

# Sharing Memories, Building Communities



## External Evaluation Report

Sharing Memories



**BSSA**  
BRIAN STRATFORD AND ASSOCIATES

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Sharing Memories, Building Communities Project (the Project) has represented a partnership between the Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland (RNNI) and the Northern Health & Social Care Trust (the Northern Trust). Funded by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Out – Connecting Older People Programme, the Project commenced in August 2012 and is due to complete its 4 years of delivery in August 2016. It has been extended for a further year.
- 1.2 The Project has aimed to enhance the mental health and emotional wellbeing of older people with disabilities by enabling their active participation in community based life story work and group based reminiscence activity. These activities would seek to improve the quality of life of older people living with disabilities and promote their ability to learn new skills. Family members and carers would be engaged throughout the process with the products created providing a valuable legacy of the life of the older person. These reminiscence activities have been delivered at 7 Northern Trust Day Centres as well as at a range of community-based settings across the Northern Trust area.
- 1.3 The delivery partners identified the need to carry out a ‘real time’ independent external evaluation of the Project. Terms of Reference were issued and Brian Stratford & Associates were appointed to carry out this work. The evaluation process has included:
- A desk review of materials generated by the Project, including facilitator reports, evaluation forms and monitoring reports produced for the funder;
  - Twice yearly consultation with a sample of project beneficiaries and stakeholders;
  - Evaluation against agreed approaches, outcomes and indicators;
  - Identification of other unexpected outcomes and outputs; and
  - The production of interim and end of project evaluation reports to include recommendations for the future delivery of reminiscence activities.
- 1.4 This report presents a summative external evaluation for the four years of operation of the Project and has been prepared by Brian Stratford and Nuala McCallum.
- 1.5 Having provided some background to the Project, how it came about and what it had hoped to achieve, the report will consider the extent to which the quantitative targets have been met and any issues in relation to these. This will be followed by qualitative analysis of how the Project has operated, including consideration of the extent to which the Outcomes established have been achieved. Finally, the report will draw some conclusions as well as making recommendations for the future delivery of reminiscence activities based on the overall findings of the evaluation undertaken.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 This Section will provide background to the Project, including details on the partner organisations, the need for the activities carried out and research upon which the Project was based, and the funding stream under which the work has been supported.

### **Delivery Partnership**

2.2 The Project has been delivered by 2 partners, the Reminiscence Network NI (RNNI) and the Northern Health & Social Care Trust (the Northern Trust).

### **The Reminiscence Network NI (RNNI)**

RNNI was formed in 1999 as a membership organisation with a mission to be a catalyst for reminiscence work and to encourage good practice through training, networking, demonstration, advice, information, and knowledge development. Its vision is of a society where people value themselves and others by recalling, valuing, sharing and preserving their personal memories.

RNNI has acted as lead partner, including managing the day-to-day running of the Project, the employment of staff, maintaining budgetary control, communicating with the funder and the delivery of reminiscence activities by staff and volunteers.

### **Northern Health & Social Care Trust (the Northern Trust)**

The Northern Trust is one of 5 health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland providing services to residents of the Antrim and Newtownabbey District, Causeway Coast and Glens District, Mid and East Antrim District and Mid Ulster District Council areas. In the delivery of services, the Northern Trust has established 7 priority areas:

- To improve the health status of the population and reduce health inequalities;
- To ensure services are safe and sustainable, accessible and patient-centred;
- To integrate primary, community and secondary care services;
- To improve mental health services and services for people with disabilities;
- To help older people to live independently;
- To improve children's health and well-being; and
- To ensure financial stability and the effective use of resources.

The Northern Trust has provided operational support to the Project, including raising awareness of the support available, acting as a source of referrals, providing facilities at its Day Centres and providing strategic direction as required through the Steering Group.

### **Big Lottery Reaching Out-Connecting Older People Programme**

2.3 The delivery partners identified an opportunity to develop a joint project focussed on the provision of creative reminiscence and life story work. An application was made to the Big Lottery Fund under the Reaching Out - Connecting Older People Programme. The application was successful in securing £416,893 over a 4-year period. The Reaching Out - Connecting Older People Programme has encouraged organisations that promote wellbeing, provide support or contribute towards independence and active citizenship, for example, social support activities including volunteering, advice provision, community safety and intergenerational work.

### **The Need for the Project**

2.4 The development of this Project represents the culmination of years of research by the partners into the needs of older people with disabilities. An independent evaluation by Wallace Consulting (2010) of older people taking part in RNNI led reminiscence work found that:

- 92% stated it helped them to appreciate their memories more;
- 97% found the work let others know more about them;
- 81% felt closer to others as a result of the work;
- 94% found the activities enjoyable; and
- 88% stated the work made them feel good about themselves.

2.5 An internal evaluation of the Northern Trust Life Story Book Work (2009) identified similar results, with a high demand from vulnerable older people for an opportunity to be supported in completing their own life story book. This evaluation also identified staff time as the biggest constraint in terms of continuation and expansion of life story work with individuals.

2.6 The partners also undertook questionnaire surveys and focus groups with potential service users to establish the need for the Project in the target areas. The results included:

- 60% stated they supported and wanted to take part in Life Story work;
- 75% stated they supported and wanted to join a Creative Reminiscence Group; and
- 85% believed these activities could help to meet the social and emotional needs of older people with disabilities.

2.7 As a result of the primary and secondary research carried out, the needs identified that would be addressed by this Project included:

- Social isolation that can lead to loneliness and depression;
- Low self esteem and self confidence;
- Being perceived in terms of current circumstances, not taking into account a person's life and achievements;
- Reliance on a few key relationships for support and social interaction;
- Being seen as a burden to society and feeling redundant within their family, social circles and the local community; and
- Poor mental health and wellbeing that may impact on physical health and ability to continue living at home.

### **The Importance of Reminiscence and Life Story Work**

- 2.8 At a basic level most people enjoy talking about the past and the social aspects of reminiscing with others. However recalling our past also helps us to keep in touch with the people, places and events that have shaped our lives. This reaffirms our identity and enables others to see us as unique and interesting individuals. Capturing people's memories in creative ways can help to preserve personal, local, social and family history.
- 2.9 RNNI believe that it is important that reminiscence and life story work does not end in nostalgia but that it makes participants re-work their memories to make sense of their lives so that they can continue to develop and enjoy more personal fulfilment in the future. A growing body of evidence supports claims regarding the benefits of reminiscence work, especially for older people, people living with dementia and for those who care for them.
- 2.10 Recently the Northern Ireland Social Care Council published guidance on Reflective Practice (2015) by Dr Stan Houston. It highlights the Domain of Psychobiography where reminiscence and life history work should be used by social workers when working with the following groups:
1. Older people would benefit from reminiscence and reflection on their life histories when they have experienced significant loss, change or crises.
  2. Adults with mental health issues would benefit from re-framing their understanding of themselves and their past in a more positive way.

### **The Sharing Memories - Building Communities Project**

- 2.11 The Project is an initiative that aims to improve the mental health and emotional well being of older people with disabilities primarily from the Northern Trust area that have been at risk of loneliness and isolation.
- 2.12 This Project has complemented and provided an effective progression route for older people with a disability who have been referred to the 16-week day care re-ablement programme operated across the Northern Trust. This programme aims to enable older people to identify their optimum level of independence, building their confidence and presenting them with options to support their social interaction. With the limited number of existing services for older people and the fact that many are over-subscribed, this Project has provided a much needed option for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.
- 2.13 The Project is made up of two distinct elements that can be briefly summarised as follows:

**Creative Reminiscence Groups** – the Project has employed a wide range of group activities to ensure an interesting and creative programme over 10-16 weeks. One session is delivered each week and is on average 2 hours in duration. Activities include sharing memories around chosen themes such as childhood, school days, holidays, use of multi sensory activities to trigger memories (objects from the past, sounds, smells, tastes, singing and dancing). Activities included opportunities to tell others about their memories and life stories and the opportunity to learn new creative skills and preserve precious memories.

The project workers support older people to overcome any individual barriers such as transport, hearing, visual impairments, speech and concentration to enable participation.

**Life Story Work** – this has involved 6-8 home visits, per person, by the project worker who provided the necessary support and guidance to complete a record of their life story. The professional networks in the Northern Trust have been used to identify people with ongoing disabilities living in the community who experience loneliness and isolation. The Project has built on the use of an award winning Life Story Book template which has been used by the Northern Trust and RNNI in previous projects as well as other approaches, including digital audio recordings of the sessions. The focus of the work has been to recognise the individual and value each person, at a time in life where many of the participants are experiencing diminishing physical abilities. It has been especially important to build on what the participant can do, to focus on what they have done and what they can learn to do in the future.

