous occasions.

**Strengthening the Voice of Older People:** There were a variety of partnerships formed during the project, to include marginalised sections of the community such as the LGBT community, those living in supported housing and people with mental health issues. As well as developing confidence through the artwork, participants were given the opportunity to talk about themselves, their lives and community. These expressions of identity were captured on paper, film, audio and through the reminiscence and metal sculptures. Older people’s voices were disseminated via an active social media campaign and the formal exhibition. As many of these individuals did not belong to established groups, it is unlikely that they would have had such opportunities in their day to day lives.

Although restrictions in funding has provided the stimulus to encourage groups to work together in order to find mutually beneficial solutions and increase their sustainability, many individuals still don’t know about the various initiatives that they could get involved with locally.
Andersonstown Community Theatre: The Bus Run

8.1 Introduction

Andersonstown in West Belfast has a population of 8,952, with around 20% aged over 60 years. Sixteen percent of households are lone pensioner and the area experiences high levels of socio-economic deprivation, with economic inactivity rates at 40%. Andersonstown is a designated Neighbourhood Renewal Area, with 26% of the population in receipt of disability related benefits, 6% of those of working age are unemployed and 50% of the population are claiming at least one social security benefit. Ninety-eight percent of the population are from a Catholic community background.98

Andersonstown Community Theatre (ACT) was established in 2013 as a cross-community drama group which focuses on writing and performing plays and sketches, line dancing, storytelling, singing and poetry. Board members are experienced in these art forms and the emphasis is upon enabling older people to become involved in creative writing, drama rehearsal and training. The AOPP funded its first professional performance - The Bus Run, written by local artist Patricia Gormley and ACT founder. The Bus Run primarily aims to highlight and showcase the talents of older people in the community. The show consisted of music, comedy, drama and song and was included in the 2014 West Belfast Feile programme. The Bus Run follows a group of older people as they embark on a weekend away to Omeath and find themselves taking part in Omeath Has Talent whilst keeping an eye out for a rumoured visit by country legend Dolly Parton. There was a cast of approximately 50 performers many of whom never performed on stage before.

This project encapsulates the essence of the AOPP. It has a strong community arts ethos, illustrates local resourcefulness, partnership building and succeeds in showcasing older people’s zest for life and hidden talents - combating societal stereotypes of what older people can and can’t do.

8.2 Project Aims & Description

The proposal aimed to deliver a play which could run indefinitely based upon the story of going on a “bus run”, links were made with La Salle secondary school drama students, local supported housing providers and community groups. ACT wanted to achieve the following:

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• Reduced isolation and loneliness by providing older people with opportunities to get involved in creative group work and develop friendships with others with similar interests;
• Improved social inclusion by bringing people from different religious backgrounds together and providing opportunities for different age groups to mix;
• Better access to the arts to people living in areas of disadvantage and those living in residential care settings;
• Increased confidence and skills amongst older people, in order to perform to local audiences and showcase their talents.

ACT applied to the first round of the AOPP and received an award of £7,500 over a delivery period of 22 weeks. During this time 40 sessions were delivered, amounting to just over 100 hours in twice weekly slots. The programme consisted of:

• **Creative Writing/Script & Character Development:** The Bus Run was based upon a play written and performed by Patricia Gormley. However, the original script was adapted to fit the talents and humour of the participants. A “Bus Run” to Omeath was undertaken in order to help participants get to know each other, stimulate ideas for the play and help to provide authentic content;

• **Performance Arts Training:** Christina Nelson and Patricia Gormley provided the artistic expertise and trained an choreographed participants in dance, drama and singing techniques in order to enhance their skills;

• **Production Training:** Participants and volunteers were involved in all elements of the production to include lighting, front of house, filming, set design, costumes and make-up;

• **Tours:** Rehearsals and part performances were held at a variety of residential and supported housing settings. This helped to encourage wider participation from residents, provided an audience for participants and provided an insight into the production elements of a dramatic performance; and

• **Bus Run Performance:** Professional performance of the Bus Run at St Agnes Parish Hall as part of the 2014 West Belfast Feile.

A DVD of the process to include interviews and rehearsal footage was produced.

### 8.3 Participant Feedback

Approximately 40 older people participated in the project, although many more were reached via performances in residential settings (estimated at 320) and a further 200 people attended the showcase at St Agnes Hall in West Belfast as part of the Feile.

Discussions were undertaken with participants and the supervisor at Tearmann Fold, who had been encouraged to take part in the production herself. It was believed that regular access to social activities and entertainment were extremely important for older people, particularly those who are living alone, have mobility issues and/or are in residential care. Life can get monotonous and an opportunity to do something different is welcomed and needed. Although arts activities such as music and crafts were regularly organised, artist facilitation time was thought to be expensive and therefore difficult to sustain on a regular basis.

It was believed that ACT had publicised the project widely within the targeted facilities and as rehearsals were conducted in the common rooms they were easily accessed. Even people who didn't want to take part in the play could drop in to watch the rehearsals.
“There was such a build up to it. Everybody knew about it. Drama was something different and we all thought it was a really good play.”

“It was good that it was in [the Fold]. A lot of people wouldn’t have gone out to it, it’s difficult to travel.”

“A lot of people are very lonely. It’s important to keep active. It was absolutely fantastic. I looked forward to it even if it was just out to a wee rehearsal.”

Although participation and rehearsals required a substantial time commitment and dedication, participants felt that they had personally benefited from the experience. Involvement gave people an interest and something to look forward to. It also meant regular outings out of the Fold to St Agnes Parish Hall for joint rehearsals as well as learning vocal and dance routines. The fact that there were different age groups working together was believed to have added an extra dimension, with acknowledgements and conversations being struck up on the street as a result.

“I got real pleasure out of it, meeting new people and learning how to express myself. I also think my acting has improved.”

“I think it showed that older people can enjoy themselves just as much as older people. I think the boys from La Salle enjoyed being with us. We were all just dancing around, up for a laugh. Those young people were great, never missed a session.”

However, although rehearsals were enjoyable, most of the conversation focused upon the Feile performance and it was clear that participants still felt excited and proud about what they had done.

“It was hilarious. I was sitting beside X on “the bus”…What a geg! On the night, up on the stage, she pulled out a lunchbox full of sandwiches. Real sandwiches. She’d never done that before. She said we’d be there for a while so we may as well be comfortable. I was in stitches with her the whole way through.”

“I was really scared. I’d never done anything like it before. On the night I was standing on the side lines absolutely petrified, but it was a real feel good factor afterwards.”

“People saw us in a different light. We were the people you’d think would never get up on stage. But maybe wanted to act all our life and it really made our day;”

“It was a great experience for everybody and Christina pulled it all together. We had proper lighting, soundtracks…though at the dress rehearsal it all went wrong! When the curtain went down we raised the roof off!!”

Participants described the recognition they had got after the performance, with local people congratulating them on the street and saying how well they had done.

“There was such a buzz in the chapel the next day. There was just so many people in it. We had family members turning up, kids from the school, a bus from East Belfast…There was such a big community presence. The next time I went to bingo all the ones had been there…it was a real boost.”
Relationships had also been maintained with the Belmont Belles from East Belfast and it was hoped that they people would continue to work together. Participants felt that the play had helped to unite people, as on the night of the performance the audience had been open, welcoming and supportive of all those on stage regardless of what area of Belfast they were from.

8.4 Partner Feedback

The Chair of ACT stated that the group had been formed in response to an identified need for accessible and affordable drama events in the local area. It was recognised that local facilities were underused and could potential host rehearsals and performances. Therefore for the last year, small scale rehearsals and performances had been undertaken on a shoe string budget.

Although ACT welcomes all age groups, older people were actively encouraged to become involved due to the Chair’s links with supported housing and residential care providers. Indeed ACT used Fold Housing Association, Tearman Fold, Our Lady’s Nursing Home, and Clonard House premises were used for free of charge rehearsal space and audience showcases, as well as La Salle Secondary School.

The AOPP application was the group’s first and they were delighted to have been successful. The original Bus Run play was expanded to encapsulate the concept of a pensioners’ day out, complete with a bus mix up and older people stepping in to save the day of a talent show organiser by providing “acts” at the last minute.

Once developed the full script was broken into sections and after small group practice sessions, the full group came together to rehearse in St Agnes Parish Hall. It was described as a team effort with people helping out with costume design and adaptations. However, there were nerves and inexperience to overcome at the start.

"It was gradual. We did a bit of creative writing at the start...sat and talked, wrote stories, I'd ask them to do a monologue and gradually they got to the point where they’d feel comfortable."

Eight students from La Salle were recruited to the cast and they provided creative input alongside the rest of the cast. Despite the age gaps, strong relationships were formed and the young people remain keen to be involved in further ACT productions. The Belmont Belles travelled over from East Belfast for rehearsals as did a few participants from the Shankill, making it an intergenerational and cross-community production.

"It was a case of tell us what you’re good at and we made sure we gave everyone a chance to have their talents shown. One big fella said he’d love to do ballet so he was dressed up as "Sally" in a tutu and he made up a dance himself and did cartwheels round the stage. Two other boys were Ant and Dec and did a comedy routine in tuxedos, another could sing Country and Western so we had him dressed up as a cowboy who had just left a boyband."

Artists noted that the less experienced participants dramatically grew in confidence as the training progressed, particularly Fold residents that didn’t usually become involved in organised activities.

"We had creative writing days and did shows around the nursing homes, singing and dancing and getting people involved. That helps build confidence and improves people’s acting skills."
“To go to the nursing homes and day centres and get recognition from your peers was great. In a few places staff said that the reaction from residents was great as they didn’t usually give such a lively response.”

Performances in supported housing and care settings was not only a learning experience, as sessions were accompanied by post performance tea and chats. This gave people the opportunity to catch up with old friends, neighbours and acquaintances. For participants it reinforced that what they were doing had value as well as being enjoyable.

“A couple of them you’d have thought they’d been acting for years. They’d ad lib, deviate from the script. They really got the bug for acting.”

“They wanted to be the best they could be and they trusted me. They also didn’t want to let each other down.”

“By the end they were volunteering for everything! They definitely pushed themselves out of their comfort zones, taking risks and having a laugh.”

The actual showcase during the Feile was the highlight for the group and there was great excitement in the lead up to the performance and indeed for months afterwards. The attendance and support on the night was believed to have been overwhelming for the cast and gave them an immense confidence boost.

“People were standing up at the end, cheering, stayed behind to congratulate us. They couldn’t believe who was on stage. Pointing out “There’s Mrs So and So...look at her up on stage!” We only had 100 tickets printed, so many people turned up we had to put the kids at the front to free up the seats.”

ACT have been spurred on by their experience and have expanded their membership as a result of the interest in The Bus Run. There are plans to perform The Bus Run at other venues to include The Spectrum Centre, Patricia Gormley is running her own play I’ll Tell Me Ma in the MAC and another cast member has written a play that they hope to work on and there are plans to work with La Salle students again.

“ACT is needed in this area. There’s nothing like it. We wanted something we could sustain and this will keep running. So many people want to do stuff. We’re determined to apply for more funding to keep going.”

8.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP’s strategic aims:

Isolation and Loneliness: ACT proactively targeted participation at older people living in supported accommodation. Using supported housing facilities as rehearsal venues meant that tenants had the opportunity to attend with little effort. At each stage new members were encouraged and as a result ACT has grown in numbers – the more people who saw the performances, the more wanted to be involved. This highlights the potential for the group to become more established within this arena. The group has since approached St Agnes Parish Hall to organise a regular weekly rehearsal slot for the theatre. Some members are meeting up outside the group and are going to the theatre together. As a result of shared interests they feed back what they’ve seen and give ideas for further productions.

Social Inclusion: Despite rehearsals and performances being primarily based in West Belfast, the Bus Run had a cross-community element and some sessions were facilitated in East Belfast and the Shankill area. Relationships between members from West and East
Belfast have been maintained and transport was organised to ensure that family members from other areas could attend the Feile performance. The Bus Run cast shows that you are never too young or old to stand on stage, with ages ranging from 9 to 88 years. The artist reflected that the different age groups really gelled, bouncing ideas off one another and providing compliments on performances. The high retention rate demonstrates the commitment of participants and the sense of achievement that they received from the sessions, culminating in such a fantastic reaction from the wider community, many of whom would not be regular arts attenders.

**Poverty:** This AOPP project was located in a community which is a recognised area of socio-economic disadvantage. Participants were encouraged to access quality performance arts and production training free of charge. The need for affordable arts activities was highlighted during discussions and there was a perception that many venues pricing structures are outside local residents’ reach. ACT also made arrangements to deliver short performances to residents of local care providers, at no cost to the beneficiaries. Although a small charge of £5 was made during the Feile performance, children and older people were admitted free of charge to maximise equality of access. ACT members acknowledge the difference that AOPP funding has made – enabling them to invest in delivering a professional production for the first time.

**Health Issues/Dementia:** The majority of the cast had never been on stage before and have undoubtedly grown in confidence as a result of the experience. In addition, participants took part in dance routines, memorised scripts and vocal performances, requiring physical and cognitive tasks. Having such an experienced artist meant that rehearsals were adapted to the needs of older people. For example, additional support and direction, inclusion of rhyme to assist learning of lines, gesture with choreography to provide stage presence. The rehearsals, workshops and performances in the residential homes, not only were enjoyable for participants but also sparked the interest of residents and tenants who acted as audience members and provided support and feedback.

**Strengthening the Voice of Older People:** Although The Bus Run delivers against each of the AOPP strategic aims, it is considered particularly successful in illustrating older people’s positive and ongoing contribution to the community in which they live. The project represents value for money, with the showcase alone reaching an audience of around 200 people. The project additionally benefited from excellent publicity as a result of support from the Feile publicity team, radio, newspaper and social media coverage. The Bus Run certainly raised the profile of not only the ACT, but older people and the arts within the Andersonstown community. Members are motivated to continue to develop their skills and improve accessibility, with ideas for a pantomime, family performances and tours across Belfast.
9 Greater Shankill: Social Sofa

9.1 Introduction

"This has really raised the profile of older people in this community. Blown perceptions out of the water. People with dementia have created stunning artworks."

The Greater Shankill area has a population of 18,089. Nineteen percent of the population are 65+ years and 20% of the total Shankill population are claiming state pension. Sixteen percent of households are lone pensioner households.

Fifty-two percent of the working age population have no qualifications at 42% of the population are economically inactive. Greater Shankill is the largest of the designated Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Thirty-four percent of the population have a limiting long-term illness or disability and 12% deliver unpaid care to friends or relatives. Fourteen percent report their health as not good. Eighty-one percent of the population are from a Protestant community background.

The Spectrum Centre, an arts and culture venue located off the Shankill Road, is a subsidiary company of the Greater Shankill Partnership Board. The Spectrum Centre opened in 2001 with a catchment area covering the entire greater Shankill district and wider Belfast. The centre sits on a site formerly occupied by the Stadium Cinema and is independent of Government or Central Government. It spans 3,700 square meters to include a main auditorium capable of hosting events ranging from concerts, film shows, exhibitions, seminars and conferences. The Spectrum Centre aims to provide a focus for the development of the arts in the Greater Shankill area through education, participation and appreciation.

This case study demonstrates how an arts project can become a community endeavour, breaking down barriers and stereotypes. It demonstrates the importance of building local links and partnerships and how people with dementia can learn new skills, make decisions, be imaginative, creative and continue to participate in community life. The project is a positive example of delivering person-centred health and social care, as each person’s memories, stories, skills and input was valued throughout.

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99 www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk
9.2 Project Aims & Description

The Social Sofa project is part of an ambitious one year long ICE Age programme. This incorporates training for care workers in arts, crafts and reminiscence, an open access community workshop programme (e.g. social sewing, digital arts), performances (e.g. drama, film, tea dances) and two partnership projects with local residential care homes (e.g. Social Sofa, arts) and an ICE Age Festival to include older people from West Belfast 50+ group and North Belfast Senior Citizen’s Forum. Identified project outcomes include:

- Increased opportunities for older people to participate in arts and cultural activity;
- Encourage and enable older people to be involved in decision-making;
- To bring imaginative, innovative and creative art forms and experiences to older people;
- Build capacity through training and volunteering;
- Enable greater communication between people with dementia and other members of the community; and
- Build links and partnerships within the local area.

