Evergreen Gardening Project Evaluation Report

Trevor Neal & Jim Coe, January 2013

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 3
  1.1 Project Background .................................................................................. 3
  1.2 Purpose of this Report ............................................................................ 3
  1.3 Evaluation Methodology ......................................................................... 4

2 PROJECT ORGANISATION & IMPLEMENTATION ........................................... 6
  2.1 Design and Preparation ......................................................................... 6
  2.2 Recruitment of Participants .................................................................. 7
  2.3 Participants and Attendance .................................................................. 8
  2.4 Sessions ................................................................................................. 9
  2.5 Day Trip to Hatfield House ................................................................... 12
  2.6 Transport ............................................................................................... 13
  2.7 Adapting the Approach ......................................................................... 14

3 PROJECT OUTCOMES .................................................................................. 17
  3.1 Levels of Engagement .......................................................................... 17
  3.2 Enjoyment .............................................................................................. 19
  3.3 Social Benefits ...................................................................................... 19
  3.4 Skills, Experience and Interests .............................................................. 20
  3.5 Health and Well-Being ......................................................................... 21
  3.6 Benefits to the Museum ......................................................................... 26

4 CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................ 27
  4.1 Sowing the Seeds and Reaping the Rewards ........................................... 27
  4.2 Legacy .................................................................................................... 30
The Evergreen Gardening Project is a community initiative supported by The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and based at the Geffrye Museum.

THE GEFFRYE MUSEUM

The Geffrye Museum is devoted to the history of the home, showing how homes and gardens reflect changes in society, behaviour, style and taste over the past 400 years. The Museum is set in elegant 18th century alms-houses with a contemporary wing surrounded by attractive gardens, which include an award-winning walled herb garden and a series of period gardens. The Geffrye is one of the most significant cultural venues in London’s East End. It has an important role to play in providing positive life-long learning opportunities and is a place to relax and enjoy for all visitors. Last year 12,000 young people, older people and children with their parents or carers took part in its community programmes. Some of these take place in the Museum, like the Evergreen Gardening Project, and others involve staff going out into the community to lead sessions like object handling, reminiscence and craft activities.

THE CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational, social and scientific interests, based in Lisbon with offices in Paris and London. A core aim of the UK Branch, in London, is to enrich and connect the experiences of people in the UK and Ireland and secure lasting, beneficial change. It has a special interest in supporting those who are most disadvantaged. The Foundation supports the Evergreen Gardening Project as part of its Environment theme, helping in the development of a society which benefits from a more sustainable relationship with the natural world and understands the value of its resources. www.gubenkian.org.uk
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Using the Museum’s gardens as inspiration for a range of gardening and arts activities, the Evergreen Gardening Project involved 36 sessions for older people with additional needs living locally. The project ran between January and December 2012, with a view to “providing holistic engagement with domestic gardens and the natural world - from practical horticulture to art and craft projects deriving from nature, to cookery and herbal medicine”.

Anticipated project outcomes were, for participants:
- Improved confidence and self-esteem,
- An opportunity to make new friends and contacts,
- New or enhanced skills, knowledge and understanding relating to gardens, gardening and the natural world,
- A long-term interest in the environment, gardening and growing,
- A long-term relationship with the Museum, leading to participation in other projects or perhaps volunteering in the gardens.

And for the Museum:
- Deep engagement with a new audience whom they may not have had the opportunity to meet and work with otherwise,
- New contacts and relationships with local organisations,
- New knowledge and understanding of how to run a community garden project involving ‘harder-to-reach’ audiences,
- New knowledge and understanding about the plants and flowers in the Museum gardens, new perspectives on Museum gardens, greater environmental awareness,
- Evidence of the importance and impact of projects such as this.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The brief for evaluation was:
- To evaluate the project with a particular emphasis on health and wellbeing.
- To assess the potential health benefits (mental and physical) the project might bring to participants.
- To assess the anticipated outcomes of the project, incorporating any surprising or unexpected outcomes.
• To assess how the project might contribute to the Museum’s understanding of working with older, vulnerable audiences on future (gardening, creative) projects.

In the body of the report we describe how the project was organised and how it evolved. We also set out findings relating to outcomes delivered, with commentary as to some of the factors that led to its success.

We hope this analysis will support the Geffrye Museum’s further development of this area of work and provide reference points for other interested organisations.

The primary intended audiences for the report are The Geffrye Museum and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Other potentially interested audiences would include funders and those in the museum and heritage, community, charity and healthcare sectors who may be considering a project of this nature.

1.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The foundation of our approach, as independent evaluators, was to work collaboratively with the project, taking joint responsibility for capturing information and assessing implementation, progress and achievements. The aim was to ensure that the overall monitoring and evaluation framework dovetailed with internal reporting systems and the project’s natural timetables.

Various methods were used to collect relevant evidence, as described in brief below. In all cases, care was taken to ensure that monitoring processes did not disrupt project sessions, nor impact negatively on participants. All necessary permissions from participants and carers were sought and agreed in regard to personal, individual or group evaluation contributions.

Observation and Participation

Project sessions took place on Thursday mornings between 10.30am and 12.30pm. Observation for evaluation purposes was carried out at regular intervals throughout the year while attending particular sessions. This was an informal process undertaken through participation in project activities and conversation with participants and staff.

Interviews

Pre-arranged interviews with individual participants, carers and staff were carried out at the end of some sessions. Interviews followed a semi-structured format, with the discussion recorded and/or notes taken. Phone interviews with external agencies and professional carers were also undertaken.
**Questionnaires and Surveys**

On occasions, assisted by staff and carers, participants were encouraged, as part of group sessions, to fill out brief feedback surveys and questionnaires, to describe their thoughts, feelings and experiences about the project and its various elements.

**Project self-evaluation**

A significant feature of the evaluation strategy was to encourage Museum staff and project leaders to include their own contributions to the monitoring process. The Project Officer compiled observations, commentaries and quotes in regular monthly reports. These reports were structured in response to guideline questions set out by the evaluation team focusing on the expected benefits and outcomes of the project.

**Advisory Group Meetings**

The collaborative approach to the evaluation process was further implemented at regular Advisory Group meetings in which Museum staff, project leaders, staff representing the Funders, participants, carers and members of the evaluation team came together to discuss developments and issues surrounding the project.

