



**Building a society for all ages:
Benefits for older people from learning
in museums, libraries and archives.**

**A report to the Museum Libraries and
Archives Council**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) was commissioned by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) to: “*identify the current and potential role of museums, libraries and archives in delivering the wider benefits of learning to older people in England.*”

1.2 Aims

The report, structured around four research questions, aims to highlight current practice and ideas across the museums, libraries and archives sector for current and potential engagement with the learning needs of older people and potential partnerships for achieving this. Its findings are to be used to inform the updating of Opportunity Age, the Government's strategy for an ageing society in July 2009¹, the *Digital Inclusion Strategy*, the implementation of the Government's White Paper, *The Learning Revolution (March 2009)*² and to inform the MLA Adult Learners Board and practitioners in the sector.

1.3 Research Questions

The key research questions were:

1. What is the current nature of activity delivered by museums libraries and archives that support older people to develop the four key literacies identified by the Help the Aged ‘Learning for Life’ Campaign:
 - Financial
 - Technology
 - Citizenship
 - Health
2. How can the inspiring public spaces on offer in museums, libraries and archives be used to reduce the isolation and loneliness of some older people and encourage greater community participation and well being?
3. Who are the partner organisations that museums, libraries and archives are currently working with to improve and extend support for older learners, and what more could be done through partnership working to support the most vulnerable older people?
4. How can museums libraries and archives further develop their practice to meet the learning needs of an increasingly diverse and growing older community?

¹ www.hmg.gov.uk/buildingsocietyforallages

² http://www.dius.gov.uk/skills/engaging_learners/informal_adult_learning/white_paper

1.4 Context

1.4.1 Learning Revolution

The *Learning Revolution* highlights the benefits of learning for older people and identifies them as a priority group for improving access to and information about informal learning opportunities.

“The United Kingdom has an ageing population. By 2030, nearly half the population will be over 50... People are living longer, healthier lives. Whether they’re working or not, older people want to continue to be active members of their families and their communities. For many older people, participation in learning is an essential social activity, an opportunity to make new friends and a chance to take an active part in life...”

We will continue to work with the Cabinet Office, the Department of Health and the Department for Work and Pensions to update our commitments from Opportunity Age in the new strategy for an ageing society, removing barriers to learning and opening up more opportunities for older people to learn”.

The MLA is supporting implementation of the *Learning Revolution* by:

- Convening an Adult Learners Board from March 2009 to develop a core informal adult learning offer for the sector, including the needs of older learners.
- Launching a £100,000 Challenge Fund to encourage museums, libraries and archives to further open up their spaces and resources for informal learning.
- Encouraging 3,000 individual museums, libraries and archives to sign the informal adult learning pledge³ by March 2010.

1.4.2 Help the Aged’s Four Key Literacies

Help the Aged has identified four types of skills or “literacies” to help older people avoid isolation and exclusion.⁴

- Financial

“The way older people manage their money has had to change dramatically over the last decade and many older people are finding themselves left behind as online and telephone banking grows and the number of local bank branches declines. Many disadvantaged older people have very low levels of financial capability. This means that many miss out on good deals and often pay more for financial services that they receive, if they receive them at all. New initiatives are needed to promote financial literacy among older people and to ensure that the financial services industry recognises the importance of this growing sector of the population.”

³ http://www.dius.gov.uk/skills/engaging_learners/informal_adult_learning/pledge.aspx

⁴ Help the Aged “Learning for living: helping to prevent social exclusion among older people. 2008.

- Technology

“Modern technology has great potential to deliver benefits to older people. However, at present many older people feel left behind by the pace of change and lack access to modern technology and the training and support needed to become familiar with it. As more information and services are made available exclusively online, there are real risks that older people will lose out and become more excluded from the changes in society. Research is increasingly picking up on how the internet disadvantages older people who are not online: for example, in limiting access to services, information and opportunities to shop around. Technology literacy and, in particular, ICT learning could be seen as a facilitator to other ‘literacies’.”

The *Learning Revolution* echoes this digital divide for older people. *“Internet usage decreases with age, with only 37 per cent of people aged over 65 having internet access at home against an all-adult average of 67 per cent, and dropping to 22 per cent for those aged 75 or older.¹³ There are still 8-10 million older adults in the UK who are not able to use modern information technology because they didn’t learn these skills at school or in work. The task of upskilling older people is urgent, because new technology moves at such a fast pace that the gap between ship and shore widens daily”.*

An underpinning principle in the *Learning Revolution* Informal Adult Learning pledge is to *“embrace new ways of learning, including the use of technology and broadcasting”*

- Citizenship

“Our ageing population means there is even greater need for public and statutory authorities to work with older people in planning future service needs in order to ensure ‘lifetime communities’ – communities that work for people throughout their lives. It should not be assumed that older people are knowledgeable about how citizenship functions and are able to participate easily in decision-making structures”

- Health

“‘Health literacy’ can include skills such as the ability to process and understand basic information needed to make appropriate health decisions, as well as having the knowledge, skills, beliefs and confidence to manage one’s own health. As our population continues to age, it is crucial to ensure that older people spend a greater proportion of their lives in good health. Yet activities to promote health and well-being among older people still focus almost exclusively on traditional public health interventions. While older people are increasingly expected to make complex health care decisions and take more responsibility for their health care, it is questionable whether all are capable of the tasks.”

The *Learning Revolution* asserts: *“we know that informal learning impacts positively on mental and physical health and well-being. The recent Foresight report on Mental Capital and Wellbeing found that to ‘Keep Learning’ is one of the cornerstones of maintaining positive mental health and wellbeing”.*

1.5 Implications for Museums, Libraries and Archives

By addressing the 4 literacies for older people museums, libraries and archives can help to deliver the overarching principles of informal adult learning for older people as expressed in the *Learning Revolution*:

- learning to know – becoming inspired, discovering and exploring, developing a passion for learning, acquiring knowledge and understanding of ourselves, our immediate world and beyond
- learning to do – gaining skills, confidence, competence and practical abilities
- learning to live together – learning tolerance, mutual understanding and interdependence, sharing the experience of learning with family and friends
- learning to be – developing ourselves, our mental and physical capacity, wellbeing and autonomy, and our ability to take control of our lives and influence the world around us

Improving the learning offer to older people will also help the sector demonstrate its contribution to outcomes in local authority Older People Strategies (Appendix 3) and Local Area Agreements which deliver national outcomes for stronger communities, health and well being, tackling exclusion and promoting equality. (See Appendix 3).

1.6 Key Messages

In the context of this ageing society, and the important role that the museums, libraries and archives sector can play in encouraging and supporting older learners, the key messages arising out of this report are that:

- Organisations across the museums, libraries and archives sector should adopt an older person friendly approach in the design of their programme of activities and in promoting the public use of their spaces.
- While there is a lot of work going on in relation to technology and health literacy learning for older people, there is less evidence of work in relation to financial and citizenship literacy. If MLA wishes to develop these four literacy learning areas for older people they would benefit from the development of self help guidance to promote this work and to share good practice among museums, libraries and archives.
- Currently most of the examples involve older people coming to use museums, libraries and archives. The exception is where learning opportunities are embedded into other activities in the community (reminiscence and intergenerational work) or IT facilities are made mobile. Learning opportunities within these areas also need to be taken out to communities to reach older people who do not currently use museums, libraries and archives.
- In order to encourage *wider* participation in museums, libraries and archives, particularly by the most vulnerable older adults and those aged 75 and over, the sector would benefit from taking a more segmented approach to their

offer, differentiating between the needs of different groups of older adults and promoting their activities accordingly.

- Museums, libraries and archives are uniquely placed in providing public spaces within local communities. While the research shows that facilities are increasingly being opened up to local groups and organisations, there is more potential for these spaces to be used well, for a variety of purposes, by a wider range of stakeholders.
- In order to take forward this agenda, the sector would benefit from working in partnership with range of stakeholders from across the voluntary and community sector on issues of shared interest. In particular, this study has demonstrated the value of being proactive in facilitating partnerships, in working with other museums, libraries and archives in local areas, and in working with others in the development and delivery of local older people's strategies.
- Using older people as volunteers has proved an extremely successful approach to delivering IT peer training and providing IT mentors for older people. The development of volunteering opportunities for older people is likely to be a useful approach in reaching and meeting the needs of a range of older people, particularly those most vulnerable and isolated.
- With a growing number of grandparents taking on a parental care-giving role within the family, museums, libraries and archives should include older adults and their grandchildren, as part of their wider family learning programme.
- Libraries have an important role in Information Advice and Guidance services to provide older people with information about learning opportunities, health and other local authority and community services. There is a particular opportunity for libraries to consider how they will contribute to the emerging mid life health check being developed as part of the Government's ageing strategy.
- Museums, libraries and archives need to gather better evidence of:
 - a) their services to older people
 - b) the outcomes of these services/interactions with older people.

1.7 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this research, the MLA Council should develop an action plan over the coming year, to support the sector to develop an older person friendly approach in the design of their programme of activities and in promoting the public use of their spaces.. This should include the production and dissemination of themed case studies to highlight existing practice around working with older people and the identification of key issues on which to advocate.

2. Methodology

2.1 Definition of 'older people'

Throughout the report and research process the term 'older people' has been used to refer to all those over 50 years of age. This definition was shared with those who were interviewed or responded via email.

The use of this definition is in-line with the perspective adopted within the Government's *Opportunity Age* document published in March 2005 and other recent government documents and strategies related to older people. However, it is important to remember that within this wider group of adults aged over 50 there exists a very broad and diverse range of individuals, covering an age span of over 40 years or more. The needs and demands of this group will therefore be complex.

MLA are particularly interested in the contribution the sector can make in delivering learning and quality of life benefits to the more vulnerable and frail older people in the 75 plus age range and to those older people living in isolation.

2.2 Desk research

Desk research was carried out throughout the research and drew upon key findings from existing published and un-published material available to NIACE and to MLA, as well as on information from the internet. Interviewees working within the sector also recommended and sent some useful material to the project team. All of the material has contributed towards identifying good practice and relevant case studies.

2.3 Data Collection

The original research design aimed to gain practitioners, other stakeholders and older people views and experiences in relation to the four research questions through an on-line survey. However, it was subsequently decided that a more effective and productive use of time would be to use email and telephone interviews to collect data on the four main research questions. Relevant people were emailed or telephoned to ask to take part in the research. A list of participating organisations is included in Appendix 4.

Telephone interviews were held with as many professionals working in this field as possible within the timescale. MLA provided the contacts. The interviews included two sets of 'telephone focus groups'. This approach had the benefit of respondents being able to share views and ideas with each other. The drawback was arranging a suitable time for people to participate. All other interviews were held on a one-to-one basis over the telephone. A topic guide was designed around the research questions and was used for the interviews in order to facilitate broad discussion and explore in-depth the main research questions depending on the respondents' expertise and experience. The interviews were recorded and notes taken.

A contact from The Better Government for Older People (BGOP) and the Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG) network circulated the research questions via email. This resulted in some useful contributions from older people and representative groups and forums. All the research took place January – April 2009.

3. Findings

The findings presented within this report are based around four research questions. At times some case studies or points link together to cover more than one question, which inevitably has led to some overlap in places. All of the case studies harvested can be found in Appendix 1 and some will be added to the MLA Case Studies database at <http://research.mla.gov.uk/case-studies>

While undertaking the research, the project team found that there was more evidence of particular types of activity for older people than others. We also found that, in the locations investigated by the study, more activities were concentrated within library services than in museums and archives. While, in part, this may illustrate gaps in provision, it must also be noted that this study was not intended to be comprehensive. The aim has been to find a range of different examples of activities and practices within museums, libraries and archives rather than to map all activities in this area. Nevertheless, the findings of our research would suggest that museums, libraries and archives should work together more at a local level to share good practice, deliver joint initiatives and advocate the value of partnership working with the sector to other organisations working with older people.

4. Question 1: What is the current nature of activity delivered by museums libraries and archives that support older people to develop the four key literacies identified by the Help the Aged 'Learning for Life' Campaign?

