



A Festival of Creative Ageing
Produced by Entelechy Arts and the Albany

Evaluation Report

by Elizabeth Lynch MBE

London Borough of Lewisham 2019





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ARTS



Executive Manager
Christopher
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FOREWORD

The entire festival changed my feelings about ageing, including going to the post-project discussion at King's College about The Home. It has been a 'turning', a way of seeing that if we hold older people not as burdens, or as people to be cared for, but as people who produce connection, care and creativity and who challenge us to be human, as we age in different ways and to learn to value difference.

Audience member, discussion at The Home exhibition, King's College, London

Reflecting on *Age Against the Machine* during the time of a pandemic, only a short while after the festival happened, it feels both from a different time, and also a hopeful vision of the future. It was an opportunity for us to see culture differently through a festival for and by older people, where they led the way, and took us on unexpected and inspirational new routes.

The festival celebrated the local, but had a much wider impact. It grew out of a series of relationships and long-term partnerships, particularly between the Albany, Entelechy Arts and Lewisham Council. This allowed it to be fully embedded within its communities, but also confident enough to speak loudly, do things differently and provoke change.

From Christopher Green's ground-breaking *The Home* to the community commissions that were the heart of the festival, there were a series of exceptional moments which will have a resonance for years to come. Elizabeth Lynch has done a wonderful job as evaluator, close to the festival and the people who made it over an extended period, but retaining a critical distance, and helping to reach the significant insights in this report.

Personally, I think we discovered new approaches through this festival, which encourage and support people to give free reign to their creativity and in so doing, remake the culture of their local areas. The festival will certainly be the inspiration as Lewisham becomes London Borough of Culture in 2022. I hope that what we learned here can help guide the way, in Lewisham and elsewhere, as we look for new inspiration and start the essential task of rebuilding our communities.

Gavin Barlow, CEO and Artistic Director, The Albany

NOTES TO READERS

Entelechy Arts

We collaborate with people from marginalised and excluded communities to place arts practice at the heart of a process striving to achieve more equal, connected and engaged communities. Entelechy Arts frequently works alongside people who have often been invisible and un-regarded members of their communities, either because of disability, underlying health conditions or the ageing process.

We believe that arts practice has a central role to play in re-imagining civic connections between historically marginalised individuals and groups. Participation in the arts enables people to feel present, alive and engaged with their world and with the worlds of others. Art creates new contexts and purpose to increase participation and engagement across generations, across cultures and across abilities. Art making can inspire individual and collective imagination.

The Albany

Based in the heart of Deptford, the Albany is a neighbourhood arts centre, pioneering new ways of working, with a history stretching back to the nineteenth century. We present a huge range of events and participation opportunities each year, across artforms and for all ages and most tastes.

We lead and host the Family Arts Campaign – a national Sector Support Organisation funded by Arts Council England to raise family engagement with arts and culture.

The Albany building has four performance spaces, including a unique central performance space. Our other facilities include a café bar, rehearsal and meeting rooms, community garden, and office space. The Albany is a creative and enterprise hub in South East London, hosting a diverse range of creative and community organisations within our building. We aim to offer our resident companies a creative community, with collaboration at its heart. We work with many of our resident organisations in a variety of ways – as artistic collaborators, as partners to deliver our community programmes and as clients.



Evaluation author

Elizabeth Lynch MBE is an arts advisor and researcher who works with artists and communities. Her experience lies in collaborating with and commissioning artists, especially in community contexts, and producing interdisciplinary projects across art, science, health and education. She established the flagship Roundhouse Studios as Director 2001–8 and now works for a range of arts and culture organisations, including Wellcome, National Trust and LAMDA.

She is an Associate Research Fellow in Contemporary Theatre at Birkbeck University, Chair of Board for Theatre–Rites, Trustee for Arts Catalyst, Critical Friend for Ideas Test and a member of Spitalfields Music Advisory Group. In 2002, London Borough of Tower Hamlets awarded her the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Award for an “exceptional contribution to youth and culture in the borough.” In the New Year’s Honours 2020 she was awarded an MBE for services to arts and culture.

Covid-19

This Report was written before the main Coronavirus outbreak in the UK and completed as the lockdown began in March 2020.

The full social, political and economic impacts remain unknown. The immediate impacts on the adult social care and care home sectors are now at the top of news agendas and public consciousness. The crisis in these sectors, described in this report, has escalated in an unimaginable manner. The loss of life for carers and the people they care for is truly tragic, and many say, unjust.

Thousands of neighbourhood Covid-19 Mutual Aid groups have sprung up all over the country offering support to those in self-isolation or quarantine. Over 750,000 people have signed up to volunteer for the NHS. Going ‘back to normal’ is not an option for so many areas of our social and public lives.

We hope that the major shift in public awareness about the status and resourcing of care for our disabled and older citizens will mean that future government and social policy will be informed by a stronger commitment to social justice. Now more than ever, this report clearly illustrates the key role that the arts play in supporting older people in our communities, including the most marginalized, to become recognised, valued and contributing citizens.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was a festival that pulled off that most difficult of tricks – exploring vital issues about life and death in a manner that was always accessible and entertaining yet never patronising. I hope it becomes a regular feature of Lewisham’s cultural calendar.

Miles Hedley, The Greenwich Visitor Blog¹

Age Against the Machine, a Festival of Creative Ageing in the London Borough of Lewisham, was the winner of a Cultural Impact Award for 2019 as part of the Mayor of London’s Borough of Culture initiative. The Albany co-produced the Festival with Entelechy Arts and it took place from 13 September – 6 October 2019.

The *Age Against the Machine* festival lived up to its title, shaking up ideas about art and ageing in a society that often seems to put old people in a box labelled ‘wise but less useful’. The Festival’s surge of activity made older people’s creativity visible to the wider community and to policymakers.

In theatres, community halls, markets, libraries, care homes, shops, and parks, the Festival poured itself into every corner of Lewisham’s large borough. With a total of 275 social events, exhibitions and performances, workshops, pop-ups and takeovers – there were multiple opportunities for joining in and taking part, for co-creation and celebration, for finding artistic work in public places, for meeting to talk and think about growing older, being older, for reflecting back and looking forward.

Whilst shining a light on existing creative ageing activity in Lewisham, the Festival supported new opportunities for artist and community organisations to work with each other for the first time – an opportunity to spread good practice and deepen reciprocal learning for both groups and artists. 22 successful proposals for Project Awards enabled new artistic work to be commissioned reaching 77% of Lewisham Council’s wards.

Programme highlights included:

- *The Home*,² a 48-hour immersive theatre production where audiences experienced life in a care home
- A step-changing 21st Century Tea Dance curated by residents from care homes and sheltered housing
- 22 artistic commissions created with Lewisham organisations
- New commissions from Upswing and Tangled Feet
- *Bed*, a street performance devised by older performers from Entelechy Arts
- A large scale participative choral and movement commission, co-produced with and taking place at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance
- *Ageing Well: Creative Ageing and the City*, an international symposium

¹ <https://www.thegreenwichvisitorblog.com/post/age-against-the-machine-at-the-albany-laban-and-across-lewisham>

² Commissioned and presented by The Albany, Entelechy Arts in association with ARC Stockton, Future Arts Centres

Age Against the Machine set out to explore four key objectives: challenging ageism; championing older artists; instigating a strategic conversation about ageing and creativity; and engaging Adult Social Care Commissioners in conversation about the potential of arts in their provision. The evaluation research captured evidence for the Festival underlying aims and methods included over 100 interviews, several online surveys and workshops.

1. Changing or shifting negative perceptions about ageing

It's changed my perceptions of the way that art generally sees what's available and appropriate for older people, because I just think the name Age Against the Machine has been amazing. ...They've had trans drag acts, and the care home [immersive theatre event] and the big Finale next week. I just think those things are really changing how people can participate in the culture.

Project Award Group participant, Jam and Jam

A significant number of people told us how their attitudes to ageing had positively shifted as a result of their experiences at the Festival. Taking part in the Festival had encouraged many individuals' creativity and, for some, creative risk-taking. They described being motivated to take up new activities and/or learn more about the local offer in Lewisham.

Many people indicated that the social and expressive nature of arts activities helped to address loneliness and isolation for older people. Performances by older artists also provoked different, more positive thinking about limiting attitudes to older people's behaviours. A strong message in the evaluation findings is that people of all ages need and value activity and events that bring people together across the different generations.

2. Encouraging the arts sector to consider more work by and with older artists

Older artists are everywhere, including Lewisham. The festival illuminated and evidenced the increasing presence of older artists in society, and the growth of artists emerging in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. Older performers are challenging casting directors' stereotypes and producing their own material to share online. They also continue to produce work that is disruptive and entertaining, telling us new and diverse, inclusive stories about the universal experience of ageing.

Working with different generations can help some older artists to shake up any self-limiting preconceptions about what might stretch them. Younger artists discover the value and pleasures of a gentler work pace and flexible approach, sometimes leading to fresh, unexpected artistic outcomes. At the *Ageing Well* symposium³, Dominic Campbell – a leading thinker on creative ageing – spoke about a new social and artistic territory:

Art made by older adults should be different art; art made by people not who live longer, but who live in a completely different stage that we have no articulacy about...We don't know what that stage of ageing is at scale. Anywhere. And it's the role of artists....to uncover and explore that.

Dominic Campbell, Creative Ageing International⁴

³ For Symposium Report visit <https://entelechyaarts.org/creative-ageing-and-the-city-symposium-report/>

⁴ <http://www.creativeageinginternational.com/>

3. Instigating a wider strategic conversation about ageing and creativity

It's incredibly important that there are dedicated resources for older adults because they are so invisible within the culture. But to separate them from the rest of life does a disservice to the rest of us. And I think that conversation is beginning to get richer and deeper.

Delegate, Ageing Well symposium

Local conversations about ageing were primarily concerned with mental health and dementia, intergenerational contact, and practical factors to do with access and accessibility. Social prescribing is now on most people's radar, and local cross-sector partnerships are essential for a strategic approach to delivering the health benefits of creative ageing activity. It is vital to listen to and work alongside older people to involve them in planning and design.

Working cooperatively with health, arts, local authority, third sector, and education partners (159 in total) was integral to the Festival's vision. This approach modelled the power of using creativity and the arts to improve quality of life and quality of care for older people. The symposium embodied and amplified the good practice exemplified in Meet Me at the Albany, Manchester's Culture Champions and Japan's Saitama Gold. It also highlighted how local authorities such as Lewisham Council, Greater Manchester, and the Greater London Authority can galvanise and support joined up thinking and co-ordination. However, as David Cutler concludes in *Older and Wiser?*⁵ without a national policy and strategy for ageing, a point has been reached at which greater resources need to be made available by our national governments to enable older people to participate in the arts.

4. Engaging Adult Social Care Commissioners in conversation about the potential of arts in their provision.

Unless we give people a sense of purpose, or reason to get out of bed. That feels like where culture comes in. So, we might be very modest in the way that we're trying out things like social prescribing, but we are being massively ambitious in terms of the central role that we feel that culture has to play in just supporting people to live independently and well.

David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts

The Festival has contributed productively to strategic conversations about the integral role the arts play in providing social care. Working with local organisations (many new to working with artists), and hosting an international symposium, encouraged new voices to join in advocating and lobbying for a national policy on ageing that acknowledges the benefits of creativity. The Festival demonstrated how motivating 'purpose' is, not only for older people, but across the life course, generating a sense of belonging.

Age Against the Machine demonstrated how a three-week festival, working intensively in one geographic area and harnessing multiple cross-sector partners, could showcase and amplify existing good practice, developed over many years. The Festival also stretched this practice, taking new risks and seizing the opportunity to experiment and draw in new partners. It involved older people in designing and curating the programme. Spaces for a light touch approach allowed for spontaneity and for risk-taking, not only with the artistic programme, but also by enabling audiences to try new work, with free and 'pay what makes you happy' events. *The Home* attracted national media attention and international partnerships.

Much of the Festival's legacy is beyond the timeframe for this evaluation. The new GP relationship will be assessed by Entelechy Arts in a year's time. Social prescribing has yet to be widely tried and tested. The world's largest ever study into the impact and scalability of arts interventions on physical and mental health was launched in October 2019 by King's College London and UCL, supported by a £2m award from Wellcome Trust.⁶

5 <https://baringsfoundation.org.uk/resource/older-and-wiser-creative-ageing-in-the-uk-2010-19/>

6 www.kcl.ac.uk/news/worlds-largest-study-into-impact-of-arts-on-physical-and-mental-health





5. Legacy

I can't really convey our gratitude, or the way that this project has changed us as a community. The festival gave permission for us to play and engage with others to play in deeply nourishing ways. We are taking it out and taking it further next year. It has connected us to so many people. Brilliant.
Project Award Group

The high profile platform of the *Age Against the Machine* festival allowed policy makers and leadership within Lewisham Council to understand further the powerful role culture has in our society and local communities. This has increased culture's status within Lewisham's priorities and in turn affected a successful bid to be the London Borough of Culture for 2021.

There is ambition to take activity beyond borough boundaries into neighbouring areas, and find ways to work and maintain connections made during the *Ageing Well* symposium. Locally in Lewisham, plans are underway to develop greater working connections between cultural organisations and Adult Social Care teams.

The legacy of the Symposium (the report of which has been circulated nationally) will create opportunities to share learning nationally and internationally, lobbying and advocating.

Festivals make memories, enrich existing relationships and forge new alliances. This is possibly the best legacy *Age Against the Machine* has created. It marked an extraordinary moment in 2019 in Lewisham, when older artists were centre stage and brought communities together. They refocused our attention, disrupted prevalent attitudes and behaviours that discriminate and limit, and they showed us all a different narrative for ageing.

6. Twelve key findings

Ageism

1. The Festival's bold approach to programming and content offered inspiring alternatives to negative, mainstream narratives about ageing. The programme provoked new or different thinking about ageing and being older and its success was due to co-creation with older people, cross-sector partnerships and collaborations.
2. Festival experiences moved people of all ages to reflect on their attitudes to ageing and to have more positive expectations of themselves, or their future selves, as older people.

Older artists and mainstream

3. There is an audience for work by and with older artists when it is made visible.
4. The theme of Ageing is itself a catalyst for engaging, challenging and adventurous work.
5. Older artists enjoy creative risk-taking. Older people are not only beneficiaries of artistic interventions, but are artists in their own right.
6. The increasing presence of older artists in society, and the growth of artists emerging in their 60s, 70s, and 80s are challenging stereotypes and producing disruptive and entertaining work, telling us new and diverse, inclusive stories about the universal experience of ageing.

Social and health

7. There is an unmet demand for intergenerational work and creative activity that brings different generations together and can challenge limiting perceptions of people at different life stages.
8. The social and expressive nature of creative activity help to address loneliness and benefits physical and mental health.
9. Social prescribing is an opportunity and local cross-sector partnerships are essential for effective delivery of creative ageing activity.

