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Promoting well-being by valuing people's memories

News Update

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## Training Dates

An Introduction to Reminiscence and Life Story Work accredited by the Open College Network QCF level 2 with 2 credits, RNNI is offering this training opportunity on the following:

- Dates: 19 Sept and 24 October 2016
  - Time: 10.00am to 4.00pm
  - Venue: RNNI's office, Richview Regeneration Centre, 339-341 Donegall Road, Belfast
- The aim is to give participants an introduction to reminiscence work through information, examples, practical exercises and discussion.

This two-day course covers the benefits of reminiscence work, the risks and ethical issues involved, the use of multisensory triggers, adapting reminiscence activities to meet different disabilities and guidance for planning reminiscence sessions.

## Letter from Australia



Almost eighteen months ago I returned to Sydney after an absence of 56 years, most of which I spent in Northern Ireland. One of my greatest joys was seeing so many people benefit from reminiscence and life story work, largely through the efforts of RNNI. My thanks to all the members, trainers, staff and board members of RNNI for your friendship, commitment to the Network and for all that you do to make the importance of reminiscence work more widely known.

I am delighting in the beauty of Sydney, its harbour and beaches, its wealth of bush land and bush walks and sharing in the busy lives of my children and grandchildren. Recently I completed a commissioned literature review on pain management in people with dementia in residential care and have joined a "Writing Your Memoirs' U3A group. If any of you are in Sydney at any time please do get in touch – I would love to see you. My warmest thanks for all your kindness to me over many years and with all good wishes.

Sincerely

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# Individual Specific Reminiscence in Dementia- A feasibility study



Inspired is an exciting and innovative feasibility study by Ulster University aimed at testing the effects of individual and specific reminiscence, facilitated through the use of an iPad App, on the relationship between a person living with dementia and their family carer. The study will take place in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. Facilitators from the Reminiscence Network will work with each pair in their

own family home to demonstrate how to identify and use specific memorabilia to stimulate their personal memories. Once identified, the personal memories in the form of photographs, music or videos will be stored on an iPad using the reminiscence App, Inspired. Participating pairs will also be given IT support on how to use the iPad and the Inspired App. The study, which is just about to start, will last for five months and will involve thirty people living with mild to moderate dementia and their carers in their own home. Individual and specific reminiscence draws on a person's unique abilities, rather than emphasising their impairments. Therefore, outcome measures will examine the impact of this type of reminiscence on mutuality, wellbeing, quality of life and quality of the relationship between the person with dementia and their carer.



Gillian Rea Housing Scheme Co-ordinator pictured with participants from Clanmil Coleraine at the new wall mural depicting the Sharing Memories Building Project at Hezlet Court Clanmil.

# OCN Training- Reminiscence work at COGS, Monkstown

I attended the Introduction to Reminiscence and Life Story work training as recalling and reflection of past experiences is a key element of my work as a minister in the Church of the Good Shepherd (COGS), Monkstown and as a hospital chaplain. A grant enabled me to set up a project called 'Down Memory Lane' whereby individuals were encouraged to explore a whole spectrum of reminiscence activities. One parishioner Jack, collated old photos and recorded on an audio CD, recalling his memories about the people and events represented in them. He created a memory clock and colour coded the emerging themes and seasons of his life which we examined together. Jack also assembled a memory box with personal memorabilia. His wife Betty added to his life-story collection by hand writing a letter describing Jack from her perspective which was very touching and a great blessing for Jack. In return he decided to write a handwritten letter to each of his family members for them to read and treasure after his death recording his life lessons and his personal hopes for each of them for the future.

I would definitely recommend this work to any parish or chaplaincy, and even suggest it should feature in clergy training and the CPD element of any pastoral, family, community or youth worker. Rev Arlene Moore



Examples of OCN students products. Dressing up for away days and holidays

# Take My Hand

Following staff training in September we started the 'Take My Hand' workshop with a mixture of apprehension and excitement. Stage one of the process involved participants mixing a pink latex with rotatory hand mixers. Participants tentatively slid their hands into the cold mixture and waited for the latex rubber mould to form around their hand. There was lots of laughter as they slid their hands from the mould, would they get their hand out? Luckily all hands were freed successfully and we proceeded to stage two of mixing the plaster with a whisk. This process reminded them of making pancakes or mixing cream as the plaster thickened to a pouring consistency. The plaster was poured into the moulds and set aside for the following week. Participants then turned their hands to screen printing their photographs onto canvas for their individual pieces. The theme of the exhibition was 'Work', each participant was asked to think of a memento which would illustrate their job. Phyllis owned her own shop in Ballyclare, she sold china and travelled widely to purchase stock for her business. The excitement was palatable the following week as we broke open the moulds to reveal the hands. The detail of skin, veins and ligaments was amazing. The participants then were asked to paint their hand sculpture in a colour of their choice, some choose natural alabaster others choose silver, Morris choose copper as he said that is the colour of his skin during the summer months. The hands were displayed on a slate plinth. An exhibition and celebration was held at Raceview Mill, it then travelled to the Braid Museum for a month. These workshops were part of the 'Sharing Memories, Building Communities Project' in partnership with The Northern Health and Social Services Trust which is funded by the Big Lottery. Training workshops in this process are available, please contact RNNI for further details.



