

Crafts Council Participation

Crafting with Pride Evaluation

Nick Kidd, February 2023



Contents

1.	Introduction	5
2.	Research and development	6
3.	Project overview	10
4.	Findings	16
5.	Next steps	24
6.	Project team	29



1

Introduction

Since the opening of the Crafts Council Gallery in 2021, we have aimed to deliver an annual community project, welcoming a specific community group each year, with the intention of building long-term relationships with participants and finding multiple routes of engagement across our public programme.

This report outlines the development and delivery of Crafting with Pride, the Crafts Council's programme for older LGBTQIA+ people. It outlines the research and development process as well as highlighting key findings and the impact it has had on the participants.

2

Research and development

Being a new gallery, we had an open brief for which audience groups we could work with, but it was necessary that we responded to the needs of our local community.

As part of the initial research and development process, it was important to identify any gaps of knowledge within the sector and understand what communities were most underserved, to avoid duplicating work being carried out by organisations and identify where we could develop expertise in working with particular audiences that could then be shared with the wider sector. Multiple conversations were had with a range of specialists and national partners including Creative Lives, Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance, Craftspace, UK Black Pride, Flourishing Lives and Mah Rana, a maker, researcher and curator with a specialism in participatory practice, as well as Lady Kitt, socially engaged artist, researcher and drag king. In addition to this, conversations were had with local organisations such as Forum+, Opening Doors and Islington Council.

We identified a lack of experience in the craft sector working with LGBTQIA+ audiences; conversations with local partners also highlighted challenges for older LGBTQIA+ people around isolation, loneliness and a lack of provision.

Other research shows:

- Older LGBT people are especially vulnerable to loneliness as they are more likely to be single, live

alone, and have lower levels of contact with relatives.

- The 2019 report 'Raising the equality flag Health inequalities among older LGBT people in the UK' uncovers that older LGBT people describe challenges in forming new heterosexual networks, with difficulties finding common ground or feeling unable to present as their authentic selves.
- The same report uncovers that older LGBT people experience difficulties accessing health care that appropriately deals with their sexual identity and their past experiences of negative interactions with health care providers shape the way they engage with and access health services in later life.
- Opening Doors' report Only Connect: The Impact of Covid-19 on Older LGBT+ People indicates 50% of respondents reported a negative impact on their psychological wellbeing, 37% felt more lonely than usual and 27% hardly ever or never had someone to talk to.
- In 2016 James McParland and Paul M Camic research estimates that there are around 56,000 lesbian and gay people living with dementia in the UK. However, taking into account trans, non-binary, bisexual, queer and other (non-cis, non-heterosexual) sexual and gender identities, the number is likely to be significantly higher. This figure would also not take into account numbers of those living with undiagnosed dementia and the large numbers of LGBTQIA+ carers.



‘I have been suffering from depression and loneliness for a long time and was looking for a group just like this where I could work alongside other people who are at my level and not be doing the organising which I have done for years. As it is a queer group it makes it perfect because I cannot access other venues as I used to due to age and disability. I have enjoyed the sessions I attended, they give me something to look forward and light up my days.’

3

Project overview

Crafting with Pride was an 8-week pilot project offering artist-led workshops to LGBTQIA+ people aged 50+. The programme was delivered in partnership with Opening Doors who provide support to older LGBTQIA+ people in London.

The workshops took place at the Crafts Council Gallery on Tuesday mornings when the gallery is closed to the public offering a much needed safe and sober space for LGBTQIA+ people.

Artists Al Hill and Eleanor West were recruited to deliver 8 workshops spanning a range of craft disciplines which were chosen by the participants. The workshop activities included embroidery, crochet, printmaking, and weaving, and were underpinned by the Craft Council's Make First pedagogy, putting an emphasis on the process instead of the final outcomes.

A total of 21 people participated in the programme with a core group of 14 participants returning to each session, resulting in 91 individual visits over the 8 weeks. The programme welcomed a cross-section of LGBTQIA+ community members, with many members enjoying the mix of genders which seemed somewhat unique to the programme. As 'craft' can sometimes be perceived as a gendered artform, this may have played a role in welcoming female, trans, and non-binary participants. Many of the core group self-identified as neurodivergent and/or Disabled with a variety of learning styles and access needs.





