

Case Study

Shine A Light:

a participation film project for the over 60s



John Whall, Digital Participation Curator, QUAD



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Shine A Light was a participatory filmmaking project designed to give older members of the community the opportunity to show that life and learning do not stop at retirement.

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Shine A Light was a participatory filmmaking project for those aged over 60. It was designed to provide older members of the community with an opportunity to show that life and learning do not stop at retirement.

The two-year project was funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, with a grant of £195,000. The overall value of the project has been projected at £235,000.

Shine A Light tapped into the many diverse groups, societies, clubs and interests across Derby and Derbyshire. Nine different groups created and inspired stories about their interests and were paired with professional directors to turn them into films.

Participating groups included The Midland Railway Trust, Derby Society of Model & Experimental Engineers, Seen 'Ya Rights, The 99th Garrison, Derbyshire Tennis Club and Derby Scriptwriters.

Developing a creative team

It was important for us to work with professional producers and directors so that participants were able to create something of a really high quality.

We were very fortunate to have several brilliant producers and directors based in Derby who were willing to get involved and opened up their networks for the project.

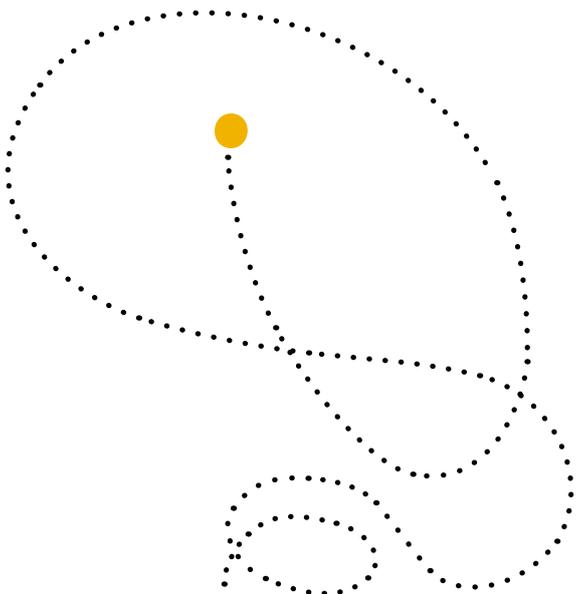
The producers were contracted through QUAD and then allocated a budget to produce the films. That budget was used as they saw appropriate. Many of the directors donated their time and even sourced funding and resources from other areas, including the University of Derby.

About QUAD

QUAD is Derby's centre for art and film. It is a gallery, cinema, cafe bar and workshop that anyone can use.

QUAD provides facilities and services that connect people and businesses to art and film, creating opportunities for entertainment, education and participation.

www.derbyquad.co.uk



Engaging participants

We researched groups and activities that already existed for people over 60. Some were run by organisations so we approached them through those organisations. Others we found contact details for and spoke to them directly, either over the phone or in person.

It was clear early on that emailing wasn't going to work. The groups we were approaching weren't necessarily engaged in the arts and they were skeptical about getting involved. They had seen fly-on-the-wall documentaries where their age group were mocked and they didn't want to be judged or ridiculed.

It was only through sheer persistence that we managed to build up trust with different groups and get them involved in the project.

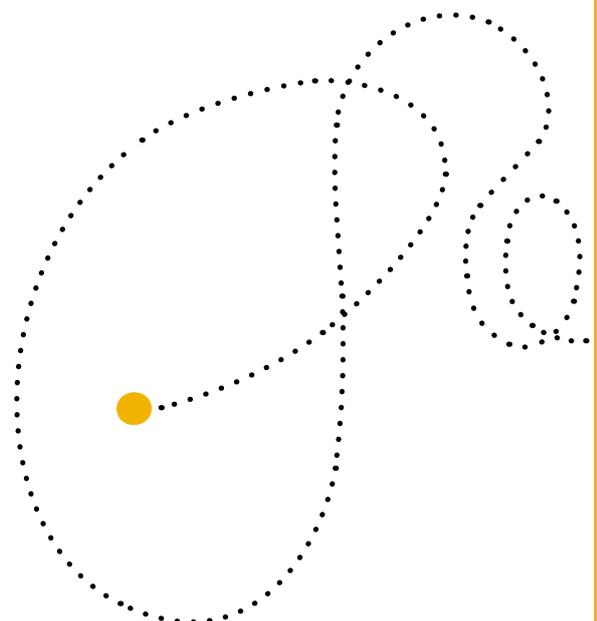
Learning along the way

The skepticism with which older people approached the project provided a huge learning curve for us. We'd worked a lot with over 50-year-olds at QUAD through GoldsQUAD and they had always embraced opportunities.

We expected these new groups to be the same but they weren't engaged in the arts and their responses were very different. If we were to repeat this project we would involve them much earlier so they could help plan the project and feel more comfortable with it from the outset.

We also found that it took far longer than expected for groups to reach a decision. We would meet someone over coffee and speak to them about the project but then those individuals would have to wait for group meetings with boards or fellow group members to decide whether they wanted to participate. It could be months after an initial meeting before we got a response.

We also learnt a lot about working with participants and directors. In the first phase of the project we worked with the groups to develop their stories before pairing them with directors. It was then difficult to find directors who were willing to run with the stories as they were and participants didn't want their stories to be changed. This was quite difficult to manage at times so we learned from it and in phase 2 we paired groups with directors so they could work together to develop their story.



Outcomes

- We worked with over 355 participants to make 12 films
- We delivered 54 workshops, development sessions and filmmaking experiences, including animation, editing, cinematography, directing for camera and online social media
- Some participants have taken interest in other groups involved in the project
- Participants have found new ways to promote their groups and encourage other over 60-year-olds to join them
- Seen 'Ya Rights' script has been developed into a stage play in a separately funded spin-off project and they are currently working with project filmmakers in making a short film version

We submitted the films to several film festivals:

- 'Leg, Arm, Head' directed by Scout Stuart and inspired by members of both the Seen 'Ya Rights and No Money for Butter Club has been successful in being selected for BFI Flare
- Short film 'The Carer' won five prestigious 'Awards of Excellence' in the Best Shorts Film Competition based in Los Angeles
- 'The Carer' had its World Premiere in official selection at the Oscar qualifying Palm Springs International Short Film Festival on 24 June 2016

Recommendations

Don't think of the age group as an age group; they are all individuals with different personalities.

Don't assume all older people are lonely and isolated because that's how they're often depicted. Some are and we should do everything we can to support those individuals but many retired people are really busy volunteering, learning and pursuing their passions. Those interests and activities should be celebrated.

Be flexible and adaptable and listen to participants. Shine A Light has evolved over the two-year period in response to participants' needs and suggestions.

Give yourself a long lead in time and involve your target audience in the planning stage so they're comfortable with the project from the outset.

The films

Watch the films and find out more about the project:

[Shine A Light Tumblr](#)

[Shine A Light Twitter](#)

[Shine A Light Facebook](#)

