



# Project Evaluation Report

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## Executive Summary

*Hats Off!* was a heritage project for older people which ran from April 2011 to June 2012. The project was developed and run by Leeds-based charity Skipkko.

The project's main achievements can be broadly summed up as: engaging people with little experience of heritage and drawing out their personal stories as well as introducing group members to varied heritage sites and information available to them in their city. The project also brought out the confidence of participants and created links between groups from different parts of the city and from different cultural backgrounds.

The project's main challenges relate to: working with partner organisations against the backdrop of an increasing funding crisis for the wider voluntary sector; and capacity issues in terms of staff support from those partner organisations.

In all, the project has been a great success with benefits for participants and a vibrant heritage exhibition and film that is alive with heritage stories.

## Aims of the project

- For people from different backgrounds to learn about their own and other people's heritage through the theme of hats.
- For participants to explore and engage with Leeds Museums' collections who have not previously done so.
- To use the theme of hats to stimulate discussion and sharing and so improve intercultural understanding.
- To conserve heritage stories about hats that can bring them to life and make them meaningful for other people and future generations.



## What happened?

Skipkko worked with 4 groups of older people over a period of 10 weeks each. The groups involved were from the Hamara Healthy Living Centre, Richmond Hill Elderly Action, Holbeck Elderly Aid (with additional members from MHA Homes Assisi House in Hunslet) and Trinity Network at Dewsbury Road, all in Leeds.

Each group started by exploring their own heritage through the theme of hats. What hats they wore, hats remembered from films, family occasions, work hats, headwear for faith etc. Each participant shared their own unique stories and gathered information in visual and written ways to put their ideas down on paper. Working as a group they created visual representations of their heritage stories in unique and creative ways, many of the participants discovering skills they hadn't realised that they had.

Each group visited a local library to find out about the heritage information available to them and to use the IT suite to look at Leodis (photographs of Leeds past) or to explore information about hats. They each also visited Leeds Museum Discovery Centre to look at their collection of hats, gather information from the curators and to visit the amazing store of collections. This was a revelation to the group members – many stated that they would like to return.



Skipkko organised a linking session to bring the groups together, at Lotherton Hall, where group members were able to explore the history and collections of Lotherton as well as creating their own Lotherton-inspired hats, followed by an impromptu hat parade! A second linking session brought the groups back together in central Leeds, to further explore their stories and make connections with each other.

A large event and heritage display of work from all four groups was organised in February 2012, where the groups were brought together to share their heritage stories and to see the work produced. This was a great success in getting people from different backgrounds mixing together and sharing their stories around something as simple as a hat, followed by the whole exhibition being moved to the Leeds Museum Discovery Centre.

To share the information with a wider audience Skippko ran 4 schools workshops at the Discovery Centre plus 2 public sessions, one in Leeds Market and one at Leeds Art Gallery.

A small under spend at the end of April 2012, allowed us to deliver an additional 8 sessions with two further groups of older people in Rothwell and Chapeltown, where they have added their heritage stories to the work, plus an additional public session at Gallery House in Leeds city centre.

A short film was made of the project that captures the process and the views of participants. A film screening took place in the old cinema at Armley Mills (Leeds Industrial Museum) where participants could see themselves on the big screen!

Many stories were gathered during the project, that are shown in a unique heritage exhibition. From a simple starting point, participants have been able to explore and exchange their stories and to understand the importance of their experiences and what has shaped them. Although the exhibition is temporary the art works will be taken back to the groups that have made them and will be displayed within their own venues for further people to see. The film is a lasting reminder of the stories and of the project.

The project made a real difference to those who took part. Information was collected at the start of the project to evaluate people's initial views in terms of their heritage knowledge or interest and their skills and confidence. These were then reviewed using creative evaluation forms at the end of the project. Each group also kept a weekly project diary that collected heritage stories as well as comments and photographs of the process. Evaluations were also completed by group support workers.

31 people took part in the regular weekly 'Hats Off' sessions, with an additional 15 only able to attend one or two sessions (mainly due to illness). An additional 22 people took part in the extra sessions delivered May/June 2012. 120 children took part in sessions at the Leeds Museum Discovery Centre and 81 members of the general public at open sessions. Over 500 adults and over 300 children will have seen the exhibition at the Discovery Centre, based on their visitor numbers.

Evaluation responses from participants and support workers are shown below as these best describe the benefits of the project on those who took part.

