RSA CASE STUDY-
'BRIDGING THE DIVIDE'
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*How can a **creative arts initiative** on **social media** be used as a **collaborative tool** within local **communities** to **reduce** potential **isolation** of the elderly by **bridging** connections between the **generations**?*
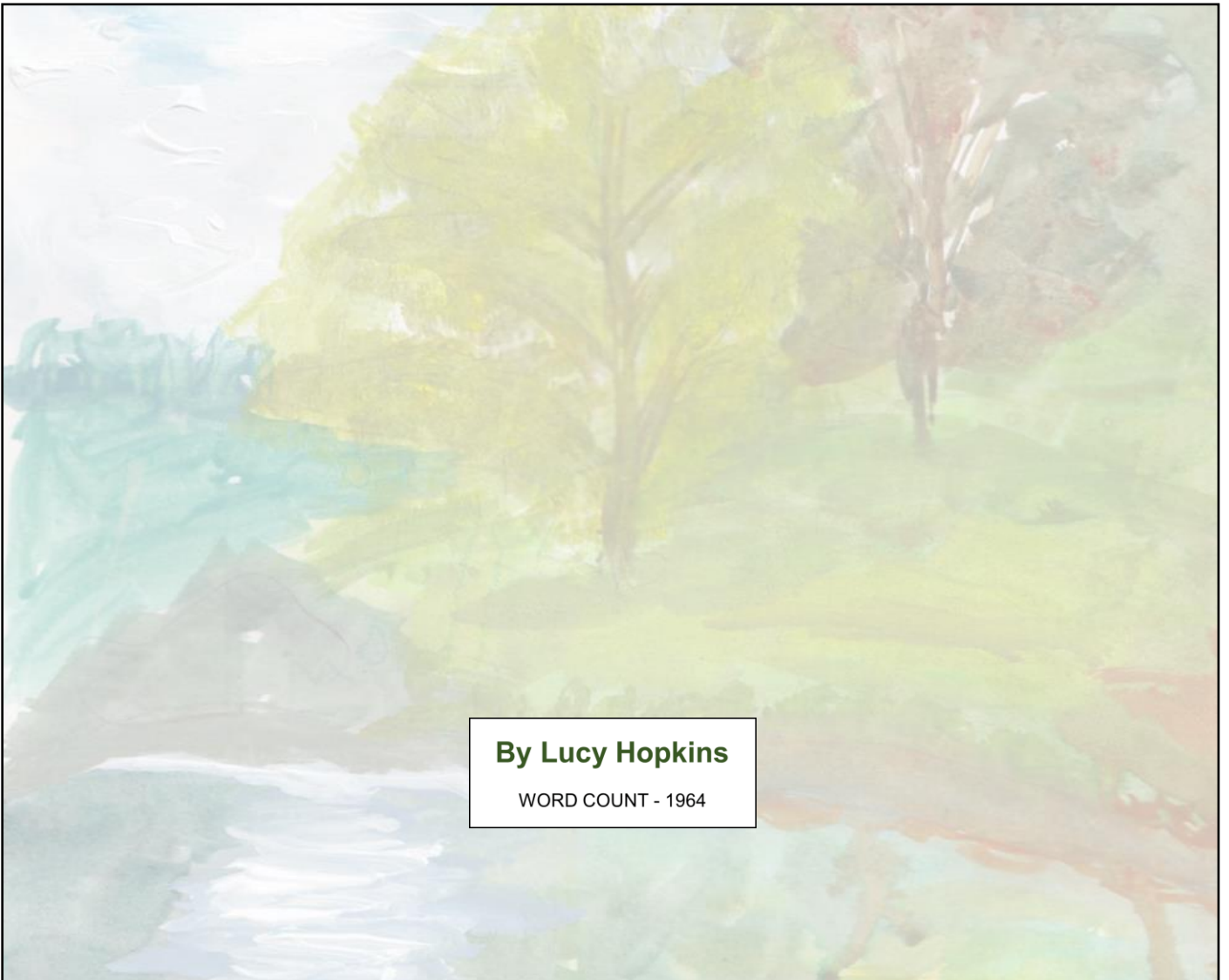
By Lucy Hopkins

WORD COUNT - 1964

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INTRODUCTION

The constant advancements within today's health sector is one of the main contributors to the increasing life expectancy of the elderly population. This is a positive step towards a sustained quality of life for the elderly but can also have negative implications. These are the increased severity and development of health issues, or even contributing to early death.

The projected number of older adults to be impacted by loneliness is set to rise to 50% by 2025 (New Scientist., 2018: 6 [online]), and recently exacerbated by the enforced isolation of COVID-19. Reinforcing the need for better end of life care for old dependents, and creative intervention could be the solution. A community creative arts group, through an online and physical format, would act as a collaborative tool to bring generations together and socialise during art related activities.

This concept was inspired by the evidence of how creative expression can encourage the visual communication of feelings. These activities highly effective and beneficial for the mental health of the elderly, especially in intergenerational groups. This is presented by the comparisons within Erik Erikson's 'Psychological Development Model'. Confirming that older adults who do not participate in creative activities experience minor improvement to their symptoms of depression. (Johannsen., 2019:51 [online]). Regular exposure to these groups can also promote future self-resilience in handling poor health.

Existing events held by charities such as *Age UK* are somewhat effective. Although, issues like the 'Participation Gap' are still marginalizing certain individuals through barriers to digital communications and opinion of the arts (Johnson., 2020:105 [online]). The key to success in arts initiatives is sufficient planning and reaching those who would benefit the most. Therefore, a collaborative arts framework would be a useful idea to some extent. This case study explored the root causes of this social issue within the elderly population on a local scale.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

A1 - To identify the prevalent social isolation and division present within today's elderly society.

- Carry out primary research to educate and gain public perspectives, including those of the main target audience, on the topics discussed in this case study.

- Carry out secondary research to gain context, find current theories and establish the root causes of loneliness in some elderly communities.

A2 - Explore why social media has the power to divide and connect particular social groups.

- Carry out secondary research to analyse current demographic trends of social media.

- Identify the factors that influence the most and least active users.

- Current systems put in place to tackle negative and false activity.

- Factors that contribute to the success of social groups on certain platforms.

A3 - Increase awareness of the multiple social benefits and collaborative potential of creative arts in community groups.

- Collect secondary research that highlights the positive social impacts and personal benefits of taking part in art related activities

- Gain valuable feedback from the target audience on proposed solutions to the problem presented by the case study.