- 2.14 Periodically throughout the Project, celebration events have been held to recognise the achievement of people who have taken part and to provide an opportunity for the older person to share with their families, carers and day centre staff their achievements as a part of the Project.
- 2.15 The Project has also provided opportunities for volunteers and Day Centre staff to obtain accredited qualifications in reminiscence work, providing valuable training and transferable skills that can be used to enhance service provision for older people in Day Centres in the future beyond the delivery period of this Project.
- 2.16 **The Project established the following Outcomes:**
1. Increased social interaction leading to enhanced mental health and emotional wellbeing amongst vulnerable older people with disabilities living in the community.
  2. Vulnerable older people with disabilities recognised as valuable contributors to their immediate family, social circle and local community.
  3. Greater feelings of self confidence and self worth amongst vulnerable older people with disabilities living in the community.
  4. Creation of Life Story Books that may promote self esteem and may be of benefit during future transitions such as moving into residential care (assisting care staff to get to know the older person) as well as creating a cherished legacy for family and friends.

Details of the aims and targets established for the Project have been included in Appendix 1. These will be considered in more detail in Section 3 of this report.

### **Management of the Project**

- 2.17 The operation of the Project has received direction from a Steering Group made up of representatives from both of the partner organisations. The Steering Group initially met on a monthly basis and now meets quarterly with the Project Manager and Reminiscence staff reporting as appropriate. Minutes have been maintained of these meetings.

- 2.18 Project activities have been delivered by three Reminiscence Project Workers reporting to a Project Manager based at RNNI in Belfast. Activities have been supported by volunteers as well as staff from the day centres and other community organisations where reminiscence activities have been delivered.

### **3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 This Section will consider the quantitative outputs achieved by the Project over the four years of delivery. This will include participant demographics, referral sources, presenting medical conditions of participants and the extent to which the agreed outputs have been achieved.

#### **3.2 Project Participants**

##### **3.2.1 Total Participants**

Based on the number of participants in the creative reminiscence groups and life story book work, there have been 504 beneficiaries from the Project across its 4 years of delivery. These figures are non-unique, that is participants may have engaged with more than one element of the Project.

This figure would be much higher if the family members, carers and day centre staff that have benefited from the work were also considered as direct beneficiaries, although it would be impossible to estimate the total number of these individuals.

##### **3.2.2 Gender Breakdown**

Of the 504 participants engaged with, 64% have been female. This is consistent with the number that was expected given the overall gender make up of Older People in Northern Ireland. Anecdotal evidence did suggest that it proved easier to recruit men for the group activities where there was going to be at least one other man in the group.

### 3.2.3 Age Breakdown

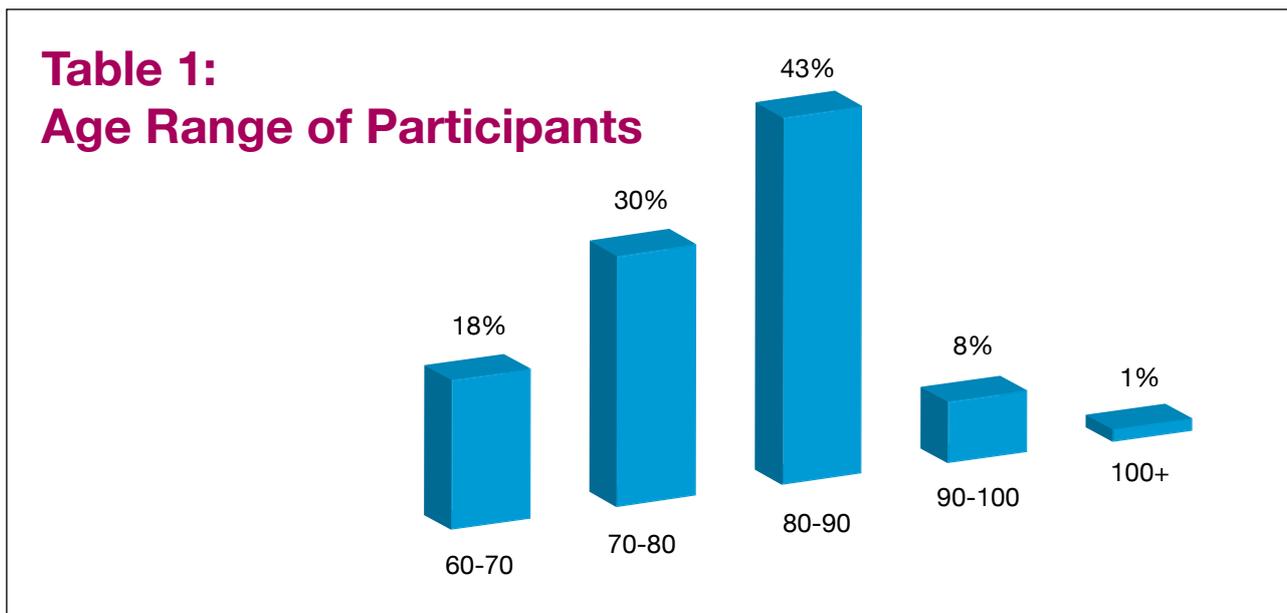


Table 1 shows that the majority of participants have been aged between 80 and 90 years old. Years 3 and 4 saw an increase in participants aged between 60 and 80, perhaps reflecting the wider range of community based organisations that were targeted for the delivery of activities.

### 3.2.4 Presenting Medical Conditions

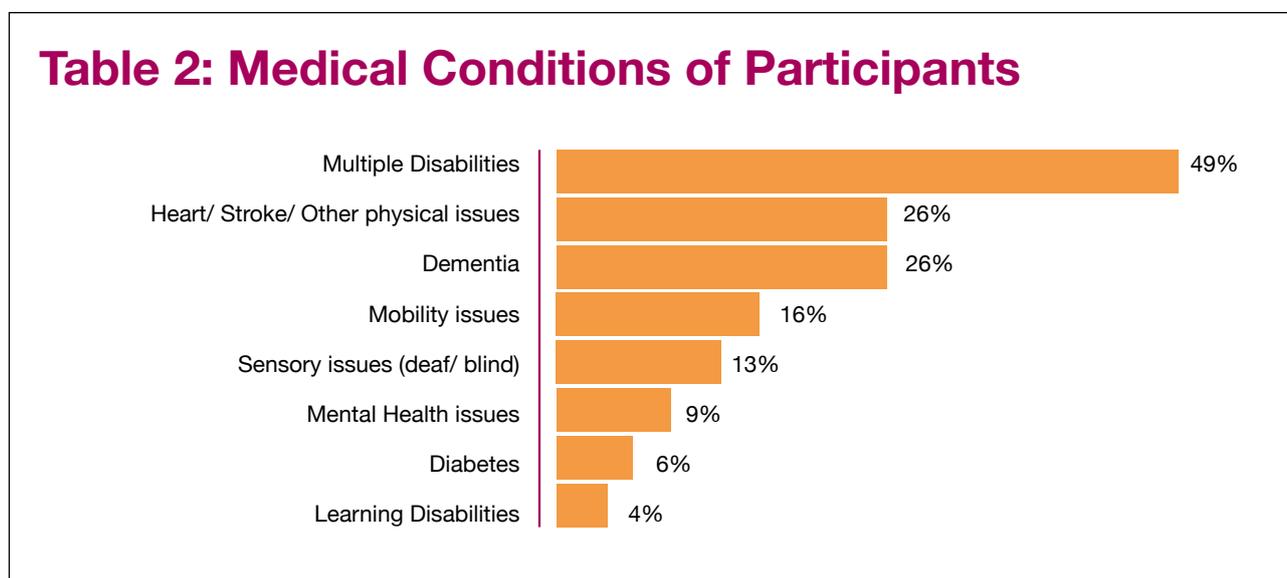


Table 2 shows that participants present with a range of physical and mental conditions, with dementia and heart/stroke/physical issues being the most prevalent individual conditions presenting. The most significant figure is the fact that almost half of participants (49% present with multiple disabilities, that is a combination of more than one of the medical conditions above).

The information regarding medical conditions has been essential for the effective planning and delivery of Creative Reminiscence Groups and Life Story work. The Project Workers have taken into account the individual needs of participants when organising activities to ensure their active involvement. This has required a range of creative techniques to be used to ensure all participants remain engaged. For the group work, additional support from Day Centre Staff and Volunteers has been required whilst for the Life Story work, a family member or carer has often provided additional support.

### 3.3 Sources of Referral for Participants

**Table 3:  
Sources of Referral for Participants**



Table 3 shows that most of the referrals have come from Day Centre staff. This was to be expected given the way in which the Project has been structured and delivered. In Years 3 and 4, there has been a marked increase in referrals coming from community sources, reflecting the increased focus on delivery in these settings.

### 3.4 Project Outputs

The following provides a review of the outputs established for the Project. Whilst the focus will be on the achievement of the targets by the end of Year 4, consideration will be given to the annual targets as well where applicable. The targets were revised at the end of Year 1 in light of the experience of delivery, with the Project successfully meeting these revised targets.

#### 3.4.1 Creative Reminiscence Groups

Table 4 shows the target and actual number of reminiscence groups completed each year, including the number of participants that completed the process.