The Spectrum Centre applied to the first round of the AOPP and although they initially requested £24,956 they received an award of £12,532. The Arts Council felt that the initial request was high for a pilot programme and agreed to support a smaller scale programme of activities, to focus on the Social Sofa aspect.

The Social Sofa concept originated in Tilburg in the Netherlands and is designed to create meeting places where people can relax and meet friends. These are durable, concrete benches which are then colorfully decorated. Since the project's inception a few years ago, over 1,000 sofas have been dispatched. This project has introduced the first Social Sofa to Northern Ireland and was led, created and produced by 35 tenants of Hemsworth Court. Hemsworth Court, located off the Shankill Road is a supported housing scheme for people living with dementia. The facility was developed by BHSCT and Helm Housing Association and contains 35 modern high-quality flats with 24 hour support services to enable tenants to live independently.

The Social Sofa is a 1750kgs concrete sofa on which tenants have been reproducing an elaborate design – using thousands of coloured mosaic tiles. The design came as a result of collaboration with a range of groups including schoolchildren from Glenwood Primary School and features iconic images of the Shankill Road – Nelson Memorial Presbyterian Church, the Shankill Library – as well as street scenes, boxing gloves, a depiction of the Titanic, and a message of love and hope. The partners were supported by artist Maria Duddy, who trained in social sofa design and techniques in the Netherlands.

- Reminiscence Sessions: A series of storytelling, reminiscence, film, music and arts sessions were delivered as part of the project. These helped tenants get to know each other on a deeper level as well as sparking and refining ideas for the sofa design;
- Design Development: The design came as a result of collaboration with a range of groups to include schoolchildren from the local Glenwood Primary School. Joint storytelling sessions were held between tenants and the schoolchildren and both would produce artistic images of aspects that they would like depicted on the sofa. A selection process took place in order to finalise the design. The finished artwork features iconic images of the Shankill Road – Nelson Memorial Presbyterian Church, the Shankill Library – as well as street scenes, boxing gloves, a depiction of the Titanic, and a message of love and hope. The design was sent to the Netherlands who replicated it onto the concrete sofa;
- Mosaic Training: The sofa template was shipped over to Hemworth Court and tenants received mosaic training by their dedicated artist. This incorporated cutting
the tiles, mixing the glues and placing onto the surface ensuring that it is flat. Each participant made a practice piece which replicated an element of the design. This was their personal artwork to keep;

- **Decorating the Sofa:** Each area on the sofa had a corresponding number which linked back to the template. Tenants were responsible for selecting the tile colours for each aspect. These selections were recorded onto the template in order to ensure uniformity. Although the tenants responsibility, relatives and other groups from the local area visited in order to help with sections of the production.

Tenants celebrated the launch of Northern Ireland’s very first Social Sofa. BHSCT Chairman launched the event in March 2015 with the Lord Mayor and tenants officially unveiling the Social Sofa, marking the completion of a 10 month project. An exhibition of the Social Sofa journey was held in the Hemsworth Court bistro.

### 9.3 Participant Feedback

A conversation took place with Grace,\(^{100}\) who had participated in the Social Sofa project. Grace was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease when she was 47 years old.

"I knew something was wrong for ages, particularly at work. I worked in IT and was used doing assessments, training, writing reports...it got I couldn’t do my job. Letters were jumping out at me, didn’t make sense. I was disorientated, not knowing my way back to my desk. I felt under immense pressure. I was scared and couldn’t understand what was happening to me. I lost all my confidence and stopped speaking for almost a year."

After persistence, Grace and her family finally found out that she had a condition with affected specific parts of her brain coupled with Alzheimer’s disease. Although the diagnosis was a relief everyone was worried about what the future would bring and were relieved when Grace and her husband moved into the newly opened Hemsworth Court. This facility had enabled Grace to live independently in an attractive, non-clinical but supportive living environment.

"There’s a lot of stigma around dementia, around mental health in general. I had become anti-social...but this was such a fantastic project. There was so much choice, so much going on. I found out that I was actually good at art, I'd forgotten. I've learned to knit again, do crochet and make jewellery."

As well as developing new skills as a result of the project, Grace felt that the activity and conversations that had been facilitated in Hemsworth had been extremely important in helping people get to know each other. Tenants contributed in whatever way they could, sorting or cutting tiles or cleaning and washing up afterwards.

\(^{100}\) Name changed.
“Such a buzz for everyone. The kids coming in here was just amazing. We all developed ideas and designs. Mine was a mask. During the sessions I was reminded about a holiday to Venice with my husband and I did the mask in that style, with sycamore leaves round it as that was from [another tenant’s] idea. It’s my mask of Alzheimer’s. When I have a bad day. I have my mask on.”

Now that the project is completed, Grace identified a sense of loss amongst tenants. Although there are other activities going on, there’s a feeling that nothing can reach the scale of the sofa. However, the benefits of keeping people’s minds active was acknowledged there needed to be a sense of fun attached.

“It’s great having small projects, but they only last a few weeks...big and longer is better. People put their heart and soul into it. We’ve been talking about a yarn bombing project. No one says “I can’t” anymore. Now it’s “I can””

“I do miss it all. Everybody loved it, all the groups that came in. It was great craic, lots of interaction. It was so important to everyone. When we launched it we were all so proud...got our photo taken.”

9.4 Partner Feedback

The Spectrum Centre representative reported that, whilst they did not receive full funding for their ICE Age programme from the AOPP, they were not discouraged. Their belief and perseverance resulted in a grant from the Belfast Strategic Partnership and this meant that the original content was delivered in full. Relationships between Hemsworth Court Activity Coordinator and The Spectrum Centre are considered to be strong as both have the same objectives – to ensure that their respective facilities are an integral part of the local community and to deliver quality and accessible services. The cohesion aspect of the project was deemed to be important for both organisations as both identified the potential for disconnect and stereotyping. This may be through people’s lack of knowledge or perceptions about the arts and/or dementia.

The importance of partnership working was clear from the start and The Spectrum Centre undertook a high level of consultation and research to develop a programme that local people would enjoy and want to become involved in. Apart from Spectrum Centre, Hemsworth Court and Glenwood Primary School, contributors included Clifton House, Greater Shankill Senior Citizens Forum, Chestnut Grove, Ballyowen Day Centre, The Skyway Club, Volunteer Now and volunteers. This variety had the benefit of raising the projects profile, building networks of like-minded groups and helping connect a range of beneficiaries.

“We involved school kids, seniors groups...coming into Hemsworth, seeing the space, talking about the project, talking about dementia and sharing memories.”
The scale of the task was considered to be huge and the partners acknowledged that the artist went far beyond her initially contracted hours. The early reminiscence sessions conducted to help generate ideas for design, took on a life of their own and was extended due to the enjoyment that it generated. One to one interviews were facilitated with tenants to help the artist get to know them individually and to find out about their interests. Then activities were developed and research was undertaken into different social sofas and tenants discussed what they liked and didn't like about them. The artist had extensive experience in specialist arts delivery.

"It was a joy to go to work and to let people dictate the outcome. To really enjoy the process, that’s the most important part and to get it launched. Real satisfaction from start to finish."

"We developed a routine with everyone pitching in. The work had to be of a high standard, but it had to be all their own work. All the tiles had to be flat so it wouldn't gather water, to last for years. They got training but it had to be motivating, keep their attention there."

The timing of the project also proved beneficial. As Hemsworth was a new facility with new tenants starting to move in, the activities helped to facilitate conversations and relationships to develop between tenants and, between tenants and staff.

"There’s the streetscape of the Shankill, two girls swinging around a lamppost, there’s references to the Titanic as a lot of people’s families were involved in building it and they could remember being told stories."

"When they were young they remembered seeing all the different washing lines around the place, so they decided to incorporate that. They chose the word “hope” to be spelt out in the clothes. That word sums it up. One day we hope there will be a cure for dementia."

The rich sporting history of the area was captured by a pair of boxing gloves and former champions from the area were invited to Hemsworth to see the sofa being produced and chat about their experiences.

"It’s such a mass of colour. Its peoples hopes...aspirations. It works so well, an eclectic story driven by memories and has captured people’s interest and imagination."

The intergenerational element and now well established relationship with Glenwood Primary School was thought to have brought a special aspect to the project. Bonds have been formed and tenants are recognised in the streets, with one child presenting a friendship bracelet to one lady – an item that has been treasured and discussed by the individual. After receiving training in the production, tenants then explained and supervised the process to outside contributors.
"It certainly was a labour of love, an awful lot of work, we had so many people coming here putting tiles on but you know if it wasn't put on right it'd be taken off and done again!"

"There was such laughter. You could hear it down the corridor, or you would catch people just going in to look at it. Coming near the end you could see people getting emotional. They didn't want it to end."

"There was a sense of "Did we really do that". It was such a sense of achievement, being in the community...belonging, participating."

The community support and positive publicity for the project was thought to have been overwhelming and indicated the goodwill of the local community and businesses.

"There was real recognition, we knew it had touched on other people. Even down to a local construction company getting involved in the fork lift work free of charge."

The Spectrum Centre reinforced the benefits of the project for their own day to day work and profile.

"This was the first time we'd done a sustained piece of work with older people, but with ICE Age...the workshops, tea dances, plays people have been coming in more. It's been a real learning curve, took us out of the centre more, we were seen to be engaging with different groups and it's really whetted everyone's appetite to do more."

Hemsworth are working hard to increase understanding of dementia within the local community and local businesses are receiving awareness training as part of the Age Friendly Cities initiative. The artist also felt that she had improved her own knowledge through the project – learning about the different types of dementia and that some people can be affected at an early age. One of the volunteers on the Social Sofa project had direct experience of dementia within her own family.

"I had an interest in art so I started volunteering in the Spectrum Centre and would come [to Hemsworth]. People would never have done art before. It shows you can be creative no matter what your ability. It doesn't focus on the illness, doesn't require a strong memory. During the reminiscence sessions, people would be rhyming off things about the Shankill. I was thinking "How can he remember all that and he has dementia.""

Partners agreed that there was a lot of fear surrounding dementia and were committed to changing people’s perceptions and behaviour.

"People don’t understand and they can judge it all wrong. They think it’s for old people...old timers disease. People can be dismissive, but it’s the stigma around it...the awkwardness of not knowing how to react, how to help."

9.5 Conclusions

The following appraisal is made in relation to the AOPP's strategic aims:

**Isolation and Loneliness:** The project succeeded reaching out to a particularly vulnerable group within the community. Dementia itself can be an isolating illness with individuals finding it difficult to communicate and develop and maintain relationships. The project focused upon group arts activities which facilitated sharing of information and experiences, uncovering commonalities as well as individual experiences. Working on the sofa was a primarily sociable experience. There was lots of fun and chat in Hemsworth's arts and craft room and the activities helped to integrate new tenants into the building.
and into the existing group. The mosaic process built upon individual ability and strengths. There were high levels of cooperation and support, helping to nurture a common interest and goal.

Social Inclusion: Hemsworth Court is located in the midst of a residential area, just off the Shankill Road. Whilst surrounded by houses and people, the facility is surrounded by fencing and there is a buzzer security system for entering and leaving. As a result, unless individuals know tenants they are unlikely to visit. However, the fact that the Social Sofa is such a unique project has generated local interest. Furthermore it is currently set outside Hemsworth and therefore can be easily accessed and used. Extensive partnership working has helped to engage a range of older people in the project – making Hemsworth the hub or focal point. These relationships are set to continue and tenants were delighted to have been invited to Glenwood's nativity play and have the children come over to them in the local library or street.

Poverty: Hemsworth Court is located in the Greater Shankill Neighbourhood Renewal Area, an area of high socio-economic deprivation. The AOPP funding delivered quality arts engagement free of cost to beneficiaries, many of whom had little experience of the arts. Strong relationships with The Spectrum have been established and there are plans for future funding applications to continue and expand the partnership working.

Health Issues/Dementia: The Social Sofa project focused on activities which relied on long-term, rather than short-term memory – as such it helped to develop skills that are less likely to be impacted by dementia. Partners and participants describe the enjoyment that the project brought to so many people and are convinced of the wellbeing benefits. The project lasted for 10 months and this was believed to have helped strengthen its impact. The fact that the sofa was held onsite meant that tenants could work on it whenever they liked. This was important as sometimes medication and mood affected when they could be involved. Staff and volunteers were trained up in the process to ensure continuity of support throughout the day. Staff felt that the sofa had been a positive distraction when tenants were agitated or distressed as the sofa lifted their spirits and took them away from the situation. Photographs of the process – all the groups that visited and participated, spanning from first to last tile were exhibited around Hemsworth, acting as a memory trigger of their own involvement. Extensive planning that had went into the project to ensure that it ran smoothly and created a stimulating environment for tenants.

Strengthening the Voice of Older People: So much positivity surrounds this project and much work has been done to raise the profile of Hemsworth within the Greater Shankill and wider. The sofa itself is a creative expression of the past and future as tenants perceive it. There is a strong feeling of ownership and empowerment as a result of the consultative and decision making process. New skills have been learned, as well as latent talents renewed. Tenants now have the techniques and equipment to continue with the mosaics. They now plan to produce artwork to generate funds for further activities and to train others. The public launch, interest and press coverage in the project has given tenants a confidence boost, in the midst of an illness which in its extreme can serve to take away independence and freedom. Hemsworth Court want to use the sofa in a tour to raise awareness of dementia, potentially working with Alzheimer’s Society to facilitate "sofa conversations". It is hoped that the wealth of ideas and artwork generated from the project can be gathered into an accompanying exhibition in order that more people can see and hear the stories.
10 Project Partners

10.1 Introduction

Each practicing artist is required to submit an Artist Report when their involvement ends in order to help learning and development of the Programme. These explore feelings on project delivery, personal development, training, beneficiary impact and progress towards meeting the AOPP strategic aims. Similarly, grantees complete an End of Project Report upon completion. This provides a project summary to include activities, perceived impact and further development potential.

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of the Artist Reports and Lead Applicant End of Project Reports. Information from one-to-one discussions is also used to provide additional insights as returns at Interim stage are low. Appendix One provides a breakdown of the reports received.

10.2 Artist Perspectives

Twenty-three Artist Reports have been received across six projects. The majority of artists (96%; n22) had worked with older people prior to the AOPP project. Only one artist had not, but stated that this had not caused a problem.

10.2.1 Project Delivery

Table 10.1 illustrates artist responses regarding their experiences regarding AOPP project delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No, but it wasn't a problem</th>
<th>No, and it was a problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were the objectives of the project clear from the start?</td>
<td>n21 (91%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In retrospect, did you get all the information you needed during the planning process?</td>
<td>n19 (83%)</td>
<td>n2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you feel you had a good working relationship with the partner organisation(s)?</td>
<td>n21 (91%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you receive the support you needed from the partner organisation(s)?</td>
<td>n21 (91%)</td>
<td>n3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you receive the support you needed from the AOPP Community Development Officer?</td>
<td>n20 (87%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the space available suit your needs?</td>
<td>n20 (87%)</td>
<td>n3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you find the older people easy to engage?</td>
<td>n23 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the older people contribute to the planning of the sessions?</td>
<td>n11 (48%)</td>
<td>n9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments generally reflect the expertise and responsiveness of the partner organisations in providing a welcoming and supportive environment for artists and participants in the
first instance and by quickly identifying and overcoming any arising issues such as
transport needs and the scheduling of sessions.

"All of the objectives, funding and scheduling concepts were clearly outlined at the
beginning of the project (and in writing) to ensure that there was no confusion regarding
the direction of the project or indeed the overarching importance of inclusion, diversity
and intergenerational communication." [DU Dance]

Initial visits to workshop venues and conversations between partners, participants and
artists were believed to significantly help to everyone’s understanding of the nature and
shape of the sessions, along with any barriers, restrictions and constraints. Although
artists largely reported that they had received necessary support from the project
partners and none had any problems in engaging participants, a small number of issues
were highlighted. These were in relation to limited arts space, the need for more time
dedicated to specific art forms and poor communication on occasion.

