

July 2015

Promoting well-being by valuing people's memories

News Update

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Dunsilly Conference

The Sharing Memories Building Communities Conference held in the Dunsilly Hotel on 8 May was a great success with over 100 people enrolling and interest was so great that a waiting list had to be compiled. 100% of those attending rated the conference as good or very good and when asked to think of a word to describe their experience those listed included 'Inspiring', 'Informative' 'Uplifting' and 'Enlightening'.

Many aspects of the project were considered with presentations from the three project workers, Deirdre Doherty, Geraldine Gallagher and Katrina Lavery focused on the impact of the project on the individuals they have worked with through the creative group sessions and life story work. The perspective of a family member was given very movingly by Loretta Carthy who told of how the impact on her mother was so great that it inspired Loretta herself to become a volunteer. Colette Fairley outlined the impact of the project as a day care manager and Nuala McCallum presented the external evaluation. RNNI is in partnership in this project with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and their perspective was provided by their CEO Dr Tony Stevens and Yvonne Carson. Current research on reminiscence was provided by Dr Assumpta Ryan from the Ulster University and the Big Lottery Fund was represented by Tony Doherty.

The very colourful and imaginative displays adorned the conference room and were a testimony to the high level of creativity in this project. Among the many very positive comments were the following:

'Excellent. This is an imaginative and joyful way to work alongside those with dementia and isolated older people.' ***'The examples of project work are amazing. All speakers were interesting, innovative and a delight to listen to. Jenny's film was the best feedback you could get'***



Training Opportunities

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>



A comment from a recent participant in the NISCC accredited programme within the Post Qualifying Social Work Framework in which successful students gain 30 points towards the MSc Professional Development in Social Work.

'I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the course, which I would fully recommend to other social workers. It was clear from the outset that a great deal of care and attention was devoted to its structure and content, which was informative, inspiring and very enjoyable. The teaching, independent study and practice requirements enabled me to fully appreciate the potential of reminiscence, life story work and life review to empower service users and transform their lives, including within a criminal justice setting which was a new area of work within the course. 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



CRUSE Reminiscence Workshop

CRUSE bereavement care ran a series of special events as part of their Beyond Words Month and RNNI was delighted to be asked to participate by running a reminiscence workshop in the Ulster Hall on 4 June. It was an afternoon of fun and memories stimulated by a great collection of old LPs and a 1950s record player. The music selected included Andy Stewart and the White Heather Club, Jim Reeves, Ruby Murray, Elvis and many more, with each choice promoting stories and lots of laughter. The very positive evaluations all commented on how nice it was to share stories and to spend time with others. One person said 'Just being with other people and sharing our memories was good'. This comment well illustrates the power of reminiscence in the development of friendships and contributing to a sense of well-being.



Celebrating Seniors Conference

On 9 June Geraldine Gallagher and Marian Ferguson represented RNNI at the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's Celebrating Seniors Conference in Greenmount College.

As well as presenting the Sharing Memories Building Communities project, we also had the opportunity to display a wide range of the life story books and the creative products produced by participants in this project. This was a great opportunity to inform an audience made up largely of people who work directly with older people in the Trust's area and we were delighted that the evaluations named us as among the top two presentations.

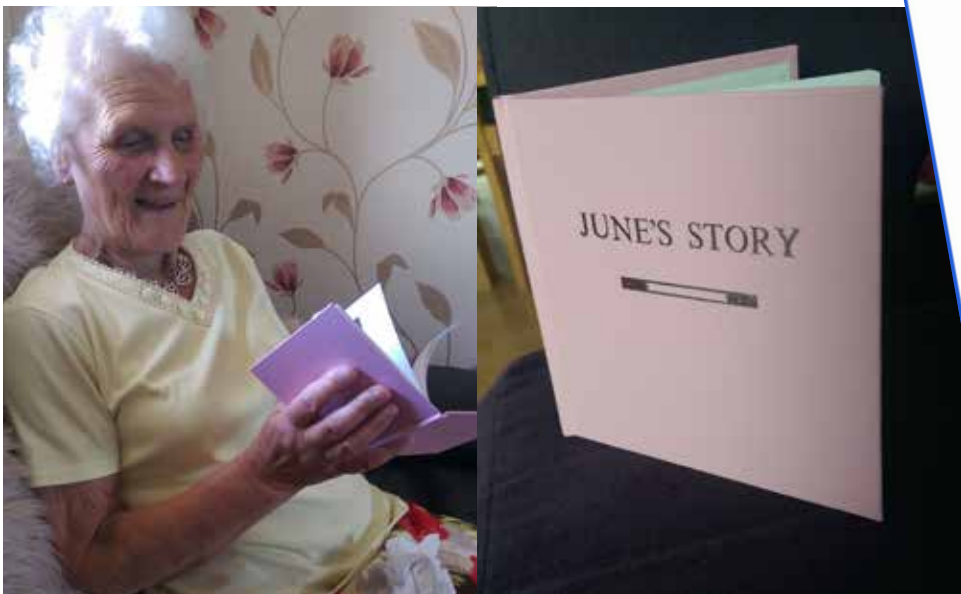


New Care Standards for Nursing Homes endorse Reminiscence and Life Story Work

The RNNI are celebrating the fact that the DHSSPS have acknowledged the value of Reminiscence and Life Story Work in the recently published Care Standards for Nursing Homes. These minimum standards, used for measuring the quality of care in nursing homes, have strongly endorsed Reminiscence and Life Story Work. The definition of Life Story Work in the Care Standards Document reflects the RNNI view that Life Story work is essential for person centred care.

