

Forfar Creative Ageing: Pilot Project

Evaluation Report 2026



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

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Summary

This evaluation explores the impact and learning gained from a pilot project led by Luminate in Forfar, Angus.

As a precursor to a larger, two-year, programme with a dedicated member of staff working in Angus, Luminate planned to deliver targeted creative ageing activities in Forfar with a commissioned artist and facilitator. Maureen Crosbie was selected to work with three community partners: Lochside Connections Dementia Meeting Centre, Deirdre Knight day care centre, and Forfar Library. The main aims of this pilot were to begin to build good working relationships with partners in Angus, to demonstrate and explore best creative practice, and to impact positively on participants' wellbeing and social connectedness.

Weekly sessions took place on-site with the community partners over four consecutive weeks in February/March 2026. Activities were chosen in consultation with partners and focused on print making (Lochside), mosaic making (Deirdre Knight) and textile banner making (Library). At the end of the sessions, a shared exhibition of artwork was mounted in Forfar Library, allowing participants (and the public) to see the finished prints, mosaics, and sewn banner.

The creative ageing activities were welcomed and highly valued by partners, most of whom were experienced in delivering creative activities but not in working with a professional artist to lead a project over multiple sessions. Maureen's professionalism made a significant difference to the project delivery as she was capable of coaching participants to fulfil their potential and produce creative outcomes which she could envisage even if at the outset the participants themselves could not.

Feedback from partners and participants on the suitability of the commissioned artist and the delivery of the creative sessions was extremely positive. Broadly, they appreciated the sociability of the sessions and the way the activities produced collective outcomes requiring teamwork and collaboration. Expectations were widely exceeded, with partners and participants describing the pilot project as having boosted confidence, affirmed what they were capable of, and nurtured an interest in further creative activity.

This project successfully began to embed Luminate locally in Angus and demonstrated that it can work in partnership to add value locally and positively enhance artist-led participative activity. As it begins its larger Angus-wide creative ageing programme, Luminate should feel confident in the approach taken in Forfar and seek to expand on this model of delivery in other areas, whilst being sensitive to local differences in context and capacity.

Pilot Aims	Summary of Key Outcomes
1. <i>Have a positive impact on the social connectedness, engagement and emotions of participants</i>	▪ Sociability designed into all activities, which facilitated a shared creative endeavour + opportunities for conversation and connection ▪ Participants/professionals/volunteers reported learning new knowledge +skills, taking pride in their achievements + expectations of themselves surpassed
2. <i>Explore the impact of taking a local residency approach to artist-led work in Angus</i>	▪ Lead artist brought a wealth of experience, confidence, vision, + leadership to influence outcomes of activities which exceeded partners in-house capabilities ▪ Project was hard work for the artist - while they felt well-supported and recompensed, it is vital that this strong support is maintained and developed in the larger programme, to avoid potential risk of artist burn out
3. <i>Build new community partner relationships in Angus, in preparation for Luminate's planned larger-scale programme</i>	▪ Feedback from the project partners on working with Luminate + lead artist was overwhelmingly positive (all expressed a desire to work with Luminate again in future) ▪ Partners appreciated flexibility + professionalism employed and how creative sessions were tailored to reflect their needs
4. <i>Learn about the opportunities and challenges of an informal social-prescribing project model, with a particular focus on increasing the social connectedness of participants</i>	▪ The relatively short duration of the pilot project meant insights into the broad topic of social prescribing were limited ▪ As Luminate's programme in Angus expands, opportunities may arise to trial social prescription referrals (planning time should be devoted to designing meaningful evaluation objectives to test this model)



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

As Scotland's creative ageing leadership organisation, Luminate seeks to '*ensure that older people's creativity can flourish whatever their circumstances, experience, interests and ambitions*'. While Luminate's vision is national in scope, its ways of working are often local, focusing resources on areas and communities where barriers to engaging with the arts are most evident. Through targeted and embedded local projects, delivered in partnership with established organisations, Luminate aims to demonstrate best creative practice and achieve real impact for partners and participants.

Angus (population 115,000) was identified by Luminate as a council area of strategic interest to their work for a number of reasons:

- Angus has an above (Scottish) average population of older people with 29% aged 60+ compared to 24% nationally¹
- This ageing trend is expected to continue, with the number of residents aged 75+ expected to increase 27% by 2032²
- While much of Angus is amongst the least deprived zones of Scotland, there is a stark wealth/opportunity gap within Angus and specific towns such as Arbroath, Brechin, and Forfar contain some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland³
- Overall participation in cultural activities in Angus is lower than in any other council area in Scotland⁴

Within this demographic context, Luminate identified that provision of creative opportunities with and for older people in Angus was also relatively low. Luminate is well connected with key partners in the area such as the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership, ANGUSAlive (the cultural and leisure trust responsible for libraries in the area) and Voluntary Action Angus, which supports the growth of volunteering, social enterprise and local third sector development in Angus. These relationships could help to direct targeted project work in the parts of Angus where it could achieve most impact.

