

CULTURE

SOME THINGS CAN'T BE CONFINED TO A BOX
AGE-FRIENDLY CULTURE



Introducing Age-Friendly Culture

Age-Friendly Culture builds upon Manchester's and the GM Ageing Hub's citizen-based approach to ageing. This champions agency, active participation and work led by older people themselves. The ethos is to work "with and for, not to" local people. This longstanding approach seeks to improve the quality of life for older people and make the city-region a better place to grow older.

Over 30 cultural organisations across Manchester and Salford, including museums, orchestras, theatres and participatory arts organisations, regularly come together to share ideas, review and develop age-friendly work and explore new partnerships and programmes. The ambition is to create scope and scale through partnership working and in so doing, reach those who participate least in cultural activity.

Case Study: Culture Champions

Nothing demonstrates more powerfully the ethos and impact of this approach than Culture Champions. One of the flagship Age-Friendly programmes for Manchester, Culture Champions is a large-scale volunteer ambassador scheme for older people within Manchester's communities. Over 150 Culture Champions advocate, lead and programme activities for their peers. They participate, promote and advocate, advise arts organisations, plan and organise their own events, takeovers and festivals. They are an alliance of the willing - committed, creative,

Greater Manchester has a significant number of important cultural and heritage organisations and assets at all scales and sizes that preserve and promote the important history of this diverse and distinctive city region. The ambition is to extend age-friendly culture across GM, not least as part of Cultural Leaders Ambition 2026, a 10-year shared vision for Culture across the Combined Authority. It already identifies Age-Friendly Culture Champions as a leading pathfinder project, but also encourages bolder forms of collaboration, driven by big ambitions for new work, talent development, and cultural democracy.

engaged individuals who believe participating in culture enriches lives. Many of them have links to other volunteering organisations and are active within their communities. A key priority is to reach those who participate least through outreach and developing new ways to welcome and support older people. Culture Champions are regularly cited as best practice nationally and internationally.

Context

Over the last decade, age-friendly cultural activity by, with and for older people has increased significantly. There is now compelling evidence for the benefits of the arts as we age alongside greater awareness of the inequalities in cultural participation. Evidence suggests that access to the arts can combat loneliness and improve health and quality of life (DCMS 2014; Goulding 2013; Crossick and Kaszynska 2016). A recent poll of over 65s, commissioned by Arts Council England found three quarters of older people say that arts and culture is important to making them feel happy (Comres 2016). Almost seven in ten (69%) say that arts and culture is important in improving their overall quality of life and over half say it is important in helping them meet others and feel less alone (51%). However, quantitative research has shown

Age-Friendly Culture: Key Characteristics

Social connectedness

Age-Friendly Culture encourages connectedness. Recent evaluation of cultural volunteering (particularly amongst older people) in Greater Manchester concluded that outcomes were underpinned by a strong sense of connectedness to people, local stories and events. This connectedness to human experience over time has enhanced the level of self-awareness, belonging, imagination and ability to narrate and relate better to others, and thus improve social relationships (Inspiring Futures: Volunteering for Wellbeing SROI Summary 2016).

Participation

There is a shared commitment to reach those who are least likely to participate. A good example of this is older men. Across Greater Manchester, there is an increase in men living alone, at risk of social isolation and loneliness and Manchester has amongst the lowest levels of male life expectancy in the UK.

The Whitworth, the University of Manchester, has led award-winning work focused on reaching and engaging older men. This includes The Handbook for Cultural Engagement with

Cross sector collaborations

There is a strong track-record of working collaboratively across the cultural sector but also across other sectors; with care settings, public health, commercial organisations and research partners. These include long-term academic partnerships, co-developed programmes with housing associations and charities, including the Stroke Association and Age UK.

Across GM, we are uniquely positioned to explore ways to link existing cultural activity with health, social care and commissioning services. For example, Manchester Camerata have particular expertise in working with older people with mental health issues and those living with dementia, including the Tameside Opera Project and Music in Mind. Since 2012 they have been working alongside qualified Music Therapists to deliver pioneering group music therapy sessions for people

that socio-economic, ethnic and health differences influence cultural participation in older age and that cultural activity drops substantially after age 75 (DCMS 2014; Keaney and Oskala 2007; Scherger et al 2011).

Much of the work to encourage and support older people to engage with culture is driven by the health, social and wellbeing outcomes of taking part and starts to tackle these inequalities. By bringing together thinking, research and insight from partners across Greater Manchester, Age-Friendly Culture responds directly and imaginatively to local circumstance and need.

Case Study: Vintage FM

Vintage FM was set up as a project to tackle loneliness by placing older people at the heart of a unique combination of radio production training, shows and cultural events (delivered within arts venues and community settings). It was funded by the Baring Foundation. Supported by ALLfm and 6 cultural organisations, a team of Culture Champions were trained in radio production and they worked across residential homes and cultural venues. Vintage FM broadcast twice a month on ALLfm, sharing cultural experiences and content with people at home.