METHODOLOGY

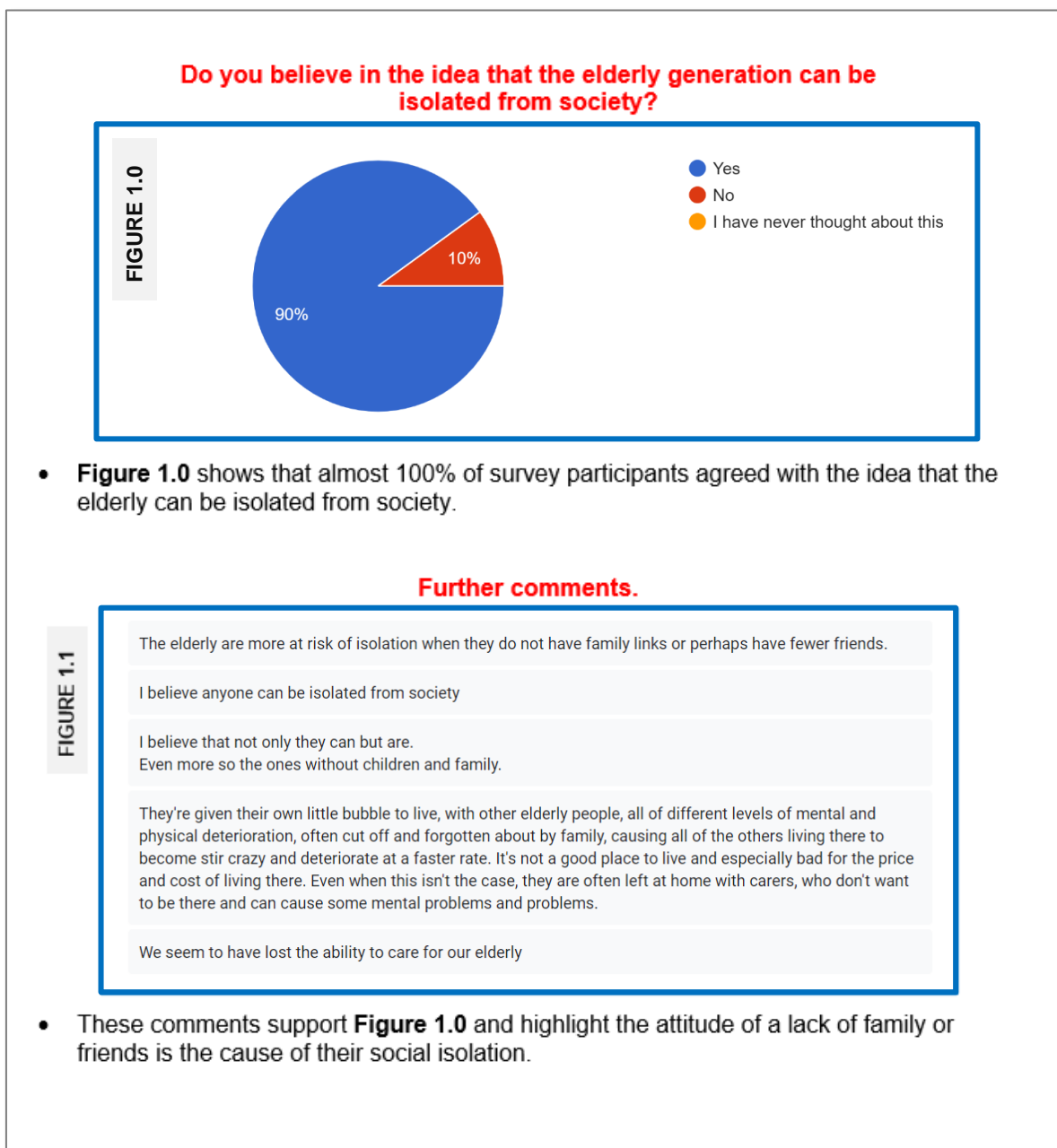--

The collection of primary data helped to gain current perspectives and feedback from local people. This information was gathered via a series of online questionnaires, submitted to Facebook and email. Despite being time consuming, the direct format these methods were the best means for the purposes of this report.

The general survey covered all investigative avenues of the case study (see **appendix A**). The Targeted surveys were emailed to relevant stakeholders, including the elderly cohorts within Winchester. For secondary research, the process was also organised into these avenues and kept the search relevant (see **appendix B**). This information was sourced through an academic data base (EBSCO) and filtered searches on Google. All sources recorded are dated between 2015-2020 for accuracy.

FINDINGS

GENERAL SURVEY (10 Responses)

The outcome of the 'General Survey' was wide variety of responses from the local people of Winchester and surrounding areas.

FIGURE 1.0

Do you believe in the idea that the elderly generation can be isolated from society?

- Yes
- No
- I have never thought about this

10%

90%

- **Figure 1.0** shows that almost 100% of survey participants agreed with the idea that the elderly can be isolated from society.

Further comments.

FIGURE 1.1

The elderly are more at risk of isolation when they do not have family links or perhaps have fewer friends.

I believe anyone can be isolated from society

I believe that not only they can but are.
Even more so the ones without children and family.

They're given their own little bubble to live, with other elderly people, all of different levels of mental and physical deterioration, often cut off and forgotten about by family, causing all of the others living there to become stir crazy and deteriorate at a faster rate. It's not a good place to live and especially bad for the price and cost of living there. Even when this isn't the case, they are often left at home with carers, who don't want to be there and can cause some mental problems and problems.

We seem to have lost the ability to care for our elderly

- These comments support **Figure 1.0** and highlight the attitude of a lack of family or friends is the cause of their social isolation.

A1 – 'SOCIAL DIVISION & SOCIAL ISOLATION'

How & Why do you think older communities are disconnected from today's society?

FIGURE 1.2

They may find it harder to meet new people and make friends. Also there is the fact that technology has greatly advanced and the elderly population may find themselves cut off if they dos not have support to access the internet and social media formats.

They rely too heavily on younger generations and expect them to be there for them and don't know what to do when they aren't

Lack of information, lifestyle change (comparing to one they grew up in), technology

Don't keep up with technology, aren't as interested at an older age, personal attitudes become more negative (everything blamed on the next generation etc)

They are not able to get around as often as they would like. They are often put in anti-social places away from others, except other elderly people.

Technology is a huge divide . Also messages from gov and society do not included them

- The two frequently mentioned reasons for this 'disconnect' was the negative attitudes of the elderly and their lack modern social awareness.
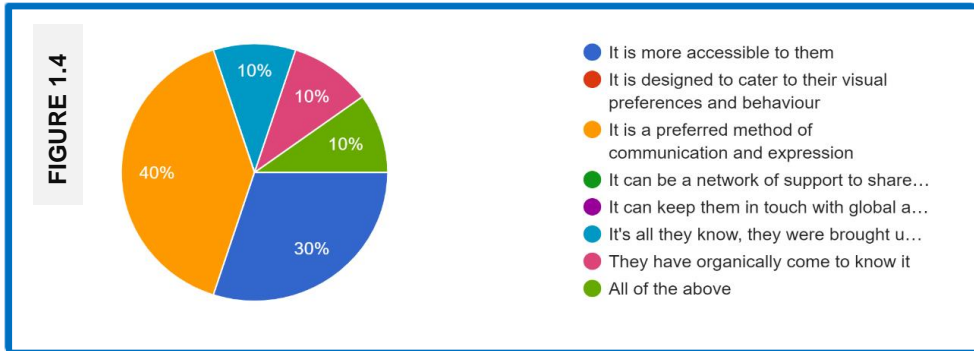
What can be done to prevent and solve the effects of this social issue? (e.g. home visits/community groups etc.)

FIGURE 1.3

To encourage a greater community responsibility to be involved with programmes to address the issue.

More support for those living alone that aren't family

Direct contact through means they can understand and be a part of.
They need to be feeling valued, useful and purposeful. They have to feel their life has a meaning and they mean something to someone.
Despair happens when one believes no-one cares.

A Youth buddy? Or someone younger that helps them out with odd chores etc or can teach them tech...possibly whilst unemployed or alongside a college course

Peer group mentoring, and doing something useful with young people, they are not as scary as the media make them out to be

Teach them how to use technology, cheaper/ free public transport

Initiatives to check up on them regularly or teach them how to communicate electronically.
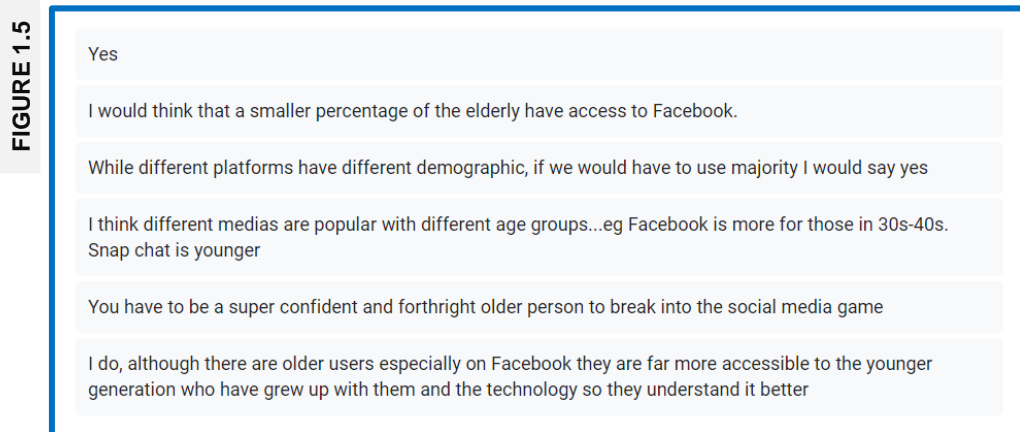
Town/village support groups

- According comments in **Figure 1.3**, there is a collective opinion about the need for greater responsibility within local communities to provide more targeted support for elderly persons living alone.