The meetings were often used as a platform to comment on all aspects of the project, from a variety of different personal perspectives. The informal discussion, individual input and spontaneous, heartfelt testimonies at these meetings, significantly contributed to the joint evaluation approach.

**Summary**

Overall, the key principles to which we operated were to:

1. Develop a non-intrusive approach fitted to the rhythms of the project.
2. Prioritise a ‘joint’ approach, supporting the project in its on-going development.
3. Gather information through multiple sources using different approaches, in order to allow for ‘triangulation’ of evidence (comparing and contrasting findings from different sources in order to build an overall picture).
4. Systematic analysis of all evidence to draw out common themes to inform development of key findings and conclusions.

This approach was not intended to be a rigorous social scientific study to academic standards. (Such a study, it could be argued, would not have been a practical or an appropriate option given the circumstances of the project.) We do however believe our approach to be robust, and as a result we are confident in setting out the evidence as we do, in particular given the unanimity of perspective captured in the findings.
Throughout the evaluation process we provided explicit encouragement to all contributors to offer constructive criticism of the project, or point to areas that could be improved, but notwithstanding this, it is a fair overall summary to say that findings about the project – across sources and information-gathering methods - were universally positive.

2 PROJECT ORGANISATION & IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 DESIGN AND PREPARATION

The project was a new initiative for the Geffrye Museum, with responsibility for delivery delegated to Project Officer, Matthew Larkinson.

Matthew was supported by core staff holding a variety of different responsibilities within the Museum, from Education and Learning to the practical maintenance of the Museum Gardens. Further supporting staff included freelance artists, workshop leaders and care workers. This broad mix of staffing experience helped lead to the smooth running of the project overall, as well as contributing towards building commitment to it, from all sides.

Matthew has worked with older people for a decade since starting out as a volunteer for a council run day-care centre in Hackney. He has since then supported and led on projects for the National Trust and the Geffrye Museum. In addition to in-house projects, his outreach work helped him to develop an awareness of older people’s organisations across East London and to form relationships with staff and service users.

His work has brought him into contact with a wide variety of older people including stroke survivors, to those with learning difficulties, people experiencing dementia, brain injury, and people who are deaf and hard of hearing and partially sighted.

The Geffrye Museum has worked with older people from the local community for more than a decade. This work includes arts and crafts activities, reminiscence, an annual creative writing club, inter-generational learning projects, other creative projects in which participants were encouraged to share their memories of home, and a gardening club for older Asian women. Through these experiences, the Museum developed an awareness that there were limited opportunities available to older people experiencing isolation due to declining physical and mental health and well-being.

The proposed Evergreen Gardening Project built on these experiences but represented a new venture, both for staff involved and the Museum itself, based on
a desire to push the boundaries further, by working onsite with older people with additional support needs.

The scale of this particular challenge, in the early stages, was somewhat daunting. Many aspects of the project would be new, untried or would involve on-the-job learning - and much of this needed to be established within a short lead-in time.

However, past initiatives had created access to an existing network of projects, experience and contacts, and Matthew was able to draw on these contacts in recruiting session leaders. The project was also driven forward by the clear set of standards and expectations presented by the Museum.

In its development phase, the project also benefited from advice taken from a wide range of external sources, including charities such as Age UK [whose vision is of a world in which older people flourish] and Thrive [whose mission is to use “our passion for the power of gardening to change the lives of people touched by a disability”].

Statutory authorities such as Hackney Social Services were also consulted in the development of the project. Further information was gathered from sources in Hackney and Tower Hamlets and other organisations, such as TLC Care Services - Stroke Project and the Alzheimer’s Society.

Building from this developing understanding, relevant training was sourced and provided for freelance and Museum staff involved in the project. The project also developed and established the Museum-wide policy ‘Working with Vulnerable Adults’ – drafted by Matthew and based on good practice and guidance from a number of different organisations.

### 2.2 RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Thirteen outreach sessions were carried out between October 2011 to January 2012, as a means of recruiting participants to the project. Outreach ‘taster’ sessions were delivered in Hackney and Tower Hamlets, to organisations committed to working with older people who are socially isolated for reasons linked to physical or mental health issues.

Organisations included: Family Mosaic, The Alzheimer’s Society, TLC Stroke Project (Haggerston, Dalston, Queensbridge, Stoke Newington), Hackney Older People’s Day-care Services (Marie Lloyd Centre, Sam and Annie Resource Centre), Peabody Trust (Sundial Centre), Outward and Hackney Libraries.

Flyers and posters were displayed in a number of relevant local organisations including hospitals, doctors’ surgeries, community venues and all Hackney libraries. The project was also publicised in Family Mosaic and Age UK newsletters, and events
such as Tower Hamlets Age Well and Hackney Older People’s Week were attended for further promotion.

The aim was to open the project up to the widest audience possible, to recruit a diverse group with different abilities, rather than, for example, “working more closely with a dedicated [existing] group and group coordinator”

The latter approach might have been a practically easier method of recruitment, but, as one staff member noted, “we wouldn’t have seen the dynamism and shared learning/camaraderie we have witnessed with this project”.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS AND ATTENDANCE

Recruitment activity was based on a rule of thumb that approximately 10% of those reached might be likely to actually take part in sessions. As it transpired in this case, the ‘conversion’ rate was higher: taster sessions reached 170 people and from that emerged a core group of around 22 participants who regularly attended the Thursday morning sessions.

The group of participants comprised of a wide range of older people with a good gender balance and from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Amongst the group were people with different abilities and disabilities, including stroke survivors, people with dementia, partially sighted, deaf and hard of hearing, and people with learning difficulties. Others participated in the sessions as family carers or partners.

Attendance at sessions remained consistently high, regularly exceeding the initial estimate of 10 - 15 participants per session, with participants only occasionally missing sessions through illness or unavoidable appointments.

This is one of many indications of a strong commitment to and enjoyment of the project as a whole.

NOTES ON PARTICIPANT ATTENDANCE (from monthly reports)

May
4 sessions with an average of 19 per session.
“This exceeds the proposed top-end estimate, of 15 participants per session, by over 25%.” – Matthew Larkinson

July
6 sessions with an average attendance of 17 participants per session.
“This figure shows a slight downturn ... primarily owing to participant holidays and health issues (operations, falls, hospitalisations) but still exceeds the proposed top-end estimate of 15 participants per session”. - ML
**October**

6 sessions with an average attendance of 17.5 participants per session.

