

**Creative Journeys Blog for Age of Creativity**  
**By Andrew Ward**  
of Essex County Council's Culture and Community Engagement team.



Creative Journeys is an innovative and exciting project led by Essex County Council's Culture and Community Engagement team. It explores the role of arts and culture in care settings and how this can support and maintain relationships between older people, care staff and the wider community.

Research funding of £125,000 from Arts Council England enabled us to deliver the programme with Anglia Ruskin University, focusing on older people who live in eight care homes across Essex. The key findings from the project will be presented by Anglia Ruskin University at a [Showcase Event](#) on 28 November 2018.

The rationale for the project was based on the knowledge that loneliness and social isolation have a negative impact on wellbeing and quality of life. Despite the proximity of others, older people living in care settings can often experience loneliness.

In addition to this, one fifth of the Essex population is aged over 65 and this is projected to increase by a third by 2030. Creative Journeys is therefore looking at how we can maintain meaningful relationships with each other and within local communities as the population ages.

As part of the project Anglia Ruskin University undertook case studies in three care homes, including interviewing residents and care home staff as they participated in dance, reminiscence, animation and orchestral work. This was led by four cultural organisations, [Age Exchange](#), [Magic Me](#), [Orchestras Live](#) in partnership with [Sinfonia Viva](#), and [Green Candle Dance Company](#).

An animation of the intergenerational arts project with Magic Me and artists Jane Gull and Emma Curtis can be viewed [here](#) whilst the final performance of the Orchestras Live project with Sinfonia Viva can be viewed [here](#).

The interim findings have already shown numerous interactions as a result of the sessions including chatting, encouragement, smiling, laughing, holding hands, waving and a huge progression from the first to last session where a sense of camaraderie developed with residents saying they *'become like a family'*.



Activities Coordinator at Alexandra House, David Harvey, said of the work with Age Exchange: "The residents were up and ready to come to the sessions before I came on shift! It's had a very positive impact on their wellbeing and they've really bonded as a group." Two films of the Alexandra House work are available to view [here](#) and [here](#).

There have also been various unexpected outcomes from the project; the Essex County Council's Quality Innovation team has commissioned the arts organisations to deliver a series of activity coordinator workshops with 'inclusivity through the arts' as a theme. In addition, the Brentwood Health & Wellbeing Board commissioned Green Candle Dance Company to deliver a series of dance sessions in day care settings.

As the current project comes to an end the project team are exploring how Creative Journeys can be taken forward, building on the learning and experience already gained, as well as the strong network of arts organisations that have developed.

If you're interested in hearing more about the findings of the project, then come along to our free showcase event to hear about the work, learn about the findings of the research, and get involved in creative workshops delivered by the arts organisations. Full details can be found [here](#).

**Twitter accounts:**

- Essex County Council: @Essex\_CC
- Culture and Engagement Team @ExploreEssex
- Anglia Ruskin University: @AngliaRuskin
- Age Exchange: @Age\_Exchange
- Magic Me @MagicMeArts
- Orchestras Live: @OrchestrasLive
- Sinfonia Viva: @sinfoniavivauk
- Green Candle: @GCDanceCompany