

# SocialArts

the crafty group for older people

## Road Map

A successful model for combatting social isolation and loneliness amongst older people through the arts

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*'This group has been a **real life-saver**. I really look forward to Mondays now.'*

*'I've loved the past few weeks - It's shown me that I can still do things!'*

*'What will I do on Mondays now!!'*

*Facing the prospect of only a two-week break!*

These comments were made by participants at the end of the five taster workshops held at the start of the project. The fact that such comments were made at the very beginning of the project demonstrates the immediate impact of Social Arts.

## Executive Summary

- i. SocialArts is an **innovative, arts-based approach** to tackling social isolation and loneliness amongst older people. It is funded by The Rothschild Foundation and delivered by Norden Farm to participants within the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, over 2 years, from January 2017 to December 2018.
- ii. A range of **evaluation** methods was implemented from the beginning of the project. This final evaluation report has been produced after 18 months of project delivery, with 6 months to go.
- iii. SocialArts is **unique** amongst other art projects, due to its **integrated, 3-part model**, encompassing **specialist transport and weekly art workshops followed by communal lunches**. All three elements were vital to the success of the project.
- iv. Half the group would not have been able to attend if specialist **transport**, in the form of a minibus, had not been provided. The transport turned out to also play an important role in developing the social side of the project, as participants chatted on the minibus. The art workshops were high quality, delivered by professional artists, and the communal lunches were restaurant quality at an affordable price.
- v. The **communal lunches** were essential to establish the social interaction between participants in the early sessions, as well as providing the practical benefit of a hot and healthy meal.
- vi. After a couple of terms, there started to be a shift in the perspective of the participants – there was a greater **focus on the art** and their own skill development. The art itself became a topic of conversation and therefore a vehicle for social interaction.
- vii. Having short **terms** of 3 to 5 weeks with a different **art topic** or theme each term worked well. A wide variety of art topics and styles were implemented, for example, sculpture, painting, drawing, singing, mosaic, natural materials and Japanese-themed art.
- viii. The **demand** for SocialArts was much higher than anticipated, indicating the level of need in the local area. As many participants as possible were accommodated, with 16 regulars on programme at the time of the evaluation – average age 73 years – plus a waiting list of 11 people.
- ix. The level of demand unfortunately led to a pressure on the project **budget**, which had been designed for up to 5 participants. This meant that the programme for Year 2 had to be modified, with slightly fewer sessions and the budget deficit was met by Norden Farm.
- x. A positive step for the future would be to work closely with **social prescribers** to put in place more formal referral routes, and to identify funding streams, thus ensuring that as many people as possible from the target group can benefit. More people could also benefit if the time on programme was limited, and there was a focus on exit routes at an earlier stage.
- xi. The **main aim** of the project was to increase social interaction and reduce feelings of loneliness. This was achieved for every individual participant. All participants were clear that

the benefits were felt from the first session attended. In some cases, the benefits started occurring even earlier, at the sign-up stage: the very prospect of attending SocialArts restored hope and motivation for some isolated older people... before they had even attended a single session.

- xii. SocialArts had a positive impact on participants' **physical and mental wellbeing** as well as on their social wellbeing. The 5 participants interviewed for the case studies all reported dramatically reduced frequency of visits to their GPs, and those who took part in the focus group (all participants except one) concurred and reported examples of not relying on their walking sticks so much, for example.
- xiii. Participants particularly liked the challenge of using different types of **art materials and styles** – they enjoyed the stimulation to their brains and the challenge of having a go. The result was the production of hundreds of outstanding pieces of art and an increase in **confidence** and perceived **creativity** for the participants.
- xiv. **Unintended outcomes** have included positive benefits extending to the relatives of participants. Particularly when relatives live a long distance away, they have noticed an improvement in motivation and zest for life in the participants of SocialArts. SocialArts has also given participants topics of conversation, whereas before they did not go anywhere or do anything and so had nothing to talk about. The staff involved in SocialArts have also benefitted. They have found working with the participants to be particularly rewarding, and they have gained skills and understanding in working with older people.
- xv. Key to the success of the project was the **staffing**. The participants had previously experienced many situations when they had been patronised and treated as though they were stupid, simply because they were older and perhaps infirm. They appreciated the friendly welcome they received from everyone involved in SocialArts, including the group leader / artist tutor, the volunteer, the project manager and other operational staff at Norden Farm (operational team, café staff, box office) and even from the minibus driver (from project partner, People to Places). It was also essential to the success of the project that the staff were professionals in their field, hence employing professional artists to deliver high quality provision.
- xvi. A **road map** has been produced as part of this report – a model for other organisations wishing to set up a similar project. This will be disseminated widely by Norden Farm.



*'It was fantastic to join the exhibition at Norden Farm, displaying works from SocialArts; a crafty group for older people and a project that brings socially isolated people together. A superb initiative and inspiring to meet so many wonderful people.'*

**Cllr Stuart Carroll**

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Cabinet Member  
for Adult Social Care and Public Health

## Section 1: Context

### What is SocialArts?

SocialArts is an innovative, arts-based project tackling social isolation and loneliness amongst older people in The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, over two years: January 2017 to December 2018.

It was conceived, planned and delivered by Norden Farm Centre for the Arts in Maidenhead.

The strapline for the group, as used in the marketing materials was:

*The crafty group for older people*

### Why it was needed

More than 1.2 million older people nationally are chronically lonely. These are older people who regularly go an entire month without speaking to anyone. (Jo Cox Loneliness Commission & Age UK websites, October 2017).

There are many ways in which older people can become socially isolated and lonely, including lack of transport and ability to leave their homes, bereavement, illness, becoming a long-term carer and sensory impairment.

Social isolation can be counted objectively through the number of contacts an individual has, or does not have, with other people on a regular basis. Loneliness, on the other hand, is a subjective measure and depends on the differing perceptions of individuals. Social isolation is often a precursor to loneliness.

SocialArts aims to tackle both social isolation and loneliness amongst older people.

The SocialArts participants use the term “lonely” interchangeably to mean both social isolation and loneliness.



*'I could go several days without talking to someone, especially at weekends, so Monday morning group is great.'*

**Participant**

## Rationale and Theory of Change

Art was chosen as the vehicle to solve the problem because of its potential to bring isolated older people together, enabling them to build social networks through creativity. The theory was that through a series of weekly art sessions, supported by specialist transport and communal lunches, they would gain creative skills and reduce their social isolation and loneliness. This would, in turn, inspire them to take up further social activities, such as, volunteering, as a sustainable, long-term benefit.

## Target Population

The target population for SocialArts was isolated older people living in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The group was self-selecting. No other entry criteria or restrictions were set.

## Commissioners and Funding Sources

Funding for the two-year SocialArts project was obtained through a grant from The Rothschild Foundation.

The funding did not cover the full cost of the project. The additional cost was absorbed by Norden Farm.

SocialArts was not commissioned by any other agencies.

## Aims and Outcomes

### **SocialArts was set up to achieve the following aims and outcomes:**

1. The participants will have increased social interaction and reduced feelings of loneliness
2. The project will have a positive impact on participants in terms of their physical, mental and social wellbeing
3. We will have learnt more about the relationship between arts engagement and the social well-being of isolated older people
4. We will have explored various types of arts activities engaged in and how they differ in their impact
5. We will identify how quickly positive outcomes emerged, and whether the presentation of the activities, through exhibition or live / recorded performance are a factor in their impact
6. We will also have looked at the other avenues of activity that participants investigate as a direct consequence of their experience of SocialArts and the legacy of the investment
7. Be able to demonstrate which parts of the project worked particularly well, or not, and share a model for other organisations to reference and build on
8. The final report will offer a road map for arts intervention projects as being an effective way of tackling social isolation in older people which will be disseminated to the widest range of users



## Section 2: Evaluation

### Evaluation Aims

There were two main aims for the evaluation:

1. To measure the success of the project against the intended project aims – Did the project achieve what it set out to achieve in reducing social isolation and loneliness amongst older people? And what lessons did we learn along the way?
2. To produce a Road Map – An instruction manual for any other organisation that wishes to deliver a similar programme in the future.

### Evaluation Methodology

### Managing the Evaluation

An external evaluator was commissioned to provide expertise and capacity for the project. They were able to drive the process, set up a monitoring and evaluation framework, produce evaluation tools and write the Final Evaluation Report and Road Map.

The evaluator was in place from the beginning of the project, enabling them to collect data and monitor progress as the project developed. This has enabled a thorough and effective evaluation to take place.

### Type of Evaluation and Evaluation Design

SocialArts is a flagship programme testing out an innovative delivery model. There were two elements to the evaluation – the evaluation of the outcomes achieved and the production of a road map for the benefit of other organisations wishing to introduce a similar project.

The Public Health England publication, *“Arts for health and wellbeing: An evaluation framework”* (January 2016) was a useful resource in planning the evaluation, in addition to the external evaluator’s own knowledge and expertise.

### Evaluation Timeline

The evaluation timeline was built upon the project delivery schedule, which covered a two-year period, broken down into terms of 4 or 5 weeks each.

The original intention was to produce 3 reports during the first 18 months of the project (to cover each 6-month period) and to produce a final evaluation report and Road Map in February 2019, following the end of the two-year project in December 2018.

This was changed due to the recognition that if SocialArts were to continue, funding applications needed to be made in advance, given that grant funders can take between 3 to 6 months to inform applicants of their decision.

The final evaluation was therefore brought forward, enabling the final report and Road Map to be produced in July / August 2018.

The 6-month report that was originally scheduled for the 18-month mark will be produced after the end of the 2-year project period.

## Data Collection Procedures and Monitoring

A number of data collection tools were used during the project:

- Attendance register
- Sign-up forms to collect baseline data (plus data consent forms)
- Group leader / artist tutor observational log – weekly
- Volunteer observational log – weekly
- Telephone calls with the project manager – termly
- Individual questionnaires
- Interactive, group evaluation materials
- Focus group
- One-to-one interviews with participants, SocialArts staff and other Norden Farm staff
- Questionnaire for partners and wider stakeholders
- Photographs taken during the art workshops

Dropbox was used to store data. It was a secure system that could be accessed by the project manager and the external evaluator only.

