EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

AGE AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

SUBMISSION FROM IMPACT ARTS

In response to the Scottish Government’s call for evidence on age and social isolation, Impact Arts would like to contribute towards best practice and ideas, with details of its Craft Café project, an example of targeted support for individuals and communities.

Background

Craft Café is a creative solution to improving health, reducing isolation and supporting independent living for longer. Targeting older people, Craft Café offers participants a safe, stimulating, social and creative environment where they can learn new skills, renew social networks and reconnect with their communities.

Craft Café has four main strands of activity:

Its key component is the opportunity to engage with professional artists to develop creativity and explore a range of visual artforms over a prolonged period. Alongside this, participants access advice, information and support on issues affecting them, delivered through local partnerships with key agencies. In addition, participants develop entrepreneurial skills through participating in exhibitions, craft sales and local fundraising activity. A further strand is the opportunity to participate in arts-based intergenerational work which benefits local communities and fosters supportive relationships with local young people.

Over the past 6/7 years, we have delivered community programmes in the Govan, Whiteinch and Castlemilk areas of Glasgow, in Irvine in North Ayrshire, in Renfrewshire and in community care settings in Edinburgh. Through these programmes, we engaged over 600 older people who had previously been at risk of isolation and loneliness.

In a time of financial austerity and an ever ageing population, Craft Café offers a resource that enables older people to sustain independent living for longer, be healthier and happier and increase their quality of life.
Why is There a Need For Craft Café?

The Ageing Population - National Strategic Context:

- Currently 1,047,000 older people 65+ in Scotland (Age Scotland Report 2011 -2012).
- 23% of Scotland’s population are 60+, and over 96% of these people live independently in their own home (A Strategy for Housing for Scotland’s older people: 2012-2021).
- The numbers over 75 are set to increase by 75% by 2033. (All Our Futures)
- 33% of 60-74yr olds and 52% of those 75+ engage in no cultural activities (The Age Scotland Report 2011 -2012)

Health and Wellbeing Amongst Older People:

The Social Care Institute for Excellence in 2011 stated the following impacts of loneliness in older people:

- Loneliness has a significant and lasting effect on health. It is associated with higher blood pressure and depression and leads to higher rates of mortality.
- It is also linked to a higher incidence of dementia with one study reporting a doubled risk of Alzheimer’s disease.
- Lonely people tend to make more use of health and social care services and are more likely to have early admission to residential or nursing care.

The Arts - A Proven Holistic Approach:

“Feeling valued, creative expression, using skills and engaging with other older people all build friendships and enhance feelings of well-being which strengthens resilience in tough times.” David Cutler, The Baring Foundation, 2012

An Evidence Review of the Impact of Participatory Arts on Older People by the Mental Health Foundation in 2011 highlighted the following:

- There is clear evidence that participatory arts programmes provide opportunities for meaningful social contact, friendship and support within the art groups themselves as well as improving relationships.
- Altruism, experienced through participatory art when it is used as a means of ‘giving something back’ to the community, can have a positive impact on community beneficiaries as well as for the individuals participating in the art.
Participatory art that involves people with dementia accessing their community or interacting with professionals serves to address age discrimination by raising awareness and expectations within the wider community and can help to break down stereotypes and reduce stigmatising attitudes and behaviour.

Participatory art that involves those with dementia along with their informal carers has proved to be an effective way of breaking down barriers in the relationship between those two groups.

In day and residential care settings, participatory art can foster a better sense of social cohesion and community for those with dementia.

Participatory art is a powerful tool that can contribute towards challenging and breaking down both the self and external stigmas of being older, that pervade popular societal culture.

All of the above points have been highlighted as outcomes for participants in Craft Café through our Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study. A summary is detailed below and the full report is also attached.

