

April 2015

Promoting well-being by valuing people's memories

## News Update

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### Reminiscence Conference 8 May 2015

Sharing Memories Building Communities

Free Registration



[www.rnni.org](http://www.rnni.org)

*To share the learning on the impact of reminiscence and life story work from the findings of the Sharing Memories, Building Communities project*

Dunsilly Hotel Antrim

9.30 am - 1.30 pm  
Followed by lunch



We are excited to announce our Reminiscence Conference which will explore the impact of the Sharing Memories, Building Communities project. Delegates will be welcomed by Marian Ferguson, Manager of RNNI and Tony Doherty, from the Big Lottery Fund. The conference will be addressed by Dr Assumpta Ryan, from the Ulster University, who will present her research findings on reminiscence work; Dr Tony Stevens, Chief Executive of NHSCT on 'Why does the Northern Health and Social Care Trust value reminiscence work in person-centred care?' and Yvonne Carson, from the Health Improvement Service, NHSCT on 'Why we encourage people to reminisce?'

Elements of practice will be presented by RNNI's team of reminiscence

workers. Katrina Lavery will discuss 'Celebrating each person's uniqueness through reminiscence', while Deirdre Doherty questions 'Why do Life Story Work?' Geraldine Gallagher will present her interpretation of practice through the theme of 'Sociability through reminiscence' and evidence of the its impact will be provided by Collette Fairley, Day Centre Manager NHSCT, who will discuss the benefits of this project on the work at Wilson House Day Centre. Loretta Carthy, will provide testimony of her experience as a beneficiary of reminiscence activities and as a RNNI volunteer in her address entitled 'The way I see it'. Finally Nuala Murray, the external evaluator of the project for Brian Stratford and Associates, will present an independent evaluation of the project. If you would like further details please contact [avrilfairbrother@rnni.org](mailto:avrilfairbrother@rnni.org).

# Training Opportunities

## Post Qualifying Specialist Award Module: Reminiscence, Life Story Work and Life Review

*Closing date for applications: 26 June 2015*

This Post Qualifying module, accredited through the Ulster University, is designed for qualified social workers in a variety of work settings, including community, residential, domiciliary and day care services for adults; children's services; probation and criminal justice; hospices and hospitals. Candidates should hold a professional social work qualification and be registered with NISCC, and have enrolled with the NIPQETP for professional credits.

*Closing Date for applications: 26th June 2015*

For further details and download an application form click on to download <http://www.rnni.org/pages/training%20courses>

## Introduction to Reminiscence and Life Story Work

*2 Day Workshop, 21 September & 2 November 2015*

This two day training aims to give participants an introduction to reminiscence work through information, examples, practical exercises and discussion. Accredited training by the Open College Network – QCF level 2 with 2 credits, a certificate of attendance can be issued. The course approaches benefits, risks, ethical issues, planning etc, providing an overview of reminiscence work supported by practice work and assessment booklet.

For more information and if you are interested in attending, an application form can be downloaded <http://www.rnni.org/pages/training%20courses#Introduction>

'It is difficult to put into words the momentous impact this has had on my practice, and I feel that my confidence in my own ability as a practitioner has grown tremendously as a direct result of my participation in this course. I now have a passion for promoting reminiscence and life review with ex-offenders, which has had a knock-on effect throughout my agency. We are now piloting a reminiscence project with our current client group, an exciting opportunity which would never have arisen without my engagement in the course and for which we are immensely grateful'.

Tina O'Reilly, EXTERN



# Reminiscence Arts- creative workshop

The creative reminiscence training took place on 9 March in the Agape Centre in Belfast facilitated by Deirdre Doherty and Marian Ferguson. A very enthusiastic group participated in a wide range of activities designed to develop practical skills in reminiscence group work. The activities included art, movement and drama and we were delighted to be joined by residents from Hemsworth Court in Belfast who performed their own drama based on the theme of love. Their performance illustrated the challenges and joys of reminiscence work and we are indebted to Charmaine and Tracy for bringing the group along to the training session.



## Women's Memories of Farming Life in the Glens of Antrim

Over a six week period, RNNI facilitator, Lisa Wilkinson met with a group of farming women to enable them to recall and share their stories of farming life in the Glens of Antrim.

Looking specifically at farming from a women's perspective, they talked of the changes they had seen and the impact they had on women in particular. They recalled the work of running the household with all the cooking and cleaning that was required at a time when there were few labour saving devices, while also sharing in the physical work of lambing, of potato gathering and helping in the hay field. They also remembered the strong sense of community that existed when neighbours shared labour and resources.

The group have produced a booklet of their memories and each woman made a framed memory picture which went on display in the in Ballymena Museum as part of their exhibition on farming life. This project would not have been possible without the support of Yvonne Carson, and the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency.



# Newtownabbey Creative Reminiscence Group 5



***“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.”***

The six very industrious participants on the fifth Creative Reminiscence group in Inniscoole Day Centre completed their sixteen week programme and went home laden with the wonderful work they had created. This included silk paintings, family trees, Christmas cards and lovely decorated Christmas stars as well as the memory book of their stories and photographs.

These sessions proved to be a great success not only for the participants but also for the family carers and it was interesting to observe how the carers found support and waited to chat to each other, exchanging phone numbers and planning to keep in touch. One participant’s wife was moved to tears on the Family Day, after seeing the DVD showing how her husband and the rest of the group had interacted and participated in all the activities.