1 Financial Literacy

It has proved difficult to find much evidence of support for financial literacy for older people within the museums, libraries and archives sector. Providers within the sector are generally not clear whether financial literacy should be a key area for development, and if so, which other organisations would be potential partners in providing relevant learning opportunities. A more organized approach across the sector would therefore be beneficial in supporting providers to meet the financial literacy needs of older people. This is an area the proposed self help guidance for the sector could address.

In particular, libraries are well placed to deliver financial learning, either as one off session, or on a longer term basis, as this would fit with their wider move to deliver service advice and act as local community information venues. How financial learning might be linked into the activities of museums and archives would require more careful consideration.

Research into Adult Numeracy within Museums and Archives⁵ has identified a range of activities within the sector to support adults to develop their numeracy skills. Within this study however, few examples were found of activity specifically focussed on

⁵ Adult Numeracy and Museums and Archives. NIACE, 2009 is available from www.mla.gov.uk/what/policy_development/learning/~media/Files/pdf/2009/Adult_Numeracy_Museums_Archives_updated.ashx

supporting the financial literacy of older people. Where practice was identified, this was commonly in relation to specific one off advice days or information days, when one of the participating services would give out advice relating to different financial matters. For instance in Cambridgeshire they hold help surgeries in libraries where people can go in and seek financial advice. Advisers then undertake one-to-one visits if requested. For example, the main library in Nottingham held a “Managing your Money” event which was directed at older people.

In Suffolk, financial learning is embedded within IT learning opportunities. As part of the libraries Learndirect provision a basic IT module is being offered that has a section on ‘Internet Banking’ and one on ‘Managing your Money’. Support is provided and uptake among older people has been high.

In York, the Libraries and Adult Education Service is involved in the development of a partnership to inspire and develop community-based learning in financial capability. The ‘Learn and Thrive’ partnership is intended to work with hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups through a range of possible activities including a one-to-one mentoring service held in libraries and community buildings.

‘The Living Later Life to the Full’ policy framework for older people in Kent (Kent County Council January 2009) highlighted a demand for more financial learning opportunities for older people. The consultation to inform the framework found that economic well-being was a major concern for older people. Many thought there should be greater support and assistance to help them manage their finances. Others thought that there was not enough information on how to collect benefits to which they are entitled or services from which they can benefit. A major issue emerging from the consultation was that some people do not know how to plan for financial security, and often leave it too late. The resulting paper, setting out the contribution of local libraries and archives to the framework (Kent County Council February 2009), highlighted the need to identify partners to help deliver financial advice to older people and to signpost people to the relevant services.

4.2 Technology Literacy

Technology literacy is an area where the museums, libraries and archives sector is undertaking a lot of different work with older people. Libraries especially are well placed to deliver basic IT provision for older people; they have the technology and are accessible to many older people. The use of older people as volunteer IT trainers or mentors seems to be a successful approach within many libraries. Interest in Silver Surfer events also seems to be increasing annually – something library respondents were proud of.

Museums and archives also have a role in IT learning, such as showing older people how to access digital services, content and links to museums and archives. Other technology learning is being embedded within projects across the sector, especially in relation to reminiscence, intergenerational and family history. This can act as an initial way to encourage older people to want to take up more technology learning opportunities. It also introduces technology in an enjoyable and useful way.

A key challenge facing the sector lies in how to reach those older people who are either unaware of what IT learning is available, or who experience access issues such as being housebound. A further challenge will be to widen technology learning opportunities beyond those associated with basic IT and using the internet, to include for example, the use of games consoles (such as the Wii in North Yorkshire), digital equipment and the latest mobile phones.

All respondents were able to provide examples of ways that they meet older people's technology literacy needs. Through the People's Network and UK Online libraries provide free internet access to people of all ages supported by trained staff, enabling them to provide access to basic IT training for older people. Many libraries use volunteers to deliver basic IT training or to be IT mentors, usually on a one-to-one basis for older people wishing to improve their IT skills. Half of the 6,000 UK Online Centres are based in libraries. Some case studies about IT training and older people were part of UK Online Social Impact and Demonstrator projects.

EngAge, Cambridgeshire

The EngAge project was undertaken to improve the services available to older people and in response to the growing evidence of a digital divide with older people not using IT. EngAge is funded by UK Online as a 'Social Impact Demonstrator' project. Participants receive IT training and some become IT champions to develop their own skills and also learn to use the UK online learning resources in informal settings to 'show people how easy, useful and even fun technology can be'. During 2007/8 over 750 older people trained in the basic use of IT, with 20 volunteer tutors (aged 18-83) continuing to train older people in IT in 16 libraries. The project leaves a network of volunteers able to continue support for the future.

50 Plus Forum, Derbyshire

Long Eaton library provided an IT training base for volunteer members of the Long Eaton 50+ Forum in Derbyshire. The forum is 1 of 13 across Derbyshire which meets regularly to discuss and suggest improvements to services. A key priority is giving members access to information online. A designated 'Electronic Contact Person' received training and worked with library staff to set up informal computer sessions for other members (Honeycroft and Clarke 2009)

Many libraries offer Silver Surfer basic IT sessions providing opportunities to attract older people to try IT learning opportunities, particularly using the internet. Libraries also offer drop in sessions and taster sessions. Examples of helping older people with different types of technology were not so common but did exist, for instance using digital and audio equipment. Some projects involved embedding the use of IT within family heritage and reminiscence work with older people. In Milton Keynes ICT for beginners was embedded in a Family History Group project. Staffordshire Archives embedded IT learning in a Family Tree Project.

Intergenerational work, North Yorkshire

There has been a shift across the area to move into intergenerational work ranging from projects to one of activities, such as young people helping older people to use the Wii in the library. Part of the intergenerational work involves young people being trained to train older people in using IT.

Community Archives⁶ have a growing role in the sector. Community Archives are where the subject matter of the collection is a community of people from the same geographical location or with the same subject interest. For example the Wise Archive is an online public archive for older people collecting their memories of working lives⁷.

4.3 Citizenship Literacy

Active citizenship is about older people contributing and engaging in community life and decision making. Museums, libraries and archives help bring communities together through intergenerational and family learning and through offering volunteering opportunities.

Many older people's forums and groups that meet in museum, library and archive facilities are concerned with issues relating to citizenship and keeping local older people informed and involved in local developments. Despite this, the project team were not able to find many examples of museums, libraries or archives being directly involved in citizenship learning opportunities for older people.

Help the Aged (2008) highlight the need for such forums to be given increased support and training in relation to citizenship skills. It also suggests every local authority should hold a campaign to encourage more older people to be involved in citizenship and to show them the opportunities open to them. The sector could do more work in this area by setting out how they will encourage active citizenship learning for older people. This action could link into providing or supporting forums to develop citizenship learning and through partnerships, including local authorities, to encourage citizenship learning.

Although only a few examples of work around citizenship learning were found with this study, a couple of different approaches were identified such as Top Time in Suffolk and Good Neighbour Scheme in Kent which work to help to improve the citizenship and health literacy of older people.

⁶ http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/category_id_62.aspx

⁷ <http://www.wisearchive.co.uk/home/>

Top Time, Suffolk

The aim was to direct older people away from day care centres and provide activities which are interesting, fun and promote mental health and well-being. The initiative includes a weekly two hour session, such as a coffee morning in each library. In some places they have proved so popular they provide two sessions a week and cap the number of people who can attend.

Activities range from chair yoga, advice on foot care and a range of people talking to the group. The older people themselves are involved in deciding the agenda. It is an opportunity to mix socially and to find out about local services and learning opportunities. This project contributes to improving the citizenship and health literacy of older people. The events have led to a book group and a theatre group forming.

Museums, libraries and archives have a strong tradition of working effectively with families and have taken enormous steps in the last decade to provide services that meet the needs of families and create family friendly spaces. With a growing number of grandparents taking on caring roles within the family, some museums, libraries and archives have specifically designed activities targeted at older adults and their grandchildren, as part of their wider family learning programme.

4.4 Health Literacy

Work around health and learning for older people is an expanding area of work, particularly within libraries, with this growth likely to continue into the future. It is not clear whether this is a true picture of provision or whether there are more examples that involve museums and archives.

There are a variety of examples of work relating to the provision of information about health related issues, which is good at reaching people who may not know where to go when faced with certain health issues to support them to make more informed decisions about how to deal with an illness. A number of projects also use this increase in knowledge to take action, such as the Campaign for Care and Countering Stigma in Dementia. Only a few examples of health literacy learning are about health in general for older people, such as the information road show in North Yorkshire and social events outlined in the citizenship section.

Help the Aged (2008) highlights the need for more research about the benefits of health literacy interventions. It also asserts that a recent Information Prescriptions pilot has shown to be effective in delivering learning opportunities and calls for the roll out of this work with stronger recommendations and guidance.

As the number of similar 'Information on Prescription' projects within libraries increases there is an opportunity for the sector to develop good practice in this area and to undertake in-depth research into the impact these projects can have on older people. This in turn may provide support for others to set up similar schemes and help to find funding for these projects. Work could include sharing ways to set up projects and references could be shared among service providers.

There are now greater opportunities to work with PCTs and the health sector both in terms of funding available and the health sector's willingness to work with the museums, libraries and archives sector to promote 'health and well-being' among older people and provide relevant information

The following case studies stand out as being different from other health related approaches; Over-50s Roadshows in North Yorkshire and Countering Stigma in Dementia in Cambridgeshire.

Over-50s Roadshow, North Yorkshire

Twice a year 'Over-50s Roadshow' are run in several library locations, called 'Fun, facts and fitness for the over-50s'. During these days many organisations and services set up stalls in the libraries, such as energy usage advice, CAB, the district council, social care, carers association, health checks (for example have your blood pressure checked). These have been running for a couple of years and have proved to be well attended. 7 events were held in March 2009 with over 2,000 people attending and as many as 500 people at one library. This year the event added the theme of financial advice. Advertisement is through the local paper, county council newsletter and posters.

Countering Stigma in Dementia, Cambridgeshire

While this project does not solely focus on older people, it mainly attracts older people. This project aims to give persons with dementia the opportunity to express themselves verbally about their condition and life generally through the help of a resident poet. The Poet is John Killick, one of the most internationally renowned poets working in the dementia field. The work is undertaken on a one-to-one basis with the finished result being the personal work of the individual, although there is an opportunity for their work to be published and performed. The project also offers training to librarians, care staff and medical practitioners so that they may continue to encourage and value creativity after the project has ended. The project aims to promote inclusion and understanding of people with dementia. Participants are encouraged to visit libraries for poetry performances. The project involves the "EngAge" Older People's Coordinator as well as County library service staff, the Literature Development Officer, Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age Steering Group, Age Concern, Adult Social Care staff, health partners, especially mental health workers, care workers and Carers, Alzheimer's Association branches, care homes and other local relevant organisations. The project is funded in part by the Department of Health and began in April 2009.

The Skilled for Health project being piloted in London is an example of more organised learning opportunities for people of all ages. From this more formal and organised learning approach participants have been interested in using the library services more often, as well as improving their knowledge.

Skilled for Health, London

Skilled for Health (SfH) is a national initiative designed to tackle health inequalities by improving health literacy in disadvantaged communities. The programme seeks to equip people with the skills and knowledge needed to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. The initiative was piloted in 5 London library authorities: Ealing, Barking and Dagenham, Islington, Newham and Haringey. A wide range of local people participated with different ethnic backgrounds, languages and from aged from 22 to over 75. Participants took part in learning within library settings. The pilot identified that the participants liked studying in the library: 88% said the library was a good place for learning; 85% of learners were interested in further study and all said they would like to continue learning in the library. SfH tutors enjoyed teaching in the library and found it less formal than a classroom setting. The learning was successful: 64% said they knew more about using health services after completing the course. 91% said they felt more confident about learning in general after the course. (Honeycroft and Clarke 2009)

Many libraries are in the process of or have been piloting projects related to giving people advice about specific long term health conditions. There were a variety of names given to these projects, such as 'Prescribed Book scheme' (Kent), 'Information on Prescription' (Suffolk), and 'Books on Prescription' (Cambridgeshire). While these projects do not solely focus on older people, they do attract a lot of older people due to the nature of the illnesses covered.

