



'SHIFNAL LIVING HISTORY' REMINISCENCE PROJECT



EVALUATION REPORT (JANUARY 2012)

SHIFNAL LIVING HISTORY REMINISCENCE PROJECT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



'Shifnal Living History' was commissioned with the aim to deliver a participatory community arts reminiscence project within the Shifnal community.

This has been an innovative and successful intergenerational project which has forged a new partnership between South Staffordshire Housing Association- Housing Plus and Shropshire Council Community Arts and Festivals Team. Through participatory arts workshops delivered between February- July 2011 by artists Brendan Jackson, Maggie Allmark and Urban Voice the project actively engaged over 120 participants, including residents and family members from Yew Tree Court and children and young people from the local community.

Through reminiscence work, drama and textile workshops an archive of participants' personal and social history has been captured to create a 'slice of life' living archive. This has culminated in the production of a book 'Greetings from Shifnal', a touring exhibition, framed digital and textile art work which incorporates local people's personal memories and life stories.

The project has been the catalyst for enhancing community integration and social activity and as a result of its success has sustained an on going textile group which meets weekly at Yew Tree Court attended by residents, family members and open to the local community. There are aspirations for Yew Tree Court to develop further links with the local community and with the local schools planning new joint initiatives and activities for the future.

On a personal level the project has had a positive impact on those that have been involved. Residents at Yew Tree Court have talked about how the project has helped them to meet, talk and get to know other residents taking up new occupancy to the scheme which has helped them to settle into their own accommodation, as well as the opportunity to try new creative activities and learn new skills.

Pupils from the participating schools have commented that they have in turn learnt about their own family history, explored new drama techniques, developed skills in co-operation and self expression, all of which has helped to build their confidence.

This project has left a positive legacy for Shifnal and provides a model of good practice for future arts projects to run at other housing schemes. It's an excellent example of how partnership working, joint funding and collective vision can result in an arts intervention that has a positive and sustained impact on the local community.

"I was rather apprehensive when I had to move in with my son to be 'looked after'. Especially as it was 'sheltered accommodation'. How wrong I was. I have found a new lease of life. I am feeling fitter, I look on the calendar each morning to see what, not just me, but all my friends will be doing TODAY not next week. We make each other, especially those who live alone glad to be alive"

Resident and project participant

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA) is part of the leading West Midlands housing organisation, Housing Plus. It prides itself on being a Values led association with customer satisfaction at the heart of everything it does. This is reflected in the current 90% satisfaction rating from tenants (January 2010).

The Association manages over 5,800 homes in Staffordshire and Shropshire, and in 2010/11 invested over £8 million in maintaining these homes and a further £2.7 million in local communities. The Association works with a range of partners to develop and deliver innovative and community focused products and services to local people.

Shropshire Council Community Arts and Festivals Team provide a range of services, to support the development of the arts and cultural activities across Shropshire. The team welcome new ideas and develop projects with a range of partners including; artists, festival and event organisers, community venues, voluntary organisations and other departments across the council. The team provide economic and community benefits by creating employment and training opportunities for artists and by developing and supporting inspiring and high quality artistic projects for local communities.



1.2 Project Background

In 2010 a new partnership was developed between South Staffordshire Housing Association, Housing Plus and the Community Arts and Festivals Team at Shropshire Council following a presentation by Jenny Smith (Community Arts Officer) to the Shropshire Housing Forum. Ideas were generated for the development of a project that would further enhance community involvement and engagement within local housing schemes through a participatory community arts approach.

Tony Price, Policy and Research Manager at Housing Plus saw an opportunity for delivering a community led arts project at Yew Tree Court, a new housing scheme built by the Association in Shifnal. The project would support the brokering of relationships of both the schemes' and residents' connections with the wider community. His vision for the 'Shifnal Living History Project' was for it to be something 'different' that would 'engage residents and the community', 'ignite people's skills', produce 'local art and a lasting legacy'.

Previously the 'arts' has never been utilised to any great extent within Staffordshire and Shropshire Housing Schemes with only small projects being commissioned such as the Association's scheme at Riverside Court, Cannock which worked with students from a local college to create tapestry hangings for display within a scheme.

Initial research also highlighted a number of large and small scale projects/ case studies funded within the UK that have focused on delivery of community based intergenerational, oral history and reminiscence projects engaging local communities through a range of arts approaches. However none highlighted through the mapping identified a targeted project such as this where participatory arts activities were embedded into the opening of a new Supported Housing Scheme and sought to engage new residents taking up occupancy of their new homes. (See Appendix 2 for a brief summary)

This £11,000 project funded jointly between South Staffordshire Housing Association, Shropshire Council and the Shifnal and Sheriffhales Local Joint Committee was an ideal opportunity to pilot a new partnership between the Housing and Arts Services. Exploring how community arts practice and housing schemes could work in partnership together with a view to learning from the process to inform a model of good practice for further development work between the Services.

At a strategic level, the project helps meet key priorities for both services.

For South Staffordshire Housing Association the project helps address;

- The Corporate Plan; particularly supporting priorities around 'Customer Focus Value' and 'Engaging Customers'
- The Development Strategy; which identifies Shropshire as a target geographical location as well as one of their key products being care and support schemes for older people
- The Resident Involvement Strategy; whereby the project would deliver intergenerational work whilst exploring new ways to engage with customers

Priority 3 in Shropshire Council's Community Strategy; Healthy, safe and confident people and communities

- Shropshire Councils' Aspiration – 'Our communities are strong, healthy, safe and inclusive, and encourage cultural diversity, voluntary effort and participation in community life.' By 2020 ensuring that 'Our communities are more vibrant, cohesive and residents take personal and collective responsibility for their well-being'
- The aim to 'improve health and wellbeing' within the Cultural Strategy for Shropshire and Telford by 'Developing proactive, targeted campaigns for key groups including 'younger' older people

PROJECT OVERVIEW

“Collecting ordinary life stories with young and old to capture a unique slice of life”

2.1 Project Aims

The main project aim was to deliver a community arts reminiscence project within the Shifnal community, capturing an archive of local people’s personal and social history particularly with residents from Yew Tree Court and children and young people from the local community.

In addition the project also aimed to:

- Develop project partnerships and models of good practice and learning across Arts Development (Shropshire Council), Housing (Housing Plus and Yew Tree Court) and local community groups
- Deliver an intergenerational, reminiscence project through community arts participation – giving local people a voice and ownership through the project
- Support the new scheme and residents to build links and integrate with the local community and to reduce any potential risk of isolation for residents of Yew Tree Court
- Raise the profile of Yew Tree Court and celebrate and profile the project work
- Leave a positive legacy (e.g. brokering lasting relationships between community groups)

2.2 Partnerships

The project partners included;

Housing Plus – one of the lead partners in this project. Tony Price, Policy and Research Manager at Housing Plus helped develop the idea and structure for the project with the Care and Support Manager and the Education and Leisure Facilitator at Yew Tree Court supporting the day to day running of the project in partnership with the artists.

Shropshire Council – The Community Arts and Festivals Team at Shropshire Council were also a lead partner on the project providing their expertise in designing a high quality community arts project. Jenny Smith, Community Arts Officer managed the project on behalf of the project partners and worked closely with the Care and Support Manager to help broker relationships with the schools and local community groups.

Yew Tree Court- A state-of-the-art £4 million development of quality apartments for older people for rent and sale. It is built on the site of a former local authority sheltered bedsit scheme of the same name. The scheme consists of 30 two bedroom apartments and three one and two bedroom bungalows, all of which have private facilities. There are also a range of communal facilities, including a residents’ lounge for socialising, kitchen and laundry. The majority of the project was delivered on site at Yew Tree Court involving the residents who were taking up occupancy of the new scheme.

“Living history is about making something new, creating a new archive and allowing our history to shape our future”

Bridhid Carey, Service Manager Housing Health and Wellbeing, Shropshire Council

Schools – All three of the schools in Shifnal were approached to take part in the project these were St. Andrews Church of England Primary School, Shifnal Primary School and Idsall Secondary School.

