

Case Study

Ideas Test

Young at HeArt



Age-Friendly

Young at HeArt is a creative arts project based in Sittingbourne, Kent, providing a regular programme of activities for older people (55+) living in the Swale area in partnership with Swale Community and Voluntary Services (Swale CVS) & Swale Seniors Forum.

These activities take place fortnightly in a cycle of 6 of each of the following: Film Club, Craft Club, Movement Club, and Culture Club. The programme started in April 2017 and runs to March 2018.

Film Club participants get involved in the programming and choosing films supported by the Swale Film Society. Following consultation with Swale Seniors Forum about programme content, Craft sessions range from woodworking to printmaking to creative computer coding. Culture Club includes local historians, astronomers & musicians leading active participatory sessions. Movement Club offers taster sessions for a variety of wellbeing related practices including the very popular Feldenkrais, Tai Chi & interpretive movement with Kent based dance company Moving Memory. The atmosphere is social and informal, tea & biscuits form an essential part.

From autumn 2017 there will be theatre trips to see performances in local rural touring venues including the Gulbenkian Theatre in Canterbury and the Woodville in Gravesend.

To ensure inclusivity to all and being aware that many older people in the area have difficulty in accessing public transport, we offer transportation, free of charge, via the Swale CVS Volunteer Car Scheme.

How did it aim to reach or have relevance to older audiences? What impact did you want it to have on the size or profile of your visitor base?

We have employed a variety of platforms to reach the audience, reflecting the diversity of this broad group. Through Swale CVS befriending scheme (64 clients) and Volunteer Transport Scheme (1298 clients). In the Swale Seniors Forum newsletter which is sent to 160 members. Through Ideas Test existing client database and promotional material at our hub, centrally located in Sittingbourne High Street. Posters at local GP Surgeries and medical centres. Via social media.

Working with Swale Film Society, who are well embedded in the area, has enabled wider distribution of promotional material across Swale - particularly to the more remote/rural areas for example the eastern part of the Isle of Sheppey, villages on the outskirts of Sittingbourne and Faversham

The availability of the Swale CVS Volunteer Transport Scheme has been a key resource, especially for older people living on the Isle of Sheppey.

We also wish to encourage older people to attend our regular programme of arts events for all at both No.34 and across Swale and Medway. By adding them to our contact & mailing lists we will also be able to invite them to participate in other projects such as our Out of the Ordinary strand.



What tools did you use to measure this impact? What key indicator did you use to measure this impact?

We will be undertaking social impact research working with a team of trained peer interviewers from Swale Seniors Forum in the autumn.

We will be evaluating fully at the end of the programme. We use feedback cards at each event & have regular meetings and communication with our partners, Swale CVS on this project, to evaluate progress.

We have also programmed a finale event where we will gather feedback & suggestions for future older person focused programming.

What other objectives were you hoping to achieve?

Through our existing work with the Swale CVS Befriending Scheme, and our links with the Swale Seniors Forum, social isolation has been highlighted as being highly prevalent in older people across the Swale area. The lack of social interaction and the feeling of loneliness is a key factor amongst the elderly for an increase in GP appointments and has a big impact on a person's wellbeing.

Older people experience social isolation due to disability, immobility, lack of confidence and location. A contributing factor in Swale is the poor transport links across the district especially for those living in the remote and rural areas.

A programme of activities with the offer of transport, enables those who are currently socially isolated, to engage in a meaningful activity on a regular basis and have the opportunity to build peer relationships with those in the same position as themselves. Those attending are encouraged to make friendships and meet independently if able.

Were there opportunities for this activity to be intergenerational?

Later in the programme we will be introducing Young Music Leaders from our Disquiet project to lead one of the Culture Club music sessions. A young coder at the beginning of her career will also be leading a Digital Craft Club.

What worked well, what challenges did you face?

As the project runs for a full year and is currently part way through we are still learning. So far all the sessions are developing regular audiences. The 'hands on' sessions are most popular, with great enthusiasm for music. Nothing like this has happened in Swale before so the challenge is to reach a very dispersed audience. Designing a programme that happens in an informal sociable atmosphere has been essential. Our biggest challenge is geographic, Swale communities are quite dispersed with a mixture of rural and urban. With our combination of promotional platforms and growing word of mouth we are developing the audience.



What have been the most important things you have learned?

It is important to listen to the participants suggestions but just as important to give them activities they might not have thought of, the excitement of the new is often more stimulating. A mixture of familiar and new in the programme creates confidence in the participants to return, as well as seek out new experiences. Comments such as: "*never quite know what you're letting yourself in for with each event and that's the thrill of coming*" and "*I haven't laughed so much in ages*" show us we're getting some things right.

We have also discovered a reluctance in some people in the 55-65 bracket to relate to a programme of events with them in mind, even though the activities are not stereotypical 'old person' activities. Over 70s embrace the programme more readily. We have learned to adapt our language accordingly.

What will you do differently next time?

Next time we will programme more hands on activities and actively creative sessions. We'd also like to create continuity by running a short series of sessions, such as 3 x Learning to Play Music sessions in place of 3 x individual activity taster sessions.

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