Information on Prescriptions, Suffolk

The "Information on Prescriptions" project is delivered at libraries and run by the County Council. The project encourages people to find out about any long term illnesses which may be affecting them. The project started with GP referrals but expanded through partnerships, for instance with East Anglia Ambulance Service. Open days for carers had a high uptake and led to a local network being established.

In addition to work around increasing the health literacy of older people, many respondents pointed out that any learning and involvement of older people either as a participant or volunteer within the museums, libraries and archives sector can lead to an increase in their health and well-being. For instance,

"We have lots of reading groups in the county, which have mental and physical benefits and attracts a lot of older people" (Kent)

"We find that the main support given is technological and health in the sense that by keeping the over 50's minds active, health is, if not improved by so doing, certainly maintained at their present level" (OPAG network member)

The relationship between learning and improving mental health and well-being seemed to be taken 'as a matter of fact' by interviewees. However, while learning can improve the health and well-being of older people it does not necessarily mean that it is also directly improving their health literacy skills.

5. Question 2: How can the inspiring public spaces on offer in museums, libraries and archives be used to reduce the isolation and loneliness of some older people and encourage greater community participation and well being?

The *Learning Revolution* quotes a recent Help the Aged survey revealing “that nearly half a million older people in the UK leave their home only once a week or less. Nearly 300,000 have gone a full month in the last year without speaking to family or neighbours”.

Museums, libraries and archives provide a network of welcoming, neutral spaces providing a wide variety of information and activities, whose reach extends into every community. This local presence means they are well placed to help reduce isolation and loneliness and encourage greater community participation and well being through welcoming and involving older people in their services.

Responses to this question can be categorized into three main elements:

- What museums, libraries and archives offer for older people within their facilities;
- How the use of museums, libraries and archives facilities by others benefit older people;
- How the museums, libraries and archives can use other community spaces to reduce isolation and increase community participation.

The case studies show that the work going on has potential for further development to include older people in a range of museum, library and archive activities.

5.1 Summary and Conclusions

Evidence from respondents showed that museums, libraries and archives are already trying to change their environments to being more open, relaxing and welcoming to all users, including older people. Some facilities are specifically trying to encourage older people to use the space through providing events, including regular social events, information and advice from other agencies and a wide range of volunteer opportunities.

An important part of this work is having the capacity to provide ‘supported visits’ for initial use of the space and if required for subsequent visits. The older people’s forum raised the point that transport provision is needed for older people, especially the isolated to attend these events. This raises the issue of how much support can and should be provided towards supporting access to facilities. It is not clear how to tackle transport issues, except on a local basis through partnership working. The availability of free bus passes for the over 60s was not commented on by any respondents as leading to increased participation in activities. This is something that could be explored in the future as transport is seen as a large barrier to older people participating in museums, libraries and archives as well as in other learning opportunities.

Opening up facilities to local groups and organisations as a meeting place appears to be happening more often and thereby attracting older people's groups to use the facilities. Respondents from outside the sector, such as those working for Age Concern, found that they had a positive response from older people when they used museums, libraries or archives to promote events. Using museum, library or archive space as areas to promote local services, organisations and as central local information points, especially in rural located facilities appear to be good at reaching older people who use these facilities. Similarly having this type of information attracts more people to use museums, libraries and archives. In some cases this has led to more community awareness in rural areas. It is not clear from the respondents, whether these approaches are meeting the most isolated older people.

Reminiscence, intergenerational and family history work takes place within museums, libraries and archives, as well as through outreach work. This type of work encourages engagement between participants and is seen to have an impact on health and well-being. Often this work is also able to reach new groups of people, including older people who do not usually use museums, libraries and archives and older people within residential settings. This type of work can act as a 'hook' into further learning opportunities.

Core mobile and housebound services within libraries are good examples of how to reach isolated older people. Some services try to address isolation issues through providing information about other library services and learning opportunities or through linking up with local services to provide information. How much these services can help reduce isolation, lead to community participation and increased well-being is unclear. More information about the impact of these services on isolated older people and how they could be developed could be useful. A key recommendation of this report is the further development of Home Library Services as part of the Ageing Society Strategy.

5.2 What MLA offer for older people within their facilities

- **Social opportunities**

There has been a shift by some museums, libraries and archives to utilise and organise their space in ways that encourage more social opportunities and to make them more welcoming places. There has been an effort to dispel the myth that these places should only be quiet places, with limited social interaction. These changes have been promoted in various MLA strategies, for example North Yorkshire has launched its new strategy in 2008 called 'New look, No Shush!'

In Kent they try to make the libraries as welcoming as possible and encourage older groups to have an arranged visit to look around.

Alongside with the reorganisation of space has been an effort to provide social events, such as regular coffee mornings that focus on older people. These events are usually informal, although some areas, such as Suffolk's Top Time, have developed them into opportunities to disseminate information through or have advice sessions linked to them. Often these social events are advertised by word of mouth,

library facilities and staff, Age Concern and other related older people groups.

“An important part of all of the libraries in the area is ensuring there is space for social activities as well as quiet space for those who want to access it. Where possible they have set an area with tables café styles with refreshment facilities available and where possible IT facilities close by” (North Yorkshire).

Honeycroft and Clarke (2009) identified that museums, libraries and archives offer “not only good locations for skills based training, they are also seen by users as friendly, supportive and unthreatening.” The responses from older people’s groups highlighted that spaces within museums, libraries and archives were more usable and appealing if they provided an area to relax and rest and have refreshments.

Respondents from older people’s forums agreed that the public spaces on offer through museums, libraries and archives can help to reduce isolation and loneliness. However, they felt some approaches to engaging older people are more appealing to some than others and that a range of barriers need to be considered. Suggestions made by older people’s forums about how to make these spaces better for older people included:

- Provide interesting shows, lectures, DVD or films showing different topics of interest to an older generation;
- More creative activities such as reading groups and quizzes;
- Face to face contact is vital to older people's interaction;
- Silver surfer lessons are just a tip of the iceberg, not many facilities follow it through;
- Where possible address access issues of older building which have not be refurbished – as this limits the access for some older people with disabilities;
- Any courses and events offered require transport to help the most isolated to attend. The ability to do this does of course depend almost entirely on available funding.

Many libraries and museums do facilitate and encourage reading and interest groups, particularly for specific audiences, such as the visually impaired or carers. While most groups are open to all ages many of the participants are older people. One respondent from an older peoples group highlighted that libraries are also able to provide the following services which are invaluable to older people; large print books, audio books; comprehensive information on services including details of local societies and clubs; and librarians are able to advise on services for housebound and disabled people, carers and people in residential settings.

In Kent County some libraries are working with their local PCT to run local ‘health walks’ that start and end at libraries. These walks attract all ages and provide an opportunity to socialise and see what is on offer at the library facilities and the

community resources they provide.

Some museums are trying to improve the health and well-being of older people through creating 'cultural opportunities' within their facilities for local older people. As part of this work, the provision of 'supported visiting' is important in ensuring visits are enjoyable as part of a welcoming environment, as well as informative. For an example of this see the British Museum case study below.

Over 55s Afternoons at the Museum

The British Museum in London is trying to encourage older local people to visit the facilities (more often, for shorter periods). They have found the key to doing this is about providing supported visiting to enable an enjoyable experience and not just encouraging people to visit and then leaving them to it. Supported visiting is part of an 'over 55' strand being developed with a core programme of assisted visits, called Fledging. Supported visiting includes a range of activities:

- Monthly afternoon social events specifically for older people;
- Older people groups are invited to attend;
- Parking and refreshments are provided;
- Offer one off sessions, not courses;
- Different groups are invited at the same time, so that they can mingle;
- Want to give information about the facilities and what is happening in the museum and current exhibitions;
- Where needed will provide escorts to help people to access lifts, toilets;
- Groups are also invited to attend free community previews of exhibitions for 'sneaky peaks' to encourage use of the facilities;
- Object handling sessions are used to facilitate discussions;
- Help is given around ranges from collections, such as help to read labels and to find their way around. (British Museum)

- **Life history / reminiscence / intergenerational work**

Examples of intergenerational work, especially reminiscence work, exist across the sector. Some family history and reminiscence sessions are run by trained volunteers. This type of work was often considered by respondents as beneficial to all in promoting health and well-being. Some of the activities take place within museums, libraries and archives, other involve work taking place in community settings through partnerships.

Respondents pointed out that reminiscence work is attractive to people of all ages, but particularly 'old' older people, while ICT and family history groups are often enjoyed more by younger over 50s.

Some respondents felt museums and archives have had more experience of reminiscence and family history work, although many libraries are trying new approaches and want to develop this area of work.

From running these sessions further groups and/or learning opportunities can arise. This can range from individuals wanting to explore or try new learning opportunities to the whole group developing into something new, such as in the Cambridgeshire example below.

Reminiscence work, Cambridgeshire

A young community in the county had reminiscence work with the local older people at their local library. The project finished and now the group still meets and has developed into a creative writing group.

Many of the museums events and exhibition programmes encourage family and intergenerational informal learning; others are designed to engage the older age group, focusing as many do on past local and family history. Seven themed Reminiscence boxes are available from library services for loan by the EngAge Groups or to local Care Homes.

Some respondents talked about this type of work being a 'hook' to encourage participation in learning and in using museum, library and archive facilities. In Kent, they found Family Learning Week provided an opportunity to generate an interest in intergenerational work. One respondent working with older people highlighted the need to promote participation in activities not as lifelong learning but as something else more appealing, such as 'life history'. They went on to add,

"Activities don't just need to be about learning but adding to archives as well – a two way flow of information – learning from each other or intergenerational work, refocusing on 'we can learn from people as well as they can learn from us'."

For instance, Sheffield Archives went to local groups and highlighted where they had gaps in local history and asked people to come forward with any information or experiences.

- **Volunteer Opportunities**

Museum, library and archive facilities and activities already attract a range of older people. Through volunteering and participating in activities offered by museums, libraries and archives many older people develop new skills and confidence, experience less isolation through socialising and networking and are more involved in community participation and active citizenship.

A survey conducted in 2005 recorded volunteer involvement at 83% of organisations in the museums, libraries and archives sector, which was highest in museums (95%), followed by archives (79%) and libraries (67%). The age of volunteers is increasing, with 72% aged 55 and over in 2005.

Volunteers, as well as staff, in some areas will run sessions or lectures specifically for older people.

Time2Give, Kent Libraries and Archives

Time2Give is a volunteering programme across the county's libraries managed by Community Service Volunteers (CSV) for Kent Libraries and Archives. Some of the more popular activities for Time2Give volunteers include;

- Computer buddies;
- Helping staff with activities, functions and events;
- Helping people across the community access library services, taking services into the community, such as delivering books to people who are homebound.

However, it must be remembered that on the whole, particularly in relation to volunteering, those older people involved are likely to already be active in their community and less isolated than older people who are currently not being reached. One respondent pointed out that, not always, but generally the people who volunteer are likely to be 'young, old' whereas some of the most isolated older people are the 'old, old'!

5.3 How the use of MLA facilities by others benefit older people

Some respondents were not sure how their local museum, library and archive facilities were being utilised by others, such as by local community groups, forums and learning opportunities. In some cases this was because sometimes the space, such as a museum's designated learning areas for group, was free and therefore the usage not monitored.

Other respondents talked about actively trying to promote the use of museums, libraries and archives by the local community. Some facilities were offered free of charge for partner organisations and local (self-formed) groups. Once again, attracting older people to these spaces through these meetings offers the opportunity for older people to see what other activities within the facilities might be of interest to them.

In Kent they have several older groups that regularly meet at the library. In Cambridgeshire they actively want to encourage the general use of the library by others seeing libraries as venues.

The use of museum, library and archive space can also be about providing opportunities for organisations and groups to promote their work and offer advice and information.

“Libraries are great spaces to promote services, particularly for older people.”