Additional local organisations and groups were also identified as potential partners early on in the project, these included; Shifnal Museum at the Fire Station ‘Friends of the Museum’ group, Shifnal Society, Shifnal Town Council, Shifnal Arts Festival and a range of local community groups.

Walsall Council Creative Development Team were commissioned by Shropshire Council Community Arts and Festivals Team to undertake the project documentation and evaluation role. With extensive knowledge and experience of community arts practice and project management, delivery and evaluation for various partnerships across health, education, disability etc the team have led the evaluation process which has resulted in this report.

2.3 Steering group support

A project steering group was established at the outset which included; Jenny Smith Community Arts Officer- Shropshire Council, Rebecca Deakin Care and Support Manager at Yew Tree Court, Alison Donald Education and Leisure Facilitator – Yew Tree Court, Andrea McWilliams Community Action Officer- Shropshire Council, Kerry Rogers Community Action Officer- Shropshire Council, Rachel Parker – Walsall Council Creative Development Team and lead artist Brendan Jackson.

The group met at key points over the duration of the project to help plan and support the project delivery.



PROJECT DELIVERY

The project was delivered through a community arts approach whereby local people's engagement, involvement and ownership was paramount.

3.1 Shifnal Living History'- phases of delivery

Community selection of artist(s) : January 2011

The first phase of the project involved the local community and residents at Yew Tree Court in the selection of the artist(s) they would be working with. Artists tendering for the project were invited to plan and deliver a one hour taster workshop for participants as part of the selection process. Stands and explanatory information were also available at the official scheme opening for residents and visitors to view. Participants then voted on the artist or artists they wished to work with. Four artists/companies attended the interviews and due to the feedback and requests from the local community and residents three artists were contracted to deliver the project as a collaborative team- Brendan Jackson (lead artist-with expertise in reminiscence work), Urban Voice Ltd (drama company) and Maggie Allmark (textile artist).

Community arts workshops : February -July 2011

A programme of creative participatory arts workshops were co-ordinated and delivered by the selected team of artists.

Brendan Jackson engaged residents at Yew Tree Court in one to one conversations to gather their personal stories and memories. Extracts of the stories, anecdotes and photographs gathered from the residents were passed onto the other artists to inform their series of creative workshops.

Maggie Allmark delivered textile workshops once a week at Yew Tree Court where residents of the scheme, their families and a few local residents dropped in and worked towards creating textile pieces of artwork through a variety of techniques including weaving, crocheting, sewing and painting.

Urban Voice ran 5 weekly workshops with pupils from Shifnal Primary School and Idsall Secondary School. The two groups were already meeting weekly with the aim to develop links across the two schools and form a drama group whereby the older pupils were supporting the young pupils in learning and developing drama skills. Supported by Urban Voice the pupils explored a range of drama techniques working together to bring the residents' stories to life in short drama, movement and mask performance pieces.

Brendan Jackson also delivered creative writing workshops at St Andrews Primary School and worked with pupils to develop skills around creative writing. Having been inspired by the residents' stories the pupils interviewed their own families and created biographies and short stories based on their own lives and the stories shared from their parents and grandparents.

Hazel Cardew, a local art student, supported some of the interviews Brendan undertook with residents at Yew Tree Court and drew portraits of those being interviewed. Hazel also spent a couple of mornings at the local Silks Café whereby people were invited to exchange a personal story/memory for a portrait.

As part of the participatory process the artists facilitated the creation of semi-permanent art works to be displayed or exhibited at Yew Tree Court and possibly other venues in the town. The art pieces were to be informed by the ideas, stories, conversations, thoughts and memories shared by the participants, ensuring that the art work created would be a meaningful and resonant for all those who took part.



3.2 Capturing the impact

An evaluation framework (appendix 1) was developed through consultation with the project partners. This highlighted the key outcomes for the project and methods by which impact would be evidenced.

The 3 main outcomes agreed were:

- Partnership development
- Community engagement and participation
- Creating a project legacy

The evaluation process was undertaken through a number of ways to help capture all the impacts and learning from the project. This included;

- Residents at Yew Tree Court participating in the project were invited to complete a pre and post project evaluation form.
- Pupils and teachers from all the participating schools completed evaluation forms after the project had finished. Artists were invited to keep an artist diary or provide ongoing reflective feedback throughout the project delivery.
- The final celebration events along with participant and audience feedback were filmed as part of a documentation DVD.
- Rachel Parker from Walsall Creative Development Team attended workshops to capture ongoing feedback from participants. An evaluation meeting with the project partners and artists was facilitated at the end of the project, and time has been spent re-visiting the residents of Yew Tree Court a number of weeks after the project finished.



PROJECT SUCCESSES

2 celebration events were held at Yew Tree Court welcoming a combined audience of 90+ visitors from across the local community.

Throughout the 'Shifnal Living History Project' a total of 31 creative arts reminiscence workshops were delivered by artists Brendan Jackson, Maggie Allmark and Urban Voice Ltd, with an additional 10 workshops incorporating meetings and project presentations to various community groups.

The project successfully engaged with:

- 113 local children and young people actively engaged in the project. This included 70 (years 5 and 6) pupils from St Andrews Primary School who worked with Brendan on the creative writing project. 23 (year 10) pupils from Idsall School and 20 Pupils (mix of years) from Shifnal Primary School participated in the drama project with Urban Voice
- 11 residents and 2 staff members from Yew Tree Court worked directly with Brendan to share their own stories and memories
- 8 residents (plus additional family members and local people) actively engaged with the textiles project on a weekly basis
- 4 residents were actively involved in the interviewing of the artists making up one third of the interview panel
- 90+ people attended the project celebration events on the 21st June and 20th July. The audience was made up of representatives from Shropshire Council, Shifnal Town Council, Town Planning, St Andrews School (teachers, pupils and parents/carers), Idsall School, Local Councillors, Friends of Shifnal Museum, Shifnal Society, Housing Plus, Yew Tree Court Residents and local Shifnal residents.



As part of the project legacy a number of 'living history' products have been created as part of the archive including;

- A hard back book entitled 'Greetings from Shifnal' illustrating a collection of stories captured from the residents and staff at Yew Tree Court. Copies of this will be on display at Yew Tree Court and Shifnal Museum.
- A large framed digital print displayed in the communal lounge at Yew Tree Court which is a montage of old photographs and images illustrating personal stories, life moments and meaningful objects resonant to the lives of those involved.
- An exhibition of 32 A2 panels forming a touring archive of living history from the project. These will be toured to local community venues in Shifnal and Shropshire.
- Collection of 30 handmade books of local pupils' own stories and biographies inspired by those of the older community
- 8 framed textile art works in the communal lounge of Yew Tree Court made by the residents and workshop participants from Yew Tree Court
- A documentation/evaluation DVD which brings to life the story of the 'Shifnal Living History project'



PROJECT OUTCOMES

Community engagement and participation

5.1 Impact on the residents of Yew Tree Court

Residents of Yew Tree Court described the project as being 'enjoyable', 'fantastic', 'brilliant', 'therapeutic' and 'wonderful'. Some said they were unsure what to expect from the project but commented that they had found it 'interesting' and 'informative'.

From a focus group of 10 residents who were directly involved in the project the following insight was gained through undertaking pre and post project evaluations (please see appendix 2 for collated information);

- When asked what they felt they had gained from taking part in the project responses indicated that they had 'Met and talked to other residents from Yew Tree Court' (28%), 'Heard other people's stories and memories' (21%), 'Shared their own stories and memories' (25%) 'Met and talked to other residents from the local area (9%), and 'Tried new art activities and learnt new skills (12%)
- 77% felt that the project had helped them to make links with activities and groups taking place in the local area
- 77% felt that the project had enabled them to get to know other residents at Yew Tree Court
- On a scale of 1-5 100% said that at the end of the project they felt 'Very Settled' at Yew Tree Court.

Over the course of the project many comments were gathered from the residents as to their overall feedback on the project.

