

PARTICIPANT STORY

"I ENJOY EVERY MINUTE I COME HERE."

Participant



Meet Jean (69), who took part in visual art and jewellery-making workshops between April and September 2025.

"We've been designing jewellery using paper, we did marbling, collaging with magazines and we learned how to make bookmarks with beads. I'm actually using my bookmark at the moment!

"I've never done jewellery-making [before]. It's fiddly and I was thinking, 'I'm never going to be able to do this'. But with the right tools and [guidance], it proves that you can do it. [Similarly], I've never done marbling before. That was just amazing, the patterns that you can make!

"My memory is very bad. Coming [here] and trying to keep physical and involved with different things and learning new skills, that's good for your memory. If you're out of your comfort zone learning a new skill, you're stretching your brain.

"[The other participants] are so sweet. Even though some have got quite severe disabilities, they're really getting on well. It's been good fun, and I think the volunteers have enjoyed it. We just feel so privileged to mix with younger people, because it makes you feel younger. I've met a lot of lovely people here. It's good to talk and it's good to hug."

WHO BENEFITED

20 unique participants took part (intended ~ 15+): Project 1 ~ 15; Project 2 ~ 18.

95%

aged 60+

90%

female

68%

with special educational needs / disabilities

30%

of the global majority

15%

use English as an additional language

NEED

Isolation among older people is a major problem in our ageing society.

- » 1.4 million pensioners in the UK regularly feel lonely while nearly 2 million do not feel valued as an older member of society.¹
- » Older people have had to cut back and make sacrifices during the cost of living crisis, very often at the expense of their own mental and physical health.²
- » Arts group participation is associated with multiple positive aspects of wellbeing including life satisfaction.³

1 Age UK, 2023.

2 Age UK, 2024.

3 Social Biobehavioural Research Group at University College London, 2023.

PROGRAMME

creative:engagement is a multi-artform programme with older people and their carers who attend FCV Dorcas. The programme is a partnership with Ashurst, which hosts the workshops and provides volunteers.

- » Create designed *creative:engagement* to give participants a chance to express themselves, connect with others and enhance their overall wellbeing.
- » Under the guidance of Create's professional artists, participants explored visual art techniques including weaving, collage and jewellery-making.
- » Eight half-day workshops took place (as intended). These were delivered six-weekly, in two project blocks of four workshops.
- » Each participant was presented with a Certificate of Achievement and took their artwork home.
- » 100% of staff rated the project 'successful overall'.

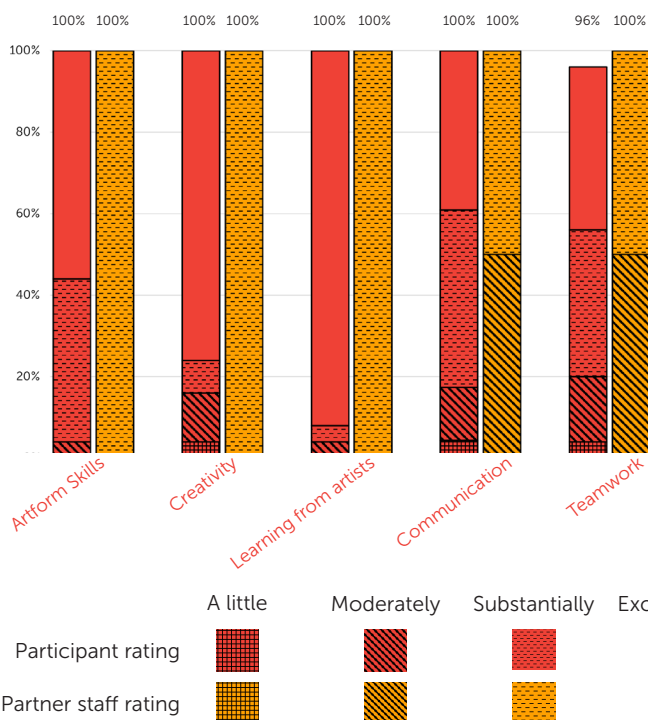
EXAMPLE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Over four half days between October 2025 and February 2026, Create artists Renata Minoldo and Teresa Paiva delivered visual art workshops with 18 participants.