Why do you think social media (e.g. Facebook/Twitter) is generally used by the younger generation?

FIGURE 1.4

10%
10%
10%
40%
30%

- It is more accessible to them
- It is designed to cater to their visual preferences and behaviour
- It is a preferred method of communication and expression
- It can be a network of support to share…
- It can keep them in touch with global a…
- It's all they know, they were brought u…
- They have organically come to know it
- All of the above

- This pie chart shows a unanimous agreement that social media is more accessible and the preferred communication method of the younger generation.

Do you agree with the previous statement?

FIGURE 1.5

Yes

I would think that a smaller percentage of the elderly have access to Facebook.

While different platforms have different demographic, if we would have to use majority I would say yes

I think different medias are popular with different age groups...eg Facebook is more for those in 30s-40s. Snap chat is younger

You have to be a super confident and forthright older person to break into the social media game

I do, although there are older users especially on Facebook they are far more accessible to the younger generation who have grew up with them and the technology so they understand it better

- The comments in **Figure 1.5** reveal that the type of platform can influence the common user demographic, with mentions of Facebook and older people.

A2 – 'SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL INTERACTION

**Or can you think of another age group with an equally higher online presence?**

FIGURE 1.6

Not known

Millennials, equally as high. Most 40-50 year olds also, but not as high a presence.

Facebook is used by 50 somethings

People around 30-40 (parents age) seem to have a big presence posting photos of their children etc on Facebook

Maybe more middle aged on Facebook and younger everywhere else

No

- The previous series of data (**Figure 1.4/1.5**) and **Figure 1.6** have revealed mixed views. Some respondent's thought that Facebook has a considerable older adult user base.

Do you think that there are any real impacts of using social media?

FIGURE 1.7
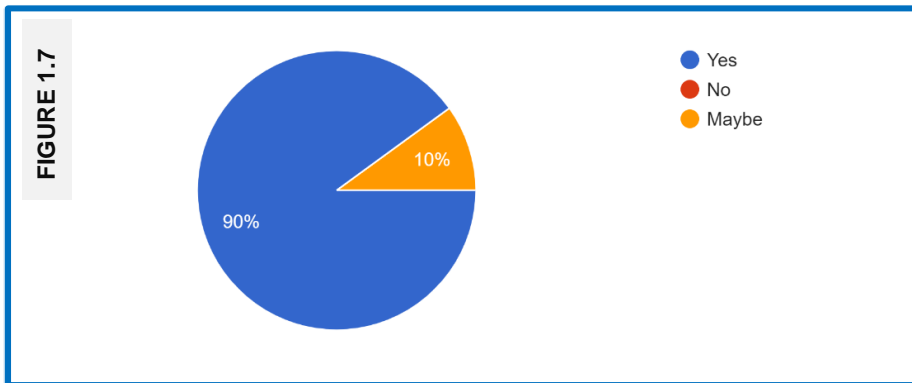
- 90% of respondents believed that there are impacts of using social media.

FIGURE 1.8

Are you aware of any recent changes in the way social media platforms are dealing with misinformation and offensive content online?

- 🔵 Yes
- 🔴 Yes, but think that as part of being on social media you are always at risk to this.
- 🟠 No
- 🟢 They are supposed to be but they are self serving entities, the onus is on the individual to stay safe
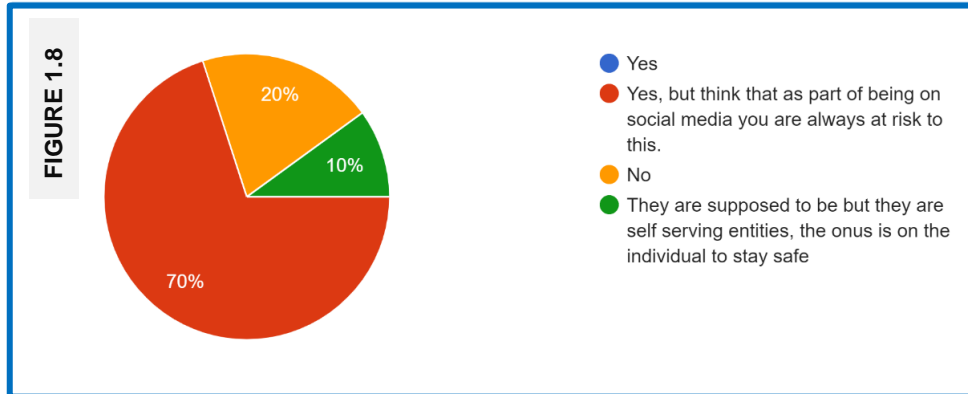
- This pie chart presents the public awareness of platforms dealing with negative activity, but this is unavoidable and that it is down to the individual to be safe.

FIGURE 1.9

What do you think the barriers are for the older generations in accessing and using social media?

Their refusal to use it

Younger generation were raised using it. It's harder for older people to get used to it

Not having/ understanding the technology e.g. phones. Not being able to use it as easily due to poor eyesight, motor functions etc.

Not having smart phone or computers, poor eye sight, less money to afford wifi maybe

Phones, phobia of tech, no one to explain it!!

No tech, no WiFi and fear of both. Saying that wihha but of patience and simplicity, bridge can be crossed

How to use it and how it all works

Potentially because using a computer or smartphone could be difficult to start with if you had no one to help or guide you with it.

- As mentioned in **Figure 1.2**, Figure **1.9** reinforces that accessibility, understanding, and personal prejudice are the barriers to the elderly's use of digital communications and modern-day awareness.

A2 – 'SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL INTERACTION

How have you communicated and stayed in touch with family/friends during COVID?

FIGURE 2.0

Mostly via social media apps, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook

Social media

Text, phone calls, video calls, messenger etc.

Skype, zoom, whats app, text, messenger, house party, Pinterest.

WhatsApp call, zoom, ms teams, all social apps

FB, Instagram, WhatsApp, Zoom

Phone, Facebook and Instagram

Zoom, group chats, video calls, social media trends, tagging eachother in posts and memes, etc.

In person, phone calls, social media

- The comments in **Figure 2.0** illustrate the ways in which the respondents kept in touch and had communication with others during COVID-19. The most common means of connection was a social media.

Do you think creative practices/activities (e.g. art or drama) have a positive impact on a person's well-being and mood?

FIGURE 2.1

80%

20%

- Yes
- Yes, but only if a person is not forced too take part
- No
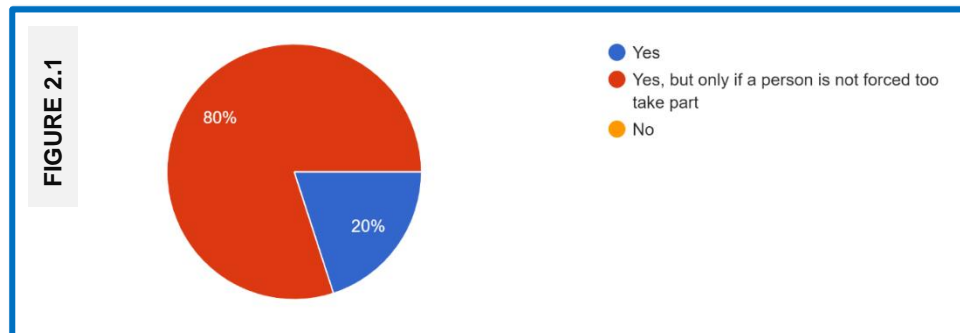
- Over three-quarters of respondents believed that creative practices only have a positive impact if a person is not forced to take part.

**What are your thoughts of art being used as a form of therapy?
Or as an initiative to encourage others to express themselves?**

FIGURE 2.2

I think it's good if the person has an interest and finds it easy to do and not stressful

It seems like a good thing which seems to work

It makes sense, it's a good way to express your emotions without having to really tell anyone and you get something at the end of it.