"This is brilliant...it's so therapeutic" resident attending the taster session

"This is fantastic!...I've loved doing the taster session"

"I found the project to be most enjoyable and enabled older folk to communicate with the young people in Shifnal"

"I enjoyed it all. So very interesting to hear about other people's likes and dislikes, how they lived as young people, most of all the comradeship that was so freely given and returned hundred fold"



Residents commented that the project had been an opportunity for them to try new activities, do something practical, learn new skills and find hidden creative talents;

"I've never done anything like this before"

"I've not done anything like this for years, possibly since 1980"

"I'm really enjoying the textiles workshops. I love doing anything with my hands and it's good to keep them active"

"I'm so proud, I never thought I could do something like this"

"We all came to the first meeting and I thought that I wouldn't be any use but gradually showed what skills we all had"

"Personally I got out of it (the textiles workshops) a talent I didn't even know I had. I am not artistic and I am not creative; so I thought. But when I saw my finished work I thought – oh you can do these things if you try. And I think it was thanks to the tuition of Maggie Allmark who came here and encouraged us to try things and it was just great fun and it proves you do have talents of some sort you just have to find them and use them"



Residents were encouraged to have ownership of the project, with many actively looking to recruit other residents, friends and family members into the project. The textile workshops saw three generations of one family all working together with much laughter and sharing of stories.

"I'll definitely try and recruit some people to come along next week"

"I really want to get more people involved"

The textiles workshops provided a friendly and welcoming space for residents to get involved as much as they wanted to. Some residents chose to observe for their first visit and watch and listen then through encouragement by the other residents and Maggie they had a go at different textile techniques.

By the end of the project residents had a sense of pride in the individual and collective work produced and spoke about how enjoyable the workshops had been.

"I'm so excited to see all the finished work. I'm so proud of mine"

"I think this project is wonderful. I've really enjoyed today- thank you!"

"I've really enjoyed this afternoon. It's been quiet and relaxed and we've chatted and all got on with our work. I'm very proud of mine"

5. PROJECT OUTCOMES

The textile workshops encouraged residents to spend time together, make friendships and create a supportive environment that has helped them to feel settled within their new homes, and provide a social activity to look forward to.

"Yes (this project) has helped me to feel settled, it's been so enjoyable"

"I love living here, I couldn't wish for a better place to end my days. Everyone is so friendly and lovely, it's like we're one family"

"I really look forward to these workshops – it's very enjoyable and relaxing"

"I feel so privileged to be living at Yew Tree Court. Things are gradually taking off, life is good"

Working towards a collective piece of all art forms (creative writing, stories, photography) evoked people to look forward to seeing and sharing the end products.

"I can't wait to see the finished pieces- it's wonderful we are all working towards a final piece"

Residents spoke about their aspirations for after the project had finished and ways to keep the momentum going.

"We'd love to continue this, and work with you (Maggie) maybe once a month or something"

All the arts workers built up a strong rapport with the residents and they soon became a friendly face within the scheme.

"You've (Maggie) really brought so much happiness into our days"

"The textile sessions have been brilliant- Maggie is a brilliant teacher"

"I've enjoyed talking to Brendan about my life"

"Rebecca and Brendan made everybody feel part of a team throughout the whole project"

The project has sparked their inspiration to do more especially in terms of continuing with the arts and crafts sessions.

"We've started!. I've got boxes for storage and fabrics and the profit from the tennis tea money to start a craft kitty"

"Once involved the residents absolutely loved it. It's been something for them and they have gained so much and it's helped to get them bonded....it's given them a purpose and inspired them and they have now taken control"

Rebecca Deakin, Care and Support Manager



Residents spoke about the value of running an intergenerational project;

"The children we've had involved from the smaller schools to older generation of school children has been fantastic and it's been important. The older people can have the benefit of the experience of life and things that have happened that they can impart to the younger generation and the younger generation can impart stuff to us like modern day living... it's important the young and the old are integrated. It earns respect"

Not only has the arts process been a successful tool for community engagement but the art work created continues to provide a talking point for those involved to share what they have done.

"The textile pictures displayed in the communal space have a presence and create conversations. People are able to learn about the project and residents can educate people and promote what they have done. This can go outside of the scheme and be celebrated"

Rebecca Deakin, Care and Support Manager

What memories will you take away from the project? – Residents feedback

"Yew Tree Court residents have a very rich and valued variety of people and characters from all walks of life"

"I enjoyed relating my own experience to other people's and those are captured in the book"

"First of all the wonderful friendship of Brendan, Maggie, Rebecca and Rachel. I love people and am always interested in not their status but what they are and what they do for the place where they work or live. Everyone has a story of interest to tell and we really enjoyed the book relating to those memories. (can't wait to own one)"



5. PROJECT OUTCOMES

5.2 Impact the project has had on the participating schools, pupils and teaching staff

'Shifnal Living History' project provided the opportunity for community links to be made with 3 of the local schools and engaging 113 pupils which exceeded the initial target for the project.

The schools approached to take part in the project were keen to be involved as they saw it as a meaningful and 'valuable learning experience' for their school and pupils. Initial interest was gained due to the fact that it provided an opportunity to work with professional artists, linked well to their learning objectives and to help attain outcomes they had already set.

"The aims of the project matched the learning objectives for the pupils in the term(s) that the project took place.... the project gave real purpose for the children and was a creative writing skills opportunity"

Head teacher
St Andrews CofE Primary School

"This was just the thing I was looking for to focus our drama leaders and it also could involve the younger pupils and wider community"

Extended Activities Co-ordinator Idsall School

Teachers commented that the project had successfully made varied connections with their school through a number of different ways. Including the intergenerational approach of 'sharing stories from different generations', 'raising the profile of drama in the school and local community' and through a cross curricular approach helping children to have an 'understanding of the wider world'.

"Yr5 & Yr6 children have had the opportunity to work with other adults and learn new skills. Children have appreciated presenting their work to members of the local community. The project continues the school's philosophy that cross-curricular projects give children an understanding of the wider world"

Head teacher St Andrews Church of England Primary School

The project was a most successful...*"Learning experience- the pupils have already used skills they developed through the sessions"*
Extended Activities Co-ordinator
Idsall School

Observations on what the pupils gained from engaging in the project.

Teachers and artists commented on what they felt their pupils had gained from taking part in the project which from their observations included gaining 'confidence', 'increased self esteem' varied drama skills and techniques and communication and group work skills. As well as gaining an awareness of their wider community and their valuable role within it.

"I feel the pupils have gained confidence and a greater enthusiasm for drama"

Teacher at Shifnal Primary School

"Increased self confidence, public speaking skills, drama skills and a sense of inclusion..... Awareness of the wider community- working with young and old people"

Extended Activities Co-ordinator
Idsall School

"Writing for a purpose, help to raise standards and interaction from other members of the community. Realisation that they are a vital member of the community"

Head teacher St Andrews CofE
Primary School

Pupils spoke in their own words about their perspectives on what they had been involved in. And commented that the project had been 'fun' and 'brilliant'.

"We created a performance of many memories and stories and working with primary children, it was fun!"

Pupil Age 15 Idsall School

"We have been putting together several pieces of drama about Shifnal and people's stories"

Pupil Age 14 Idsall School

"We have been shown how to create good questions. We also interviewed our parents and with the answers we wrote a short biography of their lives. After this we showed our skills off to the town"

Peter Age 11 St Andrews Primary School

Pupils commented that they had enjoyed many aspects from visiting Yew Tree Court, working with professional artists, learning new games and drama techniques, creating stories and presenting their work back to the residents at Yew Tree Court.

"I enjoyed the new experiences"

Claire Age 10 Shifnal Primary School

"I enjoyed making drama scenes and going to Yew Tree Court to perform them" Courtney Age 11
Shifnal Primary School

"Working with Urban Voice"

Pupil Age 15 Idsall School

"I enjoyed working with different age groups, working in a group, and learning different skills"

Pupil Age 15 Idsall School

"I enjoyed speaking to my parents and learning about their history"

James Age 11 St Andrews Primary School

"I enjoyed speaking about my parent, to the Mayoress and town (residents) of Yew Tree Court"
Peter Age 11 St Andrews Primary School

Pupils commented that they had also learnt a great deal from taking part in the project including learning about family history, new drama skills and techniques, co-operation, self expression, all of which had in many cases helped build their confidence.

