

Live Well Year 3 Evaluation Report

National Museums NI

MRNI Research
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Contents		Page
Executive Summary		4
Chapter One	Introduction	7
Chapter Two	Targeting Social Disadvantage and Exclusion	12
Chapter Three	Enriching the Lives of Older People	16
Chapter Four	Active Ageing: Accelerating Ideas and Good Practice	38
	<i>Model of Good Practice Summary</i>	53
Chapter Five	Active Ageing within National Museums NI	54
Chapter Six	Public Policy Context for Future Programming	59
Chapter Seven	Conclusions and Recommendations	61
<i>Appendix 1</i>	List of Participant Groups	70
<i>Appendix 2</i>	Participants Profile: Equality indicators	73

Executive Summary

In the past ten years National Museums NI has pioneered a series of **innovative programmes on active ageing** - Live and Learn, Treasure House and Live Well - which have successfully used museum collections as a stimulus for programmes for older people suffering some form of deprivation.

Live Well has performed exceptionally well in fulfilling its stated aims and objectives. It has **impacted significantly on people and communities**, and has been a catalyst for the development of active ageing programmes across the museum sector.

It has delivered overwhelmingly positive results, **improving the access of disadvantaged older people to cultural engagement** and learning, through 6 week outreach programmes and supported museum visits.

The **use of museum collections** and artefacts offers a deeply enriching and unique cultural learning experience.

Staff have been skilful in the ways they have designed sessions to balance outcomes to support social relationships, wellbeing and intellectual engagement. Programme **design and delivery** have been **of a consistently high standard**.

Live Well has **proactively recruited disadvantaged groups** that suffer social or economic deprivation, rural isolation or mental or physical health conditions.

Active engagement is key. There have been 8,823 engagements (an engagement being one person actively engaged in one session); 567 sessions have been delivered to 93 groups. Fifty-nine museum open afternoons have provided a follow-up activity to encourage independent visits.

Satisfaction levels with the programme have been **exceptionally high** with 99% of participants saying they enjoyed the programme and 98% that they learned new things.

For isolated older people Live Well provides a **welcoming, positive and stimulating space**. 99% of participants reported feeling more positive after the session and proud of what they had achieved and 96% said they felt more confident.

Participants placed great value on how taking part had enhanced existing relationships within groups. The variety of activities created **opportunities for new conversations**.

The visits to museum sites deepened the social interaction, and the open afternoons brought older people together from different communities and cultures.

For many participants the opportunity to try out new skills and experiment with new materials in the **creative sessions** was hugely rewarding and satisfying.

The relationships forged between Live Well staff and participants were identified as a critical factor in the success of the programme in **boosting the confidence** and self-esteem of older people.

The Live Well workers were skilful in **adapting to the needs of different groups** with consultees sharing many examples of how people with disabilities – some of them severe - had overcome barriers to engage fully and positively in the programme.

The inclusive model of learning, **drawing on the knowledge of participants**, adds to the quality of the educational experience, increasing the self-esteem and wellbeing of participants and strengthening connections within groups.

For disadvantaged older people, often with negative experiences of education, Live Well has provided a very **accessible and enjoyable** way to learn.

Even though Live Well programmes only last 6 weeks, they demonstrate the importance of learning in strengthening the mental health and self-esteem of older people. They have **opened doors to new learning and skills** and helped reignite existing interests and skills, acting as a catalyst for individuals and groups and inspiring greater cultural engagement.

Through Live Well National Museums NI has contributed to **improving the health and wellbeing** of socially disadvantaged people and communities and encouraged communities to see museums as a resource they can enjoy.

National Museums NI's commitment to supporting active ageing has allowed it to develop **a skilled team** capable of creating relevant and enjoyable programmes and to increase understanding of active ageing among a wider range of staff.

National Museums NI has pioneered this work across the museum sector. The dissemination activities have made a significant contribution to raising awareness and **deepening dialogue on how museums can meet the needs of older people** in an ageing society.

The **partnership with local museums has directly enhanced expertise** and resources and built a shared ownership of the **Live Well model as a benchmark for active ageing programmes, offering a tried and tested approach** in which older people are valued and supported to reach their full potential.

National Museums NI is well positioned to capitalise on the internal and external policy contexts to consolidate its role in the delivery of active ageing programmes. Internally there is a renewed **focus on social impact as a strategic priority** and a commitment to strengthening participatory programming. Externally it is well placed to contribute to a wide range of public policy priorities and health and wellbeing frameworks.

Findings from this evaluation affirm the **unique nature of museums and their capacity to inspire learning** and offer a sense of belonging and identity through engagement with objects and collections. Museums have a civic responsibility as custodians of our culture and heritage to ensure that these are accessible to all.

Live Well has helped **disadvantaged older people feel more positively about themselves, their creative talents, their knowledge and understanding**. Continued support for Live Well will enable National Museums NI and the Department for Communities to create a much more optimistic narrative in which older people thrive on creative and intellectual engagement and become enthusiastic advocates for art and culture in our society.

Chapter One Introduction

This report presents the findings of an evaluation undertaken to assess the impact of the Live Well programme, commissioned by National Museums NI. This chapter details Live Well programme outcomes and the scope and methodology of the evaluation.

1.1 The Live Well Programme: Aim, Objectives and Outcomes

The Live Well programme is a community outreach programme, primarily for older people. It represents a key strand in the work of National Museums NI in supporting active ageing, offering social, cultural and educational engagement to disadvantaged older people. National Museums NI has a successful track record in the delivery of active ageing programmes, having established the Live and Learn programme (2009 – 2015) and the Treasure House programme (2013-2019).

National Museums NI, in partnership with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) launched the Live Well programme in September 2016 with three years funding (£600,000) from the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF), under its *Accelerating Ideas* funding stream. National Museums NI is the lead partner in the programme.

The underpinning rationale for *Accelerating Ideas* funding is to act as a catalyst to support people and organisations in growing innovative ideas and practice. Live Well has two main strands: one is working actively with groups of disadvantaged older people; the second is sharing that practice and 'accelerating ideas'.

The **aim** of the Live Well programme is *to enhance the wellbeing of disadvantaged older people through museum programmes.*

The key **objectives** are:

1. To engage more disadvantaged older people with museums.
2. To develop a museum programme that has collections, creativity and active engagement at its core.
3. To offer participants opportunities for engaging with the *5 Ways to Wellbeing*¹: Keep learning, take notice, be active, connect and give.
4. To create a programme that can be replicated in other museum services
5. To evidence the value of museum programmes in enhancing the wellbeing of older people.

Live Well has a strong focus on **outcomes** for participants:

1. Older people will be more socially connected to one another and the wider community.
2. Older people will experience positive impacts on their wellbeing through active engagement.
3. Older people will become more intellectually and culturally engaged through museums.
4. The museum sector will be further skilled up to meet the needs of older people.

1.2 An Outreach Programme of Active Engagement for Older People

The Live Well programme is a **collections-based outreach programme**, which was delivered in local community venues throughout Northern Ireland from 2016 to 2019. Participants engaged in a six week programme on a wide range of themes inspired by the collections of National Museums NI, ranging from visual arts (local and renaissance painters), to historical periods (the Georgian era) as well as local history, traditions and seasonal customs.

¹ *The 5 Ways to Wellbeing are a set of evidence-based actions that individuals can undertake to enhance personal wellbeing. The model advocates five key actions around the themes of social relationships, physical activity, awareness, learning, and giving. Since their publication in 2008, the 5 Ways have been used by health promotion agencies, school curriculums, and local councils.*

Active engagement is key. The sessions include object handling, traditional and contemporary arts and crafts, reminiscence, music and drama. The collections provide a catalyst for older people to share their views, experiences and memories of history and art as well as participating in creative activities such as ceramics, candle making and decoupage. Sessions last about two hours and are facilitated by Live Well staff with some additional input from specialist artists.

A facilitated visit to National Museums NI with transport provided is a core part of the programme. Following the six weekly sessions, participants are invited to attend monthly Live Well Open Afternoons at the Ulster Museum (UM) or the Ulster Folk and Transport Museums (UFTM), to encourage and inspire them to become independent visitors.

Four part-time staff are currently employed by the programme. The programme had two distinct phases. In the first two years the focus was on the delivery of community outreach programmes to older people and the development of the partnership with TWAM.

Year 3 had an additional emphasis on the **dissemination and sharing of learning and practice** with museum sector stakeholders. A core element of this work was a peer-working programme with six local museums across Northern Ireland in Downpatrick, Derry/Londonderry, Banbridge, Ballymena and Belfast.

1.3 Monitoring Mechanisms and Phase One Evaluation

Progress on Live Well outputs and outcomes has been regularly monitored through feedback from programme participants and group leaders at the end of each programme. This data was submitted annually to NLCF.

An evaluation of Phase One delivery (2016-18) was completed in December 2018² with the engagement of almost 300 consultees. It documents the significant and successful impact of Live Well on participants and group leaders in both Northern Ireland and Tyne and Wear.

² *Independent evaluation of Phase one of Live Well, Evaluation Expertise (2018)*

National Museums NI has commissioned this second independent evaluation to provide a more in-depth assessment of the programme's qualitative outcomes and its impact in year three, as the current programme funding comes to an end. A parallel year three evaluation has been commissioned by TWAM.

1.4 Phase Two Evaluation Aim, Scope and Methodology

The aim of this evaluation is to investigate and analyse the impact of the Live Well Programme between September 2018 and June 2019 on two key areas:

- Programme impact on participants: the extent to which engagement in the programme improved social connectedness, health and wellbeing and cultural engagement for older people
- Programme impact on museum sector stakeholders: the extent to which the museum sector in Northern Ireland is more skilled up to meet the needs of older people as a result of Live Well dissemination activities

The evaluation also includes an examination of the broader significance and contribution of active ageing programmes to National Museums NI as part of its work to strengthen social cohesion and inclusion through engagement in learning and creativity for disadvantaged communities.

The methodology used to collect data for this evaluation included documentary review, analysis of monitoring and evaluation data and consultation with programme participants, National Museums NI staff and volunteers and programme partners.

Qualitative data was collated through focus groups and face to face and telephone interviews with 107 consultees:

- 8 focus groups with 86 programme participants representing a wide variety of socially and economically disadvantaged groups across Northern Ireland
- 9 face to face interviews with: group leaders representing community and charitable organisations (4); Live Well programme staff, National Museums NI Learning Officer and National Museums NI Head of Learning (4); Live Well programme volunteers (2)
- 8 telephone interviews with: National Museums NI Head of Collections, Head of Audience Development and a museum visitor guide; Local museum partners (4); TWAM Live Well Programme Partners
- One observation session at an Open Afternoon programme workshop for participants (Leonardo Da Vinci Workshop May 2019)
- Participation in the Live Well Sharing Practice Seminar May 2019

Findings from the analysis of this data are presented in the following chapters.

Chapter Two Targeting Social Disadvantage and Exclusion

Prior to examining the impact of Live Well, this chapter considers how well Live Well performed in engaging its target audience – older people marginalised as a result of poverty, ill health and social isolation. It draws on consultation with programme staff and key findings from internal monitoring data.

2.1 A commitment to supporting people and communities most in need

Programme partners adopted three key criteria to select participant groups, guided by a broad definition of social disadvantage and exclusion. These targeted:

- Older people facing a range of challenges such as poor health, sensory loss, limited mobility, poverty, social isolation or bereavement, disadvantage not being simply defined by social class, economic factors or educational attainment
- People aged over 50 (based on World Health Organisation definition)
- Communities and people most in need (based on NLCF priorities)

This approach has worked well. Ninety-three community based groups engaged in Live Well, benefiting older people facing multiple levels of disadvantage (Appendix 1). All groups were selected on the basis of one or more indicators of disadvantage, such as social deprivation, rural isolation, physical and mental health issues and disability. Groups also included older people facing particular life challenges such as bereavement and caring responsibilities as well as people suffering from dementia, acquired brain injury and stroke survivors. Many of the groups were located in communities with the highest level of deprivation in Northern Ireland such as inner city areas in North and West Belfast and Derry-Londonderry.

Almost half of the groups (46%) were engaged in the programme on the basis of social/ economic deprivation or social or rural isolation. Similarly, 47% of Live Well groups supported participants with a mental or physical health condition such as stroke survivors, people with acquired brain injury or mobility problems.

Live Well staff worked hard to ensure the programme delivered on its goal of targeting people and communities most in need, engaging with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations, community development staff from local councils as well as charitable health and social care organisations. They felt that the time and effort had ensured that the programme engaged older people across a wide spectrum of disadvantage and social exclusion.