## Ethics and Consent

At the same time as completing the initial sign-up form, participants were asked to sign a data consent form, explaining what data was being gathered and how it would be used. The permission was granular so that participants could opt out of having their photographs used, for example.

For those individual participants who volunteered to be interviewed for the purpose of producing case studies, an additional Data Consent Form was issued and signed at the time of the interview.

## Reporting and Dissemination

The original agreement was for 3 x 6-monthly reports plus a final evaluation report which was also to be a road map for other organisations wishing to introduce a similar arts-based intervention.

The order was changed round so that 2 x 6-monthly reports were produced up until the end of Year 1. The production of the final report and road map were brought forward to 18 months of project delivery. This was to enable the information to be used to support the bid writing process, with the intention of continuing SocialArts after the end of the two-year project. Grant funding decisions can take between 3-6 months, and in some cases, longer. The intention is to submit bids during the final 6-months of SocialArts to try and avoid a break in delivery when the initial two-year project comes to an end.

## Evaluation Budget

The cost of the external evaluation was built into the project budget and formed part of the grant funding application to The Rothschild Foundation.

## Evaluating the Evaluation

The lessons learned from conducting the evaluation of SocialArts have been:

1. Commissioning an external evaluator to be in place from the beginning of the project is essential.
2. Dropbox was a useful place to store data securely
3. Ensure any data gathering that directly involves the participants does not impinge on their arts contact time; ensure it is undertaken outside this time.
4. Participants enjoyed completing individual questionnaires / evaluation forms. They were not so keen on more interactive forms of evaluation.
5. Allow participants to take forms home to complete and return the following week, if they want to
6. Photographs are an excellent way of evidencing success. Quality is more important than quantity.

7. Do not be afraid to ask the participants directly about social isolation and loneliness; they are happy to talk openly and / or record their views in questionnaires
8. More hard evidence of the physical benefits would be useful e.g. putting in place data sharing protocols with GPs to compare the number of participants' visits to the GP in a given timeframe before taking part in SocialArts with the number of visits whilst on the project. (Many participants anecdotally reported a reduction in the number of visits to the GP because of SocialArts).



## Section 3: Evaluation Findings: data analysis and interpretation

### Outputs

Outputs are the tangible results of delivering a project: the things that can be counted.

Below are some key facts and figures about SocialArts.

### Number of Art Workshops

This is a summary across the two-year project. (For details, see the intervention delivery dates in the road map section.)

Summary of Delivery	
2	Years
16	Terms
66	Art workshops
834	Pieces of art produced (at least)
2	Exhibitions with private view & social
1	Additional Summer social

The number of pieces of art produced is based on the actual numbers at the time of writing (684 pieces) and predicted numbers for the final 3 terms of the project.

The numbers are higher in reality, as some participants produced more than one piece of art during each workshop.

## Number of Participants and Attendance

Attrition Rate					
Signed up	Did not turn up (due to ill health)	Turned up	Dropped out after attending at least one session	Regular participants	No. on waiting list
33	1	32	16	16	11

One person signed up but did not turn up at all. This was due to infirmity; she was in the target group and had been referred by another agency (social prescribing) but in the event, she was too frail to attend.

- 5 people were expected to sign-up. The total number of sign-ups across the whole project was 33 i.e. nearly 7 times that expected.
- 25 people signed up for the tasters (Term 1, Year 1).
- The largest batch of drop-outs (10 people) happened following the taster sessions right at the beginning of the project.
- There were 17 total drop-outs.
- There were no new sign-ups after Year 1 Term 4, until one new joiner in the final (Christmas) term of Year 1
- There were 16 regular participants attending at the time of the evaluation.
- Of the 16 current participants, there is a core group of 12-14 attending each week.
- The group size has ranged from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 17, with an average attendance of 15 participants
- For these current participants, SocialArts sessions are only missed for unavoidable reasons, for example, doctor or hospital appointments, or illness.
- One person had 100% attendance all the way through Year 1
- There are 11 people on a waiting list.

## Demographics

- The age range in the current group is 61 to 88 years. The average age is 73.
- All participants are retired.
- Gender: 2 males and 14 females.
- Around three quarters (74%) of the participants are from Maidenhead; the other quarter (26%) from Windsor.
- Ethnicity – 3 forms were not completed. Of the remaining 13, all classified themselves as “English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British”, apart from one participant, who identified as “Indian”.

*‘This brilliant project has given we senior citizens a new lease of life, confidence that we are able and can still use our brains and hands to create such crafts we had no idea we could do.’*

*‘This is a fantastic, brilliant project which has brought a group of senior citizens together who have learnt so much. Laughter is a tonic & a boost to morale. It is great for the mind too.’*



Sentiments expressed on behalf of the whole group in Christmas cards to the SocialArts staff at the end of Year 1

## Outcomes

**SocialArts was set up to achieve the following aims and outcomes – Were they achieved?**

### **1. The participants will have increased social interaction and reduced feelings of loneliness**

There can be no doubt about the great success of SocialArts in both increasing social interaction and reducing feelings of loneliness.

To demonstrate, participants were asked, “In what ways has taking part in SocialArts made a difference to how lonely or isolated you feel?” Their responses from Term 2, Year 1 were:

*‘Fun group – nice people. I have made a friend who I see outside of the group’*

*‘Enjoyed the social side and made me get interested in using my brain again!’*

*‘Working with like-minded people – learning from one another*

*– helps you move onto the next thing.’*

*‘I have enjoyed the social side very much. I like meeting people.’*

*‘I found it great fun doing it and meeting new people.’*

*‘I do not feel so isolated.’*

*‘More sociable with friends and joining in company.’*

*‘The joy of meeting people and having a laugh.’*

*‘I am much better and not isolated anymore.’*

There were many more similar responses from other terms.

Every individual participant had positive outcomes. Everyone felt they benefitted enormously.

*'Meeting other people has made me more able to interact with others.  
It has made a big difference to my life'*

**Participant**



## **2. The project will have a positive impact on participants in terms of their physical, mental and social wellbeing**

SocialArts has proved that there is a positive impact on participants in terms of not only social wellbeing but also in terms of their mental and physical health.

### **Physical Health**

Out of 16 participants, 9 (56%) stated that they had health issues or disabilities when they signed up for SocialArts. Some people had multiple issues. The main issues were:

- Mobility – falls, poor balance, bad hips. This was the largest physical health problem, with 7 (44%) of the group using a walking stick
- Diabetes – this affected 3 (almost 19%) of the participants and was the second biggest health issue
- Shaky hands, poor feeling in hands / fingers
- High blood pressure and heart conditions

In terms of physical health, all 5 participants interviewed for the case studies stated that their visits to the GP had drastically reduced since attending SocialArts. They also reported that focussing on the artwork and enjoying the social interactions made them forget about their physical ailments:

*‘I really enjoyed it. I didn’t feel the pain in my hands whilst I was doing it.’*

In fact, one of the participants who uses a walking stick said they are sometimes in such a state of excitement about coming to SocialArts that they dash out of the house without their walking stick and only later on realise that they have forgotten it because they have not needed it. This was echoed by other participants in the focus group.

It is therefore fair to assume that all participants who suffered any physical ailments when they joined SocialArts have found these symptoms lessen as a result of taking part in SocialArts.



## Mental Health and Social Wellbeing

Many studies have shown that there is a clear correlation between physical and mental health wellbeing. The participants on SocialArts have experienced this. The alleviation of some of their physical symptoms through SocialArts goes hand in hand with the improvements it has brought in their mental health, which leads to social wellbeing:

*‘Having a go and doing well makes you feel good’*

This success was manifested through a remarkable increase in overall confidence amongst the participants. A survey of participants at the end of Term 1 (Tasters), Year 1 showed that the situation before taking part in SocialArts and after completely reversed the results. Using a scale of 1 – 10, where 1 = Not at all confident and 10 = Extremely confident, the results were:

- Before taking part in SocialArts, 46% of the participants (6 people) rated themselves as having low confidence (points 1-3 on the scale), with no-one rating themselves as having high confidence (points 7-10).
- After taking part in SocialArts for only 1 Term (5 weeks), zero participants rated themselves as having low confidence, whilst almost 70% (9 people) had high confidence.

These results demonstrate, without doubt, the large and immediate impact of SocialArts.

Participants described the benefit of SocialArts:

*‘It has given me more courage in myself.’*

*‘It has given me more confidence to do more.’*

### **3. Be able to demonstrate which parts of the project worked particularly well, or not, and share a model for other organisations to reference and build on**

The integrated, 3-part model of specialist transport, high quality art workshops and communal lunches worked extremely well, and all elements were vital to the success of the project. Most of the participants could not have taken part without being provided with specialist transport to take them to the venue. The art workshops were enjoyed and valued by all, and the communal lunch

was instrumental in bonding the group and enabling natural, social relationships to develop from the beginning of the project.

See the Road Map section for details of how the programme was implemented and the lessons learned section for a detailed analysis of what worked well, what did not work so well and what could be done differently to improve future delivery of SocialArts.

#### **4. We will have learnt more about the relationship between arts engagement and the social well-being of isolated older people**

SocialArts has demonstrated a direct, positive relationship between arts engagement and the social well-being of isolated older people.

The participants valued the range and quality of art topics presented, enabling them to learn new skills, which then increased their confidence to have a go and tackle different and more complex techniques; in turn increasing the participants' confidence and motivation to engage in other activities in their lives outside SocialArts.

All the participants were thrilled with their personal skills development using different art forms and materials. A number felt they were no good at art before they joined SocialArts and surprised themselves by their talents. However, they also reported that they did not mind if the finished artwork was not of the best standard. What they enjoyed most was having a go and being able to achieve something tangible at the end of it.