"I have learnt to project my voice. Use big hand gestures and big exaggerated expressions. Not to be shy and try my hardest"

Amy Age 11 Shifnal Primary School

"How to make more expression with my face and to exaggerate"

Courtney Age 11 Shifnal Primary School

"We learnt how to co-operate with people" Lydia
Age 8 Shifnal Primary School

"Gained confidence" and "Communication skills"

Pupil's Age 15 Idsall School

"I learnt a lot about my moms life and what she is like"

Ben Age 10 St Andrews Primary School

Pupils memories of the project

I will remember...."People cheering and being happy....co-operating with new people...the performance at Yew Tree Court....the stories about people...the residents at Yew Tree Court.... the mask production and the wonderful people who taught me...how much fun I had. I will also never forget the scenes we made... the songs....having to transform the past into a play....historical stories... to project my voice... teamwork..."

Interviewing my mom... the scenes we made..."

5. PROJECT OUTCOMES

"(I'd like to)...send our heart felt thanks for the work you (Urban Voice) have put in with our Drama Leaders and pupils from Shifnal Primary to make their Living History performance such a success. I have spoken with the pupils this morning and they are still buzzing from the final day's work and performance....I know they have gained a great deal in terms of learning new drama skills and experiences through the short time they have spent working with you, and I am sure that it will help them towards their GCSE grade and in future Drama Leader collaborations with pupils from Shifnal Primary School"

Angie Pitchford Extended Activities Co-ordinator
Idsall School

"Really enjoyed every aspect of the project. Our school certainly benefited from being part of a community project by working with other members of the community"

Head teacher St Andrews CofE Primary School

"I hope Urban Voice will come to Idsall to do some drama hopefully. Thank you so much. I think I've built my confidence. I think it would be nice if you came to watch the yr6 production to see how well we got on"

Pupil Age 11 Shifnal Primary School

"This project has done everything I wanted it to. It's been so good for their (the pupils) confidence. I'd really like to see it performed at the Shifnal Festival"

Teaching staff Shifnal Primary



5. PROJECT OUTCOMES

5.3 Wider community links

The project was successful in making links with the wider community of Shifnal. All of whom welcomed the project and actively supported and promoted it. Brendan worked closely with Shifnal Society and Friend of the Museum (The Old Fire Station) and Robert Vincent using their archive materials to spark ideas for the early stages of the project.

Student Hazel Cardew helped interview members of the local community and with agreement from Silks Café in Shifnal she talked to customers and staff about their own life stories and in exchange for their stories and memories she drew their portraits.

The project encouraged local residents of Shifnal to get involved either through having input in the interviews/taster days and being invited to the celebration days.

5.4 Project Partnerships

In addition to the local community partnerships developed, it has been strongly felt that a new working partnership between all the project partners has been established which provides a basis for future initiatives to be developed.

"There has been partnerships made between us (Housing Plus/Yew Tree Court), Shropshire Council and you (Walsall Creative Development Team) and the artists. Links have been made from the project in terms of Shifnal Arts (Festival) Committee and Yew Tree Court....We are gradually building bridges."
Rebecca Deakin, Care and Support Manager

"This project is an excellent example of partnership working between different organisations and the local community to achieve something unique to Shifnal. There is a positive legacy for both Yew Tree Court and the wider community."
Tony Price, Housing Plus

"This project has provided a great opportunity for the Community Arts and Festivals Team to develop a range of partnerships with Housing Plus, local schools and community groups. It has raised the profile of the team and what we can do to support the arts and creativity within communities of Shropshire."
Jenny Smith, Community Arts Officer,
Shropshire Council.



COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Two community events were held at Yew Tree Court to share and celebrate the art work, stories and connections made throughout the project. On Wednesday 20th June pupils from Idsall school and Shifnal Primary School performed short drama, mask and poetry pieces from the memories and stories gained from the residents at Yew Tree Court. On Thursday 21st July the project book 'Greetings from Shifnal', the digital art work, display panels and textile artworks woven from the images and stories of all those involved in the project were unveiled alongside readings from the pupils from St Andrews Church of England School and residents from Yew Tree Court. There was also an opportunity for people to have a go at some different textile techniques which were being demonstrated by the newly formed Yew Tree Court craft group and textile artist Maggie Allmark.

The events hosted at Yew Tree Court brought in an audience of 90+ and the communal lounge was a buzz of activity, art work, conversations and presentations which all invited positive feedback from residents, community members, project partners and professionals. All of this helped raise the profile of Yew Tree Court.

"I'm really impressed- this has been a beautiful day I've really enjoyed myself"

Resident from Yew Tree Court

"It was brilliant. It brought a tear to my eye. Hearing the stories- it's all so nostalgic"

Resident from Yew Tree Court

Residents were eager for the events to start, joining in with the preparations to get the space ready for visitors;

"We all got started really early as we're so excited"

Hosting the celebration events at Yew Tree Court provided a valuable opportunity for the local community to come into the building and this in turn has helped to raise the profile of Yew Tree Court.



DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE PROJECT

Since the end of the project further work has taken place to build on the learning and outcomes from the project, and to help sustain the project legacy,

'The Regulars' weekly arts and craft group at Yew Tree Court continues to run on Tuesday afternoons and is seeing more and more residents come along either to join in or just to enjoy the company of others.

"We have increased to 9 in the group now.... One gentleman comes down and has a cup of tea. Two ladies sit and do their own needle work in the common room. After all it's better than sitting in their flat on their own"

Resident and craft group member

The craft group have been supported by Jenny Smith (Shropshire Council Community Arts Officer) to put in a bid to Shifnal and Sheriffhales Local Joint Committee to help raise funds for materials to help keep the group running and eventually be self sustaining. Currently the group are raising small funds themselves and seeking donations of art materials and resources from the local community.

The 32 exhibition panels are being toured locally starting at Shirehall and then Shifnal Festival, and on to smaller galleries and community venues in Shifnal and wider in Shropshire.

Residents of Yew Tree Court are looking to add to the collection of stories, biographies and photographs and keep the 'living history archive' alive.

St Andrews Church of England Primary School are exploring opportunities to bring in a creative consultant to help develop a social history project around farming. The Shifnal Living History project has helped broaden their thinking in what can be done through cross curricular working.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Through evaluation a number of ideas and opportunities have been shared by the participants and project partners as to what they would like to see happen next;

- Showcasing the schools/pupils performances at the Shifnal Festival and further collaborations between Idsall School and Shifnal Primary School
- 'The Regulars' craft group have organised having a craft stall at the Shifnal Christmas Farmers Market on Saturday 26th November selling a variety of textile work they have made. This is something they would like to sustain.
- There are aspirations to build on the community links made between Yew Tree Court and the local community with the potential to set up a lecture series of talks by the Shifnal Society to be held at Yew Tree Court.
- 'The Regulars' craft group are looking to make further links with the local shops and businesses to help fund and resource the art materials for their weekly group. They have been successful in a funding bid to Shifnal and Sheriffhales Local Joint Committee.
- It's hoped further community links will be sustained following the project. Recently 2 community sessions were hosted at Yew Tree Court by Shifnal Festival, whereby local people were invited to share their personal and professional life stories. It is hoped this can be further developed through the Shifnal Festival. An exhibition of the project art work and panels are also hoped to be integrated into the festival.
- Yew Tree Court would like to build on the links made with the local schools and look to develop something around Christmas time e.g. community carol singing
- Residents have mentioned that they would like to take part in more arts and social activities such as tai chi, gentle exercise and to learn to paint.

8. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE



REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING

As a new partnership project there has been shared learning and reflection on some of the challenges faced within the delivery of the project. Through evaluation with the project partners and artists the following were highlighted as learning points for future delivery;

The project needed to sensitively work within the dynamics of a new housing scheme, in particular taking into consideration that people are moving into their new homes, they need time to settle in, and may therefore want some privacy. Some may have hesitancy of what to expect from a new project and are uncertain around “outside” people coming into their communal space which they perceive as a risk to security. The expertise of the project team and the support from the housing scheme staff on site meant that development work and initial engagement of residents in the project was done sensitively. And the approaches undertaken to involve residents were adapted to suit their individual needs e.g. adapting group sessions to be one to one conversations.

Extending the project timescale and allowing people 6 months to settle in before starting the workshops may have been beneficial for some residents. However it was also recognised that having the project run as people are moving in helped provide an opportunity for them to meet and get to know other residents and to engage in a social activity. This helped “break the ice” for new residents.



9. REFLECTIONS AND LEARNING

It was recognised that having a person within the housing scheme who had the designated time within their role to act as an advocate for the project and support and encourage residents to get involved was of great value. Having insider knowledge and a good rapport with the residents was seen to help when creating a buzz and excitement about the project. Unfortunately the Education and Leisure Facilitator left the scheme for a new job 8 weeks into the project and a key member from the team was lost. This resulted in some capacity issues which needed to be filled by the Care and Support Manager and Community Arts Officer to ensure continued smooth running of the project.

With the housing scheme being new there were no existing social activities currently up and running for the arts project to tap into, this meant more initial development work needed to be undertaken by the artists to set the workshops up and engage residents. Having the funding to run the project over a sustained period of time would be considered beneficial as it would offer more opportunities to build and sustain connections with the residents and local community.

The logistics of integrating 3 schools into the project delivery each with their own scheduling, timescales and requirements posed some difficulties when trying to co-ordinate pupils to integrate and work directly with the residents at Yew Tree Court. However with a flexible approach to delivery, the sharing events allowed for pupils and residents to meet and share stories.



GOOD PRACTICE TO SHARE

Through evaluation the following have been highlighted as being key to the project being successful and achieving its outcomes;

The effective partnership working between Shropshire Council Community Arts and Festivals Team and South Staffordshire Housing Association/ Housing Plus enabled the initial development work to get the project underway. Each partner brought their individual skills, expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to set collective outcomes and support the development of the project.

The skills and experience of Shropshire Community Arts and Festivals Team and having a designated development officer to manage the overall project ensured that the project was delivered through a participatory arts process and maximised the existing community links in Shifnal.

Having residents from Yew Tree Court actively involved in the interview taster sessions helped give community ownership in the project from the start. This process encouraged them to help decide on the artists to be commissioned, and as a result the project offered a range of different art forms for people to get involved in depending on their interests.

The skills and experience of the selected arts workers in community arts practice and facilitating participatory arts workshops helped create a friendly environment in which residents felt comfortable to share their personal stories and memories. All artists were able to develop the skills and confidence of the people they worked with and over time established a good relationship with all the participants.



10. GOOD PRACTICE TO SHARE

Local champions were identified by the arts workers who had a valuable role in promoting the project to many of the residents at Yew Tree Court and other local residents in the community. Through social groups and personal invites gradually more and more links were made out into the community.

Having an element of flexibility in shaping the delivery of the project in terms of when and how sessions could be run meant that individual arts sessions could be adapted, planned and delivered to best suit the residents and pupils the project was looking to engage.

Involvement from the staff at Yew Tree Court in sharing their stories and being actively involved in the project and contributing to the workshops helped inspire interest in the residents to engage in the project in the early stages.



CONCLUSION

This has been a hugely successful project that has achieved all of its stated aims and exceeded the number of participants it hoped to actively engage in the creative workshops.

The challenges encountered and successes achieved through the delivery of this project provides valuable learning to inform future models of partnership working between the housing and arts sectors.

By jointly commissioning a participatory arts reminiscence project a new partnership has been formed between Shropshire Council Community Arts and Festivals Team and South Staffordshire Housing Association- Housing Plus. The expertise of both the lead partners in developing the project to a set of collective outcomes and the commitment from the staff at Yew Tree Court enabled the project to maximise its potential, engage the target audiences and strengthen local community links.

The early involvement and active contribution of the residents at Yew Tree Court was integral to the project's success. By ensuring that they had ownership of the project throughout meant that there was an excitement and commitment to attend throughout all of the workshops.

Experienced project management by the Community Arts and Festivals Team at Shropshire Council and the recruitment of highly skilled artists in community arts practice were all ingredients that helped shape and successfully deliver the programme of workshops that was flexible to the needs of the participants and was sensitive to the logistical requirements from the schools and Yew Tree Court. This enabled the project to run smoothly and helped build trust and communication through all the project partnerships.

The arts and creative process clearly provided a mechanism for engagement for all the participants which has had a meaningful and positive impact on them from building friendships, developing confidence and self esteem, igniting forgotten and untapped skills and helping people find a sense of place within where they live. The project lives on through the many positive legacies it leaves behind.

Shifnal Living History Reminiscence Project – EVALUATION PLAN

Deliver a community arts reminiscence project within the Shifnal community, capturing an archive of local people’s personal and social history particularly with residents from Yew Tree Court (new sheltered housing scheme) and children and young people from the local community.

Project Aims:

- Develop project partnerships and model of good practice and learning across Arts Development (Shropshire Council), Housing (Housing Plus and Yew Tree Court) and local community groups
- To deliver an intergenerational, reminiscence project through community arts participation – giving local people a voice and ownership through the project
- To support the new scheme and residents to build links and integrate with the local community and to reduce the risk of isolation for residents of Yew Tree Court
- To raise the profile of Yew Tree Court and celebrate and profile the project work
- To leave a positive legacy for the project (e.g. brokering lasting relationships between community groups)

Outcome (the changes we are aiming to bring about)	Indicator of Success (how will we know we have achieved the project aims)	How the evidence will be collected	How will we use the information gathered to profile the project, partnership and learning
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PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Establishing new working partnership between Arts Development (Shropshire Council), Housing (Housing Plus and Yew Tree Court) to address collective targets around community development.	<p>Successful delivery of project.</p> <p>Project partners to evidence their role within the project and highlight outcomes, learning and recommendations.</p> <p>Good practice and learning within the project highlighted by each partner.</p>	<p>Pre and post project interviews/meetings with each project partner.</p> <p>Ongoing conversations throughout project delivery</p>	<p>Feed into project evaluation report to highlight:</p> <p>Model of good practice and partnership working and it's effectiveness in delivering community development through the arts.</p> <p>Partner reflections- effectiveness of the participatory arts approach, experiences, learning, improvements, development opportunities and recommendations</p> <p>Value and impact of the arts and partnership approach</p> <p>Wider research into other schemes/ projects/approaches that have used arts within social housing schemes as a benchmark comparison. Research/ Mapping summary document produced and shared with project commissioners</p>
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APPENDIX 1: Evaluation Framework

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

<p>Residents from Yew Tree Court actively engaged in the project</p> <p>Active engagement of children/young people in the project</p> <p>Opportunities for local community to be involved in the project through a community development approach.</p>	<p>Participation and active engagement of Yew Tree Court residents in the creative workshops and ownership of the work created.</p> <p>A school class (approx 28 children/young people) actively engaged in the project over a 3 month period. Links made through citizenship curriculum.</p> <p>Participation and active involvement of local residents, schools, voluntary sector organisations, artists in the project. New community links made with Yew Tree Court. Project partners identify ways to continue developing and sustaining links.</p>	<p>Project monitoring and workshop attendance register. Track regular attendance of residents.</p> <p>Project monitoring</p> <p>Project monitoring and evaluation. Record individuals/groups engaging in the project. Evaluation with participating groups etc.</p>	<p>Inclusion in evaluation report – monitoring, attendance, community development success and new partnerships made through the project.</p> <p>Monitoring on no. of participants & attendance included in report</p> <p>Experiences of participants/local community gathered and included in report.</p> <p>Highlight identified areas for future development. (Hopes, wishes and opportunities.</p>
<p>Local residents empowered to have ownership of the project process</p>	<p>Residents involved in selecting the artists, methodology and media for project delivery</p>	<p>Project monitoring/ attendance and feedback in selection process</p>	<p>Documentation for evaluation report</p>
<p>Residents at Yew Tree Court feel connected with local area. Are supported to build intergenerational links and integrate within the local community to reduce risk of isolation.</p>	<p>Residents actively participate in the project and contribute to the local archive.</p> <p>Residents reflect on the impact the project has had on them</p> <p>Residents are aware of local groups and activities that they can access Residents from Yew Tree Court engage with other local residents and groups through the project process</p>	<p>Participant evaluation processes:</p> <p>Ideas= Pre and post evaluations Evaluation activities built into workshops Capturing feedback via documentary DVD</p> <p>Links into satisfaction survey carried out by Yew Tree Court? Individual case studies collected (cups of tea and conversations!)</p> <p>Feedback via Housing Scheme manager and Activities Co-ordinator – observations in and away from the workshops</p>	<p>Feedback incorporated into evaluation report and anecdotal feedback captured through documentation DVD</p>