'I can see the investment we made now – we were wise to target and not cast the net too widely. We have chosen to engage with groups who are genuinely disadvantaged and in need– rural groups and inner city groups'.

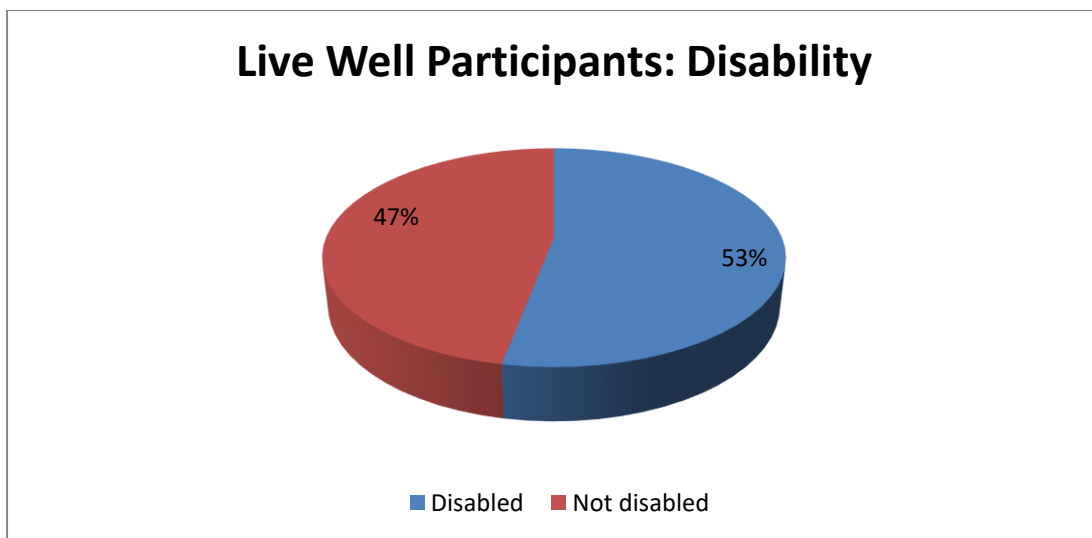
Staff talked about the value of using different approaches for recruitment to achieve this outcome including networking with broad based regional organisations as well as more informal mechanisms such as word of mouth. They felt that the latter approach worked well in reaching groups who were *under the radar* – often the more rural groups who didn't have a high level of funding and support.

Programme staff also described the challenges of attracting the most vulnerable and excluded people in society such as homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers. Whilst staff made consistent efforts to engage these groups and delivered a number of one-off events, they were unable to engage these participants in a longer programme.

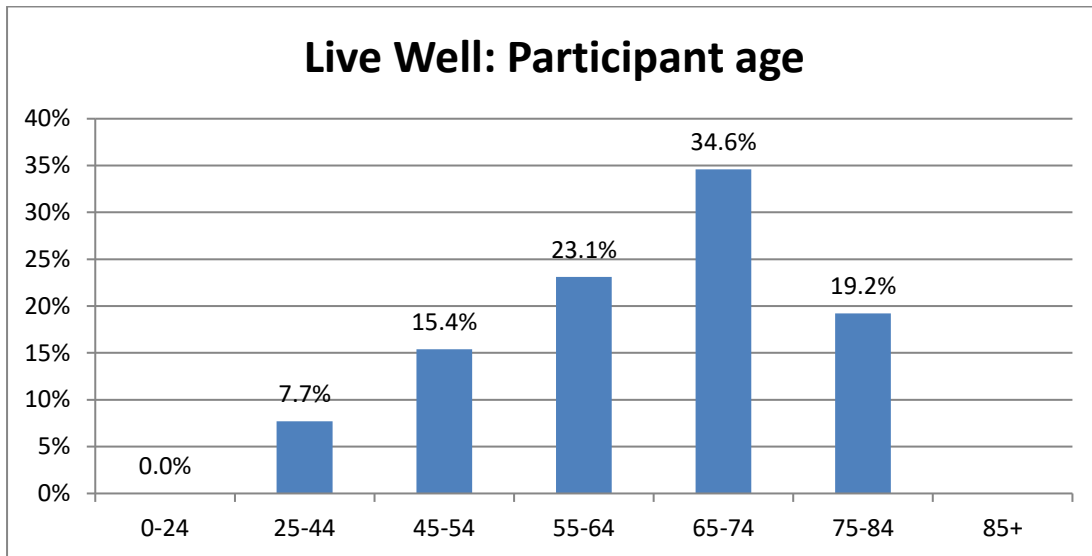
2.2 Building a significant level of engagement for disadvantaged older people

The programme has attracted a high level of participant engagement with 8,823 engagements in Northern Ireland over the three year period (an engagement being one person actively involved in one session). Year one delivered 2,730 engagements, year two 3,502 and in year three there were 2,591 (engagement targets for year 3 were reduced because of the focus on dissemination). 567 sessions were delivered as a result of the Live Well programme as well as 59 Open Afternoon workshops.

Looking at the reach of Live Well in terms of discrimination and equality indicators, Appendix 2 provides a profile of participants across gender, disability, ethnic background, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation and community background. In terms of the gender breakdown of participants, 53% were female and 47% were male; just over half of participants (53%) were non-disabled, with a high proportion of participants – 47% suffering some degree of physical or mental disability, underlining the capacity of the programme to target disadvantage effectively.



Live Well also delivered on reaching its core audience of older people with a high proportion of participants aged 65 to 84 years of age (54%) and a further 23% of participants aged 55- 64.



Chapter Three **Living Well: Enriching the Lives of Older People**

Chapter Three presents the substantive findings on the extent to which engagement in Live Well has improved the lives of older people. It examines the ways in which the programme has helped to strengthen social connections, health and wellbeing and enhanced cultural engagement and learning for older people. These findings are based on consultations with programme participants, programme staff, National Museums NI staff and programme partners.

3.1 Building Social Connections for Older People

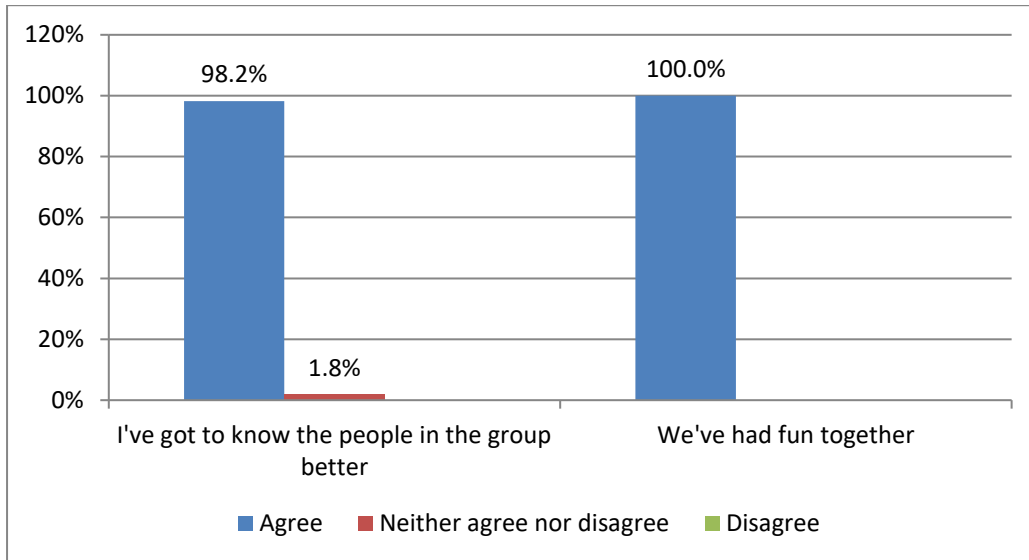
Two fifths of older people in the U.K. (about 3.9 million) say the television is their main company³. Social isolation and loneliness are common problems amongst older people, and they can have a profoundly detrimental effect on many aspects of their health and wellbeing. A key goal of the Live Well programme has been to build friendships between older people and strengthen social interaction in local communities through engagement in the programme.

Data from internal monitoring and feedback from evaluation consultees shows overwhelmingly positive results on the capacity of Live Well to improve social interaction and connections for older people. The programme was highly rated by participants in their post programme questionnaires⁴. Nearly all participants - 98% - felt they had got to know people better in the group both during the sessions, as well as having social engagement beyond sessions. All participants felt that they had had fun together.

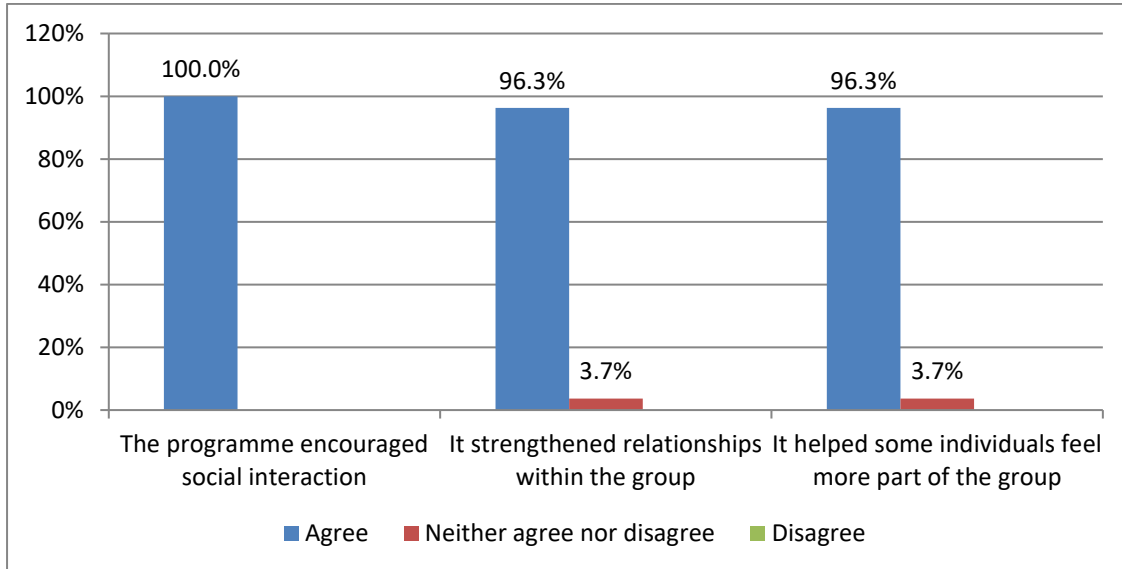
³ Age, U.K. 2014. *Evidence Review: Loneliness in Later Life*. London: Age UK.

⁴ The data from post programme questionnaires represents feedback from 226 participants and 29 group leaders.

Live Well: Greater Social Cohesion and Social Connections



These views were echoed in the ratings of the programme by group leaders all of whom felt that Live Well had encouraged social interaction and given participants something new to talk about with family and friends. 97.5 % of group leaders observed ways in which Live Well strengthened relationships in group and helped some individuals feel more part of the group.



Reducing Social Isolation

The feedback from focus groups told a similar story. Many participants placed great value on the ways in which being a part of the Live Well programme had enhanced the relationships within groups and that a great sense of camaraderie had developed.

Participants consistently talked about how enjoyable the programme was on a week to week basis and that they felt that it motivated people to come out and helped to keep the group together. One community centre co-ordinator described the programme as offering a *life-line* to older people strengthening the wider networks in the community.

'Everyone gets a chance to socialise. The programme has helped to maintain the existing friendships and create new ones. It is definitely helping to breakdown a sense of isolation'.

This programme was particularly beneficial for older people living on their own and for those coping with significant loss such as bereavement.

'Live Well is especially good if you are living on your own and for widowed pensioners – most people find it hard to go out on their own but a group like this gives you confidence. It is that combination of friendship and activities – you don't feel left out in the group and we all help each other out'.



What is also interesting is that while participants usually were part of an established group where relationships already exist, the Live Well programme has added value to the level and nature of the friendships and social interaction. For participants and group leaders, the bonds in groups became closer, with people able to open up and connect in different ways as a result of the combination of activities. The collections-based sessions stimulated quite new

conversations and the sharing of past experiences.

'Although we have been meeting for years and most people know each other, being a part of Live Well was being a part of something different, different stories were shared and we learned different things together.'

Shared interests and experiences from Live Well have impacted on the longer-term relationships amongst older people.