I think its positive, having time to focus on being creative is almost like meditation, but better imo.

Brilliant idea - creativity as release

Connecting right method for right person can be very successful

It's good for relaxing helps with anxiety/stress.

It can help people to forget any worries they may have for a short while, and can relive stress and even act as a distraction from pain.

- **Figure 2.2** shows the mutual view that art can offer a form of mental release and means of expression, and if enjoyed this creativity can have a positive impact.

A3 – 'CREATIVE ARTS INTERVENTION

FIGURE 2.3

Do you think art-based clubs (online and in person) are an effective method of bringing people together?

- 100% of participants thought that art-based clubs, regardless of the format are an effective method of bringing people together.

FIGURE 2.4

If yes, why do you think so? Can you think of any examples?

Community feeling and support from other people

Shared interests

All clubs where people share common interests are a good way to bring like minded people together

There may be a social aspect to belong in a group.

Drawing club, WI

I would actually say bit of both. Art groups are great as people can say common interest. However, they could possibly intimidate ones that would like to try "something" but feel too shy or insecure to approach "professionals". Hope this makes sense :)

You can make friends, learn a new skill and relax and clear your mind.

They have the potential to be a positive experience for people.

- As described in **Figures 2.1/2.2**, **Figure 2.5** supports that one of the many outcomes of creative arts groups is the potential for creating friendships and connections with other people.

A3 – 'CREATIVE ARTS INTERVENTION

FINDINGS

TARGETED SURVEY (2 Responses)

ELDERLY STAKEHOLDERS

This survey was targeted at local elderly residents and charities. Email correspondence (**appendix C**) with a Hampshire charity member (MHA Hampshire) substantially increased the quality of this data.

FIGURE 2.5

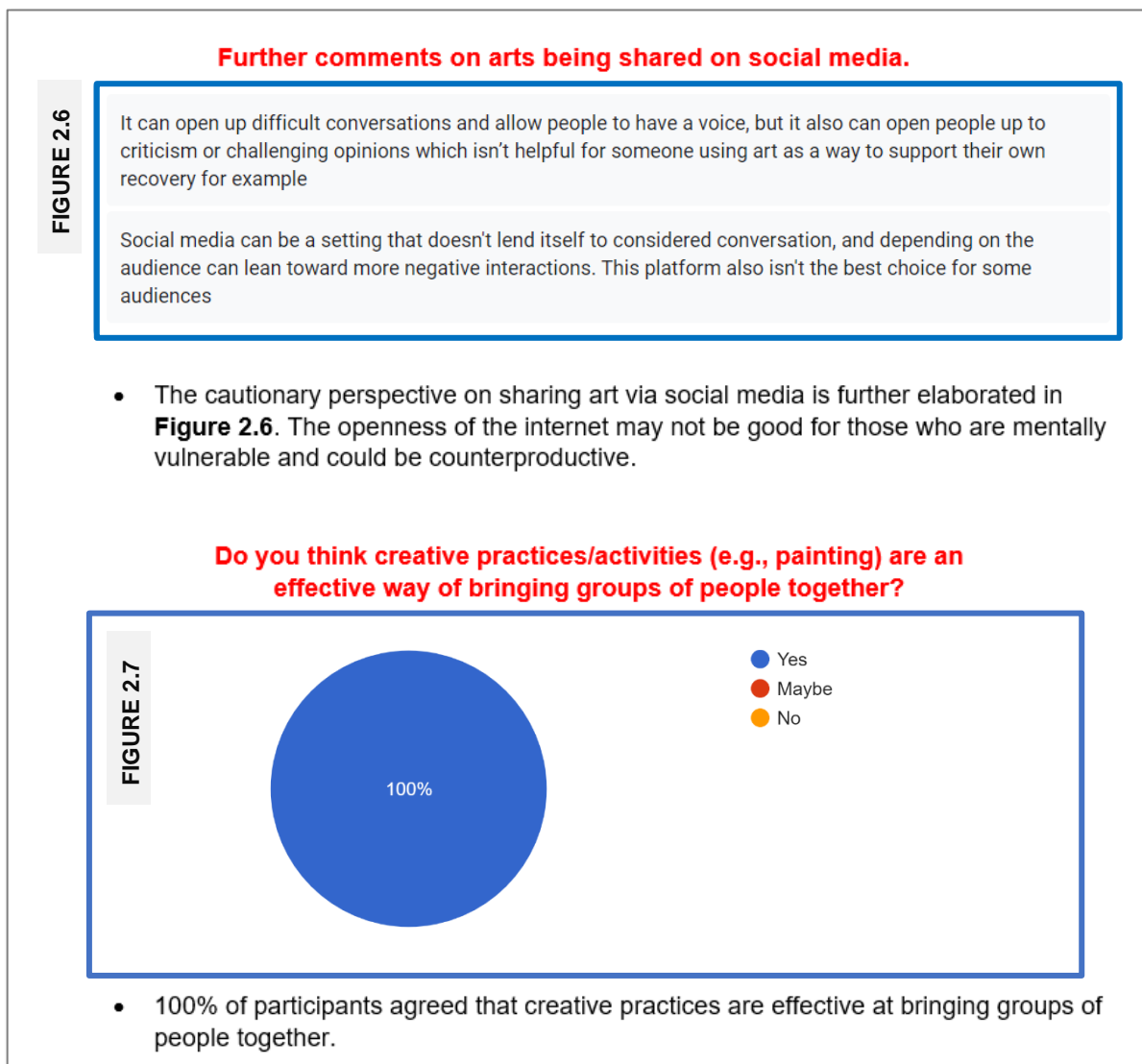**What do you think could be done to solve the potential loneliness and isolation within some elderly communities?**

> That's a difficult one. There are many things online but you need the PC, iPad or smartphone to access them at the moment as Covid has put paid to all the groups I used to belong to. I have not made much use of the activities that MHA are offering because I keep busy with craft projects of my own, have a garden to care for as well as housework.
>
> I guess linking people through the internet would need investment if they don't own the right equipment.

- This comment mentions that they acknowledged the effectiveness of the group (MHA) they take part in. As well as that COVID-19 has prevented in person meetings, and lack of access to technology meant some members miss out on activities.

FINDINGS

TARGETED SURVEY (2 Responses)

CREATIVE CLUB STAKEHOLDERS

This survey was targeted at local arts groups and societies. The direct feedback industry executives of the Hampshire Cultural Trust was very helpful.

FIGURE 2.6

Further comments on arts being shared on social media.

It can open up difficult conversations and allow people to have a voice, but it also can open people up to criticism or challenging opinions which isn't helpful for someone using art as a way to support their own recovery for example

Social media can be a setting that doesn't lend itself to considered conversation, and depending on the audience can lean toward more negative interactions. This platform also isn't the best choice for some audiences

- The cautionary perspective on sharing art via social media is further elaborated in **Figure 2.6**. The openness of the internet may not be good for those who are mentally vulnerable and could be counterproductive.

FIGURE 2.7

Do you think creative practices/activities (e.g., painting) are an effective way of bringing groups of people together?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

100%

- 100% of participants agreed that creative practices are effective at bringing groups of people together.

A3 – 'CREATIVE ARTS INTERVENTION

A2 – 'SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL INTERACTION

FIGURE 2.8

If yes, can you comment why you think so?

The work we do at Hampshire Cultural Trust is all about using cultural engagement to bring people together. It's a great common ground, relaxing activity that allows people to socialise, learn from each other and take time for themselves

Have experiencing offering these groups and have seen the relationships that form as a result

- The comments in **Figure 2.8** convey their personal experiences of creative groups, and how they have benefitted from them.

A3 – 'CREATIVE ARTS INTERVENTION

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

The trends within the research have been categorised into reoccurring themes to reference the case study aims and objectives.

