Local History Café
Sir John Moore Foundation

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Crafting Relationships

A small, values led social enterprise working on programmes with:

- older community members and primary aged children, independently and together.
- other organisations looking at values led approaches to social action work.

Our approach is a cycle of delivery, learning and sharing.
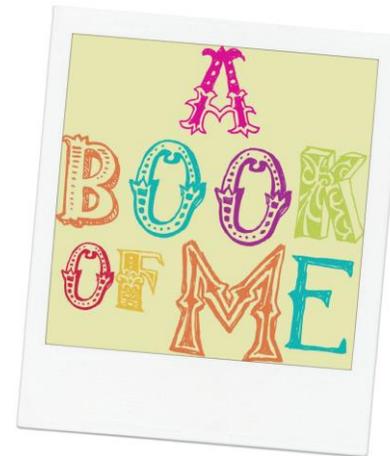
Local History Café – Origins & Concept

- First cafe - Cotesbach Educational Trust - giving something back.
- Now six across the East Midlands with two more starting this Summer.
- Monthly heritage and wellbeing get togethers for over 50s at risk of, experiencing or looking to keep at bay, isolation and loneliness.
- Managed by Crafting Relationships, in partnership with museums and heritage sites, who host cafes.
- £3 per cafe. Runs Feb - June, Sept - Jan.
- Programme of speakers decided on through group interests. Agency!
- Follow on activity.
- Heritage is the hook.
- Engaged, socially aware volunteers and staff teams blending in to sessions and acting as social glue.
- Welcoming participants for the long term - no sticking plaster projects.

The simplicity of Local History Cafes belies its depth

Big Issues: Loneliness amongst the elderly (>50!)

- Loneliness is that negative feeling that arises when our social needs are unmet by the quantity and quality of our current social relationships.

- There are nine million lonely people in the UK and four million of them are older people

- Lacking social connections is as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day

- Loneliness is associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke

- Loneliness puts individuals at a greater risk of cognitive decline

- Loneliness and low social interaction are predictive of suicide in older age

* Data and references from www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

Heritage Group, Sir John Moore Foundation

Grade 1 listed building designed by Christopher Wren, funded by Sir John Moore, opened as a school in 1697.

Currently a multi-use site with primary school, offices, flats & accredited museum. Also hosts parties & weddings.

- Public access to historic building and museum required by grants for renovation c. 2000

- Managed by a largely volunteer group with little financial input from Trustees

- Group also runs some heritage projects, facilitates visits and open days, maintains collection and develops exhibitions

Below the Radar: A useful concept?

Literature: McCabe, Phillimore & others at TSRC

- Residual term for everything we don't have detailed data on? & focus on how to measure it

- By implication – small, informal, limited resources (staff, finance)

- Lack of accountability, sustainability challenges, risk of exclusion …

- Community-based, embedded social networks, awareness of local needs …

Implications for understanding community based organisations

- Danger of assuming shared characteristics of those organisations on which little data – particularly about ways of working.

- May also encourage deficit thinking … at best on route to being on the radar!

- Largely unreflexive about whose radar which risks failing to recognize where they are visible and their impact

- Not clear whether it can help explain why some BTR organisations are more effective than others – qualitative questions?

Tackling loneliness in the elderly via local history

- Older people and history might seem natural fit ... both stuck in the past ... reminisce over a cuppa
- Deficit **medical model** of ageing – increasing loss of mental and physical capacity, loss of social contact and engagement, needing input rather than making a contribution (Dodd et al, 2018)
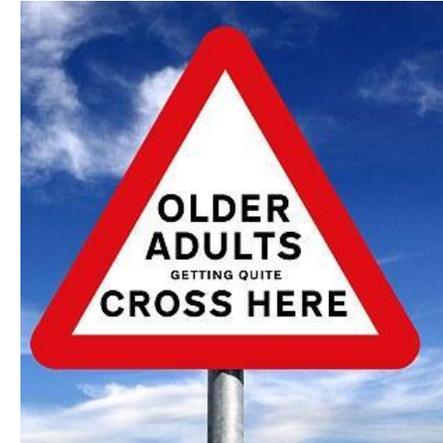
- **Social model** – problem is the way society is organised which incapacitates older people
- Providing contexts where older people feel confident to be active & engaged and confident to learn and form new social networks and to contribute

Sir John Moore Foundation's take on the Local History Café model

- Use of informal (as well as formal) networks to reach and attract participants

- Use of local heritage group networks for speakers

- Specific take on 'local history'

- Encompassing approach to informal learning, capacity and community building **with** older people – LHC Extended group

- Can be understood in terms of broader literature (e.g. community mapping, communities of practice, situated learning)

Feel this approach is at least facilitated by our small, locally embedded organisational form – and our experience of community action

Comparison of SJMF approach and ones at Local Authority museums

- 'how many?'

- 'doing loneliness'

- Practical support for the VCS voice

Crafting Relationships experience of running the LHC project - successes

- Welcoming and safe - helped those anxious about attending a social group for the first time.

- Offers something different from other social activities and groups - the opportunity to find out more about history and place and make connections.
- The approach was also felt to be inclusive in that everyone could take part and contribute.
- Gender neutral in that both men and women may be attracted to local history.
- *'I was really hooked, if you like, having lived here a long time, you realise there's a lot you don't know about a place... '*
- 6 cafes, 2 more to come, 12 volunteers, 30 speakers, 600 individual attendances, 150 unique beneficiaries, countless cups of tea.

Crafting Relationships experience of running the LHC project - challenges

- 'They don't seem lonely enough'/attracting the hard to reach
- Accidentally disempowering participants/understanding agency
- Guiding ethos and partnership working - nodding vs doing. We all get out of LHC what we put in.
- Length and number of sessions
- A common concern of participants was not to let some people dominate the conversations, making it difficult for others to speak. This may be because they are enthusiastic but stop others wishing to attend if they feel unable to contribute.
- Evaluation questionnaires (WHOQOL-BREF, De Jong Gierveld 6-Item Loneliness Scale, The UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale)

What's next?

- Summer get together, including developing a collaborative Theory of Change.
- DMU/Crafting Relationships co-authored report
- Third iteration starting this Summer with two new Leicestershire based cafes. Much more time on training, buddying and breaking away from silos.
- Focus on social prescribing via GPs or others
- Late 2019/early 2020 conference encouraging local authorites to fund places for a new partner cohort
- PG Certs in Coaching (Barefoot Coaching) and Global Ageing and Policy (Southampton), leading to a Local History Cafe case study Phd starting next year.

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