Strategic

10. Through *Ageing Well* and participation in/media coverage of *The Home*, more local public health leaders are more aware of how using creativity and the arts can improve quality of life and quality of care for older people.
11. The arts and wellbeing have become more embedded in Lewisham's Local Plan.
12. Lewisham is more widely recognised for its pioneering work on arts and ageing.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

Age Against the Machine, a festival of creative ageing in the London Borough of Lewisham, was the winner of a Cultural Impact Award for 2019 as part of the Mayor of London's Borough of Culture initiative. The Albany co-produced the Festival with Entelechy Arts which took place from 13 September – 6 October 2019.

One three-week festival cannot change the world, but it can take a deep dive into its own community and learn from what people say and think about ageing, what they know and feel, how they behave and what they do. The Festival aimed to stimulate conversation and challenge the way we perceive ageing and older people. It also aimed to champion and celebrate older people as artists. It highlighted the ways creative practice can promote positive ageing, making a radical impact on quality of life. The Festival's roots are in the long-term practice of Entelechy Arts who have been making work with older artists since the 1980s. Since 2013 the Albany began the *Meet Me at the Albany* project in partnership with Lewisham Council and Entelechy Arts. As David Slater pointed out to me

It's not the circus is coming to town for three weeks and then disappearing.

David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts

The *Age Against the Machine* festival lived up to its title, shaking up ideas about art and ageing in a society that often seems to put old people in a box labelled 'wise but less useful'. The Festival's surge of activity made older people's creativity visible to the wider community and to policymakers.

In theatres, community halls, markets, libraries, care homes, shops, and parks, the Festival poured itself into every corner of Lewisham's large borough. With a total of 275 social events, exhibitions and performances, workshops, pop-ups and takeovers – there were multiple opportunities for joining in and taking part, for co-creation and celebration, for finding artistic work in public places, for meeting to talk and think about growing older, being older, for reflecting back and looking forward. At an international symposium, the Festival engaged public health leaders within and beyond London in learning more about social prescribing, and using creativity and the arts to improve quality of life and quality of care for older people.

The programme took risks emotionally and physically, made demands on older artists and volunteers in terms of time, commitment and stamina. It also considered how to include and welcome those who are frail and less mobile, and those who have less time and energy to give.

I saw pride and joy in older people's creativity and contribution to our communities, heard protest, anger and shame for under-resourced social care, and for the structural and societal prejudice and discrimination that pushes aside the contribution of elders and compromises the values of respect and care for all older citizens as we age. In the city we increasingly live and work in age group silos. The pleasure in, and need for, doing things together with people across the life span resounded during the research for this report. The health benefits of mixing across age groups has been recognised in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines⁷ on independence and wellbeing in older people. Maybe it should be a recommendation for people of all ages.

This was a festival that pulled off that most difficult of tricks – exploring vital issues about life and death in a manner that was always accessible and entertaining yet never patronising. I hope it becomes a regular feature of Lewisham's cultural calendar.

Miles Hedley, The Greenwich Visitor Blog⁸

⁷ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng32/chapter/Recommendations#groupbased-activities>

⁸ <https://www.thegreenwichvisitorblog.com/post/age-against-the-machine-at-the-albany-laban-and-across-lewisham>

1.2 Context for Age Against the Machine

Whilst shining a light on existing creative ageing activity in Lewisham, the Festival supported new opportunities for artist and community organisations to work with each other for the first time – an opportunity to spread good practice and deepen reciprocal learning for both groups and artists.

The Festival gave Entelechy Arts and the Albany an opportunity to concentrate on a specific geographical area, defined by their local authority boundary, and to explore in more depth how a festival that was celebrating ageing and growing older would be of interest to local organisations and care homes. The response to the call out to community groups for Project Awards by Lewisham Council's Arts Office was impressive. 34 groups from all over the borough sent in proposals to make work with an artist. 22 were selected by a panel of local people representing different stakeholder groups.

The 22 new works are really at the centre of the whole programme, I think that is very key. And that's one of the ambitions for the whole festival: a sense of that sense of belonging, that sense of – this is something that is shared and owned by us.

David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts

Older Lewisham residents supported the most ambitious commission for the Festival, Christopher Green's *The Home*. Their deep engagement with the lead organisations and their knowledge of Christopher's work meant that they put their trust in artistic work that many would (and did) find radical and experimental. Three of these older residents were featured on the publicity images posted up all over the borough. They were recognised on buses and on the street, and often had to field provocative questions about the programme, which David says they did with integrity, and in their own way.

It almost feels like you can be really bold and do dangerous things, maybe in the way that you style yourself inside your own home. Well, now we're opening the front door and we're walking out into the street. And we're inviting people in neighbouring boroughs, or people are coming from a different part of the country to come and see it. It's just increasing the gaze, the engagement with what's happening...

David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts

In addition to drawing attention to what is happening in Lewisham, the Festival drew in partners and participants from further afield to ensure the impact of *Age Against the Machine* would be wide and deep beyond the local. The core question asked was, 'What is the role for arts and creativity in supporting older people to flourish?' This enquiry underpinned both the rationale for Project Awards to community organisations to offer artistic commissions and the *Ageing Well: Creative Ageing and the City*⁹ international symposium. The symposium also asked whether health teams in local authorities, the voluntary sector, and the NHS can work more closely with artists and the arts sector, and shift their approach so that older people are central to the process.

There are tremendous opportunities that come from longer lives, yet just one in three people worldwide say they are looking forward to their old age. This is perhaps not surprising given the prevailing narrative across the globe is one of decline, frailty, ill-health and loneliness. These negative experiences are not inevitable. We must improve our workplaces, our housing, our health, and our communities to enable more of us to age well. Changing our own and society's attitudes to later life is an essential first step

Anna Dixon, Chief Executive of the Centre for Ageing Better

At the time of writing this report, a comprehensive review of the development of the creative ageing sector over the past decade has been published, *Older and wiser? Creative ageing in the UK 2010-19*¹¹. This detailed report has many excellent case studies. It examines how far the sector has come and considers where it should go next. I highly recommend it to those who want to know more about the depth and breadth of creative ageing work, to explore evidence and analysis to support your thinking, and understand the wider social and political context for *Age Against the Machine*.

⁹ <https://entelechyarts.org/creative-ageing-and-the-city-symposium-report/>

¹¹ *Older and wiser? Creative ageing in the UK 2010-19* by Dr Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, King's College London January 2020 <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/resource/older-and-wiser-creative-ageing-in-the-uk-2010-19/>

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation Plan

As an independent evaluator I cannot claim to be wholly impartial, but believe that my knowledge of and experience of working with artists and communities usefully informs my research approach. I was engaged early on in the Festival planning process (January 2019), to act as a critical friend to facilitate internal sessions with the stakeholder team before designing the evaluation plan. These workshops and conversations drilled down into the overarching festival aims, refining what the research findings could evidence. Four key questions were agreed for the evaluation plan. These asked how *Age Against the Machine* would:

- A. **Change** or shift negative perceptions about ageing amongst the people who engage with the programme
- B. **Encourage** the arts sector to consider more work by and with older artists
- C. **Instigate** a wider strategic conversation about ageing
- D. **Engage** Adult Social Care Commissioners in conversation about the potential of arts in their provision.

The limitations of the timeframe and scale for this report mean that evidence of impact which emerges after the Festival during 2020 and beyond cannot be captured. What the evaluation can try to demonstrate is a change or shift in attitudes and awareness, and any commitments to action, as indicated late autumn 2019.

2.2 Qualitative data

Prior to the Festival:

- 1. Workshop with staff from Entelechy Arts, the Albany, and Lewisham Council
- 2. Conversations with programming and community outreach staff at Entelechy Arts and the Albany
- 3. Baseline survey of individuals representing a good sample of local stakeholder groups and sectors (53 participants)
- 4. Welcome Workshop with Project Award Groups (25 attended)
- 5. Interviews with selected commissioned artists and David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts
- 6. Training session for volunteers on vox-pop interview techniques.

Prior to the Festival:

- 1. Short interviews after shows and at events, with audiences and some participants x 90
- 2. Evaluator observations at performances and events x 19
- 3. 40/80 Letter writing project x 42 participants
- 4. Informal conversations by the evaluator with participants, artists, audiences, and stakeholders
- 5. Interviews with 10 Japanese and UK artists involved in Bed performances.

After the Festival:

- 1. Evaluation Workshop with Project Award Groups x 16/22
- 2. Online survey of all artists commissioned to make new work x 20
- 3. Online survey of key stakeholders x 14
- 4. Online survey of volunteers (by Entelechy Arts)
- 5. Online survey of The Home 'temporary residents' (by the Albany)
- 6. Online survey of Symposium delegates (by the Albany) x 11
- 7. Interviews with David Slater and Christopher Green
- 8. Project Award Group evaluation forms (by Lewisham Arts Officer) x 19/22
- 9. Evaluation documents produced by Upswing, Tangled Feet and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance
- 10. Informal feedback from artists and participants via email.

2.3 Quantitative data

Qualitative data was gathered via:

1. Box office and Duty Manager data from the Albany
2. Social media data collected by the Albany and Entelechy Arts
3. Project Award Group data from feedback collected by Lewisham Council
4. Media coverage collected by Entelechy Arts and the Albany.

Note to readers:

- Verbatim quotes from interviews and surveys are highlighted in blue and are anonymous, unless easily identifiable and quoted with permission.
- Quotes from publications are given in italics.
- Interview sample: We estimate that whilst the ages of people interviewed ranged from 10 years to 91 years old, most people interviewed were between 25 and 75 years old and approximately 66% female, 36% male. Interview teams were briefed to aim for as diverse a sample as possible at each event, e.g. by age, gender, ethnicity – based on observation only. It was not appropriate to ask personal questions during short face-to-face interviews.
- Lewisham is the 15th most ethnically diverse local authority in England, and two out of every five residents are from a black and minority ethnic background. The largest BME groups are Black African and Black Caribbean: Black ethnic groups are estimated to comprise 30% of the total population of Lewisham.¹² This diversity was certainly reflected in both in the profile of the artists commissioned for the programme and the audiences. It was also observed by the evaluator and volunteers conducting the interviews and recorded in the monitoring logs kept by the Albany and the Project Award Groups.

The diversity of the participants and the audience was noticed by a gerontologist who attended the Grande Finale, who thought that something interesting was being modeled before his eyes:

I think certainly in Bristol the voluntary sector has still got the tendency to homogenise later life and without really understanding diversity. And so, they need to understand more. (Interviewer: So, what sort of diversity do you mean?) I mean in cultural diversity. I call it hyper diversity. So, it looks at the way later life intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, all the very fluid aspects of our life.

Audience member Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance



3. THE FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

The Festival itself was based in a totally different mode of thinking about the huge spectrum of what we all have to offer each other.

Project Award Group

The festival programme featured over 275 events, from live music, theatre and exhibitions, to walks, talks, workshops and community events.

Highlights included:

- *The Home*,¹³ a 48-hour immersive theatre production where audiences experienced life in a care home. Created by Christopher Green in collaboration with Entelechy Arts, it drew on their shared work with older people over several years.
- A step-changing *21st Century Tea Dance* curated by residents from Lewisham Care Homes and sheltered housing schemes.
- 22 artistic commissions created with Lewisham organisations across the borough.
- Two new commissions *Catch Me* from Upswing¹⁴ and *Half Life* from Tangled Feet.¹⁵
- *Bed* a street performance devised by older performers from Entelechy Arts
- A large scale participative choral and movement commission, co-produced with and taking place at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance
- *Ageing Well: Creative Ageing and the City*, an international symposium.

Total Events	275
Public, performances, talks, films, exhibitions, walks	88
Audience attendance figures	15,398
Participatory events	187*
Project Award Groups	22
Project participants	1851
Lewisham Borough Wards hosting events	14
Livestream audience for The Home	2,000
Collaborating partners	163
Volunteers	276

*172 of these were CGA workshops and rehearsals, many of which took place June-September 2019

Of the 83 events that took place during the three-week festival 13 September- 6 October our data tells us the following about the work that was shared:

- 45%** supported by volunteers
- 64%** intergenerational (either created by or for an intergenerational audience)
- 68%** created by, or with, older artists
- 71%** created through collaboration
- 31%** new work
- 23%** performed at the Festival as part of a wider tour
- 13%** new commissions
- 308%** increase on expected audience numbers (the Albany's target was 5,000)
- 132%** increase on expected participation numbers (1,851 actual, 1,400 expected)
- 147%** increase on Project Award Groups' event audiences (4,086 actual, 2,782 expected)

A gem of a festival, with innovative work with far reaching outcomes well beyond London.

Delegate, Ageing Well symposium

13 Commissioned and presented by the Albany, Entelechy Arts and Christopher Green in association with ARC Stockton, Future Arts Centres and Saitama Arts Theatre.

14 Supported by Without Walls, Jackson's lane and Arts Council England. Commissioned by Age Against the Machine and Norwich Festival.

15 Commissioned by the Albany, ARC Stockton and the Gulbenkian Theatre

16 See Acknowledgments section for details

4. SUMMARY OF BASELINE FINDINGS

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the pre-festival survey, conducted May-June 2019, was to capture attitudes, perspectives and knowledge related to the overall evaluation aims of the Festival. The survey sample was drawn from four stakeholder groups with an interest in the Festival and distributed to 100 individuals of whom 53¹⁷ responded. The survey participants indicated their age in the following groupings: 25–34 years (34%), 44–54 years (47%), 55–80+ years (19%).

Some survey findings will be indicated in more detail in the relevant sections of this report, in order to explore how experiences of the programme challenged or validated knowledge and perceptions. The headline findings below relate to the four research questions indicated in Section 2.1 above.

In addition to the survey, 25 people participated in a **Welcome Workshop** for representatives from the Project Award Groups and some of the artists working with them. As part of the event they were asked specifically about the impact of the arts on people, and the impact they would like their creative activity to have. The responses have been integrated into the summary below.

4.2 Findings

What do we gain by saying: ‘This person is old’? [Carl Honoré] believes ageism is lessening but remains endemic. In fact, he says that when he began the book he was one of its worst proponents. “When I was younger, I was so ageist. I had a dread of growing old. I had bought into that idea that you hit 35 and it’s just a downward spiral. I used to think of old people as just sad and cantankerous. But, if you look at the stats, the people with the highest levels of happiness and life satisfaction in Britain are the over-60s. That doesn’t take away from the fact that many people will be very unhappy, but the story we are told and that we tell ourselves is that everyone is unhappy. It’s always the worst-case scenario: that’s what we are contaminated by.”

Stephen Moss, ‘Age against the machine: the secret to enjoying a long life,’ interview with Carl Honoré ¹⁸

4.2.a Attitudes to growing older resonated with the concerns of the Ipsos MORI poll on Ageing.¹⁹ Responses to a question about positive and negative language to describe growing older highlighted a disconnect between the aspirational perception of ‘wisdom’ as a positive aspect of growing older, and the contradictory perception of older people as being ‘less’ in some way, and as a result people themselves feeling that they are or will be ‘less’.