“The project continues to exceed visitor attendance targets with the last three sessions attracting 20 participants each.” - ML

### 2.4 SESSIONS

Aggregating attendance at recruitment and in-house sessions gives the following picture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sessions</th>
<th>Total visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2011 – January 2012 13 x outreach sessions</td>
<td>170 (13 per session)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2012 – December 2012 36 x in-house sessions</td>
<td>611 (17 per session)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total sessions</th>
<th>Total visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the sessions attended and observed by the evaluation team were well organised and practically managed. The atmosphere was relaxed with a prevailing sense of fun. Social interaction was encouraged and the activities remained flexible to allow for spontaneity and input from participants.

There was a consistently high staff-to-participant ratio. Freelance staff, were recruited specifically for their experience in working on socially engaged projects for older, vulnerable people either in horticulture or the arts. A typical session was delivered by one lead artist with 6/7 support staff including a qualified care worker. The staff-to-participant ratio was approximately 3:1 - 2:1, exceeding best-practice guidelines for working with vulnerable older adults.

Much care was taken to ensure that all the needs of participants were fully considered. Activity resources and materials were often more than sufficient for requirements; and the comfort, safety and enjoyment of the participants appeared to be foremost in the planning.

Taking into account staffing and transport, basic funding costs amounted to around £750 per session.

The cost of resources and other requirements linked to the delivery of particular activities was additional to this but could be as low as £2.61 as in one case (Salt Dough creations, covering the cost of the materials: salt, flour and water).
One notable feature of the sessions, both individually and collectively, was the extraordinary degree of variety that they entailed. A summary of activities undertaken, for example, includes the following:

**Activities**

- Geffrye Museum gardens spring flowers slide show and talk
- Potting spring flowers / planting seeds
- Potting strawberry plants / planting seeds
- Planting lily bulbs / seeds
- Book making, pressing leaves. Memories of herb use in the home.
- Potting on spider plants, decoupage on to paper plates and bowls
- Potting spring flowers and bulbs in hanging baskets.
- Mug and cup design using flowers and leaves as inspiration.
- Slideshow of a project freelancer’s allotment through the seasons.
- Creative writing – memories of vegetables.
- Choice of vegetables to plant – lettuce, parsley, chillies, chives.
- Talk on the history of soap and household cleaning.
- Soap making using moulds and essential oils and flowers.
- Gardener’s hand creams.
- Decorative garden tiles. Using foliage from the Museum.
- Make and bake herb crackers using Museum garden herbs.
- Planting and potting on seeds grown in raised planting tables. Lettuce, chillies, chives, lilies, marigolds, onions, parsley.
- Planting and gardening session indoor and outdoors. A mixture of sowing seed, potting on established plants, feeding and maintaining stocks
- Acrylic painting on to terracotta pots
- Photography talk and slide show by photographer Em Fitzgerald. Session reportage
- Mono printing garden images
- Japanese hanging gardens
- Writing and photography as a gentle evaluation of project.
- Completion of screen as a response to plants grown and artwork made.
- Poetry using selected words that sum up the project.
- Talk on history of planters from Tudor times to modern day.
- Up-cycling vinyl records to make plant pots and planting a variety of fast growing leaves, pea shoots and similar plants.
- Construct a planter decoration to place in the vinyl pot.
- Fridge magnets
- Cup painting
- Plant pot design
- Salt dough harvest-festival sculptures
- Cures and remedies
- Via conversation, writing and drawing a bound receipt book for use in exhibition and for group.
- Hanging basket tips
- Talk on birds which nest in museum gardens
- Talk on history and design of bird boxes
• Bird Box design with acrylics
• Talk about the Asian Women’s Project
• Making and cooking Vegetable Pakoras
• Green Man Clay making looking at the tradition of Green Man festivals
• Seed box decoration using images of veg and flowers grown on project.
• Beeswax candle making
• Planting Christmas bulbs
• Photo frames
• Pine cone bird feeders
• Orange pomanders, talk on historical use of herbs and flowers to scent homes
• Clay designs
• Nature printing on cloth bags
• Xmas decorations and crackers
• Printed gift wrap sheets
• Christmas table floral arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Session Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>29th March 2012 - Lotion and Potions - Soaps and Hand cream</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.20 – 10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.40 – 10.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.50 – 11.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30 – 11.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45 – 12.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was good investment in session preparation with individual sessions carefully planned out (as illustrated).

Within this there was flexibility – and there was certainly never a sense of regimentation, with participants always able to operate at the pace they were comfortable with.

As the project progressed it was possible to offer several activities per session, giving participants an element of choice. This enabled participants who had been absent for a particular session to try an activity they had missed, as well as, or instead of, the scheduled activity for that week. There were sufficient materials and staff to enable this and it became a feature of most sessions. Participants actively and positively commented on the choice as it grew, and a sense of cottage industry was established.

Results of feedback from all participant discussions, interviews and questionnaires about the sessions were universally positive. In discussion and in interviews, participants noted that,
“We get the chance to experience many aspects of gardening and art. The chance to grow seeds and plants is something good to experience - and then to see the results of our efforts”.

“We look at the gardens, we do planting from seeds, we have vegetable beds, weeding, pruning. We have discussions, it’s brilliant”.

“I enjoy doing all of it really … and we’ve done cooking as well – we made herb biscuits and pakoras …”

2.5 DAY TRIP TO HATFIELD HOUSE

In July, the project group visited Hatfield House and gardens.

In his May report, Matthew Larkinsson commented:

“We have high take-up for a trip to Hatfield House and Gardens on 5 July. Half a session was recently allotted to narrowing down venues and deciding (via photographs and literature) where to go. We had a show of hands with Hatfield House winning with a landslide over Capel Manor Gardens”.

The trip took a lot of planning and required extra staff and tailored transport. It was the most time-consuming and costly of all the project activities (involving 3 buses, 10 staff, entry fee, refreshments etc.) but the general response and feedback indicates that this was highly worthwhile, both as an event in itself and for its value in helping to cement a sense of community and collective commitment amongst the group.