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION (continued)

<p>Participants are supported to share personal stories and social history through creative activities to create a reminiscence archive</p> <p>Identify potential advocates for project profiling</p>	<p>Participants actively engaged in creative activities that spark conversations and sharing of personal stories resulting in the production of a tangible 'slice of life' archive.</p>	<p>Artists to keep reflective diary throughout project to capture stories and conversations. Reflective practice.</p> <p>Workshop observations & reflections captured from project partners & participants Documentary DVD</p> <p>Evaluation meeting with artists</p>	<p>Snap shot of creative process and its impact incorporated into the evaluation report.</p> <p>Documentary DVD project 'snap shot' produced</p>
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PROJECT LEGACY

<p>Project is left with a positive legacy to be built on in the future</p>	<p>Housing Scheme is profiled amongst local community</p> <p>Strengthening community links-Brokering lasting relationships between the housing scheme residents, local schools and wider community</p> <p>Residents of Yew Tree Court are aware of and continuing to engage with what's going on locally in the Shifnal area</p> <p>Public perceptions of Yew Tree Court are positive and are celebrated through the project</p>	<p>Project celebration event at Yew Tree Court</p> <p>Tracking post project (if capacity & resources allow)</p> <p>Tracking post project (if capacity & resources allow)</p>	<p>Project evaluation report and documentary DVD become part of the project legacy.</p>
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APPENDIX 2: Initial Research Summary

Initial mapping to support the ‘Shifnal Living History Project’ Evaluation

‘Wider research into other schemes/ projects/approaches that have used arts within social housing schemes as a benchmark comparison’.

Initial mapping highlighted case studies and example of projects delivered elsewhere in the UK that have focused on using an arts and creative approach when delivering reminiscence work, intergenerational work specifically linked to older people, housing schemes and community engagement.

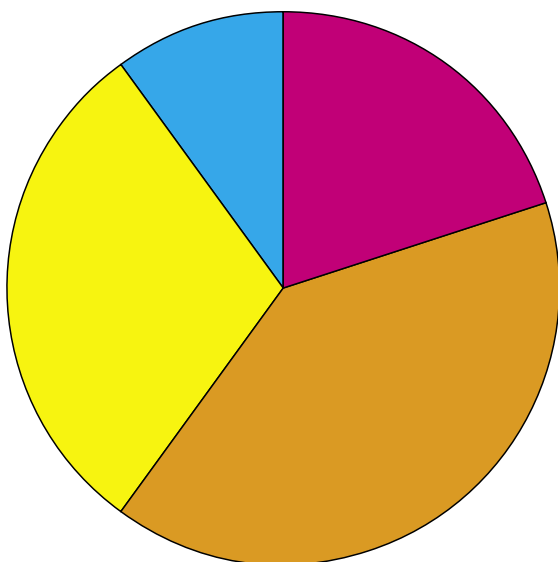
Below is a selected brief summary of 4 of the most relevant projects as highlighted through the research mapping. Full summary document has been produced and shared with project commissioners.

Project / Remit	Organisation(s)	Target Audience
‘Breaking Down Barriers’ & ‘My Perfect Day’ – Inter generational Arts Project delivered as part of wider funded ‘Transferable Skills’ programme	Various partner organisations. “My Perfect Day” was a pilot funded project through Generations Together . It was delivered through Worcester Volunteer Centre . It finished in March of 2011.	Worcestershire
Arts Together	Charity organisation ‘Arts Together’ been running since 2000	Older people Wiltshire towns – Devizes, Pewsey and Marlborough.
Views From Shropshire Oral History and Reminiscence Project	Project ran by Bridges – including partners at Age Concern and Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology.	Participants from 7yrs-92yrs Engaging older people’s groups and residential care settings
Community reminiscence project	Partnership between Age Exchange and London & Quadrant Housing Trust	Residents from Enfield Island and Edmonton

Description	Links
<p>Programme bringing together volunteers aged between 11– 25yrs and over 50 to share skills in art / crafts and produce artwork.</p> <p>Aim of the project is to provide community project volunteers, both young and old, with additional skills to encourage greater understanding between older and younger age groups, challenge negative stereotypes and increase confidence in interacting with people from other groups and the wider community.</p>	<p>http://www.centreforip.org.uk/england/worcestershire</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDwLNUG1iKo (My Perfect Day- Intergenerational Film Project)</p> <p>http://www.centreforip.org.uk/res/documents/page/Breaking%20Down%20Barriers.pdf (Breaking Down Barriers- Intergenerational Arts Project Good Practice Guide 2010)</p> <p>Please note: This handbook is specific to the “My Perfect Day” project and was developed to help some of the colleagues who were delivering the small group sessions themselves. On the last page there is a link to the you tube taster of the film which no longer exists as the film has it’s own link now however the film can be accessed via the link highlighted above.</p>
<p>Charity who’s work aims to improve the health, well-being and quality of life for socially-isolated older people through the provision of a range of participatory arts projects.</p> <p>Professional artists facilitate a broad range of arts workshops and creative activities running weekly (2.5hrs) workshops for up to 12 members per group. The charity provides subsidised places for older people to attend the workshops (Via referrals from local authority social workers, mental health teams, or by other local charities)</p>	<p>http://www.artstogether.co.uk/</p>
<p>Collecting stories through oral history interviews and reminiscence workshops, exploring participants’ lives in their country of origin, their motivation for moving to Britain and their experiences of settling into Shropshire life.</p>	<p>http://www.shropshirebridges.org.uk/views_from_shropshire/index.html</p>
<p>The Peoples Story – 18 month intergenerational project bringing the old and young from different communities and cultures together, to share in group work, arts activity, and to record their personal and community histories. Leading to a wide range of creative outputs. Including: reminiscence workshops, personal interviews, exhibitions and large-scale intergenerational reminiscence theatre production., Documentary of the whole project, to be premiered at The British Film Institute, Southbank.</p>	<p>http://www.peoples-story.co.uk/about.php</p>

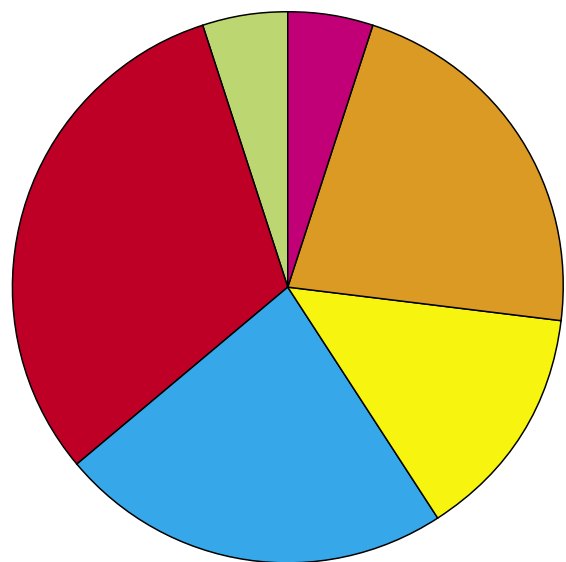
EVALUATION STATISTICS AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

How do you feel about taking part in this Reminiscence arts project?