'Prevention and proactive care' is one of the key strategic priorities identified in the Health and Social Care Partnership's current Strategic Commissioning Plan, reflecting an ambition to support older people in Angus to remain socially

¹ Angus Outcomes Profile angus.gov.uk/sites/angus-cms/files/2017-08/Angus%20Wide%20Profile.pdf

² National Records Scotland nrsotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/council-area-profiles/angus/

³ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/

⁴ Scottish Government 2022 gov.scot/publications/cultural-engagement-scotland-matter/pages/5/

connected (and independent) for as long as possible⁵ with a long-term goal to reduce hospital and care home admissions and to reduce prescription medicine use e.g. anti-depressants. In 2024, Luminate approached the Health and Social Care Partnership about the potential to work together on increasing and improving provision of creative activities for older people in Angus. From these initial shared interest conversations, a programme outline began to emerge based on:

- Luminate recruiting a newly-created regional Programme Manager role, based in Angus, with responsibility for co-designing and managing creative activities with and for older people, delivered in partnership with key local organisations
- A two-year programme duration, allowing for sustained activity, capacity-building, and meaningful change, intended to leave an enduring legacy in the region
- Creative activity delivered across Angus, but with a focus on reaching older people most lacking in local creative opportunities and most in need of social connection

‘A new local programme (in Angus) will explore the impact of having a two-year, p/t post in a single local authority area, to act as a creative ageing supporter, champion, connector, provocateur, and provider of projects and training. The role will work collaboratively, learning from people in the community and expanding local capacity, skills and knowledge to ensure a legacy for creative ageing practice locally when the post comes an end.’

Luminate Business Plan 2025-28

While plans and funding applications for this large-scale programme were being progressed, a shorter-term pilot project was conceived to begin delivering activity in the area and to build relationships with key partners in anticipation of expanded activity. Forfar emerged as a focus for this initial work as it contained three strong potential partners all in close proximity:

- **Lochside Connections Dementia Meeting Centre**, for people living with dementia and their carers. Meeting Centres originated in the Netherlands and have been set up in many communities across Scotland, but were first introduced in Angus, where the model is well-established.
- **Deirdre Knight Day Centre**, supporting adults and older people with a range of disabilities. The day centre was suggested as a potential partner by Angus Health & Social Care Partnership and Voluntary Action Angus during

⁵ Angus Health & Social Care Partnership angushsc.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Angus-HSCP-Strategic-Commissioning-Plan-2023-26.pdf

early project planning discussions.

- **Forfar Library**, home to a dedicated 'Lend + Mend' hub space equipped with sewing machines, where Luminate previously facilitated skills-based introductory sewing courses in 2025.

Luminate reached out to each partner directly with the offer of participating in the pilot and all three were happy to accept.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the pilot

An outline of project activity was designed by Luminate, consisting of:

- An open call recruitment process to commission an artist with the skills to lead participative creative activity with three partners⁶ in Forfar
- Four days of creative activity with each partner in winter 2025/26
- A potential collective sharing or public exhibition at the close of the project (left open ended/optional to ensure this output didn't create off-putting or unnecessary pressure on participants)
- A legacy of gifted art materials at the close of the project which would facilitate further self-led creative activity by partners.

The pilot project aimed to:

1. Have a positive impact on the social connectedness, engagement and emotions of participants
2. Explore the impact of taking a local residency approach to artist-led work in Angus
3. Build new community partner relationships in Angus, in preparation for Luminate's planned larger-scale programme
4. Learn about the opportunities and challenges of an informal social-prescribing project model, with a particular focus on increasing the social connectedness of participants.

1.4 Evaluation aims and methodology

Independent evaluator Eric Hildrew was appointed to work with Luminate across a number of programme strands in 2025-26. For pilot projects, the evaluation approach taken has been consciously flexible and experimental, seeking to capture learning and insight without imposing an overarching theory or model.

⁶ Initially four partners/groups were envisaged, however time/resource pressure meant this was reduced to a more manageable three.

The nature of the project activity and profile of participants lent itself to an 'embedded' qualitative research approach which was flexible and responsive to the capacity and needs of partners and participants. In particular it should be noted that while 1-2-1 evaluation interviews were possible with participants from the banner making workshops at Forfar Library, these weren't felt to be appropriate with members at Lochside Connections or the day care centre, where members have a wide range of support needs.