When Age Concern (in Milton Keynes and Sheffield) has used library services to promote activities, they always feel the library is being well used as they have received positive responses. In larger facilities in Kent, they provide the space for local agencies and groups for older people to have a stand and ‘help’ table to provide information. ‘Gateways’, including some libraries, provide public service points to help older people have access to improved services. It would seem that in the future more of this type of activity will be located in libraries, especially in rural areas. This offers greater opportunity to reach and involve older people.

Gateways, Local information providers, Kent

The concept of Gateways is to provide ‘*council and community services under one roof*’. Gateways offer a convenient public service point and are based in modern retail settings. A number of these Gateways incorporate library services. Each Gateway offers the latest innovative technologies and a wide range of local services. The focus is on shaping services to fit around customer need, providing face to face contact and joining up services.

Gateways are an invaluable way for people to directly access services and to seek information on services and benefits to which they are entitled. The expansion and promotion of these will be key to ensuring older people have improved access to services.

As part of the INVOKE project in Kent, the library acts as an access point to resources about where to seek local information and advice on a wide range of topics relevant to older people.

INVOKE, Kent

The INVOKE project runs in East Kent. It promotes independence for older people through providing information on a range of topics. It was initiated through the Voluntary Action group of Kent Elders, with the assistance of Kent County Council Social Services and Kent PCT. The library works with six groups who have collated information resources for each area so that older people have the knowledge about where to go for local information, such as support for carers. Library services provide these resources.

One respondent felt that museums, libraries and archives need more community rooms where the voluntary sector can run groups and interact more with things that are happening, which in turn could help encourage older people to engage. The availability of space within the sector for others to use was not mentioned by other respondents.

5.4 How museums, libraries and archives outside their physical premises, going into the community, can reduce isolation and increase community participation

As outlined by many respondents, especially from older people's forum, availability of transport is a large barrier to reaching older people who live in rural areas or have problems due to health or disability related difficulties. This greatly reduces the impact of any effort to address isolation and encourage community participation within museum, library and archive spaces. This has resulted in work to take activities for older people to local areas and communities.

5.4.1 Mobile Libraries and Home Library Services

All library respondents outlined core Mobile Libraries and Home Library Services that operate outside their premises to meet the needs of rural and isolated people.

- **Mobile Libraries** stop at certain locations at published times for all ages to use. Some offer IT facilities and information resources as well as books

"My mother was able to get large print books (from her mobile library) having been debilitated by a stroke, but right up till her death she was an avid reader"
(OPAG network member in support of mobile libraries).

Mobile libraries link with local services, North Yorkshire

We have 10 mobile libraries. Many people are housebound due to the lack of transport options in very rural locations. 50% of people who use the service are housebound. This means mobile libraries and other libraries are often the only frontline service available, which is why they have concentrated on being a link to other services. People mainly use the service to access books and for the social side. The fire brigade, police and other agencies will sometimes meet local residents at the same time as mobile libraries in order to give advice.

- **Home Library Services** are for housebound people who cannot easily leave their home and help to tackle loneliness and isolation in older people. Some Home Library Services also use trained volunteers to help deliver the service, which involves going to people's homes with a selection of books and resources. The volunteers are trained and helped by library staff to select appropriate books and in some cases to direct people to services and organisations in relation to any questions or needs they have. Some of these services are supported by libraries but run entirely by volunteers.

Home Library Service, Sheffield

The Citywide network of libraries ran a home library service taking books to individuals homes. All participants had been referred to the library service (some through Age Concern). In Buckinghamshire, a similar service offers care homes loans of books.

Older people found out about these services mainly through word of mouth, library staff, promotional material and referral through local organisations. In North Yorkshire

as library services are linked to Social Care they refer people to the service and the service refers people to Social Care. This approach is good at reaching older people who the library service might otherwise not be able to access.

It was highlighted that in some ways while home/mobile services are essential and have potential to reach older people, there is a risk of reinforcing isolation as people do not have the opportunity to interact with others at community venues including museums, libraries and archives. It was suggested these services have the potential to link up with learning champions to encourage the uptake of social activities within museums, libraries and archives, as well as activities covering the four literacy areas. One area also had a telephone book group for people who were housebound.

Among respondents there was a general consensus that mobile libraries and similar services are popular with older people. Yet detailed evidence was usually not collected (except for membership numbers), particularly in relation to who are reached, how often people used these services and what social needs they met. It is also not clear in what ways these service could help with the four literacy areas. Most information was anecdotal.

“I think some of the elderly in rural areas see it [mobile library] as a life line, it might be the only person they see all day” (Kent)

5.4.2 Other work outside of museum, library and archive facilities

There are other examples of museums, libraries and archives being involved in outreach activities to reach older people.

Object Handling, British Museum

The Community Partnerships Team deliver outreach to community organisations using objects from the Museum’s teaching collections. These sessions involve discussion sessions around particular objects which encourage participants to share ideas about objects and the different cultures they might represent. These sessions can be delivered to any kind of group, and have been used with older people groups and various community organisations. (British Museum)

- **Using volunteers**

Some of these examples involve training volunteers or other groups and organisations who are then able to reach older people that might not otherwise be reached.

Info Link, Suffolk

Info link is a community database of services. Working with voluntary organisations they aim to recruit 75 volunteers locally to capture what is going on locally in relation to forums and groups. This information can go onto local web page in order to increase community ownership. Libraries are involved in the training of the volunteers. The resources are located within the library but paid for by adult services.

Brighter Futures Group, Kent

The Brighter Futures Group is a partnership between KCC, PCT, and voluntary and community organisations. It aims to increase the independence of older people, by supporting people aged 75 and over who are living in poor housing and on a low income by providing a range of community services, mainly delivered by volunteers. As some of the projects have evolved, they have expanded to include internet cafes, exercise classes and healthy lifestyle sessions. In West Kent some volunteers promote library services and offers established group reminiscence, poetry and prose sessions. The group uses library resources.

- **Residential settings**

Across the sector, there are examples of outreach activity to residential settings in order to reach potentially isolated older people. These settings include care and residential homes, day care centres and sheltered housing as well as meeting outside of museum, library and archive settings with already formed groups of older people. As previously mentioned reminiscence work is popular within these settings and staff and volunteers from across the sector are involved in leading this work.

Some residential homes have a visiting library service, similar to Home Library Service for housebound people outlined above. Although one key worker in this area pointed out the need to ensure the older people who should benefit from the service have adequate support in reading, such as any sight problems addressed and a collective activity programme within the homes, this is not always the case.

Connecting with Books, Kent

In Kent library services work with the local university in a research project called 'Connecting with Books'. The project will look at reading groups for the elderly to see what the health and well being impacts are. They will use their existing loan box book service, with books going into residential homes and sheltered accommodation, to carry out the research. The box of books includes different size print books and some audio books. They want to compare residential, library and local reading groups.

Many respondents felt there was the potential to do more within these settings and to expand on the current work being done.

"I feel we're not doing enough going out to communities, such as residential settings. It's an area I want to develop, to try and do more outreach. The resources are not there. Also it is not necessarily any part of any ones remit at residential care to encourage these types of activities. Support for this work, even a push for it, would help reach a lot of excluded people. We would like to pilot work in this area" (Respondent working within museum setting)

In the future work in this area has the potential to be developed, as learning within residential settings is highlighted as needed in the *Learning Revolution* (2009). Work is being piloted in this area, which the sector could feed into.

6. Question 3a: Who are the partner organisations that museums, libraries and archives are currently working with to improve and extend support for older learners?

Responses focused on the following areas:

- Developing partnerships
- The involvement of older people via consultation, project development and volunteers
- Older People's Strategies / Charters

6.1 Developing partnerships

A key principle underpinning the Learning Revolution Informal Adult Learning pledge is to *"find and work with new partners to increase learning opportunities"*.

"Partnership working is the key to reaching the right people– it is very important to make sure you have effective partnerships to identify and work with the most vulnerable" (MLA respondent).

There was a lot of evidence of partnerships being developed with a wide range of organisations of all sizes, including groups formed by older people. It is clear that some museums, libraries and archives are becoming more proactive in facilitating partnerships and trying to be more targeted in their approaches.

Each organisation mentioned a wide range of partners who they were working with – both nationally known organisations and local ones specific to their area and to older people. While some partnerships had been built over time, some were quite new and there seemed to be a shift towards creating more partnerships. Most partnerships were formed to develop specific projects linked to their work with older people (and other users). One local Age Concern representative commented on how they used to always have to approach the libraries, yet recently the libraries were coming to them about the possibility of partnership working.

In Suffolk, Cambridge and North Yorkshire Libraries and Archives are located within Adult Community Services within their local authority which means the staff have the opportunity to work closely with Adult Social Care. This has led to building some good links with potential partners. This positioning has been viewed as beneficial and has allowed access to isolated and excluded people within the community.

"The library service is located within Adult Community Services, which means we work with Adult Social Care. This potentially allows access to each others 'older people' and has been a positive positioning. As part of social cares remit it carries out a community profile and the needs of the community. The library services have been able to help provide and set up consultations to do this. This input has been valuable to all in ensuring services meet the needs of the community. Social Care provides an angle for the library services to access people who they might not otherwise know about" (North Yorkshire).

The main partners mentioned by museums, libraries and archives included:

- County Councils and Local authorities, such as social services;
- Local Education Authorities and colleges;
- The Community and Voluntary sector, including local umbrella groups;
- PCTs and health professionals, especially at GP level;
- Local care and residential homes, sheltered housing, community centres, carer groups and housebound projects;
- Local Age concern groups and other older people's groups and forums.

The partnerships were viewed positively and seen as allowing the work to move into being more formally organised. Organisations talked about more partnerships than previously being formed and described the effort they went to in order to make sure the partnership really did allow them to meet the needs of older people.

“Partners can access these people and provide support outside of what is available at the museum” (British Museum).

Partnerships are to be productive and two way. Organisations talked about wanting to be seen to be reaching out as well as encouraging people and groups to use their services within their premises.

“We want good ones [partnerships] that understand the audiences that we are trying to reach out to, such as Age Concern Resource Centres. We are trying to use stepping stones to our organisation and using really good partners to reach out to them and understanding the audiences we are reaching out to” (British Museum).

6.2 The involvement of older people

- **Consultation and project development**

Some museums, libraries and archives try to ensure older people are represented on boards, steering groups and in other regular ways, whereas other services were limited to consulting older people in one off occasions. The involvement of older people in developing museum, library and archive services is limited in some places and could be further developed and can link into local authorities work with older people.

“The Harrogate project involves a Partnership Board involving representatives from the library, the voluntary and community sector, Better Government for Older People, Age Concern, CAB, credit union and benefit advice to help develop the facilities of the libraries and service on offer” (North Yorkshire).

Harrogate project (refurbishment), North Yorkshire

Consultation with older people and through older people organisations, agencies and forums were held to identify what they wanted from libraries.

It is written into their action plan that their target is older people. As part of the work a demographics profile identified groups of people who were not currently using the facilities often or at all. Harrogate is a large town for the area and home to many older people (higher than the national average), tend to be wealthy and have higher than national average academic qualifications. There is also a high number of people who are 'self-made' and do not have any qualifications. There was an identified need articulated in the consultation process by older people to improve their IT skills informally. And a number of older people were actively seeking local opportunities to increase their IT skills. In line with this the county council has a priority of increasing older people's health and well-being. The project was part-funded by the Big Lottery Community Libraries Programme.

Not all organisations mentioned having formal partnerships or directly involving older people in their partnerships. Some respondents thought working with a local group such as Age Concern ensured they were reaching the needs of older people, whereas others were more proactive in ensuring they had a range of older people and older people groups feeding into their work.

Meeting older people, Cambridgeshire

Through library staff going out to different groups of older people in Cambridgeshire they were able to see what provision they would like and to let them know what library services already existed. These discussions coincided with hearing a distinguished poet talk about the benefit of poetry for people with dementia on the radio and led to the 'Countering stigma in Dementia' project being established.

"We have used focus groups and had older people feed into activities to see how to develop them. The library staff try to capture positive feedback and try talking to people, we like to be personal and avoid questionnaires whenever possible" (Suffolk).