'What I noticed was that everyone was really interested in the topics. It created memorable experiences beyond that moment and then spurred on other conversations and opened up the dialogue not just about that individual photograph or object'. (Group Leader)

Another group leader of participants with acquired brain injury (ABI) highlighted how the collection on Georgian life gave participants a real sense of fun and pleasure.

'I could see how engaged people were - people really wanted to try on the costumes. You could see the joy and fun in our guys. There was a lot of laughing, trying the costumes on and everyone taking photos and sharing photos'.

The museum visits also provided a different opportunity to strengthen friendships between participants and many felt that the group experience of the visit was a rich social and educational experience.

'I have gone independently to the museum but going as a group we can draw each other's attention to different details and that sparks different conversations'.

Open Afternoons provided regular opportunities for individuals from different Live Well groups to come together and meet new people in a welcoming space.

'You can really see the social interaction growing at the Open Afternoons when you have different combinations of people coming together. It gives people a sense of belonging to the museum and it's a nice way for people to maintain the relationships with other participants and with museum staff'.

Open Afternoons were usually active workshops limited to about 20 participants, which helped to ensure that people interacted with each other. An exception was the summer Garden Party at Cultra, which attracted over 250 people who enjoyed an afternoon of music, gardening, flower arranging, candle making and weaving demonstrations, which one group described as a *'great celebration event'*.



The involvement of the group leaders in the sessions also helped to broaden their relationships with group members and deepen their understanding of older people living in their local communities. Live Well helped strengthen cross community relationships - one example of this is the engagement of two women's centres in inner city Belfast in a joint programme.

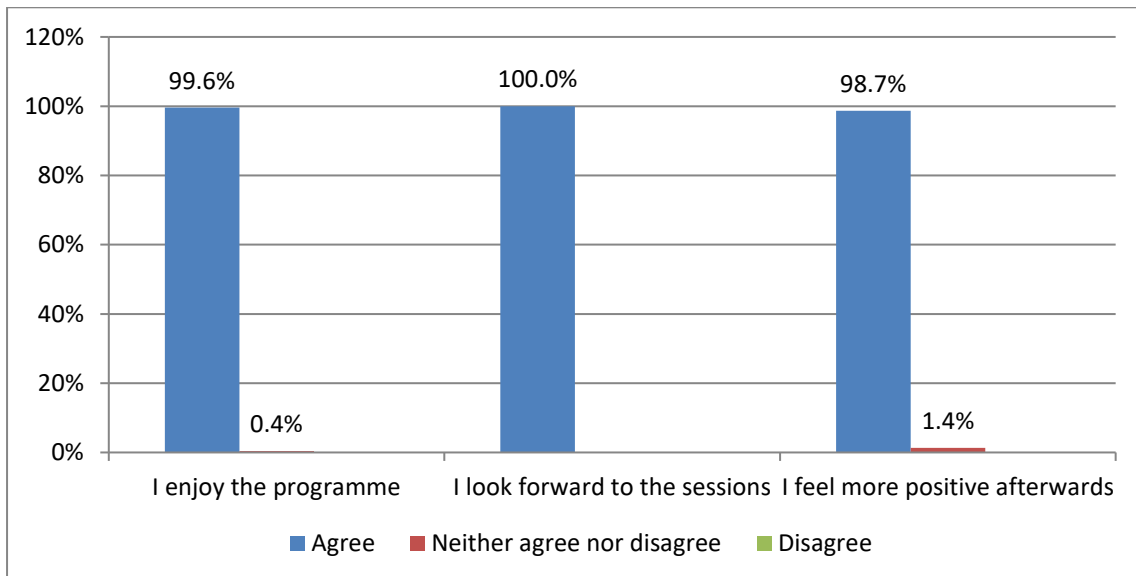
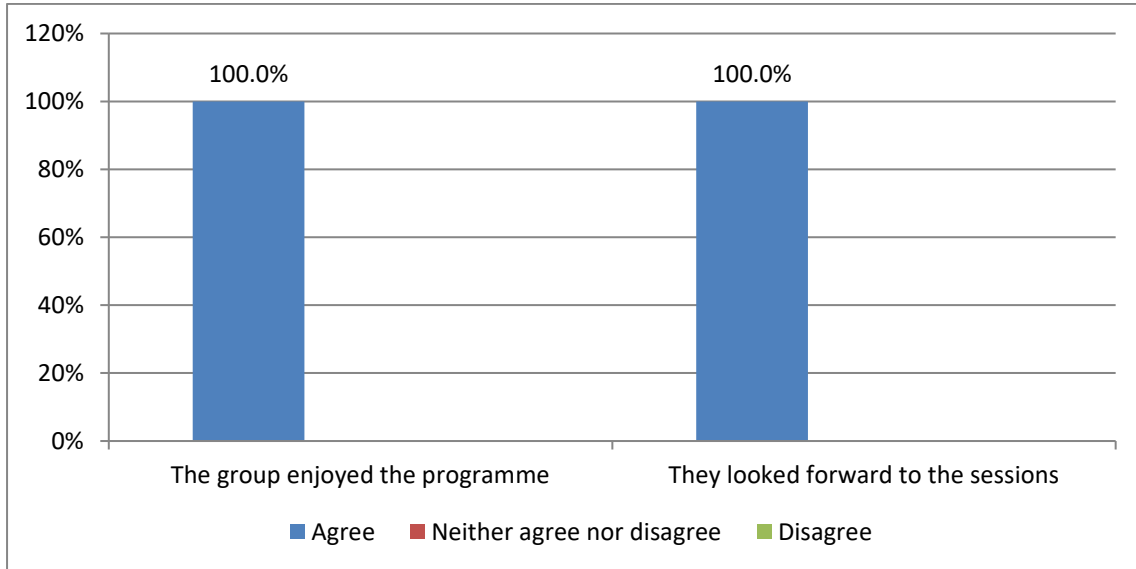
'You understand that we all have the same problems. You can see both sides - we are fighting for the same things - trying to survive. If you are lonely it doesn't matter where you are from'.

The programme has also strengthened community networks helping Live Well participants from other nationalities and ethnic communities to connect with each other and the wider community.

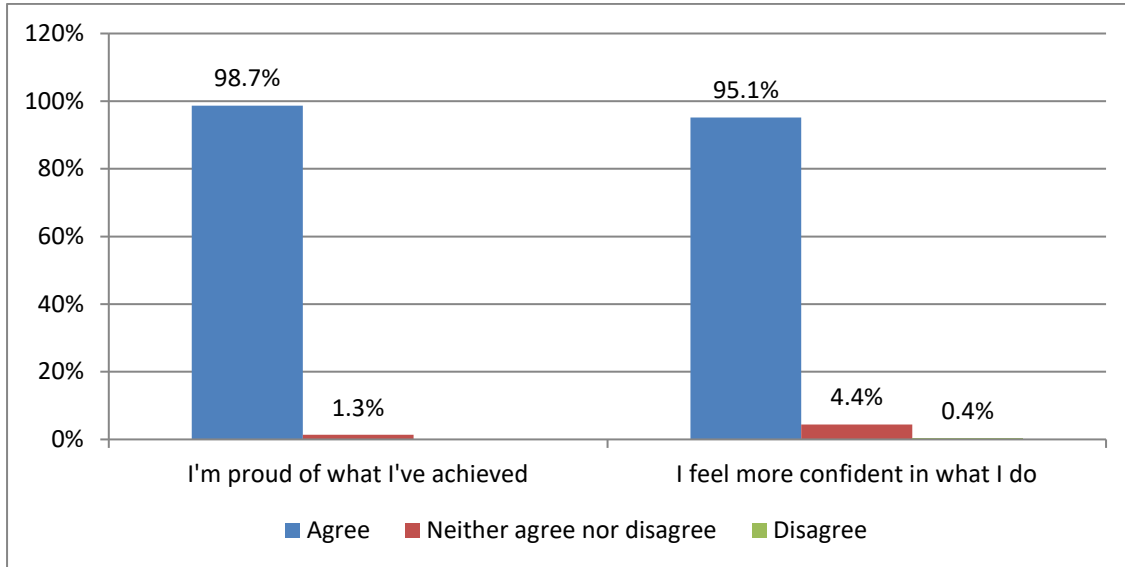
3.2 Making people feel positive, confident and engaged

Many participants and group leaders consulted rated the positive impact of the programme on the health and wellbeing of participants as one of its key achievements.

Internal evaluation data from post programme questionnaires indicates consistently high ratings for Live Well in impacting positively on the health and wellbeing of older people. Levels of participant satisfaction with the programme were almost 100% across all indicators with all participants indicating they had enjoyed programme and looked forward to the sessions.



99% of participants reported feeling more positive afterwards and were proud of what they had achieved, whilst 96% of participants felt more confident.



Data from group leaders on participant impact mirrors the results from participants with average ratings of 98% for enjoyment, building confidence, satisfaction and sense of achievement.

Feedback from focus groups and one to one interviews provided a deeper exploration of the more specific ways in which Live Well has supported older people to overcome and manage a variety of challenging physical and mental health and wellbeing conditions.

For participants suffering from depression as a result of social isolation or bereavement, or for those suffering from dementia or with caring responsibilities, the programme has provided a welcoming, positive and nurturing space.

Several participants described the importance of coming to the Live Well group in helping them cope more effectively with the pressure of caring for a spouse.

'My husband is in a nursing home and before this group I was lost. At first I felt guilty because I was enjoying myself but now I join in and talk now'.

'My husband is not well and I am in most nights. It gives you something to come out to ... you get dressed, put on your make-up and come out and know that you are learning something'.

Older people suffering from depression described the ways in which being a part of the programme helped to lift and lighten their mood.

'I suffer from depression and it got me out of the house. I was always happier after leaving here. You need something to motivate you – it is the combination of the people running it and the things we do. It was brilliant for me'.

Even though Live Well is a short programme lasting only 6 weeks, many consultees reiterated the importance of older people having opportunities to be in a learning environment as a critical factor in maintaining their mental health and building their confidence.

'It takes your mind off things otherwise you would be sitting in the house looking at the four walls. You can begin to feel yourself useful again – it makes us realise you can do things and you are not as daft as you think you are.'

For some participants, it was the creative engagement offered by the programme that provided a therapeutic and healing space in which people could express their loss and strengthen emotional wellbeing.

'I lost my husband and I lost a son. When we decorated the ceramic tiles I represented them as doves. The programme got them framed and I have it sitting in my bedroom and can look at it every morning. If you are bereaved – it gives you a lift'.

Several participants enjoyed the calmness that the creative activities provided as an antidote to everyday life.

'I find it a very peaceful group. It gives me an hour to do something creative - to forget about what else is going on and escape from normal life'.

'A calmness comes over you (doing the crafts) ...it does your morale good. If you are in bad form the programme makes you go out and brightens you up'.

The creative sessions also provided older people with a chance to try out different crafts and learn new skills in a safe and supportive environment as well as helping to strengthen bonds and a sense of belonging to the group.

'We had lots of fun and laughter in our craft sessions. There was no requirement to be a master crafter - it was about just coming and having a go. We interacted and helped each other - there was no pressure to turn out amazing things and no judgement. They didn't award points...we had a laugh about our efforts and shared our skills, knowledge and strengths'.

For many participants the opportunity to try out new skills and experiment with new materials in the creative sessions was hugely rewarding and satisfying, both in terms of the process and the results. *'I never thought I had a piece of art in me'* was a comment typical of many participants and they took great pride in describing what they had achieved, whether in ceramics, felting, copper pointing or candle making.

Programme staff and local museum staff commented on the way that participants grew in confidence and self-esteem from week to week.

'Often it is about the mind set - when people start they will say I am not the creative one, I can't do anything with my hands - I will just sit and watch and make the tea. But with encouragement, they become involved. One participant with low vision was quite stressed at the beginning but by the end of the session she achieved exactly what she wanted to do. That was the boost she needed - to realise she didn't need to be perfect - she just had to give it a go'.

One group leader observed how her members went away *'with a real sense of self-worth... it was such a boost to their self-esteem to be able to know that they could try out different things and succeed'*.

Live Well was described by one group working with people with disabilities as *'a project very much geared to their needs and understanding'*. Consultees shared many examples of how people with disabilities – some of them severe - had overcome barriers to engage fully and positively in the programme, with encouragement from staff and volunteers.