Research fieldwork comprised:

- A pre-activity interview with the project lead at Angus Health and Social Care Partnership
- A researcher visit to each partner, spending a day participating in creative activities with participants, making observations and having informal, unrecorded, conversations
- Post-activity phone interviews with x3 project participants
- Pre and post activity interviews with lead artist, Maureen Crosby
- Post-activity interviews with each partner's lead contact/manager
- Post-activity interview with Luminate's Director, Anne Gallacher.



2. Project Activity

2.1 Artist recruitment

Luminate received a strong response to its open call in autumn 2025 for a lead artist to deliver activities in Forfar. Angus Health and Social Care Partnership and Voluntary Action Angus were represented alongside Luminate on the panel which interviewed five potential artists, all of whom were of a high standard.

“Both Angus Health & Social Care Partnership and Voluntary Action Angus were really positive about Luminate working in the county. They were both enthused about the artist interviews and I think being part of those helped them see the potential impact this project could have.”

Anne Gallacher, Luminate

Artist Maureen Crosbie was unanimously selected as lead artist for the pilot. Maureen lives locally in Kirriemuir and has spent much of her career teaching art to children and adults of all ages, including those with additional needs. Maureen now trades commercially as a glass artist ([Gallus Glass](http://gallusglass.com)⁷) and pursues freelance, community-based, participative project opportunities alongside her own practice. She previously worked with Kirrie Connections, another local Meeting Centre for those living with dementia and their carers, on an art and music project with members.

Maureen has always been interested in a wide variety of materials and techniques. As a school art teacher, she was used to introducing children to a variety of media, e.g. painting, clay, etc. As an artist and freelancer she prefers to present partners with a ‘menu’ of options from her portfolio in order to initiate a conversation about participants specific needs and interests. In this way, partners in the Forfar project were able to take an active role in deciding which activities Maureen had prior experience in leading that would offer the best fit for them.

2.2 Creative sessions

Following her initial discussions with partners, Maureen planned to deliver three different activities across the project partners.

At Lochside Connections, a variety of weekly print making sessions would take place on site with members over four consecutive weeks. At the Deirdre Knight Centre, members would design and make large mosaics for hanging in an

⁷ gallusglass.com

outdoor courtyard space, while at Forfar Library the Lend + Mend sewing hub would be activated with textile banner making sessions leading to the creation of a large wall-hanging textile banner.

“Mosaics seemed a good choice to include everyone. A lot of our members have physical disabilities as well so this was something they could dip in and out of or take part in the whole project. There was no pressure on anyone to do anything from start to finish.” Centre Manager

The sewing sessions were the only ‘open call’ activities available to any older people in the area. ANGUSAlive (of which the library is part) initiated a small marketing campaign to recruit participants, who were invited to a taster session before being asked to sign up for all remaining sessions. All activities were offered free of charge. A shared exhibition of work from all three groups was planned and eventually the Library itself was decided upon as the best central venue for this with footfall from the general public.

2.3 Expectations and motivations

For Luminate, this pilot project was intended to start building relationships and laying groundwork for the forthcoming larger programme in Angus. To this end (and because Luminate don’t yet have staff embedded locally in the area) it was designed to be ‘low risk’ and to be delivered with partners and an experienced lead artist who the Luminate team were confident could manage activities with a degree of self-sufficiency.

“It was clear from her interview that Maureen was the sort of artist who could take things in her stride, which is really important in a community context as unexpected things come along. She brought loads of ideas along and you could see how she was going to personalise the work for each partner.”

Anne Gallacher, Luminate

Both the Deirdre Knight Centre and Lochside Connections had plenty of previous experience in delivering creative activities for older people, though their experience of working with a professional artist before this project was more limited. For them, the motivation to participate was about offering positive experiences for their members and encouraging them to try new things which might stretch or surprise them, and which the staff and volunteer teams wouldn’t have had the confidence or knowledge to deliver in-house. This required a degree of trust in the lead artist that they would effectively gently expand participants horizons, without overwhelming them.

“For some members, trying something new you could see was totally out of their comfort zone. When we first started some were quite quiet or reserved, maybe thinking ‘I can’t do that.’” Centre Manager

For the team at the library, participating in this project was a natural part of a wider shift towards expanding the role of the library beyond its traditional function of book lending. The Lend + Mend space is a fantastic resource, but there is very little budget available to activate it with professionally-run workshops. As a degree of confidence and knowledge is needed to begin using it, this can result in the space being underused by the local community. The introductory classes Luminate had funded in 2024 had been well-received, so this project represented a logical progression towards a slightly more ambitious and creative outcome.