- **Volunteers**

All respondents, have many volunteers which work with older people, and many volunteers are older people themselves. Volunteers are involved throughout different libraries to deliver books to people who are housebound. It was highlighted particularly in Kent and Surrey, that these volunteers have been invaluable at gaining the views of isolated older people, although not necessarily in a formalised or organised way.

Another benefit of partnership work for some respondents was also the potential to help recruit more volunteers.

Some of the feedback received from local older people groups highlighted being able to have input into the services run by their local museum, library or archive service.

“...The library services have consulted on several occasions on how they could improve services for the elderly” (Nottingham Elders’ Forum).

There is a risk that the sector are consulting widely with local groups, including older people about services but older people are not specifically involved in the planning process where they could have the most impact.

6.3 Older People’s Strategies / Charters

Some areas have developed older people’s strategies or charters. The contribution of museums, libraries and archives to these documents has been varied in regards to their initial input and the impact they now have on their current work. As more areas develop older people’s strategies local museums, libraries and archives can benefit from being involved in the process and subsequent action plans. This could range from providing the space and facilitating consultation events with older people (this could link in with developing citizenship learning) to developing services based on the strategy and identified needs of older people. These strategies help to include the voice of older people and provide links to older people, especially for involvement in developing work to meet their needs.

Cambridgeshire (2008), Suffolk (2008), Kent (2009) and London (2005) all have older people’s strategies / charters, an outline of these documents can be found in Appendix 3. In order to develop these strategies many older people and older people groups have been consulted and involved in designing the strategies and subsequent action plans. In some cases local museums, libraries and archives contributed to the strategies and are actively involved in implementing some of the action points, such as in Cambridgeshire and Kent. In Suffolk, the older people’s charter is in the background of the Libraries work, and indirectly linked to the work they do. In London, while the MLA did respond to the strategy it is not currently involved in any work directly related to the strategy.⁸

“We have an older people strategy in the county – COPRG – it is a great example of older people helping to design services, being fully engaged in activities, services and outreach activities. The [library] manager of EngAge co-ordinates COPRG’s activities, which means they are well linked with us and they are good at expressing the needs and wants for services” (Cambridgeshire).

⁸ Indeed, even within London the priority of working towards the strategy does not appear to be as high as previously as the work was led within GLA by the mayor, who changed in 2008. The most recent updates on the strategy (on-line) are for 2007.

7. Question 3b: What more could be done through partnership working to support the most vulnerable older people?

Responses identified the need for the sector to:

- Improve partnership working
- Improve engagement in older people's strategies
- Improve working in partnership with older people
- Improve networking within the MLA sector

7.1 Improving partnership working

As mentioned in 3a above, respondents indicated that they were engaging in more partnerships and planned to continue to do this. They are also trying to ensure they have worthwhile partnerships and networks that are as productive and inclusive of a range of organisations and groups as possible.

"We hope to extend networking and to formalise more library forums"

As one respondent said,

"We are more savvy about partnership working and talking to organisations below our radar a few years ago." (Suffolk)

When asked about how to improve partnership working respondents highlighted the importance of,

"Knowing and being able to access the right partnerships. The Local Authority will know where to look and how to reach the right people. We need to really work on these partnerships" (MLA London).

Partnership post, Cambridgeshire

For the past five years Cambridgeshire County Council has had a 'Partnership' post based within library services. The post holder's role is to build partnerships and find creative ways of library services working together with other local organisations and groups to meet a wide variety of users. Two factors which have seemed to have made this role work is that firstly the post has no budget to do this, which has led to innovative and creative thinking and secondly, top level management have been supportive of the role and have encouraged some risk taking in order to be creative with the resources available.

Cambridgeshire has been effective in sharing information and developing work through joint posts between library staff and adult social services. This has helped information sharing between each service and has avoided duplication of work where aims have been similar. In Suffolk, commissioned research by Adult Community Services will benefit library services and adult social services alike in being able to reach potentially excluded people.

Engaging with Older People, Suffolk

Work has been commissioned by adult community services to see how they are reaching certain groups, such as people who experience disabilities, mental health difficulties and family carers, many of which are older people. The results will be discussed with social care and library services to decide how best to meet the needs of these groups and will lead to an action plan relevant to their needs.

The partnership role in Cambridgeshire and sharing posts and/or information within Adult Community Services, as outlined above could have potential in other areas to develop more effective partnerships to reach older people.

7.2 Improving engagement in Older People's Strategies

As well as working on partnerships Cambridgeshire and Kent highlighted the importance of working towards their areas older people's strategy as it provides an opportunity to develop new areas and try new ways of reaching different groups of older people. It gives them a framework for working with older people.

7.3 Improving working in partnership with older people

- **Sharing information with older people**

To improve partnerships with older people respondents highlighted the need to be "*sharper on sharing information with older people*". This includes making sure different approaches are taken to reach the diverse needs of older people and not to assume one way is suitable for all older people. Older people are a large group and require information in a number of different formats. One respondent thought they were at risk of placing too much information only on their website, which means many older people are excluded due to their lack of IT skills and access.

Respondents had found it is important to provide one-to-one information, leaflets as well as speaking to groups, such as forums, local groups and people within care settings.

- **Improving links to older people groups**

To be able to reach the diversity of older people it is important to develop as many links to older people groups as possible, such as Age Concern and other local groups. Respondents highlighted that the value of partnerships with these groups is two way. Not only does the library reach older people and hear about what they need and would like but up-to-date information about the groups can be shared with library staff who are then able to ensure they are giving the right information about the group and services to library users. This helps to develop the information the sector can share with others as well as developing a more responsive service.

“These partnerships mean library staff can receive basic training and knowledge which they can use for library users at a basic level and then know where to direct people for advice and services. Similarly these partnerships can refer people to library services” (North Yorkshire).

The few older people forums that responded are not sure which organisations are working with museums, libraries and archives. They felt that in order to access the most vulnerable elderly people the sector needs to:

“...work along with social services and to contact all the elderly organisations in their vicinity and simply involve them in all ideas and decisions appertaining to older people” (Nottingham Elders’ Forum).

7.4 Improving networking within the MLA sector

One interviewee mentioned how important they found it not only to have local partnerships but to be able to network and share good practice with other museums, libraries or archives outside their area. Being able to share practice could help develop more creative approaches to reaching older people.

For instance, Cambridgeshire took their lead about how to run library clubs for older people from what other libraries have been doing, such as Suffolk’s Top Time clubs. They were also interested in an approach in Gloucestershire which buses in people from care homes to take part in library activities rather than going to the care home. This gives people from different care homes the opportunity to see library services and mix socially with people from other care homes.

Indeed a lot of libraries have projects and core services which other areas have and can benefit from sharing practice. For instance sharing practice in relation to ‘information on prescriptions’ projects, reminiscence work or meeting the needs of housebound older people through volunteers. Similarly there is a lot of potential to share priorities and activities locally between museums, libraries and archives.

8. Question 4: How can museums, libraries and archives further develop their practice to meet the learning needs of an increasingly diverse and growing older community?

Responses to this question were focussed around:

- the role of partnerships
- addressing the barriers to learning for older people
- highlighting how older people like to learn
- older people not reached by the learning opportunities available

At the end of this section there is a summary of respondents' 'top tips' to meet the learning needs of an increasingly diverse growing older community.

8.1 The role of partnerships

A number of respondents referred to the importance of working in partnership. Most comments regarding the role of partnerships highlighted in this section are already covered in more detail in question three due to responses overlapping.

8.2 Addressing barriers to learning for older people

- **Awareness of offer**

A few respondents mentioned, but were not sure to what extent, certain older people do not make use of museums, libraries or archives due to stereotypes of what the facilities offer and how they operate (such as libraries having to be quiet places).

Local ways to address this have included:

- Open days in Suffolk, which were well attended by all ages;
- A museum showing popular films at a cheaper rate than cinemas as a way to attract people, again aimed at all ages (Stoke-on-Trent);
- North Yorkshire over 50s Roadshow within library settings;
- The provision of free IT and promotion of Silver Surfer events.
- **Access**

The primary barrier, in both rural and urban areas, is not related to what is on offer within the sector for older people but related to issues associated with transport. This was particularly highlighted by older people forums as well as practitioners.

"In our opinion, until the problem of adequate funding and transport to and from the course/lecture or event is resolved, it does not matter that an institution has public spaces available, who their partners are, or what internet access is available to all."

"Museums and archives tend to be few and widely spaced in the community and there is therefore a question of transport to and from them." OPAG network members

Some respondents within the sector recognised the need to try and address this; while others thought they were limited in what they could achieve here or were already trying to address this through mobile and home library services. Rural issues related to accessing transport “*there’s no point having a free bus pass if there are no buses*” (Kent resident). In urban areas, especially London, safety issues around travel were a barrier to participating. Ways to improve transport issues included providing transport to specific groups or going out to groups themselves, such as care homes and established forums. In some rural areas this lack of transport increases the importance and role of library services in meeting the information and social needs of older people, as highlighted earlier by the role of mobile library services which act as community service points.

- **Outreach**

Many respondents talked about being open to trying different ways to access older people. The need to go out to communities to reach potential older learners and offer more services within the community was also highlighted as important. (Points made related to this have already been highlighted in relation to question 2.) For instance having more opportunities to work with communities and residential settings on intergenerational and reminiscence work; as a way of reaching and encouraging further learning opportunities among older people.

The *Learning Revolution* (2009) supports more educational learning opportunities in residential settings. NIACE has produced the document *Adult Education in Care Settings* (Dutton et al. 2006) and is working in partnership with the Department of Health and key sector bodies to increase opportunities for informal learning in care homes.

- **Funding**

Another major barrier to the provision of learning opportunities within museums, libraries and archives is limited funding for more informal and formal learning activities unless it is related to one off projects. Some areas found that even when working with adult education to provide vocational learning opportunities they were limited in what they could do. High charges for different learning opportunities means that those older people who would probably benefit most are the people who can least afford to pay for them.

“The major impediment to the development of services in any area of social or cultural need is lack of funding. Government decisions to focus funds on the achievement of qualifications at the expense of ‘learning for the sake of learning’ is a major set back to extending services and support for older learners, who in the main are not seeking or even particularly interested in qualifications” (OPAG network member).

There is the possibility of tackling this barrier in the future through linking with Local Authorities and CVS in taking forward the *Learning Revolution*. The paper proposes making more funding available for informal learning in 2009/10 through a ring-fenced

fund, operating for 1 year only. Museums, libraries and archives could bid for one-off funding to get projects started. Local Authorities will take the lead role in taking the paper forward; local museums, libraries and archives could feed into these developments.

- **Advocacy**

One respondent, in a strategic role, highlighted the need to refocus the work and resources of museums, libraries and archives if older people are a priority. Advocacy work with staff in the sector is needed to explain why older people are a priority as currently the focus and resources seems to be on young people and children. However, this was not raised as an issue by other respondents within the sector.

8.3 Highlighting how older people like to learn

“Older people learn a little differently, but when you consider all the changes we've had to deal with over the last 50-60years, we should be given a medal not be looked on as a burden! There's probably many different ways for an individual to learn, but they should be encouraged and supported, to choose the best option for them. In all this the best plan of action is to have face to face contact initially, so that no one feels isolated, moving on to other ways of learning eventually...” (OPAG network member).

While older people are a diverse group and will prefer to learn in many different ways most respondents felt many older people do not wish to gain qualifications or to sit exams. Although certificates are welcomed they are not seen as the reason for taking part in the learning. There was not a clear consensus on the way respondents felt older people like to learn, indeed the provision of a variety of learning opportunities is needed to meet people's needs.

- **Group Learning**

Group learning, particularly in the area of health and well being, was highlighted as becoming increasingly popular. Learning in groups, including self organised groups was highlighted as part of learning in later life and offered a chance to interact with others. This sharing of knowledge;

“...can be a two way thing, everybody needs to feel they are part of society as citizens, not just them and us situation” (OPAG network member).

Learning in groups and sharing knowledge is certainly a way of reducing isolation and have a social side to informal learning opportunities. This in turn can have an impact on someone's well-being and mental health. The World Health Organization's work on Age-friendly Cities has emphasised the importance of older people meeting with their peers and supporting each other (2007).