In a tick-box evaluation form completed by participants who had been on the trip, the response was universally positive in terms of information given, advance planning, overall enjoyment, support received, and hopes for more trips of this kind. With the exception of one person who felt that they had been given “too much” information prior to the event, none of the 16 responded negatively to any of the questions asked.

Participants were given space to make additional comments, amongst which were the following:

“This trip has been my holiday for the year, I really enjoyed it; I haven’t been away since 2008 when I had my stroke”.

“Thank you for a fantastic day – for your organisation and planning, it really was such a joy”.

“The day was very inspiring. I enjoyed it to the full”.
“It was the best time I had in a long time”.

“The trip worked out well. A lot of thought and planning paid off. We were lucky with the weather. Enjoyed going round the house, which was accessible for wheelchair bound. I enjoyed the garden, especially the scents and the layout. It was very nice to go to something that was planned so well”.

Several staff commented too that the outing gave them ‘quality time’ with key participants. One member of staff commented to Matthew that it was the “best day of work I have ever done”.

2.6 TRANSPORT

In interviews and discussions with participants there was much praise of the transport arrangements to and from the Museum.

However from the project organisation side, transport was the main problematic issue in an otherwise smooth running project. It should be noted however that these problems were out of the control of project leaders and Museum staff and lay mainly with the inherent complications involved.

In a project update, Matthew explained:

“We now use four different transport providers … so there is always the chance of a glitch … Last week proved very tricky as none of our Dial-A-Ride bookings could be met. We had to source several accessible hire vehicles … Vehicles still often arrive very early (sometimes before 10am when the museum opens) and late (last week one vehicle was 45 minutes late for collection). We have enough staff to counter these issues and participants seem accepting that sometimes the roads make the rules. Nevertheless, it can be stressful”.

Transport arrangements were a time-consuming factor within the project management and account for a significant portion of the overall budget. A philosophical and flexible approach to the issues of transport, however, resulted in no discernible negative impact on the group sessions and any stress to individual participants was sympathetically attended to and quickly relieved.

By the end of the project, the transport to and from sessions became an ingredient of the project’s success in terms of participant enjoyment, their sense of well-being by feeling supported and cared for, and in the social aspect of the group as a whole. Participants spoke of enjoying sing-alongs on the regular mini-bus journeys provided by Hackney Community Transport.

The Project Officer commented,
“The quality of service was extremely high and integral to the success of the project. The drivers and passenger support assistants were friendly, efficient and helped us immeasurably at Hatfield House. They also attended the final session in December as guests. The regular driver ... commented on how much he enjoyed working on this particular job”.

This is a good example of how the project created a positive “ripple effect”, reaching those on the edges of involvement and beyond.

2.7 ADAPTING THE APPROACH

Planter Boxes

One issue that emerged during the project’s journey was the problem of the outside space at the Museum.

An area close to the project room had been initially planned for use as an outdoor gardening area for project sessions. This area had previously been safely used by the Asian Women’s Project and other community gardening projects. However, in the early stages of the Evergreen Gardening Project, the area was assessed as being unsuitable on the grounds of health and safety, in respect of the complex needs of its participants.

This might have been a considerable setback to the project in terms of its targets and projected outcomes. Some of the anticipated benefits of the project referred to “exploring the relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces and improving awareness and appreciation of the environment”. The positive effects of ‘green exercise’ also featured in the initial proposal, which anticipated “holistic engagement with domestic gardens and the natural world”. Faced with a lack of suitable outdoor space, there was a risk that the project would not fully meet its own aims.

The project’s Advisory Group played a steering and advice-providing role on this matter as it did throughout the project. As a result, the Museum gardeners suggested installing large, raised wooden planter boxes that could be accessed directly from the project room. This was deemed to be the best solution to the issue but since the planter boxes had not been originally anticipated, they had to be purchased at significant additional cost.

The planter boxes were positioned on a curving terrace immediately outside the project room. To enable safe and straightforward access to them through a wide, stepped door, the installation of a bespoke manufactured ramp was also necessary, again at additional cost. The needs of the group primarily dictated this change. A step-free route was available but it was deemed to be too long and therefore too time consuming for practical use.
As a result, the ramp was a positive adaptation that has had benefits for all users of the space since being installed and the issues faced in this area will be addressed as part of the capital development plans of the Museum.

Adjacent to the terrace, directly behind the planter boxes, was a tall bank of plants and wild flowers, which contributed significantly to creating what became a very pleasant project garden.

The planter boxes were successful in allowing participants to experience hands-on gardening outdoors, planting and seeding, throughout the year, in a safe environment. Considering the Museum layout, the design of the project room and the variety of complex needs of the participants, the planter boxes were not only the best solution to the problem but perhaps the ideal method overall.

Participants hugely enjoyed the planter box activities, labelling them and caring for their contents. Several participants developed a keen attachment to their individual planter box and monitored the progress of the plants and flowers with much enthusiasm.

**Individual Personal Care**

In designing a project for older participants with a variety of complex needs - some with degenerative conditions - it was always anticipated that adapting to change would be an important aspect of the day-to-day running and management of the project. Personal care was a primary consideration in inviting such an audience to attend the Museum, since any organisation assuming a duty of care must be able to provide personal care, as and when it is required.

As the Project Officer explained,

“It was necessary to hire a staff member with care training and experience to be present at all sessions. Several group members required consistent care support – mobility and toileting. Without a dedicated staff member to deliver care, we would not have been able to accommodate these members”.

By employing qualified support staff the project opted for an open approach to personal care so that a wider group of participants could take part. This also allowed family and other carers to relax and enjoy the sessions, with the assurance that the museum would provide personal support as and when it was required.

One particular participant was absent from the project for several months while in hospital following a stroke. Such was his (and his carer’s) enjoyment of the sessions that he was keen to re-join the project as soon as he was well enough. During the participant’s time in hospital, Matthew kept in touch with him and his carer, updating them both with project news and progress and also to send cards and good
wishes. Visits were also made to the hospital and also to the care home to which the participant later moved.

When the participant eventually re-joined the project, his personal care needs had increased beyond that initially expected at the start of the project, with additional staff support needed. The challenge however was positively met and sympathetically managed to assist the participant as required, while allowing the sessions to run smoothly at the same time. Every effort was made to achieve this successfully in order to accommodate the needs of the individuals involved as well as the positive continuation of the project group.