“The challenge is getting people in to use the Lend + Mend. It doesn’t seem to matter how much you try to publicise it, it’s still underused.” Operational Lead, Forfar Library

Participants at the banner-making workshops who fed back were largely motivated by a desire to pick up their ‘lost habit’ of sewing and to socialise with new people. Those spoken to said they had heard about the opportunity via the library’s Facebook page (Forfar library doesn’t have an independent Facebook page but is covered by ANGUSALive’s social media accounts). Prior awareness of the workshop content was low, and it wasn’t widely known before the taster sessions that the theme was more creative than skills-based.

“Why did I go along? Company, for one thing. Just to do something that I hadn’t done for more years than I care to remember!”

“I haven’t sewn since I was at high school. I saw it on Facebook and thought it was sewing lessons! It was in a way, but not in others. I think what was on Facebook was different to the leaflet. I hadn’t realised we’d be making a banner.”

“I used to be creative. I painted and was involved in operatic societies and I still do a little singing with a folk group. I don’t paint anymore. I also used to sew. I was never very happy with what I used to produce, but I tend to be quite self-critical.”

“I don’t know that I had any expectations of the sessions really. I can’t remember where I heard about them – possibly Facebook – but I contacted the library and went along with an open mind.”

Banner-making participants

3. In-session observations

Three consecutive researcher days were spent in Forfar, joining in with the creative sessions and chatting informally with participants. The observational notes presented here are intended to bring the sessions to life a little and to convey some of the unique attributes of each group.

3.1 Print making at Lochside Connections Dementia Meeting Centre

Lochside Connections is a Meeting Centre offering on-going friendly expert support to people with mild to moderate dementia and their families. At the heart of the Meeting Centre approach is creating a supportive, social environment where members meet to have fun, talk to others, and participate in various cognitive and physical activities designed to promote engagement, stimulation, and well-being.

The group at Lochside meet three days a week in the Strathmore Cricket Club clubhouse, a medium-sized space, with comfy chairs, a bar area, and dining tables. The group accommodates as many members as it has capacity to, and has grown in popularity since it started in 2022 to a regular attendance of around 20. A few volunteer helpers also attend, so space is tight, though not uncomfortable. The clubhouse has a view out on to the cricket pitch and Forfar Loch.

From her initial session, Maureen has already learnt that participants at Lochside need quite close support in their activities, so she works with around 6-8 members at a time (on rotation) at the dining tables. Some members have been consistently keener than others to participate, but unusually (in Maureen's experience) the gender balance of those who are interested has been tipped towards older men.

Today's artistic activity is landscape collage-making. Maureen has brought along some examples of other artists' work for inspiration and explains the principle of layering different pieces of paper, from lighter shades at the back, to darker at the front, in order to create a sense of perspective.

Initially, most participants seem sceptical of their ability to participate. Although at the previous session all had been involved in painting patterns on paper with paint and various mark-making tools, none can remember doing this last week. Their paintings from the last session are going to form the basis of each collage, but participants struggle at first to grasp the concept of what Maureen is asking them to do. Using the randomly patterned and textured sheets to create a mountain landscape seems like an abstract task and there is much looking around and picking up of paper, but not much purposeful action yet.

Maureen patiently repeats her explanation, and begins to help individuals to get started, as do the two volunteers assisting today. Slowly at first, concentration and momentum begin to build. Participants seem to find it easier to engage with the practical side of the task than the conceptual, and soon everyone is carefully tearing paper, cutting out shapes, and glueing in place the layers of their collage. Maureen and the volunteers are careful not to take over or lead participants too much, instead asking them to make their own aesthetic decisions and to trust their instincts in creating colourscales and layered textures that they feel will work best on the page.

Motor skills vary across the group and as some of the collage-making work being done is detailed, delicate, and absorbing, some participants need more support than others. One table of three men covers a wide variety of backgrounds and includes a former civil engineer, a farmer, and a factory worker. While the retired engineer made technical drawings throughout his career and has retained his high level of skill, his table mates have almost no experience of drawing and painting.

At another table, an older woman is carefully cutting out and sticking down flowers to her collage. She explains that she used to like flower-arranging and once completed a City and Guilds course in it so that she would *“know what I was doing.”*

In the background at the clubhouse, two health workers from an external partner have set up a net and members are taking turns hitting balls into it at speed with a plastic cricket bat. The men explain that many in the group enjoy ‘walking cricket’ out on the pitch in the warmer months.