PREJUDICE & ASSUMPTIONS

ACCESSIBILITY & SUPPORT

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

CREATIVITY & ARTS SOLUTIONS

PREJUDICE & ASSUMPTIONS

The most apparent opinions throughout the primary data questioned the role of the elderly within society. They were characterised as being cut off and disconnected from today's modern world, and therefore most at risk of experiencing loneliness. This was suggested in **figures 1.0** and **1.2**, that social conditions can influence their wellbeing, such as minimal contact with family and friends.

This is true in some instances, as many older adults are situated in rural areas (**figures 1.1/1.3**) or have limited access to venues that offer social interaction (e.g., libraries/cafes). Although, **figure 1.2** also highlights a stronger point that anyone can experience these conditions. There is little evidence to prove a correlation between age and human risk to this social issue.

However, according to the secondary results, vulnerability to loneliness does increase with age. (Gardiner *et al.*, 2016:164, [online]). This data also confirms that circumstances associated with the elderly, such as limited access to public transport, can severely hinder their way of life. Often contributing to the impacts associated with social isolation, such as low mood and self-esteem (Courtin *et al.*, 2017:812, [online]).

On the other hand, this judgement is dependent on the individual variables mentioned before. Geographic location or family communication are contributing factors but fail consider the strength of personal influence. This is conveyed in Daniel Perlman and Letitia A. Peplau's original quote: 'Loneliness is a subjective… feeling of lack or loss of companionship…' (The Campaign to End Loneliness, 2020, [online]).

The previous quote backs the conclusions of this section. Social isolation and loneliness can affect people regardless of their age. Although, the elderly are more susceptible to experiencing the barriers that cause this issue. Posing the question whether the main contributor to social divisions within this demographic is access to technology?

ACCESSIBILITY & SUPPORT

There is mixed evidence on the relationship between technology and the elderly. The most frequent is that aversion to using technology (**figure 1.9**) is the root cause of the social exclusion in older adults. Yet, there are wider issues preventing the elderly utilising this social tool, including personal knowledge and phobias of technology. This is further illustrated by an elderly stakeholder in **figure 2.5**, who strongly believes that there is a lack of 'end of life' ICT support on a national scale.

Nonetheless, the events of COVID-19 relating to digital engagement of the elderly, can disprove the previous statement. Lockdown caused serge in the use of internet and mobile applications in older adults and kept the isolated in touch will their loved ones (**figure 2.0**). This shift is backed by the recent user statistic at 4.5 billion people worldwide (Kemp, 2020, [online]).

Despite innovation within this field, barriers are still preventing people of this resource. As discussed in the primary data, digital exclusion in smaller communities is caused by inadequate elderly tech support services (e.g., computer loans/workshops). Therefore, this 'Digital Divide' is one of the main contributors to the case study problem (Nieminen, 2016:32, [online]).

However, the previously mentioned circumstances of COVID-19 have arguably narrowed digital marginalization in old dependents. Unfortunately, this has also increased individual anxiety and bias against using technology (Wilson, 2020, [online]). Advertisement of this resource in more of a positive light and greater public awareness of 'The Digital Divide' could be a catalyst in closing this tech gap. (Ebsochost, 2015:6, [online]).

The regulation of local support tools could help prevent the barriers leading to elderly loneliness. The 'new normal' has meant this age group now uses digital communications and social media in their everyday lives. Influencing industry design of devices and social applications to cater to this growing audience. Although, has this focus on digital content for the elderly neglected the progression in traditional media?

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

The younger generations are considered to have the highest presence on social media (**figure 1.4**), with platform design and programming being catered to their visual preferences (**figure 1.5**). These features include a minimal aesthetic and targeted advertisement. Although, **figures 1.5** and **1.6** also suggest there is higher engagement in other age groups, particularly regarding older adults on Facebook.

The threat of negative interactions and fake news are arguably greater influences on user engagement (**figure 1.7**), regardless of age or platform censorship (**figure 1.8**). However, this fact is uninfluential considering the current frequency of global social media users, at 4 billion a month (Kemp, 2020, [online]).

Even though the younger generations are hailed as the largest demographic in this statistic (Cox, 2020, [online]), the secondary data also revealed this distribution is more dependent on a platforms unique content. Furthered in 41% of Facebook's (globally favoured platform) user base being aged 65 or more (Yeung, 2019, [online]). This also correlates to the change of Facebook's algorithm, to increase age inclusive content and priority of community related posts (Hutchinson, 2018, [online]). Aimed to encourage positive and beneficial online experiences to decrease negativity (Cox, 2020, [online]).

This digital equality has increased the connectivity of older adults. However, the major variable drawn in the primary data of online conflict, is inclusive to all generations. Adolescents are more susceptible to inappropriate content (Raising Children Network (Australia) Limited, 2020, [online]) and the elderly to fraudulent information. This proves the responsibility of the user, as social media has also been linked to be beneficial for the improvement of elderly brain function (IDX, 2020, [online]).

Both data sets mentioned factors that can influence a person's online experience. Age, safety, and content interaction. The older generations are classed the most vulnerable throughout the case study. However, the combination of cognitive health and communication benefits for this age group proves that social media is a viable resource against loneliness. Is accessibility still the only barrier for the target audience?

CREATIVITY & ARTS SOLUTIONS

The consistent theme was that the creative arts can have positive outcomes for a person's mental health. As a form of creative release to express emotion and reduce feelings of anxiety (figures **2.2** & **2.3**). Art groups are particularly stimulating for older adults and often bring together individuals of similar situations (e.g., lonely/widowed etc.). Although these groups are successful, especially in online communities, the issues of access and knowledge of these initiatives are still excluding the elderly from these benefits (**figure 2.5**). They are also often less resilient against online critique and conflict (**figure 2.6**).

The endless evidence and field of therapy argues that there is a greater influence of positive associations between the arts and mental wellbeing for older adults (Martin, 2020, [online]). These outcomes, including help with symptoms of dementia and increase cognitive health (Zeilig *et al.*, 2019:49, [online]), arguably outweigh these contrasting problems. Existing charities and groups use this as a creative-group mechanism, the most successful include intergenerational and inclusive classes (Poulos *et al.*, 2020, [online]).

This final section included all the trends mentioned throughout this case study. These are that a lack of access and support to digital communications is preventing the elderly of moral boosting activities. Considering a mixed media approach for the proposed solution would minimise exclusion, despite individual preference inevitably outweighing the reach of the solution's potential benefits.

CONCLUSION & FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This case study has explored how a social issue can affect the most valued generation in our society. The primary research provided insights from key stakeholders (**appendix C**), whilst existing theory brought up valid facts and comparisons. The report also questioned the viability of the proposed design solution, and further feedback (**appendix D**, p26) offered fresh perspectives to reveal areas for refinement.

This improvement relates to meeting the specific needs of the target audience in greater depth. The use of both digital and non-digital resources would make the solution more inclusive to those without technology. Traditional media would reach individuals on a local scale, whilst the online sphere would attract a wider audience. Integrating technology related workshops and guidance could also strengthen the personal outcomes of the solution.

Although this idea would not prevent the issue of elderly loneliness and social isolation on a large scale. It would contribute to the current mitigation and community awareness of this social divide. This combination of creative intervention and social media would help to build personal resilience within the aging population and decrease the health impacts in the long term.