The participants enjoy the challenge that the different art techniques present, most of which they have not come across before. They appreciate the fact that they must use their brains. They also felt that the arts engagement opened their minds to appreciating art and beauty in a wider sense, which influenced how they perceived the world around them; in a more appreciate and positive way.

As the participants said:

*'It's very good to learn new skills and to meet new friends.'*

*'I enjoy meeting different people and producing art in front of other people without fear of criticism.'*

*'The people have become such good friends with fun and laughter.'*

*'I have made a friend who I see outside of the group.'*



## 5. We will have explored various types of arts activities engaged in and how they differ in their impact

SocialArts has shown that participants welcomed a wide range of art topics. In a sense, it does not matter what the topic is. It is more important from the participants' perspective to have a range of topics and materials to keep the learning and the challenge fresh each week.

Although not every art topic is popular with every participant, the important personal development for them is that they were all willing to try. A willingness to “have a go” was oft cited by participants as a benefit of SocialArts. Some of the art topics took individuals out of their comfort zones – for example, some people did not like getting messy with paint or clay – but they still had a go. Singing (during the Tasters in Term 1, Year 1) was regarded with trepidation by many of the participants, yet once they had taken part, they all reported that they enjoyed it, and one participant even joined the choir at Norden Farm as a result! SocialArts gave the participants the confidence to try new things and this transferred to their lives outside SocialArts.

The high quality and challenging nature of the art topics presented was important. There was no dumbing down and no simplification of either the art topics nor of the techniques used. This was important in engaging the participants and in gaining the benefits.

As the participants said:

*‘I found I was more creative than I thought.’*

*'I feel more creative and not shy to have a go.'*

*'It has shown me that having a go is quite fun.'*

**6. How quickly positive outcomes emerged, and whether the presentation of the activities, through exhibition or live / recorded performance are a factor in their impact**

For the 5 participants interviewed one-to-one for the case studies, the benefits of SocialArts began before they had attended a single session. Having found out what SocialArts entailed and knowing that transport was provided so they could access the provision, the prospect of attending created a sense of excitement and hope.

As one participant put it:

*'I am so excited about what's on offer. This has got me excited about life again.'*



This comment was made by an extremely isolated and lonely participant during the initial telephone call when they were signing up to the project. This shows the power of SocialArts – it gave this person hope, even before they had attended a workshop!

Once they had attended the very first session, they were hooked. This applied to all current participants, not only the case studies. From the first day, the participants could not wait to come back for more. Their first experience of SocialArts gave them confidence, companionship and motivation – qualities that had been lacking in their lives for many years. The positive outcomes emerged instantly. They continued to grow throughout the life of the project.

## Exhibitions

Across the project two SocialArts exhibitions were displayed in the Gallery at Norden Farm.

The exhibition was a success for those participants that were able to attend. For the participants, the opportunity to see their artworks displayed in a professional gallery setting and to be able to show them to friends and family was a boost to their morale.

Having said this, the exhibition was a positive addition to the SocialArts project, but it did not in itself create significant benefits looking across the programme as a whole. The benefits were gained through the weekly production of artworks and the personal pleasure and sense of achievement gained weekly.

## Live / recorded performances

No live or recorded performances were undertaken.

## **7. We will also have looked at the other avenues of activity that participants investigate as a direct consequence of their experience and the legacy of the investment**

The intention at the beginning of the project was to invite visiting speakers to meet the group and introduce potential new activities and volunteering opportunities for the group. These would provide clear exit routes that would use the benefits gained through SocialArts to create sustainable, long-term benefits for the individual participants.

Within the timing of the SocialArts day, it is difficult to see how this additional input could be fitted in. As we have discovered, the participants are precious about their arts time and would not willingly give any of that up. Lunchtime is also not a good time, as this would impinge on the social aspect of the group.

In order for talks or presentations to be incorporated into the SocialArts day without being rushed, the timings would need to be extended to make a longer day and the transport arrangements, for those who use the minibus, would have to be adjusted.

As a result of their involvement in SocialArts, some participants did expand their social networks through their own initiative, for example, two members joined the choir at Norden Farm after taking part in the Singing workshop.

Another participant has taken up volunteering in a local charity shop but hardly had the confidence to speak to anyone before SocialArts.

Another real success story is a participant, initially crippled by shyness and anxiety, who gained the confidence to take up Tai Chi and Yoga, completely unrelated to art but also held at Norden Farm and who also now wants to volunteer to help in the café at Norden Farm, re-igniting her skills from many years before.

Many participants were so inspired by the art and the new skills they were learning that they took home pieces of artwork to finish. Some went out and bought themselves more materials, so they could continue to practice and develop the techniques they had learned.

A future refinement of SocialArts may be to more closely align some of the art topics to potential exit routes so that participants are inspired to take up further activities without any formal input. For example, would a term of Movement related art, including at least one session of Tai Chi, have inspired more members of the group to take up Tai Chi?

Due to physical infirmity, not all participants would be capable of taking up other activities. For them, an ongoing group of SocialArts or an offshoot would be a solution that would ensure that the positive benefits of SocialArts would not be lost.

All participants were devastated by the prospect of the long summer break. For one participant, this has been the catalyst to develop a mini-SocialArts group in the area where she lives. She has identified 4 other women who also live on their own and she will invite them to take part. The idea is to pass on new art skills she has learnt through SocialArts and particularly enjoyed and/or to pass on existing skills, such as, knitting. The only barrier to this could be sourcing specialist materials e.g. wire for the sculpture frames, and the potential cost of materials.

This inspirational development by an individual participant could potentially be incorporated into future iterations of SocialArts as an exit route to ensure long-term sustainability:

- Create a series of SocialArts hubs in other venues; not necessarily arts-based venues
- Norden Farm could continue to support these ventures by providing arts materials at low cost

**8. The final report will offer a road map for arts intervention projects as being an effective way of tackling social isolation in older people which will be disseminated to the widest range of users**

The second half of this report covers the practical implementation of SocialArts: the road map.

The dissemination of this report will be undertaken by Norden Farm.

## Unintended outcomes

SocialArts also achieved some unintended outcomes:

- i) The benefits of SocialArts also extends to the families of the participants. Those participants who have (adult) children, whether living near or far, state that their children have seen an improvement in their motivation and zest for life. This means the children of participants worry about them less. It also means the participants engage in interesting and meaningful conversations with their children (and grandchildren where they exist), whereas previously they had nothing to talk about.
- ii) An additional benefit of the SocialArts project is the positive impact it has on the staff. Norden Farm is a busy arts venue with many activities, such as, cinema screenings, theatre productions, regular classes and exhibitions. The difference with SocialArts is that it is an ongoing activity over an extensive period and that it includes lunch in a communal area: the participants do not simply turn up for the arts class and go away again. This means that the Norden Farm staff – particularly the operations team and the café staff – have got to know the SocialArts participants very well. As the SocialArts participants grew in confidence, so the social interaction with all Norden Farm staff blossomed.

The result has been that the staff have derived great professional and personal satisfaction from interacting with the SocialArts participants. It has made the Norden Farm staff feel valued and that they are making a positive contribution, which in turn and has enhanced the caring ambience of Norden Farm as a venue. The communication and social relationships have flourished all round.



- iii) The staff developed additional skills in how to work with older people. Some of them had only worked with children before.
- iv) Through working with visiting artists, the group leader / artist tutor learned new art topics and techniques and so expanded their own professional repertoire.

## Case Studies

Permission was given by the individual participants to use their stories as case studies. Their stories present a powerful testament to the success of SocialArts and the huge positive benefit it has had in their lives.

### Meet Mary

At 61, Mary is one of the youngest members of SocialArts. She was referred to SocialArts through the mental health charity, MIND, having suffered many traumas in her life. Prior to attending SocialArts, she had spent 12 years in social isolation and loneliness, struggling with depression and anxiety. Before having to leave work due to ill health, she had worked professionally as a nurse and a secretary.

Although she lives fairly close to Norden Farm, Mary still needed the services of the minibus as she would otherwise struggle to make it up the hill.

Mary joined SocialArts at the beginning (Week 3, Term 1 (Tasters), Year 1). She was extremely shy and timid and struggled to speak to anyone. One of the aspects of SocialArts she has appreciated the most has been the chance to talk with a friendly group of like-minded people. She enjoys the chatter that takes place at all stages of the day: it starts on the minibus on the journey to Norden Farm, widens out to the rest of the group during the tea and biscuits at the beginning of the session, continues during the art workshop, continues over lunch, carries on during the minibus ride home and only stops once everyone has been safely dropped off. The conversation is about the art and general conversation about life outside SocialArts.

She has also very much enjoyed the art itself, enjoying the variety of topics, finding out that she now enjoys topics which she had not in the past, such as, painting, and seeing an improvement in the quality of her own work.

#### What difference has SocialArts made?

*'It has transformed my life.'*

Taking part in SocialArts makes her happy. It is an environment she thrives in. Mary found that it took only a couple of weeks for the benefits to start appearing in her life. She says SocialArts has helped her re-find her independence. The transformation she feels within herself is visible to everyone else involved.

Mary is very self-conscious about her stammer. Yet, when she is at SocialArts and indeed, during the one-to-one interview by the external evaluator when she was talking about her experience of SocialArts, the stammer was not at all in evidence. This is a clear indication of the therapeutic effect of SocialArts.

## Meet Molly

Molly is proud to be the first person ever to sign up for SocialArts. She spent most of her working life doing haute couture sewing, for example, making wedding dresses. She loved working and at the age of 70, took up a completely new role learning how to do finance and payroll for a small company. At the age of 75, she finally felt ready to retire. She was still active and independent, driving herself to various places and continuing using her sewing skills – She has made over 1,000 furry toys in her time.

Now 81 years old, having given up her car due to illness affecting her vision and hand co-ordination, she felt fit for nothing. What Molly wanted at this stage in life was something that stimulated the mind but was not too physically demanding. SocialArts fit the bill perfectly.

