

Museums framework for living and ageing well

We need to change our perceptions of older people

- Ageing is a social justice issue, older people's rights are as important as everyone else's
- Ageing and age identity are fluid and multidimensional
- Ageing is experienced by everyone – shaped by social and cultural contexts (including background, education, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, personality)
- Older people are diverse (age intersects with other aspects of our identity including ethnicity, culture, sexuality, LGBTQ)
- Older people have desires, hopes, ambitions (now and in the future)
- Loss can shape people's lives, we need to acknowledge and understand this

Older people and museums: questions to consider

- What is it about older people that makes them different to the rest of the population? What is it about ageing and the ageing process that liberates us, but that limits us?
- What will enable older people to feel welcome, feel enjoyment, feel challenged, make them think and give them ideas? How can museums enrich their lives?
- What will make a difference to someone's life from engagement with collections?
- Why do you want to engage older people in museums and galleries? What is in it for older people?
- What will encourage older people into museums and galleries? What is it about your work that's going to bring in people who wouldn't otherwise come?

Engaging older people

Active engagement

Open-ended engagement experiences (no curriculum, no end point); keep learning (in the widest possible lifelong way); adult, not childlike activities; venturing into curiosity; self-directed, active process; being playful, seeing new things, feeling wonder / magic / awe

Connecting

To people, things, nature, the wider world; family, friends, community; nature connectedness; to wider issues, political issues; with experts, specialists (in an everyday, accessible way); museum collections to wider social issues

Living in the moment

Immersion; being absorbed in activity; engaged in the present, the now; sense of flow; part of the life-course, older people as themselves (not as grandparents, carers); this moment in time; taking notice; seeing things differently; being mindful; contemplation, reflection

Meaning and purpose

Feeling valued by others, by organisations like museums, and by wider society; satisfaction with life; activism and political engagement; being listened to and having a voice; giving; something to think about and focus on; element of challenge