¹⁷ Artists/arts organisations x 32, and people representing Lewisham Council and voluntary sector organisations x 21

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jan/03/age-against-the-machine-secret-enjoying-long-life-carl-honore>

¹⁹ February 2019 <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/global-study-finds-high-levels-concern-about-ageing>

I think it's brilliant you get this mix and it's about ageing rather than being aged
Audience member, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

4.2.b In terms of the **artistic work** they were making for *Age Against the Machine*, artists indicated the aims relating to social justice content, equity and skills development. Priorities for their festival commissions for those attending the Welcome Workshop were about 'challenge and change,' and 'creativity and sociability' for both artists and participants. Responding to a question about the unique aspects of the arts, two thirds of the group indicated the impact of the arts on mental wellbeing – for expressing emotions and experiencing joy. One third indicated physical impacts, e.g. on visual memory, blood circulation.

4.2.c The desired **impact of the Festival** on the arts sector was an increase in both visibility and profile for older artists backed up by strong marketing and PR/media coverage, and an increase in professional opportunities for older artists.

4.2.d People indicated that the **important conversations about Ageing** the Festival could start or expand were: the value of the arts for self-expression, socialising and health; ageism in the arts sector and wider society; learning about all aspects of ageing with older people; more intergenerational social contact.

4.2.e Half of the survey participants knew 'a little' about **social prescribing**²⁰ and just over 20% had a 'good knowledge.' This is encouraging given that this is a relatively new initiative for the arts sector to consider and to be involved in. 25% indicated that they were involved in influencing social prescribing for artistic, creative and cultural activity. However, 51 out of 53 people indicated the key challenges they face: 'not enough funding for prescribing arts activity,' and 'not knowing what is available in my area'.

4.2.f Regarding hopes for the Festival **making a difference**, participants' top three choices were:

- More local public health leaders are more aware of how using creativity and the arts can improve quality of life and quality of care for older people (86%)
- The arts and wellbeing become more embedded in Lewisham's Local Plan (70.5%)
- Lewisham is more widely recognised for its pioneering work on arts and ageing in the media, health and arts sector publications, etc. (59%)

4.2 Conclusion

These bold hopes could be seen as realistic given London Borough of Lewisham's existing commitment to arts, health and care for older people. This evaluation will explore any step-change that took place as a result of the opportunity the Festival presented for the focus on the benefits of arts and creativity for older people and wider sharing of good practice.

²⁰ This initiative comes on the back of the All Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry Report on Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing (www.culture-healthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry). Health Secretary Matt Hancock pushed the arts up the health policy agenda in 2018 by announcing £4.5m investment in GP social prescribing. Social prescribing is a non-clinical intervention in someone's life that should enable improved health and wellbeing. It is not like medical or surgical treatment. It can be any activity that a person enjoys that supports their ability to manage their health – from sport and walking to painting and dance, to volunteering.



TAI CHI, CHA-CHA-CHA

presented by The Diamond Club. A Project Award commission

A showcase of creative work by older people including photography, mosaics, needlecraft, wood carving, crochet, and knitting. There were movement displays showcasing routines created in Tai Chi, Cha-Cha-Cha workshops, plus tea and homemade cakes. The workshops were funded by a Project Award.

The afternoon I spent at The Diamond Club²¹ was one of my highlight events during the Festival. Hartley Hall was packed with members and friends, including the Mayor of Lewisham. As the effervescent movement teacher led a seated group of over 20 elders in a choreographed sequence of Tai Chi moves, the room was mesmerised and all those seated at the display tables around the space also joined in. It felt uplifting and energising to be in the room! Dances involving the upper body and footwork followed, and it felt like being at a party.

The ages ranged from mid-60s to early 90s. The club organiser later told me that they had expected 25 attendances for their programme, but this had nearly quadrupled to 92. The club meets weekly and 30% of its members are living with dementia.

Already a thriving club, the new creative activities funded by the Festival have enhanced the offer for members and others in their area. Tai Chi will continue weekly for up to 50 elders each week. It has also been introduced in the monthly mental health drop-in group, *Third Tuesday Time* at Hartley Hall. The mosaics created as part of their artistic commission will be on display at all future events. An artist who came to the exhibition has offered to run street art workshops for older adults. Their event was listed as part of Catford Art Trail and they want to be part of this again in 2020.

²¹ <https://www.lewishamlocal.com/places/united-kingdom/greater-london/london/lewisham-groups/diamond-club/>

5. AIM ONE: CHANGING OR SHIFTING NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS ABOUT AGEING AMONGST THE PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE WITH THE FESTIVAL

I shall take away from this the solidarity... and the stimulation. I think it's brilliant. You just have to open your mind and there's no question as you get older your mind wants to do that, and it's really hard work.

Audience member, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

The growth of the ageing population is one of our greatest achievements. However, it also presents society, business, and brands with significant challenges as well. Our research shows that, globally, there is a great deal of negativity towards later life, with financial and health concerns prevalent. Feeding into this negativity is a sense that the media does not do enough to portray later life as a time of potential. It is therefore, perhaps, little surprise that when describing those in old age people commonly reach for terms like 'frail,' 'lonely' and 'unfairly treated,' along with 'wise'.

There are reasons for optimism, however. More people globally have faith in the power of technology to improve the lives of the elderly. People also tend to think that there are things that they can do to ensure they are prepared for old age – though there is a gap between what we know we should be doing, and what we are doing in practice. Later life should be our golden years – but there is clearly much work to be done for this time in our life to be seen as such.

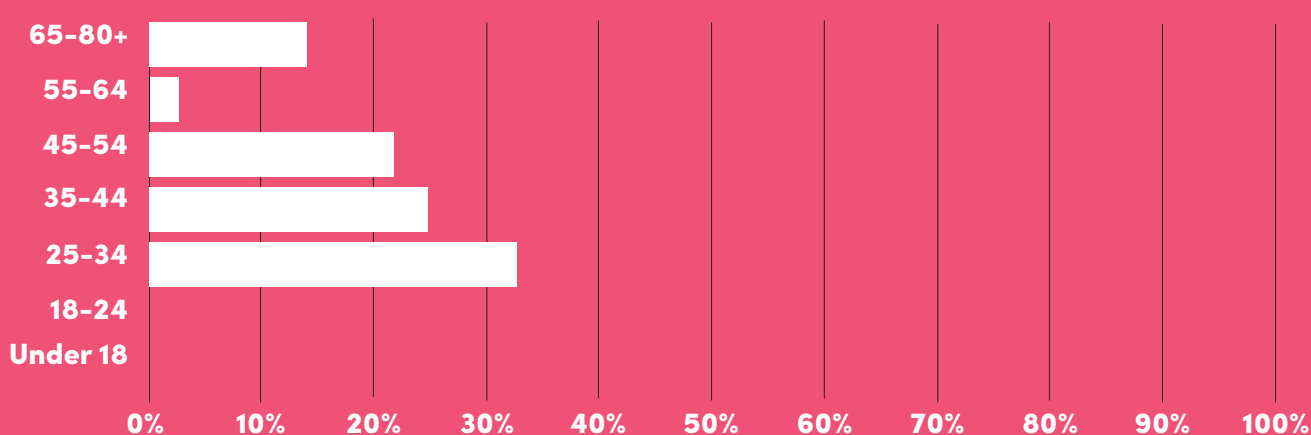
Suzanne Hall, Director at Ipsos MORI ²²



5.1 Attitudes to growing older and baseline data

In Great Britain, people overwhelmingly agree that old people are not as respected as they should be. Nearly two thirds (63%) agree, and this rises with age. Half (47%) of those aged 16–24 agree; this figure rises to three quarters (73%) of those aged 55–64.²³

The findings of our baseline survey resonated with the Ipsos MORI poll. The survey sample of 53 stakeholders represented the following age groups:



Five questions explored attitudes to growing older. Firstly, survey participants were asked to give three to six words that described positive and then negative aspects of growing older.

Of the 224 positive words, the most indicated were: **Wisdom and experience (33.5%)**, **Personal growth and confidence (18%)**, **Freedom (16%)** and **Time (12%)**. The 215 negative words were more varied in their classification. The most indicated were: **Being 'less' in society (22%)**, **Poor health and pain (17%)**, **Physical and mental decline (17%)**, **Loneliness and bereavement (both 10%)**.

This highlights a disconnect between the aspirational perception of 'wisdom' as a positive aspect of growing older, and the contradictory perception of older people as being 'less' in some way, and as a result, people themselves feeling that they are or will be 'less'.

5.2 How the Festival's activities shifted or changed attitudes to ageing

After the Festival stakeholders, participants and audiences were asked if their experiences of the Festival had shifted or changed their attitudes to, and perceptions of, growing older. We captured feedback on this first festival aim using two approaches:

- Project Award Group feedback questionnaires (19 of 22 groups responded)
- Short 'vox pop' interviews (71 of 80 responded)

²³ February 2019 <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/global-study-finds-high-levels-concern-about-ageing>

5.2.a 'You can contribute to your community at any age'

The Project Award Group questionnaire asked the main contacts for each group to indicate what had changed for them and their participants, if anything. 19 of the 22 Projects took part in the questionnaire distributed by London Borough of Lewisham. 3 out of 19 participants indicated that nothing had changed for them, because they work with older people all the time and they already agreed with all the statements offered.

For the remaining 16, the top choices indicated were:

- You can contribute to your community at any age
- The knowledge and wisdom of older people is under-used by society

Followed closely by:

- You can learn new skills at any age
- You can make new friends at any age
- Participating in the Festival has made me feel more confident
- Creativity can help express how you feel at any age

And:

- I feel more positive about growing older
- It made me want to find out more about other creative activities to get involved with

I was already in agreement with the above statements, but I was so humbled by the level of enjoyment experienced by attendees. The over 60s sure know how to have fun.

Project Award Group

If I am speaking for myself, then I already hold these views/attitudes above but I know that many of the participants did increase their confidence. They felt very proud of what they achieved, especially things they had not done before, e.g. drama sketches & magic tricks! JOY members are very involved in creative expression through dance, singing, Tai Chi on a regular basis... What was really wonderful was bringing all these activities together and everyone creating a great performance for their friends, family and other local people.

Chair of JOY, Project Award Group

We do think the children saw us older people more positively as the project progressed. At first when we asked for pupil volunteers for the performance group there was a general reluctance from the Year 5s. As the lunchtime performance club got into its swing there was a groundswell of Year 5s wanting to join on the basis that we were all having a lot of fun.

Myatt Seniors, Project Award Group

I really loved getting to know them. And doing a play with them and working with them.

Year 5 pupil, Myatt Garden School

It was just amazing to work with them because they put so much effort in, like creating this and it was just really fun. And it was better than lunchtime play. It was.

Year 5 pupil, Myatt Garden School

5.2.b 'It was an eye opener'

The 80 interviews²⁴ conducted after performances and events asked people:

- How did this arts event/activity get you thinking about ageing?
- How has your attitude to ageing shifted or changed after taking part in/seeing this activity/event/ show?

The Ipsos MORI poll found that *'Britons are overwhelmingly negative about old age. Only 30% agree that they are looking forward to old age, while more than double 68% disagree with this statement.'*

48% of our interview sample²⁵ questioned about a change in attitude said that their thinking had changed to a more positive view.

It's changed because I'm thinking you can do anything you want to do. Even if you have a disability, you can still do something. So it's really great to see other people, because sometimes you think it's just you. So when you see other people, it encourages you to do something.

Audience member, Memories in Movement with IRIE! Dance Theatre

I dread this white hair. I dread this age of mine. There's nothing gracious about me accepting that I am the age I am, and it frightens me. I dread to think I'm going to have to give up maybe my independence, which is not the right approach. This is a good approach. (Interviewer: So what thoughts will you take away from this event?) Well, you don't give up. In one simple sentence, if you have any spirit!

Audience member, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

Whilst 52% indicated 'no change', this was not stated from a negative starting point. Most people qualified this response, saying that they already had a positive attitude to ageing or that their personal caring role or professional role with older people had given them positive insights and attitudes. Older people themselves often expressed a positive attitude to being older, because they felt they wanted to make the most of their lives, despite, for example, health and mobility challenges. It might be expected that people participating in and attending events for *Age Against the Machine* might be predisposed to think more positively about growing older. **Nevertheless, the significant number of people who articulated how their attitudes had shifted to a more positive view tells us that we can and should pay attention to these comments.**

For some people the positive shift was about reinforcement for their views, for others it was about solidarity and encouragement.

Ageing does freak me out a lot, but it's nice to know you're not the only one worrying about it I think – everyone else goes through the same kind of thing. It's quite nice and comforting to know you're not the only one stressing about it.

Audience member, Half Life by Tangled Feet

It hasn't changed. I've been looking forward to it [ageing], but it has allowed me to embrace it better. [The final dance event] was good. It was an eye-opener. I enjoyed it.

Audience member, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

Being old doesn't necessarily mean you become decrepit. Spiritually and intellectually and maybe even physically.

Audience member, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

²⁴ The brief was to capture feedback from a representative sample of those attending a particular event. The aim overall was to have a diverse range of people in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. The selection was based on the interviewers' subjective observations.

²⁵ 71 of the total 92 interviews asked people whether their attitude had changed. 34 answered Yes (48%), 37 No (52%), 9 interviews did not include this question but did ask about thoughts on ageing. NB.12/92 interviews were conducted after two private performances of *Bed* for health professionals.

5.2.c 'Get out of your comfort zone'

Two useful findings for the Festival is that a significant number of the sample were **motivated to take up new activities and/or they learned more about the local offer in Lewisham**. At the Grand Finale participants said:

The classes given by Laban teachers have given me such a new lease of life, so energised me, and added to the richness of my life. The kind of age thing has slipped away a lot.

It's made me more sure that you've got to keep moving and doing things. And you've to try new things as well. Get out of your comfort zone.

Age has never been an issue. Yes, we get grey hair and everything, but I think what I would say about shifting is that we can all learn new things, whatever age. (Interviewer: Is there anything you'll do differently?) It's interesting you should say that. Because I've never really gone and done much dancing, but we've done this dancing and I've decided I'm going to join a dance group. So yes, that's for me!

It means that there are lots of interesting things that you can do when you get older to keep your mind and your body physically active. Keeping physically active is good as you get older. So that is a big part of this festival.

Across many of the survey comments and interviews, the range of activities in Lewisham was repeatedly mentioned:

Well it has opened my eyes to how many things are done in Lewisham. I didn't realise ... what a big offer there was. Not just for the older people but in general, for the adult learning classes.

Audience

I learned that Lewisham is providing some fantastic creative facilities for the older community, and that the choirs and dance groups are hugely diverse.

Artist

The festival for me highlighted the incredible range of what's available in Lewisham, the enthusiasm for creativity and the arts (and humanities!) amongst older residents.

Staff member, Adult Learning, Lewisham

5.2.d 'Loneliness rates are pretty high'

There were several comments about **addressing loneliness** that embraced different cultural attitudes, the need for local activities, for encouragement to participate, and for all of us to recognise loneliness and ongoing outreach and communication:

I'm from Colombia, when you grow old you are an important part of your family and in the UK I have found that the culture is not like that. So I was concerned how elders do here, the loneliness rates are pretty high. It's not like that in Colombia, the culture protects more the elders. So today, seeing the event and seeing all the people, different ages, it's beautiful. When you are old you are not disposable. I think art is really important to really connect with others ...

You don't have to get old and be on your own. I think if you've got the confidence to go somewhere and try it, I think it gives you another lease of life. I've seen it in my mum.