All registered nursing homes are now instructed to ensure that “Where a resident does not already have a life story book, staff develop one ... (Standard 4, Criteria 3.) And so that best practice is enforced, inspectors from the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) will be looking for evidence that staff are trained in reminiscence work and life story work with residents.

This strong endorsement from government validates the work of the RNNI and reinforces the need for the training packages in Reminiscence and Life Story Work offered by the RNNI. The OCN accredited course, Introduction to Reminiscence and Life Story Work, is most suitable for staff in nursing homes. The RNNI will be promoting this training within the nursing home sector over the next few months as homes take the necessary steps to meet the new standards.



“Life story work is considered fundamental to being informed about a resident’s life experiences and so is integral to the assessment process” (p.13).

“Knowing and appreciating each resident as an individual through effective life story work ... maintains the resident’s sense of self and connection with their life outside the home” (p.24).

Newington Day Care Centre Life Story Training

RNNI recently completed a 10 week life story training programme in Newington Day Centre, facilitated by Dr Geraldine Gallagher. Louise Purdy, Community Engagement Manager at Newington Day Centre co-ordinated 10 people to work on the programme, they comprised of volunteers and staff members. The volunteers ranged in age and experience from retired teachers Regina O'Callaghan and Nuala Prince to a Queens University Student called Katie Webb and a retired Trade Union Manager called Jim McCusker. Harriet Mills is a regular volunteer at Newington, she wrote her husband Eddie's life story on his behalf as he now resides in a care home, he has dementia. She brought Eddie to life with stories of life together, Eddie was a poet in his spare time. Harriet ended his book with a poem he wrote on holiday. She said of her experience in writing Eddie's life story

'I have enjoyed telling and remembering Eddie's life story. There were a lot of laughs and lots of tears and it brought back many times of happiness we were lucky to have. Thank you for the opportunity to recall them.'

There was lots of lively banter and chat as the participants, all women, reminisced about their days going out to dances and the cinema. Two ladies actually worked at the Hippodrome and the Strand cinemas, they recalled lunchtime showings that were regularly attended. Hand painting, was especially lively as one lady called Rosina quipped that she was 'caught red handed!'. The feedback on the training from the volunteers was very positive



The Fabric of Life

further on the final day of celebration when the two groups met and welcomed their neighbours with tea and laughter.

The fabric of life in Upperlands remains very much alive with the historic Linen village coffee shop and restored beetling mill. The memories from William Clark & Sons are imprinted in nearly everyone in the community who had a father, a son, a daughter that worked at the factory. It was a way of life for many.

The threads of the Upperlands stories were represented in one final wall hanging. Some images are clear and sharp, others faded with time but not forgotten.

It was a privilege to facilitate the work in Maghera and Upperlands. The character of the people and their heritage are now very much a part of the Sharing Memories Building Communities rich tapestry.

Deirdre Doherty
Community Reminiscence Worker



My name is Joan Swinerton and I am from Ballinglen in Co. Wicklow.

I came to Northern Ireland in my early twenties to take up a job at the Government Agricultural College in Antrim.

I was met by my husband Lawson off the train and we were together from then onwards. We were married on the 26th February 1932.



Memories Carved in Wood

As part of the Sharing Memories Building Communities project I organised a special reminiscence programme for men in Antrim Day Centre and enlisted the help of a wood carver named Steve Ryan from Green Woodwork, Ireland.

While there was great enthusiasm among the men for this programme, there were also a few reservations as some doubted their physical ability to participate due to weakness in their arms, shaking and pain and indeed one man had sight impairment. Steve was a fantastic tutor who responded very well to the needs of the men and ensured everyone received the advice, help and support they needed from him. As one participant said:

“Steve was always on hand for advice and help but never took over or never told us off. He was a lovely fella and had a lovely way with him.”

They are a great group of men and there was always plenty of craic. As they were carving they were sharing stories about wood - from gathering it for the fire right through to the few who had tried wood turning in the past. Wood carving however was a new skill for all of them and it is important to remember that as we grow older the ability to learn new skills is still very possible. As the weeks went on and they could begin to see the results of their efforts, their confidence and joy in the task grew.



**Katrina Lavery
Senior
Reminiscence
Worker**