



Happy
Older
People

1. Introduction

The Happy Older People (HOP) network was formed in spring 2014 with the aim of bringing together individuals and organisations with an interest in promoting arts participation for older people. The network aims to include a diverse mix of arts organisations, individual creatives, housing, social care and health providers, and older people themselves and offer them a space in which to get to know each other, to learn about each other's work and potentially to lead to collaborations and partnerships.

HOP covers the Liverpool city region and has been particularly interested in working with older people who may be experiencing social isolation and/or loneliness, and who are not accessing leisure and cultural opportunities perhaps because of barriers such as lack of transport, poor mobility, or lack of social networks. The connectivity of cultural and health/social organisations through the HOP network has increased the level of activity in the city, providing opportunities to tackle social inclusion. Innovative collaborations through the HOP network have enabled local organisations to pilot technology, theatre, music, and wider arts activity with older people. The potential for this to grow and be exploited locally will help benefit Liverpool citizens and cultural organisations alike.

The joint working between citywide HOP network organisations has begun to create a sustainable and strategic model of practice, which will support the work of the Liverpool's Mayoral Lead for Older People to establish age-friendly cities activity in Liverpool. On an individual level, the HOP network provides a mechanism for signposting individuals to activities both in the city centre and in the community, aligned with Healthwatch Liverpool. This approach supports the city's

friendly economy agenda by delivering better cultural services, opportunities and quality of life for Liverpool's citizens whilst also enabling local economic growth through arts participation and collaboration.

2. Key Achievements

The HOP network was the concept of National Museums Liverpool, which has long had an interest in improving the quality of elder care using creative approaches. In March 2014 Open Culture were commissioned to initiate and manage the network, and between March 2014 and March 2015 the following has been achieved:

- A network of over **130 members**
- **112 separate sessions** of activity took place through HOP Pot projects
- **759 older people** reached through HOP Pot activity
- Four network meetings, each attracting around 35 – 40 participants
- Establishment of a monthly e-newsletter, blog and twitter account to share information about events, opportunities, and best practice in Liverpool and further afield
- **Strategic networking** to ensure that arts and culture is represented in other forums for older people across the city (including presentations to the Making It Happen Group and active involvement in Age Concern Liverpool and Sefton's Social Isolation and Loneliness Task Group)
- An **identifiable brand** which can be used by partners to promote their activities
- **Directly commissioned arts and cultural activity** through the HOP Pot grants scheme has enabled many older people to participate in the cultural life of the city.



Bluecoat & PSS Creative Workshop

This report provides a summary of the outcomes from 16 HOP funded projects, and collates feedback from the evaluation of the network itself. It provides a set of recommendations about the future development of HOP.

3. HOP Pot grants

3.1 Grant programme structure

The HOP Pot grant fund was designed to ensure that HOP made a real difference to the lives of older people in Liverpool, and that the first year of the network resulted in useful learning about how to engage older people with cultural activity.



Sing Me Merseyside

Organisations were invited to apply for £250, which could be spent in anyway, which would break down the barriers that prevent participation. There was no specified age range, in order to allow maximum flexibility and ensure that the fund opened up opportunities for different generations to come together, or for family members to be included. The fund required bidders to demonstrate:

COLLABORATION – organisations working together in new ways, or for the first time.

INNOVATION – creation of new activities and testing out new ways to engage older people with culture.

ADDED VALUE – use of the HOP Pot to add value to existing resources and assets.

Participating organisations were asked to work in partnership, to contribute to the documentation and evaluation of their

projects, and to use the funding to create new activity rather than to sustain existing work.

The grant applications were assessed by a panel, which included two older people. The projects were very diverse in art form, geographical location, activity, and cultural diversity (a full list is attached as appendix 1). Applicants included older people's clubs, community groups, arts organisations, community centres and individual freelance artists.

3.2 HOP Pot Outputs

Participating HOP Pot organisations completed a final survey and the projects achieved the following outputs:

- **112 separate sessions of activity took place.** These included choir rehearsals, museum visits, theatre trips, visual arts workshops, drum circles, dance and tai chi classes.
- The project reached **759 older people.**
- At least **2261 people have seen work created by older people through HOP Pot programmes**, including short films, textile art, Chinese knots, singing and improvised drama.
- Of the 759 older people reached through the project, **454 actively participated in a creative activity** as part of the experience.



MDI performance at the Florrie

The 15 organisations who led the projects worked with a further 18 partner organisations, with many of these relationships being newly established via HOP. For example staff from the Florrie met representatives from Sing Me Merseyside at a HOP network meeting and invited them to perform at their open day. Lee

Valley Pensioners Group visited the Royal Court after their organiser attended the HOP network meeting held in the theatre.