Opinions differed – some respondents felt that older people prefer to learn face-to-face, while others – reported an increase in independent study, particularly online as a result of the growth in computer ownership.

Learning in groups along with peers was also thought to be a preference in relation to areas such as IT skills and information relating to health.

“...things such as IT skills which younger people have been brought up on are alien to most of the elderly and they feel embarrassed when younger age groups can leap ahead” (Nottingham Elders’ Forum).

Yet in contrast to this, some older people are involved in intergenerational learning, usually around reminiscence and historical learning. Workers on intergenerational projects in North Yorkshire have found that intergenerational work can potentially be hard in the beginning when trying to encourage people to interact. Many activities to break down barriers are required. However, after the initial project meetings the social aspect of the projects can “take off more than ever planned for” and have proved to be successful.

8.4 Older people not reached by the learning opportunities available

While respondents felt they could do more to meet the learning needs of all older people, they identified that their facilities and services were not always meeting the learning needs of the following people:

- Older people who have **never** used library facilities before (even as children and tend to have no formal education);
- Those who have never used a computer (includes some people aged 35 and up who generally do not have children and have never used a computer at school or through work);
- Some BME communities;
- The very ‘old’ and frail (although increased work with care and residential homes is helping to reach some of this group);.
- People who experience some disabilities

Suggested ways of addressing some of these issues included:

- The role of older people as IT mentors to other older people.
- Developing older people (learning) champions could help to reach a diverse range of older people. It could also help to ensure a diverse range of older people’s needs are being met.
- Improved links with adult social care in some areas is also an example of increased information and access to older people who may not be benefiting from the learning opportunities that museums, libraries and archives offer or can develop.

9. 'Top tips' to meet the learning needs of an increasingly diverse and growing older community:

9.1 Work directly with older people

- Create a skills audit and develop (volunteers and users alike);
- Consult and actually listen to what older people say;
- Fully utilise the potential of older people as volunteers as often they have the time and expertise to offer;
- Involve older people through consulting with them, in planning services or through having a steering group of older people;
- Find out what older people really want to learn and how they want to do this.

9.2 Provision

- Do not rule anyone out or make any assumptions about likes and capabilities;
- Build on the demand for IT learning among older people;
- Stress the benefits of being and staying active, the importance of keeping memories alive and promote the value of health and well-being;
- Raise aspirations;
- Having a welcome, even if just for first visit to ensure someone is there to support them so that they can return on their own or as an independent group;
- A buddy system for older and infirm people would ensure that isolated people are catered for;
- Perhaps a Happy Hour weekly sessions entirely for the elderly would be appreciated;
- All venues are free entry;
- Information is up to date and people are more aware of what is of interest and on offer;
- Consideration to some older people's physical needs – For example, "In the Art Gallery in Sydney Australia there is ample seating both for studying the paintings and for resting";
- Be prepared to offer a variety of activities and learning opportunities to meet the wide range of needs;
- Access is most important i.e. transport, no stairs to negotiate, a rest and refreshment area;

- Offers of community transport;

9.3 Networking and partnerships.

- Make strong partnerships;
- Look out for local opportunities - work with existing groups and tie objectives together, avoid duplication and reinventing the wheel;
- Ensure partnerships are on board so that they do not see you as competition. You will both have access to different people which can link into each other's work;
- Be open about who talk to;
- Make the most of chance meetings and discussion to form partnerships and *"When this happens you need to be clear about your agenda and what you want but be flexible in your approach to reach these aims"*;
- Be innovative and willing to try, *"you need the 'weird and wacky' to break down barriers"*;
- Link into other local work and agendas for older people where possible;
- Perseverance is essential.

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1 Case studies

The case studies have been ordered in relation to how they appear in the text. In some cases extra detail has been included and extra case studies have also been included where there are more than one example of similar projects.

Many projects and activities are required to meet the diverse needs of older people. To demonstrate this, a range of activities related to Cambridgeshire have also been grouped together in Appendix 2.

Question 1: What is the current nature of activity delivered by museums libraries and archives that support older people to develop the four key literacies identified by the Help the Aged 'Learning for Life' Campaign? Technology literacy

EngAge, Cambridgeshire

To try and improve the services available to older people and in response to the growing evidence of a digital divide, with older people not using IT the EngAge project was undertaken. The EngAge Project is funded by UK Online, as a 'Social Impact Demonstrator' project. The library service works with Adult Support Services and local third sector organisations, including Age Concern and Cambridge Housing Society to engage with individuals who may be isolated, including carers and older people. The Libraries Development Officer has played an important role in ensuring the project is innovative and in creating and maintaining partnerships to maximise the impact of the project.

The participants receive IT training and some have become IT champions to develop their own skills and also learn to use the UK online learning resources in informal settings to '*show people how easy, useful and even fun technology can be*'. During 2007/8 over 750 older people trained in the basic use of IT, with 20 volunteer tutors (ranging in age from 18-83) continuing to train older people in IT in 16 libraries. The project leaves a network of volunteers able to continue support for the future.

The library services is linked to adult support services, which meant they were in a position to share the responsibility for the EngAge post. The timing was good as it linked to Learndirect's aim of reaching older people. The first year was half funded by Learndirect, quarter by library and a quarter by support services. The second year the post is half funded by library and half funded by support services.

UK Online Social Impact Demonstrator Projects

20 demonstrator projects ran from January 2007 to March 2008. All projects varied, however they were all designed to get people online for the first time and help them to learn IT skills while connecting with their communities and interacting with public services. The following are examples of how the sector has or could engage with older adults to improve IT skills and knowledge.

Age Concern Leeds focused on mobile IAG and home delivery of IT for people over 60 who were housebound. Outreach was vital with equipment installed at four community centres. Peer-to-peer learning proved successful. Age Concern Newcastle. Get up And Go project working with Newcastle and Northumbria Universities to create good practice guide and new curriculum for IT learning for older people. A resource pack for tutors was produced about IT and older people.

The Grimsby Institute The institute linked up with local organisations to deliver IT to older people in rural locations, including 15 libraries. The project looked at how the availability of IT facilities (and training) could enhance the lives of older people. They ran taster sessions to short programmes.

Leeds Central Library and Leeds Library and Information Service. Project co-ordinated by Leeds Central Library was delivered by local partners including the network of 60 plus local libraries, an IT bus and 'Interplay Theatre' group. Not targeted at older adults specifically, but an example of good practice in interacting with communities around improving IT skills (UK online Centres 2008).

50 Plus Forum, Derbyshire

Long Eaton library has provided an IT training base for volunteer members of the Long Eaton 50+ Forum in Derbyshire. The forum is one of thirteen set up across Derbyshire which meets regularly to discuss and suggest improvements to services and facilities. A key priority has been giving members access to information online. A designated 'Electronic Contact Person' received training and then worked with library staff to set up informal computer sessions for other members. Identified by Honeycroft and Clarke (2009)

Bournemouth

The libraries use peer support volunteers to run Silver Surfer ICT sessions. Many older people were grateful to receive help from volunteers of their own age. Identified by Honeycroft and Clarke (2009)

North Yorkshire

Run Silver Surfer Sessions in libraries, ranging from basic IT to more specific areas. Have drop in sessions where people will sign up and also have taster sessions. It is run by both paid and volunteer staff and is linked with Adult Education.

Kent

Annually hold silver surfer sessions in May. Last year had 94 participants over 24 libraries.

Suffolk Family Carers

Suffolk libraries are involved in a pilot with Suffolk Family carers (includes all ages but mainly attended by older people). Many carers in the area are isolated by their caring roles as well as their rural location where they live. Therefore the pilot is looking at opportunities for carers to come into the library and use it as a community space for informal learning and fun activities, including making use of the IT facilities.

Drawn from Memory, Oxfordshire

Reminiscence sessions can, and sometimes do offer the chance to embed ICT literacy work within the sessions. For instance, Drawn from Memory: Oxfordshire “worked with older learners to produce resources for creative reminiscence sessions.... [Examples included] the theme of life before World War II which led to a creative writing session and ICT work to scan and import images to make a calendar from learner’s own photographs.” (Honeycroft and Clarke 2009, ref. 36)

Their Past, Your Future, across England

This intergenerational programme has 120 projects across the museums, libraries and archive sector. Every project is different but involves work with older and younger people. The venture is funded by the Big Lottery, MLA and the Imperial War Museum.

It is in the 3rd year. Technology is used in different ways depending on the project and includes recording information, podcasts, digitising and loading information onto the Web. Some groups have created exhibitions and performances as part of their projects (MLA Council 2008).

An example of the projects can be found in Scarborough

Old fisherman and young people at risk worked together. Initially they thought they would have nothing in common. The younger people collected tales from the fisherman, learnt about local history and how to weather forecast. A better understanding of each other developed and the impact of both ages of participants was significant, with more respect and understanding from each group. This project was library based and managed and involved some people who had never used libraries before. Now some participants regularly use the library facilities. The work was helped by the local youth team and the county council. The area hopes to develop similar work across the area in the future.

Reminiscence and IT learning, Staffordshire

Archive employees ran a Family Tree Project and embedded IT in it. Library staff have also run reminiscence training for volunteers. Project worker works closely with age concern and museums staff to visit local old people groups for reminiscence work. The work has then been put on a website about local history. Age Concern in Stoke-on-Trent also works alongside museums and libraries, mainly running IT sessions for older people with volunteers doing the teaching.

Intergenerational work, North Yorkshire

There has been a shift across the area to move into intergenerational work ranging from projects to one of activities, such as young people helping older people to use the Wii in the library. Part of the intergenerational work involves young people being trained to train older people in using IT. They are also running some 'Their Past, Your Future' projects.

Homefront memories, Wirksworth

Wirksworth Heritage Centre set a challenge to record on video the war time memories of the Home Front from sixty local residents. The Centre used Lottery funding to train local volunteers in oral history techniques and the local adult education service ran a parallel course in video techniques. About half of the volunteer team included older residents who themselves contributed memories. The top two learning outcomes recorded by participants were enhanced video skills and greater understanding of the effect of war on the local community. Identified by Honeycroft and Clarke (2009)

Citizenship literacy

Aging Well, Staffordshire

The Aging Well project run with by Age Concern does not currently involve museums, libraries or archives. The project covers active citizenship and aims to reduce isolation of older people. Examples of its work includes a Pub Club for older people – where people socialise and information is given out on various topics – such as health, could run finance sessions here and social events could link into museum, library or archive space.

Top Time, Suffolk

An initiative called 'Top Time' in Suffolk, covers all local libraries. The aim was to direct older people away from day care centres and try and provide activities which are interesting, fun and promote mental health and well-being. The initiative includes a weekly two hour session, such as a coffee morning in each library. In some places they have proved so popular they provide two sessions a week and cap the number of people who can attend.

Activities range from chair yoga, advice on foot care and a range of people coming in and talking to the group. The older people themselves are involved in deciding the agenda. It is an opportunity to mix socially and to find out about local services and learning opportunities.

This project helps indirectly to improve the citizenship and health literacy of older people. The events have led to a book group and a theatre group forming.

The Smarden Good Neighbour Scheme, Kent

The Smarden Good Neighbour Scheme supports older people in the village to participate in village life, remain in their own homes and overcome the transport difficulties of rural isolation. The scheme provides information on a range of services and facilities from health to social services in a 'red folder' available from the Post Office. The scheme also provides an Afternoon Club for people aged 50 and over. It offers activities, services and guest speakers and provides a channel through which residents can be consulted on developments within the village. Smarden was awarded first prize in the National Association of Local Council's Community Empowerment Awards Older People section in 2007 for the Good Neighbour Scheme.

Health literacy

Over-50s Roadshow, North Yorkshire

North Yorkshire have begun to run Twice a year run 'Over-50s Roadshow' in several library locations, called 'Fun, facts and fitness for the over-50s'. During these days many organisations and services set up stalls in the libraries, such as energy usage advice, CAB, the district council, social care, carers association, health checks (blood pressure checked). These have been running for a couple of years and have proved to be well attended. 7 events were held in March with over 2,000 people attending and as many as 500 people at one library. This year the event added the theme of financial advice. Advertisement is through the local paper, county council newsletter and posters.