**Table 4: Creative Reminiscence Groups completed**

Year	Groups Completed	Meetings		Participants	
		Target	Actual	Target	Actual
1	12	124	133	62	83
2	13	192	190	82	100
3	15	192	192	72	117
4	14	192	192	72	126
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>426</b>

Table 4 illustrates that the Project has exceeded the target for both the number of meetings and participants over the 4 years of delivery. The number of participants engaged is particularly impressive at more than 100 (45%) more than the original target set.

The Project has delivered 57 groups across the 4 years, with a breakdown of the individual groups included in Appendix 2. This has included delivery in 7 Northern Trust Day Centres, including 2 night classes in Wilson House, Ballymena. Years 3 and 4 have seen delivery extended into other community settings in the Northern Trust area that engage older people with disabilities. This has included voluntary organisations such as Mindwise, Age NI and Age Concern as well as housing associations such as Clanmil, The Whins and Alpha Housing Association in Crumlin and Pound Green Court, a sheltered housing scheme in Larne. The total number of participants engaged across this range of settings shows the ongoing demand for reminiscence activities.

### 3.4.2 Life Story Work

Table 5 shows the target and actual number of life story visits completed each year, including the number of participants that completed a book.

**Table 5: Life Story Work completed**

Year	Home Visits		Books Completed	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
1	98	71	12	8
2	192	141	24	21
3	192	195	24	24
4	192	192	24	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>78</b>

Table 5 has shown that the Project has not quite achieved the target for the life story books and sessions to be completed. Creative Reminiscence workers have indicated that they experienced some difficulties in the first two years of the Project in completing the books within the 6-8 week timescale that had been planned. Table 5 shows that all of the targets have been met in the final two years of the Project with the staff able to apply the learning gained to their approach to delivery.

The life story work did not commence until after the creative reminiscence groups had been formed in the second half of Year 1, thus reducing the time to complete the work. One of the Creative Reminiscence workers resigned during Year 2 of the Project and this also had a knock on effect on the ability of the remaining staff to meet the target set whilst a new worker was recruited. Staff also experienced some difficulty in achieving the necessary engagement from some family members and carers that could cause delays in the process, although again this was less of an issue in Years 3 and 4. Finally, many of those referred were at crisis point, with several participants going into care or long term hospitalisation before the process completed.

### 3.4.3 Products Shared with the Local Community

The Project had set a target of 20 products that would be created and shared with the local community across the 4 years of delivery. In reality, the total number of products created is likely to be in excess of 130. This has included:

- Memory Boxes containing mementos that were important to the participants;
- Memory maps, scrapbooks and family trees designed to reflect and record the recollections of the participants;
- Arts and crafts products such as greetings and Christmas cards, collages, calendars, art prints, flower pots and self portraits;
- Textile products including photo cushions and memory quilts; and
- Audio, visual and digital products including DVDs with photographs, music and video from the sessions completed.

Exhibitions of participants work have been displayed in the Braid Museum and Arts Centre, Ballymena and Burnavon Arts Centre, Cookstown, the Ulster Hall Belfast and Race View Mill, Broughshane as well as Day Centres and Community Centres throughout the Northern Trust.

#### **3.4.4 Celebration Events**

40 celebration events have taken place on the completion of the work at the Day Centres and community organisations, exceeding the target of 30 that has been set for this output. These events have provided an opportunity for the participants to showcase the work that has been completed as well as inviting friends, family and carers along to celebrate their achievements. Feedback would suggest that these events have been very successful and RNNI has also taken photographs of the events as evidence of this. The impact of the events on families and carers will be considered in greater detail in Section 4.

From the Project partners' point of view, these events have provided an excellent opportunity to engage key stakeholders and influencers with the Project, demonstrating first hand the benefits that this work can bring for older people with disabilities. Inviting these stakeholders along to celebration events helped to expand the delivery of the Project in Years 3 and 4 and has laid the foundation for any expansion of delivery in the future.

#### **3.4.5 Volunteers Recruited and Trained**

The Project has been successful in recruiting 27 volunteers, far exceeding the target of 12 that had been set at the outset. Feedback has shown that these volunteers have played a crucial role in contributing to the overall success of the group work activities. Creative reminiscence workers have commented that on some occasions they would greatly have benefited from the support of a volunteer when working with a particular group due to the complex needs of individuals within that group. The time invested in training and developing these volunteers will continue to be a valuable asset to the partner organisations in the future.

#### **3.4.6 Conference held**

A Reminiscence Conference was held at the Dunsilly Hotel in Antrim in Year 3 in order to promote the Project and share best practice. This was attended by 95 individuals drawn from a range of stakeholder organisations. Speakers at the conference included:

- Northern Trust staff on the value of reminiscence work in person-centred care;
- Research findings in reminiscence work from Ulster University;
- Creative Reminiscence workers demonstrating the Project and its outputs;
- The benefits of the Project to a Day Centre; and
- The benefits of the Project to a family member and volunteer.

Feedback received from attendees at the conference was very positive and will be considered in Section 4.

#### **3.5 Summary**

This Section has demonstrated that the Project has been very successfully delivered over the past 4 years, achieving and in many cases far exceeding the outputs established at the outset.

The next Section of the report will consider the results of the qualitative analysis undertaken.

## 4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

- 4.1 This Section of the report will present the findings from the qualitative analysis carried out as a part of the evaluation. The primary sources of information used have been the consultation undertaken with 35 key stakeholders of the Project and the facilitators' reports prepared after each creative reminiscence group and engagement with life story work participants. This has been supplemented by other evaluation information gathered during Project delivery. Details of these consultees are included in Appendix 3.

The information gathered has been grouped under the key themes emerging and will include project management and the operation of the partnership, project delivery including future delivery, an assessment of the project outcomes. Finally the report will consider the added value that the Project has had for each of the main stakeholder groups.

- 4.2 **Project Management and Partnership Working**  
 Consultees that had been involved in the overall management of the Project were asked to assess the effectiveness of project management and the overall operation of the partnership. Rating each area out of 4 (1 – Very Effective; 2 – Effective; 3 – Adequate, 4 – Ineffective), Table 6 shows the findings for project management:

**Table 6: Project Management**

Project Management	Average Score
Overall Management by Reminiscence Network NI / NHSCT	1.33
Decision-making by Reminiscence Network NI / NHSCT	1.35
Steering Group Meetings as a method to manage the Project	1.60
Communication between meetings (email, etc.)	1.53
Project Information Management (minutes, reports, etc.)	1.25
Suitability of the Work Plan approach adopted	1.33
Achievable targets in realistic timescales	1.35
Quality of the Reports produced by Project Staff	1.27
Financial Management, Administration and Reporting Systems	1.38

Table 6 illustrates that the average scores from consultees rate the project management overall as effective or very effective. Within these average scores, 3 consultees rated the Steering Group meetings as adequate whilst 2 consultees considered the overall management and decision-making processes as being adequate also. The reason given will be considered in 4.5 below when we consider future delivery.

Table 7 shows the findings for the overall operation of the partnership:

**Table 7: Partnership Working**

Project Partnership	Average Score
Overall working of the RNNI and NHSCT Partnership	1.33
Cooperation between Partners to address issues arising	1.47
Relationship between Project Partners overall	1.39
Clarity of roles and tasks to be performed by each Partner	1.56
Support from the Project Manager when requested	1.35
Ability of the Partnership to meet deadlines established	1.24

Again, Table 7 illustrates that the average scores from consultees rate the operation of the partnership overall as effective or very effective. Within these average scores, 2 consultees rated the overall working of the partnership, support from the Project Manager, cooperation to address issues arising and relationships between partners as adequate. In terms of the clarity of roles within the partnership, 2 consultees considered this to be adequate whilst one considered this variable to be inadequate. The reasons will be considered in 4.5.

Comments from consultees on the management of the Project have included:

*‘Our partnership is very effective and issues are discussed when they arise and any changes required are made then. We have a forward thinking and flexible working partnership’.*

(Northern Trust Steering Group member)

*‘This is an excellent example of partnership working between two organisations and there are good working relations between RNNI and NHSCT’.*

(Northern Trust Steering Group member)

*‘The Project Management arrangements were good and did not hinder us in our work and made the co-operation with the Project in the Centre easy’.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*‘This was my first experience of working closely with RNNI. I would say that they have been very helpful in the support that they offered to the Trust at the time we were introducing a new way of working in the Day Centres’.*

(Northern Trust Steering Group member)

*‘I feel that the arrangements we had in place here worked perfectly, there was a high level of professionalism yet at the same time there was flexibility and a realistic approach that is paramount when working with service users with disability’.*

(Day Centre Manager)

#### 4.3 Project Staff and Volunteers

The quality of delivery by both staff and volunteers has been very high throughout the 4 years of Project delivery and has been a key reason for the overall success of the Project. This can be reflected in the fact that consultees gave the quality of delivery an average rating of 1.06, reflecting that almost all consultees considered delivery to be very effective.

Words that have been used to describe the 3 project staff have included ‘creative’, ‘committed’, ‘resourceful’, ‘dedicated’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘exceptional’, ‘passionate’, ‘innovative’, ‘approachable’, ‘dependable’, ‘caring’, ‘person-centred’ and ‘excellent’. This is not an exhaustive list and there are many more adjectives that have been used in the questionnaires and evaluation forms.