Surprisingly, less than half of artists completing the surveys stated that participants had
been involved in project planning. As ongoing input from participants and flexibility to
adapt to their interests and requirements would be expected (and is reflected in artists’
comments), it may be that this question needs rewording in order to gauge whether or
not participants actively influenced the delivery and content of the sessions.

"We always asked participants if they wanted the workshops to run or not over religious
holidays (e.g. Easter) and took their lead from the response we received." [Strabane
District Council]

"Although the older people did not contribute to planning they did take photographs at
home in between the workshops which contributed to the overall outcome." [BEAM]

"Greenville Court residents seemed significantly engaged with the project but were not
central to the planning process, rather this was the responsibility of the choreographer.”
[DU Dance]

10.2.2 Artist Development

Table 10.2 illustrates that all the artists felt that their involvement had contributed at
least a little to their artistic practice, knowledge and understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the project contribute to your artistic development?</td>
<td>n14 (61%)</td>
<td>n9 (39%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the project increase your knowledge of older people’s artistic needs?</td>
<td>n11 (48%)</td>
<td>n9 (39%)</td>
<td>n1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you learn about ways to link your art form to participant ability?</td>
<td>n11 (48%)</td>
<td>n12 (52%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the project increase your knowledge of the social issues affecting older people?</td>
<td>n6 (26%)</td>
<td>n15 (65%)</td>
<td>n2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Artists mainly commented that AOPP project delivery had made them more aware of
individual needs and the need for creative flexibility.
"As a singing teacher I am always exploring new ways to engage my students. Learning what makes each participant “tick” and their different musical preferences and learning styles is invaluable to me as a tutor. “[Strabane District Council]

"I found myself refining various studio skills, both as a choreographic assistant and as a dance teacher, helping participants to resolve difficult steps or dance patterns...This project reminded me of the creative risks that an artist must often undertake when working within the community and the uncertainty of a participant’s ability to rise to the challenge of performance.” [DU Dance]

Some artists also benefited from joint working with other artists who had different skill sets or worked with alternative art forms.

A number of issues for consideration when developing projects with older people were highlighted, to include management of large (often very chatty) groups, the need to work at a slower pace and use repetition, use of short and direct speech to communicate, overcoming technological barriers, facilitating mixed ability groups and accounting for individualised and one to one support.

The necessity of getting to know people and adapting practice in order to encourage and increase responsiveness, was particularly cited by those working with older people with specific health needs. For example DU Dance artists commented that they had devised new warm-up routines and had been inspired to conduct more seated dance pieces in the future, as they had enjoyed the experience of facilitating them in a residential setting.

"The information and site visit made the picture very clear as to how to engage...Because of the range of ages and medical conditions I had devised a simple participatory activity that was in practice too strenuous, so the project scale diminished and the activity became background for discussion.” [NI Hospice]

"Shapes were simplified to suit impaired sight and limited dexterity. Bright contrasting colours and textures were used to achieve vibrant prints which excited participants and carers.” [NI Hospice]

As sessions were sociable, some artists felt that they had been able to gain insights into the lives of the older people they had worked with, particularly with regards to the need to be with people their own age and to have time for social interaction. Workshops provided opportunities for people to share information about themselves and their lives.

"Older people, especially in rural areas can suffer from isolation and loneliness, perhaps leading to mental health issues.” [Strabane District Council]

"Seeing how they enjoyed doing art in a social environment and meeting with new people. One commented that if left to do this herself at home she wouldn't get around to it, but being part of a group encouraged her to participate in this art form.” [BEAM]

"I had not worked in a hospice environment before and this project increased my awareness of the challenges faced by patients here. I was also able to talk to the patients during the activity and get to know a bit about their lives outside of the centre.” [NI Hospice]

However, as well as identifying vulnerabilities some artists also highlighted the strength and determination of the older people whom they had worked with.

"It is easy to be reductive when working with older people and to treat their psychological and emotional capabilities as somehow reduced, in keeping with their lessened physical
"mobility...[this was a] strong reminder that older people are indeed capable of performing powerful, subversive and emotive works." [DU Dance]

"We discovered that older people should not be underestimated." [Andersonstown Community Theatre]

Two artists formally reporting receiving training during the project. However, others mentioned induction/observation related sessions carried out by the Lead Partner or another experienced artist and this mentoring aspect had proved beneficial. Other training included working with vulnerable adults and children (sought out externally by the artist). Artists also identified further training needs to include up-to-date hazard training in craft materials (e.g. paints, glue, wood, clay) and more in-depth training on considerations when working with older people. One artist also stated that they had not known about the monitoring and evaluation requirements for the AOPP until near the end of the project.

10.2.3 Perceived Impact on Participants

Figure 10.1 illustrates that a high proportion felt that participants had enjoyed the activities, were engaged during the sessions and demonstrated a desire to learn.

Perceived Participant Benefits: Artists

Some artists described improvements in focus and concentration as the sessions proceeded. They felt that this was due to the fact that participants understood the nature of the activity, were more at ease with the facilitators, remembered the skills they had learned and had more confidence in their ability to apply them (or felt less self-conscious). The desire to try something new and be experimental was also identified as a positive outcome. In many instances participants were arriving early for class and staying behind to continue their work.

"They were absorbed in an activity that was completely new to them...Once the plate or matrix had been made, participants enjoyed experimenting and playing with various different choices of colours and textured backgrounds...They seemed to enjoy the tactile qualities of the process: the sticky inks, the feel of the rollers and use of their hands to
print the plates and the thrill of peeling the print off the sticky plate to reveal a complete surprise.” [NI Hospice]

“They really wanted to be challenged and do the harder, faster versions of choreography and try new things.” [DU Dance]

The sessions were described as sociable and supportive, with more competent members providing encouragement and help to their peers.

"The nature of the crafts allowed the participants to reminisce and to get hands on as well as take part in discussion and social chit chat in an area that they are interested in. They also allowed some participants to share their own knowledge in a certain field (e.g. fly fishing) and this encouraged more get-togethers after the workshop finished.” [Strabane District Council]

Two artists noted a growth in social confidence, as well as in self-confidence.

"They were often put in a position of authority, importance and were made to feel central to the performances. This therefore gave them clear encouragement to feel positive, empowered and visible. It was a real subversion of their usual standing in society, which is often (as they mentioned repeatedly) at a position of reduced importance and visibility).” [DU Dance]

Artists felt that participants had a strong sense of pride in their work and wanted to produce the best results that they could. Therefore it was the artist’s responsibility to ensure that the sessions were devised to maximise the potential of success. As well as providing time to chat, support one another and share a joke, most sessions produced tangible artworks that could be gifted to friends and family.

"At the end it was lovely to see them proud of their photo collages and sharing the photos with each other. Some couldn’t believe what they had achieved and in their ability.” [BEAM]

A number of artists reported that participants often practiced their various art forms at home, conducted research on the internet, bought related equipment and expressed interest in attending further sessions to refine their skills and attended other arts performances/exhibitions. As projects progressed, artists became aware that the content of conversations included more creative references. Artists were also aware of some participants developing new friendships and attending other groups and events together in the community.

Some artists wanted to reinforce the importance of programmes such as the AOPP to older people and stressed the need to continue to develop this work.

“These are people who have so much to give and people who have most probably given so much to society throughout their lives. It is important to give back to them and to reduce isolation and loneliness in their lives.” [Strabane District Council]

10.3 Lead Partner Perspective

Four grantees submitted End of Project Reports for inclusion in the evaluation. Therefore these were supplemented by one-to-one discussions. Lead Partners highlighted a number of benefits for their own organisations which arose from AOPP project delivery. These included a greater understanding of the needs of older people and more confidence in designing and delivering further activities, more people wanting to become
involved in the classes/groups which they run, increased profile from positive local publicity and new partnerships developed with other groups, facilities and organisations.

Project leads felt that they had uncovered a gap in service provision within their local areas and want to build upon the work conducted through their projects. For example, Andersonstown Community Theatre reported that they have forged a strong relationship with their artist and plan to develop the original scripts used for future tours and performances, putting new technological skills into practice. Groups have also used the process to consult older people and are better positioned to gauge what will work. For example, Strabane District Council felt that the experience had helped forge greater links with older people, increased their understanding of their needs and interests and helped them to target isolated groups such as carers, rural dwellers and older men.

Issues of loneliness were specifically highlighted, in addition to a lack of knowledge of available groups or accessible transport solutions.

“The majority of older people involved in Young at HeART were not currently involved in any organisation or community group. For these participants being part of the programme reduced social exclusion, isolation and loneliness. The participants got the opportunity to belong to a group where numerous new friendships were established. It was an achievement in itself to get many of these people out of the house and into a group scenario.” [BEAM]

Discussions with grantees provided numerous examples of how the AOPP projects had touched and made a significant difference to an individual’s life. Some of the general participant outcomes included increased sense of achievement, greater confidence, friendship development and joining other community based groups.

Partners working with people with specific health problems (e.g. Oh Yeah Music, NI Hospice) highlighted the vast spectrum of physical and mental health issues presented and the need for more specialist artistic engagement, approaches and skills. Participant outcomes may be more difficult to quantify and observe, but to carers, family and staff individual impact in mood, communication and even posture have been observed. The value of knowledge sharing, respect and ethics within the artist - staff - patient - family relationship was emphasised.

“The staff have the personal understanding and you need them to be hands on when you go out to centres. The artist needs to be aware and safe. You have very vulnerable people in a group and artists can be in a vulnerable position themselves. Its things like counting scissors when you finish, knowing that people with dementia may not have good vision, that you need constant repetition.” [NI Hospice]

"Due to lack of motivation in mental health it is normally very tough to get tenants to partake in activity. However the art group was very popular...The fact that their material was exhibited in The Playhouse was a big talking point for all and they were extremely proud.” [Ally Foyle Ltd]

"With people with dementia it's completely different. It's all about the trigger, the song. Communication is difficult, they might just get up and leave but there's a sense of honesty to their behaviour. You can get a sense of community, spontaneous-handholding, comforting. If you play live you can slow down, change key. Be reactive. It could be a tiny movement and you have to be clued into it.”[Oh Yeah Music]

One health and social care provider described the preparation required when working within Elderly Mentally Infirm (EMI) Units and the qualities needed from artists.
"You need about three days of being about the place, getting to know the dynamics of the group, getting to know the person. Workers have the knowledge and you shouldn't be afraid of trying things, taking on board advice, be open, flexible, not be afraid to ask people with dementia questions...There's a person inside there, you can find that one thing that triggers it off." [Oh Yeah Music]

A small number of issues were identified with regards to the delivery and management of projects. These were largely related to an unsuccessful first round AOP funding application (but subsequent second round award) leading to financial uncertainty for the organisation, lack of appreciation of the specific needs of the target group and the full range of barriers that needed to be overcome, issues related to venues/work space and managing sessions in disparate geographies.

"The Arts and Older People project has had a great feel good factor in the Strabane Council Area – it has also raised expectations as to what Council can provide in the arts." [Strabane District Council]

10.4 Discussion

Partner feedback illustrates the ability of the arts to provide a stimulating backdrop for conversations and relationships to develop. Artists realised the importance of interaction to the older people and shared tables, participatory tasks, flexible relaxed environment, smaller group sizes and use of social time helped facilitate this. Specific art forms such as dancing, theatre and singing meant that participants had to work together, form trust and listen to each other – leading to a sense of teamwork. It was noted that loneliness is a prominent issue and in many instances friendships have subsequently developed and people are now meeting up outside the projects.

Partners felt that it was important that arts materials and sessions were provided free of charge to the older person, hospitality provided and barriers such as transport overcome in order to help connect people to activities in their local area. The received responses demonstrate the variety of settings that classes were held in, in order to assist with inclusion. These ranged from community based classes, to day centres, residential homes and specialist clinical units. For example, Strabane District Council successfully facilitated joint mosaic sessions between those who attend day centres and those who do not. Some artists stated that the projects were targeted and helped to break down social and perceptual barriers between the arts and people living in less affluent areas. However, others felt that the participants that they worked with were already engaged with and positive about the arts and therefore would have liked reach to have been wider in order to target more rural and/or isolated older people.

Partners’ comments do suggest that sessions were well researched and planned in advance. However, there was acknowledgement that even then, practice will likely need to be adapted for specific individuals. The level of enjoyment generated from the sessions is apparent and artists witnessed how participation could change a person’s mood and evoke deep emotions and memories. Many artists responded that they had personally benefited from the work as a result of people’s reactions – their enthusiasm, pride and sense of achievement.

Artists play such a central role in helping to facilitate self-expression (and feelings of mastery) through the chosen art forms and therefore it is encouraging to see flexibility in the AOPP artist practice. Performances and exhibitions of work were thought to have brought a strong sense of empowerment and self-worth to the process. They served to dispel any stereotypes about older people's creative talents, ability to master new skills in addition to providing insights into the lives they have lived in many cases. Intergenerational project partners such as DU Dance and Andersonstown Community
Theatre felt that there were demonstrable benefits to encouraging different age groups to work together. The artwork developed during the NI Hospice and Strabane District Council projects will be permanently on display.
11 Programme Governance

11.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the associated AOPP governance structures and application process. It details activity in relation to artist development, promotion and the Arts and Age Festivals.

11.2 Governance Structures

A full-time AOPP CDO (previously a part-time post) was recruited to manage and co-ordinate the delivery of the programme and this officer reports to the Head of Community and Participatory Arts. Key duties include, to:

- Support and co-ordinate the development and implementation of key projects supported through the programme;
- Advise and support communities in the development of programmes of activities;
- Actively promote the programme through road-shows, presentations etc.;
- Act as the principal point of operational liaison with the Arts and Older People Steering Group and report on progress accordingly;
- Contribute to and support the development of key strategies and policies supported by the Steering Group and delivered by the programme; and
- Be aware of and stimulate interest in this funding programme and marketing of events by contributing to the Arts and Older People website and liaising with the Communications Unit.

The 2013-2016 AOPP Steering Group was established at an early stage in the process, with many previous members continuing to provide practical and strategic guidance to the programme. There has been sustained and valued representation from the Arts Council, Engage with Age, Age NI, Rural Community Network (RCN), Sonrisa Solutions Ltd and the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR). New representatives include the Public Health Agency (PHA), South Eastern Health Trust, ArtsCare and Lisburn City Council (CLOA).

The Steering Group’s role includes ensuring that the programme meets the needs of participating groups of older people, to provide advice from an advocacy perspective and ensure that the direction of the programme keeps a firm focus on the social justice issues as well as identifying opportunities for promotion and advocacy. The Arts Council Board, Chief Executive, Director of Strategic Development, Director of Operations and Head of Community and Participatory Arts are also involved in overseeing the delivery of the programme. The Steering Group has met five times since 1st October 2013. The Commissioner for Older People attended the group’s second meeting and outlined her strategic priorities. An Evaluation Sub-Committee has also been established to provide quality assurance, guidance and research expertise to the external evaluators. This group has met once since the programme commenced.

11.3 Application and Assessment Process

The first application round opened on 16th October until 13th December 2013 (eight weeks). The second application phase commenced on 25th April and closed on 19th June 2014 (eight weeks). Comprehensive Guidance Notes have been developed to assist with

101 WEA has ceased to operate.
application development and the Community Development Officer is available to support and guide potential applicants. Applications are assessed against four criteria:

- **Criteria 1** Strategic Impact (25 marks);
- **Criteria 2** Partnership Working (25 marks);
- **Criteria 3** Quality of arts activities planned (25 marks); and
- **Criteria 4** Organisational and Project Viability (25 marks).

The CDO and Art’s Council Development Officers are responsible for assessing the AOPP applications and in making recommendations on applications. Organisations that do not receive awards are signposted to Age NI funding workshops and are given the opportunity to meet with the Arts Council to discuss how they might improve their application and project content for subsequent AOPP applications. Others have been signposted to Big Lottery, Baring Foundation and the Turkington Fund as alternative funding streams.