[The event] helps to understand that people don't have to be alone. If they are able to take that step, to go to an event or to go to classes where they do as much or as little as they want. At least they know there is something out there for them.

Right. Change. So, from this festival I am taking away such positiveness about trying to be inclusive ... So, for me, it would be about trying to reach out to people and get away from isolation and loneliness.

The challenges of communicating what is available and finding out about it are both practical and psychological, so encouragement and empathy is helpful, as these two women counselled:

It is difficult if the person is isolated and is determined to become a semi hermit. And there is a lot of publicity out there. But getting it to the individual can be difficult unless they want to seek out the information, and if they are housebound that can be difficult. I know there's an awful lot available now on the web and computers, but a lot of us are computer illiterate, as I am.

84-year-old member of The Diamond Club

Yes, negativity doesn't achieve very much. I know it can be difficult to be positive if you're lonely and have ill health, but just try. Persevere.

84-year-old member of The Diamond Club

To just make time for those older people that you do come across, because we could be the one person that they see or get to communicate with. When you see older people and they're trying to talk to you, and we might be so busy rushing on, just stop and make the time.

Participant, Age Against the Machine Fun Palace

5.2.e 'Wild and brave and funny'

The Festival encouraged creativity and, for some, creative risk-taking. The participatory activities offered stretch and challenge – a chance to make a step-change in attitudes and habits. The performance programme offered audacious and disruptive content by older artists.

You'll hear lots of people and the older generation will say, one is as old as one feels. So sometimes, with the aches and pains of arthritis, yes you feel older. But in my head, it's true, I don't feel any different from when I was 40 I don't think.

(Someone else) Well, I do in a funny way...I'm less inhibited as an older person than I was as a younger person. (In what way?) Well, I do go to the dancing class, perform and things and I wouldn't have done that when I was younger. I would have been too self-conscious. I'm not so self-conscious now. I think it's easier to take more creative risks. We can't always take physical risks because we're not built for it as we get older, but it is good to take creative risks.

Participants, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

I don't meet that many older people in my day-to-day life. I don't have any older relatives left so I only meet young people....one of the things that was interesting is that a lot of these guys are having treatment for illnesses and stuff. They know they only have a limited amount of time left and what do you do with a limited amount of time left? Do something creative.

Artist working with a Project Award Group

It made me think about singing and my voice...it was good to practice my voice.

Choir participant, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

It makes you realise that there's still many things you can do as you get older, musically, and that you don't lose it. And often a lot of the older people have a very good ear for listening to things and singing back.

Choir participant, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

There are lots of things one could do that I've not really thought of, like the guerrilla knitting.

Audience member, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

Performances by older artists also provoked different thinking on **social attitudes to older people's behaviour**, for people at different stages of ageing:

Well, as an older person myself, I found it totally liberating. I have never seen an older person performing that way!

Audience member, Slap and Tickle by Liz Aggiss

It altered my attention to some of the challenges I probably will face when I'm older, and that's something I don't consider at 25, right now.

Audience member, Slap and Tickle by Liz Aggiss

YES, she's out there saying that you can do what you like. And she did what she likes. We really liked 'pissy old ladies' and a lot of things made me chuckle. Thank you, that relates to me... I thought she built up to the end so brilliantly. And it was so wild and brave and funny, and I've never seen anybody enjoy a curtain call like that.

Audience member, Slap and Tickle by Liz Aggiss

It'll help the kind of empathetic view of not just seeing all the people now as people who've always been old, because they too were my age....I was thinking about the things that they were interested in and that they were passionate about, in their relationships, when they were young.

Audience member, Die! Die! Die! Old People Die! by Ridiculusmus Theatre Company

It's changed my perceptions of the way that art generally sees what's available and appropriate for older people, because I just think the name Age Against the Machine has been amazing. ...They've had trans drag acts, and the care home [immersive theatre event] and the big Finale next week. I just think those things are really changing how people can participate in culture.

Project Award Group participant, Jam and Jam

My attitude? Well probably be like, don't listen to anyone else when they tell you what to wear because you're yourself and you look what you look like!

Audience member, 10 years old, Ageing in Style Fashion Show by Rushey Green Time Bank

5.2.f Age and relationships

Right across the evaluation data, people of all ages talked about the value of and need for activity and **events that bring people together across the different generations:**

Actually, the intergenerational aspect, I think, was the most interesting for me, in terms of thinking about age and relationships. Today there were very young children and elderly and it was really interesting to see how they interacted during different activities.

Project Award Group participant, Jam and Jam

I have actually been thinking about when my mother goes.....I want to find some surrogate, parents, grandparents, people, local people who I can go and help and spend time with.

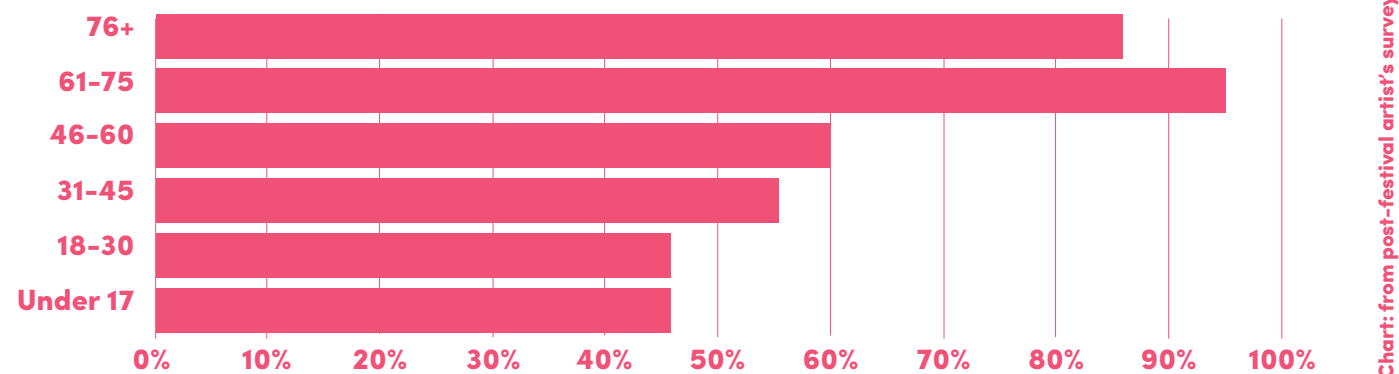
Project Award Group participant, Jam and Jam

It was really interesting to see the way that the older cast members were built into the fabric of the show. I loved the use of the theatrical exercises and warm-ups as part of the artistic content. Also, the idea of giving those people a platform and a voice was really lovely, and in correlation to the journey of somebody's life, it really worked.

Audience member, Half Life by Tangled Feet

Did you work with people in your project group from different age groups?

Indicate all that you were aware of:



There were many comments on the intergenerational aspect of the *Grand Finale* at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance by audience members and participants:

I think that the potential for intergenerational work is still untouched. It's lovely here at Laban because there's so much contact with the students and the art scene. But there's still a way to go before we really are a truly inclusive society.

Those who are coming here to take part and to view are intergenerational. That I like. Because very often I think people think ...well its older people only. It'd just be older people coming to watch, but it's not. But I think the nature of Trinity Laban is they make an effort to make things intergenerational.

I like the interaction between the young people and the older groups of people. I was surprised there are so many young people here.

5.3 Summary

A significant number of people told us how their attitudes to ageing had positively shifted as a result of their experiences at the Festival. Taking part in the Festival had encouraged individuals' creativity and, for some, creative risk-taking. They described being motivated to take up new activities and/or learn more about the local offer in Lewisham.

Many people indicated that the social and expressive nature of arts activities helped to address loneliness and isolation for older people. Performances by older artists also provoked different, more positive thinking about limiting attitudes to older people's behaviours. A strong message in the evaluation findings is that people of all ages need and value activity and events that bring people together across the different generations.



AGEING IN STYLE FASHION SHOW

presented by **Rushey Green Time Bank.**

A Project Award commission

Making and modelling clothing and accessories

This suitably flamboyant Saturday night event showcased a fashion collection for older generations, made by 15 members of *Rushey Green Time Bank*. They worked with professional designers²⁶ to create new clothes and accessories using African-Caribbean prints, upcycled pieces and natural dyes. A dramatic set incorporating giant dresses and theatrical lighting transformed the space, and people modeled their own designs, having had training from professional catwalk models. The fashion show played to a packed house of over 100 people, bringing an arts event and a different audience to the venue hired for the occasion, Lewisham Irish Community Centre's generous hall in Catford.

The fashion collection held sustainability at its heart, hence exploring upcycling clothing (some donated by local charity shops), and using fabrics people already had in their cupboards at home. They held a natural dye workshop at a local community green space, Wild Cat Wilderness (which had also brought new people to the space who might not otherwise attend), and linked them to other local networks such as Lewisham Life and FoodCycle.

The approach to sustainability clearly included thinking about developing new relationships in their neighbourhood to include isolated older adults, people with disabilities, and the Irish Community Centre's regular users, many of whom who might not necessarily access creative activities.

Bellingham Arts and Crafts group and Tea and Chat group knitted items for the fashion show over several months, and the craft group made the giant dresses for the fashion show's set.

Older local professional models and make-up artists also gave time to support the project.

We fostered relationships with influencers in the Fashion Industry including Jacynth [Bassett]²⁷ and Golden Oldie, which will be beneficial for future events working with sewing and fashion.

Community Engagement Lead

Speaking to the participants afterwards, they talked to me about the new skills they had learned and how their confidence had been built as they made design decisions, broke their own fashion rules, and practiced catwalk techniques. It felt like a turning point for some people, a new attitude and a new interest. Watch this space for more fashionista fun.

The audience members interviewed commented on the swagger of the models, the imaginative designs, and the environmental message.

I think that the whole upcycling thing is a good idea. I think it's a good one for the environment as well, something we should all probably be doing a bit more on. **Audience member**

The festival funding and concept enabled us to take a dream/idea and make it happen, on a scale and level of quality and professionalism that we haven't done before. It inspired many of our members and co-creators who would like to undertake more activities and plan future fashion shows.

Community Engagement Lead, Rushey Green Time Bank

²⁶ Three Time Bank members with professional design skills

²⁷ <http://thestylepodcast.com/jacynth-bassett/>





MEMORIES IN MOVEMENT

presented by IRIE! Dance Theatre.

A Project Award commission

Movement and dance made with African and Caribbean elders, based on movements they remember from work.

This performance held great emotional resonance, as it shared personal histories and evoked memories for all in the room. It was created from workshops with community elders featuring remembered movement from their working lives – from musicians and seamstresses to housewives, doctors, artists, and gardeners.

Workshop leader and choreographer, Sheba Montserrat, and master drummer, Mohamed Zozo Shuaibu led a series of movement sessions with members of Vista Reminiscence and residents of Milliners Court elders to make the work.

The performance used processional movement, gesture and words to tell us about individual's island birthplaces, their age and arrival date in England, and their work. Sheba Montserrat elegantly orchestrated the performers with light touch prompts and narrative.



The performance was joyous in itself, but the response from the large audience of mainly elders was gripping as the conversation started by the memories in movement was opened up to include the audience. They not only recalled stories of their own working lives, but also – spontaneously – one by one they recounted the discrimination they had had to face and confront. This took place not only in the workplace, where their qualifications were not recognised, but also at places of worship. Devout Roman Catholic, Church of England²⁸, Methodist and Baptist worshippers were told they were not welcome at local churches (sometimes directly by white ‘Christians’), or it was indicated by people avoiding sitting next to them. The African and Caribbean elders had to look elsewhere, either gathering in private homes or turning to other denominations.

It felt good and important to hear this personal, historical testimony from mainly women from an array of the Caribbean islands – the Windrush Generation. It was expressed directly, without rancour, and felt like a profound moment for bearing witness and sharing in solidarity.

My favourite aspect of the rehearsal process was hearing the members’ stories and intimating how important their memories were. Not just to friends, family, and within the community, but as an integral part of British history. Their shift from sometimes being a little shy or flippant with their tales, to validating their own experiences, was a privilege to witness. The acceptance that they were living archives changed everything.
Sheba Montserrat

Artistic Director, Beverley Glean felt that this kind of artistic activity should be available on prescription from GPs, saying:

The physical and mental benefits of movement, memory, performance, socialising and how they help people to build confidence, relationships, purpose and visibility in the community, are things that people identify as important to their wellbeing and quality of life. This needs greater recognition and promotion by GPs and healthcare professionals.

28 See article <https://time.com/5782904/church-of-england-institutionally-racist/>

6. AIM TWO:

ENCOURAGING THE ARTS SECTOR TO CONSIDER MORE WORK BY AND WITH OLDER ARTISTS

6.1 Context

Entelechy Arts and the Albany are considered pioneers in terms of creating and promoting work by older artists. Like other creatives working in this territory, they know that artists can emerge later in life, when they have new space and time to devote to their practice. Many older people who have not had the resources or opportunity in their younger years to access artistic training or opportunities for creative practice, then find groups such as *Meet Me*, or choirs and art classes. Many professional artists experience discrimination by programmers and casting agents as they grow older. *Age Against the Machine* brought all these strands together by programming exciting work by older artists with long successful careers, such as Liz Aggiss and Carol Grimes, alongside new commissions involving 'recently emerged' older artists such as *Meet Me* members, the cast of *Bed* and Saitama Gold actors. The Festival offered opportunities for older people to develop their creativity or try something new. It aimed to shine a spotlight on work by and with older artists so that the wider arts sector – programmers, producers, venues and funders – could see the variety, diversity, quality, and range of the offer.

Entelechy Arts and the Albany wanted this report to capture evidence that showed that older artists were critically pleased with the work they made for the Festival, and that younger artists who were commissioned to work with older people for the first time were stimulated and interested by their new experience.

The longer-term impact of the Festival on the arts sector is beyond the scope of this research, but the excellent, more than estimated attendance figures, social media attention and post-festival qualitative data, has provided evidence to support the thinking that the future could be imagined differently.

6.2 Motivations for work made by or with older artists

In the first survey, artists and commissioning groups indicated their key **aims for the work** they were going to make for *Age Against the Machine*. Most (57%, 16/20 participants) aims related to social justice content, equity, and skills development. Priorities for their festival commissions for Project Award Groups were about 'challenge and change,' and 'creativity and sociability' for both artists and participants.

To be able to say publicly that as long as I, we, are able, I want to work, to contribute, to satisfy my need to be creative, active and relevant. Artist

To show off the legendary stories of the LGBT+ icons in our community. To make a crack at stopping ageism. We are all getting older. We ought to be kinder. Artist

The questions in the post-festival surveys, interviews and workshops sought to dig deeper into how the Festival had helped in changing perception and attitudes to work made by older artists, work made for older audiences, and support for emerging artists who are older. Integral to this thinking is the importance of visibility and opportunity throughout our life course so that the generations are not constantly shoehorned into age group silos that limit dialogue and increase social isolation.

6.3 Positive disruption': Reasons to make artistic work for, by, and with older people

To debunk the fear-mongering around the silver tsunami. Artist

The baseline survey asked **why it is interesting to make work with or for older artists**²⁹. Half the responses (28/53) indicated special or particular reasons due to older artists' lived experience, perspectives, wisdom, honed practice, etc. There were also several responses about age not being relevant to reasons for making work, and most of the artists (aged from early 20s to 70s) make work with and for people of all ages.

