

# share. our journey

Using creativity to unlock the future  
[www.age-exchange.org.uk](http://www.age-exchange.org.uk)



# age exchange

**“She loves the music when they start singing. She can sing along, with all of them. All the old time songs – we sing them all.”**



## Colin & Doll

Doll's dementia means that her memory draws her back to her childhood. Doll doesn't understand why she can't go 'home' to her mum and childhood home – a home that exists in the past.

As part of our Inspired Caring programme, Age Exchange supports Colin (Doll's son and carer) and Doll to help create new memories they can share.

Age Exchange has over 30 years' experience working with older people using Reminiscence Arts to improve wellbeing and combat loneliness and isolation in older age.

Our work spans three decades and today Age Exchange is leading in the field of improving the wellbeing of people with dementia through the development of an evaluated Reminiscence Arts intervention.

Our work is diverse and we blend delivering national projects such as intergenerational arts with running a vibrant community hub in South London.

## What is Reminiscence Arts?

Reminiscence Arts is Age Exchange's unique approach to working creatively. Simply put, it is the creative exploration of memories.

We bring to life our stories and experiences, our shared heritage or even the history of our shared spaces. It's why our work can be narrative, linear or when we are working with people with memory difficulties, a memory that is recalled by an action.

For example, unlocking the smell of Chanel on your mother's dressing table, the feel of woollen socks on a cold day, it's just like riding a bike, something you never forget.

It's why the use of Reminiscence Arts is at the cutting edge of dementia support. Our work builds bridges between the past, the present and the future.



# unlocking lives

**“Absolutely, it was the beginning to Ivy’s re-introduction to society! Her social, emotional and physical health has reaped the benefits. She had before been diagnosed with depression and was often quoted as saying that she wished she was dead on a daily basis. We have a lot to thank the group for – Ivy has been rejuvenated.”**

*Quote from a carer about ‘Inspired Caring’*



There are over 670,000 dementia carers in the UK most often friends and family.

## Working with dementia

With the number of people living with dementia set to top 1 million by 2022, at Age Exchange we have developed a unique service – RADIQL.

Combining reminiscence with the arts (drama, dance and music), Age Exchange has developed a method of working with people with dementia that has a proven impact.

The pilot programme of our model, funded by Guy’s and St Thomas’ Charity, has already shown that the intervention has a positive impact on wellbeing and quality of life as evaluated by Royal Holloway, University of London.

Our experience using Reminiscence Arts in dementia care can provide professionals with a new set of skills to engage with those they are providing care for.

This year, we have worked in partnership with Kings College Hospital (KCH) on a ‘Delivering Dignity’ project improving the quality of care for people with dementia across 16 wards in the hospital. We have also worked with Oxleas NHS Trust to improve engagement of people with dementia in defining the physical environment they live in.

## Supporting Carers

Our whole person approach to dementia care includes weekly carers groups providing vital support to 25 couples – providing 5,000 hours a year of support for carers and their loved ones.



# unlocking the community

**“I’m a bookish sort of person, volunteering here means I have the opportunity to meet families and share my enjoyment of the library”**

Paul Harris



The Library A volunteer led service operating 6 days a week. With over 1,200 unique visitors a month.