3.3 HOP Pot - Impacts on Participants

Project managers were asked about the impact of the activity on older participants. They reported a range of outcomes, including:

Reduction in social isolation through increased levels of contact and taking part in activities outside the home

During tea and coffee break, this is another great opportunity for people to further get to know each other, chat and develop new relationships (Miriam Mussa on the Royal Court Community Choir)

We were able to take two groups of the most vulnerable older people from our community...with no support services provided except for their weekly engagement with the club. Every one of the participants had not visited the theatre before and all have said they will definitely visit a theatre again in the future. (Margaret Kelly on Lee Valley Pensioners Club's trips to the Everyman and Royal Court)



Lee Valley Pensioners Club's trip to the Royal Court

The members were all new to drama...and the group bonded really quickly; they met socially too, which was nice to see. (Becky Brooks on Creative Drama Group)

Mental stimulation through enjoyment and new forms of activity

All of the participants commented on how nice it was to return to a place that held nostalgic memories. For two of the participants, being

filmed was a new experience, so it gave them the opportunity to try something new. (Alex Coulson on the making of Hurricane Films' *People's Stories* documentary shorts)

We had fun talking about different Arabic dishes and Arabic sayings, around classic Arabic dishes. (Joan Forshaw on Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival's textile art workshops)

Chinese music and dance are very relaxing and elegant so it worked very well for elderly people. They enjoyed watching, listening and also participating in the dance workshops. (Fenfen Huang on China Pearl's performance at Moss View Care Home)

Increased levels of physical activity (dance, walking, tai chi)

Tai chi beginner's class has helped me to understand about breathing better. (Participant in Pagoda Centre's tai chi taster course)

I wake up with the aches and pains of the day, I get in the studio to have a gossip and a dance and I'm young again! (Participant in MDI's 50 Moves dance taster sessions)



MDI Growing Older Disgracefully performance at the Florrie

Breaking down barriers by challenging assumptions that the arts is 'not for me'

I would feel comfortable popping into the bistro for a drink or bite to eat now.

(Participant in Everyman and Playhouse's *Bright Phoenix* outreach programme)

The two venues we visited could not have been more accommodating to make sure the experience was excellent (Margaret Kelly on visiting the Royal Court and the Playhouse)



Royal Court Theatre Community Choir

I'd never been to any of the galleries before. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It's realising the galleries are for you and now I'm much more likely to go to the Bluecoat for a coffee for example instead of a café. Port Sunlight would easily make a day trip. I'd go back. (Participant in the Bluecoat and PSS's creative workshops)

Progression to ongoing participation in creative and cultural activities



Sing Me Merseyside

The project has helped us to increase membership. (Billy Hui, Sing Me Merseyside)

We have a couple of new members who have stayed with us through the HOP project. (Jennifer Hale on MDI's 50 Moves dance taster sessions)

3.4 HOP Pot – Impacts for Organisations

The survey feedback suggests that as well as creative positive impacts for older people, the HOP Pot programme also had an impact on the organisations that ran the programmes.

Specifically, these were around:

- Learning about what works in engaging older people and how best to provide services which meet their needs.
- Establishing an audience for future activity targeted at older people.
- Establishment of cross-sector partnerships to enhance the accessibility and delivery of arts activities for older people.



Pagoda Centre Tai Chi taster

Learning about what works

The project managers fed back on what they had learned through the delivery of their projects. This can be summarised as:

- The importance of careful advance planning, as meeting participants' transport and access needs and making them feel comfortable is vital to the success of the event.
- Offering opportunities for participants in creative workshops to see and experience the work of professional artists, for example through theatre trips and gallery visits.
- Enabling older people to lead the decision making processes about where to go and what to do.
- Building in lots of time for conversation, socialising and refreshments – this is a

vital part of how the experience enhances the wellbeing of the participants.

- Reaching new people by taking activity out of the city centre and into the neighbourhoods.



Sing Me Merseyside

Establishing an audience for future activity for older people

As described above, many of the participants in HOP Pot funded projects are now keen to do more, and have built the confidence to visit arts venues independently, or to continue attending classes and sessions.



Lee Valley Pensioners Club's trip to the Royal Court

Some older people will always require additional intervention in order to be able to take part in cultural activities, and the projects have demonstrated the benefits of this to staff in HOP member organisations. Many of the organisations involved in the programme are actively planning further activity with current project participants, and extending their projects to a wider group. For example:

- The Florrie is using a slight underspend in their original HOP Pot grant to launch twice weekly coffee mornings so that older people can drop in during the day and

make the library space an alternative living room.

- MDI are exploring ways to engage older men in dance.
- Pagoda Centre is offering further classes in tai chi and Chinese knot making.

Establishment of cross-sector partnerships to enhance accessibility and delivery of arts activities for older people

The project helped to cement relationships between arts and non-arts partners. The involvement of housing associations, community groups, care providers and voluntary sector organisations was vital to the success of the programme, as it helped arts and cultural providers to reach older people who would not otherwise hear about their offer. Organisations brought complementary skills and resources to the project: for example PSS and the Bluecoat's partnership worked very well, with PSS meeting the support needs of the group while Bluecoat led on creative content.



