

Culture
Radar

*Supporting
Strategic Change
in the Arts*

Luminate
Creative Older Adult
Learning Survey
2019
Summary Report

Culture Radar

www.culturereadar.org

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all contributing individuals, groups and organisations who kindly supported distribution and promotion of the survey.

Please direct queries for further information relating to this report to:

Luminate
info@luminatescotland.org
0131 668 8066

About Luminate

Luminate, Scotland's creative ageing organisation, runs a diverse programme of activities to increase creative opportunities for older people. Our vision is that all older people can take part in high quality arts and creative activities, whatever their background and circumstances and wherever they live. Luminate's principle funders are Creative Scotland, the Baring Foundation and Age Scotland.

www.luminatescotland.org

About Culture Radar

Culture Radar supports strategic change in the culture and heritage sectors. We work with cultural leaders, organisations, research and policy agencies to help them achieve their ambitions through strategic support, research and analysis, coaching and mentoring.

www.culturereadar.org

Culture Radar Ltd is registered in Scotland, SC618028

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Executive Summary

Background to the survey

In May 2019 the Scottish Government published *A Fairer Scotland for Older People* presenting an action framework to challenge the inequalities older people face as they age and to celebrate older people in Scotland.

The framework sets out actions for Government and stakeholders (of which Luminare is one) to ensure older people are recognised as a diverse, experienced and highly valued part of Scottish society and culture.

Luminare sees adult learning in the arts as an area of opportunity to positively impact on and contribute to some of the national actions set out in the framework, including challenging discrimination, tackling social isolation and loneliness, helping older people keep physically fit and active and helping older people engage with culture and creativity.

As Luminare grows from delivering a biennial Festival to a year-round programme of activity, it is undertaking a range of research studies to help inform new ways of supporting Scotland's evolving creative ageing sector. This report contributes to those studies.

Aims of the survey

Luminare wished to understand more about how to support the development of, and access to creative older adult learning in Scotland. As a starting point Luminare conducted a baseline survey in October 2019 to begin to:

- Explore the reality of creative adult learning for older people in Scotland and begin to understand some of the needs of both participants, and providers
- Identify some challenges around, and benefits of, creative older adult learning
- Inform the direction of further research in this area for Luminare to undertake

Two surveys were designed: one for Participants in creative older adult learning in Scotland, and one for Organisational Providers of creative older adult learning.

The Participant survey was promoted via Luminare's own networks and partners, and was aimed at people aged 50 and over (for example people who look to take up arts activities when they retire and have more time on their hands, and people who may have developed age-related illnesses such as dementia or perhaps be living in a care home). Luminare recognise this is a wide age bracket with diverse interests and needs.

Following are some of the findings from this initial study.

What is the emerging picture for creative older adult learning in Scotland?

Respondents to the Participant survey show a positive appetite for, and attitude to creative adult learning with those who are involved in creative activity (whose ages range from 50 – 93 years) engaged one or two times a week.

The five most popular artforms for Participant respondents are “drawing, painting and illustration”, “singing and choirs”, “reading and book groups”, “art appreciation” with “dance” and “music” level in fifth place.

The majority of Participant respondents to this survey are based in the Central Belt, female and with a university or college education, and the findings for this survey show that those taking part are most likely to do so locally through community groups or council venues (such as schools, adult education centres, libraries and leisure centres).

A range of arts, as well as public and third sector Providers of creative adult learning responded to the survey also - 74% of whom provide adult learning that was *suited* for learners over 50 years, and 26% provide learning *specifically* targeted to over 50 years.

While most of the Providers responding to the survey say they do not have an adult learning strategy, almost a third (27%) do have one.

What are some of the challenges and benefits of creative adult learning for older people?

Most Participant respondents in this survey were motivated to take part in creative adult learning for “leisure and social purposes”, followed by “social opportunities” and “to keep active / pass the time”.

The Participant survey also shows that the majority of those taking part in creative older adult learning had positive experiences, prioritising the benefits as “meeting new people and making new friends”, followed by “feeling more creative”, “enjoying learning more”, “improved self-confidence” and “being more involved in local events and issues”.

The key challenges reported by Participant respondents to engaging with creative adult learning were “cost / affordability”, followed by “health issues”, “work / time pressures” and “transport”.

In contrast, Provider respondents perceived the key barriers to engagement for older people as “transport”, followed by “marketing of course information” and “online application systems being potentially off-putting”.

Recommendations

These findings evidence positive interest in, and benefits from, creative older adult learning by both Participants and Providers.

As an initial exploration into this research area for Luminate, the findings also provide a useful and valid benchmark from which to build future research and develop a stronger development profile for creative older adult learning in Scotland.

Key recommendations are that Luminate:

- Undertakes further research into creative older adult learning, building on the baseline established here.
- Seeks to expand the geographic reach and demographic of respondents in future studies to diversify and test the data set.
- Considers a mix of offline as well as online approaches for gathering survey data - this could include mixing on- and offline quantitative surveys with qualitative focus groups.
- Explores research partnerships with local authorities and/or third sector interface organisations to reach a broader demographic, and respondents who may not be engaged with creative adult learning already.

