

Save the Last Dance for Me Call out and Project information for Young People

1. Introduction: About CDAN

Creative Dementia Arts Network aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people living with dementia through the arts. We provide specialist information and resources, training and professional development, carry out projects, organise an annual arts and dementia conference and facilitate national and local (Oxfordshire) networks that foster connections and collaboration between commissioners and providers across arts, health and social care.

We focus on 3 areas of work

- Arts for health and wellbeing for older people: current projects include Creative Connections for older hospital patients with dementia with Oxford University Hospitals and Oxfordshire Community Hospitals and the Burton Walk for Health and Wellbeing for older people with Oxford University Gardens Libraries and Museums.
- Intergenerational work: Between 2003 and 2006, we worked with Modern Art Oxford on the Lost in Time and Time and Pace continuum projects. These brought together younger and older people with dementia who used the themes of identity, change and loss as presented in the artist Kerry Tribe's MAO exhibition to shape a short film they made about dementia, subsequently taken on tour in Oxfordshire, the UK and internationally. Our latest project, Save the Last Dance for Me, brings together groups of younger and older people who will use creative writing, music and dance for intergenerational learning.¹
- Training and Professional Development: FLOURISH is our pioneering Arts and Dementia Training course that offers professional development for creative arts practitioners who want to learn how to work with older people and those with dementia using arts, crafts, music, dance, drama and poetry or prose.

2. The Project: Save the Last Dance for Me

Save the Last Dance for Me (SLDM) is a pilot project managed and delivered by CDAN and Fusion Arts.

CDAN and Fusion Arts anticipate the project beginning in February 2022 and ending in April 2022.

SLDM will involve a group of younger people and older people living with dementia coming together for intergenerational learning. The groups will generate and collect memories, ideas, objects, ephemera about being old or young before meeting each other to share their experience and discuss and question their perceptions and those of society. Both groups will be involved in designing a Zine that showcases learning from the project and a toolkit providing guidance for other organisations about intergenerational work. These will be shared with arts, health and social care professionals, care staff, and people with dementia and their families via a webinar. Everyone involved in SLDM will

¹ Intergenerational learning, through which younger and older people share knowledge, expertise and information, enriches those on both sides of the experience. It happens informally in many families and communities. However social change in modern societies has resulted in a generation gap with fewer opportunities for young and old to interact easily with each other and the COVID pandemic and lockdowns have exacerbated this generational apartness. SLDM is an example of formal generational learning providing active learning for two generational groups who can provide unique perspectives from both sides, challenge stereotypes and stigma and gain insights into each other's needs, thus increasing their knowledge and understanding of what it is to be young or old in a diverse society.

help plan and organise the webinar that will present the results of SLDM followed by a 21st century tea dance to celebrate generations coming together.

Kate Wilkinson, CDAN's music lead, will lead 8 sessions of group work with older people who participate in specialist dementia activities run by Dementia Active, at its base in Banbury.² During the first 3 sessions, group members will be encouraged to reminisce about leisure activities of their youth especially music and dance and to bring in memorabilia to share. They will discuss young people today and develop questions to ask the younger people's group.

Cathrin Poppensieker, Fusion Arts, will manage the work of creative practitioners working with a group of younger people over 8 weeks. For the first 3 sessions, the group will use creative writing to explore the lived experience of being young and imagine what it means to be old, focusing on leisure activities such as music and dance. Then they will construct questions to ask older people.

3. Fusion Arts' Creative writing programme for Young People

Fusion Arts will be utilizing their "Write On!" - creative writing scheme - to invite Young People participants to reflect on themes such as "being young in 2021" and "being perceived as a problem teenager" to "the stigma of aging" and dealing with the concept of "facing the loss one's identity". The programme aims to promote social connections, to enhance wellbeing and to increase confidence and the feeling of self worth through group work and interaction with like-minded Young People while gaining new skills.

Fusion Arts will offer a series of creative writing workshops where Young People get the chance to discover the power of writing and develop their own voice through dynamic activities in poetry and storytelling. Through the series they will explore new pathways for expressing themselves and presenting themselves to others.

What is it like being young in 2022? What are the stigmas that young people face, and older people face, in today's society because of their age?

DCAN has kindly offered to start the Young People participants off with an introduction session about dementia. This session aims to increase awareness and spark the Young People's thought/ creative process. This introduction will be followed by four sessions (each 75 - 90min, one session per week) where the Young People will work with two writers to explore new forms in poetry and storytelling. Engaging with dynamic exercises and discussions, the Young People are encouraged to discover their own voice and put their own stories on the page, whether this is through fiction or poetry.

The fourth, fifth and sixth session will introduce the two groups to each other, the sessions will be hosted by DCAN and artist Kate Wilkinson. Kate, Catherin and Maria Pasiecznik Parsons (CDAN project evaluator) will then facilitate 3 sessions with both groups to enable them to discuss perceptions of youth and old age, raise awareness of stigma and stereotyping associated with the generations and begin to challenge these besides exploring differences and similarities in their experiences of adolescence through music and dance.

Given the ongoing pandemic, we are aware that some group members may want to reflect on social isolation, loneliness, and/or marginalisation. We shall support individuals who want to and help them manage any difficult thoughts and feelings.³

² Dementia Active is a well-established charity providing high quality specialist activities for older people with dementia in North Oxfordshire <https://dementiactive.co.uk/>

³ All staff working for CDAN and Fusion Arts work ethically with vulnerable people in line with their safeguarding policies. We adhere to a best practice principle of relating to people as unique individuals which means not assuming that everyone will want to participate in a group in the same way. Group leaders are highly experienced facilitators who monitor and moderate group discussions including responding sensitively to and supporting individuals who wish to share personal memories of a loss, crisis, abuse etc. The threshold

In the final 2 sessions both groups will work on a Zine (facilitated and helped by Fusion Arts' Creative writing mentors), the webinar and 21st century tea dance.

4. Working with younger people: call out for collaborators

Fusion Arts and CDAN are seeking expressions of interest from young people/organisations working with young people who would like to participate in Save the Last Dance for Me.

- This project will start in February 2022.
- It's going to run online for 8 weeks (pause over half term), one session of max 1.5h per week. The sessions are likely to take place on Tuesdays or Thursdays 4:15 - 5:30pm.
- We will offer a £10 compensation (this is not a payment, but merely a compensation for the participants time) per session per Young Person (potentially paid in Amazon vouchers).
- We are looking for a group of 8-12 young people, who have an interest in working with elderly and/or dement people and who'd love to gain experience in creative writing. Young People who would be keen to be involved in an important intergenerational project to raise awareness for dementia and build a bridge between generations.
- **To express your interest in participating in this project please email info@fusion-arts.org.**

for disclosure in a group setting varies from person to person but group leaders will ensure that any concerns are shared appropriately with Dementia Active or other organisations involved in SLDM.