The contents of this report could offer inspiration for other academic research in the future. The next steps for the design solution would be practical testing and prototyping. Locally trialling a beta platform or social media page for the arts group would test its traction online. Along with a series of printed brand media, to compare the reach to elderly individuals. These improvements would offer valuable references in future development and gain honest feedback directly from the target users.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY	SENT TO/POSTED ON
General Survey	**Facebook** Personal Feed - https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008501854870 DMD Winchester Page - https://www.facebook.com/groups/172293992888085
Targeted Survey – Elderly Stakeholders	**Email Contacts** MHA Hampshire Charity - (Winchester@mha.org.uk) https://www.mha.org.uk/find_a_service/hampshire/ enquiries@ageconcernhampshire.org.uk https://www.ageconcernhampshire.org.uk/ enquiries@brendoncare.org.uk https://www.brendoncare.org.uk/care/our-care-homes/meadway headoffice@greensleeves.org.uk https://www.greensleeves.org.uk/care-homes/st-cross-grange-winchester-hampshire/
Targeted Survey – Creative Club Stakeholders	**Email Contacts** Hampshire Cultural Survey (enquiries@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk) https://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/ Tate (https://shop.tate.org.uk/contactus.html) https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/contact-us Art Care Salisbury (sft.artcare@nhs.net) https://artcaresalisbury.uk/ (info@thecolourfactory.org.uk) https://www.thecolourfactory.org.uk/

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH AREA	KEY WORDS (ALL REFERENCED TO TARGET AUDIENCE)
Social Divide	Social connection/social divide/generation gap/digital divide/social connection/social polarisation/disconnect/community.
Social Media	Social media/social platforms/facebook/demographics/statistics/user/activity/reach/engagement/digital conflict/censorship.
Creative Arts	Art therapy/expression/communication/creative arts/mental health/arts activities/arts initiatives.
Design Solution (Art Club & Desk)	Creative arts groups/social media art clubs/community art clubs/collaborative art clubs/branding/logos/COVID safety/dividers/art desks.

APPENDIX C

EMAIL COMMUNICATION
Email Correspondence with a team member of the MHA charity (Hampshire). This service provides care for over 17,000 people, with the aim to reduce isolation and loneliness in the over 55s.

MW MHA Communities Winchester <Winchester@mha.org.uk>
15/10/2020 10:29

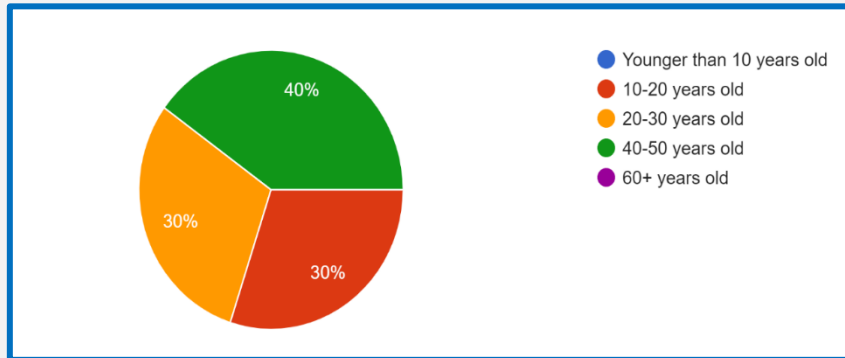To: Lucy Hopkins (L.Hopkins.19)

Hi Lucy,
We are a charity that supports older people to live independently in their own homes by providing support with shopping and volunteer befrienders. We usually run a programme of 20 activities 6 days a week across the Winchester District but as these are currently on hold we have moved most of these to online sessions. We are currently producing weekly exercise, tai chi, cheerleading, singing content which is sent to members vis email to view on or private You Tube channel. We also have some interactive groups via Zoom as well as some additional online content with quizzes, short documentaries, craft and cooking demonstrations. Unfortunately I cannot just forward your link to our members who are on email (which is about a third of our 360 members) as this goes against GDPR guidelines, what I can do if it's of use to you, is ask if any of our members would like to receive the link to the survey. Please let me know if you would like me to do this. For moe information about our remote services please see our promotional video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGGTEppPFkU&t=20s
Kind regards
Anna

APPENDIX D

GENERAL SURVEY (data not mentioned in main body)

How are old you?

Legend:
- Younger than 10 years old
- 10-20 years old
- 20-30 years old
- 40-50 years old
- 60+ years old

Pie chart values: 40%, 30%, 30%

The most common age of the respondents for this survey was 40-50 years (40%).

What are your thoughts on creative groups on social media that also act as a way of communicating personal feelings?

Really helpful if you feel safe and comfortable

Good way for some people to feel connected

That makes sense as that's what creativity is about

Not sure

Scrapbooking is a great idea

Great idea!

Good idea but must be managed properly.

Art can help people to communicate feelings, even if it is by doing this subconsciously.

They're okay, just not as effective as meeting up in person. Less can be conveyed.

These comments show a series of mixed viewpoints of whether online creative groups are as effective and sociable as in person meetings.

Do you think the following is a good idea?

"A 'creative art club' (based online) design to resolve and spread awareness of the potential loneliness within elderly communities in towns and cities.

This initiative would be aimed at helping to improve their mental health and wellbeing, through taking part in collaborative activities (online & in local venues) with other members."

- Yes, I think this is a good idea
- No, I think this idea it could be improved
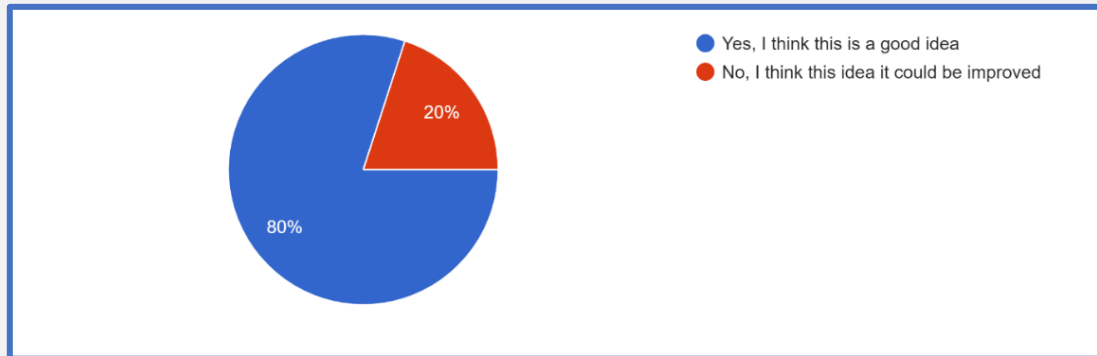
After proposing a design solution based on the social issues discussed in this case study, over three quarters of respondents thought it was a good idea.

If this 'Art Club' were to arrange an in-person meeting, (with COVID measures in place) Would you be worried about meeting face to face?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No
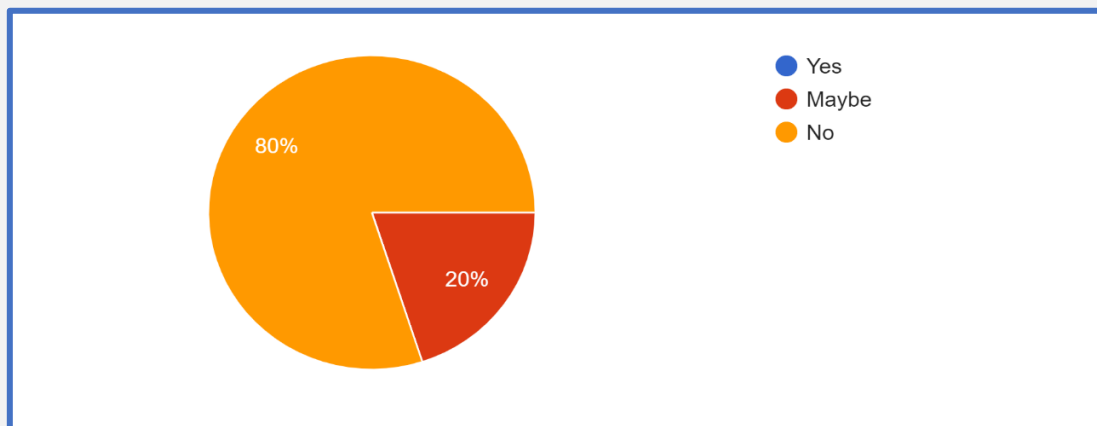
If this design solution existed and organised in-person meetings, 80% of survey participants would not be concerned to take part if COVID measures in place.

These COVID measures would include a specially designed art desk with screens, for protection and be a window to the person on the other side.

