



Awards for All Age Friendly Neighbourhoods Creative Project

Background

Since September 2021 the Elders Council have been facilitating "Age Friendly Neighbourhoods" engagement work in 2 areas of Newcastle (Byker/Walker and West Fenham). We have visited many groups of older people in the areas to discuss their interests, aspirations, experiences and knowledge and gauge how they work with others to make their neighbourhoods good places in which to grow old. We have also developed partnerships with local organisations. The Elders Council encourages and enables older people to participate in our work and become members. By giving older people a voice we can work towards making Newcastle an Age Friendly City. Using creative engagement supports the involvement of people who may not get involved in any other way, gives people

confidence and can enhance voices in a more powerful and impactful way.



*"we've got some interesting ideas of what we'd like
our community to be like"*

Aims

Through this creative project the Elders Council aimed to develop a sense of Age Friendliness in specific neighbourhoods and break down barriers by giving older people a voice. We wanted a springboard for older people to further participation in the arts, other opportunities for involvement and civic engagement across the city. We planned to demonstrate that where you live or your age should not be barriers to a good life.

What we did

We worked with Unfolding Theatre to organise outreach sessions with a range of community groups to explore initial themes around age friendly communities. Unfolding Theatre recorded conversations and facilitated creative exploratory exercises such as making a map of an age friendly community and writing a manifesto.

We then arranged a creativity week in each area during the summer. These were accessible and inclusive creative sessions that were open through the week in local community venues where participants developed the manifesto ideas into a performance using creative writing and spoken word. The performance was called Just Us.

Around 50 people participated in the outreach sessions and creativity week.



In October, 2 performances of "Just Us" attended by around 60 people, were held as a part of the imAGE festival organised by the Elders Council to celebrate Older People's Month. The performances included

participants from the creativity week telling their stories in different ways as well as 2 professional actors to present the main points of the manifesto.

"Two fine actors relayed vital issues of our lives, which they had gleaned from workshops over four days during August, in Fenham and Byker. From this, a manifesto arose for an imagined (but not impossible – are you listening, Westminster?) community of hope and practical ideals"
(from Elders Council Magazine member's article).

No cliches, no apologies...
JUST US
Part theatre show - part bingo game



"I got someone approaching me in the street saying that was a fantastic delivery you gave"

Unfolding Theatre and the Elders Council of Newcastle present

AN AGE FRIENDLY CITY MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

Join us in Creating:

A COMMUNITY ALLOTMENT

A place to grow food together.

A FOOD HALL

A place where we can buy cheap, healthy and locally grown food.

A COMMUNITY KITCHEN

A place to cook and eat together. A chance to share skills, swap recipes and talk.

A MULTI-FAITH CENTRE

Where people of any faith or none at all can find sanctuary and peace.

A GIVE IT A GO SCHEME

Whether it's swimming or the gym, needlework or pottery, French or DIY. A chance to see if it's right for you, no pressure before you commit.

A LIVING LIBRARY

Instead of taking out a book, you borrow a person. Just like reading, it gives you a small window into someone else's world.

A HELP HUB

A place you can go if you don't know how to do something. Like a YouTube tutorial but better. You can ask questions, be shown how.

A REPAIR AND RECYCLING CENTRE

We'd like to repair more, we just don't always know how.

Here's what we want to see:

AN INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM

FREE HEALTH, DENTAL AND EYE CARE FOR EVERYONE.

We support the NHS

BETTER DEMENTIA CARE

That is free and reliable.

LOCAL SERVICES IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Banks where people come and talk to you!

WE WANT ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION ERADICATED

The manifesto was created by groups of older people in Byker, Walker and Fenham through the 'Just Us' project with Elders Council and Unfolding Theatre

Impact and Next steps

Unfolding Theatre produced a short film about the project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaLImT-pUn8>

The manifesto included many creative ideas around the need to share skills and develop links within the community.

Since the Just Us performances Elders Council and Unfolding Theatre have made a link with a local youth project, Kids Kabin, who are getting involved in developing some of the ideas and links between older people and children in Walker. We'll be running some creative exploratory sessions with the groups around cooking and sharing stories with the aspiration to develop a longer term intergenerational project.

One of the groups involved in the initial outreach sessions went on to develop their own film project working alongside a group of planning students to explore the age friendliness of their local area in Byker as well as participate in an artist residency for the east end of the city. The findings from this project have been shared with the Newcastle City Council team working on a long-term plan for the re-development of key high streets.

Elders Council continue to develop local networks, engage with community representatives and activists, co-ordinate small grants and broaden membership and older citizen involvement in the neighbourhood areas and across Newcastle.