**Detail of Craft Café Programme**

- Aimed at older people aged 60+ who are at risk of isolation and loneliness
- Providing up to a 3/4 day per week service within local areas that is easily accessible
- Designed to meet the need of older participants who have multiple barriers to engagement in their local community
- Generally delivered in partnership with local community organisations such as housing associations

During the programme, older people receive:

- Access to professional arts tuition allowing development of new skills and self-led learning
- A community benefit through the entrepreneurial sale of artworks and crafts
- Renewed social networks and social opportunities
- Free access to the service, materials and refreshments to ensure no financial barriers to access
- A programme of professional exhibitions with local and national galleries

How it works:

- To identify older people who are isolated and alone: Housing Associations, care and supported accommodation, GP Surgeries, family and friends, Mental Health Teams and self-referrals.
- To provide support services to older people participating in Craft Café: Citizen Advice Bureaux, Health Improvement Officers, Mental Health Teams, Alzheimer’s Scotland, financial advisors and tenancy support workers.
- To deliver a range of local and national art exhibitions: National Galleries of Scotland, Glasgow Life, Local Authorities and Independent Galleries.
- To deliver a series of intergenerational programmes: Local youth service, primary and secondary schools.
Getting added value with a Partnership Approach

Identifying the right partners is a vital component to the success of the Craft Café programme, allowing for a more rounded delivery of service and securing the correct referrals on to the programme.

Key criteria for potential partners are those whose aims are to deliver:

- unique and creative health improvement initiatives
- services to combat social isolation amongst older people
- high quality, stimulating day care opportunities
- supports which enable older people to remain independent in their own homes.

What we have learned

During the pilot programmes of Craft Café, an independent Social Return on Investment Study was undertaken to evaluate the impact of the programme on key stakeholders and the social return through financial investment in the programme.

Outcomes Reported by Older People

✓ Feel stimulated and inspired, leading to a sense of self-worth and fulfilment
✓ Are able to make new friends, form better and stronger relationships and are therefore less lonely
✓ Report increased mental stimulation, a more positive outlook and reduced levels of anxiety and depression
✓ Become more confident, more independent, more active in their community, leading to a better quality of life
✓ Start to take more regular and more vigorous exercise as a result of attending
✓ Take greater notice of their health and reduce harmful behaviours (e.g. smoking, drinking, and poor diet)
✓ Are able to support an unassisted tenancy for longer
Outcomes reported family members of participants:

- The new interests and motivation of the older person leads to more conversation and a better relationship for family members
- The companionship and interests provided through the Craft Café means that family members worry less about their loved one
- The group support offered by the Craft Café means that the older person requires less attention by the family
- The creative output of the older person leads to increased appreciation and interest in art among family members

For Partner Housing Associations

- The publicity gained from the programme and association with Impact Arts leads to improved Housing Association profile and reputation
- A more settled, satisfied, and involved group of older tenants enables the Housing Association to provide a more efficient service
- The ability to deliver a more vibrant programme of activities for older people and greater demand for tenancies
- The stimulation, interaction and wellbeing derived by older people enables them to sustain an unassisted tenancy for longer

Health Outcomes

- The therapeutic value of attendance of the Craft Café brings about a reduction in the symptoms of anxiety and depression
- The companionship and positive outlook brought about means that participants reduce or stop smoking completely
- The improved physical and mental health of Craft Café participants leads to a reduced frequency of GP attendance

The SROI Study revealed that for every £1 spent there is a £8.27 saving to the public purse.

Since 2012, Craft Café has played a role in the annual Luminate Festival, a joint venture between Age Scotland, Creative Scotland and the Baring Foundation. Craft Café has popped up in rural areas of Ayrshire and West Lothian. The pop up workshops have proved popular and we have expanded and developed our work with Luminate over a number of years.

Conclusion

By establishing the model of Craft Café, Impact Arts believes we have:

- Created increased quality of life and well-being amongst older people in areas of deprivation across Scotland.
- Provided opportunities for older people to participate in lifelong learning in a way that suits their needs
- Enabled older people to have access to a range of support services such as Mental Health Teams, Alzheimer’s Scotland, financial advisors and tenancy support workers
• Supported housing associations to have stronger relationships with older tenants and allow older people to live independently for longer
• Improved health and well-being of older people through regular, positive and creative activity
• Established an older generation of emerging artists
• Strengthened communities through opportunities for intergenerational working and learning.

At a time when there are more people over the age of 60 than under 16, and with an ever increasing older population, an enhanced Craft Café programme that enables older people to be healthier, less isolated and more active in their community is an essential creative solution.

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