Telford: Our New Town project was initially collecting photographs of Telford as it was developed through the 1960's-1980's. As the project developed we realised some of the benefits it would have to our older population including those living with dementia. We have had visits from residential and care homes to visit Southwater Library and take part in an interactive activity viewing the photographs and sharing memories with us.

We soon realised that we would need to adapt our offer to share it with more people in the community, we had groups that were interested in the project but were unable to visit the library, so we developed Reading Down Memory Lane. This is an interactive activity looking at photographs displayed through a presentation, along with using extracts from poems and reminiscence items to encourage sharing memories and engaging in meaningful conversation.

To help with our sessions we also developed a set of six reminiscence cards including subjects like Homes & Houses, Leisure and Work. Each set has a short description about the theme, a timeline, reminiscence prompts and then four cards each with selection of photographs. These have also been used in shared reading sessions and by people in the library.

How did it aim to reach or have relevance to older audiences? What impact did you want it to have on the size or profile of your visitor base?

We have been able to be flexible in reaching an audience. The sessions can be held in any of the libraries, it can be taken out to care settings, extra care facilities, sheltered housing and provided as an activity to local support groups run by Age UK.

We wanted to make the resources that we have available to everyone to use even if that meant taking the activity out to them rather than them visiting the library. We hoped that by taking this

approach it would encourage people to come into the library to view the resources on their own, or with their family.

What tools did you use to measure this impact? What key indicator did you use to measure this impact?

We have kept a record of all the sessions we have held and events attended. The main indicator we have used to measure impact is feedback from users which was mainly in the form of memories several of which were at risk of being lost.

What other objectives were you hoping to achieve?

It became an added value to the TONT project and is continuing to develop. However one of our key objectives is always to attract new audiences to our library service and to make a positive contribution the 'Living Well with Dementia' agenda.

Were there opportunities for this activity to be intergenerational?

The reminiscence cards were developed into two sets, one for Adults and one for Children. We are in the process of developing a family based activity for sharing memories at Southwater Library using the digital table photographs, reminiscence books and items to help families to talk about the past.

What worked well, what challenges did you face?

The sessions worked well in helping people to join in conversation and engage, often people will join in with reading the poems and they like the interactive 'Do you remember parts' with saying and rhymes.

There have been challenges, visual impairments have caused some to be frustrated at not being able to view the photographs, hearing impairments has made being

heard challenging and large groups can make it challenging to share personal memories. To minimise the impact of these challenges we started to leave time at the end of the sessions to circulate and speak to people on a one-to-one basis.

Other challenges have been getting care staff on board to

see the value of the sessions for their residents, lack of staffing for trips out to the library, not joining in the sessions or finding a quiet space. However we have addressed some of these by being clearer about the requirements from both sides when a session is being organised.

What have been the most important things you have learned?

It was very powerful to see the potential use of the material in engaging with people living with dementia. Under quieter, friendlier locations/surroundings the photos have the capacity to open up new worlds. People just love seeing the photos even though it is a different experience from seeing them on the digital table. It makes people happy – they always seem to remember the happy times from a childhood or a period of their lives when things were exciting and in many cases demonstrates a "pioneer" type memory as they moved onto new estates. You glean a sense of pride and community heritage.

What will you do differently next time?

Due to the project being an unexpected development of another project we didn't give enough consideration as to how we could most effectively measure and evaluate the impact of what we were doing, so if we did it again that is what we would do differently.

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Top Tips for engaging older audiences:

➢ **Start by visiting them and then encourage them to come and see what you offer.**

➢ **Make sure visits are carried out by a recognisable face and that the same staff are available on their return visit.**

➢ **Wait for responses, it can sometimes take longer for them to respond to questions and conversations.**

Memories that were shared at the sessions:

"My aunt Joan used to live in one of the cottages. She lived here when she was first married and my cousin Pamela was born here. She moved to Little Dawley. The end cottage was the post office. The white building was the rectory."

"I used to go swimming at the MERC twice a day in the holidays. It cost 10 or 20p to get in. We used to play on Madeley Green and although we shopped in Key Markets locally."

"We've been friends since we moved into the area for our Dad's work back in the 1970's and lived on Brookside. I lived just behind the Red Admiral in the photo. That's from the opening of the Brookside Community Centre."

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