Positive relationships quickly formed within the group, with many participants attending for the social aspect, however there were some dynamics between members which required some careful management. Participants grew more invested in the making process, taking ownership in steering the workshop activities. Numerous enthusiasts emerged, expressing an interest in leading future workshops in their specialism.

Participants also visited the gallery independently and socialised with each other outside of the sessions. Upon the final session most of the core group shared their contact details with each other with the intention to meet up outside of the workshops. While we put the focus on simply taking part, the group took a great pride in the work they produced over the weeks and concluded the programme with a 'show and tell' style celebration.

‘[The impact has been] profound. Not being on the scene, which is centred around drugs and alcohol, with centres closing we are now prisoners in our own homes and cut off from each other. There is still a lack (zero-none) of mainstream provision in local authorities and charities and cultural venues. With the current climate of transphobia, murders and hate crime, it is important, now more than ever, to have safe spaces.’



4

Findings

Demographic data

17 of 21 participants completed a demographic information survey, for which they were able to self-identify for all questions.

The survey data uncovered an interesting cross section of LGBTQIA+ community members, notably a significant amount of Disabled, neurodivergent and working-class people. The complex identities of the group highlights the importance of careful project planning to ensure all participants have equitable access to groups of this nature.

- 5.88% participants were aged 49 and under, 23.53% were aged 50-59, 41.18% 60-69 and 29.41% were aged 70-79.
- 82.35% of participants self-identified as being white British, European, or other and 17.65% participants were of Global Majority ethnicities.
- 52.94% of participants self-identified as being Deaf, Disabled and/or having a long-term health condition, 23.53% as being non-disabled and 23.53% preferred not to say.
- 23.53% of participants self-identified as being neurodivergent.
- 58.82% of participants self-identified as being working class.
- 47.06% of participants self-identified as being female, 41.18% as male, 5.88% as genderfluid and 5.88% as non-binary.





- 5.88% of participants stated that their gender was different to that of which they were assigned at birth.
- The majority of participants described their sexual orientation as Gay.

Sexual orientation



■ Gay (35.29%)	■ Lesbian (23.53%)	■ Queer (17.65%)
■ Bisexual (11.76%)	■ Asexual (5.88%)	■ Prefer not to say (5.88%)

Project impact

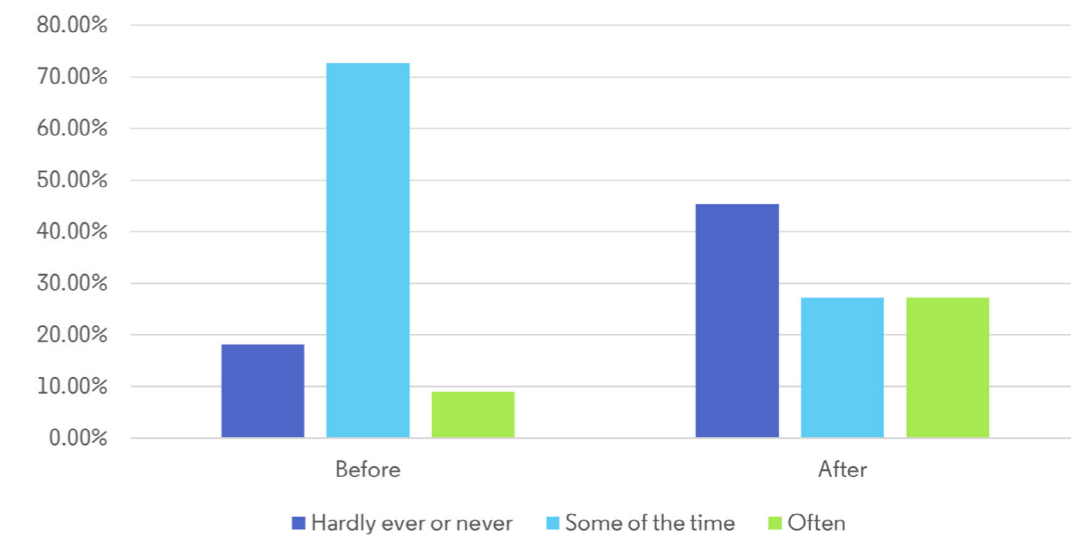
16 participants completed a qualitative baseline survey, 12 participants completed exit survey resulting in 10 sets of comparative data demonstrating the impact of the weekly programme.