Older Men, co-curated exhibition Danger! Men at Work and the ongoing peer-led workshop programme Handmade.

The National Football Museum is currently delivering the Memories of 66 Project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund in partnership with Sporting Memories Network. Inspired by 1966 World Cup exhibition and memories of England’s win, they have regular get-togethers, using sport as a way to help people meet others, talk about their experiences and make new friends.

living with dementia and their carers. A recent assessment by New Economy, found that some participants no longer had to be medicated after taking part. Carers reported reduced agitation, better moods and improved posture.

“Culture is a talking point to trigger conversations - it gives them things to talk about with residents and it helps them bond - builds relationships. Not seeing the person in a care context but in a social and creative context, the staff saw the residents differently, in a new light.”

Manager, care setting

Talent and creativity

The cultural ambition is that Greater Manchester will be regarded as the city-region which values and nurtures creative talent, skills, diversity, and expression more inclusively and successively than any other. Creativity in later life and supporting older artists plays an important role. The making of art confers agency and autonomy rarely experienced as we age (Matarasso 2012). Artists such as Picasso, Miró, Cézanne and Matisse, continued working throughout their lives whilst others like Louise Bourgeois, only became a household name in her late seventies.

Age-Friendly Culture: Ambition

These are just a handful of the programmes and activities which take place each week. Age-Friendly Culture is increasingly high profile, attracting national and international attention. In recent months, the distinctive programmes and GM’s ambition for arts and ageing have been shared in Hong Kong, Tokyo, Australia, Germany and across the UK. There have been study visits from colleagues in Melbourne, Singapore and Copenhagen.

Recommendations to support and develop Age-Friendly Culture

Extend Culture Champions

Culture Champions can lead the way; show how older people, arts and third sector organisations might work together to reach more and more diverse older people, particularly those who currently participate least.

To do this, the Culture Champions should be diversified, in two distinct ways; First, to broaden the range of people (in terms of ethnicity, social class and geographical location) who become Champions, through new forms of recruitment, training and partnership. The aspiration is that the champions fully reflect the city-region in which they live.

Establish a Centre for Arts and Ageing

There is an opportunity to develop an ambitious Centre for Arts and Ageing over the next 3 years. It would build upon existing profile, partnerships, exchanges and growing international networks, particularly in East Asia. Working closely with colleagues in MICRA (Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research into Ageing), it would share GM-based research and

Greater Collaboration

The infrastructure around ageing is developed and increasingly collaborative. This is a real opportunity to more effectively mainstream culture within ageing priorities and practice (eg: to seek to integrate culture and leisure fully within the

Campaign to tell a different story about ageing

To rewrite the story of old age (from a narrative of loss or deficit to one of aspiration and growth) is a bold aspiration but Greater Manchester is, and always has been, a progressive and ambitious place. Age-Friendly Culture provides a high-profile platform and opportunity to share the vision of GM Ageing Hub and tell a different story

The Royal Exchange Theatre’s Elder’s Company makes boundary pushing theatre that challenges the negative stereotypes of ageing. It is for everyone over 60 who wants to feel connected to new people and ideas. Critically (and unusually) the Elders are situated within the artistic vision of the theatre, significantly raising the status and ambition of the work and enabling it to reach a far wider audience.

Age-Friendly Culture plays a leading role and feeds into nationwide networks, including Age Friendly Museums Network. There is now significant local expertise around arts and ageing, recognised by widespread external support, funding and awards for this work, including from the Royal Society for Public Health, British Council and Baring Foundation.

Secondly, to diversify what Culture Champions do, to ensure they shape the cultural life of their city-region for themselves and their peers. New skills and roles would be required to support this ambition; producers, editors, broadcasters, befrienders and fundraisers. There is the potential for a step-change in the ambition, reach and impact of Culture Champions across GM.

practice and make a strong and novel contribution to theories of ageing and identity, cultural participation and value. The Centre would provide thought leadership to the cultural sector, seek to influence and shape policy, have significant convening power and attract investment. It would be the UK’s first dedicated Centre for Arts and Ageing.

expansion of retirement planning activity) for the widest benefit and impact of residents. Across GM, we are uniquely positioned to explore imaginative ways to link existing cultural activity with health, social care and commissioning services.

about ageing. In partnership with local and national media, there is an opportunity to develop a new campaign and narrative that draws upon both the lived experience of older people and some of the most creative and imaginative writers, artists and performers living and working today.



**“I’m all for new experiences.
It stimulates my brain”**

We learn

**“I ended up on the radio,
doing broadcasts”**

It gives us a voice

**“You do things differently,
meet different people”**

We feel more connected

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