'There was one woman who only had the use of one arm and loved crafting before her stroke but had not done anything since. With encouragement and some practice, she realised she could do felting again – and it was a real achievement and milestone for her'. (Programme worker)

'There was a participant with learning difficulties – she didn't communicate easily with people and could be quite insular. But in Live Well she opened up and on the visit to the museum she was totally joyful and communicative. The group leader could not believe the positive change in her'. (Volunteer)

The relationships forged between Live Well staff and participants were identified as a critical factor in the successful impact of the programme in boosting the confidence and self-esteem of older people. Participants from the ABI group were in no doubt about the contribution of the Live Well worker to their experience of the programme and the sensitivity and skill she displayed in supporting the wellbeing and learning of the group.

'The relationship with SC⁵ was very important... we really took to her. It sometimes takes us a little longer to process the information and she was so patient with us. It was so important to us that she went at our speed. We loved the variety of the programme – she made it all so interesting'.

'SC was brilliant at setting the pace and made everyone very comfortable... that helped a lot and helped to get us all involved and everyone spoke out'.

Other participants highlighted the ways in which programme staff encouraged and supported them as women.

⁵ SC is used to represent Live Well staff members throughout the report, the four workers being Suzanne Duncan, Cathy Hanna, Susan Kelly and Sharon McKibbin.

'I never thought I would be able to speak out in public. Being a part of this group has brought me out of myself and more assertive. SC encouraged you to express yourself - she mingled with everybody'.

Another group from a rural community echoed the positive role of the workers

'As a rurally isolated group, for us this was a real success - we basically had a full group every week which is unusual. SC made us all so welcome and she was very relaxed, encouraged everyone and helped us relax and everyone contributed. We looked forward to it every week- she always had a surprise for us'.

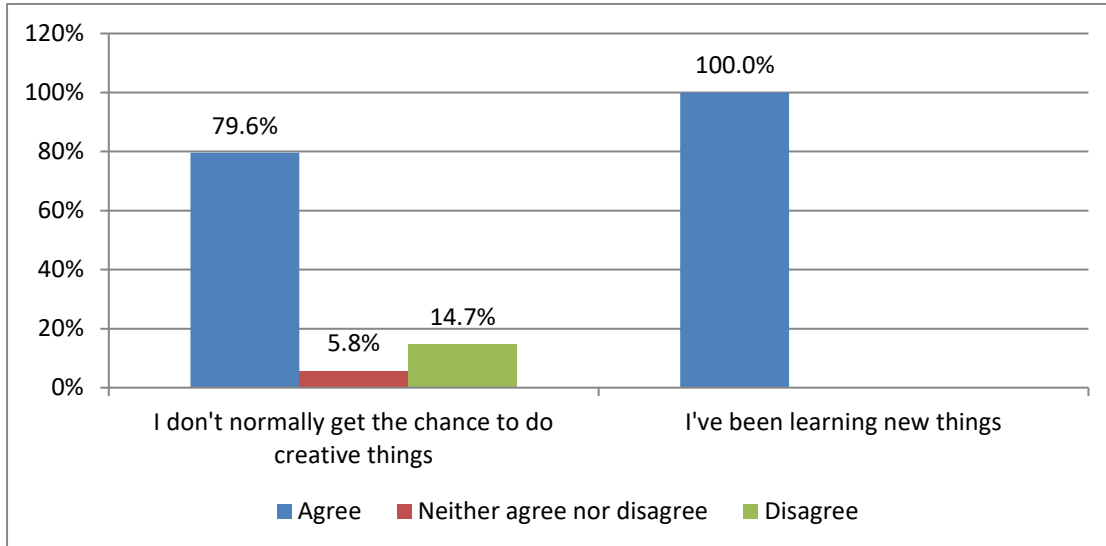
While participants rightly identified the role of the Live Well workers in the success of the programme, it is clear that the *surprise* element of the content and the variety and stimulus of the museum collections were also critical factors the impact of Live Well.

3.3 Keeping Your Mind Alive and Bringing History to Life

'I was able to socialise, learn new skills, and rekindle my interest in history. The local history and customs we were told about have all been passed on to children and grandchildren. Members of my family have visited both the Folk Museum and the Ulster Museum because I raved so much about them'.

Participants talked about many ways in which the Live Well programme had enriched their intellectual and cultural engagement and stressed the necessity of continuing to learn to active ageing. One group member described the programme as *'a total learning experience - it keeps your mind alive'*.

Live Well as a programme for learning was highly rated in internal evaluation data which highlighted the *new* learning opportunities it offered. 100% of participants and group leaders felt participants had engaged in new learning as a result of the programme.



This is important given that both participants and group leaders recognised the limited opportunities for participants to be involved in cultural activities: 80% of participants felt that they normally didn't have the chance to do creative things; and 96% of group leaders felt their groups had limited opportunities to be involved in cultural activities. Also of significance for Live Well in terms of progression, was the finding from questionnaires that 82% of participants reported that they hadn't been to a museum in the last year.

Many participants enjoyed learning about history, art, culture and local traditions, some because it helped them reconnect with their roots, others because they learned new things.

'Live Well helped me find out more about the history of Belfast in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and where my grandparents came from. I was very impressed with the history of the Shankill and Falls Road ...and loved going back and learning about the street games and traditions'.

'I was very interested in the hiring fairs in Comber- I come from an urban background - it was nice to learn about that local rural history'.

Many older people cited the creative activities and new skills they developed and their sense of accomplishment as the highlight for them.

'You think you are great because you have done something you didn't think you could do. I thought doing the crafts was hard but when I did it I felt good about myself - we made sheep broaches, Easter rabbits with pompoms, and earrings in Suffragette colours'.

'It gave me the confidence to do other creative things - I can knit and crochet but my hands get sore now. It inspired me - I am growing cactus now... before I never would have thought of that'.

'A lot of things we didn't know how to do before ... felting, ceramics, painting. I had never made a beeswax candle before or a harvest knot - now I know not only how they are made but what they symbolise'.

The new found skills and knowledge of participants were recognised by other family members adding to their confidence and sense of achievement. One participant said that her grandchildren had been *'very impressed'* with what she had made and another that her children remarked *'Dad had hidden talents we knew nothing about!'*



Several of the groups remarked on the opportunities the museum programme gave them, as women, to learn about history, art and culture, opportunities they had not had earlier in life when they were *'stuck to the sink'*.

All participants consulted felt the format of the sessions whereby the creative session was related to the museum collections provided a very effective and enjoyable way to learn about culture and heritage. Several participants described how positively they felt about Live Well compared to a number of other events and classes they had tried.

'We did a papier mache class before and it went on and went on for 6 weeks... it was excruciating'.

'We tried a computer class.... We found out we are not into computers ... not interested in anything high tech'.

For some community centres offering accredited courses in adult education, such as history and IT, the Live Well Programme helped to broaden their range and offered an enjoyable experience of learning *'with no pressure to attain a certificate'*.

The visits to National Museums NI and local museums were identified by many as rich educational and cultural experiences.

'At the Guildhall I learnt a lot about the town that I never knew. It brought history to life. At the Tower Museum there was a lot of local history in the Story of Derry exhibition as well as the Decade of Centenaries exhibition which was about World War 1 and the suffragette movement. I learnt more history there in two hours than I ever did at school'.

For participants with earlier negative experiences of learning, Live Well was very accessible and enjoyable, involving fun and imagination. One museum guide who role plays characters in the Ulster Folk Museum, concurred *'What I am doing is a conduit for enjoyment and I slip in learning and we always have a laugh'.*

A shared learning space for memories, conversations and stories

The visits and exhibits in the Ulster Folk Museum sparked memories. Many women participants reflected on how the sessions had led to discussions on the lives of their parents and grandparents.

'It made you appreciate what we have now... the hardships and hard work our grandmothers experienced- there were no washing machines or electricity'.



Many of the groups commented on the historical authenticity of their visit to the Ulster Folk Museum and the ways in which the visitor guides kept completely in character and totally engaged the group in imagining former times.

'When you were going round the village there was a woman in bare feet and she was hiding from the rent man – it made the poverty very real – she talked about her father working at the shipyard and that she was at the launch of the Titanic. You are in the middle of the drama and are living the history'.

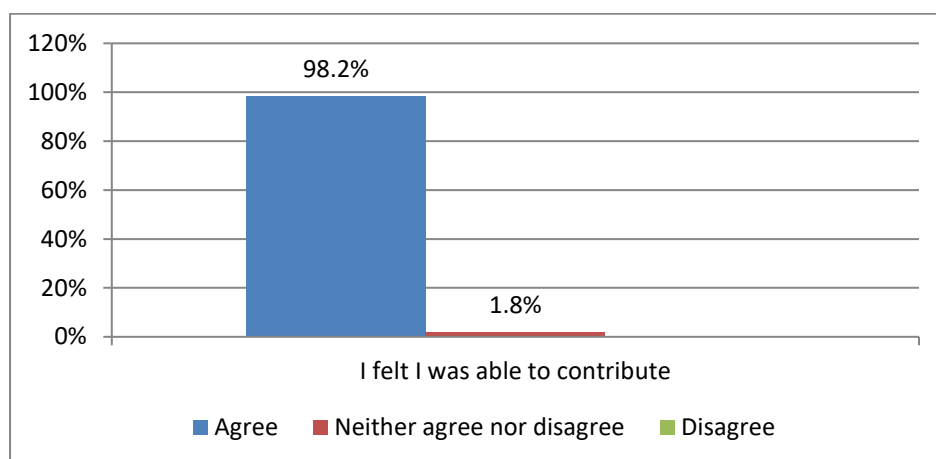
For one woman the visit to the schoolhouse brought back memories of how she had to look after her desk at school. She talked about how she had to bring wax polish and a duster in every Friday and that the nuns came around to check them! Whilst many older people recognised the hardships of earlier times, others also reflected on the sense of community they had enjoyed in the past compared to their isolation today.

By intentionally varying the kinds of learning on offer, Live Well aims to provide an inclusive model of learning. There was overwhelming agreement about the positive ways in which programme and museum staff encouraged contributions from all participants, adding value to the educational experience and strengthening connections in the groups. One group talked how they'd been encouraged to be imaginative.

'SC held up a photo and invited us to think about the story behind the picture...everyone was involved in sharing their ideas'.

'SC liked hearing our stories – when we recognised things from the past... It wasn't I am here to teach you... it was if you have a story to tell, tell it'.

The effectiveness of Live Well as a model for older people to share their skills and ideas is clear in the participant questionnaires which indicated exceptionally high levels of satisfaction from participants with 98% of participants reporting they had been able to contribute their ideas and knowledge and 97% of group leaders agreeing with this outcome.



One participant shared a memorable example of the powerful impact of the information contained within museum artefacts. She talked of seeing the name of her uncle - killed in 1941 during the blitz when he was only 23 - in a document brought out by the War Memorial Museum worker. She went on to create a notebook in the craft session honouring his memory. It is clear that the sharing of these personal stories and connections to artefacts and exhibits enhanced the learning experience in the group.

Group leaders from community centres, women’s centres and charitable groups saw the informal learning approach and the opportunity to learn together as important.

‘Our group really enjoyed getting the stories behind the paintings such as Sir John Lavery’s – the group loved these stories. Then when we went to the Ulster Museum, we could look at paintings and know the story behind them and there were great discussions about that’.

One worker reflected the views of many commenting

'It is really cleverly done – it is not a lecture at the front of the room. The community – adult education model that Live Well adapted recognises that participants bring their own knowledge to the learning and our women really responded to that. The painting of the ceramic pots may be about the decorative features but learning is always at the base of this programme'.



Museum collections play a vital role in helping people connect to historical or cultural themes and these collections have been at the heart of learning within Live Well.

'The learning is a two way process – people love to share their ideas and thoughts. The learning is a big part of the programme – it takes people by surprise how engaged they are with the object handling and the collections'.

'The Kildare Silver Service is used as springboard to talk about Georgian times and the life of women in terms of their dresses and fashion. There is an unbelievable level of fun when the participants start dressing up with the wigs etc... it connects you to the history in a really fun way'.

'It always amazes me how much learning they retain by the end of the programme. Particular themes spark interest in different individuals - the seasonal customs and traditional skills connect people to their past as well as sharing new learning'.

'It is a great vessel for participants to talk about what they are interested in historically / culturally – it widens your outlook. You don't get that in a knit and natter group...an appreciation of heritage grows. And the learning does carry on – you can see that at the Open Afternoons'.

A museum visitor guide talked about how the visits to the Ulster Folk Museum were affirming for older people in connecting them to earlier experiences.

'Take a big topic like medicine - everyone has something to say about that. It could be their memory of a polio outbreak, or a childhood friend who lost her hearing through measles or a brother who died from thrombosis. Or their fear of the dentist or hospitals, using a docken leaf for a nettle sting or a blue bag to make sheets white'.