She's exposing her body, she's offering us an image of something that we don't see in the mainstream culture. Women may not feel entitled to expose when they're ageing, and she's doing it very precisely and very consciously ...breaking down so many stereotypes of the female experience. And how women behave sexually. How a woman experiences motherhood. How women experience ageing.

Audience member, Slap and Tickle by Liz Aggiss

The reflections captured from the Project Award Groups drew out some observations about the distinctiveness of making work with older people. The intergenerational aspect of much of the work was a positive quality, bringing fun, cultural diversity, and much laughter to the activity. Making activity accessible on all levels is a priority, and working at a gentler, flexible pace is important for some. One self-contained and isolated group was reluctant to try new things, e.g. 'I don't crochet, I only knit,' but this was an exception and highlighted the effects of isolation for the commissioned artist, who is experienced at working in these settings. Access to high quality materials (due to the festival funding), and fresh opportunities to work with professional artists built up confidence, removed creative blocks, and freed up artistic motivation. People were 'amazed' by what they produced and 'now see themselves more as artists, even if they might not use that label'. The Festival has inspired many of the Project Award Groups to seek further funding and be more ambitious for their next project.

Older artists themselves are working to challenge stereotypes:

I think the life experiences and stories are really important that older people bring. I particularly like intergenerational work because the other flipside of the coin is we maybe got stuck into habits that can be challenged by working with younger people. It also fits into a wider situation of where, once people become older, they become invisible. So, by working in this way, it's saying 'actually, I'm very visible. I'm very flexible,' and challenge some of the stereotypes ... how many times do you see an advert for a 'rosy cheeked, plump granny'? Actress, aged 70+

For Christopher Green, who made the immersive theatre experience *The Home*, it is important for him to talk about ageing, and make work about ageing:

It's a shared experience. It's a win to age. It means you have done well out of life, if you get to a certain age. So, why is there a slight whiff of shame about it? 'Poor thing, you're eighty, oh dear.' Actually go, 'Yeah, I'm eighty, I survived. It's a fucking triumph!' We don't have that attitude, but we should.

²⁹ This question was only aimed at people who were making artistic work for Age Against the Machine

6.4 Reflections on the artistic work: quality, surprises, outcomes, and impact

It was raucous, joyous, anarchic fun. Artist

Apart from the finale itself, the two outstanding highlights of the last day were the film of a gorgeous outdoor performance by members of the Bellingham-based dance and singing group, Voices In Motion, and a solo live performance by young dancer, Kristine Brante about what you really are, not what you think you are. It was beautifully and brutally honest. Miles Hedley, Greenwich Visitor Blog

After the Festival, reflections were gathered from artists, Project Award Groups, partner agency staff, and organisers through interviews, online surveys, and a workshop. The survey asked artists 'What did you think of the work you made, either with or for older people?' Most artists (55%, 11/20 participants) indicated that they were pleased with the quality of the work they had co-produced for their commissions (these comments referred to participatory/co-produced work). In addition to the responses about artistic quality, artists described the work as 'inspirational,' and detailed the sense of pride and achievement felt by the participants.

I thought the work itself was really life-affirming for the participants and the audience. The performances on the night were of a high quality. Artist

It was also very unusual to work alongside the children rather than 'teaching' them or being in charge. We felt we experienced a different and very rewarding relationship with them. Some parents also told us they thought this different relationship was helpful, as we older people had no preconceptions of the children, and so the children too could show themselves in a new light.

Myatt Seniors and Myatt Garden School, On My Way to Market performance project

Half of the artists were surprised by the enthusiasm of their older participants; their ease and pleasure in taking part; the extent of their existing knowledge and skills. Other artists gave contrasting experiences of working with those who were less confident and certain in their approach, and needed much more encouragement:

I was surprised that some of the older people I worked with were nervous about working with school children, but they overcame it and really enjoyed that part of it. Artist

I was surprised that although I had prepared some templates, participants did not feel the need to use them and quickly grasped the print and collage processes I showed them...On the walk I learned so much about the area from those who had direct memories of some of the sites we visited. It was a very special collaborative day of walking, talking and sharing and making. Artist

For several artists, the amount of time and emotional labour their project entailed was a new experience. Some of this was related to recruitment and the careful, iterative holding together processes of communicating and connecting.

Picking up on the current societal attitudes to ageing and how people experience feeling less visible as they grow older, or their contribution less valued, the survey asked whether the artists thought making artistic work contributed to a sense of agency for the older participants. 11/20 artists gave examples that illustrated that this increase in agency had taken place, including unexpected outcomes and some learning;

They have undoubtedly now been able to go into the world with new skills and new opportunities, as seen by many of the acts being offered gigs shortly after the event... They have increased sense of agency and self-belief in the performance community. Artist

One person specifically said several times how much he enjoyed being part of a creative process where his creative input was integral, rather than performing a pre-defined role. Artist



Image: 21st Century Tea Dance. Credit: Roswitha Cheshier

In this case what was so different, especially working with Natasha Lohan and Clare Qualman, the artwork was so deeply enfolded into the project that it wasn't so much making art work as shaping how to be together, and the art emerged from that. It was hugely enjoyable and in some deep way life changing.
Lewisham Unity, about Jam and Jam

It was the central tenet of the project...I think in hindsight, I found some of the finished product gave a little too much emphasis to the compositional process involved and we have all learned that we can be looser with that element, allow the performing groups to shape this even more. There was still a definite feel of agency for the participants, in that changes/adaptations that they requested were happening right up to performance time. I feel that the process used was the right one for a first time large scale collaboration, but I can see the true agency emerging now that we are back in our separate rehearsal rooms - ideas of what might happen next are coming more readily from the group and we will let that lead the next steps.

Artist, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

Three artists described a shift in their own practice:

I seriously took up my cello practice this year and even applied (successfully) for Arts Council DYCP funding. I had felt previously I had 'closed that door' as a younger person, and I think working on the Festival made me feel able to pursue it again. **Artist**

Tonight's show was a really great experience to help feed into my own creative endeavours as an older artist that tries to focus on ageing. I really wished my collaborators had seen [the show], because it really pushed the envelope out in terms of what we would achieve. **Audience member, Slap and Tickle by Liz Aggiss**

The post-festival evaluation workshop was attended by commissioners from the Project Award Groups. They identified several key outcomes and impacts for the artistic work commissioned with older people:

- Observing a shift/increase in individual confidence
- Being able to engage audiences in a public place
- Artistic activity had been a powerful catalyst for connecting people socially and developing friendships
- Upskilling people and skill sharing, shining a light on existing creative skills

Children and teenagers were able to break through older participants' resistance to trying new things. The staff were initially resistant, they came under duress. But then something shifted and they loved it.

Project Award Group

6.5 Learning and new insights: time, participation, art, and meaning

All of the 20 artists who responded to the post-festival survey described their personal and practical learning and their new insights about the demand for this type of work. There were several comments about the need for more process time, and the capacity required when working with vulnerable older people:

We probably approached early sessions with a misplaced confidence on our workshop-leading abilities. Artist

There were interesting comments about what constitutes participation. This means different things to different people. For example, some people like to sit and be entertained by their friends and join in by simply being present. Engagement cannot be forced, and 'one has to respect what happened in the moment.'

Several artists interviewed shared interesting observations about the artistic work created, and these comments about pace, time, and purpose resonate with other comments by both artists and Project Award Group leaders:

I learned a lot about the kind of art we were making, a new art form, in which art becomes a space in which collaborations and encounters that could not happen elsewhere, happen. As we worked in our garden, people just joined us, and we moved into a different sort of space-time in which listening and making were the things that drew us together. Artist

I learned to work with a creative process in a quite different way, sitting in on sessions and learning from their facilitators and the choir's way of performing, prior to bringing these together in a collaborative and continuous process. Artist

With the elderly men, instead of whipping through a hundred prints, they take time, they're much more slow and methodical and safe, because they haven't done a lot of stuff before with their hands unlike, say, older ladies might do a lot of sewing or knitting. Not being stereotypical there, but that seems to be what happened. They haven't done anything arty before, so it was a new thing for them to try. And that's what the men's group was trying to do. Try new things out, keep themselves active. It did make me think very hard. And they want to pass on a legacy, the memories of the area because, for example, [many people] don't know about the bombing in the war of this local school (points to a photograph). Everywhere has a deep heritage. It's a very obvious thing, isn't it, to say to pass it on to children, but it's just as important to pass it on to parents, so they can tell their children. But it's really nice just to work with older generations in the community, because you're quite often isolated away from older people. It was an amazing experience working with these guys. It really, really was a spiritual thing.

Artist, Downham Anecdote



6.6 Visibility and media coverage

We benefited from the ethos of the Festival, which was so buoyant, and its bravura - it refused to stay within boundaries and it gave us a huge sense of permission. Artist

The desired impact of the Festival on the arts sector for 79% of the stakeholders surveyed was an increase in both visibility and profile for older artists, backed up by strong marketing and PR/media coverage, and an increase in professional opportunities for older artists.

Being in the programme gave kudos to our organisation! Project Award Group

Well-designed programme brochures were distributed widely and shared online³² with regular updates and news. Media coverage included articles and reviews in *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *Radio 4*, *the Evening Standard*, and international online platforms. Media engagement figures reached over 5 million nationally and internationally.³³ Several artists and groups gave positive feedback about social media activity, but some had hoped for/expected more profile for their work.

Attracting mainstream media coverage is extremely difficult and the great success for *Age Against the Machine* were *The Guardian* and *The British Theatre Guide*³⁴ reviews for *The Home*, that drew attention to the urgent and topical issue of care home provision.

*This weekend in southeast London, 25 strangers signed up for a two-night stay in a fictional care home. For our brief but intense experience of institutionalised care, we eat and sleep onsite, our days filled with jigsaws, naps and insidious micro-aggressions. Part of the Albany's Age Against the Machine festival, this extraordinary immersive experiment investigating the performance of – and line between – care and control is an unforgettable feat of emotional engineering. Kate Wyver, The Guardian*³⁵

90% of the artists in the post-festival survey (18/20) offered evidence for increasing the visibility of older people's creativity in the wider community as a result of their project. This visibility had practical and significant social outcomes for participants:

Many of the artists were booked for gigs off the back of this event. These gigs are intergenerational both at 'club spaces' more used to 'younger' faces and also large scale public facing events like at The Legends Ball at the Southbank. Artist, The Legends and Legacies Ball

Absolutely! Many participants brought friends and family, who then found themselves involved in the event – this is true visibility, when your community steps into your shoes and inhabits your performance with you! Artist

Definitely. The creative input was integrated throughout the process, and on the day there was an excellent audience. There was also positive output through social media. Artist

The older people's group I was working with was at risk of closure, and now continues as a result of the project. Artist

³² <https://www.ageagainstthemachine.org.uk/>

³³ Data from Marketing Department, the Albany

³⁴ <https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/the-home-durat-goldsmiths-coll-18159>

³⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/sep/16/the-home-review-48-hour-show-turns-residential-care-into-theatre>

People that are a certain age in the LGBT space become invisible... that's what concerns me as a person who is getting older....One of the biggest things I didn't account for was the effect of the HIV crisis on the older community, and how that has affected, traumatised a lot of people who had many friends who passed away in the '80s...There are people in the group who are living in social care who are isolated because of that. And the trauma of that is still there with people. They're an active group. They want to say things, they want to speak out, and they want to talk about the things they experienced, because they don't want people to forget, especially in these days. Artist, The Legends and Legacies Ball

Two older female actors described how they are taking more control in a theatre industry where they become invisible as they age. They push back against casting stereotypes, write material themselves, and put shows on YouTube:

I challenge the directors when I go in for jobs, if they've asked for a rosy cheek grandma. Yes, I might look like rosy cheek grandma when I turn up, but I am trying to change their mindset and say, 'See, you didn't really need that, after all.' I do a lot of dead, dying, and demented. Because I want to show what we need to do for people with dementia. Now we need to deal with it. Actress, 70+, The Home

6.7 Summary

Why would it seem to be radical that people in their 70s and 80s would completely renegotiate, or redesign their lives so that they could just nourish the culture of their borough? That sense of purpose, that sense of agency, of ownership, has been really key to that shared belonging. It's very much that the 'we' is 'our' Festival, I think we have been quite successful in achieving that.

David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts

Older artists are everywhere, including Lewisham. The festival illuminated and evidenced the increasing presence of older artists in society, and the growth of artists emerging in their 60s, 70s, and 80s. Older performers are challenging casting directors' stereotypes and producing their own material to share online. They also continue to produce work that is disruptive and entertaining, telling us new stories about the universal experience of ageing.

Working with different generations can help some older artists to shake up any self-limiting preconceptions about what might stretch them. Younger artists discover the value and pleasures of a gentler work pace and flexible approach, sometimes leading to fresh, unexpected artistic outcomes. At the Ageing Well symposium³⁶, Dominic Campbell – a leading thinker on creative ageing – spoke about a new social and artistic territory:

Art made by older adults should be different art; art made by people not who live longer, but who live in a completely different stage that we have no articulacy about, we really don't. We don't know what that stage of ageing is at scale. Anywhere. And it's the role of artists to find that place, it's the role of artists to uncover and explore that. Dominic Campbell, Creative Ageing International³⁷

The festival contributed to much local, and some national, visibility for older artists, and importantly brought their work to new audiences of all ages. Venues and programmers take note, the Festival saw a 308% increase on expected audience numbers (15,398 actual, 5,000 estimated).

If art is a form of agency, it might become increasingly important as we get older and begin losing other capacities for action, once taken for granted. A person who has, through the practice of art, nurtured their expressive skills, imagination and creativity will be able to draw on those resources to the very end. So, perhaps the practice of art, whether by lifelong professionals or by amateurs who turned to art only after retirement from other work, offers real benefits to those undergoing the complex experience of growing old, if only by enabling them to tell their own story themselves.

Winter Fires: Art and agency in old age by François Matarasso³⁸

³⁶ Symposium report is available at <https://entelechyarts.org/creative-ageing-and-the-city-symposium-report/>

³⁷ <http://www.creativeageinginternational.com/>

³⁸ <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/resource/winter-fires-art-and-agency-in-old-age/>





HALF LIFE

presented by Tangled Feet, commissioned by the Albany, ARC Stockton and The Gulbenkian Theatre

Tangled Feet are an ensemble that met twenty years ago, aged 20. They are all about to turn 40, they have been creating theatre together for half their lives. To mark the moment, they are asking some big questions, and have brought in help.

In *Half Life*, Tangled Feet were joined by a company of 10, 20 and 80-year-olds, to wrestle with the nature of time passing. The show asked: How does our perspective change as we age? How do we cope when we don't know what's coming next? What do we hold onto? What do we let go?

Audiences were asked to join them to find some answers, ask more questions, and celebrate the wisdom we can share at any age. Intergenerational shows are ambitious and challenging for a host of reasons and more so when artists are working with community performers who have different demands on their time. Tangled Feet managed to balance the competing needs of three age cohorts, and to marshal some very personal and sensitive material. The cast confronted themes of mortality, ageing and uncertainty in a playful production that was actually set in a playground of climbing, swinging, rolling structures that suitably framed life's precarious up and downs, and offered community and friendship as metaphorical crash mats or trampolines.