A key reason for the success of the staff has been the range of skills that they have brought to the Project. Each Creative Reminiscence worker brought their own individual attributes and experiences to the Project and consultees have indicated that these complemented each other well. It has also been highlighted the willingness of staff to continue learning, to use creativity and to try new approaches to ensure that all participants felt included and involved, irrespective of their disability.

Another key aspect of the success was the identification, development and use of volunteers and students to support the work of the creative reminiscence workers. These individuals were able to bring additional skills and an extra resource that was crucial when dealing with participants with complex needs. This also reduced the pressure on Day Centre staff to be directly involved.

Some quotations from consultees about the staff and volunteers include:

*‘The project workers have brought a range of innovative skills and approaches which had not been used in our Day Care. Each exhibition, awards ceremony or presentation to families has highlighted the contribution that older people have made’.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*‘<The creative reminiscence worker> interacted so well with all the tenants. She made it a great fun experience which led to everyone creating beautiful final pieces such as corsages and silk paintings based on their childhood homes. <The creative reminiscence worker> put an enormous amount of effort into everything she delivered each week and I feel she couldn’t have done anymore to improve the outcome’.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*‘I found <the creative reminiscence worker> to be key in this programme. She was friendly and approachable with a wealth of skills and experience but it was her warmth and care that encouraged participation and her diligence at capturing the tiniest thing resulted in beautiful work’.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*‘I would like to thank you for the work you have completed with several of my community clients in their own homes. Your input has been of a very high level and, particularly in one case, beneficial to both my client and her carer. In speaking to this family they can not give enough praise, when they advise of the work you completed with them and how your contact gave them something to really look forward to and continue to benefit from’.*

(Social Worker)

## 4.4 Project Delivery

### 4.4.1 Approach Taken

Closely linked to 4.3 and the role of staff and volunteers, consultees have praised the approach that was taken in the delivery of the Project. This has included:

- **Planning** – consultees have highlighted the importance of planning that takes place prior to the group beginning. This has included setting clear objectives, assessing the often complex needs of the group members and establishing the activities or approaches that will best meet the needs identified.
- **Flexibility** – whilst it has been important to be clear as to what is to be achieved, it has been equally important to be flexible to the needs of the individuals and to shape the approach taken accordingly. Consultees have praised the staff in this regard and this has resulted in the participants being more willing and able to engage with the activities.
- **Commitment** – the importance of having commitment from all of those involved has also been crucial. As well as the creative reminiscence worker and the participants, the commitment of family members, carers and the staff from the Day Centres have also been important in achieving active engagement throughout the whole process.
- **Accessibility** – the approaches taken have ensured that the activities have been open to older people irrespective of their disability and the staff have sought to ensure that everyone is included and involved.
- **Non-intrusive** – the delivery style was described as non-intrusive, where participants were encouraged to share their memories in a safe environment with minimal risk of revealing something private.
- **Fun and Enjoyable** – consultees observed that their clients had fun and enjoyed recalling and sharing memories within the group. Many participants had shared memories of past experiences and this helped to bond the group. This has been highlighted as one of the reasons why high levels of attendance and completion were achieved for many of the groups.
- **Creative** – the opportunity to produce something tangible, whether this be a life story book, a painting or a wood carving, was highlighted as being important as it was something to keep and that could be taken home. This also helped participants to use skills that may have lain dormant for a long time or to learn new skills.
- **Innovative** – the Project has been willing to try new things, including the night classes that have been successfully delivered in Ballymena, the creative writing workshops and the joint trip between groups as a way of celebrating the success of the activities. Having the funding in place has allowed for the activities to be properly resourced, something that had not been possible in the past when attempting similar things.

Comments from consultees on the approach taken have included:

*'I have been very happy with the project; it has been very successful in meeting its objectives and especially the quality of the project workers I have had the pleasure of working with. They have been able to integrate the project into the day care programme in a very positive way with highly successful outcomes for both the larger group and the individuals within the group'. (Day Centre Manager)*  
*'Having attended a number of events, the organisation and delivery of the content of the events and the participation of older people and their carers have been excellent and a model for similar projects. There has obviously been close working between staff in NHSCT Day Centres and project staff which have produced benefits beyond the original project'.*

(Assistant Director, Northern Trust)

*'Your deliverance, dedication, and commitment have been outstanding all the way through the project with the scrap books and life stories. I have noticed the joy, shared humour, memories, and the reflective quiet times with all the clients. I have been working with clients with all disabilities for around 30 years and I can honestly and sincerely say that you have been an absolute pleasure to work with and one of the best so far'.*

(Social Worker)

*'I was aware that some clients had recently been through a difficult time, I observed your input with each client and your skills to listen and recalling their happy memories was astounding and a true gift, [you never seemed to lose eye contact]. In my opinion you motivated the clients regardless and I believe this helped them through at that present time to cope with their personal loss'.*

(Day Centre staff member)

*'The best part of the project delivery was it was tailored towards the interests of those involved. Everyone felt a part of it and was asked what they would like to do over the ten weeks. It was a great success due to the person co-ordinating it taking a real interest in each person and making sure that everyone felt included. It was varied and interesting and kept everyone involved'.*

(Housing Association Manager)

#### 4.4.2 Quality of Project Outputs

Consultees were asked to rate the Outputs from the Project and the average scores out of 4 can be found in Table 8:

**Table 8: Project Outputs**

Project Outputs	Average Score
Creative Reminiscence Workshops delivered	1.04
Group member memory products created	1.04
Life Story Books produced	1
Memory Boxes produced	1.08
Remembering Yesterday Caring Today (RYCT) Training and Apprenticeship Programme	1.38
Introduction to Reminiscence & Life Story work volunteer training	1.22
Practical skills training courses for volunteers	1.16
Celebration Events held	1.20

This would suggest a high level of satisfaction amongst consultees with the outputs from the Project. In particular, every consultee considered the life story books to be very effective, with the workshops, products and memory boxes rated effective or very effective by all consultees also. The memory boxes have been described as an unanticipated benefit to the Project and added value to the overall offering.

Consultees have highlighted how the products have been great for the participants and their families, highlighting the real sense of pride in what they have created and the interest in the older person from members of their family. Day Centre staff have also been able to adopt and adapt many of the ideas they have learned from their involvement in the reminiscence groups to their own work with the older people.

The RYCT training was provided to 23 staff with an apprenticeship programme delivered to 7 participants. Both of these were unanticipated outputs from the Project but represent an opportunity for RNNI to expand into in the future.

Comments from consultees have included:

*'If there had been an option to mark 10 I would have done so as the products were so professionally produced and the impact on individual project participants was so positive, improving people's sense of worth and enabling conversations with people who they may not have previously engaged with'.*

(Assistant Director, Northern Trust)

*'The Life Story Books are just outstanding and a real joy to read and are proof of the benefits to the participants'.*

(Northern Trust staff member)

*'The quality of the products produced - the service users must feel very proud of these items which are so professional you would happily buy them and place them in your own home'.*

(Northern Trust staff member)

*'The product produced in respect of the craft and creative element of the project has been of an outstanding success across the groups and has shown what can be achieved with guidance and support. The life story work has been truly inspiring and humbling and the finished books are indeed a work of art in both presentation and content'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

#### 4.4.3 Marketing and Promotion

The Project has utilised a range of promotional channels, including:

- The use of traditional marketing materials such as flyers distributed through existing channels used by RNNI and the Northern Trust;
- The delivery of Information Sessions through which Project staff delivered a presentation on the Project and its potential benefits;
- Information provided on both the RNNI and Northern Trust websites;
- Utilisation of social media such as Facebook;
- Press Releases included in the RNNI e-bulletin;
- Word of mouth from day centre staff, past participants and their families and carers;
- Inviting key influencers to celebratory events delivered where the outputs of the Project could be clearly seen and the benefits outlined;
- The BBC Lifeline appeal (broadcast in 2014) raised awareness of the Project;
- Promotion through partner organisations such as Mindwise and Agewell;
- RNNI Annual Conferences; and
- The Project was presented at the European Reminiscence Network Conference in London in June 2014.

As can be seen from the list above, the Project has effectively utilised a wide range of media for promoting the Project. The success of these can be reflected in the fact that the Project has managed to engage with so many individuals and has consistently maintained a sustainable level of referrals.

In particular, the conference held at the Dunsilly Hotel can be considered to have been a resounding success. All of those in attendance rated the content and helpfulness of the Conference as good or very good. It highlighted the benefits of reminiscence work, informed professional staff, highlighted good practice

in reminiscence and life story work and led to more appropriate referrals to the project. Comments from attendees included:

*'Highly inspirational. Brilliant, concise speakers all with lots of passion and knowledge'.*

(Occupational Therapist, Western HSC Trust)

*'All the speakers inspired me. The benefits of reminiscence were made so clear, especially in terms of valuing the individual and their experience'.*

(Librarian)

*'This was an excellent conference. The programme was spot on. All followed on succinctly. The reminiscence workers were so passionate about their work and this was so evident'.*

(Health Improvement Service, Northern Trust)

*'Excellent. This is an imaginative and joyful way to work alongside those with dementia or any isolated older person'.*

(Dementia Navigator, South East HSC Trust)

*'Very good listening to the workers on the ground and being able to witness evidence of the good work around the room. It was also great to hear from participants themselves'.*

(Project Officer, GPH Gransha)

#### 4.5 **Future Delivery**

The following will consider the future delivery of projects such as this, in particular in relation to changes that should be made to improve the delivery process.