## Comments from participants at the start of the project about what heritage is, why it's important and what involvement they have had with heritage:

'Heritage is where you're from.' 'I haven't done my family tree.' 'I've no idea, I'm not sure what heritage is.' 'Not done anything to do with heritage or family tree.' 'Not recorded any stories.' 'It's your past – it's easy to forget things.' 'It's old things, heritage sites, history.'

'It's part of who we are – most important to know and keep learning and for our children and grandchildren.' 'People, what they hand down to you – buildings and things'. 'It tells you from the past what we can learn for the future'. 'It makes you understand others and why they do what they do.' 'Heritage can be personal, History is the bigger picture – you can learn from both'. 'There is no direct translation for heritage in Punjabi'.

The Hamara group talked about heritage mainly in terms of material belongings and things that have been passed down the generations.

Quite a few participants had been to heritage sites and museums in Leeds such as Kirkstall Abbey, Thwaite Mills and the Thackeray Medical Museum, but not many had been to Lotherton Hall and no one had been to the Leeds Museum Discovery Centre.

## Comments from participants at the end of the project:

22 written evaluations were completed by the older group members. The missing ones were mainly due to ill health.

### **How did you feel at the start of the project?**

'Nervous' 'I thought it could be something to fill the morning, what an eye opener I did not know how great and enjoyable it is, thanks.' 'Very good, keep your mind active and very interesting.' 'very good feeling' 'Interested' 'Wondered what we might be doing, felt ok' 'All right' 'I was very optimistic about the idea of it and it took off very well' 'I felt what is this all about and what were we going to do' 'I was a bit unsure about it, maybe I never heard of it before' 'Felt a little less confident but as it went on things got good and I met other groups' 'Wasn't here at the start but have really enjoyed it since' 'very strange' 'very strange' 'didn't know what to expect' 'not very confident at first' 'very excited' 'did not know what to expect'

### **Write 1 to 3 words that describe your experience of the *Hats Off!* project?**

'good experience, got me out of the house' 'Excellent, Marvellous, I take my hat off to it!' 'Enjoyed, very, much!' 'Funny' 'lovely staff, exciting, enjoyment' 'Brilliant' 'enjoyed' 'Fun, happy, good' 'had fun together, dug up old things, I found it enjoyable' 'learnt new skills, it was fun, it was enjoyable' 'it has been fun, seen new things, worked with new group' 'really had fun, it was good to meet others, like to do it again' 'fun, interesting, creative' 'clever, good, interesting' 'I was amazed' 'Interesting, different, educational' 'curious, learnt something new every day, must be mad!' 'interesting, enjoyable, friends' 'memories, fun, laugh' 'enjoyed' 'gorgeous, like a family, enjoyed the hats'.

### **Is Heritage important and why?**

'Very important, learn about your past and keeps the knowledge for children's future'  
'Yes it tells what times were like then and what they are now.' 'very important' 'Yes heritage is very important that our heritage is passed down to the next generation.'  
'Makes people realise why things are as they are' 'So that we can remember where we come from' 'Because it tells us about our history' 'It gets you together' 'Yes it is important because you can refer back to it' 'Yes it is, we can refer back to things' 'Yes it is very important' 'It's good to remember things we've done in the past' 'yes, it is very interesting' 'Yes it's interesting' 'It is very interesting' 'pride in your local history' 'gives an insight into the past and how styles have changed' 'Yes because it is to share memories' 'yes sharing things with friends and other people' 'yes for other generations to learn about' 'It's very important to remember the past'



### **Are you interested in your own or other people's heritage more, less or the same as before?**

17 out of the 22 responses said they were more interested now in heritage.

5 out of the 22 responses said they had the same interest in heritage.

### **What did you think of the trips to the Discovery Centre, Lotherton Hall and/or the Library?**

'We hope to return again, so much to see.' 'I wasn't that excited when you said we were visiting a museum...but I really enjoyed it.' 'I thought it was fabulous, I'd like a look round the store'. 'Very interesting and knowledgeable' 'Great, but a shame I had not been to them before – no excuse!' 'Very good and interesting' 'Really enjoyed the trips out and meeting new people' 'The Discovery Centre was wonderful I will be going again' 'Enjoyed all the trips' 'Absolutely brilliant' 'very good' 'I enjoyed them all, I won't forget the visits' 'very good, learnt more about other things' 'They were very enjoyable all of them' 'I enjoyed them all' 'The trip to the library was really good looking at leodis on the internet was fascinating' 'library was good, Discovery Centre was interesting' 'It was very interesting and educational' 'very good' 'very interesting would like to visit more places' 'They were fantastic' 'nice, enjoyed seeing the hats at the discovery centre and liked being the Indian Chief at Lotherton'.