'It is about valuing and cherishing their experiences and allowing them to see there is an audience for them'.

It is also important to note that whilst the programme invites participants to reconnect to their past and to their lived experience, Live Well is much more than a reminiscence programme. Being a part of Live Well encourages participants to articulate their current opinions and ideas about modern art, history and heritage, and to be creative. This is important as it gives value and meaning to their life in the here and now, rather than being defined by memories of the past. Research by the New Economics Foundation on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing highlights the value of continued learning and mental stimulation to support wellbeing and mental health, particularly for people facing social and economic disadvantage⁶.

⁶Five Ways to Well-being: New applications, New ways of Thinking. New Economics Foundation, 2011
<https://neweconomics.org/2011/07/five-ways-well-new-applications-new-ways-thinking>

3.4 Participant Highlights from the Programme

Participants in focus groups were asked to choose their personal highlights from Live Well. Their feedback reflects the many ways in which the programme has inspired new learning in local arts and culture, in the history of art, as well as social history and local traditions.

'SC gave me a great appreciation of local artists from Northern Ireland from the 19th and 20th Centuries'.

Many participants enjoyed the first object handling session, which is used as an ice breaker and as a way of reminding people that museums are for them. They loved the opportunity to handle the artefacts and work out what they were used for.

'You learnt so much more being able to hold them – some of them were so tactile ...you could connect with them'.

Others participants enjoyed archive photographs of seasonal and rural traditions and the ways they brought the day to day experiences of families back to life. Some chose the focus on historical events such as the two World Wars and how they connected to their own local communities.

The vast majority of consultees found the **creative activities** highly enjoyable and satisfying and this was a highlight for many. The opportunity to celebrate traditions from the past by making corn knots and beeswax candles gave people a valuable appreciation of the seasonal routines of rural life. Copperwork, ceramics, felting and decoupage were also stand out favourites for many participants who enjoyed the opportunity to work creatively in new and different media.

Participants and partner organisations alike recognised the therapeutic benefits of creative sessions, in particular working with clay in the production of ceramic pots or with wool in making broaches. For many, the creative aspects of the programme provided a space where they had fun, felt cared for and felt that their efforts were greatly appreciated.

The careful planning by the programme staff and the quality of the materials provided contributed to making participants feel valued and worthy of investment, perhaps something that older people do not experience in their everyday world.

'The worker came prepared with everything- whether it was the materials for decoupage, the copper plating, the clay for our pots and plaques – she brought all that was needed. I would not know where to get all this stuff. She even brought lovely frames for the plaques. She made the crafts easy for us to create brilliant results. We had such fun - it was like a breath of fresh air and it all related to what we had been talking about in the weeks before.'

The **museum visits** were identified as a highlight by the majority, and many appreciated the expertise of curators and costumed guides, who they felt greatly enhanced the experience.

'To have presentations on different subjects and benefit from that professional knowledge- it is fantastic - you get much more in-depth learning and information. The Open Afternoons on Map Making of Ireland, Geometrics and Art and Leonardo Da Vinci were brilliant.'

'The doctor at Cultra was fantastic – he was all dressed up in the clothes of the day. He had us all laughing, showing us medicine bottles. He brought it all to life.'

'When the Georgian lady talked about her life, you felt you were part of her family... I never thought I would be interested in that but I enjoyed that.'

'When you go yourself – you get fed up reading, whereas experts know what they are talking about. You get to see some of the hidden treasures at the museum and it really sparks your interest. The staff in museum are fabulous – the guy was really amazing at the Dinosaur exhibition.'

3.5 Getting Older People connected to Museums

Progression – further independent engagement with museums or culture or development of skills or interests – was an aim of Live Well, but given that that it took place outside the programme, it has proved very difficult to measure.

However, feedback from evaluation consultees reflects positively on the programme in terms of improving cultural engagement by older people. Staff and volunteers from

National Museums NI and local museums who worked closely with participants also talked about the ways in which they had observed progression at an individual level.

'You say can't teach old dogs new tricks but you can. Lives were changed – people who hadn't been museums goers definitely were by the end of programme'.

'People who took part realised that museums are for them – they belong to everybody, not just highly educated people. That has a snowball effect when they begin to encourage their family and friends to visit also'.

Live Well staff cited Open Afternoons as a valuable way of hearing from former participants about craft skills they had developed, cultural events they had attended or television programmes about art or history they had enjoyed inspired by Live Well.

Many participants expressed a new or renewed interest in follow up visits.

'I would never personally have thought of coming to a museum before – doing the Live Well was great - we all have a new way of looking at paintings now. I really enjoyed the session on Leonardo de Vinci. I will go back'.

However, other participants cited a range of barriers to visiting museums independently. The most notable of these were access to transport, transport costs, mobility/ disability issues and the preference of many participants to visit as part of a group.

CHAPTER FOUR: Accelerating Innovative Ideas and Practice on Active Ageing

Year three delivery included a commitment to the dissemination of the learning and practice from Live Well as an active ageing programme to the museum sector in Northern Ireland. Using the experience and expertise developed over the first two years of the programme, National Museums NI's work had three core strands:

- Set-up of a peer-learning network with six local museums across Northern Ireland
- Sector wide learning and practice Events
- A Live Well online toolkit

This chapter considers the impact of the dissemination phase of the Live Well programme and its success in sharing and 'accelerating ideas'. It examines ways in which skills and capacity on active ageing developed within the museum sector and touches on the broader legacy of the programme for local museum staff, National Museums NI staff and community partners.

Growing Innovative Practice in Active Ageing

National Museums NI has been at the forefront of initiatives to pilot and test active ageing programmes within disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland for a decade. Live Well has provided an opportunity not only to strengthen capacity within National Museums NI, but a unique opportunity to **expand skills and capacity on active ageing within the museum sector.**

Feedback from Live Well programme staff and volunteers, local museum partners and partner delivery organisations indicates that the dissemination activities have made a significant contribution to raising awareness and deepening dialogue on active ageing within the museum sector and prompted a range of actions to support active ageing programmes.

4.1 The Local Museum network: Sharing Learning and Practice

This involved the set-up of a **local museum network** between National Museums NI, the Northern Ireland Museums Council and six local museums across Northern Ireland. The six partner museums were: The Tower museum, Derry-Londonderry; Down County Museum, Downpatrick; the FE McWilliam Gallery, Banbridge; the Mid-Antrim Museum, Ballymena; the War Memorial Museum, Belfast; and the Linenhall Library in Belfast.

The network developed a peer learning/mentoring model to share skills and knowledge... Initially a staff member from the local museum shadowed a Live Well worker during the delivery of a first 6 week programme to a group in the local museum's area. With support from the Live Well worker, the local museum worker recruited a new local group and designed and delivered a second 6 week programme on the Live Well model, based on the collections of the local museum.

This proved a very effective mechanism for the sharing of learning and practice delivering a range of benefits: strengthened relationships across the museum sector; improved knowledge, skills and confidence in delivery of active ageing outreach programmes; and recognition of Live Well as a model of good practice for active ageing.

4.2 Strengthened relationships, skills and knowledge within the Museum sector

The mentoring approach worked well. Live Well staff were valued for their knowledge and skills; their expertise in the design of active ageing programmes; their open and collaborative approach; and their support in the set-up and delivery of local museum programmes. Local museum partners valued the access to National Museums NI's expertise and described the experience as a *'real privilege'*.

'The partnership with SC was very helpful – I got great support and drew on her advice and knew that I had a colleague in the programme.'

'I was quite inspired by SC's approach. I gained a lot from it – the bar was set high but not beyond my reach.'

For local museum staff relatively new to the sector, the network gave them an opportunity to learn about programme delivery within a safe and supportive environment.

'It gave us permission to try things out and learn on the job. I learnt how time-consuming the set-up of the group is, and the importance of getting the numbers right – one of groups had a lot of people and I found that challenging. Also it was really important to adapt the activities to the particular needs of the group – one group I worked with had three partially sighted participants as well as some with mobility issues. That was a good learning for me'.

It gave local museums an opportunity to develop their capacity for community outreach work and an appreciation of the importance of building trust with participants.

'Live Well opened a new door for us by letting us do work out in the community for the first time. We are constantly trying to encourage more people into our museum. It was a great model of practice and pilot programme for us'.

'One of the things I learnt from SC was the importance of gaining trust with the group and showing respect. You didn't need to be a big expert (on the topic), it was a very gentle process of sharing. It was the simplicity of the process – it was not about having the best artist, or a complicated process – it was about sitting around the table and making those human connections.'

Live Well staff recognised the effectiveness of the partnership as a mechanism for sharing their expertise and skills on active ageing. Although it was a new challenge, staff rose to it and learned themselves.

'I really enjoyed the whole process of working with the local museums. I was a little anxious ... but it was set up as a collaborative enterprise from the start. It was a sharing of our practice – we were not dictating to them'.

'It was really fascinating to see what other people did in similar (facilitation / outreach) roles. At the beginning it was sometimes hard for them, for example, to embrace creativity if that was out of their comfort zone'.

4.3 Integrating Creativity with Learning in Outreach Programmes

One of the key impacts of the local museum network has been the way it has developed the skills and confidence of local museum staff in designing future programmes using the Live Well model.

'I didn't have a huge amount of confidence in delivering the creative activities – it was so valuable to see how SC delivered those and to see how simple but well-designed they were. It brought a different perspective for me – I began to see how I could use this with my own collections and to connect with groups'.

'If we wanted to develop a creative element in a workshop now I would be much more confident about designing and facilitating a session like that, ensuring that the activity matches the people and their skills and choosing the right artist to bring in'.

One partner reflected on the structured approach to designing creative sessions.

'When SC presented the creative activities, they were quite defined – this is what you are going to make. In all my experience in working creatively with groups, that structured approach would go against my thinking [as an artist]. However, what I learnt was that with these groups, the aim is about having a creative experience – and ensuring participants have a sense of pride and accomplishment. What they get out of the making is more important than the end product. That was a really important learning for me'.

Live Well staff affirmed the learning for local museum partners and for themselves.

'They had never done anything like this before – their work with older people was based on reminiscence work – they really liked the creative and learning elements, drawing on their collections. They took everything on board – and it was a good learning experience for both'.

It gave me a chance to reflect on my own practice and look at the ways the programme could be adapted to different collections. It made me think – how can I use this museum? It was very educational and gave me a lot of confidence'.

For local museums, the design and delivery of the programme deepened their learning and appreciation of their own collections and artefacts. Engagement in the programme also enabled them to deliver their own strategic commitments in relation to community engagement and strengthening health and wellbeing.

4.4 Sector Wide Learning and Practice Events

The dissemination phase included a number of activities which brought together key stakeholders from the museum sector in Northern Ireland and beyond

- A Live Well exhibition launch in the Ulster Museum displaying the creative work of participants from Live Well workshops (October 2018)
- A workshop on the Live Well approach at the UK-wide Museums Association conference (November 2018)
- Briefing sessions with delegates on the British Museum training programme,
- A seminar to share practice and learning from Live Well (May 2019)

The **Live Well exhibition** and exhibition launch was a celebration of the creative work of participants from several groups. It gave the general public, funders and national and local museum staff appreciation of the creative potential of older people as well as creating a shared sense of pride. For the individual participants whose works were publicly exhibited, this was a memorable acknowledgement of their creative capacities and skills, boosting their self-esteem and confidence.

A workshop at **Museums Association Conference** facilitated by Live Well staff focussed on sharing their ideas on how to using collections to inspire learning and creativity. Drawing on artefacts from National Museums NI's collection, staff presented ways particular artefacts could be used to design activities in, crafting, role play and story-telling to aid creative and intellectual engagement. The workshop was attended by delegates representing local, national and international museums.