##### 4.5.1 **Roles in the Project and Staff Support**

A number of changes have been suggested in relation to roles in the Project:

- **Steering Group** – it is important that the membership of the steering group is kept under review with changes made where necessary. It is inevitable that some initial members of the group may move on to other job roles. As the project develops, it would also be prudent to add new representatives to reflect this, for example a family member or carer of a project participant as well as a representative from a community organisation that is involved in delivery. The way in which the steering group and Board of RNNI communicated should also be kept under review.
- **Project Manager** – the staffing structure and personnel changed during the project. Feedback suggests that it may have been helpful if the role of Project Manager was full time and could allow all Project staff to concentrate fully and exclusively on reminiscence work.
- **Reporting** – it would be beneficial for the creative reminiscence workers to report occasionally on the activities completed to the steering group and Board of RNNI. These reports have generally been made by the Project Manager and Senior Project Worker. This has been difficult in the current project due to the challenging targets established.
- **Staff Collaboration** – there would be value in staff sharing knowledge and gaining mutual support from one another. While there have been many occasions when the workers did work collaboratively, such as in the organising of the Conference in Year 3 and the Celebratory Event in Year 4, each brought a unique set of skills to the Project which could have been

shared more effectively. It is recognised however that there is a limit to what part-time staff can achieve in the hours available to them.

- **Staff Training and Support** – the work lead to disclosures of difficult life experiences by some participants. Ensuring that mechanisms are in place to support staff when the need arises is particularly important. Staff were able to participate in training offered by RNNI and the Northern Trust to ensure they were best equipped to deal with difficult situations as they arise. This is an area that should be kept under review to ensure that staff needs are identified and responded to in a timely manner.

#### 4.5.2 **Work between RNNI and the Northern Trust**

The role of each partner in the Project should be set out clearly and explained to everyone involved, including Creative Reminiscence workers and Day Centre staff, to establish a single approach to the delivery of this work. Briefings to all Day Centre Managers and key staff are essential.

Senior management support from both RNNI and the Northern Trust has been crucial to the success of the project but is also important that the day centre staff are fully committed to the project. This should be negotiated and agreed with each day centre manager prior to the start of each reminiscence group.

These issues relate to planning and communication. Now that the Project has been delivered successfully, the learning gained can be applied and the necessary pre-start planning, training and relationship-building can be put in place for any future activities such as this.

#### 4.5.3 **Future Training Delivery and Capacity Building**

The consultation has highlighted that there is a strong demand from staff at the Day Centres and community settings to be trained in the creative reminiscence activities that have been used through this Project. Several staff have indicated that they have applied activities to their own work with older people with disabilities having observed the creative reminiscence worker delivering the Project. There is a desire for formal training to be provided to build the capacity of both the staff and the organisations whilst ensuring a legacy of the Project is in place for the longer-term. Issues in relation to staff shortages and freeing up Day Centre staff to undertake the training would need to be addressed.

In addition, it has been suggested that new training programmes and manuals could be developed by RNNI as a result of the learning gained from this programme and applying some of the creative techniques that were trialled during project delivery. Training for carers to be able to better engage with the older person in their home setting has also been suggested. The feedback from the Conference in 2015 has also suggested there would be a wider demand for this training and accreditation should be sought for any new training delivered.

Consultees have highlighted the benefits that there would be to extending the delivery of a project such as this into a wider range of settings, including residential and nursing homes. Developing and training staff working in these settings would further spread the reach of the reminiscence work taking place.

#### 4.5.4 Importance of the Reminiscence Process

It has been highlighted throughout the consultation that there should be emphasis placed on the reminiscence process as well as on the production of pieces of art or craftwork. Participants clearly gain a lot of satisfaction from producing something tangible, but the process of reminiscence remains paramount.

Comments from consultees on the importance of reminiscence work have included:

*'The importance lies in concentrating on what people can do. Acknowledging their past skills e.g. working in the Mill, and transferring that to what they can do now through meaningful reminiscence work'*

(RNNI staff member)

*'Reminiscence work is central to much of the work carried out with older people. It stimulates the mind and improves mental well-being. It can also contribute to physical health by engaging people in social activities that keep the person active and alert'*

(RNNI staff member)

*'Finding creative and fun ways to engage and facilitate the older people and those with disabilities to become involved was just amazing and everyone was an individual and was treated as such'*

(Northern Trust staff member)

*'Reminiscence work is considered the 'icing on the cake' i.e. not necessary but nice if you can afford it. This mindset needs to change as reminiscence plays a very important part improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing in older people'*

(Northern Trust staff member)

*'I think they are very important as it has the ability and great methods to bring happy memories back to members. For people who are older and have gained disabilities over time it often gives them great enjoyment to share happy memories when they were younger, fitter and more able bodied and also share their common interests with others'*

(Community Association Manager)

*'The process of life story and reminiscence is just as important as the outcome, the product - of feeling valued, increased confidence, talking about something they are an expert in, of general enjoyment. Of course there are benefits for carers also who find out pieces of family history previously not known to them. It can also improve staff relationships with service users and carers. It is part of a parcel of holistic, individualised care I believe'*

(Northern Trust staff member)

#### 4.5.5 Other Factors for Future Delivery

Other factors highlighted by consultees have included:

- **Transport** – it could be difficult for some participants to access this Project due to their complex needs, including the fact that a member of care staff may also be required to accompany the individual when travelling to and from their home to attend the Project.
- **Referral** – for an individual to get the maximum amount of benefit from a project such as this, it is important that they are referred when they

are newly diagnosed. Some clients were referred when they had already reached crisis point resulting in the support provided being of less benefit to them.

- **Group Dynamics** – the membership of reminiscence groups should be carefully selected to ensure the appropriate dynamics exist. This could include single sex groups, individuals with similar disabilities and smaller group numbers to allow for complex needs to be met. It is also important to ensure that the participants are at a point where they are ready to engage in a process such as this.
- **Pre-Start Relationship Building** – there would be benefit if the group got to meet the facilitator for a few weeks prior to the reminiscence group starting, to build relationships and become comfortable with what would be happening. If this was possible, it was suggested the time in the group could be better spent and more productive.
- **Timing of Groupwork and Celebration Events** – consultees have suggested both the morning (when the memory of participants is likely to be better) and the evening (when carers and family members are more readily available) as the best times for carrying out the activities. It is important that both options are considered.
- **Intergenerational work** – it has been suggested that an intergenerational aspect could be added to a future project by engaging local schools, particularly where grandchildren of the older person could be involved.
- **Marketing and Promotion** – it would have been beneficial to attract wider publicity for the work carried out, particularly from newspapers and other media. A future project could develop a media and publicity plan with respective roles for RNNI and the Communications department within the Northern Trust. The benefits of the work could also be widely promoted across the Northern Trust into other programmes of care, with the potential to identify new service users from other parts of the Trust and with other stakeholders.

#### 4.5.6 Project Evaluation

The Project staff have been very diligent at gathering evaluation information, both during and at the end of both groupwork and life story work, with information appearing in facilitator reports. Staff have produced some excellent evaluation materials, including video testimony from participants as well as case studies outlining the difference the Project has made to both the older person and their family.

If an independent external evaluator is to be engaged, it needs to be considered how this role can best add value to project work overall. For example, having the evaluator attend sessions is time-consuming, costly and may not be the best use of the evaluator's time. Attendance at celebration events, at which discussions with participants and family members could take place, would have been a much better approach to have taken.

This evaluation report has sought to provide a summative review of the Project overall and has focussed on the way in which it has been delivered by the

partners to identify learning for the future delivery of work such as this. Whilst comments from participants and their families will be included when considering the Outcomes from the Project, this report has sought where possible not to duplicate the information that will be included in the end of project publication that is being produced by RNNI.

#### **4.6 Added Value brought by the Project**

There are a number of ways in which the Project has added value to the partnership and the work undertaken.

##### **4.6.1 Proof of Concept**

This Project has provided valuable funding for RNNI and the Northern Trust to develop the concept of carrying out creative reminiscence and life story work with older people with disabilities, with staff developing innovative ways of delivering the work. The approach taken has been shown to have worked and, with a few adjustments, can be applied to future projects and delivered again in the future.

##### **4.6.2 Development of the Partnership and Relationships**

The Project has enabled a partnership to develop between RNNI and the Northern Trust. Again this was not the first time these organisations had worked together but the relationships have been strengthened as a result of the work undertaken. This has not only been between the organisations but individual staff members and volunteers providing them with an opportunity to engage in a new area of working. These relationships can be developed and strengthened in the future if this work continues to be delivered.