In a different case, it was noted by staff and some participants that a group member with dementia was making comments during sessions that might offend or worry others. Aware of the issue and over time, staff developed methods of distraction through activity and conversation, which had a positive effect on the person’s mood. As a result, the participant was gradually observed to be more focused on positive activity and less likely to make negative comments, which also served to ease any concerns amongst the other participants. Sympathetic discussion with other participants also helped put them at their ease.

This is a further example of how the project sympathetically managed to intertwine the needs of individuals with the demands of the group, with positive results on both sides.

**Group Attendance and Inclusion of Individuals**

At the start of the project it could not be accurately anticipated exactly how many or how few participants might regularly attend sessions. However, consistent attendance by a core group remained high throughout.

While the project was underway further referrals, from community organisations, charities, health agency professionals, individuals, their carers and key workers, were made for other individuals to join, although these could not be accommodated due to the high number of regular participants.

As Matthew commented, “Such were the number of referrals coming in, we could have filled the project 5 times over and eventually we had to stop taking names”.

These observations and comments indicate both a well-planned outreach and advertising policy and a high level of participant interest and enjoyment, for which the project leaders and session planners should take much credit.

It also indicates a generally high level of otherwise unmet demand for projects of this nature.
3 PROJECT OUTCOMES

3.1 LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

As noted, presenting a variety of fresh activities to maintain a consistent level of participant interest never appeared to be a problem. This can be attributed to the breadth of skill and experience evidenced by the freelance artists and gardeners who led sessions.

Adapting to the mood and needs of the group on a weekly basis as it developed socially was also achieved with much success, allowing individuals to express themselves, sometimes spontaneously, in a variety of ways.

Once again, this was achieved in a relaxed and informal manner that served both the individual and the group, with a mutually beneficial and rewarding outcome.

For example, several participants chose to share their own knowledge and experience of gardening or garden related tips and natural recipes with the group. These were welcomed and absorbed into what was already a rich and varied programme of activity.

Some Participant Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Eugene’s Pigeon Peas</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lily’s Ginger Beer</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s good when you have no toothpaste.</td>
<td>Trial and error – alter quantities depending on your taste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just pound the leaves and stalk</td>
<td>Peel and grate some ginger and pour boiling water over, steep for strength.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And rub it on your teeth</td>
<td>Taste and add more water if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinse with water</td>
<td>Add half a teaspoon of cream of tartar and leave aside for a day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeth come out nice and sparkling.</td>
<td>Stir the liquid up and add two drops of almond essence and white sugar to sweeten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It grows in the West Indies</td>
<td>Keep tasting and adjust if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigua in particular</td>
<td>Add lemon or lime juice if you like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigeon Peas makes your teeth white.</td>
<td>Strain through muslin or a fine strainer, squeeze out the juices into the beer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ready to drink.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One family carer’s enthusiasm for the project grew in such a way that he requested the opportunity to lead a session:

“Brian, a regular participant asked if he could lead on part of a session. The next week we allotted him 30 minutes, and provided him with materials, and he gave a brilliant demonstration showing how to plant a hanging basket. Brian really enjoyed it, as did the group, and we turned the demonstration into a fact sheet which will also become part of a book of recipes, cures, facts and know-how that will feature in our February exhibition”.

### Brian’s hanging basket tips!

You will need:

- Hanging basket
- Compost
- Shredded or scrap paper torn into bits
- Thin cardboard, any will so, cereal packets, inserts from new shirts, empty loo rolls
- Old plastic pipe, lagging, tubing, whatever you can recycle!

What to do:

1. Fill the bottom of the hanging basket with shredded paper
2. Tear up the cardboard into strips to cover any holes, place vertically with ends popping out, can trim later if needs be.
3. Attach some tube/plastic pipe to the centre with string
4. Carefully fill with compost.
5. Roll up some longer bit of cardboard and push in to the compost with ends sticking out. Make sure that they are pushed right down to the bottom of the reservoir to soak up water.
6. Plant up.
7. Water through the central pipe, initially water until it run out of the bottom and from then on simply fill up the pipe and the plants will never be over watered again!

It should then look something like this ...
3.2 ENJOYMENT

The results and feedback from our interviews and questionnaires indicate a consistently high level of enjoyment and appreciation of all aspects of the project by all participants, partners and carers. The experience of all sessions was invariably highly praised and the variety of practical activities within each session was widely enjoyed.

“**Oh I really enjoy it. I look forward to coming here every week**”.

“**We find every session different – which is what we like**”.

“**As far as we’re concerned, it’s a 100% success – even 110!**”

Museum Staff and session leaders also commented positively about the level of enjoyment and sense of personal reward they themselves experienced during the project. In particular, a Personal Care and Session Support Worker commented, “**This is without a doubt the best job I have ever had!**”

3.3 SOCIAL BENEFITS

There was clearly a great emphasis in the organisation of each session to allow the social aspect of the project to flourish. Activities were flexible; the mood was relaxed, while breaks and comfort were also accommodated, with snacks and refreshments in plentiful supply.

Participants and carers alike all indicated how much they enjoyed and appreciated the social aspect of each session:

“**The camaraderie, the friendship … the friendly society that’s here is amazing, so is the staff … and everybody is here to assist us. Everything is perfect, how it should be**”.

“**It’s like a little family … everyone gets on, you know, talks to one another, intermingles**”.

“**Everyone says ‘hello’ when I get on the bus and we all enjoy the journey. Sometimes songs, mostly talking. Everyone is really sociable and we talk about the week and what has gone on**”.

Project staff also highlighted the value of the social aspect of sessions, which served to feed and encourage the social and well-being benefits for participants. One of the session leaders, for example described how,
“Quality time... happens here on a regular basis... hearing Geraldine talking about the first time she saw snow, conversations with Roy about old movies, seeing people blossom, their confidence grow, and seeing them change, and how people relate to each other... people will sit and have a talk, because you have the time you can follow them on the next week...”

Matthew noted that,

“Staff are also gelling well with one another which can only be good for the project. ...there is a real sense of industry, sharing and community between them...Their variety of skills makes for a broad range of activities and they are visibly enjoying their interactions and growing relationships with participants”.