The majority of funded projects did not receive all of the money which they had applied for. Reductions were based upon scaling down time-scales or the number of groups targeted, ineligible costs, or declining costs which were not considered central to programme delivery.

Two Briefing Events (one for each funding round) have been held to ensure that all grantees are aware of their obligations to contribute to the programme’s evaluation and information packs were distributed. An AOPP Media Pack has been developed by the Arts Council Communications Department. This provides advice regarding acknowledgement of funding, guidance for writing news releases and selected quotes alongside contact details for key NI press. A number of grantees received advice on commissioning artists post Award (e.g. Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAAP) and ALLY Foyle were signposted to ArtsCare and Community Arts Partnership CAPtabase artist directory). There is also ongoing support provided with regards to financial monitoring and fulfilling the terms and conditions of grant.

### 11.4 Artist/Practitioner Development

In order to encourage practice development, the Programme aims to support artists working with older people to increase their skills in areas such as working with people with dementia, to reflect on their own practice and to share experience through networking events, at a local, national and international level.

Two targeted training programmes have taken place to date:

- In 2014 Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) facilitated a residential weekend for 11 artists from Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland and England. Recruitment was via application, with 22 artists applying and assessed via weighted criteria. The aim was to enable artists working with people with dementia to come together to explore practice issues. Discussions were documented and used to inform and stimulate conversations during the “Dementia Black and White” symposium at the 2014 Arts and Age Conference which brought together 100 arts professionals, health and social care commissioners and media representatives. A film and evaluation report facilitated dissemination; and
- ArtsCare were commissioned to develop and deliver a pilot training programme with healthcare staff and volunteers across the five Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs). The Arts Health and Wellbeing programme was delivered in partnership with key older people’s services and groups in March 2014 in order to build creative

102 [http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/creativity/arts-and-dementia-northern-ireland](http://dementia.stir.ac.uk/creativity/arts-and-dementia-northern-ireland)
care into routine practice, increase access to introductory arts activity for older people and to support artists through increasing staff's understanding of the value of arts for older people. Fifty-five people participated (initial target was 100), which included two days creative arts training and an evaluation report was developed. An exhibition of the artwork developed was held in the new ArtsCare Gallery Space in Belfast.

The DSDC residential was believed to have primarily been beneficial in terms of connecting artists with an interest in working with people with dementia and facilitating them to share ideas and practice. Recommendations for continuing practice development, resources and mentoring were highlighted in the DSDC residential evaluation report and specific planned areas of work will include the development of a Dementia Associates scheme to provide an opportunity for interactive networking and support. Artists took part in workshops to develop the DSDC Dementia portal which can be accessed by carers, artists, people with dementia, decision makers and funders to inform and advice on Creativity and Dementia. DSDC are publishing arts based research on this site also. A pilot for the site has been completed and it will soon go live. Whereas online practice sharing is considered valuable, the need for localised opportunities to learn from each other was considered necessary to artists.

The ArtsCare pilot focused upon increasing access to introductory arts activity for older people in visual arts, music, dance and storytelling and communicating the benefits of the arts to people working with older people in a healthcare setting. In general, conducting the training within an arts setting, rather than the workplace was believed to have provided a more positive experience as participants reported feeling more relaxed as a result of being outside the working environment. The following benefits were reported in the ArtsCare evaluation:

- Staff felt more valued and recognized the investment made to develop their skills;
- Enabled time for creative reflection and expression on their professional practice in a safe space;
- Development of new creative skills and increased motivation to incorporate these into their existing activities with older people;
- Increased confidence in own creative ability and a desire for further exploration;
- Greater awareness of the positive role of the arts in health and the benefits of securing the services of artists within healthcare settings;
- Increased sense of wellbeing amongst participants as a result of the training;
- Promotion of the benefits of the training to non-participants.

A number of areas for development were also highlighted. These were mostly concerned with the short lead-in time to the training, which impacted upon staff availability (three to four months advance notice was requested). A workshop is to be held during the month of May and co-hosted by Arts Care. This will be for carers and artists. The workshop will be an informative session where we can learn about the impact of the previous training which Arts Care held and lessons to be learnt. It will also be used to find out about the impact the training had on the carers and tailor future training to be delivered. After this session, a further programme will be designed (e.g. workshops or the creation of a toolkit which can be used in care settings).

As part of their grant, several AOPP grantees will deliver training, either as the main focus of their project or as an integral element:
- **Big Telly’s Fantasy Hotel** will deliver creative training to 30 care staff in six residential settings by professional theatre makers. Over a four week period, the project will culminate with each residential home having their own show performed by four professional actors, with supporting roles by residents, care staff, family and friends. The show will then embark on a short tour to other residential homes in that local area;
• **Community Arts Partnership CAPtivate** project will provide community arts activity for older people and those with dementia across 10 different groups – culminating in 10 artworks. The project will train up to 20 community artists to become more specialised in working with people with dementia;

• **Age NI** will train 45 older people as peer facilitators, equipping them with photographic skills to capture and edit images. This project has a strong advocacy slant and will feed into the planned Age NI “All About Ageing in NI” publication;

• **Verbal Arts Centre’s Reading Rooms** provides a dedicated training programme for librarians, community workers, writers and volunteers based around reading aloud and shared reading settings. Participants will be encouraged to participate in sharing memories and telling stories. Trainees will be provided with opportunities to come together and share their experiences;

• **Greater Shankhill Partnership Property Development Company’s Social Sofa/ICE Age** project facilitated training workshops for care workers in arts and crafts and reminiscence;

• **Arts and Disability Forum** will provide preparatory training for artists within their Art and Biscuit - Let Me Stay mini tour, involving theatre, discussion and practical visual arts sessions for people with dementia and their carers;

• **NI Hospice’s Arts for Hospice** aims to integrate arts/creative therapies into the programme of care at Hospice and to create a model that can be replicated by other palliative care service providers. The funding will be used to provide arts activities and training to healthcare staff on the use of arts to enhance the care of hospice attendees and their carers. Training will also be offered to artists and care staff on dementia awareness in order to improve knowledge and skills; and

• **Lisburn City Council’s Arts and Older People** project incorporates arts training for workers in care and community settings.

### 11.5 Strategic Partnerships

The Programme intended to link with older people’s initiatives in the UK and further afield, building upon relationships with the Bealtaine Festival, Republic of Ireland, Gwanwyn, Wales and Luminate, Scotland. The CDO has networked with other Arts Councils via The Baring Foundation and activities and learning has been shared. It is hoped that these relationships will continue to develop over the course of the programme.

The Arts Council hosted a visit from the Director of The Baring Foundation and this involved showcasing ongoing AOPP projects. Meetings were also conducted with OFMdFM and DCAL in order to improve knowledge and reinforce understanding of the Programmes’ ability to deliver against departmental policy priorities. The programme has also been promoted to the OFMdFM and CAL Committees and the Arts Council Chairperson attended The Baring Foundation Conference in Holland.

The CDO has also been active with regards to networking and grassroots promotion of the AOPP. For example, promoting the programme at Age Friendly Belfast – Imagine Arts Event, attending Age NI - Focus on Sustainability ‘Measuring Impact’ and assessing the Arts and Culture category for the Age Friendly Belfast Older Volunteer Awards 2014.

The CDO has linked with the PHA Regional Later Years Groups, in order to help ensure better geographical and issue based project coverage.

The Steering Group suggested forging relationships with Queen’s University Belfast ARK project and this has potential for improved links to research and partnership working. Arts Council will also host one of their older people’s events.
11.6 Arts and Age Festivals

The AOPP pilot programme culminated in a Celebration of Age Week designed to showcase three years of AOPP funding and to raise awareness regarding the ability of the arts to have a positive impact upon the lives of older people. All grantees were contacted and invited to contribute to the programme and 23 organisations participated in the events (45% of grantees) and almost 16,000 people attended events and/or viewed exhibited work.

The new Programme now hosts an annual month long ‘Arts and Age’ Festival which aims to provide participants with a platform to display their work and a valuable opportunity for advocacy through high-profile media coverage. The March 2014 event necessarily adopted a collaborative approach as there were no current projects to showcase. A brochure was produced with contributions from the following:

- ArtsCare – Here and Now programme, workshops and showcases;
- Age Friendly Belfast – launch of their Action Plan;
- Age NI – funding classes and workshops;
- Dementia Services Development Centre – AOPP artist training weekend and symposium; and
- Arts Council – Conference with input from the Commissioner for Older People, film, workshops and an ArtsCare exhibition displayed at the event.

The conference aimed to explore the personal and societal benefits for older people engaging in creative activity, how this can be developed, sustained and advocated for. There were three speakers, workshops and a panel discussion during the one day programme. One hundred and fifty individuals attended the event and a report was submitted by the external coordinator. Feedback illustrated appreciation for the quality and liveliness of the event and particular appreciation for the showcases – requesting more interactive participation in the future.

Planning for the 2015 Festival commenced in May 2014 as a result of a collaborative planning meeting (spanning Arts Council, Age NI, ArtsCare, DSDC, individual artists, Community Foundation NI and Bealtaine representatives). The final programme incorporated the following:

- **Advocacy Breakfast/Ideas Lab**: The Festival commenced with an advocacy breakfast event in Belfast led by DSDC and the Arts Council. This was attended by representatives from politics, media, health, international funders and the arts and culture and age sectors. It aimed to explore the role that arts and culture can play in the way dementia is perceived and experienced in Northern Ireland. This was followed by the DSDC Ideas Lab panel (of which the AOPP CDO was a member). The Ideas Lab initiative aims to help capture and share practical ways to make a difference to the lives of people with dementia:

- **Exhibitions**: Exhibitions of the work undertaken by AOPP participants to include Big Telly’s Machination project in Belfast, the Playhouse in Londonderry, Down Community Arts intergenerational Life Text exhibition in Newcastle Library, MEAPP Hope Exhibition in Ballymena, Play Resource Warehouse in Belfast and the Waterside Theatre in Londonderry. The programme also encapsulated ArtsCare Here and Now Older People’s Arts in Health Festival exhibition in the Ulster Hall, Belfast. This exhibition of multi-media artworks showcases and celebrates the productivity and creativity of older artists over the age of 60 who have not had a solo show;

- **Workshops**: 14 workshops were held as follows, 10 Verbal Arts Centre Reading Rooms in Londonderry and Belfast, four Streetwise Community Circus Age-ility Circus workshops in Belfast;
- **Conferences/Symposiums**: The **Audiences NI/DCAL Conference** was hosted in the North West and **Age Friendly Convention** in Belfast were promoted through the Arts and Age Festival programme and **DSDC** held its **Black and White Symposium** in Belfast at the end of March;

- **Performances**: ArtsCare Aloud Allowed Aloud performance based showcase in Omagh, Glasgowbury ‘Strut and Stroll’ Tea-dance in Magherafelt, Playhouse Theatre project showcase, **Play Resource Warehouse** fashion show, Fermanagh District Council project showcases in Enniskillen and Omagh, **MEAPP** project showcase in Ballymena and Carrickfergus and Waterside Theatre Tea Dance in Londonderry; and

- **Daily Blog**: Project profiles and Festival events were posted throughout the month by ACNI and partners.

A number of project showcases were attended by the evaluators and were considered to capture the essence of what the Arts and Age Festival (and AOPP) hoped to achieve – that the arts are for all ages, are powerful communication tools and above all can provide comradery and fun.

For example the **Playhouse** showcase was held in a packed theatre attended by older people’s groups, families and friends. Many had never performed in front of people or taken part in arts activities before. There was a mix of song, stories, poetry and sketches and the project had clearly tapped into a wealth of talent, bringing out the artist, poet and writer in many. The sense of friendship, enjoyment and accomplishment was apparent throughout the atmosphere and the warmth and support for those on stage was tangible. The accompanying exhibition showcased the art work developed over the project duration – some detailing very real stories of what life had been like for them over various stages, some portrayed achievements, happy times and others were sad memories of a difficult life.

The **MEAPP** performances were similarly poignant, incorporating audience participation through movement and familiar songs. The range of groups showcased their talents to include poetry, drama, glass quilting, music and song. The professionalism of the group was apparent and the Braid Theatre was packed to capacity with appreciative audience members. A further showcase was undertaken the following day within a residential care home whose residents were not able to attend.

The **Play Resource Warehouse** event in the Ulster Hall was a rowdy, fun packed affair jam packed with music, song, fashion and artistic talent. Fashion and lifestyles through the ages was showcased to cheers and interaction from the lively audience. An exhibition of work accompanied the event.

### 11.7 Promotion and Media Monitoring

Promotional work plays a valuable role in attracting applications, raising the profile of the programme and increasing awareness of its potential benefits for the older population. Efforts have been placed upon building face-to-face relationships in order to raise awareness within Councils and across local age sector groups.

For example, five information sessions were held to support the first round application process (in Craigavon, Belfast, Portadown, Omagh and Ballymena) and the AOPP Community Development Officer has been available for one-to-one project development guidance to interested parties. Discussions have been undertaken with Arts Development within the Councils in order to help promote the programme and support the Council to identify smaller groups that would benefit from a partnership approach. The positive response from Councils has been welcomed, with some delivering promotional taster sessions with older people’s groups and the representation of CLOA on the AOPP Steering Group has been beneficial.
The Communications Plan for the programme aims to maximise publicity for the initiative as a whole and individual projects. It sets out the key messages to be delivered, the publications and places to target, suggested broadcast and media partners and campaign advocates. The communication objectives are as follows:

- Raise awareness of issues affecting older people and encourage more positive attitudes towards aging in our society;
- Increase awareness of stakeholder involvement including Arts Council, PHA, DCAL, Baring Foundation and ArtsCare;
- Increase awareness of AOPP funded projects and highlight opportunities for participation in arts activities that help stimulate older people at a physical, mental and social level;
- Raise awareness of the month-long festival in March 2014 and 2015;
- Raise awareness of older people’s issues and encourage more positive attitudes towards aging in our society;
- Increase awareness of the health benefits of involvement in the arts for older people physically, socially and mentally;
- To ensure key messages are carried by speakers and supporting promotional materials on how the arts can benefit older people and communities across NI; and
- To integrate key messages across targeted communications channels including: news releases, print, signage and display materials, funders’ websites; traditional news media; online news media; specialist arts media; social media; relevant blogs.

The Arts Council website carries information about the programme and provides an online application service. The CDO is actively involved in a DSDC working group currently developing a shared portal for individuals with an interest in the field of dementia. It has recently been launched and includes online individual profiles, skills and interests, research information, toolkits and other dementia friendly resources.

The Arts Council Communications Officer provided information for the Programme covering 03 April 2015 – 01 April 2015. Three news releases have been issued by the Arts Council Communications Department over this time:

- The Bus Run – funded project;
- Launch of Arts and Age Month 2015; and
- Play Resource Fashion show – one of the events within Arts and Age Month 2015.

Sixty-seven print media articles recorded during that period (144 across the pilot programme). Those were predominately in the regional papers with some coverage in the Belfast Telegraph as well. There was just one broadcast clip captured during this time and that specifically related to the news release on The Bus Run.

Online and social media promotional activity heightened around the Arts and Age Festival. Despite more web updates than in 2014, the number of page visits was lower. However Facebook reach increased substantially. Twitter activity and impressions was also lower than during the previous Festival.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts &amp; Age Festival 2014</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACNI Website</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>710 page visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reach 3,760</td>
<td>Engagements 517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Impressions 46,328</td>
<td>Engagements 678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts &amp; Age Festival 2015</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACNI Website</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>529 page visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Reach 31,975</td>
<td>Engagements 510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Impressions 32,484</td>
<td>Engagements 415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11.8 Discussion

Although there has been coverage of the Programme within the media and projects have been successful in promoting publicity at local level, it is suggested that the Programme would benefit from continuing with the AOPP Newsletters in order to highlight the work that is being delivered. It is also considered that the web content would benefit from a greater presence and higher visibility within the Arts Council website as it is difficult to navigate under the generic “Showcasing the Arts” tab. Dedicated webpages would be preferable.

