

Positive projects to boost mental health

Originally featured on Zurich.co.uk as part of World Mental Health Day:

[positive projects to boost mental health \(zurich.co.uk\)](http://zurich.co.uk)

Creative projects for older people in Oxfordshire

Age UK have developed their own [Index of Wellbeing in Later Life](#), focusing on people who are over 60. It states that the biggest direct factor for wellbeing in later life is the participation in enjoyable, meaningful activities. Further analysis looked at the [importance of creative and cultural participation](#).

Helen Fountain, [Age Friendly Creative Manager](#) at Age UK Oxfordshire told us about the work she is involved with. "Oxfordshire is a large county with lots of rural areas. It is easy for older people to feel isolated and lonely as they deal with the challenges of later life. The good news is that there are lots of projects and activities aimed at older people with the goal of improving health and wellbeing. We run some ourselves and signpost to others.

Creativity means lots of different things to different people. From book groups to art and crafts, going to the theatre, singing, dancing or sharing local history. Taking part helps people to develop or start new interests and skills, connect with others and keep active.

The barriers for people joining in include transport and accessible facilities but also knowing what is on and having someone to go with. We work with partners and projects to make sure their activities are accessible to older people. Our group of ambassadors volunteer as consultants, sharing their lived experience to help shape cultural activities across the region.

Initiatives like [Age Friendly Banbury](#) also help to recognise the needs of older people and ensure they are included. The vision for the initiative is of a "Banbury for all ages – a friendly and more accessible town for everyone".

Age UK's vision is a world where everyone can love later life. We don't want people just to survive but to thrive. Good mental wellbeing is key to this."