From the very first session, she was hooked and could not wait to come back the following week. She was impressed by the warm welcome from the staff and enjoyed being with a large group of people her own age. Molly relished all aspects of SocialArts. She appreciated the transport being provided, otherwise she would not have been able to attend. She loved learning new art techniques each week and enjoyed the experience of eating with others, rather than eating on her own.

*'This is my once a week out – It's my real treat.'*

### What difference has SocialArts made?

*'It has proved to me that you are never, never too old to learn something new.'*

Being at SocialArts helps Molly shut her mind down to her ailments and worries about the future. It keeps her brain active and gives her a thrill in learning new skills. She was scared about becoming boring. SocialArts has alleviated that fear. She now has something to talk about during telephone calls with her son, who lives on the other side of the world. The additional benefit is that her son does not worry about her since she started SocialArts, as he can see that she is happier and energised about life again.

Molly sends her son photographs of her artwork each week. She particularly enjoyed the Japanese themed artwork and her son was so enamoured with one particular piece that Molly had it framed for him. It will be going back with him to his house at the other side of the world next time he visits in a few months' time.



'Japanese Willow Tree' by Molly

## Meet Bill

Bill was one of only two men taking part in SocialArts. He spent his working life as a “chippy”, as he describes it: a carpenter and joiner. He loved his trade, often staying after hours to finish a piece of hand-crafted furniture. He and his wife used to go ballroom dancing and he happily admits that she led him, rather than the other way around, as it is supposed to be. He lost his dear wife at the age of 53 and still feels that sadness today, over 30 years later.

Nowadays, at the age of 88, Bill has mobility problems and can only walk very slowly, with the aid of a walking stick. He was referred to SocialArts by the Manager at a local day centre for the over 60s. The Manager referred Bill as she felt that SocialArts would provide positive mental stimulation that would benefit him. She could not provide this at Elizabeth House as the demand there meant that services were being geared more and more towards people with Alzheimer’s and dementia related conditions. Bill did not require these services.

Before attending SocialArts, Bill felt isolated and lonely. His mobility problems prevented him from doing anything independently, which meant that most of the time, he did nothing at all. Bill travels to SocialArts on the minibus provided. He would not be able to attend otherwise.

Both on the minibus and during the SocialArts sessions, Bill keeps everyone entertained with his constant source of corny jokes. He admits that he goes quiet when he’s concentrating on a particularly tricky task, as the tips of his fingers go numb so he can’t feel the art materials. Despite this, he enjoys being able to use his hands and his brain again.

### What difference has SocialArts made?

Bill never regarded himself as creative. Since coming to SocialArts, he has really enjoyed making different artworks each week. He feels that his work isn’t perhaps the best but he doesn’t care. He’s happy with what he produces and recognises that he has improved in his art skills. He has been pushed out of his comfort zone:

*‘I never dreamt I could do some of the things. It gives you quite a thrill.’*

The biggest impact for Bill has been the sense of belonging; of being part of a group, which includes the other participants, and also the staff at Norden Farm:

*‘It’s like being part of a big family.’*

As well as the improvement in his mental health, the joy that Bill obtains from attending SocialArts has improved his physical health, with much less frequent trips to the GP.

What is even more powerful is that he felt the benefits from day one; from the very first session he attended.

## Meet Di

Di is in her mid-80s. Before her retirement, she was a personal chef for 18 ½ years. It is 20 years since she sadly lost her husband. Living on her own, she was isolated and felt an emptiness in her life.

Like Bill, Di was also referred to SocialArts through the local day centre. Also, like Bill, Di has mobility problems and can only walk very slowly, with the aid of a walking stick.

Di travels on the minibus to SocialArts. Although she still drives occasionally, she has lost a lot of confidence since she broke her wrist a while ago and only uses her car for the fortnightly trip to the local supermarket.

During SocialArts, Di has appreciated the friendly and uncritical support of the staff and most of all, their patience in teaching different art techniques. She can see the quality of the artwork that everyone produces, even when they themselves think it is not very good.

*'It's such a joy to come here.'*

### What difference has SocialArts made?

For Di, the stimulation and joy she receives from attending SocialArts has had a dramatic reduction in the number of visits to her GP:

*'I used to go to the doctor's all the time but now I hardly go at all.'*

Di felt the benefits of SocialArts from the first session she attended. The main difference SocialArts has made to Di has been in giving some purpose and meaning to her life.

*'It's filled a big hole as far as I'm concerned.'*

## Meet Maureen

Maureen spent 20 years of her working life as a foster carer, constantly busy in a fulfilling role. These days, she lives on her own. She lost her husband 5 years ago. Her husband drove; she didn't. Losing her husband sent her into an ongoing, deep depression. She rarely left the house and she did not have the motivation to do anything.

Then one day, the information about SocialArts popped up on Maureen's internet, although she cannot remember where it came from and she nearly deleted the email. She went to ask her neighbour if she would accompany her, as she liked the idea but would not have gone on her own. Luckily, her neighbour said 'Yes' and in fact, brought her husband along too, closely followed by his elderly stepmother!

Once signed up, SocialArts instantly became the highlight of Maureen's week:

*'I can't wait for next week to come. I'm really excited. I couldn't wait for the week to go for it to be Monday again.'*

Maureen comes to SocialArts on the minibus. Otherwise, she would have to catch two buses and would still have a long walk to get there. This is not at all feasible, particularly in the darker months. She cannot walk a long way and the buses are unreliable. The transport is therefore vital to Maureen.

She loves the art: she loves doing different things every week because it stimulates her brain.

*'Just because you're old doesn't mean your brain is not working.'*

She particularly enjoyed the sculpture, putting her own spin on it: leaving her wire sculpture ballerina naked when everyone else dressed theirs.

### What difference has SocialArts made?

Maureen is so very glad she did not delete that email. Attending SocialArts has changed her life beyond recognition. She felt the positive benefits of SocialArts from the very first week she attended.

She says that before SocialArts, she would not speak to anyone. Now, she is happy and outgoing and not afraid to talk to anyone anymore. She puts this transformation entirely down to the positive impact of SocialArts.

*'I'm a different person.'*

Before SocialArts, Maureen was in and out of her doctor's surgery. She had very bad vertigo and also had to use a walking stick. Because she is so focussed on SocialArts, she

says she hasn't got time to think about her illnesses now. In fact, some days, she is so keen to get to SocialArts that she rushes out of the house without her walking stick and only later realises that she has forgotten it.

The power of her new, positive mental attitude has overcome her physical limitations.

As a result of her new-found confidence through SocialArts, Maureen is happy to go out on her own and now volunteers in a charity shop on a Saturday, and sometimes during the week if she's feeling a bit down. She loves working there and they love having her. She gets lots of hugs from staff and customers, which makes her feel valued. In fact, she is so popular that other local charity shops are trying to poach her for the positive vibe she brings.

*'It's opened my world.'*

*'It's a blessing from heaven.'*

*'I can't thank the funder enough because it has changed my world around.'*

Maureen feels bereft that SocialArts will be closed over the summer. She intends to keep it going in a small way for herself and her neighbours – who still also attend. In addition, she has identified 3 or 4 other women in her local community who also live on their own. She plans to invite them along and teach them some arts or other hobbies, like knitting. She is effectively creating her own SocialArts hub.

### **Post-script to Maureen's Story**

The painting below was created, completely unprompted, during the last session of the term in June 2018, before the summer break. Maureen created it to express her feelings of utter devastation about the prospect of SocialArts coming to an end in December, once the two-year funded project period is over.

It is fitting that her emotions have been expressed through art. Maureen's views about the potential end of SocialArts are replicated by everyone in the group.

It is a powerful picture. Maureen interprets her picture:

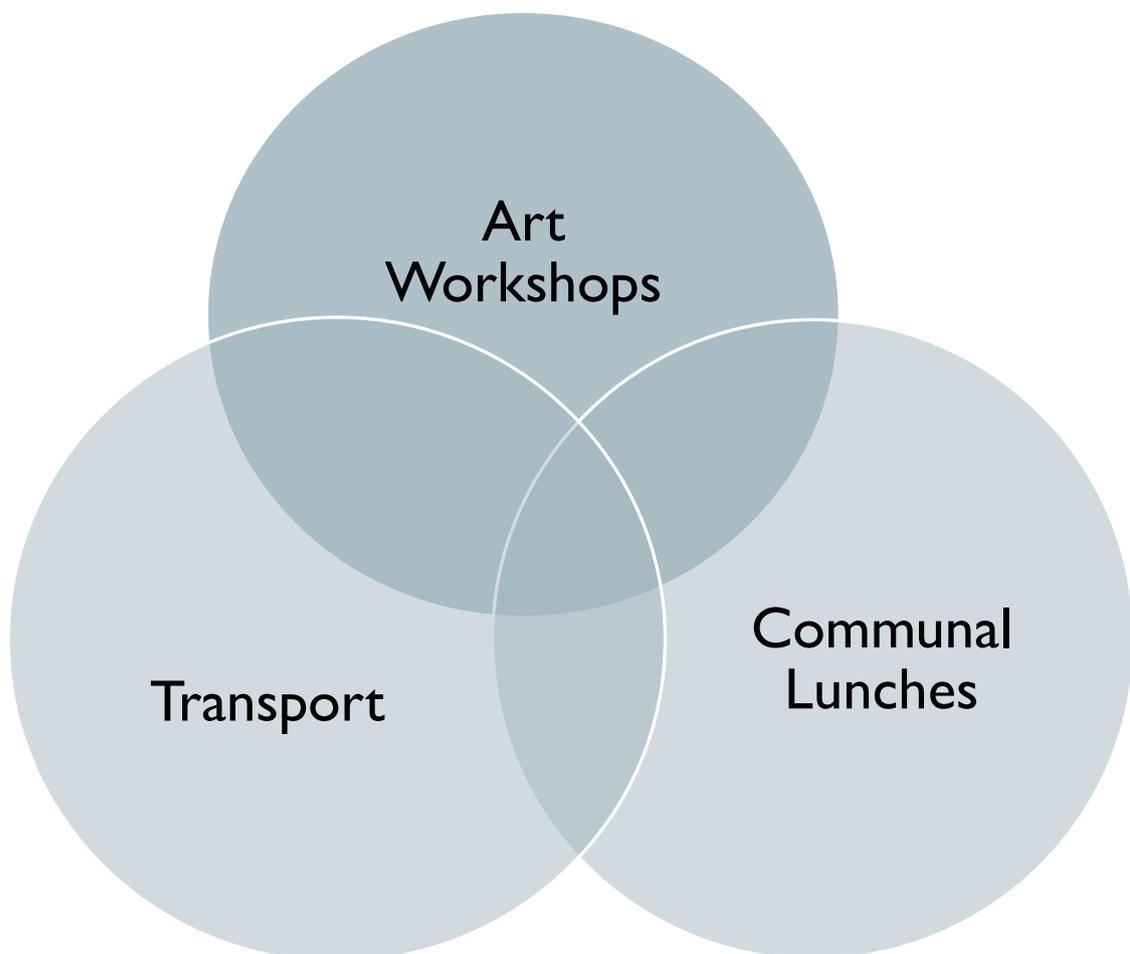
*'The moon is a tiny window of hope [that funding will be found to enable SocialArts to continue]. The birds are flying away with no hope.'*



