





# What We D~~i~~d

## Reminiscence Training

A~~t~~ the start of the project, 40 care and museum staff and volunteers took part in lively training workshops about memory and life story work. These wereled by Julie Heathcote, Associate Reminiscence Trainer, Alzheimer’s Society and involved learning ~~a~~bout how objects, photographs, smells and sounds affect people with memory issues and how rem~~i~~niscence can be a life-affir~~m~~ing and fun activity for people la~~t~~er in life.

*“It has reminded me of ways to talk to people to get them to talk about themsel~~v~~es and maintaining their value and self esteem.”*

## Life Story Interviews

Following ref~~e~~rrals from care organisations, care volunteers and/or staff met and reminisced with individuals as pa~~r~~t of a life story interview. Some volunteers used photograp~~h~~s, objects and songs as prompts ~~an~~d recorded the information on a memory capture fo~~r~~m. The interviews usually lasted 1 - 2 hours and involved care volunteers discussing topics from the pers~~o~~n’s l~~i~~fe with them at home or with care s~~t~~aff i~~n~~ their residential c~~a~~re home. Some people chose to do t~~h~~ese over several sessions and often the care volunteers were known to the person through other care they ~~h~~ad ~~p~~rovided to them.

*“I’ve enjoyed being able t~~o~~ share my memor~~i~~es ~~w~~ith*

*someone who is i~~n~~terested.”*

## Personalised Memory Bo~~x~~es

Using th~~e~~se form~~s~~ and working with the care staff and voluntee~~r~~s who carried out the interview~~s,~~ mu~~se~~um volunteersresearched and gat~~h~~ered together objects, photographs and documents related to the ~~s~~pecific me~~m~~ories and created a box for each ~~p~~erson. There were 21 v~~o~~lunteers who took part in the proces~~s~~, either carr~~y~~ing out life story interviews or creating boxes across Cambrid~~g~~eshire for 32 individuals.

*“I was aradio operator during the war andcould tell yousome stories. Once I*

*started talking it all came tumbling out.*

*I enj~~o~~yed talking to others about what*

*I h~~a~~d ~~d~~one using the box and I think I might need a bigger box!”*

## Creative Workshops: Colla~~g~~e and Textiles

T~~h~~e creative workshops for adults with learning disabilities and sensory impai~~rm~~ent were stimulating and fun. ~~A~~rtist Karen Jinks, led works~~h~~ops w~~h~~ere people created collage cards and pictures using original photographs, cigarette cards, postcards and fabric. In other settings she worked withgroups who chose images, fabric, an~~d~~ original wri~~t~~ing to create a one-off patchwork piece. Both processes involved people sharing and talking about the past and what they were doing as part of the pro~~c~~ess and everyone kept their artwork.

*“There was engagement in the moment and*

*objects were useful to*

*prompt memories from the past.”*

## Photography

Photographer Kay Goodridge explored self portraits with a group of younger people with learning disabilities using an iPad, Smartphone, and Polaroid and Bronica cameras. Working individually and as a group with their key worker, people built up a series of photographs of themselves, sometimes with ~~a~~ chosen object of significance, or of places which have meant something to them a~~n~~d their families. Overtime, each person chose images they wante~~d~~ ~~t~~o add ~~t~~o a unique workbook and added notes in their own words. These workbooks belongto the participants and have been shown to each other, friends, family a~~n~~dother carers.The photographs formed a slideshow and were presented at their care setting and at a celebra~~t~~ion Tea Party at the end of the project. Following on from this, the group and other people at the co~~m~~munity centre take part in regular photography art sessions in house, which also rec~~o~~r~~d~~ new memories.

*“Andrew has got the most out of it - at every opportunity he wants to take pictures. To get*

*him taking part is amazing - he has loved*

*choosing and sticking his photos in the workbook andshowing everyone.”*

## Touring Exhibition and Sharin~~g~~ Events

These examples ofcreative reminiscen~~c~~e were incorporated into an exhibition which toured Cambridgeshire museums ~~a~~nd c~~o~~mmunity s~~e~~ttings, rai~~s~~ing awareness a~~n~~d support for memory work. The exhibition was specifically designed to be interactive and included quotes and voic~~e~~s of people reminiscing. A living room setting was created with an audio armchairplaying reminiscenc~~es~~, quotes were designed onto cushions and curtains, and sample memory boxes were avai~~la~~ble to handle. Venues added the~~i~~r own material to it, and arran~~g~~ed shari~~n~~g events in their community based around the ~~ex~~hibition, such as a carer~~s~~’ open day and memory box-making workshops.