I was surprised at the ease and pleasure with which the intergenerational cast functioned together by production week. Initially people entered the process with very different energies and perspectives, but I think we (finally) gelled as an ensemble, which was really lovely to experience... The children and the older people were both keen to take much bigger risks than we initially anticipated, which was brilliant and exciting. Artist, Tangled Feet

It got me thinking about playfulness, the scene that was on that beam. I really liked some of those words about how valuable play can be, and being in between who you are and what you want to be. Audience member

I started crying a little bit, just because I've recently moved away from my Mum, so with the whole speech to do with his mum, and her dying, it was just, yeah, it touched home slightly with me leaving. Audience member

As with so many performances during the Festival, this show attracted an intergenerational, local crowd, one of whom highlighted the ticket booking system that invited audiences to pay an amount after shows based on how much they enjoyed it.

I live very close to here, so it was very nice to see a community production ... seeing something like this really encourages me to do something locally, and it just was a good reminder of how important the Albany is to this area – putting on shows like this; and also truly accessible financially, with people's donations and that 'Pay-What-Makes-You-Happy' system – but also very good at being inclusive in those other ways. Audience member



CATCH ME

Presented by Upswing. Commissioned by Age Against the Machine and Norfolk & Norwich Festival. Supported by Without Walls, Jackson's Lane and Arts Council England

Catch Me was presented as part of the Festival's Outdoor Performance Trail, four outdoor performances that people could just turn up to or join a carnival procession of bicycles, mobility scooters and a walking bus to take in all four events.

An older woman and a younger man balance, climb and jump across a stack of chairs. Together they discover all the people they can be. *Catch Me* is an energetic mix of dance, circus, and chairs, and offers us a lively and surprising take on age and gender. It provokes us to think about the messages we all absorb subliminally and consciously on ethnicity, gender, the relationship between generations, who cares for whom, and who is capable of what. *Catch Me* asks how do we see each other and who we value?³⁹

Audiences found the show playful, stimulating and were very impressed with the quality of the performance. They called it 'poetic', 'emotional' and 'uplifting.'

Consistently engaging. Age in the mind. The imagination accepting, rejecting, creating. Encompassing the entrenched and the totally free. Audience member, Catch Me.

Upswing have been exploring ageing and gender stereotypes for a while. They were part of a pioneering project that brought circus skills into care homes, in partnership with Magic Me (2016-18), and so this commission for *Age Against the Machine* was timely for the company.

Engagement with people has been part of the way we work for a while, but with each project we learn more about how to be porous to that exchange and how to let it lead us to more exciting choices. Catch Me evolved through conversations we had with the Entelechy group and an elder's group in Brixton. It was not an attempt to 'tell their stories' but a way of articulating the many possibilities we saw in the people we spoke to, that ran counter to immediate judgements. It has reinforced the principles in how participatory practice might work for us... It is about working with people, offering them an experience that makes it worth their while to spend time with us, and then allowing that time spent to change us.

A lot of people have responded to the show with stillness. We recently had a peer evaluation event where people spoke about how after the performance, instead of rushing off they wanted to sit still and contemplate what they had seen. Vicki Amedume, Artistic Director of Upswing

7. AIM THREE:

INSTIGATING A WIDER STRATEGIC CONVERSATION ABOUT AGEING

Ageing and older people can remain radical, revolutionary, and politically engaged. This is essential in remembering the radicalism of the past to inform the social changes we want to see in the future. Artist

The conversation is changing. What's changing is there is a much more deeper and broader conversation within some of the leadership... because it wasn't about separating, making ageing another thing. It's incredibly important that there are dedicated resources for older adults because they are so invisible within the culture. But to separate them from the rest of life does a disservice to the rest of us. And I think that conversation is beginning to get richer and deeper.

Delegate, Ageing Well symposium

7.1 The Important conversations about ageing for Festival stakeholders

In the first survey, stakeholders indicated that the top three important conversations about ageing that the Festival could start or expand were:

- A. Value of the arts – for self-expression, socialising and health (39/53 comments)
- B. Learning about all aspects of ageing with older people
- C. More intergenerational social contact

Followed by:

- D. Ageism in the arts sector and wider society
- E. Practical issues, e.g. physical access, transport, subsidy for tickets, training for carers, food clubs, access to NHS services

Surprisingly 'loneliness and isolation' were mentioned only six times, and 'mental health' and 'dementia' only five times. Perhaps this sample of stakeholders with some investment in the Festival felt that these subjects were already on the radar for discussion. However, mental health, social and practical issues were highlighted by the Project Award Groups after the Festival (see 7.3 below). Their data also indicated that all their commissions were created through collaboration by or with older artists, and all were considered to be intergenerational.

To change or shift negative perceptions about ageing amongst the people who engage with the programme was integral to its form and content, and this has been evidenced in detail in Section 5. Wider strategic conversations were held with people who are engaged with the issues around ageing, not only in the arts sector, but also from local/regional government, third sector, health, and academia. Conversations took place during formal and informal talks during the Festival, especially around *The Home*, but the main forum was the *Ageing Well* symposium.⁴⁰ This event brought together this specialist cohort from across London, the UK, Ireland and Japan to review and explore what is working well already and how local authorities and cultural organisations could work more effectively together in supporting older lives to flourish.

⁴⁰ For Symposium Report see <https://entelechyaarts.org/creative-ageing-and-the-city-symposium-report/>

7.2 Reviewing the important conversations in Lewisham

After the Festival, we reviewed the conversations identified above in the first survey with the Project Award Groups. We asked them which of these issues their artistic commission had highlighted. The top three were identified as: mental health and dementia; intergenerational contact; and practical factors, followed by the value of the arts, and addressing ageism.

The group who indicated 'addressing ageism' spoke about encountering internalised ageism amongst the older people, which has a detrimental impact on their confidence and learning. It can be assumed that the value of the arts was a given for these groups, who had been awarded funding by the Festival for artist commissions.

Working on creative, artistic projects had not only boosted confidence, the contact with professional artists had shifted conversations around what it is to be creative. Some participants could 'see' their skills and knowledge through a fresh lens and placed greater value on what they had produced.

Less stigma around dementias in recent years had increased the demand for activities for people living with early onset dementia. Within the group settings, members offered each other mutual psychological support. The arts activities had a huge impact on wellbeing, with people feeling less anxious and enjoying connecting, being together and being inclusive for people living with dementias

Most of the commissions had brought people together from different generations, both the young with older people, and with participants across several generational age groups. For many groups this was not a regular occurrence, and the value of and need for this type of contact was discussed at length.⁴¹

The practical challenges facing older people's access to creative activity had been addressed imaginatively by the facilitators and artists, adapting physical activity, e.g. seated dance, yoga, and tai chi; being mindful of timings and time (length and pace of activity), transport; the importance of group solidarity and support when trying something new, or visiting a new place.

At the *Ageing Well* symposium, the Manchester Age-Friendly Culture Champions⁴² shared some great practical ideas. The Champions advise arts venues and museums on access and inclusion, and have also produced age-friendly awareness postcards for bus drivers.

7.3 Ageing Well: Creative Ageing and the City – strategic conversations

The symposium was particularly seminal. The event felt like the start of a new movement, rebalancing leadership away from being done to by 'the system,' be it cultural or social or medical. Flipping the creative leadership in a really productive way. Delegate, Ageing Well symposium

A significant arena for a wider strategic conversation was the symposium *Ageing Well: Creative Ageing and the City, A day of exploration, celebration and curiosity*.⁴³ 88 Contributors from London, Manchester and Tokyo (and across Japan) came together to share best practice examples of cultural initiatives that support agency and active participation as we age. The speakers and roundtable discussions examined how cultural activity can support older people to remain active, valued, and engaged citizens.

The whole system approach of Personalised Care within the NHS recognises the contribution of communities, and the voluntary and community sector to support people and build resilience. The recent work of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing has clearly evidenced that involvement in the arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness, and mental health.

⁴¹ See also Sections 7.3 and 7.4 for more findings on intergenerational work.

⁴² <https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/culture-champions>

⁴³ <https://entelechartyarts.org/creative-ageing-and-the-city-symposium-report/>

The symposium aimed to deepen the conversation between health, social care, and the arts and cultural organisations that are working with older people, including those who are isolated and living with complex health conditions. Locally, how can the arts, care, and health sectors develop more embedded and sustained relationships to support the wellbeing of our oldest citizens? The event practically explored effective and everyday ways in which artists, arts organisations, local authorities, health, and other community partners can work together in new ways to support older people, including those who are isolated and frail, to connect with, and contribute to, the cultural life of their communities.

The key messages from the speaker's presentations were:

1. Creative ageing is now an international movement
2. The creative ageing sector is now on people's radar, but remains precarious
3. Partnerships across different sectors and services are crucial for achieving funding and sustainability
4. Local authorities have a key strategic role to play
5. Listen to older people and involve them from the start
6. Artistic leadership and support for emerging artists at any age is vital
7. There is much work to be done in care homes
8. Social prescribing is an opportunity

The roundtable discussions explored some of these messages more deeply. Responding to 'What works?' the delegates emphasised proactive, face-to-face approaches, reciprocity to maximise collective resources, and allowing enough time for any process. The language and categorisation around ageing have to change. They strongly advocated involving older people in decision-making, investing in the long-term rather than the quick fix, and that action on access, diversity, inclusion, and belonging is integral. A warm welcome, love, determination and kindness are essential ingredients for creative ageing work to thrive.

Access to culture is a human right and feeds our souls. Delegate, Ageing Well symposium

7.4 Ageing Well: Creative Ageing and the City – strategic conversations

I am a gerontologist. I've studied ageing in the life course. But I have a special interest in the arts and so I'm really glad to come here. It's a great experience to see very forward-looking approaches to the power of creativity. Audience member, Grand Finale at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

Local conversations about ageing were primarily concerned with mental health and dementia, intergenerational contact, and practical factors to do with access and accessibility. Social prescribing is now on most people's radar, and working in cross-sector partnerships is an essential ingredient for this strategic approach to delivering the health benefits of creative ageing activity. Listening to, and working alongside, older people to involve them in planning and design is vital.

Working cooperatively with health, arts, local authority, third sector, and education partners (143 in total) was integral to the Festival's vision. This approach modelled the power of using creativity and the arts to improve quality of life and quality of care for older people. The symposium amplified and embodied the good practice exemplified in Meet Me at the Albany, Manchester's Culture Champions and Japan's Saitama Gold. It also highlighted how local authorities such as Lewisham Council, Greater Manchester, and the Greater London Authority can galvanise and support joined up thinking and co-ordination. However, as David Cutler concludes in *Older and Wiser?*⁴⁴ without a national policy and strategy for ageing, a point has been reached at which greater resources need to be made available by our national governments to enable older people to participate in the arts.

⁴⁴ <https://baringfoundation.org.uk/resource/older-and-wiser-creative-ageing-in-the-uk-2010-19/>





THE HOME

By Christopher Green. Presented by the Albany, Entelechy Arts and Christopher Green, in association with ARC Stockton, Future Arts Centres and Saitama Arts Theatre

An entertaining and provocative excursion into residential care

Note: Elizabeth Lynch interviewed Christopher before and after *The Home*. She also participated as a Temporary Resident, in a personal capacity.

'You're going to stay in The Home. Just for a few days. It's a chance for you to be really looked after – and to give everyone else a break. It's a great place. Rated excellent by the Care Quality Commission – best in its price range. Lots to do! Or you can keep yourself to yourself. You'll love it. It's not forever. Promise.'

The Home creates a care home where the audience are invited to spend two nights. They become 'the cared for' during their stay. The staff are played by professional performers and community participants who are all older artists. The piece is based on stories told by residents and staff living and working in care homes. It gave the 'Temporary Residents' an opportunity to discover the problems, and pleasures of being cared for in a communal setting, and explored the care home as a place of reinvention and possibility.

There are also short events within *The Home* where visitors could spend time with 'staff' and 'residents': a Talent Show, a Bingo Party, Non-denominational Worship and Mindfulness Session, and an Open Afternoon Cupcake Day.

The culmination of several years' research, Christopher Green wanted to make *The Home* because the conversations about residential care are urgent. As we live longer, more of us will need residential care, and the prevailing narrative in the media is unfailingly negative – undercover cameras show us care homes riddled with abuse. However, we know, as in any industry, that there is bad and good practice in the sector.

I think as artists we should be doing something to balance that out. We should be doing a lot to say, well, we have agency in this, it's a capitalist structure, that's what we're in at the moment. So, therefore, we should have some agency, we are consumers and we will be consumers. Why are we not saying, 'I need that product to be available to me and I want value for money?' Whereas at the moment nobody's getting value for money in the residential care home sector.

As Professor Jill Manthorpe⁴⁵ said during a panel discussion⁴⁶ in November at King's College London, wonderful things also happen in care homes and we need to invest in them, not ban them.

For me, the durational nature of *The Home* certainly brought to the fore the issue of our agency in communal settings, particularly how easily we surrender it when we are being cared for. We let things go, we don't want to make a fuss. Health and safety is used as an excuse to limit freedom, the threat of losing 'insurance' crushes our rights to do what we want. Then you start to feel uncomfortable because it is not really what you want. You question, you talk to some others, and some of us rebel. The experience was provocative and made most of us uncomfortable in different ways.

45 Director, NIHR Health & Social Care Workforce Research Unit and Professor of Social Work, King's College London

46 A packed discussion attended by 60 people <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/events/the-home-immersive-theatre-exhibition>

We are lab rats. Incredibly quickly, we become compliant, and when the public are let in for bingo and afternoon tea, we are territorial. While our carers are never cruel, there is an undercutting of independence and dignity, their tone switching from playful to patronising, leaving us at times feeling demeaned and diminished. Kate Wyver, The Guardian⁴⁷

I left The Home durational stay feeling very irritated and uncomfortable, which I think was the point of the piece. In my job I run projects in care homes, and it has really put more of a strong emphasis that everyday activism in changing the stereotypes of elderly care or how care is delivered is so important. Feedback from Temporary Resident, audience survey by the Albany

Half the Temporary Residents were involved in the care sector in some capacity, as carers, academics, service leaders etc. The age range was 23 –82 years old, which made for interesting and varied responses and conversations. Older performers from Meet Me joined us for the special events, bringing fun and joyful disruption to any preconceptions about the Talent Show and Bingo. Whilst I enjoyed the camaraderie of being on the Judging Panel for the Talent Show with some of the visitors, it transpired over the weekend that some of my fellow Temporary Residents had become territorial and resented visitors coming into ‘our space’. A huge jigsaw that a group of my fellow residents had been working on was broken up on Saturday evening and they blamed this transgression on the visitors who had come for the Bingo Night. This incident stayed with Christopher. Since then he has changed the way he goes into care homes. Even though he is being brought in by the home manager, he now holds back a bit before going right into the day room. He waits for a resident to say hello, ask a question – and that is his signal to go and sit next to them, instead of walking straight in.