## Section 4: Road map

This section of the report is about project delivery – how SocialArts was delivered and the lessons learned that could improve how the project is delivered in the future. It is intended to be used as a model or “road map” by other organisations who wish to reduce social isolation and loneliness through the arts.

### The 3-part SocialArts model



SocialArts was unique in its concept and delivery compared to other arts-based interventions.

**It involved three core elements to ensure maximum success:**

1. Transport – To overcome the biggest barrier to accessing the provision
2. Arts workshops – A range of topics delivered by professional artists
3. Communal lunches – To maximise social interaction in a natural setting

## Transport

Specialist transport was provided for those participants who would otherwise not be able to attend SocialArts, that is, those participants who had no means of private transport or for whom public transport or walking was not feasible due to lack of mobility, general infirmity or other health problems. Ten participants used the minibus, which was its capacity.

The minibus and driver were provided by a local organisation, People to Places.

Each week, the route was worked out according to which participants would be attending.

This took a lot of careful liaison between People to Places and the project manager at Norden Farm:

- a) The SocialArts project manager confirmed attendance personally by telephone each week – The list would change if someone could not attend due to illness or medical appointments
- b) The list of people requiring transport was passed to People to Places, who then planned the route and rang the individual participants to advise them of timings – when they would be collected on the day
- c) Those who lived furthest from Norden Farm were obviously collected first and after SocialArts, dropped off last. This involved a 1 ½ hour trip each way; another 3 hours added to the day.
- d) The minibus dropped the participants off at Norden Farm in time for a 10am start and collected them after the communal lunch had finished at 1.15pm.



## Art Workshops

The art workshops were held for 2 hours, from 10.15am to 12.15pm.

The first 15 minutes or so of the morning was spent sitting in a large circle at one end of the art room, having tea / coffee, biscuits and a chat. The art topic for the day was introduced during this time and demonstrated by the group leader / artist tutor.

The art activities were undertaken sat down, with minimal movement required, to accommodate those participants with limited mobility. The art room was set out with participants sat at tables of 3 or 4 people each. (4 tables for 16 participants, although not every participant was able to attend every week).

Every participant produced an individual piece of artwork during each session. In some cases, they produced multiple pieces. They were able to work at their own, individual pace.

Some sessions were specifically designed for participants to work together and to be more interactive, for example, working in pairs and studying each other's faces to make a clay sculpture of their partner, and in another session, two members of the group posing together as life models (with their clothes on!) for the rest of the group to draw from different angles.

A whole-group project was delivered through the medium of printing – the pieces produced were combined into a large, single tapestry.





A wide variety of art topics were covered.

Visiting artist tutors were occasionally brought in to expand the range of topics on offer.

The first term of Year 1 was Tasters, where each week was a completely different art topic or theme.

During the rest of Year 1, each term (of 4 to 5 weeks) had a different theme. Within that overall theme, each week would have a different approach through using different materials and techniques.

The group was consulted about their favourite art topics and some of these suggestions – drawing and sculpture – were incorporated into Year 2. However, it was important to keep the programme fresh and vibrant by continuing to introduce new topics.

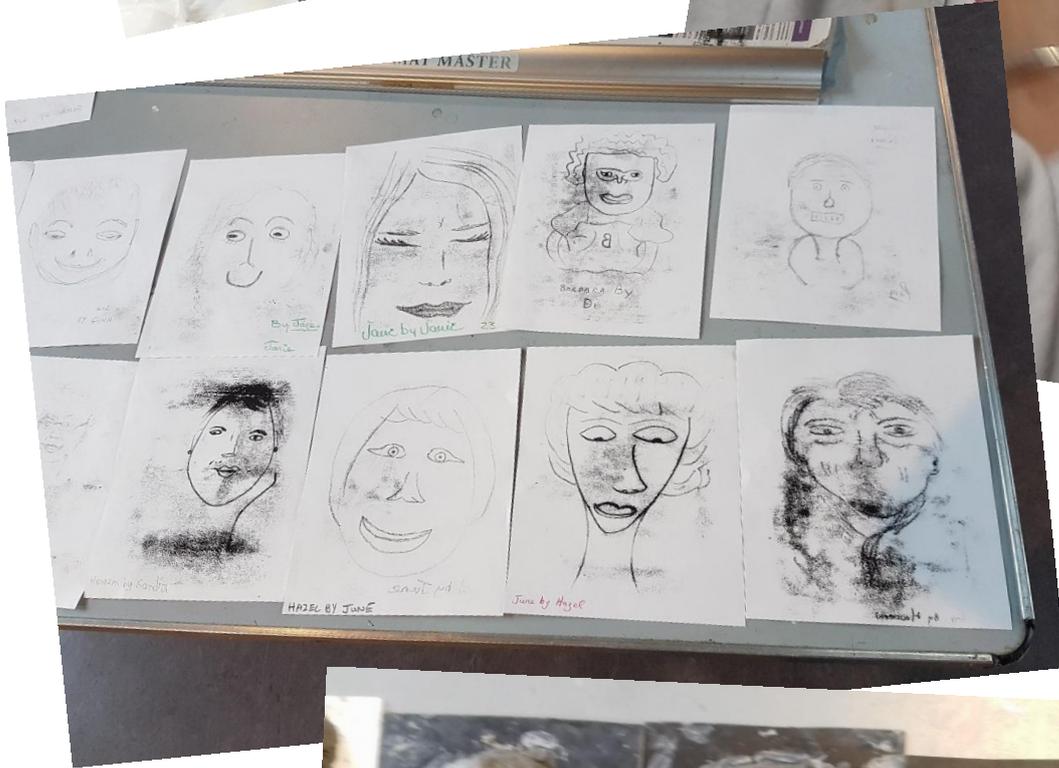
The original plan was for Year 2 to also start with a taster term for potential new participants to try. This did not happen as the same group of participants from Year 1 continued through into Year 2.

The table below shows the art topics across the two-year project.

The art topics and techniques were challenging. Specialist materials were provided. There was no simplification nor 'dumbing-down' of the experience because the participants were elderly. The participants received an authentic experience of intricate and detailed art techniques. Providing this high-quality experience was a deliberate strategy. This was another reason why SocialArts was unique amongst art provision for older people.

## Art Topics

	Year 1	Year 2
Term 1:	Tasters – Printing, Stained Glass, Sculpture, Singing, Animation	Collage
Term 2:	Drawing	Drawing
Term 3:	Printing	Sculpture
Term 4:	Sculpture	Painting
Term 5:	Mosaic	Bird of Paradise Study, Watercolour Sunset Landscape, Chalk Pastel Boat Study
Term 6:	Japanese Themed Art	Singing, Handmade Wrapping Paper, Monochromatic Black Ink and Charcoal
Term 7:	Textiles and Natural Materials	Monoprinting, Watercolour Study, Mixed Media Decorations, Winter Landscape, Lantern Making
Term 8:	Christmas Decorations	Paper rolling, Live Performance: The Fir Tree, Christmas Decorations





## Communal Lunches

Lunch was an integral part of the model. It was part of the daily programme that participants signed up to when they joined SocialArts. It was held at 12 noon, immediately after the end of the art workshop. It took place in the Norden Farm café, which is a communal space open to users of Norden Farm and the general public. Tables were put together to enable the SocialArts participants to sit together as a whole group, thereby encouraging social interaction.

All participants stayed for lunch – those being collected by the minibus and those travelling independently. Occasionally, an individual participant would have to leave before lunch due to a prior appointment.

The £5 a week cost to participants was used to pay for the lunches. The Norden Farm chef used creative shopping and menu planning to ensure he could provide a top quality, hot meal for the money. There was one choice per week, with a rotation of around 4 or 5 main courses, including salmon, chicken, pork, sausages, etc. It was possible to choose an alternative if a participant did not want that particular meal. The standard of the meals was the same high standard as for all other meals in the menu in the Café Bar. Again, a high-quality experience. The value of each meal, if charged at normal Norden Farm rates, would have been around £13.50.



## Recruitment and Referral

The Norden Farm Education Manager (also the SocialArts project manager) and the Norden Farm Chief Executive and Artistic Director promoted SocialArts to a wide range of local agencies to raise awareness of SocialArts and to open up channels of recruitment and referral, including a presentation to the local authority, GPs, NHS Wellbeing practitioners, the local day centre and other community groups.

An A5 size, flyer was distributed around local agencies – See Appendix A.

It was anticipated that some participants would be referred through social prescribing – the referral of participants from other agencies such as, GPs or social workers. This happened informally in 3 cases.