Further commenting that,

“The plural nature of the project, particularly the diversity of staff working with participants (artists, gardeners, educators, curators, filmmakers and photographers) lays the ground for increased social connectedness and emphasises the importance placed on the project. My feeling is that this helps foster a sense of individual and group importance...This model of working is empowering project staff as well as participants”.

It is clear that the project managed to create a strong sense of community. From undefined beginnings, the project quickly grew and eventually blossomed into a close group of regular participants and carers.

Over time a social bond was formed amongst the group, staff and artists - and further links were made with gardeners, transport providers, funders, evaluators and other associated organisations and individuals which all enjoyed, contributed and became a part of the small but friendly community known as the Evergreen Gardening Project.

3.4 SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND INTERESTS

We have gathered much evidence that participants and carers have discovered new skills, re-awakened old interests and enjoyed new experiences through the project activities.

Alongside the emphasis on the gardening activities, many have expressed pleasure in taking part in the arts and crafts based activities, cooking and other creative sessions:
“People have definitely learnt skills, from when they first started, and were saying ‘I can’t do that’, now that isn’t said and has really altered, people are more comfortable in being creative, exploring that side of themselves”.

Participants commented:

“I’ve never got down and done things like this before ... the pottery ... and we made soap ... the cream – the gardeners’ hand cream. The herbs and plants and that – I’ve got to know some of them ... I know more about [them] now”.

“I’ve never been a good gardener. I’ve never had green fingers. I used to kill everything”.

Has that changed?

“Definitely!”

“It’s revitalized some my oldest skills that I used to have, that I thought I’d lost. One of those is painting because I used to be very involved with art – and the other one that stems from that is modelling with clay. So it really is opening up other avenues that I thought I’d lost a long time ago”.

Participants have been strong advocates for the project and in some cases have themselves played an important part in its development.

Members of the group contributed, for example, through staffing the information stall at a Museum open day (featuring work by participants), and acting as project representatives at Advisory Group meetings.

One member who regularly contributed to project evaluation with verbal and written testimonies often introduced outside experiences and ideas to the group and, in the final Advisory Group meeting, suggested ways of fundraising using personal connections with external organisations, all signs of a journey from participant to project champion.

3.5 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Participants and their carers strongly expressed an improved sense of health and well-being as a result of attending the project sessions.

Some participants with serious health issues, for example, indicated improved communication, showed signs of a happier mood and demonstrated increased physical abilities during session activities.

The personal journeys of the participants - and carers – were typically rich and multi-layered, as the following case study reveals:
Case Study 1

This is a summary of transcript of an interview with a family carer whose father is a participant. Her father is a wheelchair user and has been since the project began. In June her father suffered a stroke and spent some months in hospital. Since coming out of hospital they have continued to attend sessions together, even though his condition and communication has deteriorated since the start of the project.

**How did you hear about the project?**

“Dad was going to a day care centre at the time – I think Matthew came to the centre to try and get people to come to the project and that’s how I heard about it – dad was interested and I said ‘great, yeah, I’ll come along too’. That was it basically. We’ve been coming here – dad had a stroke in June – so we’ve had a few weeks when we’ve not been coming. It’s a lifeline for dad. He’s in a residential nursing home now and this is the one day in the week he really looks forward to.

“Originally he was really interested in gardening and before he had the stroke he was a bit more alert. He was really crazy about gardening. He had plant pots in his flat and he would do gardening in the day centre’s garden. He loved gardening so this was just perfect for him.

“Now we’ve come here we’ve done loads of things – gardening, crafts and painting and all that sort of thing. He enjoys it.

“I thought I’d give it a go. See what happens. I might not really like it. Then I got to really enjoy it and I look forward to it. This is the one day ... for me ... it makes me sort of release my stress. I really feel happy”.

**Do you and your father receive all the support you need?**

“100% support. Oh yes. Definitely. I would say the team here are better than the nursing home and better than anywhere else he’s been. The support that we get here ... I think ... oh my god, these people are so wonderful ... I say to the people at the home where he is at the moment ‘come out and see what it’s like here – how they operate’.

“It’s just completely different you know. I mean for him to be doing this [cut-out paper montage box decoration] as well, it stimulates his brain, you know – making him do something creative – whereas over there, they’re supposed to have that sorted but they just sit there in front of the TV ... he sits around getting depressed. This gives him something to do that’s really good. What I’m worried about is when it ends ... 

“The first session we had I really enjoyed it – it was just before we started I was a
bit, you know – ‘what’s it going to be like’? It’s been good since the start. I’ve enjoyed every session. I didn’t know what to expect at first.

“I enjoy doing all of it really but I think probably this sort of thing [arts and crafts] and painting … that sort of thing … pottery … and we’ve done cooking as well – we made herb biscuits and pakoras …”

So you might think about going on to do another arts course?

“Yes. Yes – the gardening I enjoy as well but I never was much of a green-fingered person – it was more my dad’s thing but it actually got me interested and I started helping him at home. He wanted to plant seeds and I’d go out and buy plants. We’d re-pot them. I learnt how to re-pot properly – whereas before I didn’t, I used to get into a right mess – I found out how to do it properly here – I started doing it for my dad but I started really enjoying it. You can watch it actually grow and turn into a nice flower or a plant”.

It’s helped the two of you?

“Yes definitely. It’s the one day of the week I really look forward to. I really, really do look forward to it. I’ve been through a lot of stress with my dad’s illness”.

You’ve had a rough time recently

“Yes, a very rough time – and even with him going into the nursing home and all that – it’s been such a big change. We’ve been trying to get things working out over there – you know, getting things falling into place and getting things done properly and all that is quite stressful.

“They [the nursing home] sort of need to take a lesson from the people here. Really. The way they operate is terrible in a way. I think it’s communication problems – and things like that really. They haven’t got that many activities for them to do there. I’ve never got down and done things like this before … the pottery … and we made soap … the cream – the gardeners’ hand cream. The herbs and plants and that – I’ve got to know some of them. Some of them I know more about now. He (dad) loves everything. He really enjoys it. With his health problems he gets a little bit moody. He still really looks forward to being here. It’s good for chatting. Dad is treated well. With his condition, they’re providing whatever he needs … they say ‘it’s not a problem – we’ll do it’. Even with transport they’ve done whatever they can – even if it means getting a taxi.