Bluecoat & PSS Creative Workshop

4. The HOP Network

The impact of the HOP network was evaluated in a workshop session as part of the HOP network meeting in January 2015. Participants detailed a range of benefits from engaging with the network, which were:

- It is the only forum focused on arts which successfully engages with staff from other sectors, and so the meetings do not duplicate other activity
- HOP is inclusive and has attracted organisations representing a diversity of older people

- The informal style of the meetings and ‘no pressure’ networking allows contacts and relationships to develop over time.
- Members liked being able to hear from speakers about their work and to share ideas
- The availability of funding via HOP Pot grants gave a sense of purpose to the whole initiative, and ensured that HOP was making things happen.
- HOP is a conduit to ensure that arts and cultural partners are ‘at the table’ as the Age Friendly Cities agenda and other initiatives develop.

Feedback collated from the session suggests that HOP is highly valued by its members, and that it benefits arts and non-arts attendees alike. However it has not reached its full potential, and is not yet embedded. While there was general agreement that a central contact point for information about the city’s arts and cultural offer for older people would be very valuable, there was limited use of the HOP blog and twitter feeds which were intended to be the main channels for these. The e-newsletter was most effective in reaching HOP’s intended audience of practitioners interested in working with older people.



Pagoda Centre Tai Chi taster

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on feedback from HOP Pot grant recipients and from attendees at HOP network meetings.

- It is strongly recommended that National Museums Liverpool and Open Culture seek to maintain HOP in some form beyond March 2015, when current funding runs out. This will require adequate resourcing of project management time for

database management, event delivery, grant administration, regular communications and disseminating information.

- Specifically, the HOP network meetings, HOP Pot grant programme and monthly e-newsletter are the most valued of HOP’s activities and should take priority in future planning for HOP continuation.
- HOP should advocate for the value of arts and culture to healthcare practitioners, and in particular GP surgeries.
- HOP projects should remain small, seeding new activities and partnerships across the city, aiming to involve higher numbers of older individuals in high quality cultural experiences.



Poppies Group, St Leonards Community Centre visit to St Georges Hall

Report prepared by Kate Rodenhurst, Open Culture HOP Project Manager. March 2015



Appendix 1

HOP Pot Grant Awards

1. Chaturangan - Delivered two sessions of Indian dance performance and participatory activity at St Mary's Millennium Centre, in partnership with the Women's Fellowship.
2. China Pearl - Delivered a Chinese cultural day for 80 residents at Moss View Care Home, including dance, music, tai chi and movement workshops.
3. Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival - Commissioned an artist to deliver a number of textile art workshops with a group of older women who meet at Liverpool Arabic Centre, leading to the creation of a wall hanging which will go on display during Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival.
4. Pagoda Centre - Delivered 12 Chinese knot craft sessions open to all but targeted at older people, leading to a small exhibition.
5. Pagoda Centre - In partnership with Riverside and Wheel Meet Again, promotion and delivery of a series of tai chi taster sessions for older people.
6. Everyman and Playhouse - In partnership with Steve Biko Housing Association, a series of play readings and workshops in the community followed by visits to the Everyman for a tour and performance, with the aim of encouraging older people to join the E&P community forum.
7. The Florrie - Funded transport to enable local older people to attend the Florrie's community open day on 7th October, plus an artist fee to deliver hands on activities for older visitors during the event.
8. Heart Beat - Funded a series of drum circle workshops and the cost of targeted marketing to over 50s.
9. MDI - Delivered five taster sessions to encourage new members to join 50 Moves, MDI's over 50s dance group, which is suitable for those with no previous dance experience.
10. PSS and the Bluecoat - Contribution towards the cost of funding nine creative workshops for older people with mental health problems, including trips to City Centre galleries.
11. Royal Court Theatre - Provision of refreshments as a contribution towards the cost of supporting their community choir, which largely consists of members over 50 and meets weekly.
12. Sing Me Merseyside - Funded a marketing campaign and open evening event to promote the organisations network of informal singing groups across Merseyside.
13. Poppies Group, St Leonards Community Centre - Contribution towards the cost of a series of trips to cultural and heritage venues in Liverpool City Centre, with follow up reminiscence sessions themed around how the physical landscape of the city has changed.
14. Lee Valley Pensioners Club – Funded transport and refreshments to support the group to attend daytime concerts at the Philharmonic Hall. The club has participated in some outreach work with the Philharmonic but has not been able to visit the Hall due to funding constraints.
15. Hurricane Films - Creation of a series of short features on www.peoples-stories.com, which will take people back to visit places which were significant to them in their youth and record their memories.
16. Creative Drama Club - Funding for marketing and start up costs for a creative drama group for older people.