It’s up to them, the residents, who’s invited in, not to the staff. That’s actually very significant. I’d just never clocked that before. All the time I’ve visited care homes, I’d be like, ‘Hello, I’ve come to do something good for you.’

Christopher Green

Do we want care homes that take a holistic approach to older people? Do we think it would be better if people could be kept in their own homes as long as they want to be, and as long as possible? How do we want to be in our communities? And how do we create ways of stopping people being lonely? Looming over all of these questions was the ever-present spectre of money, as we were constantly encouraged by the fictional care home Executive Director to invest in purchasing a private insurance plan to fund our future care.

The level of planning and detail for *The Home* was extraordinary. It has already been presented in Stockton and will feature as part of the Olympic Cultural programme in Japan 2021 with Saitama Theatre.

Logistically, The Home is remarkable: the level of control even when we thought we had agency; the intricacy of planning and stage management; the intense periods of improvisation from all cast and crew. It wrings us out emotionally, too. The Home is neither a blanket celebration nor critique of the care sector, but a demonstration of how complicated and difficult it is. By making us genuinely vulnerable, The Home forces us to directly address the care industry and our own possible futures within it.

Kate Wyver, The Guardian

⁴⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/sep/16/the-home-review-48-hour-show-turns-residential-care-into-theatre>



8. AIM FOUR:

ENGAGING ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMMISSIONERS IN CONVERSATION ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF ARTS IN THEIR PROVISION

8.1 Purpose

Our purpose for the Festival is quite focused. The NHS now are really passionate about personalised services. But having social care to help you get out of bed in the morning without also asking Why? - it's not enough.

Unless we give people a sense of purpose, or reason to get out of bed. That feels like where culture comes in. So, we might be very modest in the way that we're trying out things like social prescribing, but we are being massively ambitious in terms of the central role that we feel that culture has to play in just supporting people to live independently and well. David Slater, Artistic Director of Entelechy Arts

8.2 A new relationship with a GP surgery

Prior to the Festival, Entelechy Arts talked with a local GP cluster and then produced a leaflet offering a choice of six creative social prescriptions to patients. Entelechy also have a programme based in the leisure centre where the same GPs' practice is located, called 'Meet Me in the South', which is a film club for people who are living with dementia and their carers. In addition, following the Festival, Entelechy is designing a programme of creative activities in the Waldron Health Centre in the north of the Lewisham borough. Both of these are interventions that can be monitored by Entelechy, and both are useful for the GPs and for a local authority that is boosting social prescribing.

8.3 Knowledge of social prescribing

Findings from the first stakeholder survey were encouraging given that this is a relatively new initiative for the arts sector to be included in and to consider. 50% indicated that they knew 'a little' about social prescribing and just over 20% had a 'good knowledge'. 25% indicated that they were involved in influencing social prescribing for artistic, creative and cultural activity. However 96% cited the key challenges as: 'not enough funding for prescribing arts activity' and 'not knowing what is available in my area'.

In order to be effective, social prescribing needs to go far beyond patients at GPs. It needs to reach everyone who can benefit from referral to services (including arts organisations) that will improve their wellbeing. By working together on a borough-wide scale, incorporating services that aren't just health services will help us to deliver the outcomes that social prescribing aims to deliver. Survey participant

What will a successful infrastructure look like? How will GPs know what is on offer and what is good quality – and how will arts organisations support patients and respond to GPs – and how will patients be supported? Survey participant

There needs to be more funding for activities, not just investment in social prescribing itself. Survey participant

The role of the arts sector in social prescribing was on the agenda for several seminars and conferences during 2019, e.g. Creative Health Conference, Southbank Centre, 10 June 2019.⁴⁹ At the Ageing Well symposium, speaker Nikki Crane summarised some of the challenges of social prescribing for the arts sector:

- Training: The arts sector needs to work hard to contribute to Link Workers' knowledge and experience of the arts, and work in partnership (e.g. with NHS) to enhance training.
- Together: The arts sector needs to work with local authorities and other voluntary sector organisations to coordinate the arts and culture offer.
- Capacity and funding: Joining up arts organisations interested in social prescribing in local consortia, where resources and expertise can be shared.
- Artistic quality: 'Seek out the transformational work.' Our standards of delivery must be upheld and not compromised by the emphasis on the quantity that is required to make social prescribing work.
- Evidence: Build on evidence we already have to effectively evaluate social prescribing.

When I worked in an arts and health setting, I was always surprised by the number of doctors who would comfortably tell me how playing an instrument or singing or painting relieved their stress and anxiety, and in the same breath would tell me that concerts in the hospital offered no value at all.

Moira Sinclair, Vice-Chair, London Mayor's Cultural Leadership Board

8.4 Increasing awareness of the role the arts and creativity play in health and ageing

*I joined the choir. I had some health problems. I told my doctor 'I've joined the choir,' she said 'That's the best thing you could have done for your health'. We were given exercises and I found it helped me with my chest and my lungs. I feel I've got a voice and I didn't even know I had one. I've never looked back. We've done public performances and had standing ovations. **Meet Me member***

After the Festival, via the surveys, interviews and workshop, we asked if and how the Festival had increased awareness of how creativity and the arts could play an important part of the offer for social prescribing for older people. 10/15 of the stakeholders surveyed described how it had increased their awareness of social prescribing and how increased and more regular attendance was a strong indication that the new creative activities were valued by participants.

*The festival had definitely increased my awareness - we had a high number of participants who were committed to coming to each workshop, and this has led to some of them becoming members after the Festival ended. We have noted that some of the participants are now coming to other activities that we run - we also know that people have made new friendships and this has opened up new networks to them. **Staff member, Voluntary sector organisation***

49 For the full list attended by the Evaluator, see bibliography.

50 GPs, primary care professionals, adult health and social care, etc. will refer patients to the local Link Worker to discuss what will work best in terms of their individual health need and suitable available activity.

51 Of 15 surveyed, 2 said No, 2 were already well aware, and 10 said it had increased their awareness

Running the creative sewing workshops and subsequent exhibition made me truly appreciate how important the arts are in improving older residents' health and wellbeing. They were prepared to travel across Lewisham to attend the workshops, and much of the feedback spoke of the unity of the group, how they enjoyed meeting new people, and the feeling of being connected and togetherness. They were so proud of what they had created, and it wasn't something they had been offered before, so learned new skills as well as improving upon old ones.

Staff member, Voluntary sector organisation

St Christopher's Hospice was involved in several Festival events and runs a regular programme of creative activity as part of its offer to patients. Staff wrote that their approach to care is based on evidence that participation in creative and artistic activity 'reduces social isolation, de-stigmatises illness and dying and helps promote positive mental health.' They also wrote that this work 'has also been shown to relieve pain symptoms.'⁵²

Another voluntary organisation staff member talked about her observations of the impact on wellbeing through working creatively with older men:

Anything creative, I think, is beneficial, especially with men. A lot of times men think that they're not actually creative, or they're very shy. And sometimes they'll just kind of sit and have a cup of tea and not take part. And then all of a sudden, they'll just start drawing or they start singing or they start doing whatever the activity is. It is amazing. Within a few weeks, they've just completely blossomed. And then all of a sudden, they're talking to people and making connections. Also, I think having to just get out, I mean, just literally leaving the house. And even if you're getting on a bus, at least you're not just sitting down.

David Cutler, Director of the Baring Foundation, spoke at the symposium about the crisis in care homes, how difficult it is for them to exist, let alone think about the arts, but how the arts are immensely important for people working in care homes and for residents. Feedback from staff at a care home where many residents are living with dementias was beautifully detailed in a thank you letter to festival organisers:

I held a discussion this morning and each resident has given an overwhelming experience of enjoying the performance. We have had comments such as it was wonderful, the scenery was great, the sounds were lovely. Some residents were able to go into detail and express how it made them feel. One said it stirred up his emotions, he also said that they were very good in using lots of things for them to feel and touch. The residents and staff all felt it was a great success and thank you, the organisers and sponsors, for such an uplifting experience

Activity Coordinator, Beechcroft Care Home on The Garden by Spare Tyre

The symposium delegates heard about a wide range of creative ageing work during the day's talks and discussions, and gave us great feedback on their increased awareness of good practice across the UK and beyond.

The breathtakingly high artistic quality of the Japanese case study was especially memorable.

Delegate, Ageing Well symposium

⁵² A study in the February 2018 issue of The Arts in Psychotherapy (<https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/the-art-of-pain-therapy>) looked at almost 200 people hospitalized for a medical issue or surgery. The researchers found that participating in art therapy for an average of 50 minutes significantly improved their moods, and lowered levels of pain and anxiety. Source: Harvard Health Blog 12 July 2018 www.health.harvard.edu/blog/art-therapy-an-other-way-to-help-manage-pain-2018071214243

Also see: Ten ways art helps us heal | Art UK <https://artuk.org/discover/stories/ten-ways-art-helps-us-heal#>

8.5 Actions and new thinking

Looking at the way the day centre is structured. Actually do we really need it to be a day centre, could it be an arts centre? I feel quite motivated to change what we are doing. Delegate, Ageing Well symposium

Regarding hopes for the Festival making a difference, the stakeholder survey participants' top three choices were:

- More local public health leaders are more aware of how using creativity and the arts can improve quality of life and quality of care for older people (86%)
- The arts and wellbeing become more embedded in Lewisham's Local Plan (70.5%)
- Lewisham is more widely recognised for its pioneering work on arts and ageing in the media, health, and arts sector publications, etc. (59%)

It is clear from the evidence presented in this report that these three hopes have been delivered.

Delegates reported coming away from the international Symposium motivated by new thinking and new ideas. Inspired by the speakers and conversations, several spoke about their increased awareness of the creative work being undertaken with older people, their professional commitment to a more joined up approach to the delivery of services in their area, and to including creative activity as part of their offer. Several gave examples of making new contacts in their borough, across London, and the UK.

I have planned a meeting with artists and other practitioners to see how we can change the emphasis of our service delivery model from day care to art and wellbeing.

It has improved my perception of [the value of] intergenerational work. We don't have to be in our own boxes.

I need to put a Post-It on my desk that says 'work to the capabilities not to the limitations of older audiences.' Having aspirations for these groups as well. And including them in the conversation at the start of the project.

Having presentations from outside of London shifted my thinking the most - fascinating cultural information so that the work wasn't divorced from cultural, social, geographical context - somehow this illuminated my own work and experience more.

It's certainly challenged me to check my preconceptions about who a creative project might reach/target, i.e. older adults can and should engage with quality performance art.

I particularly got a lot from those [table] conversations and those practitioners who spoke about place making and geography, the uncovering of grassroots work that was going on everywhere already, and of creating different maps [of an area] that includes the natural places where ordinary people are developing initiatives.

In February 2020, the Mayor of London announced that Lewisham has been awarded the title of London Borough of Culture 2021.⁵³ Lewisham states that a legacy of the year will be that culture and creativity become embedded across Borough policy and strategy and become an integral part of life in the Borough. Key areas of Council strategy and policy will be influenced, and work programmes shaped by culture.

*As public services, we understand the vital role culture plays and are confident in using it to deliver the social change we want. The legacy will be a new model of culture that better captures the lived experience of communities to improve service delivery, and a more explicit inclusion of culture in our corporate strategy. **Lewisham Borough of Culture bid***

⁵³ www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/current-culture-projects/london-borough-culture/london-borough-culture-winners-2021-and-2023

8.6 Summary

The Festival has contributed productively to strategic conversations about the integral role the arts play in providing social care. Working with local organisations (many new to working with artists), and hosting an international symposium, encouraged new voices to join in advocating and lobbying for a national policy on ageing that acknowledges the benefits of creativity. The Festival demonstrated how motivating ‘purpose’ is, not only for older people, but across the life course, generating a sense of belonging.

Age Against the Machine demonstrated how a three-week festival, working intensively in one geographic area and harnessing multiple cross-sector partners, could showcase and amplify existing good practice, developed over many years. The Festival also stretched this practice, taking new risks and seizing the opportunity to experiment and draw in new partners. It involved older people in designing and curating the programme. Spaces for a light touch allowed for spontaneity and for risk-taking, not only with the artistic programme, but also by enabling audiences to try new work, with free and ‘pay what makes you happy’ events. *The Home* attracted national media attention and international partnerships.

Much of the Festival’s legacy is beyond the timeframe for this evaluation. The new GP relationship will be assessed by Entelechy Arts in a year’s time. Social prescribing has yet to be widely tried and tested. The world’s largest ever study into the impact and scalability of arts interventions on physical and mental health was launched in October 2019 by King’s College London and UCL, supported by a £2m award from Wellcome Trust.⁵⁴

Finally, Lewisham’s status as London Borough of Culture 2021 will enable the local authority and its partners to build on the success of Age Against the Machine without losing momentum.

⁵⁴ www.kcl.ac.uk/news/worlds-largest-study-into-impact-of-arts-on-physical-and-mental-health



BED

Presented by Entelechy Arts in partnership with Saitama Gold Theatre

A bed. A street. Four older people abandoned in their nightclothes. What is real? What is fiction? There are so many stories that go unheard.

Bed popped up in public places throughout the Festival, but this case study focuses on a special indoor version of *Bed* for an event organised for local authority and voluntary sector staff by One Lewisham Health and Social Care, which combines mental and physical health services and social care. The event was held in the Ladywell Centre in the middle of the day, with lunch provided to make it easier for staff to attend. In addition to older actors in hospital beds scattered across the hall, actor members of Meet Me sat in armchairs at small tables with photos and other mementos. Empty chairs at the tables invited visitors to sit and talk. 30 members of various staff teams attended, and we interviewed 12 people.

Hesitantly, when they realised it wasn't going to be 'a show,' people started to engage with the performers, some of whom were non-verbal or speaking in Japanese. The care professionals were themselves ethnically and culturally diverse, very representative of Lewisham. As an observer, it was interesting to see how the various professionals responded to the actors. A couple moved into 'let's fix this' mode, as one patient moved unexpectedly across the bed. Others took more time, were very patient, spoke softly to her, and did not try to move her, just held her hand. There were long intimate conversations, group chats with loud laughter, stories exchanged between actors and visitors, plus much listening and watching.

It gave me an awful lot of confidence in our care and other workers in Lewisham, because they were very professional and very confident about engaging with the actors, the patients. And it fills me with a lot of hope if I ever get ill in Lewisham! **Project Manager**

The key themes from the interviews afterwards were about how the encounters resonated with the staff's professional, day-to-day experiences, the empathy they felt, and the whole issue of loneliness and isolation for older people. The need for more time to talk and listen to older patients is compromised by the pressure staff are under to get through a certain number of visits in a day. The powerful stories they heard reflect what they hear in care homes and on home visits. Some perceptions were shifted, and awareness increased of how the arts might contribute to ageing well. Finally, there were many comments in appreciation of the artistic quality of the event, how it was absorbing, authentic and realistic.