The Festival of Arts and Age succeeded in having a sustained presence throughout the month of March and demonstrated the value of combined programming and partnership (e.g. Age Friendly, ArtsCare, DCAL/Audiences NI, DSDC). However, it could have benefitted from a published programme and collaborative marketing strategy. It is acknowledged however that the Festival requires extensive time and organisational commitment. Many submissions were last minute and the Arts Council were not always kept informed of the schedules in advance. Consideration also needs to be given to the fact that there are now a number of arts festivals for older people in Northern Ireland (i.e. ArtsCare Here and Now Festival, Kaleidoscope’s annual Imagine Festival) and there may be a more strategic way to coordinate this and deliver a more visible product. It is also worth noting that Kaleidoscope have won this year’s Big Lottery People’s Millions Competition for the development of an Imagine Arts Centre pilot programme (started in January 2015 at the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre, Newry).

Artists and partners delivering AOPP projects are extremely knowledgeable, have overcome obstacles and often go beyond their funding terms in order to deliver high quality, innovative and enjoyable projects. This experience should not be lost but could feed into awareness/networking opportunities for artists, staff and volunteers working with older people. Discussions with Lead Partners and artists indicate that working with older people and particularly those with specific health needs is extremely specialised and requires a specific skill set and expertise. The ArtsCare pilot training demonstrates the value of providing creative facilitation training to staff in order that they may fully understand the benefits of arts to wellbeing, in order to support artists and build their motivation and confidence to engage in arts activity with older people themselves.
12 Policy Impact

12.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses upon determining the profile of older people’s issues and the AOPP in relation to the wider policy agenda. It presents the findings from discussions with the Steering Group, interviews with selected policymakers and stakeholders and a survey of MLAs regarding the perceived value of the arts in addressing social justice issues.

12.2 Contextual Analysis

The Interim evaluation is written against the backdrop of Northern Ireland’s Westminster Election at the beginning of May 2015.

The DUP have outlined their priorities as making Northern Ireland an economic powerhouse, delivering world class public services, a society based on fairness and opportunity, make politics and government work better and to protect British identity. Specifically older people are mentioned in relation to tougher sentencing with prison terms the norm for those who attack the elderly and vulnerable, prioritising the needs of older people through anti-discrimination legislation and protecting existing benefits such as free bus passes.

The DUP have a range of policies to include Valuing Older People, this recognises the positive contribution of older people, the need to protect vulnerable older people and provide appropriate care. A guide has been published to signpost Government and voluntary services (i.e. maximising benefit entitlement, staying healthy and independent, ensuring safety in the home, and promoting active citizenship) available to help older people. The Culture policy emphasises the development of Northern Ireland cultural assets and encouraging creativity to grow the economy. It also commits to maximising the use of arts facilities and securing the Community Festival Fund.

Although the DUP and Sinn Fein are politically opposed with regards to their views on the Union between the North of Ireland and Great Britain, there are similarities with regards to priority policy themes. Job creation and employment, reconciliation and the Peace Process, economic recovery, frontline service provision, rurality and EU/International relationships are the primary focus for Sinn Fein. The Home Care policy recognises the right of older people to live in dignity and independence and to age well, in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Sinn Fein practices abstentionism and MPs do not take their seats in the House of Commons. Sinn Fein is strongly opposed to the “austerity” measures and focuses upon protecting the most vulnerable within its 2015 Election Broadcast.

Like the DUP, the SDLP also specifically highlight older people and arts and culture policy issues within their policies. They state the good health, independence and well-being of senior citizens must be a top priority and express concern that pensioners are being forced to live on insufficient pensions and are often in fuel poverty. The need for enhanced care provision and an end to workplace discrimination is highlighted. The potential of arts and culture as economic drivers are acknowledged with a request to nurture business entrepreneurship within the arts community. The 2015 Manifesto focuses upon jobs and the economy, a shared and safe community and a NI that works. Older people are specifically mentioned in terms of insufficient pensions, fuel poverty, age discrimination and care packages. The SDLP specifically mention the need to protect the arts sector in the light of unprecedented pressures on the budget.
"The SDLP believe that instead of cutting arts funding and reducing creative opportunities as a result, we should nurture local talent in order to develop a sustainable indigenous creative industry."\(^{103}\)

Culture is highlighted within the UUP vision, alongside health, education and the economy. The UUP appear to indicate support for the value of the arts to provide more than economic benefits. There is recognition that the arts have been particularly affected by the budget cuts and the party stresses the need to safeguard evidence based programmes of benefit.

"Culture and the arts have a major role in improving mental health and well-being, primarily through participation and there must be a concentrated approach on youth development and active participation across Northern Ireland".\(^{104}\)

They propose that DCAL should be dissolved due to the fact that 80% of its current budget is administered by arm’s length bodies and the remaining 20% has synergies in other departments such as the Department of Education and a potential Department of the Economy. The 2015 UUP Westminster Manifesto focuses upon a Healthier, Prosperous and Happier People, including issues such as dementia, mental health and wellbeing, fuel poverty, community safety, supporting older and young people, tackling disadvantage and supporting rural communities.

Alliance’s Manifesto commits to delivering a shared future to improve Northern Ireland’s finances and social cohesion, developing the skills and infrastructure for a shared future, protecting the environment and transforming the political system. Alliance specifically mentions financial support for carers and older people and improving the state pension scheme to enable older people to live independent and dignified lives. It supports more community focused care and supporting people to live in their own homes as far as possible. The Manifesto specifically states that government has a role in promoting culture and the arts and notes the evidence that arts and leisure have significant benefits for well-being and the economy. They commit to providing access to the arts to sections of the community who have lower-than-average uptake rates, developing a formal protocol to ensure that sectarianism does not occur at artistic and cultural events funded by public money and establishing an integrated strategy for cultural tourism.

### 12.3 MLA Panel Survey

During November 2014, Stratagem in conjunction with ComRes, a London-based polling and research company, distributed 84 surveys to MLAs on the MLA Research Panel using self-completion postal/online questionnaires.

Membership of the MLA Research Panel includes:

- All community designations (nationalist, unionist and other);
- All main political parties represented in the Assembly;
- All 18 constituencies;
- Party Leaders;
- MPs;
- Men and women ranging in age from mid-20s to mid-70s; and
- New and returning MLAs since 2011 Assembly elections.

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\(^{103}\) http://www.sdlp.ie/site/assets/files/42192/westminster_manifesto.pdf

\(^{104}\) http://uup.org/our-vision/policies#culture
In total, 42 MLAs completed the questionnaire anonymously in 2014 (50% response rate). Data was weighted to reflect the exact composition of the Assembly in terms of party representation and constituency distribution.

AOPP submitted a question for inclusion in the MLA Research Panel Survey as follows:

**Thinking about social justice issues for older people, in your opinion, how effective or otherwise are the arts at addressing each of the following?** (5=very effective and 1=not at all effective)

- Reducing loneliness and isolation;
- Improving health and wellbeing;
- Highlighting poverty;
- Supporting social inclusion; and
- Strengthening the voice of older people.

MLAs were also asked to outline the reasons for their answers. Surveys were also undertaken in 2011 and 2013, although the wording differed slightly. Due to the changes direct comparisons cannot be made over the survey periods, rather trends in opinion are inferred.

Figure 12.1 illustrates that MLAs consistently felt the arts to be most effective at addressing issues regarding *loneliness and isolation* and *health and wellbeing*. However, the scores are averaging at “midpoint” and are lower than those of previous surveys. MLAs rated the arts to be less effective at *supporting social inclusion, giving older people a voice* and addressing issues concerning *poverty*. The perceived effectiveness of the arts at supporting social inclusion has shown the greatest decrease over time.

The findings illustrate that on the whole, MLAs are more likely to find the arts ineffective at addressing social justice issues:

- 34% of MLAs felt the arts were effective in reducing loneliness and isolation;
- 29% at supporting social inclusion;
- 27% at improving health and emotional wellbeing;
- 23% at strengthening voice of older people; and
- 10% at highlighting poverty.

Table 12.2 illustrates effectiveness rating by party membership as per 2014. On average the UUP were most likely to score the effectiveness of the arts more highly than the other parties, with the DUP and Alliance generally scoring lowest. The DUP, SDLP and Alliance rated the arts as being most effective in improving health and wellbeing (DUP also felt it was most effective in addressing loneliness), whereas SF and the UUP felt the arts were most effective at supporting social inclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Theme</th>
<th>DUP</th>
<th>SF</th>
<th>UUP</th>
<th>SDLP</th>
<th>Alliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness &amp; Isolation</td>
<td>2.77 (1)=</td>
<td>3.15 (2)</td>
<td>3.57 (2)</td>
<td>2.94 (2)</td>
<td>2.54 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Wellbeing</td>
<td>2.77 (1)=</td>
<td>2.74 (3=)</td>
<td>3.53 (3)</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
<td>2.88 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>1.93 (5)</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
<td>2.79 (5)</td>
<td>2.56 (5)</td>
<td>2.27 (3=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Inclusion</td>
<td>2.47 (3)</td>
<td>3.21 (1)</td>
<td>3.69 (1)</td>
<td>2.87 (4)</td>
<td>2.27 (3=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Older People a Voice</td>
<td>2.18 (4)</td>
<td>2.74 (3=)</td>
<td>3.11 (4)</td>
<td>2.89 (3)</td>
<td>2.27 (3=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Score</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some respondents provided supplementary comments (see Table 12.3). Although there was positivity with regards to addressing loneliness, the feedback typically illustrated a perceived lack of connection between the arts and social justice. However, a few comments advocated for the intrinsic value of the arts irrespective of the need to deliver social outcomes.
Table 12.3
MLA Research Panel Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DUP</th>
<th>“The arts have the potential to do much more than is currently the case. Greater focus could be applied on what has already worked through the arts in addressing these issues”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The arts have a limited reach into our older population. For those that can access it the impact may be effective but its reach is limited”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t believe that the arts really address any of these issues for those elderly people in my largely rural constituency”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The only organisation which truly raises their voice for older people’s issues is the Pensioner’s parliament”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The arts provide opportunities for older people to socialise, that helps with social inclusion and isolation and possibly in turn improve health and wellbeing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What do they do on any of these issues?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The arts are important but I am not sure that they are valued by those living in communities of social deprivation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t see any relationship between arts and above”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| SDLP | “I am not aware of the Arts being actively engaged in any of these areas, I see them as by-products rather than a targeted objective” |
|      | “The arts can be many things to many people. Attempting to use the arts in a campaigning way runs the risk of undermining artistic quality and patronising the target of the campaign” |
|      | “Few people emerge as champions for the above causes. Those who do exist are tired out, jaded and disappointed by the lack of interest in their issues” |

| UUP  | “I am of the opinion that the arts have no role in this” |
|      | “This is an issue which I am passionate about - I firmly believe that support for FE courses in the community can have a massive impact on health and wellbeing as well as tackling social isolation” |

| Alliance | “Sorry but I don’t get the connection between the arts and these problems” |
|          | “Not aware in recent years of the arts being used as a vehicle for social justice for older people” |

| Sinn Fein | “There is much work still to be done in the Arts in terms of social inclusion” |
|           | ”Everyone is talented and deserves to have this talent nurtured. Arts is good medium for raising good self-esteem and self-worth” |

| Other | “I think the arts can provide a space and purpose for older people to socialise and discuss their problems with others in similar circumstances. I think this applies more to women than men” |
|       | “Provide activities or a break from loneliness and isolation” |
|       | “The arts should not be driven to address social issues - good art is of value in and of itself. I do not benchmark art on the criteria above” |

12.4 Bellwether Interviews

Structured interviews were undertaken with “bellwethers” or influential people in the public and private sectors whose positions require that they are politically informed and that they track a broad range of policy issues. These interviews aimed to determine:
- Where the policy issue is positioned on the policy agenda;
- How decision makers and other people of influence view it; and
- How likely policy makers are to act upon it.

The discussions were dominated by issues relating to the NI economy, particularly the increasing pressures on public services. The austerity versus prosperity debate and the Westminster elections were thought to have received much media coverage. Although coverage tended to focus on the sectarian divisions within NI politics, through DUP/UUP pacts and the rejection of a SDLP/Sinn Fein pact. This prompted references to the flags protests and the fact that they are still lingering on unresolved.

This aside, health and social care provision, youth unemployment, social security benefits and the rollout of welfare reform, lack of inward investment and general concerns around how the public sector can continue to function were believed to be high on the policy agenda.

Political representatives noted that constituency issues were mostly routine, but obviously significant to the particular person (e.g. benefits advice, refuse collections, anti-social behaviour, traffic issues, planning objections, health related problems). However, representatives were conscious of the negative impact that the recession and public service budget cuts were having on people’s day to day lives. One representative stated that they had noticed an increase in racial tension due to unemployment and pressure on GP and hospital waiting lists and nursery places.

"There’s a real sense of underlying hopelessness. It’s deeper than the normal cynicism with politics. People’s heads are down, a sense of despair."

The fact that we have a rising older population was considered to be worrying in terms of planning and provision, especially with younger people finding it difficult to secure permanent jobs and thus start to contribute to their own pension plans. The potential financial burden of domiciliary care provision was also raised by one contributor. They described how a family are under extreme financial strain to pay for their mother’s care as she had not wanted to sell and move out of her home, yet did not have enough savings to sustain the service. Transforming your care and maintaining independence was believed to be the right route to take – indeed fears around going into residential care amidst coverage of elder abuse were thought to be worrying for older people. However, sustaining the level of services needed to make this a possibility would be a challenge.

"People see the decline of the National Health Service and it’s deeply worrying to them, an air of insecurity. Do you sell your house and move into a [care] home? Older people feel let down as they’ve paid taxes all their life and the health service isn’t necessarily there for them."

None of the political representatives were aware of the AOPP. However they all felt that there were social and health benefits for older people – keeping active and combating loneliness. The latter was thought to be prevalent within this age group as they lose life-long partners and have fewer opportunities to make new friends. Indeed two representatives noted arts programmes for older people that were ongoing in their constituencies which were funded under the Programme. One individual’s widowed mother was persuaded to attend dance sessions and they described the positive change in her social networks and wellbeing. However, it was stated that many people don’t know what’s on in their area or need encouragement and companionship to go. Media coverage of older people’s issues was thought to portray them as either “a drain on society” or as frail and vulnerable.
"Much of what you see is media sensationalism. You know a picture of some poor lady with a battered face."

The arts were believed to be relatively low profile in policy terms, yet people know the value of activities on the ground.

"Arts expenditure is relatively small amount of money but cuts will have an impact on the health service...involvement in the arts has benefits for mental health, depression. There’s a lot of evidence around it. People just think the arts is for people who are comfortably off."

Those consulted felt that it would be difficult to secure arts funding given the economic environment. However, marketing and communication was believed to be central to success.

"It shouldn’t be an economic argument as you’re just going to fall down. We should accept that there is an intrinsic value to the arts – therapeutic, connecting people, improving quality of life."

"The arts is a broad term. Its more than arts, people don’t know what you mean. You need to communicate in layman’s terms. Not just for the “arty”."

"It’s not a corporate approach. Politicians want to know their constituents, personal stories and connections are better than anything else."

"You need to show more of the positive local stuff. That it’s not in some theatre somewhere but in community centres. That it reduces the burden on the health service. The Arts Council doesn’t mean anything to the man on the street."

12.5 Steering Group Conversations

Discussions with the Steering Group confirm that members are fully committed to the need for and positive impact of, a targeted programme of arts activities for older people. Although it is at times challenging for those delivering projects, the feedback in terms of the benefits for participants and partners was thought to demonstrate its worth.

"There’s such a wide breadth of activities. People get so much out of it. As you get older you feel that people stop listening to you, nobody has time. The storytelling, self-reflection etc. validates people as individuals."