##### **4.6.3 Staff Training and Skills Development leading to Organisational Development**

Staff from RNNI, the Northern Trust and from the community-based organisations engaged have all indicated that they have developed new skills and aptitudes as a result of their involvement with this Project. In particular, this has included new practical techniques that can be used when seeking to engage with older people with a disability that can be applied to the everyday work being undertaken. One day centre staff member stated that their involvement had rekindled their passion for their job role.

One Day Centre Manager commented 'My staff who attended your initial training, came back full of ideas and energy to try out the things they had learned. They really developed their practice with clients, not just those people with dementia. Getting ways into real, individualised memories, about the real physical world clients had experienced was a real eye opener. Having shared "common memories" that are great for initial socialisation, moving on to this individuals' memories is great. We also learned that how we asked questions was important. For example when we got to know clients, we could ask them about their experiences. If they forgot words, because we knew them and the likely answer we could help them find answers, and as such helping to prevent them becoming embarrassed because they forgot a word or two. How we asked the questions was important because there are no right or wrong answers, and then we could explore their answers with them'.

The staff training and skills development from the Project has led on to the development of the organisations that they work for. Some of the creative techniques used have become imbedded as standard practice now and anecdotal evidence suggests an improvement in the quality of the work.

#### **4.6.4 Increased Capacity and Improved Service Delivery**

With the skills learned, consultees have indicated that their involvement with the Project has led to an increased capacity, both for the individuals and their organisations, leading to an improvement in the overall service delivery being offered. Organisations can now offer a wider choice of activities than before improving the chances of being able to engage with more older people. Staff are also considered to be more confident in their job roles.

Day centre staff have indicated that the Project has improved the connectivity that they have to the families of the older people they provide care to, improving relationships and leading to an improved service being provided as a result of the greater knowledge they have of the older person's specific needs. This has increased the older person's involvement in activities at the Centre.

Greater contact with other organisations and services within the Northern Trust has also improved the ability of staff to signpost effectively to other providers where a need has been identified.

#### **4.7 Outcomes Established for the Project**

As the Outcomes are qualitative in nature, these can best be illustrated by presenting some anecdotal evidence from participants and families/carers. As the Project staff have been very proactive in gathering this evidence, there is a plethora of information available and it has not been possible to include all of this here. Given that the Project delivery was based around achieving these outcomes, examples of how they have been achieved can be found throughout the report. Some of the anecdotes may also illustrate more than one Outcome.

Consultees were asked to assess the extent to which the Project had achieved its Outcomes. Almost all of the consultees considered the Project to have been very effective in meeting each Outcome, with the remaining consultees rating the Project as having been effective.

##### **4.7.1 Outcome 1 - Increased social interaction leading to enhanced mental health and emotional wellbeing amongst older people with disabilities**

Social interaction has been achieved in a range of ways, most notably through involvement in the creative reminiscence groupwork and the life story book activities. The production of the Life Story Book has in many cases resulted in increased social interaction, both with other older people at the Day Centre or community setting but also amongst family, friends and carers. Consultees have highlighted new friendships that have been formed and carried on outside of the Day Centre. Participants have displayed much more self-confidence and a desire to get involved in more activities following this initial engagement, often as a result of re-connecting with skills they have not used in a long time.

Comments from consultees on social interaction have included:

*'I have met vulnerable elderly people with a range of disabilities, who have benefited from the projects. Instead of staying at home, they look forward to social interaction. Lives are transformed; self-worth and self-confidence replace feelings of isolation. Indeed, these people encourage each other!'*

(RNNI Board member)

*'In particular, family members liked the way the person they cared for seemed to come alive again, had much more interest in the world, remembered significant life events, and were able to share the stories with families. In terms of simple outcomes they had a "Really good laugh" which is a very important therapeutic approach and outcome'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*'The project really helped tenants who suffer from depression, sight loss etc. to really come out of themselves and become more confident. They learned new skills such as silk painting and enjoyed music and dancing which some hadn't participated in in years. They really enjoyed the social interaction each week and the fact that they had something to show to their families that they produced themselves'.*

(Housing Association Manager)

*'The groups have encouraged fun and friendship and have involved a large number of older people in a variety of creative pursuits which has been a source of joy and given a great sense of achievement. Many of the products produced went on display in public exhibitions which again has been a source of pride. The evening class have also provided welcome opportunity for those involved to get out of their homes at night to participate in a safe and joyful experience'.*

(RNNI staff member)

*'Increased social interaction and associated well-being amongst older people, who are vulnerable and isolated. Many have disabilities, but under careful guidance have been able to rise above their situations. Family members have thanked me personally for the way RNNI has helped their relatives'.*

(RNNI Board member)

Comments from participants and family members on their increased social interaction leading to enhanced mental health and emotional wellbeing include:

*'I enjoyed my Wednesday nights, having a reason to get dressed up and go out at night. The company and the craic really lifted me and made me feel good. I enjoyed making my picture and remembering the lovely things about my husband'.*

(Participant)

*'The social aspect of this project. We compared stories and events and shared so many happy times in the past, which I feel brought people out of themselves as they recalled these. It also brought me to a greater appreciation of things past especially regarding people who recalled previous employers and work experiences they had'.*

(Participant)

*'Meeting others in the group and walking down memory lane, I was young again!'*

(Participant)

*'Thank you so much. My Mum has had such fun coming every week. It has been lovely for her to make new friends and have interaction with others, other than her family'.*

(Daughter)

*'Mum has got a lot of benefit being part of the group. It has stimulated memories for her and we have talked about these at home. The organisers were very good in helping mum with the paintings as she has limited eye sight. Mum was always brighter when she got to the group and it got her into different company. Thank you very much to everyone involved in running the group'.*

(Son)

#### 4.7.2 Outcome 2- Vulnerable older people with disabilities recognised as valuable contributors to their immediate family, social circle and local community

The Project has been very successful in recognising the value of older people to their family and the community in general. The Life Story Books produced have helped to capture the important role that the older person has played during their lifetime, something that may not have been known by many within their family. Passing this information on to others means that it won't have been 'lost' and makes a valuable contribution to the recording of local history. Sharing of the information gathered, particularly through the creative reminiscence groups, has allowed the older person to share this information and interact with others with memories being shared and the positive experience enhanced, accentuating the positives in what may otherwise be a negative situation.

#### **Evaluations carried out with participants revealed that:**

- 96% said they felt more connected to their families/social circle/community through this work;
- 96% said that they felt that the people who saw/read their memories will value them more as a person from knowing more about them;
- 98% said they felt more confident since participating in the programme; and
- 100% said that they had enjoyed the social aspect of the programme.

Comments made by consultees on the value of the older person have included:

*'The Project reached out to people in different countries and enhanced the involvement from relatives. One 73 year old lady kept abreast of her 93 yr old mother's life story via email from Canada. Another sister of a participant who is living in England supported her brother's life story. He is now blind and she has been helping gather old photographs and information'.*

(RNNI Staff member)

*'Family members appreciate the work that has been carried out by RNNI. A daughter mentioned to me that her mother no longer wanted to stay in bed, she took pride once again in her appearance and looked forward to meeting people in the day centres. This is not an isolated case'.*

(RNNI Board member)

*'At the presentation of certificates it was clear that families relived the known experiences of their relatives and also learned about them as a younger person and in particular what made them tick. These experiences for me were humbling and edifying. The rich social history has to some extent been captured. It was interesting to see families making time in their busy lives to focus on their relatives'.*

(Northern Trust staff member)

*'The individuals involved were 'brought to life' so to speak. They weren't just 78 year old Annie for example, the project allowed workers, family and community to see and hear what 'Annie' had enjoyed, changes in her life, adventures, work,*

*history both locally and globally and what she still had to offer which was crucial. It was a very powerful experience to be a part of and really encouraged me to promote the work of RNNI'.*

(Volunteer)

*'Listening to the group talking of their life experiences, work history and hobbies gave me a great insight into not only "who they were but also who they still are". I also feel that in giving the group and the elderly in general the chance to tell their stories makes them feel more acknowledged and maybe even a little bit more appreciated'.*

(Volunteer)

Comments from participants and family members on the recognition that is now felt for the older person have included:

*'I enjoyed looking and discussing the past with my daughter, and many late nights reminiscing over a glass of wine. I have thoroughly enjoyed this process of looking back over my life, it feels like I have lived it again. I enjoyed sharing my memories of my lovely husband and the many adventures we went on together. My life was all I wished for and I enjoyed every bit of it. But there's still more to come! I would recommend creating this life story, it has been nice sharing stories with my extended family. My daughter has been a great help in writing this book, she has discovered memories she never knew about. This has triggered lots of discussion about the old days'.*

(Participant)

*'I liked talking about my life and reminiscing about the past and getting everything put into a book that I can look at and share with relatives and friends'.*

(Participant)

*'I enjoyed talking about my wife as she passed away and showing pictures of my wife and the farm. I enjoyed making the picture. I am proud that my picture is on the wall for everyone to see'.* (Participant)

*'The whole process has been very reassuring and empowering for our whole family. The book, family trees and art work are great to have as a way of reflecting and sharing good times. It's great to have a legacy of their and our lives. The way Mum and Dad's memories were drawn out using different techniques from their photos, old objects, art work, old posters from dancehalls and building up the family tree was amazing. All the work is a brilliant legacy for the grandchildren too. Mum and Dad enjoyed every bit of it and really looked forward to <the creative reminiscence worker> calling. She is now a friend and I think my Mum would easily adopt her. It was a really positive process and the informality around it made it very comfortable for them and us'.*

(Son)

#### 4.7.3 Outcome 3 - Greater feelings of self-confidence and self-worth amongst vulnerable older people with disabilities living in the community

From the anecdotal evidence, it has been clear that participants have become more self-confident and recognised their continued worth, both within their family unit but also to society in general. In the groupwork, participants could be seen to grow from week-to-week and take more of a role in the activities. Recognising their past achievements and what they have contributed brought positivity and

reduced any feelings of being a burden on those around them, again accentuating the positives of their situations, and helped them develop skills to better cope with what they are faced with.