These data sets demonstrate the impact that the programme has had on the participants' sense of loneliness and social isolation.

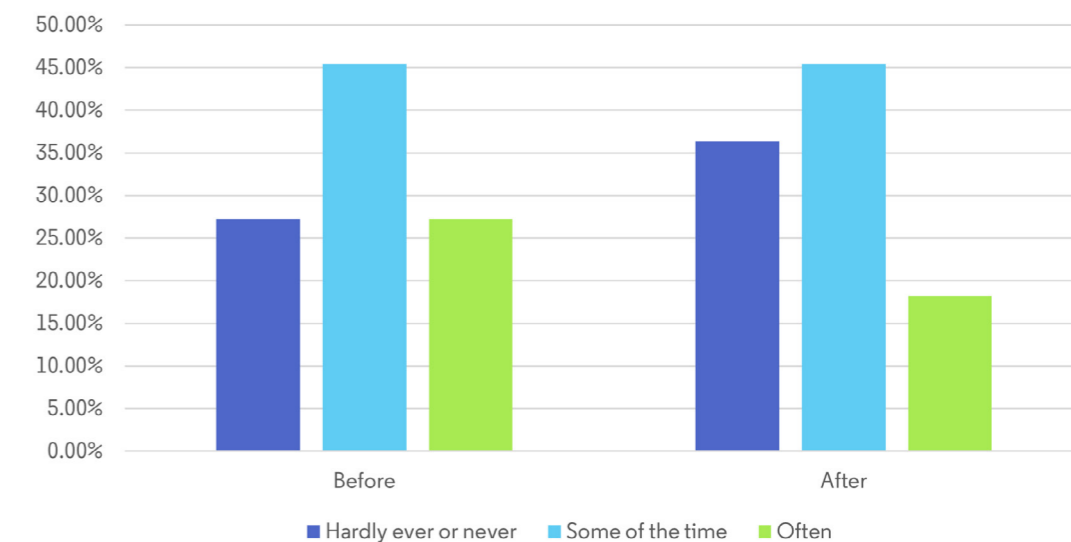
The data suggests there has been a significant decrease in participants feeling left out, a slight increase in participants' sense of companionship, and a slight decrease in participants feeling socially isolated. This data suggests there are a small number of participants who report no change in their feelings of loneliness and isolation; this is unsurprising given the short time scale and the chronic nature of their challenges. We acknowledge the complexities of working with groups of this nature and also recognise that an 8-week pilot programme will have limited impact.

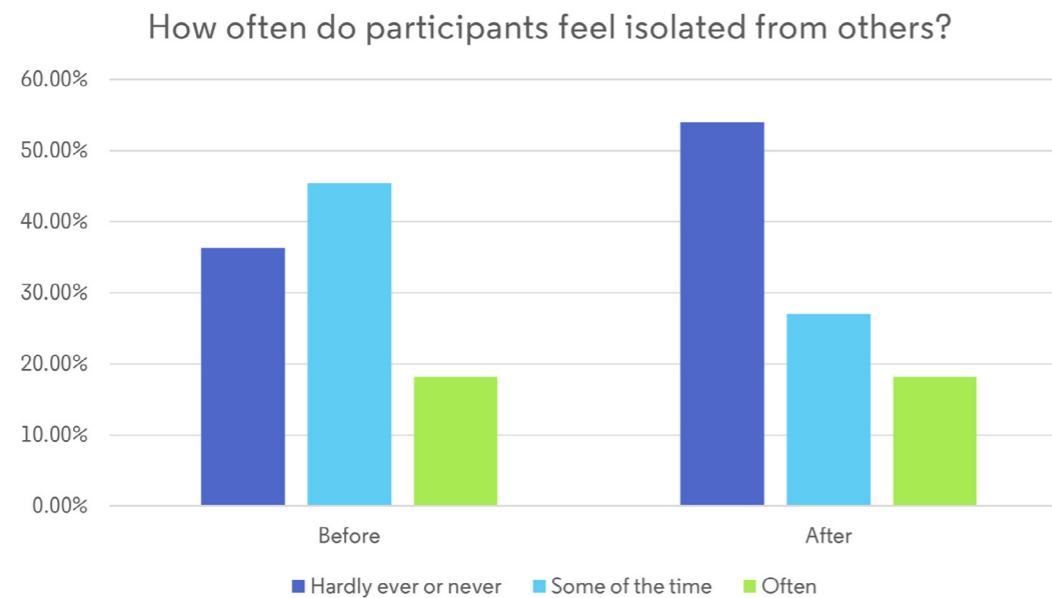
The narrative data gives us meaningful insight into impact on the individual participants and evidences the positive effect it has had on their day-to-day lives.