In terms of the way forward, some members felt that there should be a continuing focus on providing increased arts access to marginalised groups and in particular those who may have little opportunity for social contact and are not connected to local networks. There were also concerns that the need for match funding has indirectly excluded some of the smaller voluntary groups from applying. The increased emphasis upon people with specific health issues such as dementia has proven valuable in terms of delivering quality of life impacts and raising the profile of arts in health. However, these projects will typically involve smaller numbers of beneficiaries, specialist artist skills to minimise risk and will likely not be the main focus of the Programme.

In general, members wanted the profile of the AOPP to be more visible and felt that a more strategic overview should now be taken. There were concerns that within the current cuts in public spending arts services and funding would be negatively impacted over the next few years. This was in turn predicted to negatively impact upon health and social wellbeing. However, they noted are a variety of opportunities to build on. For example, active ageing within the context of an ageing population is a priority policy issue
and the Programme also has connectivity with the new Council powers of wellbeing and community planning. Similarly the age sector is a highly effective lobbying group and there is potential that the Programme could be more issue focused. It was believed that politicians are more likely to react to constituency issues and therefore there should be a concentrated effort to raise visibility and advocacy at this level, particularly through the use of personalised stories and participatory arts performances. Members however recognised the need to prove the effectiveness of arts interventions to deliver tangible outcomes.

Members wanted involvement in the Programme to be empowering for older people, something that was specifically owned by them and for them. Some felt that efforts should focus upon enabling and sustaining arts participation with low budget interventions, showing that older people’s quality of life is worth investing in and that the AOPP can be a catalyst for positive change.

12.6 Discussion

Research reinforces the need to raise the profile of the policy related benefits of the arts – focusing upon prevention, life-long learning and positive ageing. The OFMDFM representative stressed the positive contribution that older people make to society. However in reality the media image tends to focus on costs related to health and social care and there is an unconscious stereotyping of older people.

Getting the message through to politicians and budget holders will be difficult, although there was a feeling that older people’s active voting tendencies may make representatives more receptive. It was noted that NI provides less expenditure on the arts than GB and therefore this may be an indicator of its perceived value. Despite this it was thought that the public are aware that activity has a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

There was strong consensus that older people’s voices and stories should be used to demonstrate the AOPP’s worth, rather than a solely Arts Council or related agency approach. The Steering Group particularly stressed the need for collaboration, rather than duplication of efforts. It was also suggested that links with education should be forged, in light of the closure of WEA and the AOPP’s promotion of life-long learning opportunities.
13 Programme Appraisal

13.1 Introduction

The AOPP has specific strategic themes which the Arts Council and its partners aim to deliver through the commissioned projects. Overall, the AOPP aims to utilise the arts to positively influence attitudes towards older people, to help provide better services from more knowledgeable staff. Active ageing, civic engagement, wellbeing, participation and advocacy are at the core of the programme and there is strong alignment with wider policy issues.

Arguably the starting point is to connect with the lonely, marginalised and isolated, to develop welcoming social spaces and provide equality of access to arts activities which stimulate curiosity, build confidence, skills and facilitate creative expression. A critical element is to ensure that wellbeing benefits are maintained through further opportunities to connect and engage.

"The concept of wellbeing comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience of their life. Equally important for wellbeing is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one’s life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of wellbeing." 105

Five ways to wellbeing

- independence
- participation
- care
- self-fulfilment
- dignity

This chapter discusses the impact of the programme according to the overarching objectives and short-term outcomes presented within the AOPP evaluation framework and those outlined in the Arts Council’s Ambitions for the Arts strategies. The populated indicators are displayed and a number of areas for AOPP development suggested.

13.2 Impact: Isolation and Loneliness

Table 13.1 illustrates the AOPP objective and desired outcome in relation to combating isolation and loneliness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To provide opportunities for social interaction through arts-led interventions and projects;</td>
<td>• Increased social interaction through participatory arts projects amongst target groups (i.e. people living alone, carers, rural dwellers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

105 http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/five-ways-to-well-being-the-evidence
The AOPP aims to increase opportunities for social interaction through engagement in arts based activities. Based upon Lead Partner returns, we estimate that over 3,000 people will participate in these projects and a final funding round is still to take place. Table 13.2 highlights the populated indicator framework.

Table 13.2
Indicators: Isolation and Loneliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% living in Rural SOAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in participants’ loneliness scores (Hughes et al) pre- and post-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% participants agree these sessions have made me want to go to arts events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% participants agree these sessions have made me want to participate in more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arts activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of artists who feel participants enjoyed the activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of artists who feel that participants are now more positive about the arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants agreeing that they have made good friendships out of this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants, artists &amp; stakeholders feel that the project has decreased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isolation and improved access &amp; participation in the arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previous research evidence demonstrates, loneliness is a significant issue for many older people. Lack of companionship appears to be an underlying factor with over half of the sample experiencing this at least sometimes. Although participants reported feeling left out or isolated to a lesser extent upon entering the projects, prevalence for the latter still amounted to around four out of every ten participants.

A number of indicators were found to be associated with loneliness, to include living alone, males and self-rated poor physical health. This analysis provides guidance with regards to “at risk” older people and which groups should be targeted via activities. Forty percent of AOPP participants stated that they lived alone and around one third had lived alone in excess of 10 years. Thirty-six percent had a long-term illness and 14% reported their physical health as not good. However, as with the pilot programme, there appears to be a significant under-representation of males in the AOPP projects for which data was submitted.

Rural living has also been associated with loneliness in older age (as per participant and partner feedback) and the current programme has specifically targeted this group. Eight percent of participants were carers, similar to the earlier programme. The NI Hospice project will help support the establishment of a new creative arts group for carers of people living with dementia.

Four projects stated in their applications that they would target males (i.e. South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association’s The Loom Room, Big Telly’s Machinations, Age Concern Causeway and Craigavon Borough Council). These organisations have been adept at identifying art forms that capture the interest of men (i.e. traditional crafts, metal and woodwork, music and film). Also Strabane District Council, found that men were more attracted to their traditional crafts and photographic offerings.
Group based arts activities appear to create a natural and stimulating environment for friendships to develop. The prospect of being with new people, learning something new, sharing apprehension and achievements and being actively engaged does seem to break down barriers. Artists reported an understanding of the need to allow social time within the sessions and noted how important this was to people. The feedback received from participants leaves no doubt that they enjoyed the activities, with a high percentage reporting a desire to attend more arts activities and to a lesser extent arts events.

Upon entry to the projects, the opportunity to increase social networks was identified as being one of the primary drivers of participation and the exit surveys illustrate that 80% felt that they had made friends as a result of their involvement. Anecdotal evidence from partners and artists supports the development of new friendship groups, with participants meeting up outside of project activities. Andersonstown Community Theatre also reported that an informal “arts review group” had emerged with participants attending drama performances and feeding back information and suggestions. Although there are overall increases in the proportion of older people stating that they hardly ever lack companionship, feel left out or isolated, significant changes in pre-/post- Loneliness Scores were only achieved under the feel isolated domain. It may be that companionship requires more frequent and closer contact. Therefore, the stimulation and sustainability of activities post-funding is extremely important.

For example, Northern Ireland Action Mental Health (Niamh) will establish a community based weekly art group for older people within the Triax Neighbourhood Renewal Area in Londonderry. Big Telly’s Machinations project, although unintended at the outset, has led to the establishment of a rural men’s group in partnership with a local library. Age Concern Causeway aim to establish a choir for older people with mental health problems and specifically people with dementia and their carers. Strabane District Council will also continue to run the tea dance element of their programme, although on a smaller scale and the purchase of a Silver Music Box – Sing along system will help the singing and poetry activities with daycentres and residential groups to continue. Craigavon Borough Council’s Dance the Memories project will deliver sustained arts activities and will establish a regular Age on Stage group in Craigavon.

The AOPP funding has also enabled The Verbal Arts Centre’s Reading Rooms project to be extended, meaning that more volunteers will be trained as facilitators. Using reading aloud techniques and shared reading groups, participants share personal experiences and memories in response to short stories and poems. The project aims to combat isolation through increased social connections and shared experiences – partners include Age NI, Alzheimer’s Society, Stroke Association and supported housing/residential care providers.

Whilst it is important that older people are provided with opportunities for participation, grantees must challenge themselves to target those who are most in need and in particular “non-connected” older people. For example, Mindwise New Vision identified a need to provide outreach to people within their own homes, where they currently feel unable to attend Mindwise Resource Centres due to mental health problems. Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAPP) used referrals from the Good Morning Projects and BEAM obtained GP and pharmacy referrals for their programmes.

13.3 Impact: Social Inclusion

Table 13.3 illustrates the AOPP outcomes in relation to addressing social inclusion.
Table 13.3
Outcomes: Social Inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Combating the social exclusion of older people through arts interventions that promote inclusion, free movement and sharing;</td>
<td>• Positive relationships developed between people from different backgrounds and experiences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working to create a more peaceful, fair and inclusive community that does not discriminate against age and ethnicity</td>
<td>• Older people feel more connected to their local communities and wider NI society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decreased feelings of exclusion amongst older people in society and increasing awareness of age discrimination amongst those who have participated in the programme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The desired outcomes focus upon improving access to services, increased relationship building between older people on an intergenerational, inter-cultural and cross-community basis and increased feelings of social inclusion. The relevant indicators are presented in Table 13.4.

Table 13.4
Indicators: Social Inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of participants strongly agree/agree that they have made good friendships out of this project</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* cross-community, cross-cultural, intergenerational projects</td>
<td>Cross-community 82%&lt;sup&gt;106&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in the promotion of good relations (e.g. sharing facilities, relationship development, networking &amp; links)</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants agree they have taken part in other groups and activities as a result of this project</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in sense of neighbourhood belonging</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in sense of belonging to NI belonging</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a notable increase in the proportion of AOPP projects targeting people living in supported accommodation and/or residential care. Whilst this opportunity will have provided equality of access to the arts, it is suggested that social inclusion is more manifest when two-way relationships are established that connect beneficiaries to community life and other groups.

This has been achieved via a number of projects. For example, the Spectrum Centre case study illustrated how supported accommodation for people with dementia became the central point of the AOPP activities – visited by a range of external groups. This project facilitated sustained intergenerational contact between tenants and children from the local primary school, generating an invite to the children's nativity play. Strabane District Council also facilitated joint sessions between people attending day centres and those who don’t. Although challenging to facilitate, staff noted that more able-bodied

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<sup>106</sup> Based on Andersonstown Community Theatre, BEAM and Strabane District Council only
<sup>107</sup> Based on Andersonstown Community Theatre and Strabane District Council only
participants helped and encouraged people from the day care facilities to participate should this be dancing or building mosaics. Niamh’s project was established to overcome the perceived segregated service provision for people with mental health problems. They advocate that services should be supported to ensure that they are open and accessible to everyone. Thus reducing associated stigma and polarisation.

There has also been an increase in projects promoting the digital inclusion of older people. For example Lisburn City Council’s Dance Goes Digital and Tie the Tales focused upon improving access to digital technologies such as dance, film-making, animation, creative writing, v-jing and music technology. This incorporated a partnership with Southern Eastern Regional College (SERC) to facilitate Ipad training and app development. A choreographed virtual dance performance will also link eight care homes and community group in shopping centre based performances. It is intended that the app will help develop skills for forming memory and rhythm, coordination and movement leaving a legacy beyond the lifetime of the project. Tie the Tales joins schools and older people’s groups to transform reminiscence into cutting edge animations. These social histories will be compiled with images from people’s personal collections culminating in a touring showcase. Northern Visions also supports the digital inclusion of older people via its digital storytelling, music creation, archiving and animation project which also includes outreach via Good Morning projects and “unconnected” older people.

The extent to which projects worked on an inter-cultural and cross-community basis aren’t apparent until the End of Project reports are received. Usually sessions tend to attract people from a variety of community backgrounds, although not specifically devised as such. All four of the projects which have completed their documentation reported cross-community involvement, whereas none reported inter-cultural mixing. Examination of the applications suggests that only two projects will include a minority ethnic network group (i.e. Craigavon Borough Council and Northern Visions). Therefore this may be an area for development in the final funding stage.

Many of the projects have intergenerational aspects (to include two of the four completed projects). For example, DU Dance’s Fallen brought people from nine to ninety together in a dance performance on the anniversary of the First World War. The project included workshops, a performance programme, exhibition and film screenings. DU Dance’s independent evaluation report details how participants wanted to ensure that younger people were aware of the human cost of war. Banbridge District Council’s Lives and Legacy project also connects older and younger people living in rural communities to share and record memories using a medium of their choice.

The 2013-16 projects have been especially strong on partnership working, sharing facilities, promoting mobility and increasing access to the arts for older people. Councils and arts venues were able to offer workshop and performance space, however activities also took place in community centres and health and social care settings. Transport provision was identified by the majority of partners as being necessary to increasing accessibility and participation.

Andersonstown Community Theatre identified their project as being cross-community from the outset – developing existing links between the Belmont Babes (based in predominately Protestant East Belfast) and residents living in the predominately Catholic West of the City. The group conducted rehearsals in both areas and was mindful of the need to ensure participants family and friends would feel safe travelling to the final showcase performance. Transport was provided from East to West Belfast and a small number of audience members stated that they had attended as it was cross-community.

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The pre-/post- increases in participants’ sense of belonging to both their neighbourhood and NI illustrates the potential of the arts to promote inclusion and cohesion. The results are particularly interesting as they are in contrast to NISRA population results, in that AOPP respondents feel a greater sense of belonging to NI, compared to their local areas – potentially highlighting a greater local disconnect within our sample.

Although projects may have stimulated personal friendships which have lasted beyond the funding, only 57% of respondents reported joining other groups as a result of the activity. Although Arts Council should aim to improve upon this, it is an increase on the pilot results and there are examples provided whereby individuals have been signposted to local groups by other participants (e.g. some BEAM participants joined the Women’s Institute, Probus and the Open Door Club).

Negative stereotyping of ageing and by implication the older person by society is an issue. Artists and partners both demonstrated a greater awareness of not only the physical and psychological barriers that older people may have had to overcome to become involved in activities, but also highlighted the wealth of personal achievements – from performances in front of large audiences, new skills and expertise and renewed confidence in their own ability. Feedback from young people involved in the Andersonstown Community Theatre and DU Dance projects also demonstrates positive changes in opinion regarding ageing and older people.

Sometimes there is inequality of access (to arts and other activities) for certain individuals within supported housing, day centres and residential care settings – with staff or group leaders “selecting” participants. The approach undertaken by the artist in The Spectrum Centre project eliminated the chance of this happening by visiting and getting to know every tenant individually, finding out what they would be interested in doing, providing assurance and encouragement and a personal invitation to the activities.

13.4 Impact: Poverty

Table 13.5 illustrates the AOPP objective and desired outcome in relation to poverty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Providing opportunities for older people living in disadvantaged/marginalised rural and urban areas to access and participate in arts activities;</td>
<td>Increased social interaction through participatory arts projects amongst target groups (i.e. Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, Areas at Risk, disadvantaged areas to include rural).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working to improve the quality of life of older people living in disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas of Northern Ireland.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13.6 outlines the relevant indicators related to addressing and highlighting poverty.
Table 13.6

**Indicators: Poverty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators</th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>NRA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in % participants who have been to see an arts event in the last 12 months (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
<td>+4%</td>
<td>+3%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in the % of participants who have taken part in an arts activity in the last 12 months (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
<td>+22%</td>
<td>+33%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
<td>+57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in perceived barriers to the arts (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
<td>Post-activity responses decreased by 40% Urban -61% Rural -24% NRA -78%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants strongly agree/agree they have made good friendships out of this project (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>91% Urban</td>
<td>74% Rural</td>
<td>97% NRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants strongly agree/agree they have taken part in other groups &amp; activities due to this project (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>82% Urban</td>
<td>56% Rural</td>
<td>69% NRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants strongly agree/agree these sessions have made them want to go to arts events (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>80% Urban</td>
<td>71% Rural</td>
<td>90% NRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants strongly agree/agree that these sessions have made them want to take part in more arts activities (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84% Urban</td>
<td>79% Rural</td>
<td>85% NRA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Arts Council actively encourages organisations to identify and recruit individuals from disadvantaged areas through the weighted AOPP assessment criteria. Overall, 24% of survey respondents (and 26% of event attendees) lived in NRAs and 46% lived in rural areas. However, initial participant analysis may indicate that some localities such as County Armagh could be under-represented with fewer organisations from this area applying to the Programme.