An hour passes quickly and the results are impressive. Collages of all different colours and compositions have emerged from the mass of paper and while the general tone is self-effacing and modest (*“It’ll look better from a distance mind!”*) it’s clear some participants are quietly surprised at what they’ve created. The retired farmer calls out to his friends who are chatting in their comfy chairs and holds up his collage for them to admire approvingly.

“You’ve got a talent you didn’t know you had!” they call back.

Maureen asks each participant to sign or initial their work. She will take the finished collages away to crop and frame so they can form part of the planned exhibition of project work at Forfar Library.

3.2 Mosaic-making at Deirdre Knight Day Care Centre

The Deirdre Knight Centre strives to '*alleviate the effects of social isolation and loneliness by providing opportunities for social interaction in a friendly and supportive atmosphere*'. Members who attend the centre span a range of ages (from around 50 to over 90 years) with a range of needs and abilities (though all are being helped to live as independently as possible). The purpose-built centre features a spacious lounge with plenty of tables for activities. Around 8 of the 20 or so members have chosen to be involved in the sessions with Maureen, though others (and staff) drop in to observe, comment, or participate in some way.

For this group, Maureen is leading mosaic-making, as this activity was chosen from her past work portfolio by the centre manager as something that would best fit members' needs and abilities. The day centre has a small walled courtyard which members can sit out in during the warmer months and this idea stemmed in part from a desire to embellish and decorate this currently plain brick outdoor space.

Mosaics require careful work, time, and concentration, but their advantage is that progress towards the finished work is made incrementally every time a single tile is placed in position. The work is also very much a team effort, allowing small groups to sit around a table together and to become absorbed in a collective effort.

Over the past couple of sessions, members have been making coloured drawings of garden flowers and then scaling their drawings up on to large plywood backing boards. Maureen has collected dozens of different coloured glass mosaic tiles, all neatly boxed in over 40 separate plastic containers. Maureen and the staff use special tile cutters to break the tiles into shards, which participants are carefully gluing into place piece by piece. Most of the centre staff, including the manager, get involved and contribute at some point in the session, which feels collaborative and sociable. The shared process of cutting and gluing provides a conduit for conversation, which ranges from members' previous experiences in the arts, to their homelife and recent trips made with carers.

As sections of the mosaics begin to be completed and the effect of the brightly-coloured tiles placed next to each other starts to become clearer, passing staff and other members begin to take an interest and compliment the makers. The participants themselves, though mostly relatively quiet verbally, seem absorbed and satisfied with the results of their efforts. The consensus is that the mosaics are beautiful and will look even more so outside with sunlight on them.

Once the glue has dried, Maureen will take the mosaics back to her workshop, where grouting will be applied to fill the gaps, before the tiles are polished up to look their best. All of the unused tiles, along with the tile cutting tools, will be left

with the day centre after the sessions end, so that staff can incorporate smaller scale mosaic-making into their ongoing roster of creative activities.

3.3 Banner making at Forfar Library

The creative sessions hosted in Forfar Library's Lend + Mend Hub were the only 'open booking' workshops in the pilot project, which any older people in Forfar were welcome to sign up for, regardless of their health or experience level. The only criteria was that they needed to be (or to become) library members and (after an open taster session) to commit to a block of four weekly sessions.

Voluntary Action Angus did some marketing and recruitment of the workshops to the community (using a flyer created by Luminate) and ANGUSAlive also helped to promote the opportunity. Overall, the response was very positive, with all 12 spaces across morning and afternoon sessions being filled.

The Lend + Mend Hub is a special facility at the rear of the library with six sewing machines and other resources intended to encourage DIY making and mending. For these sessions, Maureen wanted to utilise this resource and direct participants towards creative outcomes in the form of a banner or quilt display for the exhibition at the end of the project.

Participants (all female and aged 50+) have a range of experience and abilities. Some have sewn all their lives (one produces bags and purses for commercial sale) while others have relatively little experience of machine-sewing and are keen to improve their knowledge and skills. One participant was a machinist in a factory all her working life and was keen to pick up machine production skills which she hadn't used since retirement some years ago.

For today's session, the group will be sewing bunting flags, cut from a huge selection of colourful and patterned fabrics which Maureen has gathered together with help from one participant who has a large collection of fabrics. The group have got to grips with the sewing machines in previous sessions, so this week Maureen raises the bar a little by showing them how to thread the machines themselves with spools of coloured thread (a delicate process!). Soon a production line is established and flags of all colours and patterns are being finished for Maureen to pin in place on a long length of tape fabric. The bunting will be hung in the main library in order to lead visitors towards the art exhibition.