*“A really enjoyable day th~~a~~t showed me how important memories are and in particular being able to share them.”*

# Creative Reminiscence - A Toolkit

## Personalised Memory Boxe~~s~~

V~~o~~lunteers who interviewed people in their community explored where peop~~l~~ewere born and grew up, their ~~m~~emories of school, subjects they did, particularteachers they had, f~~u~~nny stories about tricks, games, songs from childhood, particular memories about birthdays, celebrations, wed~~d~~ings or holidays. Progressing throu~~g~~h life stages such asworking life, re~~l~~ationships, moving house and interests meant that this was a very persona~~l~~ record. In many cases, interviewe~~r~~s were also findingo~~u~~t aboutthe effects of significant nat~~i~~o~~n~~al and local ev~~e~~nts such as war~~,~~ unemployment,improvements in housing and changes in popular cultur~~e~~ through the eye~~s~~ of people sharing their own experiences on a personal level. Music, dance, cinema, books, fashion and hobbies were areas where people recal~~le~~d individual tastes and key memories.

Du~~r~~ing this process, it is im~~p~~ortant to follow the pace of the interviewee, whe~~r~~e one memory leads to others and to ask open questions s~~u~~ch as ‘Can ~~y~~ou descr~~i~~be...?’ or ‘What was it like to...? Often reminiscing in this way can be great fun, sometimes intense, sometimes sad and upsetting as memories are connected with a range of em~~o~~tions. It is imp~~o~~rtan~~t~~ to listen to the mood of the interviewee a~~s~~ they are talkin~~g~~ and only explore what the interviewee wishes to talk about at the time. Some volunteers were keen to digitally record the interviews so that these could be added to the memory box for others to hear. This can also be helpful for carers if individuals experience problems communicating later on in their life.

*“Eileen has been a strong figure in the*

*village and worked hard to improve*

*things. She is taking her boxwith her to various drop-ins and sharing with other people. I think it is good for her to talk*

*and keep her confidence but also I think she has a lot to be proud of.”*

*“I wrot~~e~~ to my friend abou~~t~~ it and suggested they might dosomething similar and make it into asoc~~i~~al evening.”*

*“I have used this with my daughter and my grandson.”*





### Tips

* *Plan in time to understand a particular setting if working with peopl~~e~~ in residential car~~e~~,meeting with key workers, learning the daily rou~~t~~ines of individual~~s~~ and to work out the depth and length of a workshop. Karen, the artist f~~ac~~ilitating the group work with volunteer~~s~~ and key workers, planned where activities would take place, for how long and wha~~t~~ s~~t~~imul~~u~~s woul~~d~~ work for di~~ff~~erent individuals.*
* *Levels of engagement will be very different for ~~e~~ach individual and so ~~c~~onsider one activity which can offer different choices ~~a~~nd tech~~n~~iques to try as part of it. Also invite peopletobring their own ~~m~~aterial with them~~,~~ pictures, postcards, and mementoes for inclusion or sharing.*
* *Working with individuals, particular memories or symbols were identi~~fi~~ed and designs were created from this. For example, one participant Sarah c~~h~~ose a yel~~l~~ow rose as symbolic of a place she loved and choseto recreate her design ~~t~~o decorate her memory box.*
* *Encourage ways for people to capture their memories in their own words by writing them as part of the artwork or alongside or having someone else record itif they are not able to.*