### **What did you think about meeting the other groups?**

'Found it interesting finding out about someone else's heritage'.

'Great' 'I met people who like me have a new outlook on what were our humdrum lives, thank you' 'very good' 'enjoyed meeting new people from different parts of the city' 'Liked the other groups especially the Hamara ladies' 'Very interesting' 'Good' 'I really enjoyed it' 'I felt good, meeting other groups doing the same things' 'Enjoyed meeting other groups' 'I am happy to meet other groups it gets me out of the house' 'I was really happy to meet them' 'That was good fun, there were people of different cultures as well who brought new ideas' 'It was lovely' 'I've enjoyed everything also meeting different people' 'It was good to meet different people' 'good seeing new faces' 'very friendly' 'very good' 'enjoyed meeting other groups'.

### **Have you learnt any new skills or rediscovered existing skills?**

'Art work, modroc' 'Yes, thanks' 'Yes I have' 'yes 3D modroc hat sculptures' 'improved craftwork, being creative, dressing up' 'rediscovered existing skills' 'yes' 'I rediscovered when doing this project' 'Yes hat making' 'Yes I have learnt new skills, this sort of work I have never done before' 'I discovered existing skills' 'Some of the new skills some rediscovered ones' 'learnt how to do the silhouettes' 'yes' 'the craft work has been fascinating' 'yes art work' 'learnt about hats' 'photography' 'Yes I enjoyed dressing up and role play' 'hat making'. 'Never knew there was so much you could learn about hats!' 'I have learnt a lot of how it is good to see different cultures getting together, it has been very interesting' 'I have learnt a lot about heritage and hats' 'I did learn something it was very interesting'.



### **Have you benefited by taking part in the project, if yes in what ways?**

'I've liked meeting people'. 'It takes your mind off being lonely, I've really enjoyed the company.' 'Getting out of the house'. 'I like talking about old things'. 'More confident about joining a group and come out of the house to meet people (I need support to go out of the house).' 'I have done something I did not think I could do, making hats. Never done anything like it in my life.' 'keeps you active, keeps your brain working' 'more confidence' 'Fine' 'Fun, entertaining, kept busy' 'Working with other people, good enjoyment and good friendly atmosphere' 'Getting together' 'It got me interested in art work and doing things with hands' 'first time done this kind of work together' 'Yes in particular meeting with other members and the workers' 'Yes it has been nice meeting everyone doing things together in a group, bouncing round different ideas' 'Yes learnt things' 'It's been an experience' 'Yes, it's been good to do something instead of wasting another afternoon' 'getting my brain thinking' 'Yes learnt something

interesting, got me out of my flat' 'having fun' 'Having fun, talking and sharing stories, laughing together' 'yes, had a laugh having a chance to dress up as a character' 'Had a laugh'.

**How confident do you feel about making work together or being part of a group?**

'Very confident, excited, enthusiastic' 'I would be very confident doing it all again and meeting all the nice people again.' 'I feel good' 'I like trying to make new things' 'Have enjoyed it' 'Fairly confident' 'all right' 'I am very confident working things together with others.' 'very confident about making work and being in a group' 'More confident' 'I was not confident at the beginning, then I grew confident with help' 'I was very confident being part of group activity' 'It's great, I like art anyway but doing it as part of a group is really good' 'very confident' 'Always wanted to get involved with art as I used to do a lot' 'feel fine, like to join in with the group' 'more confident'.

**If Skippko were to run things again what do you think we should do differently?**

'More art, painting, drawing, needlework' 'I think you should carry on like this it does you proud' 'keep the same' 'Enjoyed how things are done' 'Don't need to do anything differently' 'Good as it is' 'more study' 'more trips' 'The same would be nice' 'maybe do some design work' 'embroidery' 'thought it was really good, cannot think of anything they could do any different' 'things stay the same' 'I think the staff are great' 'I'd be happy to leave things as they are' 'pick a subject with scope to carry on in another field' 'perfect' 'the length of time was about right' 'more trips' 'nothing'.



## Comments from group support workers:

'Her confidence has improved over the period.'

'This lady really enjoyed the sessions and her interest grew, wanted the sessions to run for longer.'

'Her self esteem has improved over the project.'

'At the start of the project she would only come if her friend came as well. Since her friend has moved away she has increased her confidence and has been on her own.'

'They have enjoyed sharing their stories and finding new interests.'