Maureen notes that this group of women have "*really gelled*" and while concentration at individual sewing machines is required at times, the overall feel of the session is social. Participants chat about all manner of topics as they cut and sew together, each contributing their completed bunting flags to a growing pile.



4. Partner and participant reflections

4.1 Experience

Feedback from the project partners on working with Luminate and the lead artist has been overwhelmingly positive. They particularly appreciated the flexibility and professionalism which was employed, and the way the creative sessions had been tailored to reflect their particular needs.

- It is clear from their feedback that communication and coaching skills are essential for a lead artist working in this way with their members.
- In addition, partners were impressed with the creative ideas and technical knowledge of materials which a professional artist brought to the project.
- This went above and beyond any previous projects they had been involved in and extended the threshold of what they had thought was possible to deliver in their spaces.

"This was the biggest group project we've ever done and it was brilliant from start to finish. "Some people created a drawing for a mosaic but didn't want to do any more. Some people did the whole thing, from drawing through to finished mosaic. Some people just wanted to stick the mosaic pieces on, but we all worked together to achieve the end result." Day Centre Manager

"Maureen was cracking to work with. She was great at fitting in and talking to the members. I don't think it would have worked so well if she hadn't that ability to adapt and coach them." Meeting Centre Manager

"It was nice having lots of different folk in the library and having conversations. A lot of contacts were made. Some people said 'oh, we thought libraries were quiet!' Not any more they're not!" Operational Lead, Forfar Library

"I enjoyed learning something and being part of a group. Apart from my choir most of the things I do now are just with one person so it was nice to be part of something. It's nice to be in company and to meet new people as well." Banner making participant

"Maureen was very knowledgeable but happy to admit if she didn't know something. She was a very open person and I liked her very much." Banner making participant

“Maureen didn’t force us to do anything we weren’t confident in doing. She was there to help if we needed help.” Banner making participant

Maureen also found Luminate and the partners supportive and professional from the outset. She felt the project brief from Luminate was clear without being proscriptive and that the fee offered was appropriate. She also appreciated the close support of the teams in each setting, who were welcoming and adapted where they could to help make delivery of the activities practicable in spaces not specifically intended for making art.

“I feel very much appreciated by Luminate. I think I’ve met all the staff now and I’ve had good feedback, which is nice. Communication has been straightforward. They’re on top of their game and really good to work with.” Lead artist

In hindsight, Maureen did find running full day activities (with a substantial volume of materials required) on three consecutive days quite draining, however she feels this was still the most effective way to manage the project delivery in the agreed timescale.

“It was really hard work, though nothing different to what I’ve done before when I was teaching. I’m fiercely independent and when people say ‘can I give you a hand with that?’ I say no, no! At Lochside it was the space that was difficult and the wee tables, though the staff were really helpful and re-arranged lunch service for me, which I hadn’t realised they were doing at first.”
Lead artist

4.2 Outcomes

From Luminate's perspective, the aim of building relationships in Angus and demonstrating good practice locally was born out by the pilot project.

- Partnerships have proven mutually beneficial, and the lead artist proved both very skilled and professional.
- Luminate's projects often include a sharing or performance at their close, however in this instance the team felt it was particularly beneficial that the shared exhibition of creative work took place in the library – a central, public, location with good accessibility and high public footfall. This was felt to amplify the achievements of participants and to grow awareness more widely in Forfar that older people with a range of abilities are more than capable of engaging in creative activities.

“Maureen did a brilliant job with the exhibition. The groups loved visiting the library and that experience of seeing their work on display. One of the family members connected to Lochside told me that people think those living with dementia can't do anything. There's a sense that once you have that label you're seen as having no cognitive ability to achieve anything. They were really chuffed that the work of the Lochside members was in the library for the public to see, to show them what people living with dementia can do.”

Anne Gallacher, Luminate

Although originally the intention had been to bring all three groups together for an exhibition launch event at the library, the practicalities of facilitating this given the different schedules of each group meant this wasn't feasible and so each group visited separately. Luminate team members all visited the exhibition on different days to align with when the three partners were visiting with their groups.

For the managers of the day care partners, working with Maureen exceeded their expectations, helping their members develop confidence, pride, and a shared sense of purpose which also initiated social interaction. One member of the day care centre was so pleased to see her mosaic displayed at the library that she took different people along on different days of the week to visit the exhibition.