- I feel a bit unsure **20%**
- I feel okay **40%**
- I feel fairly confident **30%**
- I am really looking forward to it **10%**
- I don't think I am going to take part **0%**

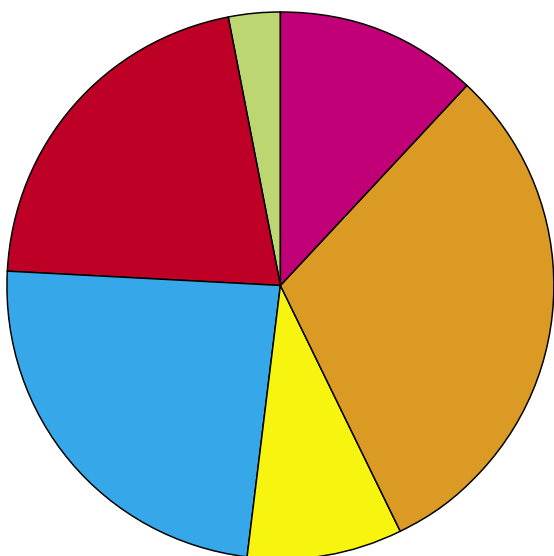
What would you like to gain by taking part?



- Try new art activities & learn new skills **5%**
- Meet and talk to other residents from Yew Tree Court **22%**
- Meet and talk to people from the local area **14%**
- Share my stories and memories **23%**
- Hear other people's stories and memories **31%**
- Other **0%**
- No response **5%**

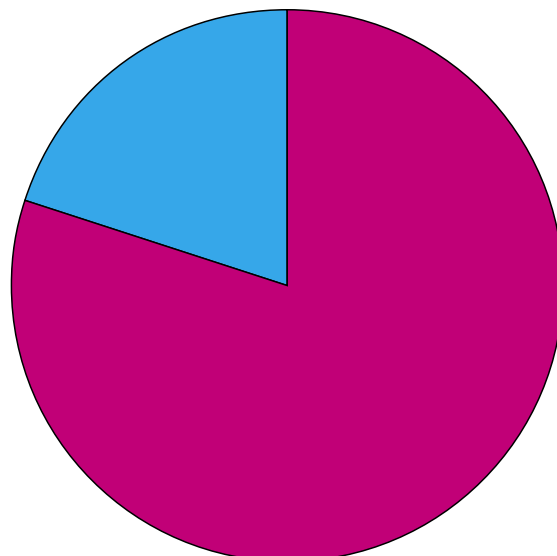
APPENDIX 3: Evaluation statistics and supporting information

What do you feel you have gained from taking part in the project? (Post Project)



- Tried new activities & learnt new skills **12%**
- Met and talked to other residents **31%**
- Met and talked to other people from the local area **9%**
- Shared my stories and memories **24%**
- Heard other peoples stories and memories **21%**
- Other **3%**

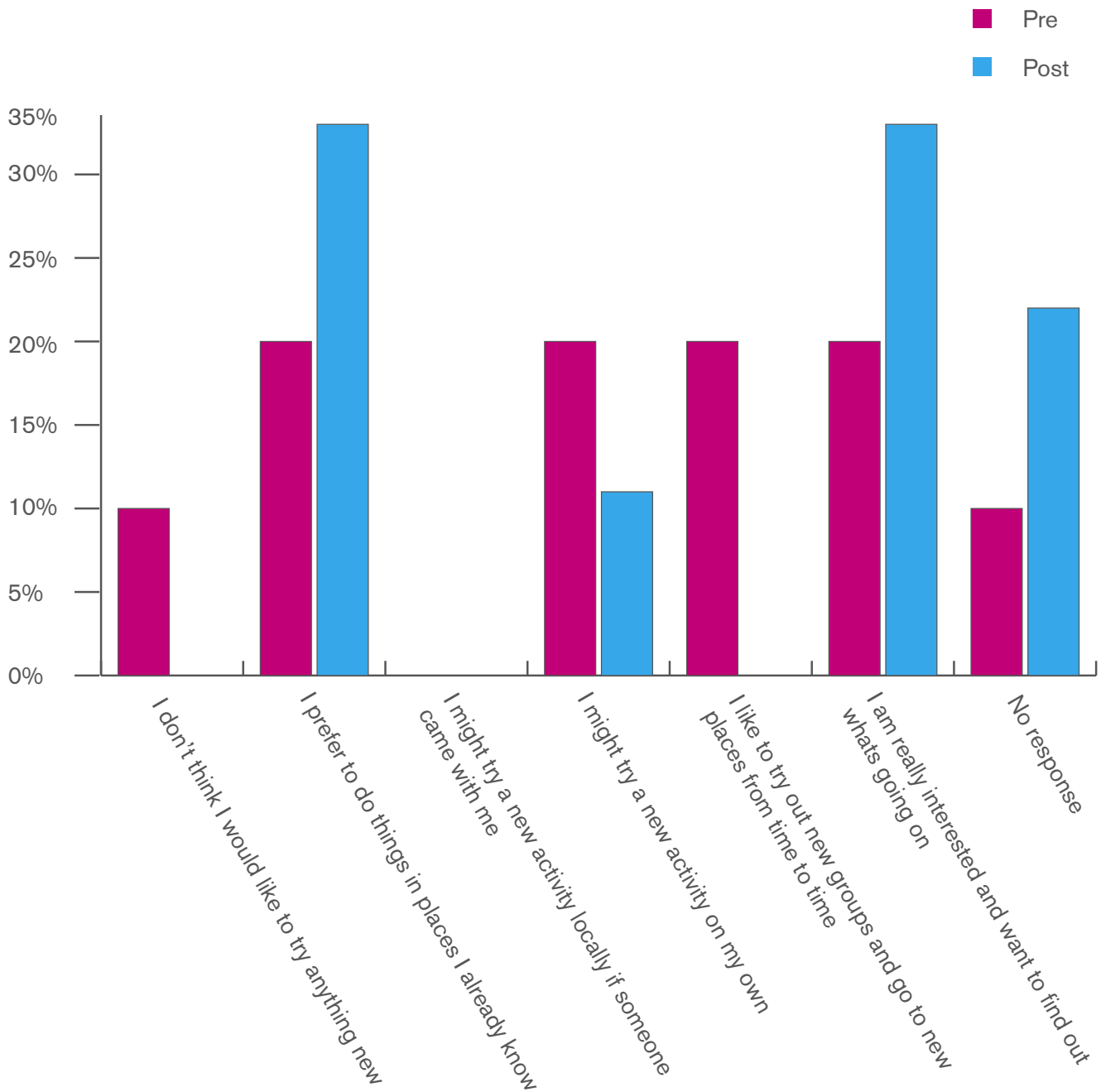
Do you feel the project has enabled you to get to know other residents at Yew Tree Court? (Post Project)