**Katrina Lavery**  
**Reminiscence Project Worker**

*Some social workers also attended the Family Day said...*

***“This is an invaluable resource that provides a much needed forum for those with memory impairment to relax and reflect on their life experiences, sharing in a non threatening environment where they can be the expert. Both service users and carers benefit as they are able to continue the conversations at home.”***

*(Social Worker)*

# Friends Gather For Tea – in all weathers!

On the 29th of January on an extremely cold and snowy day, participants from the Magherafelt and Maghera Day Centres gathered for a tea party and celebration of their reminiscence work. A hardy breed indeed! With most of Ulster covered in deep snow, relatives and friends waited on the two buses to arrive from the local day centres.

Amidst the snow was a jolly crowd anticipating a lovely cup of tea and exhibition of their artwork produced throughout the sixteen-week creative reminiscence sessions as part of the Sharing Memories Building Communities Project. I welcomed them all to the Lurach Centre in Maghera and we were delighted to have a few words from the Rev. Issac Hanna who outlined the rich heritage of the local area. He later commented “Today I was reminded of the importance of telling peoples stories”. A film on life story work, produced at the Maghera Day Centre was previewed and provoked a great deal of special memories and reflections for the day. Roy Arbuckle, musician, treated the audience to an array songs with local tunes such as ‘The Gem of the Roe’!

The wonderful light and bright centre was awash with colour displaying framed life portraits, photo displays, cards,



canvases and artwork complimented by the bespoke china tea cups. All very different! The backdrop of the church and scenery made it very special. One family member remarked, “There is great energy and happiness in the room!” Another commented “To arrive at the Lurach Centre on a cold snowy morning, little did I think I ‘d be greeted with such colour, vibrancy, beautiful china and warm, friendly people”.

Two participants, from each day centre, were presented with individual Life Story books, which added to the sense of occasion and celebration. These books were developed over an eight-week period in one to one life story work.

**Deirdre Doherty,  
Reminiscence Project Worker**

***“There is great energy and happiness in the room!” Another commented “To arrive at the Lurach Centre on a cold snowy morning, little did I think I’d be greeted with such colour, vibrancy, beautiful china and warm, friendly people”.***

# 'Take my Hand' Group 6 Exhibition Wilson House

Wilson house was overwhelmed with visitors who were interested to see the 'Take My Hand' exhibition, over 70 people attended. Participants of the 'Take my Hand' workshop, created a wall mural which was based on their experiences of growing up. The 'Take My Hand Tree of Knowledge', featured themes such as 'Childhood', 'School', 'Teenager', 'Work' and 'Romance', the leaves of the tree were made from the participants' hand prints. One participant who grew up to be a policeman said his favourite subject at school was 'fighting', this was met with peals of laughter from the rest of the group. Everyone contributed their memories, we compared expectations of childhood from today to the past. Everyone came to the realisation that children today have a lot less freedom than they had in their day, when they could go off and play in the fields and forests around them without a thought of the dangers, we remembered blissfully building dams in the nearby stream with no adult present.



The participants created a book together called the 'Unusual Suspects', this was a tale that featured a long lost romance. An accidental lost key brought childhood sweethearts together. It featured a bed, a breeze block and a blanket on the ground, more laughter and delight was created by our volunteer Loretta as she read out the story to the audience, it was very well received, each participant was presented with their own copy.





***‘I enjoyed making my plate, painting it and decorating it. I enjoyed meeting new people, seeing their photographs and hearing their stories’. Workshop participant***

The exhibition contained plates featuring the participant’s hand print, each plate was decorated with participant’s personal jewellery. This was a multisensory process; the first stage involved the participant’s making a dough. As they mixed the flour and glue together with their wooden spoons, memories spilled out of baking with their mother and making breads and pies for their children, each woman in the group had a different way of pinching the dough to decorate their ‘pie’. The men were introduced to a rolling pin and enjoyed their first experience of ‘baking’. Each participant choose their favourite colours.

***‘I looked forward to my mum coming home every day from the day centre, she was full of exciting stories of her day. The experience has given her a renewed energy and zest for life’. Carer***



John choose green and red which reminded him of Ulster rugby, Annie got carried away with the glitter, her plate sparkled. All of the participants were genuinely surprised by the work of art they produced. The carers who attended the exhibition were moved by their parents' creativity, they were able to place their hand in their parent's hand print which was a sensual way to take their parent's hand.

**Geraldine Gallagher**  
Reminiscence Project Worker



*'I loved the company'*

## Life Story - Lottie

Lottie received her life story book and Mp3 Player in February. I helped Lottie remember the past by matching photographs from her family album with her favourite songs. The song 'A boy named Sue' by Jonny Cash reminded her of when her son was born. 'Rosemary I love you' by Slim Whitman, reminded her of her wedding day. It was important to find the right song to match the occasion. The song had to have meaning for Lottie to take her back to a time and a place. Lottie's book is handbag sized so she can carry it around with her where ever she goes. The music helps to relieve anxiety and helps Lottie to relax. She is able to engage her family and friends in her lifestory and it keeps her story alive.

Lottie took the £10.00 ticket to Australia with her young family. Her husband was a carpenter, he built their home in Australia, it came in handy as they were able to sell it three years later so they could raise the money for the boat home again. The heat did not agree with Lottie and she lost lots of weight. Lottie's husband made fiddles, he was self taught. He was once interviewed by Terry Wogan.



*'My children cried when they read my book, I never thought I'd ever write a book, my daughter is a librarian' Lottie*

**Geraldine Gallagher**  
Reminiscence Project Worker