“With dad … I never went anywhere with him – now I have loads of memories now with dad here – which has been really nice – whereas before it was separate - I’d see him but not actually be doing anything like this. Also I used to be more – not really a creative person, you know, not into painting".
So it’s opened a creative interest?

“Yes. Dad’s really proud of his work and wants to take them home. Like we did the bird boxes a couple of weeks ago. He took them back to the nursing home and he won’t let anyone touch them. The carers put them away at one point and he was like ‘Hey! Where’s my bird boxes? Bird boxes!’... He’s really precious about his bird boxes. He’s always asking me about them, like ‘Where are they?’ if he can’t see them.

“He’s always down in the dumps at the home at the moment. He’s not attending day centre. They haven’t arranged it all yet. They have actually sort of completely thought ‘Well he’s lost all his marbles and that. He’s not really going to ever do much’. That’s the attitude in the home, you know but actually when he comes here he does actually participate. He can sometimes be a bit more withdrawn but he does actually try. Sometimes you can’t really tell but still he’s not as bad as how they think he is over there. They just sort of think ‘Oh he’s not interested’ and all that – in their activities - but then, in their activities they sort of treat him like he’s a three year old”.

Her father listened as we spoke at certain points during the interview and at one point he smiled, pointed to the activity on the table in front of him and gave thumbs up. His daughter told me that the sessions are the only time he smiles.

She wouldn’t change anything about the sessions...

“It’s good as it is – there’s always something new. They’re such a great team – I give them 5 stars – no, 7 stars!”

This experience highlights that the project brought benefit to carers as well as participants – offering a time of release from some of the personal stresses of being a committed carer while providing an experience that was personally enjoyable and satisfying at the same time.

We would say that it is unequivocally the case that participants’ well-being has been enhanced through involvement in this project, particularly through a mix of the factors discussed above: through a combination of the project being socially fulfilling and creatively positive for an enjoyable fixed time in the week.

These findings are consistent with academic research in this area, for example in the finding that,

“From a wide variety of University of Essex research ... we have discerned three key outcomes from participating in ‘green exercise’ activities:
1) Improvement of psychological well-being (by enhancing mood and self-esteem, whilst reducing feelings of anger, confusion, depression and tension);
2) Facilitation of social networking and connectivity;
It is clear from project findings – as many of the quotes we have cited reveal - that the link to the cycle of nature has also proved an enriching experience for those involved. Given participants’ limited mobility, this wasn’t a ‘green exercise’ initiative in its mainstream sense [‘exercising outside in the presence of nature’] but participants were able to ‘get close to nature’ through the project and this theme pervaded the approach throughout.

The experience of this project would point in particular to the first two benefits cited in academic literature – psychological well-being and social connectivity - having been fulfilled through this project. There were examples too that suggested physical health improvements had occurred:

**Case Study 2**

“I think it helps me. It’s physio for me. It makes me use my hands. The stroke affected one side. I don’t use my hand a lot. When I’m in here I try to use my right hand, which is good”

The above quote is from a participant and stroke survivor who attended the project with her husband and carer. Throughout the project, the participant continued to receive physiotherapy. Towards the end of the year, her physiotherapist had charted an improvement in her wrist mobility. She told her physiotherapist that she had been taking part in gardening and art activities, which she felt helped to exercise her wrists in a gentle manner. The physiotherapist confirmed that this could be a credible explanation for improvement, and expressed an interest in contacting the project to hear more.

Creative use of the Museum’s artefacts and displays also was important in promoting mental stimulus.

This was in line with the identification by The Alzheimer’s Society that, “People with dementia can often remember the distant past more easily than recent events. If you can find a way to help trigger the more distant, pleasant memories, the person may become more animated and interested”.

On its journey, the project enjoyed many examples of participants sharing and exploring past memories and recollections during the sessions, with Museum displays and rooms forming the basis for these recollections. These memories were often triggered by certain activities or individual items like spider-plants and herbs,

---

1 Jo Peacock, Rachel Hine and Jules Pretty (February 2007): Got the Blues, then find some Greenspace: The Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise Activities and Green Care. Centre for Environment and Society, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ
2 it could perhaps be more accurately described as an art therapy/green exercise hybrid
including through smelling and touching them, or individual slides and photographs of past events and historic occasions at the Museum.

Case Study 3

We heard from one professional carer for one participant with dementia who lives in residential care. The participant’s family are unable to attend the project sessions and so she is his only means of getting to the Museum and taking part. In a phone interview she described the participant’s experience of the project:

“He likes to get involved in quite a lot of activities. Because he’s got dementia, when he gets there, he focuses on whatever activity it is ... Sometimes [at his residence] we don’t have a lot of activities so it’s really good for him to get involved ... and to keep him really motivated ... and keep his skills really ... I do enjoy going there ... I thought sometimes he might have got up and said ‘I want to go back’ – ‘I don’t want to stay’ – but he engaged in all the activity. He never says ‘I don’t want to go’. He just gets on with it”.

Has (the participant) ever described his feelings about the sessions?

“Yes he has expressed how he felt – he felt he can share with others. He felt happy being there ... he said he was quite happy being with other people”.

Any new skills or change in what he’s able to do?

“The changes have been artistic really ... like painting the cups ... He loves painting ... and the gardening ... He likes it when he’s able to take [things] back with him. It helps him to remember that he did it. He might not remember where he did it but he knows that he did it”.

Any positive affect on his memory in any way?

“I wouldn’t say he remembers a lot but when we get to the Museum he says things like ‘I’ve been here before’. Even ... telling the driver where to go”.

3.6 BENEFITS TO THE MUSEUM

There is significant collected evidence indicating that participants appreciated and enjoyed attending the Museum. The surroundings were described positively and the atmosphere and staff were highly praised. It was generally agreed that participants received all the support they needed while inside the Museum buildings.

“It’s a very impressive place. More people should visit it. It should be better known, so that more people do visit it”.
“It’s lovely. Beautiful building – and the Museum itself, what it does – it’s brilliant”.

“In the Geffrye Museum each and every one is my neighbour and my friend”.

Many participants expressed a wish for the project to continue at the Museum and would also very much consider attending other similar sessions at the Museum, if available.