They are good actors and it's reflected in the type of people we meet in the community. Each and every person is individual, the way they are portrayed here. That's the way we see them in their communities. **Enablement Officer for discharged patients**

In reality, the most isolated and lonely people, you have to dig for that information and pull it from them. So, they're not always as able to articulate how they're feeling, because they don't recognise loneliness themselves. They think they're doing well; they're coping. Whereas the people here all understood they had a problem. They wanted to share what their problems were. **Support Planner, Adult Social Services**

She just managed to allow me to realise that an older person has a lot more to offer than meets the eye. I think what resonated also was the fact that she's got so much to give, and she is still there to keep giving, irrespective of what she's been through. **Social worker, Adult Social Care**

I think they're all very powerful stories. I think they reflect a lot of what we hear when we go into care homes, and some of those stories aren't new, but they're just as powerful. You see the individualism of people. And you see that need is not of a kind. So, the need to personalise [care] is so important, and it's sometimes missing. It was a powerful reminder of that. **Patient Champion, Health Watch (Charity)**



I asked people if there was anything they would do differently themselves, or would encourage others to do as a result of the experience of *Bed*. They all acknowledged that taking time with the people they serve is important, **giving enough time for people to talk, to listen and build up trust** and find out whether special care is needed, or just some company, ‘somebody to watch Eastenders with them, – it could be trivial things that make a big impact.’

Time matters. We’re time poor in our jobs, we take what we need and move on.
Support Planner, Adult Social Services

We talk an awful lot about improving services, about hearing the stories from the patient. We’re always certain very quickly, we know the answers as professionals, clinical or otherwise. But actually, we don’t consult enough generally with the patient and wait till they finish their story before deciding halfway through that we figured out the answer. **Project Manager, Adult Social Services**

Several people said they would change their approach, to listen more and take time to have a longer, less functional, more sociable conversation. I asked if they could push back, to manage upwards, against the time restrictions.

We refer back to the Care Act... It says the right things and how we should approach things. However, in reality and the logistics of work and the volume of work we have, it’s not practical. They expect you to work ‘time efficiently’. But that isn’t always the best approach. So, you understand that there are some cases that may need long- term management and there are others that might just need a short intervention, which you can turn around quickly. But I think they are listening more over the last few years since I’ve been working for them. So we do push back. **Neighbourhood Coordinator for Social and Health services**

Even though I know everybody is individual, I still will have to be more vigilant in my approach when visiting my clients. **Social Worker, Adult Social Care**

Several people committed to finding out more about arts and social activities in Lewisham (most of the interviewees did not know about the *Age Against the Machine* festival). When I described Meet Me activities, they immediately could see how such a varied offer could benefit people of all ages in their care, particularly addressing loneliness and isolation.

We discussed **social prescribing** which all interviewed agreed is, a ‘superb,’ and an ‘important’ idea. Most are still beginning to come to an understanding of how it might work, but think that it will help health services understand the benefits of social connections and not just health interventions.

Some care packages allow care workers to take people out into community activities. We also have social services supporting people to go to the centres where they get involved in activities. But we need more of this. And I think higher up that support can be pointed out to the people who manage the money.
Neighbourhood Coordinator for social and health services

And finally one worker resolved on an immediate personal action:

I’m going to go and call my mother tonight! And be a little more patient, because I think sometimes with our own families, we can get caught up in the day to day as well. And this was also a powerful reminder that actually, she was young once. She was eighteen. She had a whole life ahead of her, that’s now behind her, and sometimes it’s just nice to talk about it. **Patient Champion, Health Watch**

Note: The impetus for, and co-creation of, *Bed* came from a group of women in their 70s and 80s who, when walking out in public life, felt that they were no longer recognised and valued as the people that they had always felt themselves to be. *Bed* was first performed in 2016.

9. LEGACY

The high profile platform of the Age Against the Machine festival allowed policy makers and leadership within Lewisham Council to understand further the powerful role culture has in our society and local communities. This has increased culture's status within Lewisham's priorities and in turn affected a successful bid to be the Borough of Culture for 2021.

Whilst several community and arts organisations have already stated their intention to continue new partnerships and seek funding to continue working with artists at the time of writing this report, the Borough of Culture Award offers a great opportunity for creative ageing work in Lewisham and a deep impact on future intra-departmental policy. There is ambition to take activity beyond borough boundaries into neighbouring areas, and find ways to work and maintain connections made during the *Ageing Well* symposium. Locally in Lewisham, plans are underway to develop greater working connections between cultural organisations and Adult Social Care teams.

The legacy of the Symposium (the report of which has been circulated nationally) will create opportunities to share learning nationally and internationally, lobbying and advocating. Nationally the arts and cultural sector are seen as key partners in the huge social prescribing movement that, supported by the NHS, seeks to change the landscape in terms of supporting the wider health and wellbeing of our communities. Lewisham and its cultural sector are in a strong position to contribute to wider leadership in this fast-changing landscape.

London is part of the World Health Organisation Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities, and Communities, and Boroughs of Culture can benefit from sharing practice and being inspired by work around the world.

This report has sought to capture evidence to demonstrate that *Age Against the Machine* was able to deliver on its key aims and objectives. It is clear that taking part in the Festival has had an immediate impact on individuals and organisations and that productive, wider strategic conversations have been instigated and augmented.

Festivals make memories, enrich existing relationships and forge new alliances. This is possibly the best legacy *Age Against the Machine* has created. It marked an extraordinary moment in 2019 in Lewisham, when older artists were centre stage and brought communities together. They refocused our attention, disrupted prevalent attitudes and behaviours that discriminate and limit, and they showed us all a different narrative for ageing.

We can do anything! We have an amazingly talented and energetic group of older artists in this borough, and we've just opened a door to a very exciting demographic of performers. The challenge now is to allow that group of people to steer the next festival!

Artist, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

I can't really convey our gratitude, or the way that this project has changed us as a community. The festival gave permission for us to play and engage with others to play in deeply nourishing ways. We are taking it out and taking it further next year. It has connected us to so many people. Brilliant.

Project Award Group

10. TWELVE KEY FINDINGS

Ageism

1. The Festival's bold approach to programming and content offered inspiring alternatives to negative, mainstream narratives about ageing. *Age Against the Machine* provoked new or different thinking about ageing and being older and its success was due to co-creation with older people, cross-sector partnerships and collaborations.
2. People of all ages were moved to reflect on their attitudes to ageing by their experiences during the Festival, and to have more positive expectations of themselves, or their future selves, as older people.

Older artists and mainstream

3. There is an audience for work by and with older artists when it is made visible.
4. The theme of Ageing is itself a catalyst for engaging, challenging and adventurous work.
5. Older artists enjoy creative risk-taking. Older people are not only beneficiaries of artistic interventions, but are artists in their own right.
6. The increasing presence of older artists in society, and the growth of artists emerging in their 60s, 70s, and 80s are challenging stereotypes and producing disruptive and entertaining work, telling us new and diverse, inclusive stories about the universal experience of ageing.

Society and health

7. There is an unmet demand for intergenerational work and creative activity that brings different generations together and which can challenge limiting perceptions of people at different life stages.
8. The social and expressive nature of creative activity help to address loneliness and benefits physical and mental health.
9. Social prescribing is an opportunity and local cross-sector partnerships are essential for effective delivery of creative ageing activity.

Strategic

10. Through *Ageing Well* and participation in/media coverage of *The Home*, more local public health leaders are more aware of how using creativity and the arts can improve quality of life and quality of care for older people.
11. The arts and wellbeing have become more embedded in Lewisham's Local Plan
12. Lewisham is now more widely recognised for its pioneering work on arts and ageing.



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The festival worked with

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Fox and Ginger

Fun Palaces
Future Art Centres
Glass Performance
Gulbenkian Theatre
Heart n Soul
Horniman Museum and Gardens
Irie Dance Theatre
Jacksons Lane
Kanagawa Arts Theatre
Levantes Dance Theatre
Magic Me
Make Mee Studio
Manchester Museum
Meet Me
Montage Theatre Arts
Move Me
Norfolk and Norwich Festival
Penned in the Margins
Poetry TakeAway

Quadrielle Dance
Ridiculusmus
Sadlers Wells
Saitama Arts Theatre
Saitama Gold Theatre
Sardines Dance Collective
Setagaya Public Theatre
Shades of Black Theatre
Shizuoka Performing Arts Centre
South Bank Centre
Spare Tyre
Tangled Feet
The Albany
Trinity Laban
Upswing
White Rabbit
Without Walls

22 Project Award Groups

60 Up CIC
ChART Big Local
Diamond Club
Downham Men's Group
EASE Project
Flour Studio
IRIE! dance theatre
JOY (Just Older Youths)
Lewisham and Greenwich

NHS Trust
Lewisham Healthy Walks
Lewisham Homes
Lewisham Irish Community Centre
Lewisham Unity
Myatt Seniors
Opening Doors
Red Ribbon
Rushey Green Time Bank

St Christopher's Hospice
Sydenham Gardens
Vietnamese Family Partnership
(Gia Dinh Viet)
Voluntary Services Lewisham
Befriending
Young at Heart

23 Community collaborators

Age Exchange Bakehouse	Downham Health & Leisure Centre	Positive Ageing Council
Asian Absolute – Translation services	Ewart Community Hall	Potter's Field
Beecroft School	Friends of Chinbrook Meadows	Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre
Bohemians Hair Salon	Holy Cross School	St Christopher's Community Connections
Chinbrook Community Orchard	Honor Oak Community Association	St Mary's Primary School
Christchurch United Reform Church	Lewisham Dementia Action Alliance	Stanstead Lodge Seniors Club
Over 60s	Lewisham Shopping Centre	Vista Reminiscence
Social Group	Myatt Garden School	
Crofton Park Independent Living	Philosophy For All	

32 Artists

Antosh Wojcik	Grace Barry-Tait	Louise Cain
Carol Grimes	Jive Five (x 5)	Merlin Strangeway
Charles Hayward	Katy Milner	Natasha Lohan
Christopher Green	Kwake Bass	R.M. Sanchez-Camus
Erin Bolens	Lavinia Co-Op	Sarah Garrod
Fabiane Lee-Perella	Linden McMahon	Shane Waltener
Geni Lou	Liz Aggiss	Shanique Thompson
George's Magic Accordion	Liz Lane	Simona Scotto
Ginger Johnson	Lizzie Kew Ross	Xnthyony
		Yenling Huang

5 Higher Education partners

Goldsmiths University
King's College London
Queen Mary, University of London
Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

25 Strategic collaborators

Adult Learning Lewisham	Team	Opening Doors London
Alexander Care	Guildhall	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Arts Council	HC-One Home	Red Ribbon
Baring Foundation	Ladywell Centre (Dementia Unit)	Table Talk (referral and advisory)
British Council (delegation from Japan)	Ladywell Day Centre	The Blue Ribbon Foundation
Cedar Court Care Home	Leander Court (Peabody)	Therapeutic Services
Greater London Authority	Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust	Tower Bridge Care Home
Greater London Authority Culture	Lewisham Library	University Hospital Lewisham
	Milliners Court Elders	Voluntary Services Lewisham

On behalf of Entelechy Arts

Artistic Director:

David Slater (Festival Co-Director)

Creative Director:

Rebecca Swift

General Manager:

Christine Lee

Volunteer Coordinator:

Sarah Jarman

Administrator:

Jessica Acton

Intern:

Caitlan Smith

On behalf of the Albany

Artistic Director/CEO:

Gavin Barlow (Festival Co-Director)

COO:

Shenay Gaul

Head of Creative Programmes:

Rachel Nelken

Creative Programmes Manager:

Linda Bloomfield

Engagement Producer:

Linden McMahon

Programme Coordinator:

Aja Garrod

Programme Manager, Meet Me At:

Lucy Warren

Project Coordinator, Meet Me At:

Sarah Phillips

Youth & Community Programme Manager:

Kirsty Collander-Brown

Youth Programme Coordinator:

Kine Odegard

Youth Programme Assistant:

Remy Moynes

Garden Projects Coordinator:

David Dandridge

Project Manager:

Alison Hamilton

Head of Marketing and Communications:

Kate Farrell

Marketing Manager:

Polly Cotran

Marketing & Communications Coordinator:

Hannah Harewood

Marketing Assistant:

Tayo Olowo-okere

Head of Production and Premises:

Ben Stephen

Chief Technician (Stage):

Jack Fox

Chief Technician (Electrics):

Jerome Reid

Head of Operations:

Dave Pollock

Front of House Manager:

Meg Hendrickse

Duty Managers:

David Pollock, Jamie Hemingway,

Jenni Sinclair, Laura Marie Donnelly,

Matt Lloyd, Meg Hendrickse, Nicole Young

Event Assistants: Becky Horne,

Beth Stoddart, Ciara Fleming,

Daniel Odebode, Dominic Frimpong,

Eleanor Parker-Harbord, Ella Becker,

Emily Coghlan, Henrietta Thomas,

India Young, I-Ying Liu, Lawrence Ijeh,

Llewelyn Lewis, Maeve Elmore,

Maya Yoncali, Nelson Ekaragha,

Stella Purvis, Susie New, Suzie Carney,

Taylor Han, Vivian Triantafyllopoulou,

Zoe Beeny

Premises Team: **Arcilia Dabo, Tony Dabo,**

Valentine Nzongo Vangi

Box Office Manager:

Rebecca Mead

Box Office Assistants: **Amy Van Zyl, Fleur**

Martin, Sara Codrington, Tiffany Murphy

On behalf of Deptford Lounge

General Manager:

Annette Butler

Operations Manager:

Richard Barr

Duty Managers:

Jody DeSchutter, Lloyd Newton,

Ronan Morley, Sophia Tupy

Premises Team Leader:

Rui Dabo

Premises Officer:

Iaia Sanha

Premises Team:

Fatmata Kamara, Flavio Da Coneicao,

Iliane Dabo

Lewisham Council Festival team:

Andy Thomas, Elizabeth Crook, Liz Dart, Lucy Formolli, Nancy Stridgen

Press and PR: David Burns

A special thank you to the
276 volunteers
who supported the Festival



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Also see CultureCase, which comprises a vast array of carefully selected academic research from universities and scholars around the world that can add value to the work of the cultural sector.

<https://culturecase.org/>

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In sight

Now my eyes have retired
I am flicking back through
all the albums of images
they took,

I am seeing with my hands
my ears, my heart,
gathering shape by different
means.

Colour is ambiguous now -
your blue is my green,
what matter.

My glass has always been full,
no half measures.

That's not to say I haven't
cried behind toilet doors
when wolves said I didn't
belong -

that's not to say I haven't
felt tears in my heart
when someone has been hurt,
been to unheard.

But I have always stayed
so those I represent

can see themselves
with purpose at their
fingertips.

There is no accident
in my dictionary -
only reason,
only unknown meaning,
mysterious weaving.

So I will persist.

Speak when I need,
listen when I can,

see what I have seen -
it is enough.

My glass will always
be full,
of strength, of love.

Erin Bolens
20.09.2019

The Bohemians Salon hosted free haircuts and artist takeover on 20 September. People shared stories and ideas with Erin Bolens to turn into poems.

The idea of having some of their own words in a poem was clearly quite novel and it was so great to see their surprise at their conversation being preserved and celebrated in that way.

Erin was especially inspired by one woman who was almost entirely blind and before her retirement she worked for Social Services. She was the first Asian woman to do so and received a lot of racist abuse and bullying from clients and staff. Although disheartening she said it never stopped her as there has to be a first for everything and she wanted others to know that it was possible.