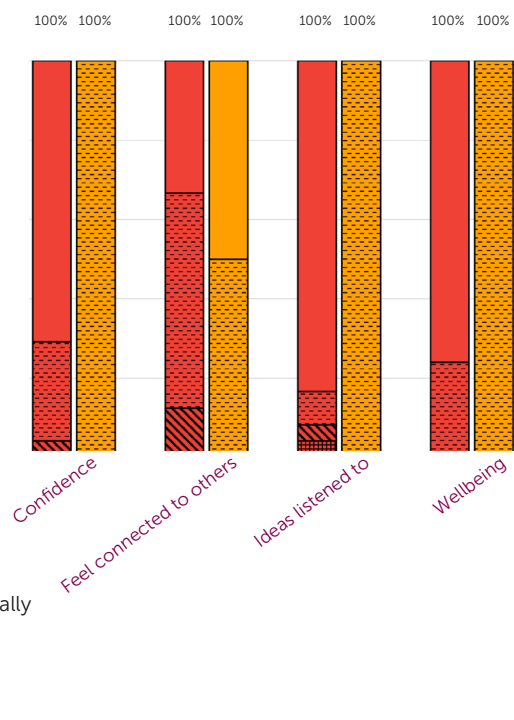
- » Participants began by learning a simple weaving technique, and used this to create their own bookmarks.
- » Then, under Renata's and Teresa's guidance, they learned a variety of collaging techniques. They also experimented with techniques which included tracing using carbon paper, and taking rubbings from shoes.
- » Every participant made their own collage using various techniques that they had learnt during the workshops. Many participants made album covers, and one created a collaborative piece with a volunteer.
- » At the end of every workshop, participants shared their artwork. They talked about the techniques they had used and praised each other's work.

OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Improvement in Skills for Life, Education, Work



Improvement in Quality of Life



SKILLS FOR LIFE, EDUCATION, WORK

"I'VE USED (THESE TECHNIQUES) IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE."

Participant

Artform skills:

"I have learned to do collages and make notebooks and bookmarks which is brilliant." "Making earrings out of paper was new and fun. Then I was able to wear them!" "I have done pictures that I didn't know I could." "I have sold a little jewellery at a Christmas fête and I bought myself a kit." "I love my creations as much as I love gold jewellery!" "With the marbling, we've been using large-scale, see-through paper. You can scrunch it, cut it into random shapes, just go with the flow really. You can see a picture in it when you're finished." **Participants** "[Participants] developed and learned new skills and learned about different types of art and artists." **Staff** "[Participants] made a 'creative conversation' with the work of Matisse." "We've explored craft, collage and jewellery through tassel and bead work." **Artists**

Creativity:

"[It's been] great seeing how different our results have been despite the same prompts and materials." "I have designed earrings and necklaces." "I just let my mind run away." "It helps bring out my creative abilities and I'm able to do crafting at home when I'm feeling out of sorts." **Participants** "[Participants] developed confidence to try new things and be more creative." **Staff** "[The participants] led the design elements and chose what kind of items they wanted to make." "Collage is a good medium because it's all about intuition and flow." "We provided a lot of material options to support [participants] in making their own choices." **Artists** "I didn't realise how creative I could be until the participants gave me inspiration." **Volunteer**

Learning from artists:

"[Working with a professional artist is] really good as it opens your eyes to see different things in different ways." "Very inspiring: I get new ideas each time." "It gives me so many new ideas that I never would have thought of myself." **Participants** "[Participants can] expand their knowledge and artistic skills." **Staff**

Communication:

"I'm not worried if I make mistakes in my talking." **Participant** "[It's] nice to see the participants enjoying creative skills and communicating better." **Staff** "Keeping hands busy releases the mind, and that helps relaxing and feeling more communicative." **Artist**

Teamwork:

"I love being part of a team while doing all sorts of things." "[I was] passing materials and showing others how to achieve their artwork if they weren't sure." **Participants** "Participants were encouraging and supportive to each other at their tables." **Artist** "We collaborated on artwork and shared excellent discussions." **Volunteer**

QUALITY OF LIFE

Confidence:

"The jewellery workshop was great. Members of the public praised me for my necklaces." "I feel proud of what I'm doing and more confident." "I did two collages and they turned out really well. I'm not usually a creative person." "I [feel more confident] because we're given guidelines and then fully supported along the way." "I am not afraid of making mistakes." **Participants** "[Participants are] much happier trying new skills." **Staff** "It was a simple activity that is very effective and it creates a final output, which creates a sense of accomplishment." **Artist**