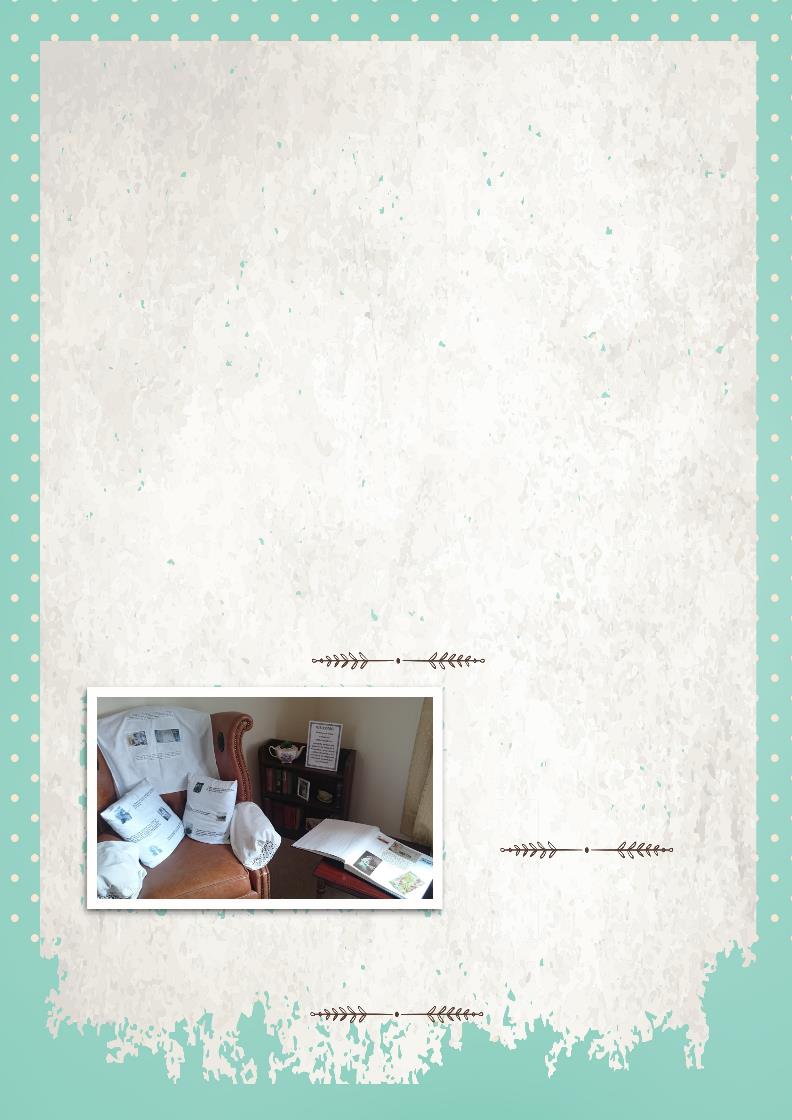
## Sharing Events

Planning sharing events was an important part of this project and brought together peop~~l~~e to share their lives. It gives significance to their work and their lived experience. We identified coffee morning~~s~~ in community cafes and shared communal spaces in sheltered accommod~~a~~tion, drop-in events at museums, and a larger scale Tea Party held at Ramsey Rural Museum for everyone involved in the project. Family members were invited along, other people in the l~~o~~c~~a~~l communities came to the drop-ins and coffee mornings and this gave people more opportu~~n~~ities to tell people about themselves and share their stories.

Museums are well-placed to do this for groups and individuals in their local area, by hosting events and displaying life stories for people in thelocality for all ages to share. This can often lead to other connections and activities which participants can choose to take up. For example, Care Network volunteers are now arrangingto create memory ~~b~~o~~x~~es as a community group in one Cambridgeshire village following this project.

# Working Togeth~~e~~r

## A Community Approach

*Memories in the Community: Stories of My Life* has brought different sectors t~~o~~gether in Cambridgeshire for the first time and shown how impor~~t~~ant a network of people are around a person needing care. This was a community approach to supporting person-centred care. Museums learned more about th~~e~~ needs of people in their community and how they can provide knowledge, material cul~~t~~ure and hands-on experiences to s~~u~~pport creative reminiscence resources. Care st~~a~~ff and families have had p~~o~~sitive experiences of creative reminiscence methods which is enabling the activities to continue and reach more people.

***In workin~~g~~ together we learned~~:~~***

* *Having an event for carers and mus~~e~~um staff and volunteers at the start o~~f~~ the project is important to learn more ~~a~~bo~~u~~t each other’s ~~s~~ector before the proj~~e~~ct begins.*
* *Care settings have daily ~~a~~nd hourly changes as well as particular routines they use - keeping regular contact helps ~~t~~o learn when the best time is to arrange activities and also about expectations of ~~in~~dividuals with different circumstances. Flexibility is key!*
* *Volun~~t~~eers taking part areco~~m~~mitted to their local area and to working on projects which support people in their own community. They saw the benefits for the local community of helping individuals shar~~e~~ their memories with others living nearby.*
* *Someparticipants in this project, now living in Cambridgeshire, also lived in other parts of the country and abroad du~~r~~ing their lives. Some felt their roots were elsewhere and having tangible reminders of places that had been significant in their lives has helped to keep important links associated with them~~.~~ This has also helped to communicate to others in their new location more about their culture and previous lifestyles.*
* *Itis important to create an opportunity to come together at the end of the project t~~o~~ see what can be learned and developed further as well as ~~r~~ecog~~n~~ising volunteers for their work and commitment.*
* *Always allow more time than planned!*

*“I didn’t realise how important objects and photographs were... they hold so many me~~m~~ories but useful to have to touch and they often led us on another path of memories.”*

*“Learning more about what museums do and have has been useful to see*

*possibilities for visits and other work in the future.”*

*“This project has given me more insight into the work of Care*

*Network and also the c~~o~~mmunity ce~~n~~tre’s work~~.~~ This has helped me see ways wecan link with care groups in our area.”*