The programme was self-selecting and open to anyone who regarded themselves as older and socially isolated.

In terms of the age-range, no upper or lower age limits were set.

Demand was much higher than anticipated, including some participants who did not regard themselves as socially isolated. This begs the question of whether the project attracted the intended target group or whether more socially isolated and lonely people could have benefitted.

The initial intention was to have a regular churn of participants, with a new group of participants each term, thus maximising the number of individuals who could experience SocialArts. This did not happen as the same group of participants carried on throughout the project.

The system was that current participants got first choice for signing up to the following term. As most of the participants signed each time, this left very few places for new participants. After around 6 months of operation, the population of the group stabilised. Only one new participant has joined since. The size of the group could not grow any higher than 16 due to the restrictions in the number of places available in the minibus, if needed, and the additional costs that would have been incurred.

## Intervention Delivery Dates

SocialArts was delivered across two years.

Delivery was planned in terms, consisting of 4 to 5 weeks each.

The term dates and topics are shown in the following tables:

Year 1	2017		Term Dates & Topic						
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Exhibition PV	Term 5	Term 6	Term 7	Term 8	
<i>Tasters</i>	<i>Drawing</i>	<i>Printing</i>	<i>Sculpture</i>		<i>Mosaic</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Textiles</i>	<i>Festive</i>	
23-Jan	13-Mar	8-May	12-Jun		31-Jul	4-Sep	9-Oct	20-Nov	
30-Jan	20-Mar	15-May	19-Jun	17-Jul	7-Aug	11-Sep	16-Oct	27-Nov	
6-Feb	27-Mar	22-May	26-Jun		14-Aug	18-Sep	23-Oct	4-Dec	
13-Feb	3-Apr	5-Jun	3-Jul		21-Aug	25-Sep	30-Oct	11-Dec	
20-Feb							6-Nov	18-Dec	
No. of weeks	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	35

Year 2	2017		Term Dates & Topic						
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Socials	Term 5	Term 6	Term 7	Term 8	
<i>Collage</i>	<i>Drawing</i>	<i>Sculpture</i>	<i>Painting</i>		<i>Mixed Term</i>	<i>Mixed Term</i>	<i>Mixed Term</i>	<i>Mixed Term</i>	
15-Jan	19-Feb	16-Apr	4-Jun		17-Sep	8-Oct	29-Oct	26-Nov	
22-Jan	26-Feb	23-Apr	11-Jun	16-Jul	24-Sep	15-Oct	5-Nov	3-Dec	
29-Jan	5-Mar	30-Apr	18-Jun	20-Aug	1-Oct	22-Oct	12-Nov	10-Dec	
5-Feb	12-Mar	14-May	25-Jun				19-Nov	17-Dec	
		21-May							
No. of weeks	4	4	5	4	3	3	4	4	31

## Exhibitions and Socials

Two exhibitions were built into the programme – one held each year, during the summer break.

The exhibitions were held in the gallery at Norden Farm – a purpose-built exhibition space. There was a one-day private view for participants with their friends and families. The exhibition was then open to the public for a week.

During the private view day, the local Community Warden was invited to attend. She was able to give general social care advice to the participants and their friends and family.



The day was also made into a social occasion with refreshments. This social element was introduced to make up for the gap in SocialArts sessions over the summer break and the concern that some members of the group would have little or no social contact over that period.



**Attendance at exhibitions:**

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
Total number of visitors (open to public)	1,046	947	1993

## Daily Timetable

The SocialArts day activities began at 10am.

Prior to this, the minibus collected those participants who needed transport and the group leader and volunteer set up the room

The overall time was 6 ½ hours for those participants living furthest away from Norden Farm, that is, a full day.

### Daily Timetable

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 8.30 am  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mini-bus begins pick-ups</li></ul>   |
| 9.00 am  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Norden Farm operations staff set out the art room furniture</li><li>• Catering staff set out refreshments</li><li>• Group leader and volunteer set out the art materials</li></ul> |
| 10.00 am | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participants arrive</li><li>• Registration and collection of weekly subs</li><li>• Tea and chat</li><li>• Introduction of art topic for the day</li></ul>                          |
| 10.20 am | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Art session begins</li></ul>   |
| 12.15 pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Art session ends</li><li>• Participants go for lunch</li><li>• Group leader and volunteer begin tidying the art room</li></ul>   |
| 1.15 pm  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lunch ends.</li><li>• Mini-bus begins the journey back</li><li>• Group leader and volunteer finish tidying the art room</li></ul>  |
| 3.00 pm  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Last participant dropped off at home</li></ul>   |

## Location and Setting

SocialArts was delivered at Norden Farm Centre for the Arts in Maidenhead.

There was access for the minibus to drop participants off right outside the door to the art room, which was on the ground floor. This was important as many participants lacked mobility.

Due to the group size of 16 being much bigger than originally intended, SocialArts had to be delivered in the largest room at Norden Farm. This happened to be a beautiful sixteenth century barn. This venue certainly added to the positive ambience of SocialArts.

The room was large enough to host the tea/coffee circle time on arrival, a table for the group leader / artist tutor to prepare the materials and 4 tables laid out to seat up to 4 participants each. It also had a disabled toilet and sink adjacent to the room itself – again important as many participants lacked mobility.

There was space to display the finished artwork around the room at the end of the session and space to store the artwork ready for the exhibition or simply to leave it to dry for participants to collect the following week.

The Norden Farm Café Bar was used for the communal lunch, so the group was in a natural, public space.

## Project Staffing

There were 3 key roles created to deliver SocialArts:

1. Project Manager – who was the Education Manager at Norden Farm
2. Group Leader (also the lead artist tutor) – who was a professional artist well-known to Norden Farm, as an associate artist regularly engaged by them to work on other projects through a series of casual contracts
3. Volunteer – to support the group leader and who came on board part-way through the first 6 months

Simple job descriptions – with main tasks and key competencies – are given for these roles below.

In addition, the following Norden Farm staff were heavily involved in delivering the project:

4. Operations Manager – to co-ordinate the operations team to ensure the art room was set up and to rearrange the café furniture to accommodate a large group of 16 people for the communal lunches

5. Catering Manager – to provide high quality meals for a large number of people on a low budget and to organise the café and kitchen staff to serve the meals promptly

A key reason SocialArts was so successful was the attitude and approach of the staff. This applied to all Norden Farm staff with whom the group came into contact.

Potential participants rang Norden Farm and spoke to the project manager to book a place. This was a crucial part of the process as the project manager could explain what the programme would entail and take details for those who needed transport. As well as the practical details, the project manager provided general guidance and reassurance to those who needed it and maintained a personal relationship with the participants throughout their time on the project.

## Role: Group Leader / Artist Tutor

Main Tasks	Key Competencies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan the art programme for the year</li> <li>2. Purchase the resources and art materials for each session</li> <li>3. Set-up and pack-down the art room each week</li> <li>4. Demonstrate the weekly art topics and work closely with the group to enable them to produce their own pieces of artwork</li> <li>5. Ensure safe storage of artworks and curate the exhibitions</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding of the needs of isolated and lonely older people, including all aspects of their mental and physical health and wellbeing</li> <li>2. Professional artist</li> <li>3. Cheerful / sense of humour</li> <li>4. Patience and sensitivity towards the needs of older people</li> <li>5. Willingness to learn and engage with new art techniques and materials not already in repertoire</li> </ol>

## Role: Volunteer

Main Tasks	Key Competencies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support the group leader / artist tutor in setting up and packing-down the art room for every session</li> <li>2. Alongside the group leader / artist tutor, work closely with the group to enable them to produce their own pieces of artwork</li> <li>3. Work with front-of-house and catering teams to confirm numbers and dietary requirements</li> <li>4. Liaise directly with participants to log attendance and collect weekly fee</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding of the needs of isolated and lonely older people, including all aspects of their mental and physical health and wellbeing</li> <li>2. Cheerful / sense of humour</li> <li>3. Patience and sensitivity towards the needs of older people</li> <li>4. Some arts experience desirable</li> <li>5. Willingness to learn and engage with new art techniques and materials</li> </ol>

## Role: Project Manager

### Main Tasks

1. Co-ordinate and ensure the smooth-running of the whole project
2. Promote the project and recruit participants
3. Liaise with partner organisation to put in place specialist transport arrangements
4. Collect weekly cash subscriptions from the participants and manage the whole project budget
5. Collect monitoring and evaluation data

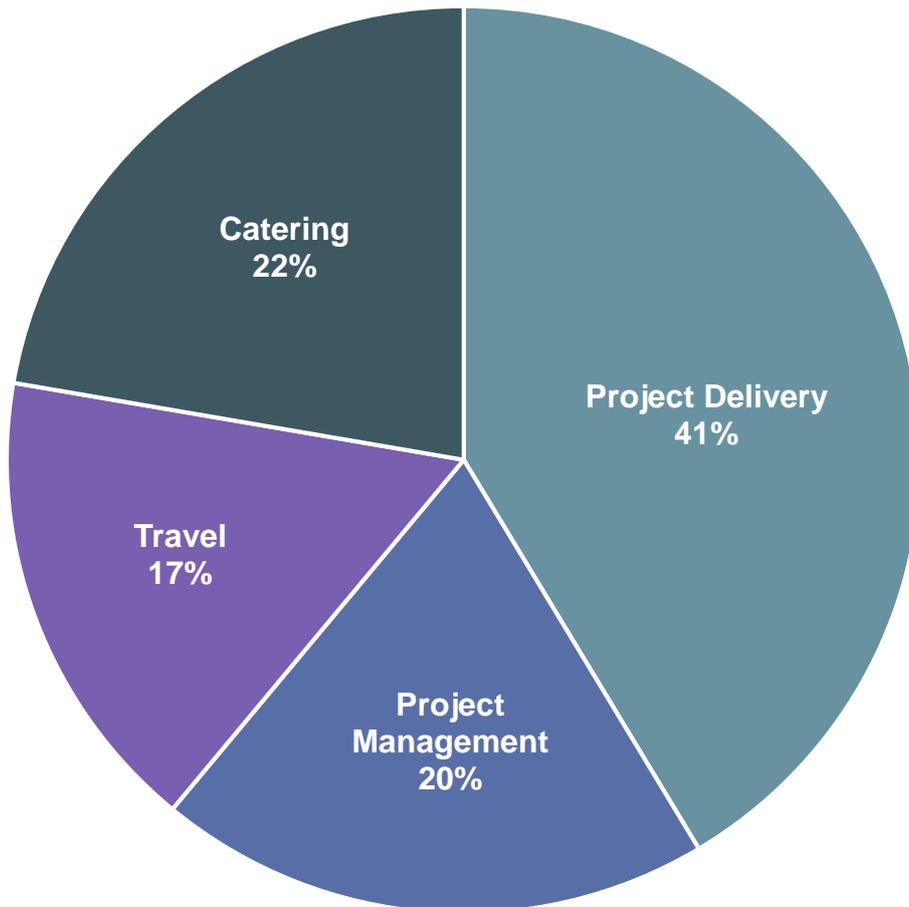
### Key Competencies

1. Understanding of the needs of isolated and lonely older people, including all aspects of their mental and physical health and wellbeing
2. Organised and pragmatic
3. Approachable and friendly – managing positive relationships with participants is vital
4. Professional approach to all key stakeholders, including funders and partners

