

**Visible** is a Newark district project which focuses on cutting edge quality arts projects for people over 50. Participants can take part in a 10 week course and there are 12 different activity streams. Having completed a course, participants can progress to become “shadow artists” on other artform courses.

## The Participants



Eric Green is 77 and has been very involved with the arts throughout his life. He chaired an “action for arts” committee and frequently organises poetry readings and arts events at his local church. However, embarking on Visible’s ten-week poetry course was a different experience: “... *Writing my own poetry was frightening.... The most difficult thing about writing a poem is facing the blank page.*”

## Expectations and Reality

*“Before I started I thought that I would be rather nervous about it. I wondered if I would understand what this professional poet would talk about. I went into the unknown. I went into a vacuum. Then, of course, I found out almost straight away what a man he was (Kevin Fagan the poet who facilitated the group) and how humble he was about his own professionalism and talent. We worked from ten o clock in the morning till three in the afternoon, and when we had lunch we even talked about poetry!”*

## Enjoyment through engagement

Eric quickly relaxed into the course:

*“Gradually we became more confident about our ability and not to be frightened of getting things down on a piece of paper. It’s just so satisfying...”*

*“The project exceeded my expectations. I can’t wait to get to the next one. I even enjoy doing my ‘homework’ too!”*

## Evaluating the impact of participating

He plans to carry on writing:

*“I hope to keep on writing poetry when I finish the course. I’ve learnt to write in different styles and I’m starting to carry a notebook for ideas.”*

He said participating: *“Made me feel a bigger person by knowing something that I didn’t know before. Although it overlaps with some of what I have already done, it’s spread to a different pattern. I am just thrilled by it.”*

He now plans to invite his fellow course participants to read their poems at a poetry reading at his church.



**Robert Mitchell** is also 77 and stopped being involved in arts activities when he finished school. He has been a Newark District Councillor and is active in his Citizens Advice Bureau. He signed up to a Visible creative writing course and hasn’t looked back, having now participated in creative writing, lantern making, filmmaking and other courses.

### ***Expectations and Reality***

Robert didn’t know what to expect when he signed up for his first creative writing course:

*“I hadn’t a clue. The good thing was we started off very simply, write 20 words, then do this and do that. And before you knew it, you were you dashing to get everything down on paper that was growing through your head. I left exhausted and for the first time in years I went to bed at half past nine! But it was so enjoyable and the big thing I got out of it was that having done the course, four of us have stayed together and we meet at each others houses and are talking about doing a 12 minute piece...”*

*“I thought it might be like going back to school and hadn’t realised that once it was explained to you it was simple. I suddenly realised I have something up here (indicates his brain) that was relevant and I could use it.”*

### **Enjoyment through engagement**

He has recently completed a music-making course:

*“I used to play piano till I lost my fingers and the joy of the course was that you didn’t have to be able to play an instrument or to write music. All you had to do was to convey to an orchestra what you wanted them to do and they would say like this or that and then the piece was put together.”*

He engages his friends in the process: *“I talk about it because it is something that you can talk about amongst friends. I’ve given them stories to read and they’ve said – I didn’t think you had it in you! I’ve thoroughly enjoyed each aspect of it so far....”*

He also enjoys the social side of the groups and the way *“bonding happens within the groups. It is a super experience.”*

### **Evaluating the impact of participating**

He says the courses surpassed his expectations. *“Each thing I have been involved in has been an eye opener. Each one has lit another little candle up here (indicates brain). I have them lighting up instead of going out.”*

*“I’m back to being a ‘have a go’ person. I enjoy every bit. And it enables you to see people in a totally different light.”*