Introduction, methodology and scope

Introduction

In May 2019 the Scottish Government published *A Fairer Scotland for Older People* presenting an action framework to challenge the inequalities older people face as they age and to celebrate older people in Scotland.

The framework sets out actions for Government and stakeholders (of which Luminare is one) to ensure older people are recognised as a diverse, experienced and highly valued part of Scottish society and culture.

Luminare sees adult learning in the arts as an area of opportunity to positively impact on and contribute to some of these national actions, including challenging discrimination, tackling social isolation and loneliness, helping older people keep physically fit and active and helping older people engage with culture and creativity.

As Luminare grows from delivering a biennial Festival to a year-round programme of activity, it is undertaking a range of research studies to help inform new ways of supporting Scotland's evolving creative ageing sector.

Luminare wished to understand more about how to support the development of, and access to creative older adult learning in Scotland. As a starting point Luminare conducted a baseline survey in October 2019 to begin to:

- Explore the reality of creative adult learning for older people in Scotland and begin to understand some of the needs of both participants, and providers
- Identify some challenges around, and benefits of, creative older adult learning
- Inform the direction of further research in this area for Luminare to undertake

Methodology

Two surveys were designed: one for Participants in creative older adult learning in Scotland, and one for Organisational Providers of creative older adult learning.¹ The surveys were created on Survey Monkey and were available online between 1 and 26 October 2019 via Luminare's website and via a direct access links emailed to Luminare's mailing lists.

The surveys were supported by a marketing campaign including website and social media promotion, and support from Luminare partners to distribute information about the survey via their networks and social media.

A total of 333 Participant and 51 Organisational Provider completed questionnaires were received.

The resulting data sets were exported from Survey Monkey to Microsoft Excel, cleaned and reviewed using pivot tables and charts.

¹ A third survey, aimed at Self-Employed Providers of creative older adult learning, did not realise a sufficient data set to include in this report, but could be a focus for future research.

Scope

The Participant survey, and questions for Providers, were focused around the experiences of people aged 50 and over (for example people who look to take up arts activities when they retire and have more time on their hands, and people who may have developed age-related illnesses such as dementia or perhaps be living in a care home).

The surveys requested feedback from Participants who were already or had recently been active in creative adult learning only, and Providers who were involved in, or had recently, delivered creative adult learning.

While the scope of the study is both broad (the age bracket covers a potentially wide range of interests and needs) and limited (to those already engaged or active in the world of creative adult learning) it was agreed these parameters were suitable for an initial scoping study, where survey results could inform the design of future, more nuanced research.

Notes on the data sets

- While 333 completed Participant questionnaires were received, a review of the data set shows that it is biased towards already-engaged, Edinburgh-based females with a majority having either college or university qualifications. Of the 51 completed Provider questionnaires received, the majority of responses (43%) were submitted from “arts, culture, heritage organisations”.
- It is also noted that distribution of the surveys was online only (which may have been a barrier to some older people), with promotion via email lists and social media of Luminare and partners.
- For both surveys then, the data profile suggests that the findings, while true reflections for this respondent base, do not necessarily reflect the full picture of creative older adult learning in Scotland, and are perhaps more indicative of Luminare’s culturally engaged networks.

Building a picture of creative adult learning in Scotland

Key findings – Participants

Demographic of the data set

The survey asked respondents to provide basic information to profile their age, gender, location in Scotland and about their education as a social indicator.

While respondents to the survey range in age from 50 to 93 years, the majority fall within the following:

- 74% are aged between 61 and 76 years
- 79% are female
- 89% hold a college / university qualification
- 79% are based within the Central Belt (with representation beyond this ranging from the Scottish Border to Shetland)
- 72% are mainly active with no disability or significant health issues

Recent experiences of participants

The survey asked respondents to this survey about recent experiences of creative adult learning to assess the type of activities the group were engaged with, which venues were most popular for them, how often they were taking part and payments for creative adult learning.

The findings show a broad spectrum of creative adult learning on offer for learners over 50 years, with most respondents engaged locally in 1 to 2 creative adult learning activities at a time.

- 22% are very engaged and involved in more than five creative activities at a time, with the majority (49%) involved in one to two arts focused learning activities. On average (across all respondents) people are involved in around three creative activities at a time.
- The top five artforms for this group are: drawing, painting and illustration (12%), singing/choir (10%), reading/book groups (9%), art appreciation (9%), dance (9%) and music / musical instrument (9%) – although a broad range of artforms was represented overall.
- The most popular locations recorded are via local community groups such as U3A, Rotary Clubs (36%), and Council settings (30%) such as a local school, adult education centre, library or leisure centre. 13% of respondents were involved in art-focused learning via arts/heritage organisations.
- 38% are engaged with creative adult learning once a week for more than a year, with 29% involved once a week for a term.
- 76% had paid fees for their creative adult learning themselves and 20% reported their learning was free.
- The most popular routes to finding creative adult opportunities for this group is via local clubs and community groups (22%) followed by Internet searches (22%) and local libraries (12%).