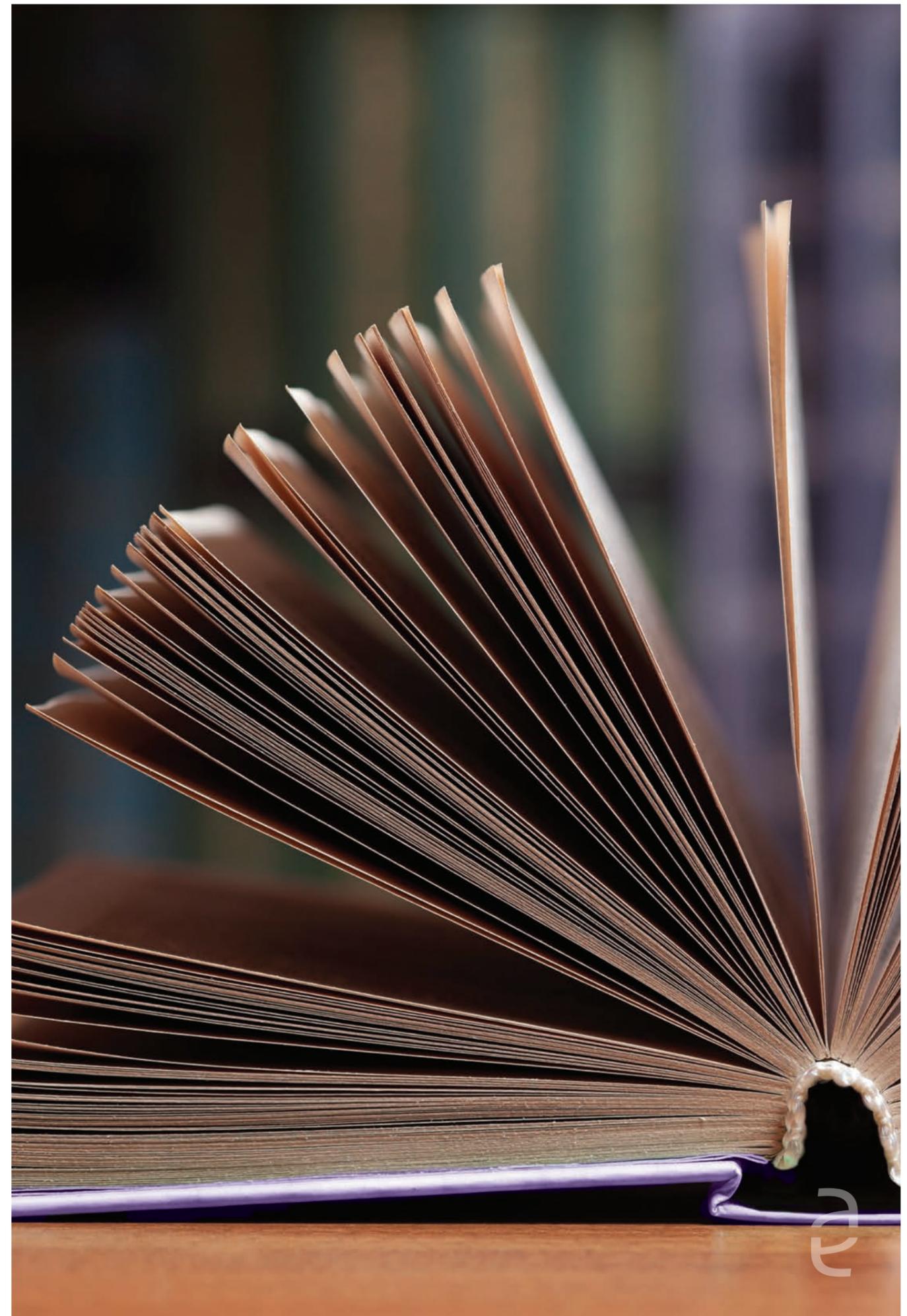
The Exchange, our community hub in Blackheath, provides a space that inspires, and is designed as a mid-century home where we bring together the local community and volunteers. In our theatre we provide support to carers in a non-institutional, inviting setting.

Our community hub has gone from strength to strength in the last 2 years with a footfall of over 140,000 a year. We provide a whole host of services:

- A volunteer led library service operating 6 days a week. With over 1,200 unique users a month.
- Daily activities including; Pilates, a knitting group, art classes and rhyme time for pre-school children.
- A not for profit café open 6 days a week.

Last year our volunteers supported the Age Exchange with over 18,500 hours of their time. Our volunteers range in age from 14 to 94 and run our café, library, intergenerational sessions, support our carers groups and much, much more.

We’re proud to be the stepping stone to employment for almost 10% of our volunteers.



# unlocking opportunity

**“It has been a privilege to share the childhood memories and experience of people who were alive during the First World War. It brought the time to life, more than a documentary or book. I’m honoured to have built a real emotional connection with a past I haven’t experienced and with new friends from a generation my own friends would never meet.”**

*Alex Mustapha, Project Assistant*



As part of our wider Intergenerational arts programme over the past year, Age Exchange has been working on a major WWI reminiscence project recording over 125 family stories across London.

Our thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting Children of the First World War.

The project culminated in a film installation and a theatre production at the Bridewell Theatre in London in August 2014. The theatre production included children from St Matthews Academy and Plumstead Manor School.

Our intergenerational arts programmes and expertise is called upon on an international stage.



As part of the project Age Exchange digitalised some 5,300 personal letters, photographs and period artefacts brought in by interviewees.



# unlocking the future

**“Age Exchange is a creative, vibrant place - we are pushing the boundaries in our work with dementia and working with older people.”**



Today nearly 2.5 million people aged 60 or more are becoming increasingly isolated socially.

Age Exchange is developing as an organisation. We are championing the arts sector by bringing academic excellence to the field of arts interventions for people with dementia.

The future for the Age Exchange is threefold:

**Deliver a quality national service in the field of dementia care**

We will become champions in the field of arts and wellbeing influencing the quality of activities provided in care settings and improving the skills and knowledge of professionals in health and social care.

**Develop and protect the community hub in Blackheath**

We will provide a natural home for organisations and people with shared values in Southeast London in a sustainable community hub.

**and recognise Diversity through community arts**

We will build excellence in the field of intergenerational arts developing capacity in other organisations and our own work improving community cohesion and fostering creativity.



# unlocking our principles

It's not just what we do but the way that we do it that's important. We put people and principles at the heart of our work with individuals, the community and our partners.

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## Respect and dignity

We put people and authenticity at the centre of everything we do. We believe the focus on person-centred care is the cornerstone of creating respect and dignity. It underpins our work with older people and in bringing the generations together, as well as in the way we form partnerships to deliver our goals.

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## Innovation

We believe people have a right to be able to express their creativity throughout their lives and we use the creative arts as the basis of our work. As an organisation we strive to be innovative and create new opportunities to improve the wellbeing of older people and to create new partnerships.

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## Diversity

We are able to meet a diverse range of needs by putting the individual at the heart of how we work and in fostering creativity. Our work enables individuals, regardless of their background and needs, to engage in a way that respects their experiences.



Age Exchange is recognised as the leading UK charity working in the field of reminiscence.

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