Evaluations carried out with participants revealed that:

- 100% of participants said that they enjoyed sharing their experiences;
- 98% said that they were more willing to share their memories since taking part in the programme; and
- 92% of those taking part in individual life story work said that they felt that the people who saw/read their memories would value them more through knowing more about them.

Comments from consultees about increased confidence have included:

*'When one listens to these people talking about pictures or craft items that they have made, it is very revealing. Often, there is a real sense of pride in what they have produced. On one occasion, a watercolour self-portrait was so good, that one of the project staff hung a photograph of the elderly person beside it. No words were required, the talent of the artist spoke for itself. How many times does one hear the phrase "I did not think I had any talents". Works are regularly put on public show'. (RNNI Board member)*

*'We saw people's confidence building week on week and indeed many people surprised themselves in respect of their involvement and participation'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*'One life story piece was particularly important to one gentleman who had felt he would have nothing to say or have anything interesting written about him. It was evident through the process how much he was enjoying it and he became increasingly confident each week. The finished piece of work proved to be an immense source of pride for him to show to his family'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*'The participants have raised self esteem, motivation and confidence. Carers are able to witness the improvement in mood of their loved one. They are also able to realise that it is ok to challenge their loved one to do more'.*

(RNNI Staff member)

*'It has given something back to those who have lost so much, it has restored a level of confidence and self belief and it has promoted a culture of we instead of me. I also feel that it has helped reinforce with family and carers that there is still a lot of ability within the individual even if it sits along side a disability, and given time and support it can be restored to everyone's benefit'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

Comments from participants and family members on how the Project has raised confidence and self-worth of the older person have included:

*'I appreciate that with both hearing and sight problems that you gave me the confidence to keep going regardless of my disabilities. I'm able to do things now that I could do in the past; I thought I'd never be able to do them again'.*

(Participant)

*“Mummy looked forward to coming each week. Her confidence grew. The girls gave her the freedom to be herself. She didn’t have to hide forgetting things; it was part of what brought everyone together.”*

(Family member)

*‘I feel more comfortable with regards to other members of the group, more willing to look back and see how my past memories affected my present life. I welcomed the sharing of past memories as it has helped me to have more meaning to my life’.*

(Participant)

*‘I was not too happy to go to the day centre but my daughter persuaded me and I’m glad she did, I really enjoyed it. My picture is very special to me’.*

(Participant)

*‘I didn’t know at the beginning what reminiscence was, I wasn’t sure what to make of it but I enjoyed it all. I would recommend it to anybody. It’s good to talk about the past and get the conversation going. Sometimes it can be hard to get the conversation started. I had never painted before and now look what I have done’.*

(Participant)

*‘This has been such a valuable group for both my Dad, as it gets him out, provides stimulation and company, and for my Mum as a break from her carer duties. Thank you’.*

(Daughter)

*‘I love the way you use the memories of the people to bring them closer together. I can see that everyone in the group are close. The people that run this group should be proud they have done a lot of good work here. Plus it’s always a bonus to see a smile on my nannies face’.*

(Grandson)

*‘Thank you for everything you did for granny in keeping her wee mind active, as she was able to tell me all the stories she had maybe forgotten! And for the support and opportunity to be a part of the group’.*

(Granddaughter)

*‘Anyone who knows my Mum cannot get over how much her memory has improved and from initially not joining in she entered fully into all aspects of the programme’.*

(Daughter)

- 4.4.7 Outcome 4 - Creation of Life Stories that will provide a passport during transitions helping older people with disabilities to assimilate to their new environments and creating a cherished legacy for family and friends
- Participants have expressed high levels of satisfaction and pride with the products that have been produced, providing a lasting legacy of their lives for their families. Anecdotal evidence from consultees has identified occasions where the life story book has provided a source of contentment at times of bereavement or when there is a change in their lives, most notably when they lose their independence and move into residential care. Having the book has helped the older person to settle into their new environment by having something to share with the new people they encounter as well as a legacy of the life they have lived.

Evaluations carried out with participants revealed that:

- 96% of those who participated in life story work said they would be willing to show their life stories with those caring for them; and
- 100% of those who participated in life story work said they would be willing to leave their life story books to their families.

Comments from consultees on transitions have included:

*'We have had experience of clients using their life story book in hospital and care as a way to help them during difficult times and transitions. Many families ordered additional books to pass to the younger generation of the families'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*'A life story book was completed with one couple in which the wife had dementia and the husband had terminal cancer. When the husband became really ill and could no longer speak, he still nodded and smiled while the family read to him from his book. Unfortunately he passed away but his book was passed round at the wake where the pictures compiled on a DVD of his life were shown on a continuous loop. The family told me that the life story book and the photos provided many moments of joy in a very difficult week'.*

(RNNI staff member)

*'The memory products created are a lovely legacy of the programme and were proudly shared with family and friends and I feel in many cases served to reinforce that irrespective of lost memory and skills, people still have a lot to offer given time, stimulation and support'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*'I believe some families were very surprised at the quality of outcome. The life story books are just a pure joy and I thank those that gave me the privilege of being allowed to read them. The quality of presentation and content is special and we have seen something that should be cherished as it is a piece of living history that a person can take forward on their journey so that others can share memories even if the individual's memory is no longer clear. It will be such an important document in respect of transition'.*

(Day Centre Manager)

*'The life story books have been received very positively by all those involved. They have helped to restore self-confidence and helped the participants reflect positively on their lives. They have been used to enhance conversations across generations and in some instances continents and have been used when some have gone into hospital or care. They have been a source of comfort too to the families at times of bereavement'.*

(RNNI Staff member)

Comments from participants and their family members have included:

*'It's great to have all the significant elements of my life put into one book. I couldn't have done it on my own. It made me appreciate my past and what I've achieved. I'm delighted with the result'.*

(Participant)

*'I enjoyed making so many friends and learning new things. I enjoyed writing my life story; I remembered things. I enjoyed writing things that I didn't know I could'.*

(Participant)

*'Later on showing it (my Life Story Book) to different classes would be nice for you, I was hoping to let them see because I was so scared at the beginning and was ready to pull out. I have come out of myself quite a bit from coming here. I am able to chat more to others, even people I don't know'.*

(Participant)

*'You have certainly taken a lot of trouble to make sure I can read it and see it myself and making sure its nice for me. You have been so friendly and natural that I had no difficulty telling my stories to you. I really enjoyed it. I was nervous at first but you put me at ease and I am really chuffed with the book'.*

(Participant)

#### 4.8 **Summary**

This Section has demonstrated the success of the Project across its four years of delivery. The following Section will present some conclusions before recommendations are made for the delivery of future projects such as this.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 This Evaluation Report for the Sharing Memories – Building Communities Project has clearly demonstrated that the Project has been successfully delivered over its four years of delivery. The Project has been successful in engaging with 504 older people producing 78 life story books and more than 130 products based on group memories. The staff have facilitated 57 creative reminiscence groups in more than 700 sessions across 7 Day Centres in the Northern Trust area and held 40 celebratory events. The Project has also successfully recruited and trained 27 volunteers
- 5.2 The qualitative analysis throughout this report has clearly demonstrated the success of the Project in meeting the aims and outcomes set at the outset. The mental health and emotional wellbeing of older people with disabilities have been enhanced through their participation in the creative reminiscence groupwork and the production of a life story book. This process has often led to family members and carers taking a more active interest in the life of the older person thus reducing their feelings of social isolation and creating a valuable record of their lives as a legacy from the work.
- 5.3 The Project has also effected real changes in the participants, increasing their confidence levels and feelings of self-worth, learning new skills as well as re-kindling older ones that may have been lost. Skills have also been developed amongst staff and volunteers leading to an expansion in the activities provided at the day centres and improved relationships with the older people. There is increasing sound evidence for Reminiscence work and its positive impact on the health and well-being of people.
- 5.4 The scope exists for the delivery of the creative reminiscence work to be rolled out over a wider area and feedback from stakeholders would suggest that there is a demand for this work beyond the Northern Trust area of remit. There is also the potential to provide additional training to existing staff that have been engaged with to embed the learning gained in the communities for the longer-term future.
- 5.5 The following Section will put forward some recommendations for consideration to be implemented in any future project delivery.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following provides recommendations for the future delivery of a project such as this based on the findings of this evaluation report.