Briefing Sessions have also been held with four international delegates on the British Museum training programme and with a University of London Ph D student from South Korea

The **Sharing Practice Seminar**, launched by the Older People’s Commissioner, provided delegates from across Northern Ireland with a more immersive experience of the Live Well model and programme delivery. It was a significant event for National Museums NI internally, helping to build understanding with a relatively new senior management team. The seminar promoted the value of the Live Well model to a wider group of stakeholders within the museum sector, relevant voluntary sector and funding organisations. The specific strengths of Live Well as a model of good practice are examined in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

The Sharing Practice seminar provided a valuable opportunity to stimulate dialogue and progress ideas on active ageing across the sector. It has strengthened knowledge and practice of active ageing programmes and has:

- Widened debate on the role of museums as contributors to health and wellbeing and social cohesion within the context of the growth of ageing populations in the UK and Northern Ireland
- Articulated the ways in which the engagement of older people in participatory museums can be mutually beneficial for museums (by demonstrating relevance and access for wider audiences) and older populations (by recognising museums as enriching social and educational spaces which support wellbeing and social cohesion)
- Presented an evidence base to demonstrate the value of Live Well to widening National Museums NI’s audience to ensure a diverse access to its collections
- Showcased the successful performance and impact of the Live Well programme on participants in terms of social connectedness, health and wellbeing and learning

- Raised awareness of Live Well with National Museums NI staff generally as well as with staff in local museums
- Initiated debate on the potential of the transferability of the Live Well model to other age groups, and other groups at risk of social exclusion / disadvantage such as people with mental health issues

Engagement in the dissemination events provided new opportunities for learning and skills development by programme staff which was distinct from the learning gained through the delivery and facilitation of their own programme sessions. All of the programme staff team played leading roles in presentations on sharing the model and practice of the programme as well as leading workshops on practical creative sessions for seminar participants. Live Well managers felt that as a result of the Seminar, staff skills had developed significantly

'I think all programme staff found it very productive to think and articulate how they worked alongside local museum partners outside of National Museums NI'.

A final output of the dissemination activities of Live Well was the production of an **online toolkit** which shares some of the key lessons learned. This covers six key areas: Wellbeing and Learning; Exploring collections; Engaging creatively; Planning with groups; Skills for delivery; and Outcomes and Evaluation.

4.5 Quality of the Programme Design and Delivery

National Museums NI is associated with delivering programmes of high quality that are well thought through. Live Well has demonstrated consistently high standards of programme design and delivery.

In terms of programme design, the use of museum collections and artefacts offers a deeply enriching and unique cultural learning experience.

Live Well is an integrated programme built around museum collections to support clear outcomes: improved social connections, health and wellbeing and creative and intellectual engagement in disadvantaged older people. The balance between the social, health and wellbeing learning and creative elements in the programme worked well. There was a range of views from consultees about whether one element was more important than another with some participants favouring the social dimension, while for others it was the creative or learning space that was the priority. However, the divergence of opinion on this was not significant and there was a shared belief that the all strands were important. The thoughtful design of the programme brings these separate elements together in a coherent and effective manner for a very wide variety of disadvantaged groups, improving social connectedness, health and wellbeing and learning. It has supported the underpinning rationale of the programme by consciously introducing participants to the *5 Ways to Wellbeing*, providing multiple ways for participants to explore and practise actions to Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give.

Programme staff felt that the diversity of the programme was a key reason why participants and partner organisations found it so enriching.

'If Live Well was only a craft class, or an art history class or a session on how to improve your health and well-being, or a one-off visit to the museum, people would not be interested'.

A strength of the programme design has been its capacity to accommodate a wide range of learning needs and styles

'A key part of the success of the programme in delivering on all outcomes is the way in which staff engage with their audience and ensure the sessions are flexible enough to satisfy individuals with a high level of knowledge/creative skills as well as participants who are feeling less confident about their skills and capacities'. (Programme staff)

Staff Skills and Expertise

A key element in the quality of the programme was the contribution of Live Well staff in the design, planning and delivery of the programme sessions. Staff were well prepared and informed in a wide range of subject areas and presented ideas in an accessible and engaging way. Many participants and partner consultees commented on the skills and sensitivity with which the Live Well workers built relationships within the group and adapted to the needs of specific groups. Community partners appreciated this, with one worker from a head injury support group commenting,

'The museum was a great partner for our group. SC adapted to the needs of our group in a very skilful way and after the first week she had a great understanding of their interests and what they could and couldn't do. SC had a lovely way of coming across and of describing things and responded to the particular needs of the group'.

Staff were also praised for their warmth, patience and skills in creating an inclusive learning environment.

'SC was brilliant at setting the pace and made everyone very comfortable that helped a lot and get us all involved'.

'She made you feel very welcome and relaxed. No matter what you said she listened. The group chose the programme – she came up with some topics then the group decided and she did her research and designed the programme'.

'SC was so knowledgeable... she was a person you could listen to – and had a very enthusiastic nice manner. She was the stand out – she talked to you like she was your friend for years – she didn't talk down to us'.

Group leaders felt that knowledge of programme staff and their access to museums collections was essential to the success of Live Well. Whilst they felt they could not replicate this level of expertise, there was the potential to consider adapting some sessions on a much simpler basis.

Programme managers underlined the strengths of Live Well staff: their commitment and passion; their recognition of the need to engage people actively and to appeal to a range of learning styles.

'From an operational and management perspective, the overall development and management of the staff team has been a smooth process. After three years of intense delivery, they are not jaded. They are still full of enthusiasm'.

'We are not encouraging Live Well staff to be experts in their field – they need to be knowledgeable, but the skills to connect and engage with your audience, to facilitate different ways of learning are critical'.

For programme staff themselves, Live Well deepened their learning on active ageing and the need to understand the abilities and interests of older people.

'There can be a fear of working with older people with disabilities – a worry if someone has low vision, hearing impairment, they will not be able to achieve this? Personally it was quite daunting for me – but then I had to go out to a group where three people were blind - and that really made me consider how to change things to meet the needs of those people'.

The main challenge for the Live Well team in terms of programme delivery was the time consuming nature of recruiting appropriate groups as discussed in Chapter Two. A key aspect of this was the need to balance widening participation and target social disadvantage with the need for the potential of participants to become independent visitors. As reported earlier, the staff managed this challenge effectively and the team has been very successful in targeting the programme to reach a wide number of disadvantaged older people often from hard-to-reach groups, such as those who are rurally isolated or not part of wider networks.

Live Well involves work within communities and changing timetables, hence it is not the easiest of programmes in which to involve volunteers. Although small in number, the volunteers have made a valuable contribution to Live Well, offering practical support and encouragement to participants, particularly those lacking in confidence or participants

with a disability. For volunteers, Live Well has provided a rich and satisfying learning experience both culturally and in deepening their skills and confidence in working with a diverse range of groups

'I never had experience of working with people with brain injuries before. I learnt the importance of listening and observing to see what they needed. I am a much more confident volunteer because of my experience here'

Management Support and Team Working Capacity

On an operational level, the Live Well programme has been successfully delivered and managed by National Museums NI and management capacity within National Museums NI has benefited as a result of the programme. Described by one manager as *'providing an excellent resource for National Museum NI'*, she felt it had strengthened cross site development and enhanced team building across the organisation.

Management support of the Live Well team has been effective both in terms of peer support within and across the two teams as well as in the formal management and supervision mechanisms. Given the intensity of the delivery and the somewhat solitary nature of outreach work, staff valued the quality of support they received from programme managers and rated it highly.

Another significant resource for National Museums NI and the museum sector more broadly has been the critical contribution of the Education Officer who has developed all aspects of the programme from securing funding to staff appointments, programme development and management. Staff from National Museums NI's senior management commented,

'She managed the programme very well, and brings great intellectual engagement and rigour which underpins the whole programme'.

4.6 Legacy of the Live Well Programme

As well as the immediate impact of Live Well on participant, the programme has also created its own legacy for future initiatives in a number of ways.

Live Well has **acted as a catalyst for individuals and groups and inspired greater cultural engagement and learning** and group leaders highlighted a mixture of educational and cultural activities north and south of the border that have been organised for participants as a result of Live Well including:

- Drama and local history classes
- Follow-up craft workshops including ceramics and felting workshops
- Cross-community classes on Irish history and creative writing
- Visits to the Famine Museums in Donegal and Dublin and to local museums in Glenarm and County Down
- Engagement in a cultural diversity programme (including a visit to Belfast Synagogue and sessions on Chinese and Indian cultures)

Engagement in the mentoring programme **increased collaboration and sharing of resources between local museums.**

'I now realise we have a lot of resources, expertise and knowledge between our three local museums and as a result of Live Well I know that we can collaborate and co-ordinate on future projects'.

Live Well has also created a number of other legacy actions across the museum sector including:

- The development of a joint funding programme between the Tower Museum and Shantallow Community Centre to replicate the delivery of a smaller model of Live Well focussing on local history and customs
- FE McWilliam museum – gallery's engagement on a cross-borough network including linking with the Millennium Court Arts Centre in Portadown. The development of an exhibition is connecting local artists with older people. One of the artists is recording stories from older people, encouraging them to lead the content of the work, with the artist coming up with a corresponding art work

- The War Memorial Museum – greater awareness of the importance of documenting the oral testimony of older people with the 80th anniversary of World War Two, stating, *'this is the last opportunity we will have to connect with this generation and we are very conscious of how we do that work'*.

The delivery of the Live Well programme has had **a positive impact on knowledge and skills development more generally with National Museums NI staff.**

Programme managers and staff recognised the impact on staff across the sites in responding to the needs of older people, particularly on curators and museum guides.

'Because of programmes like Live Well and Treasure House, museum staff are much more used to seeing and engaging with older people. There is greater awareness of a range of disability needs and it has changed the perceptions of staff about the abilities of older people in a positive way'.

A museum guide described the value of these programme in keeping the UFTM *relevant* and the importance being skilful in dealing with a range of audiences.

'You need to be good at reading your audience - if people have hearing or mobility issues, you need to be aware of that'.

He described the engagement with older people as *'a source of cultural richness – it always broadens my knowledge – and the learning I get from them is very rewarding'* and felt that such learning was vital for museums such as UFTM.

Participants and community partners were very positive about the way they were treated by National Museums NI staff during museum visits: from the welcome at reception, to the expertise of curators and the performances by visitor guides, there was a consistently high level of commitment to customer care. This culture of welcome and respect encourages future visits. One participant reflected the views of many.

'We were treated very well by all the museum staff – from the reception area where they organised a wheelchair – all needs were met. We felt welcomed and taken care of. It wasn't stuffy – I know I would go back'.

Group leaders highlighted a number of ways in which Live Well has made a broader contribution to community development in local areas. These included the ways in which Live Well has **expanded the educational range of community based learning**

'It has been the icing on the cake for our centre. It has broadened our horizons and programme range and it is fantastic to offer quality creative arts on a cross-community basis as part of our service'.

Group leaders also highlighted the way in which Live Well had provided **a stimulus to secure future funding**

'We are hoping to engage with our local museum partner and try to get funding to expand delivery of some format of the programme in the area'.

'I like the legacy aspect of it. We have a very creative group and now we are thinking how we can progress that and I am putting in an application to Awards for All to have a full programme of activities for our group. That would not have happened without our engagement in Live Well'.

Community partners also appreciated the opportunity to engage in the programme themselves and felt it had been an enriching process intellectually and supported their own wellbeing, reducing some of the pressure from a busy and demanding work environment.

4.7 Recognition of Live Well as Model of Good Practice

One of key benefits of Live Well as a catalyst for learning has been the recognition of Live Well as a model of good practice. Local museum staff articulated their trust in the effectiveness of the programme and their commitment to using it as a basis for future outreach work.

'The Live Well model has been created. I know from my own experience it works really well. I know how to start it off and finish it. These are basic things but they have been rigorously gone through'.

'This partnership has given us a really well established model to work from and adapt. All the research has been done, the format and structure handed to us on a plate, including the evaluation tools. This is a model we can trust and use for future work'.

'Live Well is pretty much the basis of training we are doing for our outreach work and it has been a very helpful crash course in outreach work and has really impacted positively on my role within the museum'.

The following table identifies the key aspects which distinguish **Live Well as a Model of Good Practice**.