Countering Stigma in Dementia, Cambridgeshire

While this project does not solely focus on older people, it will mainly attract older people. This project aims to give persons with dementia the opportunity to express themselves verbally about their condition and life generally through the help of a resident poet. The Poet is John Killick, one of the most internationally renowned poets working in the dementia field. The work will be on a one-to-one basis with the finished result being the personal work of the individual, although there will be an opportunity for their work to be published and performed. The project will also offer training to librarians, care staff and medical practitioners so that they may continue to encourage and value creativity after the project has ended. The project aims to promote inclusion and understanding of people with dementia. Participants will be encouraged to visit libraries for poetry performances. The project will involve the "EngAge" Older People's Coordinator as well as County library service staff, the Literature Development Officer, Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age Steering Group, Age Concern, Adult Social Care staff, health partners, especially mental health workers, care workers and Carers, Alzheimer's Association branches, care homes

and other local relevant organisations. The project is funded in part by the Department of Health and began in April 2009.

The Archaeology of Conflict – Unearthing the Psychological, The Freud Museum, London

This project is principally focussed upon GCSE and A-level students but does involve older adults. The project explored the psychological impact of conflict. During March 2008 A-level psychology students from South Camden High School participated in a series of workshops to prepare them to interview veterans from 'Combat Stress'. The students were taught the practical and creative skills needed to empathise and interact in meaningful ways with the lives and experiences of veterans. The interviews were conducted with respect and empathy; the personal benefits of the meeting being felt by students and veterans alike. As well as gaining insight into the practical applications of psychology the project provided an excellent opportunity for intergenerational learning. One veteran described the experience as, "*a further form of therapy, as it were*". The Freud Museum then worked with the Playwright Ben Davis to produce 'Not Yet Nervous'. The work was influenced by the interviews and developed through workshops with GSCE drama students from South Camden High School (NIACE case study).

Campaign for Care, Dorset

This project engaged with the Tolpuddle Martyrs museum to hold a mock trial in Dorchester's Old Crown Court (where the Tolpuddle trials were held) as a learning tool and build a Campaign for Care. A good example of engagement with 'health literacy'.

Skilled for Health, London

Skilled for Health (SfH) is a national initiative designed to tackle health inequalities by improving health literacy in disadvantaged communities. The programme seeks to equip people with the skills and knowledge needed to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. The initiative was piloted in 5 London library authorities: Ealing, Barking and Dagenham, Islington, Newham and Haringey. A wide range of local people participated with different ethnic backgrounds, languages and from aged from 22 to over 75. Participants took part in learning within library settings. The pilot identified that the participants liked studying in the library: 88% said the library was a good place for learning; 85% of learners were interested in further study and all said they would like to continue learning in the library. SfH tutors enjoyed teaching in the library and found it less formal than a classroom setting. The learning was successful: 64% said they knew more about using health services after completing

the course. 91% said they felt more confident about learning in general after the course. (Honeycroft and Clarke 2009)

Prescribed Book, Kent

The 'Prescribed Book' scheme in Kent runs in 39 libraries. Initially the scheme promoted books for people who experience mental health difficulties. This has been extended to include stop smoking and bereavement. The resources are put together by libraries services and health practitioners also give book recommendations. Have referral form from health providers and other people can also access the scheme. Main libraries also have collection to help dealing with cancer issues which Cancer Macmillian and Kent cancer network use and refer people.

Books on Prescription, Cambridgeshire

Library services are keen to widen Books on Prescription - the current focus is on people who experience mental health difficulties. They want to also focus on long term health conditions that mainly effect older people.

Information on Prescriptions, Suffolk

The "Information on Prescriptions" project is delivered at libraries and run by the County Council. It is co-ordinated by a staff member of library. The project encourages people to find out about any long term illnesses which may be directly or indirectly affecting them. While the project is not specifically for older people, the nature of the conditions means many older people use the project. The illnesses covered by the project include Alzheimer's, dementia, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and different mental health conditions. They are trying to choose conditions where information can make a difference to people's lives, such as providing information on things they can do to help the condition they have. The project started with GP referrals but expanded through chance partnerships, for instance with East Anglia Ambulance Service, which tells people able the project. In line with this they have held open days for carers – this has had high uptake and resulted in a local network being established. Originally to help design the material for Information on Prescriptions focus groups were held with people who had certain illnesses. Board member includes representatives from Suffolk Pensioners. The project has been running for 2 years and has funding for a further two years.

2. How can the inspiring public spaces on offer in museums, libraries and archives be used to reduce the isolation and loneliness of some older people and encourage greater community participation and well being?

Time2Give, Kent Libraries and Archives

Time2Give is a volunteering programme across the county's libraries managed by Community Service Volunteers (CSV) for Kent Libraries and Archives. Some of the more popular activities for Time2Give volunteers include;

- Computer buddies;
- Helping staff with activities, functions and events;
- Helping people across the community access library services, taking services into the community, such as delivering books to people who are homebound.

Health Walks, Kent

Have local 'health walks' that start and end at the libraries. Work involves the local PCTs. Provides an opportunity to socialise and see what on offer at library facilities. Libraries act as a community resource.

Over 55s Afternoons at the British Museum, London

The British Museum is trying to encourage older local people to visit the facilities (more often, for shorter periods). They have found the key to doing this is about providing supported visiting to enable an enjoyable experience and not just encouraging people to visit and then leaving them to it. Supported visiting is part of an 'over 55' strand being developed with a core programme of assisted visits, called Fledging. Supported visiting includes a range of activities:

- Monthly afternoon sessions specifically for older people;
- Older people groups are invited to attend;
- Wheelchairs and accessible parking and refreshments are provided;
- Offer one off sessions, not courses;
- Different groups are invited at the same time, so that they can mingle;
- Want to give information about the facilities and what is happening in the museum and current exhibitions;

- Where needed will provide escorts to help people to access lifts, toilets;
- Groups are also invited to attend free community previews of exhibitions for 'sneaky peaks' to encourage use of the facilities.

An object handling sessions is given for those that wish to stay in the education centre. This allows visitors to get up close to objects and provides a sensory experience. Staff and volunteers also talk to the groups about the Museum and use maps and guides to help them plan trips into the Museum's galleries. Once the larger group has been split into smaller groups who want to see different parts of the collections, these groups are then accompanied into the galleries by staff and volunteers so that there is someone with the group who knows their way round and can assist with finding seats, toilets and lifts (very important in such a large building).

Partners include Age Concern Camden and other Resource Centres, Community Centres and other kinds of community organisations (such as carers groups and mental health charities).

Reminiscence training, Staffordshire

In Staffordshire library staff ran reminiscence training for volunteers. The volunteers and museum staff then worked closely with Age concern to visit local old people groups for reminiscence work. The work was placed on a local website for people to visit.

Reminiscence work, Cambridgeshire

A young community in the county had reminiscence work with the local older people. While the project finished the group still meets and has developed into a creative writing group.

Many of the museums events and exhibition programmes encourage family and intergenerational informal learning; others are designed to engage the older age group, focusing as many do on past local and family history. Seven themed Reminiscence boxes are available from library services for loan by the Engage Groups or to local Care Homes.

Key Memories, recollections of my first home project, Cambridgeshire

Five museums from each Cambridgeshire District are involved with an intergenerational reminiscence Heritage Lottery Funded project. It involves care home staff and residents and young families from new housing estates. The project provided training for museum staff, volunteers and care home staff in producing and delivering reminiscence materials and recording and collecting oral histories as well as engaging with mother and toddler groups in new communities/ housing estates, to create an intergenerational project based on the theme of 'Key Memories: my first home'.

This is My Life project, Tower Hamlets

A photographer with the input of residents of a care home took photos of the local area and helped the residents to produce photo books of their past and current lives. This resulted in more sharing of experiences between residents. It also resulted in more conversations between the residents and staff, family and friends who visited them.

Intergenerational work with Camden Chinese Community Centre, London

As a pilot project, ten members of the youth group at Camden Chinese Community Centre have been training in how to handle objects and how to facilitate discussion sessions and activities with objects. The youth group have already been involved with the British Museum as volunteers and participants of activities. The Youth Leader at CCCC wanted to try to integrate the youth group with the older members of the centre. The trained young members of the group have delivered object handling sessions to older adults at the centre and also in the CCCC's Jubilee house bound project. The plan is that this will become a regular monthly activity which the centre runs independently, using objects from the Museum's Handling Collections.

Gateways, Local information providers, Kent

The concept of Gateways is to provide '*council and community services under one roof*'. Gateways offer a convenient public service point and are based in modern retail settings. A number of these Gateways incorporate library services. Each Gateway offers the latest innovative technologies and a wide range of local services. The focus is on shaping services to fit around customer need, providing face to face contact and joining up services.

Gateways are an invaluable way for people to directly access services and to seek information on services and benefits to which they are entitled. The expansion and promotion of these will be key to ensuring older people have improved access to

services.

INVOKE, Kent

The INVOKE project runs in East Kent. It promotes independence for older people through providing information on a range of topics. It was initiated through the Voluntary Action group of Kent Elders, with the assistance of Kent County Council Social Services and Kent PCT. The library works with six groups who have collated information resources for each area so that older people have the knowledge about where to go for local information, such as support for carers. The library services provide these resources.

Mobile Libraries link with local services, North Yorkshire

We have 10 mobile libraries. Many people are housebound due to the lack of transport options in very rural locations. 50% of people who use the service are housebound. This means mobile libraries and other libraries are often the only frontline service available, which is why they have concentrated on being a link to other services. People mainly use the service to access books and for the social side. The fire brigade, police and other agencies will sometimes meet local residents at the same time as mobile libraries in order to give advice.

Home Library service, Sheffield

In Sheffield the Citywide network of libraries ran a home library service (until last summer), where books were taken to individuals homes. All participants had been referred to the library service (some through Age Concern). In Buckinghamshire, a similar service offers care homes loans of books.

Object Handling, British Museum

The Community Partnerships Team deliver outreach to community organisations using objects from the Museum's teaching collections. These sessions involve discussion sessions around particular objects which encourage participants to share ideas about objects and the different cultures they might represent. These sessions can be delivered to any kind of group, and have been used with older people groups and various community organisations.

Info Link, Suffolk

Info link is a community database of services. Through working with voluntary organisations they aim to recruit 75 volunteers locally to capture what is going on locally in relation to forums and groups. This information can go onto local web page in order to increase community ownership. The libraries are involved in the training of the volunteers. The resources will be located within the library but paid for by adult services.

Brighter Futures Group, Kent

The Brighter Futures Group is a partnership between KCC, PCT, and voluntary and community organisations. It aims to increase the independence of older people, by supporting people aged 75 and over who are living in poor housing and on a low income. By providing a range of community services, mainly delivered by volunteers, As some of the projects have evolved, they have expanded to include internet cafes, exercise classes and healthy lifestyle sessions. In West Kent as part of the project some volunteers promote library services and offers established groups reminiscence sessions, poetry and prose sessions. The group uses library resources.

Connecting with Books, Kent

In Kent library services want to work with the local university in a research projects called 'Connecting with Books'. The project will look at reading groups for the elderly to see what the health and well being impacts are. They would like to use their existing loan box book service, with books going into residential homes and sheltered accommodation, to carry out the research. The box of books includes different size print books and some audio books. They want to compare residential, library and local reading groups.

3a. Who are the partner organisations that museums, libraries and archives are currently working with to improve and extend support for older learners?

Meeting older people, Cambridgeshire

Through library staff going out to different groups of older people in Cambridgeshire they were able to see what provision they would like and to let them know what library services already existed. These discussions coincided with hearing a distinguished poet talk about the benefit of poetry for people with dementia on the radio and let to the 'name' project being established.

Harrogate project (refurbishment), North Yorkshire

Consultation with older people and through older people organisations, agencies and forums were held to identify what they wanted from libraries.