### **6.1 Project Management**

- The membership of the steering group should be kept under review to ensure a representation of the key target groups of the Project, for example:
  - a family member/carer of a project participant
  - a representative from a community organisation involved in delivery
  - a current RNNI Board member
- There should be a clear process for replacing Steering Group members if necessary;
- Each creative reminiscence worker should report to the Steering Group at least once per year;
- Consideration should be given to making a future Project Manager role a full-time position;
- A Communications Plan should be established to seek wider external publicity for a future project; and
- An evaluation questionnaire should be developed to measure the impact that this work has on the mental health of participants and their families.

### **6.2 Project Staff**

- Opportunities should be explored to enable staff to collaborate more in delivery utilising the different skills and experience they bring to the Project;
- Training and Support arrangements should be kept under review to support staff with the changing needs of their work;
- For each new location for creative reminiscence or life story work, it is important to set out the respective roles and expectations of creative reminiscence workers and the host organisation or Centre;
- Review meetings between project staff and Day Centre Managers, and involving a senior member of Northern Trust staff as required should be considered; and
- Additional staff time for networking and building referral networks should be built in to a future programme.

### **6.3 Stakeholder Training**

- Staff in Day Centres and community organisations as well as carers should be trained to deliver creative reminiscence activities;
- Training courses and supporting manuals should be developed based on the learning gained from this Project;
- Accreditation should be considered for any training developed; and
- RNNI should establish a mechanism for supporting the implementation of training programmes in Reminiscence and Life Story Work by providing mentoring for staff in the statutory and the community and voluntary sectors.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Aims, Outcomes and Outputs**

The aims set for the Sharing Memories - Building Communities Project are as follows:

- To enhance the mental health and emotional wellbeing of older people with disabilities;
- Enable active participation in life story work and group based reminiscence activity;
- Engage family members and carers in improving social inclusion for older people with disabilities;
- To promote the ability to learn new skills amongst older people living with disabilities;
- To improve the quality of life of older people living with disabilities; and
- To produce products of memories that will be a valuable legacy for family/ friends and carers.

The agreed outputs for the Project over 4 years were:

#### **Year One**

- 98 Life Story work home visits made and 14 Life Stories completed;
- 124 Meetings of creative reminiscence groups held in 7 different locations, attended by 48 older people;
- 2 products based on group members memories created and shared with the local community; and
- 6 volunteers recruited and trained to support project activities.

#### **Year Two**

- 192 Life Story work home visits made and 24 Life Stories completed;
- 192 meetings of creative reminiscence groups held in 7 different locations by 72 older people;
- 12 products based on group members memories created and shared with the local community;
- 12 family heirloom products created via creative reminiscence groups; and
- 10-12 events held per year.

#### **Years Three and Four**

- 192 Life Story work home visits made and 24 Life Stories completed;
- 192 meetings of creative reminiscence groups held in 7 different locations by 72 older people;
- 12 products based on group members memories created and shared with the local community;
- 12 family heirloom products created via creative reminiscence groups; and
- 1 end of project celebration event held including launch of an end of project celebration document.

The initial target outcomes established for the Programme were:

Outcome 1: Increased social interaction leading to enhanced mental health and emotional wellbeing amongst 224 vulnerable older people with disabilities living in the community by the end of Year 4.

Outcome 2: 179 vulnerable older people with disabilities recognised as valuable contributors to their immediate family, social circle and local community by end of Year 4.

Outcome 3: Greater feelings of self confidence and self worth amongst 202 vulnerable older people with disabilities living in the community by the end of Year 4.

Outcome 4: Creation of 98 Life Stories that may promote self esteem and may be of benefit during future transitions such as moving into residential care (assisting care staff to get to know the older person) as well as creating a cherished legacy for family and friends, by end of Year 4.

# **Appendix 2**

# **Creative Reminiscence**

# **Groups**

<b>Date Sessions Completed</b>	<b>Day Centre</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<b>YEAR 1</b>		
Dec 2012	Antrim Day Centre	11
Dec 2012	Inniscoole - Newtownabbey	6
Jan 2013	Wilson House - Ballymena	8
Dec 2012	Gloucester Park - Larne	5
Dec 2012	Cookstown Day Centre	7
Jan 2013	Magherafelt Day Centre	9
July 2013	Antrim Day Centre	6
July 2013	Inniscoole - Newtownabbey	7
June 2013	Gloucester Park - Larne	5
June 2013	Wilson House - Ballymena	6
Aug 2013	Cookstown Day Centre	6
Aug 2013	Magherafelt Day Centre	7
<b>YEAR 2</b>		
Nov 2013	Antrim Day Centre	10
April 2014	Antrim Day Centre	7
Aug 2014	Antrim Day Centre	7
Jan 2014	Inniscoole - Newtownabbey	7
June 2014	Inniscoole - Newtownabbey	7
Feb 2014	Wilson House - Ballymena	7
July 2014	Wilson House - Ballymena	8
March 2014	Gloucester Park - Larne	12
July 2014	Gloucester Park - Larne	8
Feb 2014	Maghera Day Centre	6
July 2014	Maghera Day Centre	8
Feb 2014	Magherafelt Day Centre	8
Aug 2014	Magherafelt Day Centre	5
Sept 2014	Wilson House – Night Class	6

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day Centre</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<b>YEAR 3</b>		
Jan 2015	Inniscoole Day Centre	6
July 2015	Inniscoole Day Centre	6
Jan 2015	Antrim Day Centre	7
May 2015	Antrim Day Centre	10
July 2015	Mindwise Ballyclare	7
March 2015	Larne Day Centre	7
June 2015	Pound Green Park, Larne	10
Oct 2014	Wilson House Night class	7
March 2015	Wilson House Day Centre	8
July 2015	Wilson House Day Centre	8
July 2015	Wilson House Night class	8
Jan 2015	Maghera Day Centre	9
July 2015	Maghera Day Centre	7
Jan 2015	Magherafelt Day Centre	8
July 2015	Upperlands Community Association	7
<b>YEAR 4</b>		
Nov 2015	Inniscoole Day Centre	13
Dec 2015	The Whins Crumlin	7
April 2016	Inniscoole Day Centre	9
June 2016	Inniscoole Day Centre	4
May 2016	Antrim Day Centre	9
Jan 2016	Moat View	7
Jan 2016	Wilson House	7
May 2016	Age NI Day centre, Ballyclare	10
May 2016	Wilson House Day Centre	5
Dec 2015	Clanmill Portrush & Ballymena	11
Dec 2015	Clanmill Coleraine	10
April 2016	Maghera Day Centre	6
April 2016	Age Concern Coleraine	9
June 2016	Apex Housing	6
June 2016	Magherafelt Day Centre	8
June 2016	Larne Day Centre	9

# **Appendix 3**

# **Key Stakeholder**

# **Consultees**

### **Steering Group Members**

Audrey Lockhart	RNNI
Marian Ferguson	RNNI
Hazel Kelso	Northern Trust
Yvonne Carson	Northern Trust
Petr Zvolsky	Northern Trust
Collette Fairley	Day Centre Manager, Northern Trust
Caroline Bucklee	Day Centre Manager, Northern Trust
John Logan	Day Centre Manager, Northern Trust

### **Project Staff**

Katrina Lavery	Senior Creative Reminiscence Worker
Deirdre Doherty	Creative Reminiscence Worker
Geraldine Gallagher	Creative Reminiscence Worker

### **RNNI Board Members and Staff**

Siobhan Casey	Chairperson
Katherine Robertson	Secretary
Colin Dyas	Treasurer
George Sproule	
Sandra Gray	
Fiona McGettigan	
Alan Hanna	

### **Northern Trust Staff**

Tony Stevens	Chief Executive
Oscar Donnelly	Director Mental Health
Hugh Nelson	Head of Health Improvement
Patrick Graham	Assistant Director, Community Care
Brian Serplus	Head of Residential and Day Care Services
Amanda Hull	Senior Care Worker
Fred Fisher	Day Centre Manager
John Holmes	Day Centre Manager
Catherine Kerr	Day Centre Manager
Donna O'Neill	Day Centre Manager
Hazel Rice	NHSCT Manger of Oriel House

### **Other Consultees**

Gillian Rea	Clanmil Housing, Coleraine
Caroline McFerran	Age Concern Causeway
Gemma Wilson	Upperlands Community Association
Marlene Smyth	Choice Housing Scheme Coordinator Pound Green Court
Lisa Wilkinson	Apprentice
Loretta Carty	Volunteer

## Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland

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Twitter: **[https://twitter.com/RNNI info](https://twitter.com/RNNIinfo)**

Sharing Memories