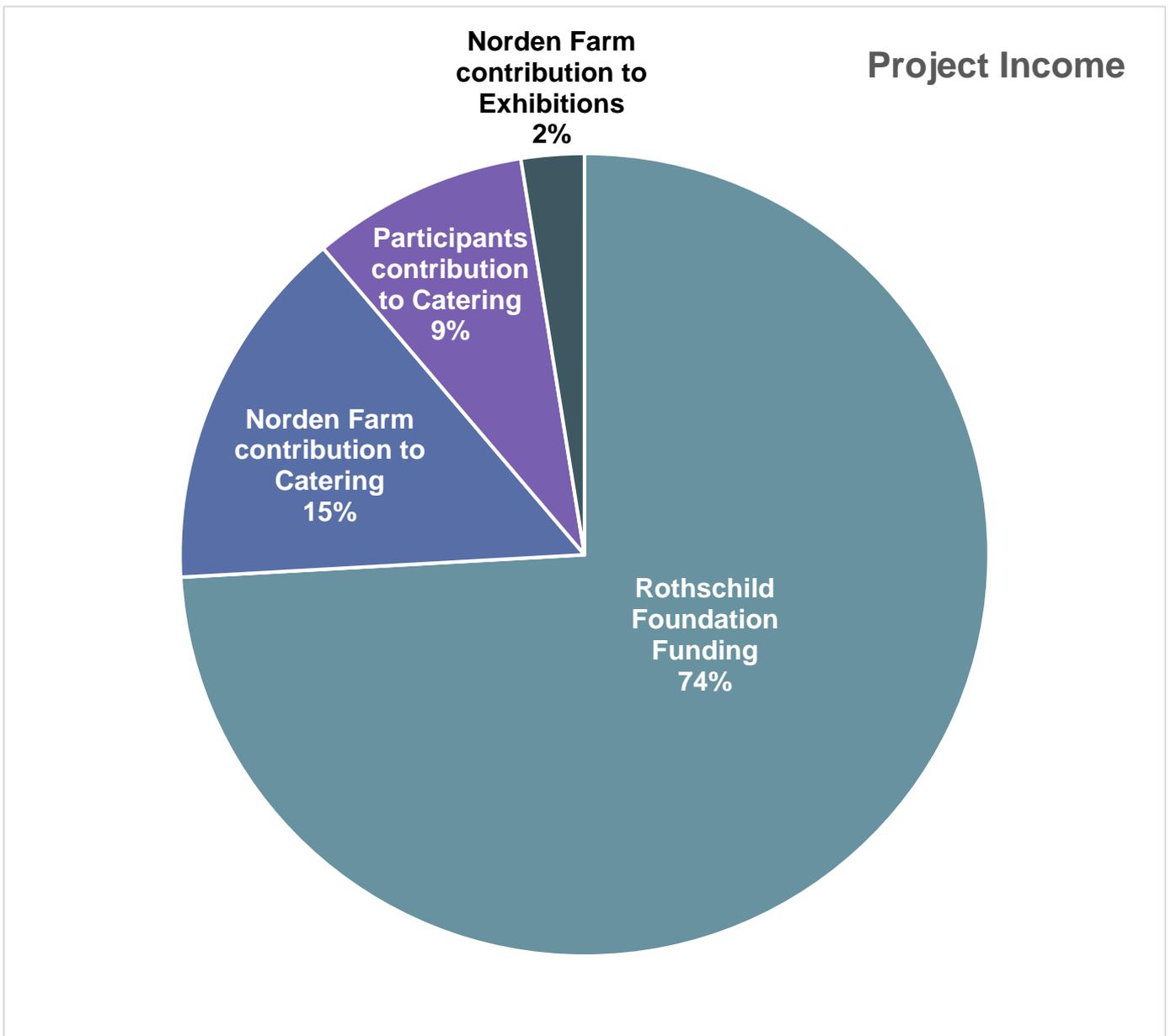
## Project Budget

Total project expenditure across two years = £70,759

### Project Expenditure



Total project income across two years = £67,468



## Budget Notes

The budget above was added to the report at the end of 2018 and is accurate up to that point.

- There was a total overspend of £3,291, which was covered by Norden Farm.
- For most cost headings, the actual expenditure was close to the budget.
- The notable exception was Marketing, where the actual spend was £3,630 less than predicted. This was due to the group becoming full at an early stage and therefore further publicity and marketing was not necessary. The underspend was used to off-set the continuation of the project into 2019.
- Catering was the largest cost at a total of £15,768, representing 22% of the total spend. This was offset by the £5 per week contribution from each participant, leaving a net cost to Norden Farm of £9,928.
- Travel – i.e. the minibus used to transport the participants with mobility issues – was the third largest cost at a total of £11,826, representing nearly 18% of the total spend.
- The Norden Farm team and the participants themselves are considering ways to reduce costs and increase income. Even when these are achieved, it is clear that the project cannot continue beyond the end of March 2019 without a substantial injection of new funding.

## Lessons Learned

### 3-part model

1. Each of the 3 elements – transport, art and communal lunches – were of equal importance in achieving the outcomes
2. Over time, the participants' perceptions of the value of the different elements of SocialArts shifted so that they became more interested in the creative aspects of the project, that is, the art, and were focussing more and more on the new skills they were learning each week. They did still, however, appreciate the ongoing benefits of the specialist transport and the communal lunches and the participants recognised that these elements were instrumental in establishing the social aspect of the project.

### Transport

3. The specialist transport – in the form of a minibus – was vital to enable participants with limited mobility and other health problems to access SocialArts. They could not have attended without the transport being in place.
4. The transport quickly became, quite literally, a vehicle for social interaction. The journey to and from Norden Farm became a key aspect of the social development of the participants and not merely a practical necessity, as they chatted, joked and bonded on the journey to and from SocialArts.

### Art workshops

5. The tasters served their purpose in allowing people to try SocialArts and decide if it was for them, but they were much more labour intensive than the terms and much more expensive, as a different topic had to be prepared for each week.
6. Having another artist come into the group and run the first session of each term was useful to start with, as it introduced new people to the participants with the constant presence of the group leader / artist tutor for reassurance.
7. Additional artists introduced new art forms and styles, which were interesting for the group and which the regular group leader / artist tutor could learn from.
8. The participants responded well to the teaching styles of different workshop leaders, for example, with a more structured approach.
9. It is important to vary the types of art and crafts introduced, as different participants liked different things. For example, some really enjoyed the 3-D work and sculpture, whereas others did not like getting their hands dirty.

10. The participants all enjoyed the sessions when members of the group modelled for the rest of the group to draw or paint – both the models and the rest of the group.
11. It was important that the group leader tried out session plans in advance to work out how difficult they are and to be aware of which elements the participants may need help with, particularly regarding the use of fine motor skills and the need for good eyesight.
12. Running some sessions over 2-3 weeks was good but some participants work faster than others so the group leader (or visiting artist) needs to have extension activities to offer.
13. It was important to repeat or do similar things over a couple of sessions, as the participants often found a topic easier the second time around.
14. Displaying the work around the room at the end of each session was important. It enabled everyone to see what had been achieved. The participants found it interesting looking at each other's work and seeing how their different personalities shone through. This stimulated art appreciation discussions and mutually supportive critiques of each other's' work.

### **Communal lunches**

15. The one and half hours allowed for lunch was sufficient to allow a leisurely lunch, with plenty of social interaction.
16. The art class that had just taken place provided a focus for conversations over lunch, with the participants critiquing each other's work in positive way and bolstering the confidence of those who perceived they had not done so well. The art therefore was the foundation of conversation that then naturally flowed to cover other aspects of their lives and create meaningful connections between people.
17. The participants tended to sit in exactly the same places, even when one or two were not in attendance, resulting in gaps on the lunch table, and people interacting with the same people each week. The long, thin table layout was dictated by the café shape at Norden Farm. A wider, squarer table would be better to encourage wider group interactions at lunchtime.
18. For some participants, the lunch at Norden Farm was the only hot meal they would have that day and for some, the only hot meal that week.
19. All the participants appreciated the high quality, nutritious food at such a low cost.