- Yes **80%**
- No **20%**

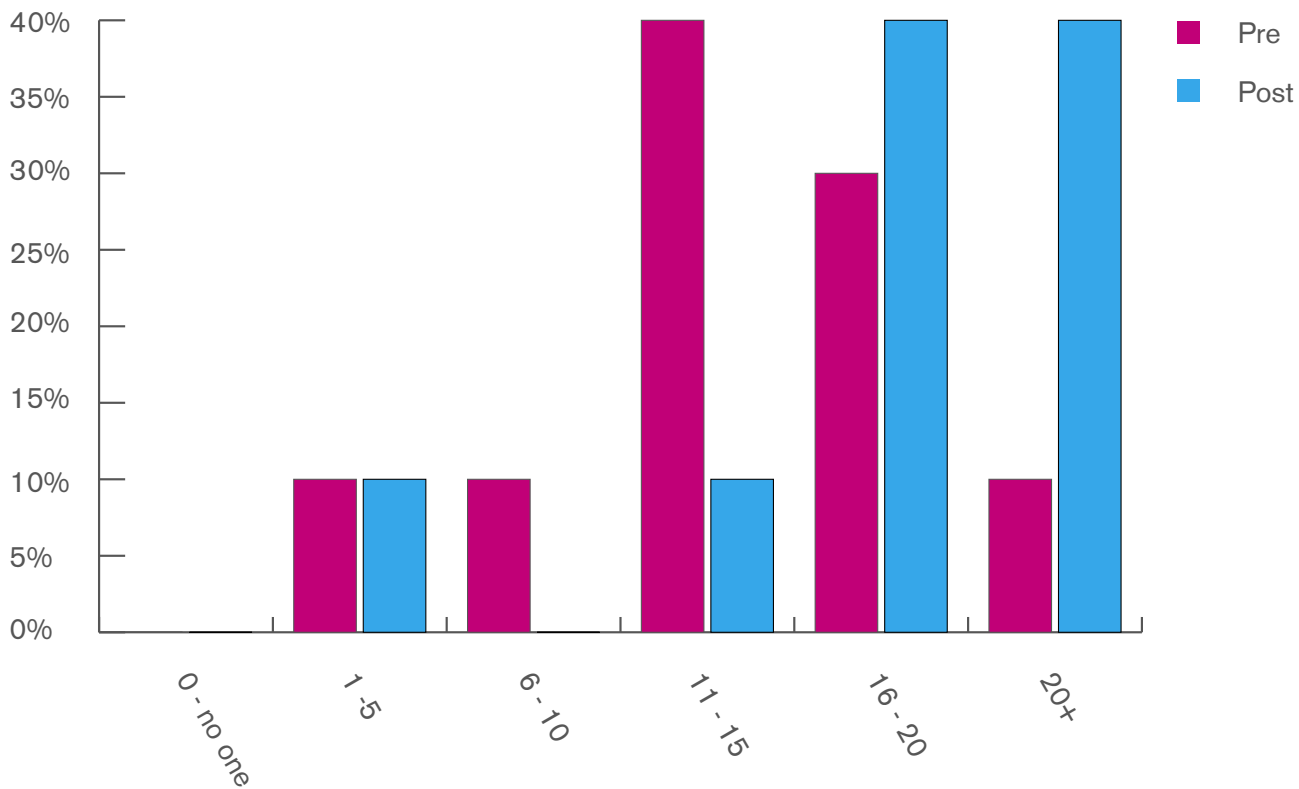
APPENDIX 3: Evaluation statistics and supporting information

How would you feel about trying something new elsewhere, such as a class or a group? Pre and post project comparison.

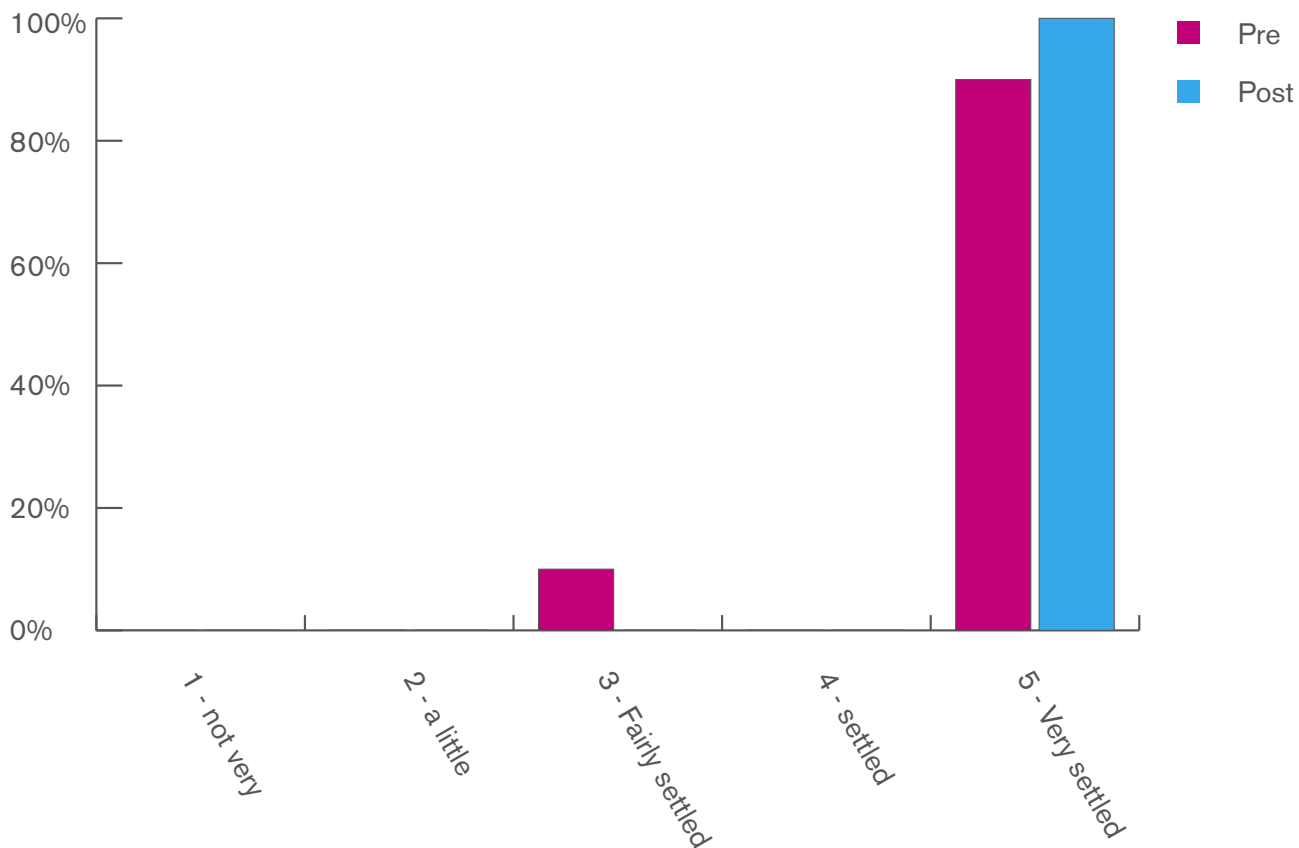


APPENDIX 3: Evaluation statistics and supporting information

How many residents do you know at Yew Tree Court? Pre and post comparison.



How settled do you feel at Yew Tree Court? Pre and post project comparison.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With thanks to all the project participants for their valued contribution including:

Residents and staff at Yew Tree Court for sharing their stories and photographs

Head Teacher and Yr 5 & 6 pupils at St Andrews C of E Primary School
Staff and Yr 10 pupils at Idsall School
Staff and pupils at Shifnal Primary School

Additional community links with Shifnal Society, Friends of Shifnal Museum (The Old Fire Station), Shifnal Carnival, Shifnal Festival and Silks Café

Main project partners:

Tony Price; Policy and Research Manager-Housing Plus,
Jenny Smith; Community Arts Officer-Shropshire Council, Rebecca Deakin; Care and Support Manager, Yew Tree Court.

Additional; Steering group partners:

Alison Donald; Education and Leisure Facilitator – Yew Tree Court,
Andrea McWilliams; Community Action Officer- Shropshire Council
Kerry Rogers; Community Action Officer- Shropshire Council
Brendan Jackson – Lead Artist.

Commissioned arts workers:

Brendan Jackson (www.brendanjackson.co.uk), Maggie Allmark, Nic Byrne and Karl Veltman (Urban Voice Ltd www.urbanvoice.co.uk)

Student placement artist: Hazel Cardew

Video documentation: Karl Veltman (Urban Voice Ltd)

External evaluator:

Rachel Parker, Walsall Council Creative Development Team

Funded by: South Staffordshire Housing Association - Housing Plus, Shropshire Council and Shifnal and Sheriffhales Local Joint Committee

Project managed by:

The Community Arts and Festival Team at Shropshire Council

Photographs by:

Brendan Jackson, Rachel Parker, Maggie Allmark and Steve Martin

Report design by: Gavin Ingram



'SHIFNAL LIVING HISTORY' REMINISCENCE PROJECT

EVALUATION REPORT (DECEMBER 2011)

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