Do you think this concept is a useful and good idea?
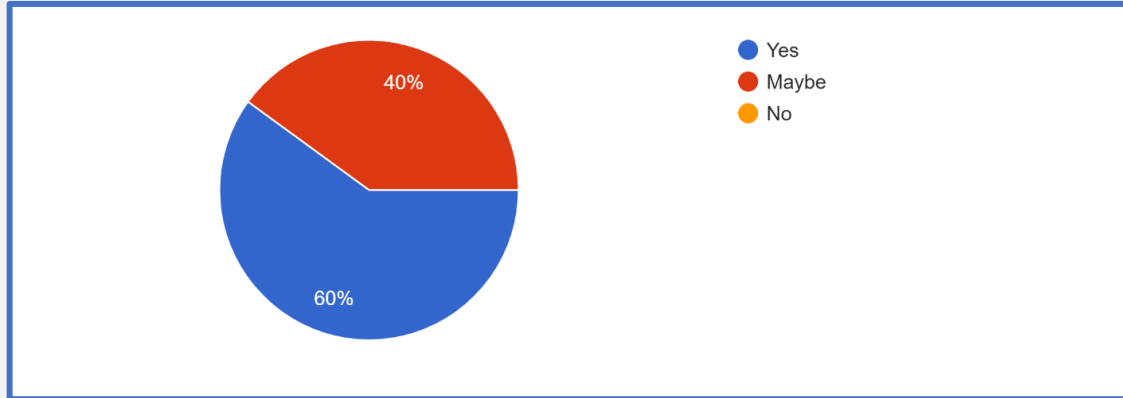
This pie chart shows that over half of the respondents thought a purposely designed (COVID protection) art area and desk would be a good idea for use in club meetings.

What social media platform would most suit this art club idea? (remember the target users)
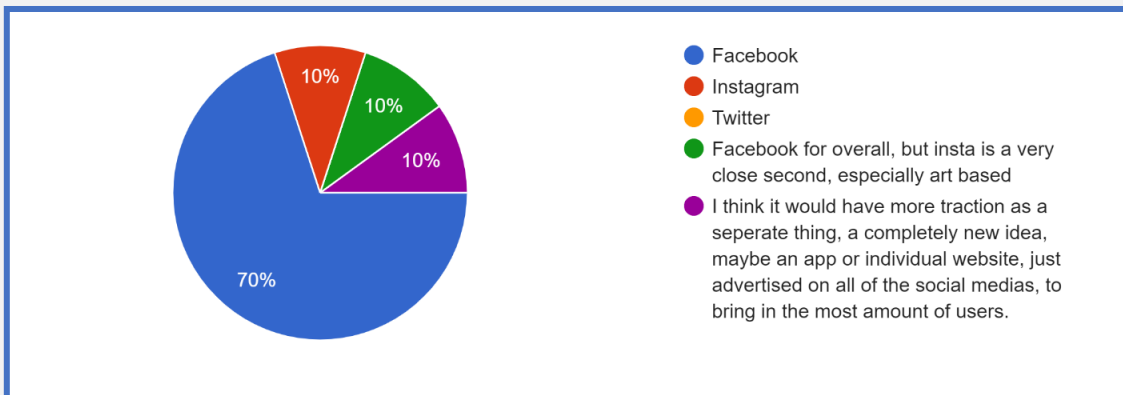
The respondents of this survey clearly thought that there is a considerable elderly demographic on Facebook and would make it the most suitable platform for the design solution.

Do you think this would be a beneficial and effective idea?

Yes

I think so if it's made easily accessible to the older generation and not all marketed via social media

Yes it will bring the community together and they can have shared experiences and express themselves

Yes

The idea isn't new and fresh, particularly not by using social media. It has been done before alot. It's alright, as current groups like this are, they're just quite reserves and you'll encounter the same problems. It just could use some more thinking.

Maybe, to a very specific target audience though

The final question in this survey received constructive and positive responses regarding the overall viability of the design solution. The main feedback was about the level of suitability for such a conservative demographic, and how it can be refined to their abilities or familiarities.

This word cloud is a visual representation of the most repeated words mentioned in the responses to this survey.

APPENDIX E

ELDERLY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY (data not mentioned in main body)

Do you feel social media has the potential to connect you with others, or can divide you from the rest of society?

> It connects as I Skype family every day and share photos etc. on WhatsApp. Also keep in touch with friends from the currently defunct Alzheimer's support group.

The comment shows that this respondent felt that social media is a regular part of their day and helps them keep in touch with friends in a support group.

Are there any age groups (e.g., teens/young children) that you feel currently 'disconnected' or 'out of touch with'?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No this does not bother me
- No I don't feel 'out of touch' with other generations

100%
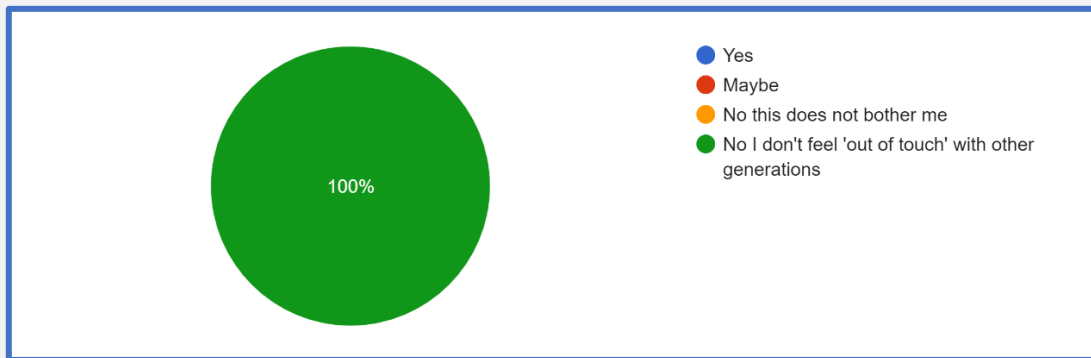
This pie chart conveys that the respondents felt in touch with other generations.

Do you think there is enough awareness of the potential loneliness and isolation within some elderly communities?

- Yes
- No
- I don't think people understand enough to care

100%
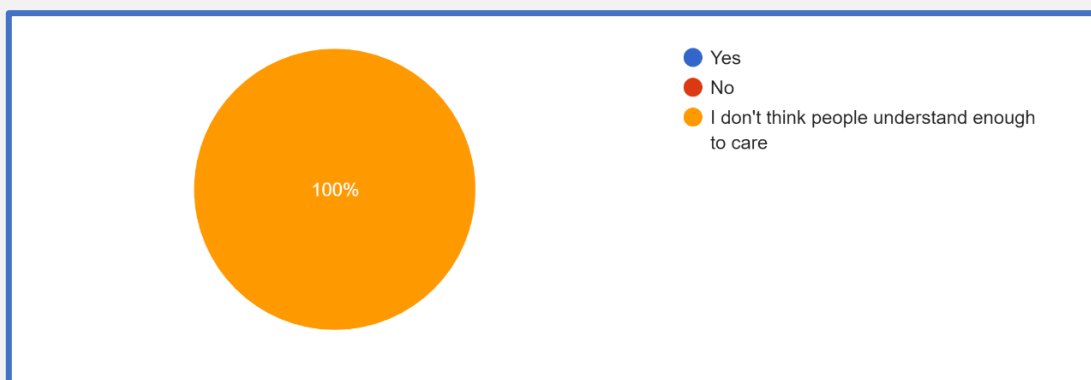
This shows a shocking additional answer added by a participant to whether they felt that there is enough awareness of social loneliness in the elderly population.

Further comments.

> Until you are in the position of being alone, particularly if you had a large family, I don't think you really appreciate how solo people feel.

This comment elaborates the meaning behind this stark response, with the belief that such little awareness is the reason others do not appreciate their situation.