### **Recruitment and referral**

20. The reasons participants decided to go along to SocialArts included a mixture of interest in art activities and reducing their isolation:

- Sounded interesting, different, educational and stimulating. Kick-started the brain!
- I am interested in art and craft activities and thoroughly enjoy them
- Curiosity / interest
- Loneliness
- Meeting people
- To be able to leave the flat
- To learn new skills and meet new people
- Because I am interested in many crafts and meeting people of all ages, including the tutors
- It sounded good fun
- Keep my mind and body busy
- I like craft. Have too much free time
- Very interested after seeing the exhibition

21. Participants who were socially isolated or lonely were attracted by both the creative arts side of the project and the social aspect. There were one or two participants who were not socially isolated nor particularly lonely, for whom the opportunity to develop their art expertise was the main attraction of SocialArts, rather than the social side.

22. For the future, consideration could be given to setting entrance criteria for future SocialArts project to ensure that the maximum number of the target group – socially isolated older people benefit:

- Given the age range in the group was 61 to 88 years and the average age was 73, with the older members of the group tending to be more isolated and lonelier, future age criteria could be set at a minimum age of, say, 70 years. On the other hand, such a high age range would preclude some people who, although younger, are living in extreme isolation and suffering with many problems exacerbating their loneliness. On balance, the suggestion is that perhaps the age restriction should be age 60 and above and that other screening should be used to establish credentials in terms of social isolation and loneliness to ensure that the correct target group is reached.
- Create formal partnerships with social prescribers to set selection criteria and build a referral process would help to ensure the target group is reached.
- Consider having a mixed recruitment model of referrals through social prescribing and self-referrals and deciding a proportion for each before recruitment begins

### **Intervention delivery dates**

23. Having 4 or 5 weeks in each term during Year 1, with a different art topic or theme each term, worked very well.

24. However, budget pressures (due to the success and popularity of SocialArts during Year 1) meant that the terms were reduced to 3- or 4-weeks during Year 2.

25. Participants found gaps of more than one week in provision difficult to handle. They enjoyed the benefits of SocialArts so much that the prospect of any time away, and therefore a return to social isolation, was daunting.
26. To help plug the gap, additional social sessions were added during the long summer break in each year, linked to the exhibitions.
27. The participants would have welcomed a SocialArts session every single week of the year, with no breaks. This, however, would have been unfeasible, for financial and logistical reasons.
28. Knowing that SocialArts would be in demand, any future projects could ensure that the number of weeks is distributed evenly across the two-years and could also set clear expectations with participants at the beginning of the project about breaks in provision. However, some of these issues would be mitigated if there was a rolling recruitment programme with a clear exit strategy – See Section 5: Conclusions.

### **Daily timetable**

29. The timings worked well, even though it was a long day for the participants travelling on the minibus and who lived the furthest away from Norden Farm.
30. The cup of tea / coffee circle time was useful to allow the participants to chat informally and catch up with each other, although it was important not to let them go on too long.
31. The circle time allowed the group leader time to demonstrate the art technique for that week, ensuring that everyone could see and hear. It also allowed any notices to be given out by the project manager, for example, reminders of term dates and holidays.
32. The plan to bring people in to introduce potential new activities for individuals to follow up as an exit strategy after SocialArts will require additional time as the daily timetable is already full and the participants do not like having their activities interrupted, particularly the art class.

### **Location and setting**

33. Although the room used for the artwork is beautiful, it was the largest and therefore the most expensive room at Norden Farm. There is therefore an opportunity cost of potentially hiring out the room for corporate bookings that would pay higher rates that is lost. This should be resolved in future by the building of the planned new wing at Norden Farm, which will incorporate a room suitable for SocialArts at a lower cost.
34. The art room was most often set up with 4 tables, with 4 participants at each. This worked well to encourage sharing and conversation in the earlier sessions. However, the participants always tended to sit in the same place and with the same people, so it was important to have alternative table set-ups sometimes (e.g. one big table with everyone sat round the outside). Another tactic that worked well was to place their work to be continued from the previous week so that they were forced to sit next to people they did not normally sit next to and finding ways to join work

together, for example, a large landscape made out of individual collages completed the previous week.

35. These alternative room layouts took the participants out of their comfort zones and encouraged new conversations and new relationships to be formed.

### **Project staffing**

36. Recruiting the right staff to work on the programme is essential. The group obviously worked most closely with the group leader / artist tutor and the volunteer. It was these relationships and interactions that were therefore the most powerful. The participants, being older, had previous experience, in other contexts, of being patronised and talked to as if they were stupid. The characteristics they appreciated most about the SocialArts staff were that the staff were consistently:

- Cheerful
- Patient
- Not patronising

37. Consistent and reliable staffing is important to how safe, secure and relaxed the participants feel. Covering absences for holidays or other known reasons were planned in advance for the whole year's programme and this worked well.

38. Visiting art tutors need to be well-briefed in advance about the best way to introduce and explain a new topic to the group in a non-patronising way.

39. It was helpful to gather a bank of visiting artists who knew the group and could easily step in if the group leader was not able to be present.

### **Project budget**

40. The total cost of delivering SocialArts was underestimated for two reasons: the cost of transport was more expensive than originally thought and the greater number of participants than planned meant a higher cost of art materials and lunches.

41. For future SocialArts projects, build a funding model for social prescribing that makes at least a partial, if not full, contribution towards funding places for individual participants. The cost to the referring agency could be scaled at a higher rate for those participants requiring transport, as this is the biggest cost.

### **Overall lessons learned**

42. SocialArts is a very personal and individual project in contrast to a project working with children and young people, which had previously been the experience of the staff involved. This was a

major difference that the staff discovered. Working with older people was more intense and required close attention to one-to-one relationships, to understand the needs of the individual participants and to be able to respond effectively. The project demanded much greater time resource from the project manager than anticipated, for example, in sorting out the specialist transport arrangements.



*'The minute we come in, the tutor and assistant are always smiling. It makes me feel welcome.'*

*'They don't treat us like children or that we are stupid. They just explain things clearly and make it fun.'*

Feedback from participants on their views about the staff delivering SocialArts



## Section 5: Conclusions

One participant summed up:

*'SocialArts is the perfect title:  
It's social and it's artistic.  
It does what it says on the tin.'*

**Participant**



SocialArts is a flagship project. It is designed to tackle the social isolation and loneliness of older people and it has succeeded in spectacular fashion.

The original concept of an integrated, 3-part model proved to be well-thought out and definitely contributed to the success and to how quickly the results became apparent – from day one.

There have been lessons learned that will improve future delivery of SocialArts, mainly in terms of ensuring that even more of the target group are recruited, perhaps through implementing a more formal social prescribing route, alongside self-referrals; in terms of understanding the importance of the specialist transport and the high cost of that; understanding that the variety and high quality of the artforms presented is important to the participants; and understanding the importance of hosting the group in a setting with the right ambience and with staff who have the appropriate competencies and attitudes to their work.

There is a waiting list for SocialArts, which is testament to its success. Future waiting lists could be reduced by finding a way to have a higher flow-through of participants, so that more socially isolated and lonely older people can benefit. This could potentially be achieved by reducing all terms to a maximum of 4 weeks and limiting the number of terms an individual participant can attend to perhaps 2 or 3. This would also rely on introducing potential exit routes, in the form of new social

opportunities, including volunteering, to the participants at an earlier stage in the project, and on an ongoing basis throughout the life of the project. This would ensure that the benefits of SocialArts are sustainable in the long-term for the individual participants.

## Section 7: What Next?

The following key actions for the future are currently in the planning stages:

1. Bidding for external grant funding from trusts and foundations.
2. Sharing the SocialArts model of best practice and lessons learned with other, local, regional and national, arts-based community organisations.

# SocialArts

the crafty group for older people



**SocialArts** is a creative programme for older people.

Get crafty with a range of arts activities including visual arts, dance, music and more.

With support from visiting artists and group leaders in a fun and friendly environment.

At **SocialArts** you can learn new skills, meet new people and try something new. The perfect way to start your week!

**SocialArts** is a funded project run by Norden Farm Centre for the Arts, Maidenhead.

**Come get involved and give it a try!**

## Taster Workshops at Norden Farm starting January 2017!

Monday 23 January / Printing:  
Monday 30 January / Stained Glass  
Monday 6 February / Sculpture  
Monday 13 February / Singing  
Monday 20 February / Animation

**10am - 1.30pm**  
**£5 per person, per session**  
Including lunch in the Norden Farm  
Cafe Bar and transport  
(if required)

Fancy giving it a try? Give me a call, I would love to find out more about you and get you booked in! **Robyn Bunyan / 01628 682563 / [robyn.bunyan@nordenfarm.org](mailto:robyn.bunyan@nordenfarm.org)**



Online / [www.nordenfarm.org](http://www.nordenfarm.org)  
Box Office / 01628 788997



# SocialArts

the crafty group for older people

## • What can I do when?

10am - 1.30pm | £5 per person, per session

**Monday 23 January / Printing:** Explore some simple fun printing techniques and come away with a shopping bag that you have designed and printed yourself.

**Monday 30 January / Stained Glass:** Get creative with colour, light and silhouettes and make your own 'stained glass' to hang in the window.

**Monday 6 February / Sculpture:** Fancy getting your hands dirty - use different modelling materials to create a 3D portrait.

**Monday 13 February / Singing:** Like to sing or just like the idea of singing – come and join this friendly workshop, open your vocal chords and have a good old sing along.

**Monday 20 February / Animation:** Make your own 30 second film using simple stop frame animation techniques.

## • Where

The programme is hosted at Norden Farm Centre for the Arts, Maidenhead SL6 4PF.

All workshop venues at Norden Farm are fully accessible for those with mobility issues.

## • Travel Arrangements

Transport is available free of charge (within a 10 mile radius) for participants of the programme who require it

## • Price

Each session costs £5 per person to attend. This price includes the workshop, lunch at the Norden Farm Cafe Bar and transport where needed

## • How do I get involved?

Fancy giving it a try? Give me a call, I would love to find out more about you and get you booked in! **Robyn Bunyan / 01628 682563 / [robyn.bunyan@nordenfarm.org](mailto:robyn.bunyan@nordenfarm.org)**



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## Appendix B: List of Partners



### Project created and delivered by

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**People  
to Places**