'She has had fun sharing stories and trying new things but has also increased her confidence in doing things for herself.'

'I think they have all benefited from the project, especially getting them out and about and doing something different.'

'She has more confidence and enjoyed the project.'

'Discovered he was very creative and confidence grew with each session and skills improved.'

'Has led a very interesting life and let us join in remembering her past experiences.'

'New to the club, it helped her settle in and meet people, improved confidence with other members.'

'She became a more confident person and mixed more in a social group.'

'Artistic talents came out, good self esteem.'

'Helped her to become a good communicator within a social group.'

'Relieved her from social isolation away from home, social outlet worked well.'

'Improved artistic talents that some failed to know they had, met new friends, attended historical places and gained knowledge and improved confidence.'

## Review

The project was reviewed by the project manager and group facilitators. This encompassed the organisation, planning and delivery of the project as well as the outcomes for participants.

### What worked well?

- Although the theme of hats was difficult at first for some group members to relate to each group was able to take the theme in the interest and direction that suited them. It was a good hook to get the groups thinking about heritage.
- The trips worked really well both for providing information for participants as well as new experiences and opening up possibilities for future visits and interest in heritage.
- The trip together to Lotherton Hall was a great way for the groups to meet in a relaxed way. It widened the heritage focus and helped for the following linking session as people recognised each other.
- Photographs and visual stimulus helped as a starting point for groups to get them talking.
- Drama work at Discovery Centre, wearing hats and silhouette work was particularly good - it seemed to engage people well. They enjoyed dressing up and role play more than we had expected.
- Good atmosphere at linking session. Using creative activities to encourage people to mix worked well. Trying out scarves in different designs went down well and allowed people to relax with each other.
- Good for groups to be able to meet more than once. Several people wanted more trips and events.

- Great atmosphere at final event – it's good to be able to bring all the work created and the participants together to share what they have achieved and to see it as a whole heritage exhibition. Work presented well, so valued people's input.
- Filming at Hamara and Richmond Hill really brought out more detail about what group members were getting out of the process/project.
- Showing the film at a special screening made it feel important and it was a nice way to finish off the project with participants.
- The process worked well, engaging people with heritage.
- Sharing ideas and resources box at the start was good for facilitators, helped with planning.
- Props and hats worked really well to get group members talking and sharing their own stories.
- Small diaries (individual) worked well at Hamara – nice keepsake and small enough to not be overwhelming.
- Schools sessions – splitting visual arts and drama into 2 groups worked well. Teachers varied some hadn't thought about who should do art or drama. Some children found group work difficult. The teachers liked the fact file sheet to think about characters. Five Lanes Primary School were impressed with the hats and were going to do some more at school. Good variety of things for the children to engage with.

#### **What didn't work as well?**

- Group members were reluctant to write about hats, they preferred the facilitators to do the writing.
- Hamara group had less personal information to relate to such as photographs so it took a while longer to draw out personal stories.
- The flow of the project was a bit interrupted by the trips & library sessions. The groups really enjoyed this but made it more difficult for facilitators to keep group members focussed on their stories.
- Slower pace with older people, illness and hospital appointments meant attendance was up and down and didn't always achieve the plans for each session, however, the final work produced really captures the essence of the experiences and personalities of the participants.
- Takes time for groups to trust us before they can start working on the group pieces therefore would have liked more time with groups.
- Staff support was up and down and sometimes non existent or there were interruptions.



### **What would we do differently next time?**

- Filming at Hamara and Richmond Hill really brought out some detail about what group members were getting out of the process/project. Could we use this again as a way of collecting evaluations or use of Dictaphones? Voxpops worked well to gather feedback.
- Collecting evaluation – suggest could also video/mp3s of evaluation questions, could use our camera's/mp3s to record answers. Someone else coming in to help collect evaluations could work well and using a variety of methods.
- Could have spread the trips out more.
- A taster session/inset for the partner organisation support workers/volunteers at the start of the project may have helped in explaining their roles and how important it is that they support each session.
- Possibly Skippko finding own volunteers to support sessions as we have less support from partner organisations mainly due to their lowering levels of capacity?
- Bigger budget for film making, Jan could have undertaken more interviews if the budget had allowed.
- Someone new coming in at the end to gather feedback would work better, a new face to tell their story too, using the diaries as a prompt.
- Photo permission forms – sometimes people say no at the start but might change their minds by the end. Could we do the monitoring side of the form at the start and have a separate photo permission form which includes some examples of how photos might be used to complete at the end of the project.

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