Participant motivations and benefits

Responses show a positive experience to engaging with creative adult learning, with the majority of Participant respondents (97.5%) reporting additional benefits to taking part and only 2.5% saying they had experienced no benefit or change.

Most of the Participant respondents to the survey are motivated to engage with creative adult learning for “leisure and social purposes”, with the top five benefits chosen by the group being:

- 32% Meeting new people / making new friends
- 23% I feel more creative
- 18% I enjoy learning more
- 13% My self-confidence has improved
- 8% I am more involved in local events and issues

Only 1% selected “to gain a qualification as a motivation for engagement”.

Additionally, some respondents report participation in exhibitions, interest in having work published, overcoming feelings of failure due to disability and feeling pride in what they can do.

Key findings – Providers

A total of 51 Organisational Providers responded to the survey, with 100% completing the survey “As an employee of an organisation that provides creative adult learning”.

Profile of organisations responding to the survey

Providers were asked to give basic information to profile their organisation type and location. Responses show that:

- Most of the respondents (51%) are based within the Central Belt.
- 43% of respondents are from “arts, culture, heritage organisations”, 24% are “voluntary and charity organisations”, and 22% are “local authority” providers.
- 74% deliver adult learning *suitable* for learners over 50yrs, with 26% delivering learning *specifically* targeted to over 50yrs.
- 73% do not have (or do not know if they have) an adult learning strategy.
- Of the 27% that do have adult learning strategies, 39% of them include an older adult strand, and 10% of those include targets for older adult engagement.
- 50% of respondents don’t know how many of those taking part in their creative adult learning are over 50yrs.

Organisations' experience of delivering creative adult learning

Providers were asked a range of questions to assess the kinds of creative adult learning they offered, frequency and whether it was paid for or free. The results show that for the respondent group:

- 41% offer more than 20 creative adult learning classes per year, and 31% offer between 1 and 5 classes per year.
- The most offered activities in this group are: craft (11%), followed by drawing, painting and illustration (8%), singing/choir (8%), writing, poetry, playwriting (8%) and photography (7%).
- 38% provide activity once a week for a term, and 28% offer a half or one day sessions.
- In this data set 55% of respondents offered Paid for courses, with 45% providing learning for free.

Skills and qualifications sought by organisations providing for creative adult training

Providers were also asked to select the qualifications or skills their organisations look for when hiring tutors for creative adult learning.

- 29% of respondents selected “evidence of previous work experience delivering creative adult learning”
- 26% selected “working at a professional level in their creative field”
- 16% selected “a professional qualification in the subject they teach”
- 8% selected “we don't look for any professional qualifications”

The least selected options were a “teaching qualification” (4%), “membership of a professional association / representative body” (4%) or “certificates for working with participants with additional needs” (2%).

Challenges and perceived barriers for creative older adult learning

A comparison of the challenges and perceived barriers to engaging with creative older adult learning by Participants and Providers respectively shows a difference in priority between the two data sets.

The majority of Participant respondents to this survey experienced no difficulty in engaging with creative adult learning, but of the 43% who had experienced difficulty, or some difficulty, the following emerge as the top five challenges for this group:

1. “Cost / affordability”
2. “Health issues”
3. “Work / time pressures”
4. “Lack of transport”
5. “Difficulty in going to things on own”

In contrast, Provider respondents were asked to choose what they perceived were the main barriers to older adults engaging with the adult learning they provided, which were:

1. “Transport”
2. “Marketing (access to information about the courses and timetables”
3. “Potentially off-putting online application systems”
4. “Cost of the course fees”
5. “Confidence – the courses are aimed at younger students”

While “cost” and “transport” are issues for both groups therefore, their importance is weighted differently.

Recommendations

These findings evidence positive interest in, and benefits from, creative older adult learning by both Participants and Providers.

As an initial exploration into this research area for Luminate, the findings also provide a useful and valid benchmark from which to build future research and develop a stronger development profile for creative older adult learning in Scotland.

Key recommendations are that Luminate:

- Undertakes further, more nuanced research into creative older adult learning, building on the baseline established here.
- Seeks to expand the geographic reach and demographic of respondents in future studies to diversify and test the data set.
- Considers a mix of offline as well as online approaches for gathering survey data in future to avoid barriers to engagement. This could also include mixing on- and offline quantitative surveys, and qualitative focus groups.
- Explores research partnerships with local authorities and/or third sector interface organisations in future studies to try to reach a broader demographic, and to reach respondents who may not be engaged with creative adult learning already.

In addition, specific research questions which may benefit from more detailed investigation and analysis include:

- The differences in the reported challenges and perceived barriers to older adults engaging with creative learning between Participants and Providers – particularly in relation to costs and transport – as these are most likely to be affected by variables such as demographics and geography.
- The types of organisations providing creative older adult learning, the context and drivers for adult learning strategies being implemented, and drivers for ‘older’ adult learning strands.
- The finance of creative older adult learning – both from a Participant and Provider point of view – to better understand access for creative older adult learning.
- The role of freelance / self-employed Providers for creative older adult learning within the mix of the creative older adult learning ecology.