“Maureen encouraged a few people to try art for the very first time. This project also sparked conversations, which meant we found out things about our members we didn't know.” Meeting centre manager

“When we started the project we had no idea or expectation that the end result would be so good, and it’s like that because we had an expert, an actual artist, helping us. They’ve got the experience to know what the outcome can be. We wouldn’t have attempted anything like that on our own.” Day centre manager

“Some of the men from Lochside walked over to the library for the exhibition and there was a bit of worry when they hadn’t turned up, but they did, all wearing bonnets and pointing their sticks at the work. That was fab to see.” Lead artist

“We took two groups down to the library to see their work and there was just a huge sense of pride that their work was on display. There’s a sense of achievement for members, that they’ve actually done that for themselves as a group. It’s given them a lot of confidence to try other things.” Day centre manager

Participants from the banner making sessions also reflected very positively on their personal outcomes from the experience. All of those interviewed said they had enjoyed the company of other participants, had their confidence boosted, learnt or refreshed practical skills, and enjoyed contributing to a wider creative outcome in the form of a collective sewn banner and a joint exhibition with the other groups.

“I felt a lot more confident at the end of it. I enjoyed meeting people and there was a mixture of us there, from some experts to some who hadn’t sewn since school.”

“My friend who went to the afternoon session, she also enjoyed it. She’s actually been back to the library since to make her own spectacle case.”

“I couldn’t have just gone in and used the machine on my own, so I made things I couldn’t have otherwise and I did learn from it. My goal is to make a pair of trousers, though I haven’t plucked up the courage to look for a pattern or get material yet. It’s given me the push I wanted.”

“I was very impressed by the final exhibition, not only what we had produced but also the other activities that had been on. I enjoyed it.”

Banner making participants

For lead artist Maureen, despite having extensive previous experience, this project boosted her confidence that as an older artist herself she still has the ability to lead creative activities for people with a range of needs and manage work across multiple settings with an exhibition outcome.

"I'm really glad I went for the opportunity. It gave me confidence. It made me think 'you can still do this to the standard that you want!'" Lead artist

Maureen has taken on new teaching work since this project, including a commission working with carers in Angus. She also hopes to sub-contract one of the participants from the banner making sessions to co-deliver a textile activity for the carers she'll be working with.

Although the three partner groups didn't convene for a shared exhibition launch, they all reported positively on seeing each other's work at the library and feeling part of a wider creative endeavour. For Lochside Connections, the experience of taking members up the road to the library led to further conversations about more regular engagement, and the group have since taken part in an intergenerational Book Bugs sessions with local toddlers.

Lochside Connections Facebook posts celebrating the shared exhibition and subsequent intergenerational event:



We absolutely loved visiting Forfar Library last week and seeing our masterpieces proudly on display! 🎨✨

A huge well done to all our Wednesday members – your artwork was truly stunning, and you should feel incredibly proud of what you’ve achieved.

And a very special thank you to [Luminate: Scotland’s creative ageing organisation](#) and local artist Maureen Crosbie for making this all possible. We’ve had the most wonderful time working with you and couldn’t have asked for a better experience! 💛



We had such a wonderful time celebrating Intergenerational Week with our joint Bookbug sessions alongside Forfar Library 📖💛

A huge thank you to everyone who came along and took part. It was truly heartwarming to see the connection and engagement between young and old—sharing stories, songs, smiles, and special moments together.

These sessions are such a lovely reminder of how powerful bringing generations together can be. We’re so grateful to be part of a community that embraces these opportunities with such enthusiasm.

The centres have also benefitted from the pilot with the short-term legacy of rich resources in the form of leftover art materials. At the day care centre in particular, there are active plans to make more mosaics now that knowledge of and confidence in the process has been embedded within the staff team.

All of the banner-making participants interviewed wanted to keep up their creative participation. For some, sewing was their primary interest, but others liked the idea of trying their hand at new or experimental techniques.

“I would love to do something new in the future. Calligraphy is something I’d love to do, but I’m open to anything really.”

“I’d be interested in doing some hand crafts, though I’m happy with the sewing and crocheting – that sort of thing. I don’t think I’d go in for mosaics.”

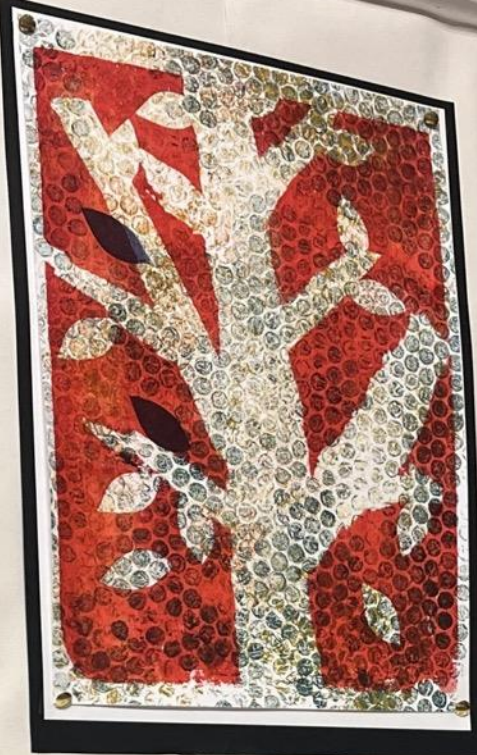
Banner making participants





Creative Ageing Exhibition, Forfar Library, March 2026.