# Multi-Sensory Life Story Training

Two organisations Deaf/Blind NI and Sense approached RNNI to create a multisensory life story training programme to engage people who were deaf or blind. Dr Geraldine Gallagher taught participants how to engage their client through touch using acrylic paint. The deaf participants managed to communicate despite their hands being covered in paint, Angela signed 'this feels cold'. Geraldine then demonstrated how to draw the participant's life story out of client in a friendly and non-threatening way. Angela stated that she really enjoyed the training it was like 'opening doors on your life'. This approach is useful in breaking down barriers and encouraging trust between the facilitator and the client. It can also be used if no photographs exist.

Participants were also trained to draw a narrative from a cherished photograph. A photograph holds many semiotic clues that can reveal clues to the provenance of the image. Participants were taught to focus the narrative to produce the important elements of the story within a limited word count. We discovered that deaf people write their story in a different way. They structure their narrative in a bullet point fashion rather than a traditional paragraph structure. Staff from Deaf/Blind NI and Sense have produced wonderful work with their clients as a result of the training.



Angela signing 'this feels cold'



Geraldine from Sense with her clients lifestory



Participants handpainting



Donna from Sense with her clients lifestory



Ruth from Sense with her clients lifestory

# Beyond My Window -Vera and Kay



## *Life Stories at Clanmil Housing*

*A good few years back I had one of those days with time on my hands, so I got out a pen and some paper and started to write my memories of the war, recalls Vera.*



Vera Ravenhill  
MBE

*My Life in Pictures*

Vera Ravenhill, aged 94 years, has a lovely view from her window at Hezlet Court, Coleraine. It looks over the River Bann where she sees the changing light and activity of the river. Beyond that window Vera reflects on a very different time in her life - the war years and growing up in Belfast. Like wise Kay Malcom, approaching her 80th birthday this year, looks out her window to the award winning garden at Cramsie Court in Ballymoney where she sees flowers in full bloom and neighbours passing by. She reflects on her life long nursing career and attending The First Derry School in Londonderry, situated on the city's historic walls.

*The City Walls were our childhood playground, we would have played around 'Roaring Meg', one of the city's famous canons. I remember every year on New Years Eve, one of the canons was fired and you could hear it all around the city! Kay*



Both these ladies recently completed life story work facilitated by Deirdre Doherty, community reminiscence worker, the Sharing Memories Building Communities Project. Their amazing life experiences and 'windows' into the past reveal the remarkable riches that come from sharing life stories. Enjoyed by the their families and circle of friends, the stories provide great insight and are celebrated in a renewed way today. Vera received an MBE in 2005 from the Prince of Wales in recognition of 45 years of dedication to the Army Cadet Service in Coleraine where she ran the tuck shop (and still does after 57 years). She was born in Hillsborough and moved to the Donegall Pass in Belfast.

# Beyond My Window - Vera and Kay

*I was 17 years old when the Second World War started, no one thought that the war would last so long. While many young people decided to join the Forces, I contributed to the war effort by working in a clothing factory that made uniforms for the troops. I was good at sewing and could use a sewing machine. It was hard work as the material was very heavy back then.*

*I got to make the stripes for the uniforms, the sergeants stripes were the hardest to sew for they had to be in a perfect V.*



*Vera at Hezlet Court, Coleraine with her Life Story Picture Box.*



*Kay outside Cramsie Court, Ballymoney with her Life Story Book.*

*I started nursing in 1959. I did my first training in the Massereene Hospital in Antrim. A typical day was breakfast at seven. Then I went on the wards to around a quarter to nine assisting the nursing staff. You started at the very bottom and were given jobs that the qualified nurses no longer wanted to do! Then a sister tutor started our studies at nine o'clock. It was so interesting learning about the different parts of the anatomy, the heart, the liver and the brain.*



*Prehen, Londonderry where Kay grew up*

# Family Day exhibition at Ballyclare Town Hall

Participants and their family members came together to produce their joint life story at Age NI Day centre. There were 21 participants all painting their hands together, with a break for tea and scones. Staff were able to find out facts about their participants they were unaware of. Family members were able to share time and fun with their loved one. They chatted to other carers and staff members in a relaxed atmosphere. The eight week workshop and the Family Day artwork was displayed and celebrated. Local singer Trevor McGuckin had the audience singing and miming together. We also launched our new audio lifestory book by John and Ella Holmes. John has dementia, photographs, narrative and music were linked together to help John remember his life story. Ella stated that John draws great comfort from it. A hard back copy was also created for the Holmes family to share.



The workshops were part of the 'Sharing Memories, Building Communities Project'.