Analysis indicates that AOPP survey respondents have attended (68%) or participated (57%) in the arts within the last 12 months. Those living in NRA areas were more likely to access the arts than those who lived in other areas. This means that targeting these areas may mean that participants may be more likely to be more familiar with the arts. A number of artists did highlight that their sessions may not have targeted those in most need. However, there is a balance required between sustaining people’s interest, attracting newcomers and reaching the most isolated and excluded.

Routine Arts Council surveys indicate that the perceived affordability of arts activities is a barrier to engaging older people, particularly those who have a low income and poor access to transport. The cost of events and activities was also one of the primary barriers to arts involvement within the AOPP sample. Each of the 31 funded projects enabled
access to arts activities free of charge during their duration as well as providing showcase attendees with free or low cost arts events in community and art venues.

Partners have also signposted participants to other projects, events and services. However, at application stage only Fermanagh District Council stated that they would provide participants with free/subsidised tickets to performances. Participants generally feel they are less likely to attend arts events as a result of the projects, in comparison to events. Although it is the reverse for those living in NRAs. There may be more scope for this to be addressed in the final funding round.

Over the course of the programme, perceived obstacles to arts engagement significantly reduced, to include concerns regarding cost. However, this still needs addressed. The AOPP does provide access to experienced and highly skilled artists and more emphasis needs to be placed on facilitating low cost longer-term solutions for groups as hiring artists on an ongoing basis may prove unsustainable for many.

Participants and partners highlighted how older people living in rural areas can quickly become isolated, with longer travel distances to neighbours, shops and activities, less frequent public transport, fewer local community and arts venues and less activities in general. Poor weather conditions in winter often meant that activities shut down at the end of summer.

A high proportion of survey respondents stated that they had established good friendships as a result of project participation – lower in rural areas. Despite these successes 57% of the exit sample reported that they had taken part in other groups and activities as a result of the AOPP project. The differences between rural and urban respondents is apparent on this indicator.

As with the pilot programme, it is considered that AOPP projects should be highlighting issues associated with ageing in rural communities and the occurrence and implications of poverty for older people, their concerns around increased cost of living, pension provision etc. through the artwork produced and project showcases - in addition to improving access to the arts within disadvantaged areas.

13.5 Impact: Health Issues/Dementia

Table 13.7 illustrates the AOPP objective and desired outcome in relation to health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide opportunities for older people to participate in arts led activities which may help improve physical, mental and social wellbeing; • Work to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for active ageing through participation in arts activities.</td>
<td>• Increased opportunities for participation in arts led activities that help stimulate older people at a physical, mental and social level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the 31 projects funded reported that they aimed to address health/wellbeing/quality of life related issues. The related indicators are shown in Table 13.8.
Table 13.8

**Indicators: Health/Dementia including Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing**

| Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators | Physical health +3%  
Mental health +0.05%  
Enjoyment of life +11% |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased % of participants stating that their physical health, mental health &amp; enjoyment of life is “Good”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Increase in participants’ wellbeing score (WEMWBS) | +1pt  
78% increased or stable  
28-35pts +6% |
| % strongly agree/agree that they have been able to express themselves at sessions | 75% |
| % of artists stating that participants’ self-esteem increased | 70% |
| % of artists stating that participants’ concentration improved | 65% |
| % of artists stating that participants’ ability to listen and follow direction improved | 61% |
| % of artists stating that participants appeared engaged during the sessions | 91% |
| % of artists stating that participants’ became more confident in talking to them/others about their work | Talking to Artist 83%  
Talking to Others 78% |
| Participants, artists & stakeholders feel that the project has increased wellbeing | Achieved |

Improving wellbeing and quality of life is central to the AOPP and as such, a range of vulnerable groups were targeted to include those with poor mental health, dementia and life-limiting illnesses, as well as those who care for them. Just over one third of survey respondents reported that they had a long-term illness health problem or disability. Although, the majority rated their physical health as *good*, it was rated less highly in comparison to mental health and enjoyment of life.

Males and older age groups were more likely to report poor physical health, whereas those aged 50-59 years appeared to have lower self-rated mental health and enjoyment of life (corresponding to age related differences in population GHQ12 scores). Living in a NRA was related to poor physical and mental health and enjoyment of life.

Although health problems were cited as a barrier to arts engagement, lack of knowledge, cost and not knowing what’s on offer were considered greater obstacles. However poor health significantly decreased as a reason for non-engagement upon project completion. This was presumably due to the fact that partners worked hard to ensure that the activities matched capabilities in order to ensure feelings of mastery and success. Many artists were highly experienced in working with older people and described how they had adapted materials and techniques to participant needs (e.g. breathing exercises, warm-ups, choreography, use of silk painting, printing, interactive technologies). Ongoing and honest communication between the artists, partner organisations and participants is central to successful project delivery and works best when discussions are held to get to know participants and explore potential obstacles from the outset (e.g. Oh Yeah Music shadowed health and social care staff over a short period to get a feel for the people they would be working with).

Some partners did highlight instances whereby things could have been delivered better. For example, introducing the potential of public performances too soon, underestimating the need to repeat and reinforce learning at the start of each session, not realising that
some activities would be difficult for people with limited dexterity, not building in enough facilitator time and support for mixed ability groups.

On the whole, projects were deemed to have been extremely well received and enjoyable, with many personal obstacles being overcome through task sharing and teamwork. General health and wellbeing impacts observed include increased confidence in own ability, improved concentration and focus and improved dexterity and flexibility (the latter evidenced via sustained dance/movement based sessions).

Fifteen of the 31 projects stated that they would facilitate arts activities or performances for people with dementia and/or address issues related to memory loss and ageing at application stage. Although none of these projects are completed, conversations with artists and carers suggest increased levels of interaction within the group and demonstration of empathy, support and physical contact, increased alertness, ability to focus on tailored repetitive tasks, improved one-to-one communication with staff, responsiveness towards and recognition of the artist and importantly, enjoyment and provision of attention. As well as providing personal benefits, those who cared for them reported that re-introducing the triggers such as songs, dance, personal stories, musical instruments or photos could act as a distraction – making for a more positive and understanding relationship.

Analysis of the full range of projects suggests a move towards improving access to the arts for people with more complex health needs. There is no doubt that this should be within the remit of the AOPP. However, this is a highly specialist field and requires consideration of expertise, risk, consent and ethical practice – in order to ensure the safeguarding of both participants and artists. The Arts Council commissioned two training courses – networking for artists working with people with dementia and creative facilitation with health and social care staff in order to help understand and facilitate arts based practice. There are further projects which concentrate on providing training to both artists and carers, the most notable of which is Big Telly’s Fantasy Hotel and Community Arts Partnership (CAP). The CAP project was devised as a result of research undertaken during the previous pilot programme – which is a valuable resource in itself. However, it is suggested that specific ethics based practice could be offered to artists to help complement project development, management and delivery.

Although direct inferences with regards to the health benefits of AOPP participation can’t be empirically substantiated, the quantitative results do appear to conform to wider research evidence. The AOPP comparator sample demonstrates small increases in the proportion of respondents rating their physical health as good (mental health remained stable) post-project. The positive changes, from project entry to exit, in self-rated enjoyment of life were found to be significant. However, it must be noted that this sample rated their health in more positive terms than the wider sample and therefore may be maintaining good health. Indeed further analysis substantiates that significant positive change was recorded amongst those with the poorest health ratings.

Post-project analysis of WEMWBS statements illustrated increases in wellbeing across all of the indicators except I’ve been dealing with problems well – in particular there was an 18% increase in those always/often feeling relaxed. Utilising the WEMWBS as intended, there was a small but significant increase in the overall post-project population wellbeing score, with 49% of the respondents indicating an increase and 29% of scores remaining stable. The proportion of respondents with the highest wellbeing scores also increased over the duration. However, 22% of respondents had decreased scores and this was most prevalent in males, those living in residential/supported accommodation and the 50-59 age group.

Questionnaire based evidence is substantiated by participant, partner and artist feedback which also suggest that participation in the AOPP has had a positive impact upon wellbeing. The AOPP projects encourage people to have a go at a wealth of creative activities – from traditional crafts to circus skills to dance and drama. However, there are common aspects which relate to increased wellbeing. Through the evaluation evidence, these are broken down to core ingredients of providing enjoyment, social interaction, learning and achievement.

### 13.6 Impact: Strengthening the Voice of Older People

All of the AOPP projects must meet the need to “strengthen the voice of older people”, via artistic expression, capacity building and advocacy. Table 13.9 highlights the relevant AOPP outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for older people to develop skills which will strengthen their voice on issues that affect them. Providing artistic, professional and personal development skills;</td>
<td>Increased skills amongst older people – including artistic, capacity building, community development and advocacy skills;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work to strengthen and develop the voice of older people particularly on issues that directly affect this section of society on a day-to-day basis.</td>
<td>Awareness of the programme and social justice issues amongst policy makers, service providers and wider society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13.10 summaries the corresponding indicators.
Table 13.10

**Indicators: Strengthening the Voice of Older People**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative/Qualitative Indicators</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in awareness, understanding &amp; support of older people’s issues by policy makers</td>
<td>Partially Achieved – role of the arts to a lesser extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in awareness, understanding &amp; support of older people’s issues by service providers</td>
<td>Achieved by those in contact with the AOPP projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in awareness, understanding &amp; support of older people’s issues by wider society</td>
<td>91% artists increased knowledge of social issues 59% event attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in sense of influencing neighbourhood decisions</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in sense of influencing NI decisions</td>
<td>+4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants who strongly agree/agree that they have tried &amp; learned new things</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants who strongly agree/agree that they have surprised themselves &amp; others by what they can do</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants who strongly agree/agree that the activities have given them the confidence to try different things</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of participants who strongly agree/agree that they feel good about what they have achieved</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of artists stating that participants’ showed a desire to learn</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of artists stating that they would like to work with older people again</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants, artists &amp; stakeholders feel skills have been developed via the project</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The AOPP has worked to *Strengthen the Voice of Older People* on a number of levels. Firstly, internal differences in confidence and behaviour have been evidenced. Participatory arts sessions in many cases have taken individuals out of their comfort zones, motivated and challenged them to develop skills within their given mediums and allowed them to create quality artworks beyond their initial expectations. The balance of encouragement and enjoyment has in many cases sparked new interests and reawakened latent talents – leading to a desire to do more...upgrading camera equipment, buying an Ipad, attending drama performances…the “can do attitude” that has been referenced.

The art forms and the artists have been vehicles for creativity, communication and self-expression. Whether its dance, song, creative writing, painting, photography, poetry or crafts how the person chooses content and then interprets it through choice of colour, texture, positioning and presentation is an expression of themselves. The projects illustrate that art can help facilitate both verbal and non-verbal communication. In fact the arts is a safe form of expression as what is created is completely unique, can be interpreted in many ways by different people and is not constrained by logic or fact. Art provides great flexibility in that mediums can be chosen and/or adapted according to the physical and psychological capabilities of the participant. For example, silk painting or the use of Ipad because they require little manual pressure, seated movement, voice recordings, repetitive music chords, collage and mosaic work.

Project delivery has helped artists and partners develop their own awareness of issues that can affect older people’s ability to participate and enjoyment and developing ways to address these. The consortium approach has been beneficial in knowledge sharing and
strengthening networks and capacity at local level. There is no doubt that stakeholders can see the value of arts participation for older people, recognise existing service gaps and are committed to developing their practice and provision. The Arts Council has significantly increased the number of training projects funded, particularly in health and social care related projects (e.g. dementia focused, carers, artists) and this is welcomed and necessary both to encourage safe practice and sustaining the work.

The project showcases and exhibitions are extremely important. Not only in terms of professionally presenting the outputs of the funding, but on valuing the personal stories and journeys behind the work. This is when older people’s voices can be heard by family members, peers, neighbours, commissioners and policy makers. These events are central to challenging the existing societal stereotypes of ageing and demonstrating older people’s creative skills, sense of fun, desire to learn and participate. Although 59% of event attendees reported a lot more awareness of older people’s issues as a result of attendance, it is recommended that more planning takes place to ensure that the opportunities for advocacy during showcases is not lost. Speeches must emphasise how the project has delivered against the AOPP social justice themes, rather than merely promote the activities as being enjoyable.

However, the focus now needs to be on strategically raising the profile of the Programme and its achievements. The AOPP branding is not particularly strong and whilst individual projects may get recognition, it’s not necessarily under the AOPP banner. For example Councillors highlighted local arts projects but were unaware that they were AOPP funded.

There needs to be a collaborative approach to arts and ageing. The sector has grown significantly over the last few years, with a range of age related festivals and events (e.g. Arts and Age, Here and Now, Imagine, Silver Surfer Days, International Day of Older Persons, Age Friendly Cities, Day of Solidarity between the Generations). A collaboratively branded and managed approach would have much more impact in raising awareness and getting the pertinent messages across.

13.7 Growing Audiences and Increasing Participation

The Arts Councils Ambitions for the Arts strategy commits to increasing arts access and participation amongst older people, in addition to other marginalised groups. The Arts and Health policy reports the need to “develop a strategic approach towards addressing the inclusion of older people and other marginalised groups in the arts” and to this end the Arts and Older People Strategy and AOPP were established.

Table 13.11 illustrates the potential of the AOPP since its launch in October 2013.

Table 13.11
**Indicators: Growing Audiences and Increasing Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Indicators¹¹⁰</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 arts projects specifically targeted at older people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,178 participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,955 hrs delivered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,703 showcase attendees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Arts Council has identified older people as a group which have comparatively lower levels of arts attendance and participation than the rest of the population. Hence the development of the Arts and Older People Strategy and the AOPP pilot programme. The

¹¹⁰ Estimation based on received End of Project Reports
interest generated over the course of the initial phase has been sustained during the 2013-16 AOPP. Although a final round of funding is still to be announced, it is estimated that around 3,000 participants will enjoy activities under the projects awarded to date.

Project partners, quality and content have become more ambitious in terms of their duration and subject matter, with many individuals benefiting from more regular and, a greater choice of creative offerings in their local areas. Locally accessible arts provision is extremely important to older people, as is having an understanding and supportive artist who facilitates a welcoming and friendly environment. As a result of the AOPP more and more artists are building knowledge, adapting their practice and challenging and encouraging older people to reawaken and connect with their creativity. There is growing expertise within this sector and a desire to promote good practice and learn from one another. The AOPP have increased their support for practice development through the increased number of awards focusing in on the training of artists and those who work with older people. Specific training was also provided by DSDC and ArtsCare.

The AOPP has been successful in attracting older people’s interest because there is a clear focus upon them from the outset. Applicants must demonstrate that they have consulted widely with potential participants to demonstrate both the need, the art forms that will be used and the relevance to the AOPP strategic themes. This ensures that the activities offered are ones that older people are actually interested in and involvement in shaping activities enables full ownership. Partners have also learned to tailor their advertising (e.g. church or community bulletins, newspapers, flyers and posters at libraries, pharmacies etc.), rather than solely via social media or the internet. Many organisations such as MEAPP and the four Councils have undertaken extensive consultation processes and this has led to a better understanding of issues and greater connectivity to beneficiaries. It emphasises the need to genuinely reach out and get to know your audiences in order to provide them with a product or environment that suits them – rather than what you think they want. Only then will audiences and participation grow.

The most recent Culture NI report illustrates that engagement with the arts is on the increase. Indeed those completing AOPP surveys do have higher attendance and participation levels than older people in general. However, we do not know if reported contact with the arts is sustained or is a one-off event or arts workshop. Certainly the feedback from respondents would suggest that people are relative newcomers or at least trying out new art forms. Although feedback from some artists does suggest that a proportion are active art goers and participants.