Critical Success Factor	Live Well Programme – Model of Good Practice
Clear conceptual basis underpinning programme design	5 Steps to Wellbeing Framework Active Ageing as a process to optimise opportunities for health, participation and quality of life (World Health Organisation)
Partnership working	Collaborative model of working established and encouraged across all aspects of programme development, design and implementation – engagement with participants, mentoring with museum partners, staff support and management
Targeted recruitment of groups	Successful participation older people from a diverse demographic of social need, disadvantage and good geographical spread informed by a broad definition of social disadvantage
Outreach programme	Successful outreach programme combining community based engagement with visits to museum sites
Museum collections inspire and inform learning	Skilful use of museum collections in inspiring learning and creativity enabling a greater sharing and exploration of collections. Collections more accessible
Programme duration	6 weeks duration with one visit to museum optimal model supporting social connections, creativity and learning outcomes for groups.
High quality of relationships and engagement	Importance of building engagement with participants as a bedrock to the creativity and learning aspects of the programme
Inclusive participant experience	Encourages and validates the views, knowledge and experiences of participants as a resource in building learning
Multi- dimensional programme combining social, creative and learning activities	Programme structure and content supports active ageing across a range of dimensions, strengthening personal relationships, community cohesion, creativity and learning within the context of arts, culture and local heritage
An active ageing programme which combines backward looking and forward looking perspectives	A model of practice which goes beyond personal reminiscence work: encourages critical thought and debate by older people on themes in contemporary culture as well drawing on historical/ heritage themes
Programme staff require a strong knowledge base and broad skill set	Staff building relationships and creating a welcoming and nurturing learning environment; good organisational and planning skills; good facilitation skills; good communication skills, particularly listening skills and ability to judge / read group/ audience; responsiveness; enthusiasm. Interest in arts, culture, heritage; creativity
Embedded learning and evaluation practice	Integrated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and systems. Commitment to learning from practice, and sharing best practice
Staffing and management	Part- time roles enabled sharing of tasks, ideas and problem solving and a peer support system. Structure and content allowed staff to develop their own styles and play to their strengths.

CHAPTER 5 Active Ageing within National Museums NI

Having presented the findings on the overall impact and benefits of Live Well, this chapter analyses the potential for active ageing programmes to become a cornerstone for strategic development within National Museums NI.

National Museums NI has demonstrated a consistent engagement in active ageing over the years but funding for programmes has been external. Whilst NLCF funding has been extremely valuable for a range of programmes, it has now come to an end. National Museums NI faces a strategic moment in deciding the extent to which active ageing should be at the core of the museum experience and recognising the potential benefits that could arise from that.

5.1 Active ageing as part of National Museums NI core services

'We are one of the most advanced (museums) in the field in terms of engagement with older people, young people and in supporting wellbeing. We need to recognise and celebrate the achievement of this work and retain the expertise that has been built up within National Museums NI. A lot of organisations are just waking up to this'. (Senior Management team)

There was overwhelming support from consultees that active ageing programmes such as Live Well should be a core part of the work of National Museums NI going forward. Apart from the intrinsic value that programmes such as Live Well deliver in terms of social impact and health and wellbeing, two key points were made in supporting the integration of this work as a core aspect of National Museums NI's services: the unique stimulus that museums provide in supporting health and wellbeing; and, the onus on museums as public institutions to create inclusive spaces and ownership of museum collections across all communities.

Academic discourse on the uniqueness of museums as centres of learning can be seen as part of the thinking developed around the concept and development of *lifelong learning* in the early 2000s. David Anderson⁷ has argued for museums as places of broad based learning, an idea which has become widely recognised both in academic discourse and public policy.

'Museums offer great scope for informal learning. Precisely because museums are a public space wherein learning and leisure are combined they can encourage adults who find formal education too intimidating to take a first step towards lifelong learning. Moreover, the specific environment of museums has advantages.....Among these are "the special circumstance of learning in the presence of real objects (which) inspire curiosity and creative thinking"'.⁸

This evaluation affirms the unique nature of museums which can inspire learning, a sense of belonging and identity through engagement with objects and collections. A Live Well local museum partner described the potential of collections in stimulating creativity and learning for visitors

'When you work in a museum it is easy to get a bit blasé about collections and objects and forget about the real power they can hold for people. They can be used as a means to draw out different stories and creative action, to connect people as well as tools of education'.

A programme worker described the impact of visits to the UFTM on participants, and how that had nurtured their learning – *'it is in the everyday, it is the life we know about – and people can have a beautifully rich connection with that'.*

One of the speakers at the Live Well Sharing Practice Seminar, an art therapist, similarly described museums as *a space in which people can feel held and where archetypes in collections can provide a sense of connecting and belonging.*

⁷ Anderson D (1999) *A Common Wealth: Museums in the Learning Age*, A report to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, London: The Stationary Office.

⁸ *Lifelong Learning in Museums a Critical Appraisal* Candlin, Fiona and O'Brien, Margaret (2001). In: Jones, David J. and Normie, Gerald (eds.) 2001. P.2 *A Spatial Odyssey*. Nottingham: Continuing Education Press, pp. 176-186. ISBN 185041095X. <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/754/1/candlin6.pdf>

This sees museums as therapeutic spaces which can be used as a springboard to explore issues and concerns in the lives of people.

Incorporating Active Ageing programmes into National Museums NI's core services would enhance public ownership of museum spaces, collections and resources by sharing these with people who do not naturally engage as museum visitors.

In the context of Northern Ireland's competing and divided community identities, the work of participatory programmes is particularly important in providing a neutral shared space to explore single and multiple identity themes in the context of art, history and heritage. Programmes like Live Well enhance community based cultural learning as well providing open spaces to engage in National Museums NI sites.

A community partner reinforced the importance of museums being proactive in connecting communities with collections.

'Sometimes people need to be invited in – museums should not be a closed institution for a privileged class – part of the museum audience needs to be people who would not naturally choose to go there'.

Consultees also noted the particular status that older people often associate with museums with one arguing that *museums have a reputation and standing and in our society that older people trust*. It is therefore important that museums balance their roles in keeping collections safe with the responsibility to ensure that they are accessible to communities.

5.2 The Broader Strategic Value of Live Well Programme for National Museums NI

There are also broader strategic benefits for National Museums NI in integrating active ageing programmes into their core work

Congruence of the Live Well programme with the strategic purpose and aims of National Museums NI is high. Live Well represents a successful participatory public programme which has delivered on key strategic priorities particularly National Museums NI's commitment to strengthen its social impact and the development of a more diverse audience base.

'Now there is recognition that this audience (older people) can be significant for museums when resources are tailored to them. This is an important area – we know there is an audience that enjoys and benefits from engagement with National Museums NI and our collections and which can add value in visitor numbers'.

Senior Management Team representatives highlighted the importance of social impact outcomes as a strategic priority for National Museums NI.

'Our business model is about positive social and economic impact. The more success we have as a visitor business the more we can invest in social engagement. We want to make a positive difference in people's lives'.

One team member described Live Well as *'a perfect fit with our strategic priorities, our values and our brand promise Here For Good'*. He described a shift in National Museums NI's focus which was *'becoming more purpose-driven and cause-based'*, and of the importance of programmes to strengthen health and well-being and community cohesion in this context.

A key achievement of Live Well has been to widen the access of local communities to museum collections and sites, which delivers on National Museums NI's strategic priority to build a wider audience and visitor base as part of improving their social impact.

National Museums NI is currently developing a new approach to audience development

planning which will include such participatory public programmes. Senior management representatives recognised the value of integrating active ageing programmes into the core work of the museum

'I would like to see this kind of work being an extension of our core sense of purpose and core practice given the positive impact it makes on people's lives. This should not be an add-on or an optional extra. It should not be switched on and off – we should always be able to have a minimum level of provision that we can amplify.'

Chapter Six Public Policy Context for Future Programming

This Chapter considers the future context for National Museums NI in further developing the Live Well Programme and presents an assessment of the public policy environment for National Museums NI's work on progressing active ageing within the museum sector.

6.1 Public Policy and Active Ageing Programmes

Implementation and development of government policy in Northern Ireland has been compromised by the fact that the region has been without a devolved power-sharing government since January 2017 - more than two and a half years. Despite the limitations of the political vacuum and constrained public policy implementation, the potential for Active Ageing programmes is evolving in a strategic context where National Museums NI is well placed to contribute to a wide range of public policy priorities and health and wellbeing frameworks. These include those within the Programme for Government (PfG) (2016-2021), the Department for Communities Strategy, the Active Ageing Strategy, the Health and Wellbeing Framework, the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and policy initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness.

The PfG outlines the key policy priorities in Northern Ireland. National Museums NI's active ageing programmes such as Live Well can make a direct contribution to several key PfG outcomes, notably those which aim to ensure: that the population can *enjoy long, healthy, active lives*; that Northern Ireland develops an *innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential* and, where *people care for others and we help those in need*; and, outcomes which support respect for the diversity of people and communities.

National Museums NI's commitment to growing participation and engagement in disadvantaged communities is central to the work of the Department for Communities (DfC)⁹ in enabling and promoting social inclusion and community cohesion. The success of Live Well in supporting the health and wellbeing of older people at risk from social exclusion, those suffering with physical and learning disabilities, people facing mental health issues and those living in rural isolation and areas of urban deprivation validates the role of National Museums NI in strengthening vulnerable people and communities. These groups are common priority communities for the DfC and National Museums NI. The contribution of Live Well to building understanding and mutual respect within communities of older people further supports the role of the DfC in promoting social inclusion and diversity.

The challenge of social isolation and loneliness that many older people face is a growing concern and focus in social and health public policy. Programmes such as Live Well which connect older people and strengthen communities can have a big impact in addressing social isolation, which in turn helps to restore health and wellbeing including mental health in older populations.

As previously noted in Chapter One, the design and delivery of the Live Well programme has been informed by the *5 Ways to Wellbeing* approach. Feedback presented in this report affirms that the programme has been particularly successful in enabling older people engage in the five ways to wellbeing: to socially connect and build relationships, to keep learning, be active, to take notice and observe, to contribute and give their ideas and knowledge as well as support their fellow participants.

⁹ *The Department for Communities is National Museums NI's sponsor department.*

Chapter Seven Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the main conclusions emerging from the evaluation findings in terms of the impact of the programme on disadvantaged older people and in building capacity on active ageing within the museum sector.

Conclusions

7.1 Active Ageing in an Ageing Society

National Museums NI's Active Ageing programme development is taking place when Northern Ireland, like the rest of the UK, is experiencing demographic shifts in terms of ageing and life expectancy. Projected estimates from Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) indicate that, by 2041, Northern Ireland's population will reach 2 million and that the number of people over 65 years will have increased by 65% from 297,800 to 491,700¹⁰. This data argues that Northern Ireland's population is predicted to age at a faster rate than that of the UK, with the number of children estimated to fall 6% by 2041. In this context, the need and demand for Active Ageing programmes to support local communities will be significant.

The popular narrative constructed about our ageing society within mainstream and social media is a pessimistic one which considers older people to be a burden, responsible for creating a major social and economic threat for younger generations as a result of concerns about rising health and social care costs. In this scenario older people are perceived as having little value and status in society. In a world increasingly fixated on image and social media, there is little empathy for older people, particularly socially disadvantaged older people, who are often stereotyped and socially excluded.

¹⁰ 2016-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland (2017), NISRA
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/news/2016-based-population-projections-northern-ireland>

Active Ageing programmes like Live Well are an antidote to this, promoting a positive and vibrant image of older people. Such programmes create spaces in local communities and cultural institutions in which disadvantaged older people are valued, visible and celebrated.

The findings presented in this evaluation present clear, compelling evidence of the successful impact of the Live Well programme in enabling disadvantaged older people to have a more positive experience of ageing through increased social, intellectual and cultural engagement.

7.2 Increasing Social Connectedness

Opportunities for creative expression, a shared learning experience and the experience of feeling valued have built friendships and enhanced the wellbeing of Live Well participants. Social isolation and loneliness can be particularly challenging for older people as they adjust to the social and emotional challenges of ageing and the life changes that accompany it. Live Well has added value to the quality of relationships within groups, with museum artefacts providing a focal point for new conversations and the sharing of memories and ideas in established groups. Within local communities, social networks have grown as a result of the programme where people have supported and encouraged each other and had fun. Visits to museums have added another layer of social engagement, creating new opportunities for friendship and have helped to support cross community and cross cultural connections amongst older people.

7.3 Supporting Health and Wellbeing

The findings from this evaluation provide many examples of ways in which the Live Well programme has boosted the self-esteem and self-worth of participants by creating a welcoming and dynamic space for older people to connect, learn and nurture their creative and intellectual selves. For older people suffering from depression, ill health or the stress of caring for a partner, the experience of being in a learning and nurturing environment – even for a short period of six weeks - proved an important way to help maintain their mental health. Of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, Be Active tends to be interpreted as involvement in physical activity or sport, and the most difficult for museums to deliver, yet for some older participants having the motivation and the opportunity to get up and get out and do something different, is just as important.

The creative sessions within the programme, offering a calm and therapeutic space, have also helped participants recuperate and strengthen their emotional wellbeing. The creative activities of the programme have been hugely rewarding for participants, offering older people the opportunity to try out new crafts and experiment with new materials giving them a sense of pride in their newfound skills and creative efforts.