How often do participants feel left out?



How often do participants lack companionship?





Additional questions were added to the exit survey, gathering further data which demonstrates the positive impact Crafting with Pride has had on the group, and tells us that it has significantly improved the wellbeing of all participants involved. It also shows that the programme has created a greater sense of connectedness amongst participants.

- 83.33% of participants strongly agreed that the programme improved their wellbeing, while 16.67% agreed.
- 83.33% of participants strongly agreed the programme had helped them feel better connected to others, while 8.33% agreed and 8.33% were neutral.
- 91.67% of participants strongly agreed they had tried new craft techniques, while 8.33% agreed.

‘I have so looked forward to these days. I have very few social outlets and getting together with this group of people each week has been a big highlight of my past weeks. So the social part has been great and I’ve also gotten my creative juices going which has been a lot of fun. I will definitely miss the regular social/creative outlet. It has really lifted my spirits. I’m also very grateful for Nick putting this together and for Al and Eleanor for their wonderful creative inspiration. They make this a wonderful experience.’

5

Next steps

Over the 8 weeks, the group became highly invested in the Crafts Council and were keen to find ways to engage with our wider offer.

Following the 8 pilot sessions, the group has returned to the gallery on a monthly basis with different participants leading the sessions, from printmaking to knitting. While this approach is a low-cost way to sustain the programme, there is great benefit in working with queer or trans-identifying freelance artists to lead specialist workshops.

The most important thing the group needs is an accessible venue and safe space to meet and enjoy a range of creative activities. The need for programmes of this nature is clear, Crafting with Pride has demonstrable impact on participants, and reduced isolation amongst the group. While the creative activities are widely enjoyed by participants, the social interaction is the most significant factor.

Following the pilot, we have developed a baseline understanding for the nature of this work, as well as the challenges and limitations of the gallery as a venue for older people. While it seems like there is a minimal offer for older LGBTQIA+ in London and participants would benefit from sessions on a weekly basis, monthly workshops feel like the

most sustainable way forward, factoring in costs, resources, and emotional energy of staff.

While the programme welcomed a culturally and socially diverse group of LGBTQIA+ people, Global Majority participants were underrepresented within the group. Moving forward, the programme would benefit from finding additional ways to promote the sessions to QTBIPOC-focused groups and organisations, ensuring a wider range of audiences are aware of the programme.

‘I loved the print workshop. I have hung my print framed on my wall at home. The print workshop reacquainted me with my former (30 years ago) career in graphic design. I liked the weaving too! The workshop made me much more aware of craft as a ‘thing’. I had not thought much about craft before at all. It has broadened my horizons.’





6

Project team

Nick Kidd, participation producer
Zoe Dennington, head of learning and participation
Jazz Willett, learning and skills coordinator
Al Hill, freelance artist educator
Eleanor West, freelance artist educator
Lucy Jones, workshop volunteer

With thanks to Ian McGeough, community engagement coordinator, Opening Doors.

About Opening Doors

Opening Doors is the largest UK charity providing activities, events, information and support services specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, non-binary or gender fluid people over 50.

They offer specialist training for organisations, to help them understand the needs of older LGBTQ+ people.

Crafts Council Registered Charity Number 280956



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**