Arts attendance is generally lower for older people than is arts participation and this is true for the AOPP sample. Indeed Audiences NI state “we’re good at getting people to come back in the long term, but not in the short term”, with 66% of households making one visit to the arts per year. They report that 41% of people booking tickets for an arts event are either completely new to the arts or lapsed attenders who hadn’t attended in the last two years. New customers are four times more likely to only be attending once that year than multiple times.111 Thus, our population infrequently attends arts related events in dedicated arts venues - although community centres, libraries and outside spaces are increasingly hosting arts activities and are increasing accessibility of the arts for many. It is also suggested that more emphasis should be placed upon providing incentives to participants in the form of free or subsidised tickets to arts venue based performances or workshops through the Programme. This is taking place, but is not the norm.

With the increasing emphasis upon providing outreach to those on a low income and living in less affluent areas, there are currently thriving arts programmes for young

111 http://www.audiencesni.com/what-we-do/Test-Drive-the-Arts-NI/The-Need-for-Test-Drive
people, adults and older adults in NRAs. This has been a positive impact and one that should be sustained. However, it may be that if the Arts Council is looking to reach new audiences it may have to look outside these areas.

The AOPP evidences that the Arts Council are actively doing this as an increasing proportion of projects are looking at more marginalised and hard to reach older people, such as those living in rural areas, in supported accommodation and residential care. People with dementia and ongoing physical and mental health problems as well as the people that care for them have been involved in sustained programmes of arts activities. However, we must also recognise that there are many more older people that could benefit from the initiative. In particular greater emphasis needs to be placed upon engaged older men, minority ethnic communities, the very old and those who are not connected to groups and have little social interaction. Reducing rural isolation also should be addressed.

The evidence shows that the majority of participants report an increased desire to attend arts activities as a result of their involvement. The arts provides so much flexibility and choice and is so much broader than what may traditionally be the notion. The AOPP has challenged partners and older people to taking part in a range of creative endeavours to include fly tying, jewellery making, clay modelling, junk art, collage, crochet, circus, music making, mosaic, screen printing, woodcraft, felt-work, drama and poetry. Dance has proved popular – spanning emotive performances such as Fallen by DU Dance, Craigavon’s Age on Stage’s lively dance steps and the many tea dances that have been hosted in community centres around NI.

As well as challenging older people’s perception of what the arts are and the extent of their own capability, feedback from partners and audiences attending the project showcases also demonstrate greater awareness of the issues concerning older people and more positivity towards aging. This is particularly apparent in intergeneration projects. Therefore it is important that audiences have a good mix of young and old in attendance. Arts Council in partnership with DSDC and ArtsCare hosted a Dementia Breakfast with key decision makers and service commissioners, artists, representatives of the age sector and the media with the aim of discussing dementia and creativity and the portrayal of dementia in the media. The role of the arts in challenging societal stereotypes continues to be a required area of focus.

13.8 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in light of discussions with Steering Group members and the full breadth of the evaluation research. Please note that some recommendations made upon completion of the pilot programme remain relevant:

13.8.1 Final Funding Round

It is recommended that the Final Round will have a strong focus on delivering projects that tackle isolation, marginalisation and social inclusion. However, there must be a clear progression route for participants.

- The Arts Council have successfully targeted and increased the number of projects working in rural areas. This is important as rural dwellers have lower levels of arts engagement due to a range of accessibility issues. Partners have also highlighted the potential for social isolation within this group. Therefore it is important that the AOPP continues to encourage applications which will cover the more remote rural areas;
There have been no survey responses received from County Armagh as yet. However Craigavon Borough Council and Big Telly for example have run projects in the area. It is recommended that grantees are asked to submit which Counties they are/plan to work in, in order to determine any potential geographical gaps as we enter into the final funding round. It would also be useful to ask if they have identified gaps in provision over the course of their project;

Analysis of the participant surveys and feedback from grantees and artists suggests that men still remain under-represented. There are good practice models being delivered through the programme, such as Big Telly’s Machinations project, AGE NI’s photography focused activities and Strabane District Council’s traditional crafts workshops, which demonstrate that perseverance and choosing the right activity and approach is key to success. It is recommended that the final round of applications should contribute to the strengthening of longer term service provision for men and helps to connect them into community activities. The Men’s Shed initiative is highly successful and there is a desire to establish these across Northern Ireland. There is potential for the Programme to provide a test ground for areas that are in the exploration phase – providing an outlet for men to come together, learn new skills and decide what they would like for the future;

Applicants should also consider targeting other marginalised and socially excluded groups such as those with caring responsibilities, seniors from minority ethnic backgrounds, the over 80s, LGB&T and those in poor health who could benefit from participation;

As well as helping to sustain existing activities for older people’s groups, it is extremely important that vulnerable and isolated older people are encouraged to take part in activities and become involved in new social settings. Applicants should not merely recruit from existing networks, but are aware of the potential benefits of targeting via alternative means in order to help others integrate into wider networks. Indeed the Arts Council may consider promoting referral partnerships with community and statutory partners such as the Councils, Health Trusts, community navigators, Good Morning Projects, GPs, community pharmacists etc. and projects which enable a degree of one-to-one outreach (as per the BEAM project);

Feedback from artists highlights that a significant proportion reported that older people did not contribute to the planning of the sessions. It is recommended that all projects should commence with an introductory session enabling information sharing to take place between partners, artists and participants, showcasing previous work, fine tuning content and work plans according to the group’s needs. This session would be a good way of introducing the evaluation questionnaires and enabling discussions to arise. It could provide tasters of potential activities, highlight any dexterity issues and enable participants to express their preferences; and

It is recommended that applicants are asked to formally submit a Recruitment and Exit Plan for their project which will indicate the steps which partners will take, not only to recruit, but to ensure connectivity between the project and other local services, facilities and activities upon completion. Signposting, information provision and the development of transferrable resources and skills must be part of the project – this could be scheduled as the final session alongside the exit questionnaires.

13.8.2 Professional Development

These recommendations relate to building the expertise of artists and partners to deliver against the aims of the Programme, develop their own practice and meet the needs of the people they are working with.
• There are still instances where the offered activities are not suitable for all of the group. This could be due to visual or physical impairments or scheduling too few sessions means that artists have to finish the work after the last session and participants don’t get to see the finished article. In other cases participants are not particularly interested in what they are doing but are humouring the artist, in a joint piece of work there’s little explanation of what the end result will be. These problems appear most prevalent when a range of artists are brought in to deliver short-term sessions and don’t really get to know the group or build up a relationship. Although many AOPP artists are experienced in working with older people, there are still others who aren’t. It is recommended that the Induction Training developed in the pilot – spanning Finance, Evaluation, Communications is reinstated to include Age Awareness. The latter could involve a short chat from one of the AOPP grantees about the learning they have gained. Artists should be present at the Evaluation and Age Awareness sessions;

• The 2013-16 Programme has focused upon training delivery – through funded projects and links with DSDC and Arts Care. The Programme has an increasing proportion of projects which include people with dementia. This is a highly specialist area of work and one that more artists are showing an interest in. In order to progress dementia and creativity the Arts Council, after consideration of the CAP community arts and dementia training for artists, should explore training and support gaps and the potential for offering Dementia Awareness and Ethical Practice training to artists working outside the AOPP;

• There is strong evidence that organisations and individual artists would benefit from informal networking and, potentially mentoring opportunities. So much good practice and learning has been achieved through the AOPP and it is important that this knowledge is routinely shared. Networking can spark new ideas for projects and lead to future collaborations. It would also provide a feeling that grantees and artists are part of a bigger Programme, rather than a collection of individual projects; and

• Arts Council are pursuing fun European funding. Steering Group members are supportive of this and recommend that the collaborative approach involves partners with a range of strengths in order that NI can truly gain learning from the experience as well as sharing our own knowledge and expertise.

13.8.3 Arts and Age Festival

These recommendations recognise that the Arts and Age Festival has grown considerably over the last few years and that there is increasing interest in age sector issues.

• This aspect needs to be adequately resourced in order to promote and strengthen the voice of older people and to showcase their creativity. The collaborative approach to the Festival (bringing in work conducted under Friendly Cities etc.) works well, however it means that the Arts and Age brand is weak. There needs to be a focused effort upon building and promoting the brand, the arts and its social justice messages;

• There is an opportunity to consider whether the Festival would be better served by a consortium approach, with lead partner delivery. This would strengthen the brand and create greater visibility and impact. The strength of the Festival is the links with the AOPP projects – acting as a showcase opportunity and it is recommended that the Festival is about celebrating and promoting ongoing opportunities. Although requiring significant levels of planning, there must be a printed Festival Programme for dissemination;
The AOPP should consider holding a proportion of Final Round funding for a Project Festival Fund. This is in recognition that not all projects will necessarily finish during this month. Therefore a small amount of funding could enable completed projects throughout the 2013-16 Programme to hold exhibitions, demonstration workshops and performances throughout Northern Ireland;

It is considered that more could be done to cross-promote arts venues through the Programme in general (i.e. partners linking to offer discounts or free tickets for participants). However, during the Festival there is an even bigger opportunity to do this – potentially through Audience NI’s Test Drive the Arts initiative. This partnership should be explored further; and

There is potential for the Festival to cover one theme each week – highlighting Loneliness and Isolation, Poverty, Social Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing. Strengthening the Voice is the central theme of the Festival, the Programme and the projects. There is substantial scope for partnership working between the age sector and the Festival in order to achieve this.

13.8.4 Marketing, Communications and Advocacy

These recommendations are considered extremely important for the stability of the Programme post-2016. Awareness of the Programme is relatively low at strategic level, at a time when all public services to include the arts are facing severe budget cuts.

The AOPP must encapsulate and promote the spirit of active, positive ageing and continues to challenge and surprise. This should follow through in the funding of innovative projects which stretch our imagination and makes us think about our own perceptions of age and older people. The pilot Programme flash mob launch at Stormont is one example of creative communication and publicity. The AOPP really needs to increase its profile coming into the final stages of funding;

The marketing and communication efforts must serve to pull together all the different projects into a collaborate effort which are working towards the same strategic aims. The AOPP should be perceived as a package made up of project activity, training, networking, showcases, Arts and Age Festival and advocacy;

An AOPP Newsletter was distributed in the pilot programme and it is recommended that this is reinstated and widely promoted through programme partners and externally. Any case-studies should be contextualised with regards to the social justice area it is addressing (e.g. one on loneliness would start with the prevalence of loneliness within the older population). A dedicated website promoting the programme, the benefits of arts engagement and containing localised information on how to get involved should be considered. In the short-term more prominent website positioning would be beneficial;

Although many practitioners and service providers are aware of the arts potential to improve quality of life, selected Departments and elected representatives appear to be less aware. It is suggested that the Arts Council widely disseminate the evaluation findings in a Briefing Paper [as well as creatively] – highlighting the benefits to loneliness, social inclusion and wellbeing. It is understood that the Arts Council and members of the Steering Group will revisit the AOPP Advocacy Plan in order to deliver targeted messaging which align with age sector campaigns;

In light of the suggested emphasis upon marketing, communications and advocacy, the Arts Council may wish to consider the potential staffing resources required to organise/deliver these in light of its stock take of the Arts and Age Festival;
• The more localised approach to the 2013-16 programme is welcomed and the CDO has linked into the Councils and local health provider networks. This is important as it increases the Programmes connectivity to community planning as well as identifying local needs and gaps. It is suggested that this area based approach is strengthened and the idea of developing localised AOPP Champions and information points are explored; and

• Elected representatives were very clear in that they listen to their constituents and act upon their needs. Therefore it is of utmost importance that project partners and participants are active and vocal in their approach. Showcases have had political representation and the performances etc. were well received. However, it is important that grantees are supported to explain why the project was developed and the unmet need that has been addressed. Unfortunately, the currently funding climate means that it isn’t enough to merely describe what took place.

13.8.5 Evaluation

Not everyone will be able/wish to complete standardised questionnaires and it is stressed that these are voluntary. All projects are encouraged to submit qualitative feedback, poems, photographs, videos and other artwork in order to inform the evaluation. As a significant proportion of projects are working with people with dementia questionnaire returns may be lower than would normally be expected. However, data quality appears to have improved compared to the pilot programme. The following recommendations concern evaluation and evidence gathering.

• It is clear that we still need to communicate the benefits of the evaluation process to grantees. Despite the evaluation briefings and the opportunity for one-to-one support some grantees aren’t using the forms in the correct way and at times this has led to older people completing multiple forms over a short period of time. It is suggested that a reminder email is sent out to current grantees – highlighting in layman’s terms what the evaluation has found and who the Arts Council will lobby as a result. The email should include encouragement and explanation of form completion and/or sending in other evaluation material; and

• Quantitative research methods within the arts sector are not commonly used. It is recommended that artist attendance at the evaluation briefing sessions is made compulsory in order to increase understanding of the questions and the ultimate use of the information generated. It is also important that artists understand the centrality of social justice issues within the AOPP and what it aims to achieve.
Appendix One
Evaluation Framework
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Short-term Outcomes</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengthening the Voice of Older People:</strong></td>
<td>Awareness of the programme and social justice issues amongst key stakeholders, policy makers, service providers and wider society</td>
<td>• Increase in awareness, understanding &amp; support of older people’s issues by policy makers, service providers and wider society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Provide opportunities for older people to develop skills which will strengthen their voice on issues that affect them. Providing artistic, professional and personal development skills; Work to strengthen and develop the voice of older people particularly on issues that directly affect this section of society on a day-to-day basis. | Increased skills amongst older people – including artistic, capacity building, community development and advocacy skills | • % of participants who strongly agree that they have tried & learned new things  
• % of participants who strongly agree that they have surprised selves & others by what they can do  
• % of participants who strongly agree that the activities have given them the confidence to try different things  
• % of participants who strongly agree that they feel good about what they have achieved  
• Increase in sense of influencing neighbourhood decisions  
• Increase in sense of influencing NI decisions  
• % of artists stating that participants’ showed a desire to learn  
• % of artists stating that they would like to work with older people again  
• Participants, artists & stakeholders feel skills have been developed via the project |
| **Social Inclusion:**                   | Positive Relationships developed between people from different backgrounds and experiences. | • % of participants strongly agreeing that they have made good friendships out of this project * cross-community, cross-cultural, intergenerational projects  
• Increase in the promotion of good relations (e.g. sharing facilities, relationship development, networking & links)  
• Older people feel more connected to their local communities and wider NI society  
• Increase in sense of neighbourhood belonging  
• Increase in sense of NI belonging |
| Combating the social exclusion of older people through arts interventions that promote inclusion, free movement and sharing; Working to create a more peaceful, fair and inclusive community that does not discriminate against age and ethnicity |                                                                                                                                 |
| **Poverty:** Providing opportunities for older people living in disadvantaged/marginalised rural and urban areas to access and participate in arts activities; Working to improve the quality of life of older people living in | Increased social interaction through participatory arts projects amongst target groups | • Increase in % participants who have been to see an arts event in the last 12 months (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)  
• Increase in the % of participants who have taken part in an arts activity in the last 12 months (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)  
• Decrease in the % of participants agreeing that there are barriers to the arts (*urban/rural & Neighbourhood Renewal areas)  
• % of participants agreeing that they have made good friendships out of |
Disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas of Northern Ireland.

**Isolation & Loneliness:**
To provide opportunities for social interaction through arts-led interventions and projects; Working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>this project (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of participants agreeing that they have taken part in other groups &amp; activities due to this project (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of participants disagreeing that these sessions haven't made them want to go to arts events (*urban/rural &amp; Neighbourhood Renewal areas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decrease in participants’ loneliness score (Hughes et al)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of artists who feel participants enjoyed the activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of artists who feel that participants are now more positive about the arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants, artists &amp; stakeholders feel that the project has decreased isolation and improved access &amp; participation in the arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Two
Evaluation Responses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>End Report</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANDERSONSTOWN COMMUNITY THEATRE</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>133</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEAM</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<td>DOWN COMMUNITY ARTS</td>
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<td>NORTHERN VISIONS</td>
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<td>OH YEAH</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>STRABANE DC</td>
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<td>DU DANCE</td>
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