The relationships established between Live Well staff and participants have been a critical factor in the successful impact of the programme in boosting the confidence and self-esteem of participants. Engagement in Live Well has been particularly valuable in strengthening the wellbeing of people living with long term disabilities such as acquired brain injury, strokes or visual impairment as well as for people facing challenging periods of illness in their lives. Older people facing a variety of challenges, whether physical or psychological, have overcome barriers and faced their demons to engage fully and positively in the programme, in creative activities, in sharing their knowledge and in providing support to each other.

7.4 Stimulating Learning and Intellectual Engagement

The programme has provided a very effective model of adult education which has extended the intellectual horizons of older people and helped to improve their quality of life. For disadvantaged older people, particularly those whose early experiences of learning and education have been negative, Live Well has provided a very accessible and enjoyable way to learn. Active engagement is key to the programme and participants thrived within the rich learning environment created by skilled programme staff using the museums' resources. Participants enjoyed the interactive nature of the learning in the programme, particularly the visits to museum sites and the great variety of topics on art, culture, history and local traditions.

Learning is interwoven in the Live Well programme in imaginative ways and the practice of using museum artefacts and collections to link a creative activity to an historical theme has proved to be a very effective way to stimulate ideas and the development of creative expression. The opportunity to learn new creative skills such as copper punching, ceramics, decoupage and felting, using familiar and unfamiliar materials has been immensely rewarding for participants, nurturing their creative and intellectual engagement. The inclusive model of learning, drawing on the knowledge of participants, has added to the quality of the educational experience, improved the self-esteem and wellbeing of participants and strengthened connections within the groups.

7.5 The High Quality of Programme Design and Delivery

National Museums NI has a reputation for excellence as a cultural institution. Live Well has embodied National Museums NI's commitment to high standards in the quality of programme design, staff expertise, management approach and intellectual rigour. With resources under pressure within National Museums NI generally, it would have been tempting to lower standards to spread the delivery of Live Well more thinly or reduce the length or content of the programme.

The Programme has demonstrated integrity in terms of targeting disadvantage and in prioritising active engagement and social connectedness. Management and programme staff have demonstrated an ambitious commitment and a desire to be socially inclusive throughout the delivery of this programme and have created a diverse audience for Live Well.

7.6 Accelerating Learning and Good Practice on Active Ageing

National Museums NI has demonstrated its role in pioneering active ageing and in building and expanding capacity through Live Well. The programme has proved to be a very significant resource for the expansion of knowledge across the museum sector. For programme staff member and partners, being actively engaged in Live Well has provided an enormous insight into the needs and interests of the older community. It has deepened empathy and understanding of many of the difficulties older people face on a day to day basis and as a result allowed the teams and museum partners to create programmes that are relevant and enjoyable and improve the wellbeing and intellectual engagement of participants.

The dissemination events and activities have made a significant contribution to raising awareness and deepening dialogue within the museum sector in Northern Ireland on the concept and practice of active ageing. Findings from this evaluation indicate that the partnership with local museums has had the most impact as a catalyst for growing innovative ideas and practice for ageing well, compared with the other sector-wide activities. The partnership encapsulates much of what makes Live Well a highly successful programme: strategic engagement; collaborative working relationships; quality programming; putting engagement and learning at the centre of active ageing programmes to enhance wellbeing.

Engagement in the programme has been particularly valuable in terms of accelerating innovative thinking and practice for local museum partners. The partnership has delivered a number of significant outcomes for the sector, notably strengthened relationships and networks within the museum sector; improved knowledge, skills and confidence in the delivery of outreach active ageing programmes; and recognition of Live Well as a tried and tested model of good practice for supporting active ageing. The broader sector wide events have also progressed debate and dialogue on active ageing and innovative practice, raising the potential for the transferability of the programme model to use collections to work more therapeutically with groups and to support mental health and wellbeing more generally.

7.7 Placing Active Ageing at the Core of the Museum Experience

National Museums NI is well placed to consolidate and expand the work on wellbeing and active ageing and its level of expertise makes it a natural actor to lead and develop future work on active ageing. Findings from this evaluation affirm the unique nature of museums and their capacity to inspire learning and offer a sense of belonging and identity through engagement with objects and collections. Museums have a civic responsibility as custodians of our culture and heritage to ensure that their collections are accessible to all tiers of society, not just the privileged, educated elite. Live Well is the embodiment of this commitment to broadening access and participation by socially disadvantaged groups. Evidence gathered from this evaluation indicates that the principle of public ownership should be core to the development of future museum services and that active ageing programmes should be an element of that work.

7.8 Policy Context for Active Ageing Programmes

Internally within National Museums NI, the development of the Live Well programme is taking place within a strategic and operational context where there is a renewed focus on social impact as strategic priority as well as a commitment to audience development and strengthening participatory programming. Live Well can contribute to supporting the development and delivery of both these priorities. Congruence of the Live Well programme with the strategic aims of National Museums NI is high with social impact now central to the mission of National Museums NI, and a focus on social cohesion and health and wellbeing a part of that work. With an effective Audience Development strategy critical to National Museums NI's sustainability and ongoing success, the Live Well programme can play an important role in creating a more inclusive audience base. National Museums NI's senior management team recognise the value and potential for the development of active ageing programmes and have indicated their commitment to exploring the potential to integrate a version of the Live Well into their core work

In terms of public policy, National Museums NI is well placed to contribute to a wide range of public policy priorities and health and wellbeing frameworks. These include those within the PfG, the Department for Communities Strategy, the Active Ageing Strategy, the Health and Wellbeing Framework, the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and policy initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness. The success of the Live Well programme in supporting the health and wellbeing of older people at risk from social exclusion, those suffering with physical and learning disabilities, people facing mental health issues and those living in rural isolation and areas of urban deprivation validates the role of National Museums NI as an agency engaged in strengthening vulnerable people and communities. These groups are common priority communities for the DfC, National Museums NI's sponsor department and for many other policy drivers in public policy in Northern Ireland.

Recommendations

7.9 The Future for Participatory Programming in National Museums NI

In the future participatory programming in National Museums NI faces more opportunities than threats. National Museums NI has an established track record in the delivery of successful Active Ageing programmes, has built up expertise and now has a proven model of good practice – one could argue model of excellent practice. What is significant going forward is the recognition and commitment from the SMT to exploring ways to build on this mode as part of National Museums NI’s core work, reflected in the comment from a member of the SMT

‘National Museums NI has been active in this area with funded programmes for ten years. We have developed a strong theoretical base and body of practice in engaging older people. Our body of practice has evolved over the years and one of the things that has characterised these programme is that they have been very well designed and thoroughly monitored and evaluated. The challenge is how we mainstream that work into the core of our organisation’.

Whilst the SMT also acknowledged the current financial environment as a challenging one, they also saw that the end of the Live Well programme would be a significant loss for National Museums NI in terms of *good work, skilled people and positives outcomes* and identified the need to develop solutions to avoid this. Active Ageing programmes now have a champion within the SMT who recognises Live Well as a strong programme contributing to National Museums NI’s social impact agenda. They have acknowledged the need to secure funding to mainstream its work and that this funding should no longer be piecemeal or short-term. Furthermore, a new audience development strategy will reflect a shift in priorities to build a more inclusive audience base and target programming to widen audiences to create social impact.

Future Delivery of Live Well

Part of taking the Live Well model into the future involves reflecting on ways to adapt, transfer and even deconstruct the format as it currently exists. There was a range of opinions and ideas from Live Well managers and programme staff on different formats and audiences. Potential target groups suggested for future participatory programmes included: mental health groups; job seekers / long-term unemployed; long-term hospital patients; and, refugees and asylum seekers. Future engagement with groups needs careful consideration and should be consistent with National Museums NI core role and objectives. In terms of content, it is important that the focus on learning and progression is maintained, and combined with elements to support social interaction and health and wellbeing.

A range of factors to consider in terms of the format of future programmes was also identified:

- Shorter programme - 3 weeks plus an onsite visit the minimum (the loss of the onsite visit would be significant)
- 6 weeks is the preferred option in terms of social connections
- Open Afternoon v. Discovery Room Session (including an interactive element)
- Open Afternoon / Follow up sessions valuable but need to balance that with the equitable targeting of resources to maximise engagement in the programmes
- A shorter programme combined with the use of own transport/community transport schemes as a way to reduce costs
- Transport – there was overall agreement that the absence of transport would be a significant barrier to engagement in the programme as museums are not particularly accessible for older people who don't have their own transport.

Appendix 1 Live Well Participant Groups

Group Name	Postcode
The Focus Club	BT11 9HU
Conway Education Centre	BT13 2DE
Rowallane Hub	BT24 7AB
Bangor Memories Cafe	BT20 4LN
Ballywalter Seniors	BT22 2PQ
Creggan Day Centre	BT48 9QE
Easy Come Easy Sew @ Tullycarnet	BT5 7GE
Conway Education Centre	BT13 2DE
Portavogie Seniors	BT22 1EH
Cloughy Knit & Natter	BT22 1JA
Club @ The Hub Rowallane	BT24 7AB
Glebe House	BT30 7NZ
St Agnes'	BT11 9BW
Divis Community Centre	BT12 4RT
Highfield Community Centre	BT13 3SA
Head Peace, Ballywalter	BT22 2PQ
Comber Library	BT23 5AU
Ashley Lodge	BT17 0AF
New Way Adult Centre	BT37 9RB
Newtownards senior drop in	BT23 4EN
Leitrim SCG	BT32 9SL
Wave Trauma Mens	BT15 5DW
Attical Golden Yrs	BT34 4SS
Anna House	BT17 0AA
Belfast Memory Cafe	BT5 4FD
Inverbrena Hall Seniors	BT30 7NJ
The Thursday Club	BT36 5EZ
Busy Bees	BT24 8HP
Indian Community Centre	BT13 1AB
Taghnevan Seniors	BT66 8SL

Avenue Rd Seniors	BT66
Deaf/Blind Assoc. NI	BT4 1NT
Bangor CHS	BT20 4EV
Drumross Adult Centre	BT36 6UN
Drumbeg Residents Assoc.	BT65 5AQ
Simon community	BT28 2DX
Concorde Community Centre	BT14 1JB
Newry Head Injury Support	BT34 1DQ
Craigavon Head Injury Support	BT65 5DL
Lawrencetown Young Stroke Support	BT63 6DU
The Loop Group	BT4 1FT
Dean Crooks Fold	BT4 3HZ
Westwinds community group	BT23 4RE
The Vine Centre	BT14 7AA
Decorum NI	BT19 7QT
Wise The Bap	BT20 FAU
Newtownards Memory Café	BT23 4AN
Men's Shed	BT20 4AU
The Whins	BT29 4FL
Newington Day Centre	BT15 2HN
The BFG	BT23 4YH
North Down Stroke Survivors	BT19 7TZ
Men's Shed	BT20 4TF
Kircubbin young at heart	BT22 2SR
Footprints women's centre	BT17 0AR
Kilcooley Women's Centre	BT19 1QS
Retired but not expired	BT20 3YB
Knocknagoney	BT4 2QF
Decorum NI	BT19 7QT
Atlas Women's Group	BT28 1NY
Kircubbin Hens Shed	BT22 2SU
Bell Rotary House	BT5 6JJ
Shanty Women	BT48 8EN
Hen's Shed	BT16 1UN

Tuesday Club	BT11 9HU
Carnlough hub	BT43 5EJ
Chatty Crafters	BT38 8TE
Conway Mill Complex	BT13 2DE
Kilcooley women's centre	BT19 1AJ
Skyway Club	BT7 3GG
Sydenham Court	BT4 1PP
Brain Injury Matters	BT5 6BQ
Fairholme	BT17 3JJ
Chinese Welfare Association	BT7 1GB
1-2-3 Club	BT17 9BB
Cosy Club	BT34 5TU
NI Polio Fellowship	BT5 4EQ
Men's Shed	BT30 6TE
Wednesday Welcome	BT24 7AB
Belvoir CHS	BT8 7DT
Derrybeg Seniors	BT3 56EZ
Newtownards AMH	BT23 4YH
Ballygowan Seniors	BT23 6NA
Downpatrick AMH	BT30 6TE
N&W CHS	BT9 7DU
Downpatrick CHS	BT30 6ST
Victoria Court	BT38 9PS
AMH Downpatrick	BT30 6TE
Tecconnaught	BT30 9JQ
Clonard	BT13 2RH
Women Together	BT12 6AL
Ballybeen Women's Centre	BT16 2QE
Men United	BT2 7DB

Appendix 2 Breakdown of Live Well Participants across Equality Indicators

