



## How Lived Experience Inspired an A-Z by Helen Fountain, May 2023



Good ideas can be like buses, none come for ages and then several come along at once! Our lived experience networks (both local and national) defy that saying over and over again, and we really struggle to keep up with the volume of their great ideas at times! During the planning stages for the [Age of Creativity Festival 2023](#) we set a task for our national Creative Ageing Lived Experience Network (or CALEN, you can read more about its origins [here](#)): to come up with a creative challenge to encourage people to participate in the Festival and inspire others to try a creative activity. We had a great discussion about this at one of our monthly CALEN Zoom meetings (which includes members of creative ageing groups from Manchester, Staffordshire, Oxfordshire and London).

Within minutes of the meeting ending a text came through from one of our CALEN members suggesting an A-Z of Creative Ageing, such a simple idea but perfect for the Age of Creativity Festival and ideal for a website-based challenge. Our Digital Team have been hard at work on the design and functionality the A-Z webpage to enable everyone to contribute throughout the Festival. CALEN members gave very useful feedback on all aspects of the process and provided the first examples of creative ageing ideas.

Each entry includes a photograph and some short text explaining why the activity is so enriching and enjoyable. The feedback told us it's the personal stories that people find so interesting and inspiring. Collage, Macrame, Storytelling, Model Making, Dancing and Writing have all been shared so far and we can't wait to see what else will be added during the Festival which runs throughout May 2023. It's a real tribute to the power of the hive mind and the wisdom of our elders and as the saying goes, *teamwork makes the dream work!*

To add your ideas to the A-Z of Creative Ageing please visit the webpage [here](#).

Helen is part of the Age of Creativity [Team](#), she is the Age Friendly Creative Manager for Age UK Oxfordshire supporting the [Oxfordshire Age Friendly Creative Network](#) and leads on Lived Experience. To find out more about the CALEN or any aspect of our work contact [helenfountain@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:helenfountain@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk)