The Museum’s motivation for developing the project was to extend its community reach, engaging with vulnerable older people in a new way. As a member of staff from the Museum put it,

“For the Museum it’s about the position within the community, and a sense of social responsibility. The Geffrye’s mission statement is about enjoying and learning and the project fits right in with that”.

The Museum has successfully undertaken a complex and challenging initiative in a way that has helped to fulfil its core purpose. The Museum has also embraced the opportunity to learn from the experience and to build on the project’s positive legacy in future programming.

4 CONCLUSIONS

From evidence gathered - including our own observations - the Evergreen Gardening Project was a great success on every level.

The detailed planning, dedication and care taken to ensure safe, smooth running and enjoyable sessions for vulnerable older people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to experience the activities or social interaction of this nature leads us to conclude that this has been a ‘gold standard’ project.

4.1 SOWING THE SEEDS AND REAPING THE REWARDS

The key reasons for the projects’ success could be summarised as follows:

1. An underlying culture of respect and affirmation

In describing his own approach, Matthew outlines the particular experience and learning which was implemented in leading the Evergreen Gardening Project:

“I treat everyone the same, be they professional contact or participant. There is a bit of a recipe ... Be warm, be informative, playful, accessible but
This ethos became strongly embedded across the project, creating a prevailing spirit of caring, friendliness and positivity – shared and reinforced by the participants themselves.

Matthew was exceptionally well-suited to the task in hand and was well supported by a strong team of committed and skilled professionals working in tandem. The project was delivered through a team effort, involving an extended group of people and underpinned by the commitment and spirit of the museum. Led with skill by the Project Officer and admirably supported by the Museum, staff involved in the project modelled behaviour that created standards, in terms of ways of working and ways of interacting, that then helped foster a virtuous circle of positivity, fostering the well-being of participants.

There was consistently in evidence a facilitative approach to sharing knowledge and experience, with staff offering guidance without lecturing, and with an emphasis on interactivity and inclusion. Going the extra mile helped make people feel valued and part of something. When one member of the group was in hospital for example, “Matthew ... regularly kept in touch ... [The group] sent cards, like get-well-soon cards and pictures of how the plants were doing”.

2. **Operationally strong implementation**

This was a complicated project where attention to detail was just as important as wider efforts to generate a positive atmosphere.

Well-designed and well-pitched sessions that demonstrated variety, flexibility and understanding of the range of participants’ needs and capabilities were at the core of the project. It was also vital that there was close attention to practical and logistical details (not least relating to transport) by the Project Officer and supporting staff. The success of the project was underpinned too by preparation, for example through the investment in training - and the setting of clear standards and expectations - in the early stages.

As part of this, crucially too, the project has shown good adaptive capacity. The same level of success might not necessarily have been achieved if it wasn’t for learning ‘on the go’, a willingly-embraced approach to learning by staff, and a speedy and intelligent response to problems, difficulties and issues.

3. **Role of the Museum**

The particular role of the Geffrye Museum was also a central contributing feature of the project.
The Museum acted as a strong advocate for the project – “There’s always been a clear sense of it being the Museum’s project” – with personal and institutional support for it being clearly evident throughout. This included visible support from staff at all levels, from the gardeners (who were closely involved across the lifetime of the project) to the senior managers (who regularly visited and took part in sessions).

It helped too that the Museum is home to a pervading ethos – “We are interested in all visitors and their interests” - that was very much in tune with the aspirations of the project. As a physical venue, the Museum also added value, with many of the themes explored in the sessions being linked to Museum artefacts and exhibition rooms for example, as well as the gardens.

4. Resourcing

Levels of investment alone do not of course guarantee success and it is the mix of factors together that seem to have been important.

It is clear from all accounts, however, that the flexibility and capacity freed up due to the ratio of staff-to-participants being relatively high was critical in allowing the project to flourish in the ways that it did.

For example, one of the session leaders commented that,

“A lot of work I do, it is so hard to give people the time they need - here it’s so different: because of the staff commitment and staffing levels, everyone feels valued, everyone gets the attention. And being valued as an older individual has encouraged the group to grow, it feels very different ... I haven’t worked on another project that has been so well staffed, and that brings so many benefits, as well as the talents of people involved - it creates a different opportunity to develop relationships, it feels like you can follow through with things - with the best will in the world, it’s normally near-impossible”.

The key challenge for the future is one of replicability, given the high costs involved. Funders may be unwilling to countenance such costs, although this project demonstrates that there would be rewards in doing so.

Operating to the model deployed in this project, there appears to be no easy way to reduce staff support to the project or to find transport savings without compromising the safety and comfort of the participants. As noted below, however, options present themselves in terms of how some of the core project features could be developed and rolled out in different ways.
Concerns about what would happen when the sessions ended became increasingly, and naturally, a source of worry and trepidation for the participants:

“What I’m worried about is when it ends ...”

“... It’s so nice coming here we want to come here all the time – don’t want it to end”.

There was no ‘exit strategy’ in place early on because at the planning stage those organising the project “didn’t know initially that it would be the same people every week ... didn’t even know if anyone would want to take part”.

In that context, “Even managing the legacy has been a learning experience for the Museum - we didn’t anticipate the impact that it would have on a small group”.

Mindful of the impact of the project ending, and recognising participating individuals’ continuing needs, the project has developed scenarios to address these that involve identifying and signposting post-project options.

Contingencies are in place depending on whether a (currently pending) decision about funding support to a follow-on project is successful or not.

It is encouraging too that the Museum adopts the perspective that, “responsibilities are not just to the individuals who participated in this project, but to the wider group [of vulnerable older people] – how can we build on this model ...”

Options are being developed; again the ultimate shape of these will depend on decisions about follow-on funding. Either way,

“The fact that participants are advocates helps opens doors to do more – as individuals they might be able to invite us to things, or get us into care homes, where we can run session, train others and promote the way of working that way”.

The ideal would be to

“Up-skill [other] projects with the knowledge we have learned, provide those projects with outreach sessions utilising the existing project staff ... [and] recruit and train a bank of older people as volunteers for those projects and the Museum”.

Given in particular the very positive feedback the project has generated, it would be great to find ways in which it, or a variant of it, could continue in some way.