Connected to others:

"I live alone, so this has enhanced my life, getting me out of my comfort zone and letting me create, enjoy [the company of] others and develop skills." "It's just such a friendly group, and everyone is so nice." "I have met new people and made friends." **Participants** "[Participants] enjoy socialising and trying new ideas." **Staff** "We chatted the whole time and it was lovely to get to know everyone." **Volunteer**

Ideas listened to:

"The collage was all my own work." "[I liked] choosing colours and pictures myself." "We all had good ideas, which were appreciated by the team." **Participants** "[Participants are able to] choose what they would like to do." **Staff** "By reflecting [their own] ideas in the artworks, most [participants were] quite independent and had a clear creative vision in mind they wanted to pursue." **Artist**

"NOW I CAN SWITCH OFF FROM MY ANXIETIES BY DOING SOMETHING CREATIVE."

Participant

Wellbeing:

"I love coming here. I look forward to it. I love creating and the food is great." "It helps to keep me more calm." "[I feel] well-cared-for." "We have great fun doing the projects." "It makes me feel a lot happier and makes me get up in the morning." **Participants** "Clients love coming to every session, being creative and meeting new people." **Staff** "Crafting is a meditative process." "There was lots of laughter in this session." **Artists**

Achievements celebrated:

"I love sharing my artwork and showing other people how to do things at my community centre." "My grandchildren will love the jewellery." **Participants** "[Participants] shared their work and gave each other praise and positive comments." **Staff** "They were all really proud of the jewellery they made - many of them wore their designs home." **Artist**

RECOMMENDATIONS / LEARNING

- » Participants appreciate knowing what activities will be coming up in each workshop. Create's artists will continue to give an overview of the workshop content at the start of each session.
- » Positioning the tables in a U-shape formation was an effective way to enable conversation between participants, volunteers and staff. Create will continue to ensure the layout of the workshop space lends itself to connection and conversation.
- » Participants particularly enjoy the opportunity to talk with volunteers and build inter-generational connections. Ashurst volunteering will continue to facilitate these relationships.

IMPACT / FUTURE PLANS

- » 100% of staff said that *creative:engagement* enhanced FCV Dorcas's programme of activities.

Staff feedback:

"Clients love coming to every session, being creative and meeting new people."

Participant feedback:

"I enjoy it so much! At 72 years of age, it's great to be a student and [be] creative with others."
"I love the whole day: the food, creativity, meeting other people. Staff and [facilitators] are friendly and approachable."

- » 100% of participants and 100% of staff said they would like to work with Create again.
- » The 2026/27 *creative:engagement* programme is currently being planned.



FUNDING / IN-KIND SUPPORT

creative:engagement was funded by Ashurst LLP.

Ashurst

39 Ashurst volunteers participated, attending workshops, building relationships and working creatively with participants. Ashurst hosts the project at its London office and provides lunch.

Volunteer feedback

"Sharing stories and laughs with the other [people] at the workshop gave me a really satisfying and warm feeling." "Wonderful experience meeting so many lovely people from different backgrounds and being able to make them laugh." "I was so, so shy before but the ladies were wonderful." "I feel my confidence has improved by speaking to a variety of participants." "This gave me confidence to get more involved." "The marbling was great fun!" "Nice to give back in such a joyful way." "I feel relaxed. [It's a] creative outlet. It's nice to be away from my laptop and do something creative." "It was an extremely rewarding session." "Super fulfilling experience." "[I'm] happy to work at a company that values these programmes." "[I'm] so proud of Ashurst." "It is a very lovely way to give back to the community and [I'm] happy that work provide this." "I have truly looked forward to [this]." "I thoroughly enjoyed the session and will definitely be returning to another workshop."

- » 100% of volunteers said their mental health and wellbeing improved.
- » 100% said they felt able to engage with the participants.
- » 100% said they improved their knowledge and understanding of the issues facing the participants.
- » 100% said volunteering increased their job satisfaction and their commitment to and pride in Ashurst.
- » 98% said they increased their confidence in working with people from a different background.

Participant feedback

"[I enjoyed working with the volunteers] especially when they helped me. My English is not as good as [my] Italian." "I chatted to new people and enjoyed talking to volunteers."

Artist feedback

"Many of the participants spoke about how important the workshops are to them and how much they value working creatively with the volunteers."