What is your opinion of social media?
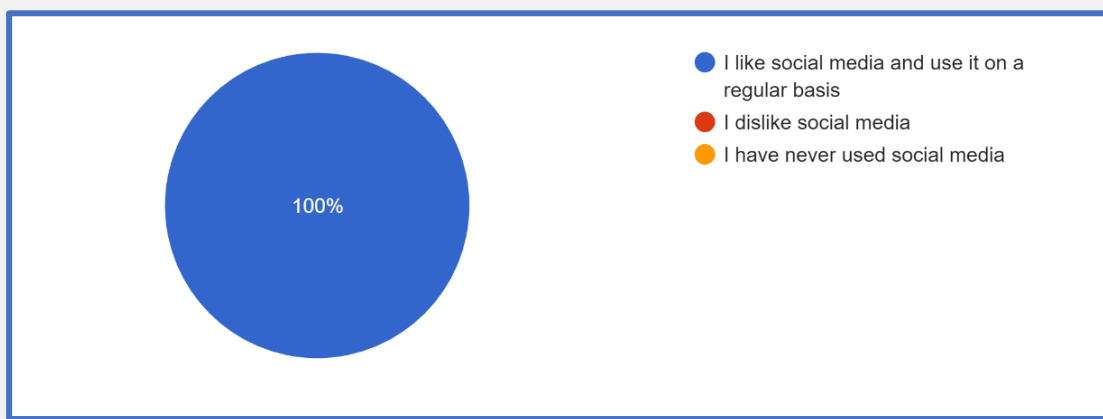
The respondents of this survey are consistent users of social media and described that they like and use it every day.

Further comments.

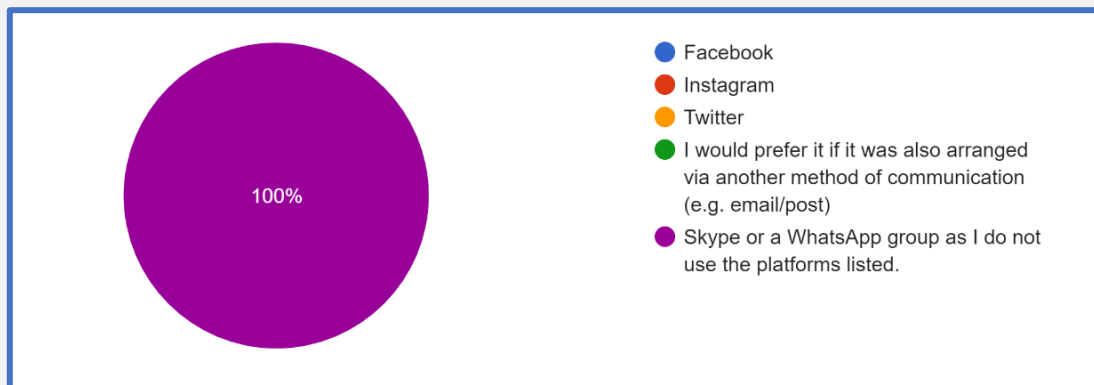> Not sure if you consider Skype and WhatsApp to be social media but that's what I use.

This shows contrasting response to the previous question, as it is mentioned that they favour social media, but admitted a lack of clarity to whether their favoured platforms are in fact social media.

What are your thoughts on the idea of a 'creative art club' (based online) designed improve the mental health and wellbeing of elderly communities in towns and cities?

Are you talking long term as all group activities are currently halted? In the normal world the opportunity to expand my interest in crafts with younger people would be most welcome.

In the instance of a sustained and organised art group, the respondents would be interested in taking part and expand their interests in the company of younger people.

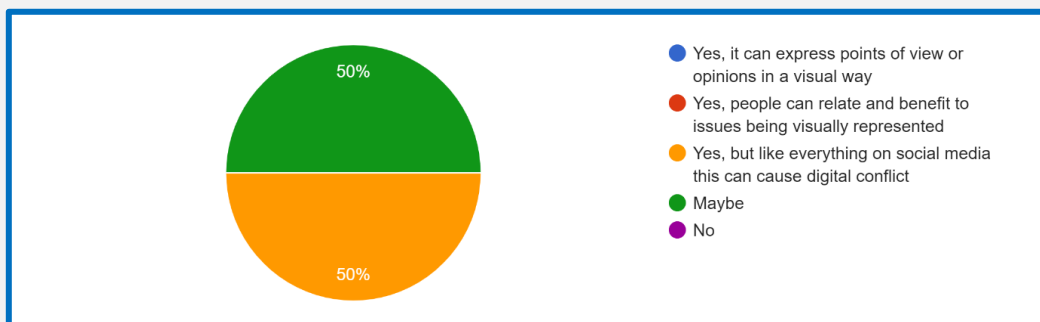**Which social media platform would you prefer this art group initiative to be based on?**

100%

- ● Facebook
- ● Instagram
- ● Twitter
- ● I would prefer it if it was also arranged via another method of communication (e.g. email/post)
- ● Skype or a WhatsApp group as I do not use the platforms listed.

The preferred social media platforms were Skype and WhatsApp, with the more popular platforms listed dismissed.

APPENDIX F

CREATIVE CLUB STAKEHOLDERS SURVEY (data not mentioned in main body)

Do you think art being exchanged on social media is a positive method of communication?

- Yes, it can express points of view or opinions in a visual way
- Yes, people can relate and benefit to issues being visually represented
- Yes, but like everything on social media this can cause digital conflict
- Maybe
- No

The respondents believed that social media can be a positive platform for sharing art, with acknowledgment of the potential for digital conflict.

Do you think that creating art has a positive impact on a person's wellbeing?

- Yes
- Depends on whether someone is forced to do it
- No
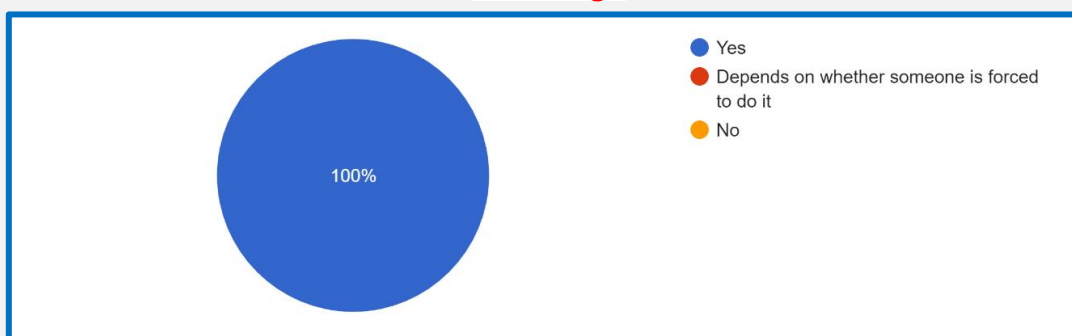
This pie chart shows that all survey respondents thought that creating art has a positive impact on a person's wellbeing.

Further comments.

It's a powerful tool support many things e.g resilience, mental health, rehabilitation, loneliness etc

Significant research base that proves the link between art participation and positive increases in wellbeing

These responses show their knowledge of research, along with personal experience of the mental health benefits the arts can provide.

In your opinion, what set groups of people or individuals would benefit the most from taking part in creative activities?

> Those who are vulnerable and find it difficult to access mainstream support or activity. Arts engagement can be seen as a first step to a transition into more support, a softer approach to recovery rather than a more clinical route. It also is something that can be done ongoing and not just as part of an organised group

> Everyone would benefit, but not everyone is likely to see this as something for them. We see higher levels of attendance from women (men generally want to know that this kind of session is specifically for them, rather than being inclined to sign up for a general group). The activity also needs to be matched to the group - eg. high energy dance classes are probably not appropriate for older people at risk of falls

These comments describe the participants opinions on who would gain the most from an arts group. The common point emphasised is that everybody could to some extent, and that art mainly is the bridge between support and recovery.

What are your thoughts on the idea of a 'creative art club' (based online) designed improve the mental health and wellbeing of elderly communities in towns and cities?

> We do this kind of work at Hampshire Cultural Trust and took a lot of stuff online during lockdown. Older people
> Is harder due to technology but can work amazingly well

> We have had challenges engaging older people in online offerings. In many instances before they are able to engage in the creative opportunity they first need to be supported to set up and understand the technology, which is often difficult if there isn't someone at their location to assist

The last question in this survey proposed a basic idea of the concept design solution to mitigate the issues mentioned in this case study. The responses were positive in that they compared and noted similarities in the idea with their own schemes in Hampshire Cultural Trust.