Welcome to the Forfar Creative Ageing Exhibition

These artworks have been created by older people collaborating with Angus artist Maureen Crosbie.

The sessions have been taking place here at Forfar Library, as well as at Lochside Connections Dementia Meeting Centre and the Deirdre Knight Day Centre.

To find out more about the project, please pick up a copy of the exhibition leaflet.








4. Learning and insight

The creative ageing pilot project in Forfar was well planned, designed, and delivered. Maureen Crosbie worked with all three partners in a mutually supportive way to engage older people with a wide range of abilities and needs in artistic work which expanded their self-belief and confidence. Staff and volunteers from each partner were enthusiastic and keen to do more, laying a solid foundation for Luminate's expansion of creative ageing activity in Angus over the next two years.

4.1 Aim: Have a positive impact on the social connectedness, engagement and emotions of participants

All of the activities delivered had an in-built sociability and for the banner-making participants at Forfar Library the desire to meet new people was intrinsic to their motivation. In the case of both the Deirdre Knight Centre and Forfar Library, the main creative outputs from the activities were collective efforts made possible by the lead artist's vision and oversight. Participants and the professionals/volunteers who work with them reported learning new knowledge and skills in the project, taking pride in their achievements, and having their expectations as to what they could produce surpassed. On the researcher visits to the creative sessions, the engagement and commitment from participants were evident.

4.2 Aim: Explore the impact of taking a local residency approach to artist-led work in Angus

The impact of placing an experienced local artist in established organisations in Forfar was considerable and highly regarded by the project partners. Maureen Crosbie was able to bring a wealth of experience and confidence to influence the outcomes of the activities which surpassed partners in-house capabilities. Her abilities both as a practical lead (planning activities, sourcing materials) and as a facilitator, teacher, and communicator helped to ensure that partners and participants had a hugely positive creative learning experience. This was hard work for the artist and while they felt well-supported and recompensed by Luminate, it is vital that this strong support is maintained and developed in the larger programme, to avoid the potential risk of commissioned artists overworking and/or experiencing burn out.

4.3 Aim: Build new community partner relationships in Angus, in preparation for Luminate's planned larger-scale programme

Through this project, Luminate has worked effectively both with strategic partners (Angus Health & Social Care Partnership, Voluntary Action Angus) and local partners in Forfar (Lochside Connections, Deirdre Knight Centre, Forfar Library). All report positively on their experience of working with Luminate and wish to collaborate further in the future. In the pilot project, careful selection of partners enabled Luminate to engage the kind of participants it specifically aims to reach (older people with a range of abilities/needs, without regular access to professionally-led creative activities). Not every partner Luminate works with in the expanded project may be as skilled or supportive as those who participated in the pilot, however the presence of a Luminate project lead on the ground in Angus is likely to mitigate this risk and to

further embed partnership working. Through the pilot, Luminate also succeeded in raising awareness of the partners and their work with the other partners involved and in some cases initiating new bilateral partnerships – an approach which could be scaled up across the forthcoming larger programme.

4.4 Aim: *Learn about the opportunities and challenges of an informal social-prescribing project model, with a particular focus on increasing the social connectedness of participants*

The relatively short duration of the pilot project meant that insights into the broad topic of social-prescribing were limited, though the widespread positive feedback from partners and participants suggests that clearly opportunities exist for Luminate to achieve impact in this space. As Luminate's programme in Angus expands, there may be opportunities to work with local Link Workers to trial social prescription referrals to Luminate creative activities. If this transpires, planning time and discussion should be devoted to designing meaningful evaluation objectives to test this model, including the possibility of using longitudinal measures to better understand the impact of sustained creative social-prescribing over a sustained period.

"We'd be delighted to do further work with Luminate in any way, shape, or form because it's been a very positive experience." Operational Lead, Forfar Library

"We definitely want to be involved in any future opportunities. Some of our members talked about sewing because they were very inspired by the other group's work in the exhibition at the library. We'd be involved in anything we could!" Day centre manager

"We're really keen to do more as this (pilot) has worked really well. In fact it's been wonderful." Meeting centre manager