It is written into their action plan that their target is older people. As part of the work a demographics profile identified groups of people who were not currently using the facilities often or at all. Harrogate is a large town for the area and home to many older people (higher than the national average), tend to be wealthy and have higher than national average academic qualifications. There is also a high number of people who are 'self-made' and do not have any qualifications. There was an identified need articulated in the consultation process by older people to improve their IT skills informally. And a number of older people were actively seeking local opportunities to increase their IT skills. In line with this the county council has a priority of increasing the areas health and well-being as well as meeting the needs of older people.

3b. What more could be done through partnership working to support the most vulnerable older people?

Partnership post, Cambridgeshire

For the past five years Cambridgeshire County Council has had a 'Partnership' post based within library services. The post holder's role is to build partnerships and find creative ways of library services working together with other local organisations and groups to meet a wide variety of users. Two factors which have seemed to have made this role work is that firstly the post has no budget to do this, which has led to innovative and creative thinking and secondly, top level management have been supportive of the role and have encourage a bit of risk taking in order to creative with the resources available.

Engaging with older people, Suffolk

Work has been commissioned by adult community services to see how they are reaching certain groups, such as people who experience disabilities, mental health difficulties and family carers, many of which are older people. The results will be discussed with social care and library services to decide how best to meet the needs of these groups and will lead to an action plan relevant to their needs.

Key achievements not already mentioned, Cambridgeshire

"Engage" free monthly social events aimed at older people take place in 7 libraries. The programme of events ranges from computer tutorials to armchair exercise, local studies to icing cakes, creative writing to reminiscence sessions and more.

Carers Clubs are being developed in libraries with the Carers Support Network.

Annual participation in "Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age" programme - learning and information opportunities in libraries.

Free Doorstep library service - volunteers deliver books to those unable to visit the library

A free postal 'Talking Books' service for the visually impairment is run by volunteers

Work on developing accessible information for older people (with Age Concern)

The Fitzwilliam museum last year entered events in our Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age Programme and now has a development worker. It has worked with a local Alzheimer's Carers group creating art at the Museum

From April 2009 the older people's newsletter has been re-launched.

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Appendix 2 Cambridgeshire County Case Study

The museum, libraries and archives sector in Cambridgeshire is active in providing a wide range of projects that involve or are aimed at older people.

Improving Technology literacy

To try and improve the services available to older people and in response to the growing evidence of a digital divide, with older people not using IT the EngAge project was undertaken. The EngAge Project is funded by UK Online, as a 'Social Impact Demonstrator' project. The library service works with Adult Support Services and local third sector organisations, including Age Concern and Cambridge Housing Society to engage with individuals who may be isolated, including carers and older people. The Libraries Development Officer has played an important role in ensuring the project is innovative and in creating and maintaining partnerships to maximise the impact of the project.

The participants receive IT training and some have become IT champions to develop their own skills and also learn to use the UK online learning resources in informal settings to *'show people how easy, useful and even fun technology can be'*. During 2007/8 over 750 older people trained in the basic use of IT, with 20 volunteer tutors (ranging in age from 18-83) continuing to train older people in IT in 16 libraries. The project leaves a network of volunteers able to continue support for the future.

The library services is linked to adult support services, which meant they were in a position to share the responsibility for the EngAge post. The timing was good as it linked to Learndirect's aim of reaching older people. The first year was half funded by Learndirect, quarter by library and a quarter by support services. The second year the post is half funded by library and half funded by support services.

Books on Prescription

Library services are keen to widen Books on Prescription - the current focus is on people who experience mental health difficulties. They want to also focus on long term health conditions that mainly effect older people.

Acting as community resource and information centres

"Our libraries are projecting themselves as information and resource centres... There has been a long term effort to make remaining Libraries more user friendly to disabled and older people."

Volunteer opportunities for older people

Volunteers are important to the success of museum, library and archive activities. There is an attempt being made to seek older people as volunteers in libraries to engage with there own and other age groups. Similarly, the museums, often with help of volunteers encourage intergenerational activities with special events. All 28 museums in the county have volunteers, around 1,200 in all of whom the vast majority fall into the older age bracket. They work on the documentation and research of collections, undertake simple conservation work and help with schools workshops, hosting events and activities throughout the museums.

Formal learning opportunities

Several museums run lecture programmes through their 'Friends' and supporters groups and host adult education classes. However, some Life long learning programmes have been reduced in this area due to funding changes.

'Countering Stigma in Dementia Through Creativity' (Winner of regional funding to support the Dignity in Care Campaign).

While this project does not solely focus on older people, it will mainly attract older people. This project aims to give persons with dementia in the opportunity to express themselves verbally about their condition and life generally through the help of a resident poet. The Poet is John Killick, one of the most internationally renowned poet working in the dementia field. The work will be on a one-to-one basis with the finished result being the personal work of the individual, although there will be an opportunity for their work to be published and performed. The project will also offer training to librarians, care staff and medical practitioners so that they may continue to encourage and value creativity after the project has ended. The project aims to promote inclusion and understanding of people with dementia. Participants will be encouraged to visit libraries for poetry performances. The project will involve the "Engage" Older People's Coordinator as well as County library service staff, the Literature Development Officer, Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age Steering Group, Age Concern, Adult Social Care staff, health partners, especially mental health workers, care workers and Carers, Alzheimer's Association branches, care homes and other local relevant organisations.

Intergenerational, historical and reminiscence work

Many of the museums events and exhibition programmes encourage family and intergenerational informal learning, others are designed to engage the older age group, focusing as many do on past local and family history. Seven themed Reminiscence boxes are available from library services for loan by the Engage Groups or to local Care Homes.

Key Memories, recollections of my first home project

Five museums from each Cambridgeshire District are involved with an intergenerational reminiscence Heritage Lottery Funded project. It involves care home staff and residents and young families from new housing estates. The project provided training for museum staff, volunteers and care home staff in producing and delivering reminiscence materials and recording and collecting oral histories as well as engaging with mother and toddler groups in new communities/ housing estates, to create an intergenerational project based on the theme of 'Key Memories: my first home'.

The use of MLA space by others

Some museums and libraries are used by outside organisations and individuals, which attract people to them. This includes WEA learning groups and lunch time concerts provided by young composers, which attract all ages including older people. The Cambridgeshire Older Peoples Reference Group which links older peoples groups often uses meeting rooms in libraries in different parts of the County in order to ease access and transport problems.

Partnerships and related projects

The work of the museum, libraries and archives sector in Cambridgeshire involves maintaining many local partnerships in order to deliver and support the following types of projects that engage with a wide range of older people.

“We have been working hard in the Library Service to build on our partnership work both with and for older people in Cambridgeshire”

Creating, developing and maintain effective partnerships in order to derive maximum impact and relevance from the delivery of services to customers is a priority. This includes working with LAA partners, Adult Social Care and Age Concern on implementing an Older People’s Strategy.

Key achievements not already mentioned include:

- "Engage" free monthly social events aimed at older people take place in 7 libraries. The programme of events ranges from computer tutorials to armchair exercise, local studies to icing cakes, creative writing to reminiscence sessions and more.
- Carers Clubs are being developed in libraries with the Carers Support Network.
- Annual participation in "Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age" programme - learning and information opportunities in libraries.
- Free Doorstep library service - volunteers deliver books to those unable to visit the library.
- A free postal 'Talking Books' service for the visually impairment is run by volunteers.
- Work on developing accessible information for older people (with Age Concern).
- The Fitzwilliam museum last year entered events in our Cambridgeshire Celebrates Age Programme and now has a development worker. It has worked with a local Alzheimer's Carers group creating art at the Museum.
- From April 2009 the older people’s newsletter has been re-launched.

Information collated from various sources including Honeycroft and Clarke 2009, UK Online reference, email and interview responses from key MLA employees and on-

line sources)

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Appendix 3 Older People's Strategies and Charters

Cambridgeshire Older People's Strategy 2008 – 2011

The strategy aims to address older people in a holistic way, looking at ways to promote their overall well-being and to encourage and enable their active participation in, and contributions to, their communities. Older people are an important resource for local action to tackle social isolation and support independent living. The strategy is intended to be a living document and is to be reviewed and updated during its lifetime.

A detailed analysis of the older population in Cambridgeshire and their needs was undertaken as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment completed in January 2008, as introduced and required by the Government's *Commissioning framework for health and well-being*, published in March 2007. Feedback from older people, via organisations of older people as well as those run on behalf of older people, has played a significant part in shaping the strategy and the output from recent consultation exercises has been taken into account. The strategy outlines the need to keep older people consulted and engaged in local strategies, particularly through the help of local organisations. One of the future planned service provision are adult learning opportunities to be further developed to ensure older people are not left behind in an increasingly digital age.

Living Later Life to the Full, Kent

The Living Later Life to the Full policy framework aims to design Kent's communities and service provision in a way that enables people to lead the lives they want and to encourage social interaction both within and between the generations. The work involved consultation over 18 months with Kent residents, the voluntary and community sector and groups as well as local services. Older People's Champions helped to encourage wide participation in the consultation process. The framework came out in January 2009 and the action plan in March 2009.

The framework wants to increase older people's participation in community life, social inclusion and the contribution they make to society in order to ensure their interests, needs and expertise is not overlooked. Promoting lifelong learning is part of this. The framework has different priority areas which include supporting people's citizenship, learning and participation in community life. This involves ensuring people are aware of how to participate in community life through better information of opportunities and ensuring links between forums and policy makers are more formalised. The framework encourages enrolment in adult education courses and in promoting The University of the Third Age. Self managed learning should also be encouraged through local community groups. The framework identified the need for older people to have more opportunities to learn about IT and access internet facilities as a way to promote inclusion, to access information, support and social interaction, which can result in a positive impact on their health and well-being

Valuing Older People, London

The Mayor's Older People's Strategy (2005), aims to challenge stereotyping of older people and provide a framework to develop a city in which older Londoners have the support they need to lead active, healthy and independent lives. The Strategy's development was informed by The London Older People's Strategy Group, a coalition of over 200 Older people's groups in London. The strategy promotes measures to 'ensure older Londoners can both contribute to, and benefit from, the capital's cultural and leisure activities'. Current barriers to doing this include: affordability, fears about safety, accessible venues, travel concerns and costs and a lack of information.

It promotes the value of intergenerational work and the 2007 action plan includes the mayor working with "organisations such as MLA London to promote work to record more of older London's experiences and ways in which their stories can be made available to younger generations." The strategy also supports measures that, 'enable more older people in London to take advantage of the benefits of new technologies'. As part of this work there is support for more free internet access at UK on-line centres and libraries. The 2007 annual report highlights a scheme where local businesses have been donating old computers to be recycled and used in Age Concern centres to increase IT resources available for older people. Events are planned around Silver Surfer week to raise the profile of available training.

Since the new mayor in 2008, it appears that the mayor's priority areas have shifted and the strategy is not at the fore anymore, with the most recent annual report and action plan on the internet being 2007.

Charter for Older People, Suffolk

The Charter for Older People was put together by the Suffolk's Older People's Strategic Partnership Board (OPSPB) in 2008. This board, formed in 2006 acts as a formal voice for all older people in Suffolk and is made up of various organisations, groups and individuals. The content of the Charter originated from discussions involving older people held at Partnership with Older People's (POP) Forums from everyday issues and concerns. Further work was carried out by the OPSPB on how to move forward with what older people were saying about life in Suffolk. As part of this work the 'Partnership with Older People' (POP) have produced a leaflet to promote their work and encourage more older people in the area to become involved. Anyone can join the 'Partnership Club' and receive the 'Talkabout Suffolk' magazine which highlights the range of services available for older people, such as the Home Library Service. This is a joint venture between POP and Age Concern Suffolk. The charter is linked to the Community Strategy for Suffolk which underpins the way services in Suffolk are planned, including library services.

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Appendix 4 Respondents

Age Concern Dorchester

Better Government for Older People (BGOP)

Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG) network

British Museum

Cambridgeshire Libraries, Partnership and Service Manager

Kent County Council, Library and Archives

Milton Keynes Age Concern

MLA London, Development Manager for Learning and Skills

Museums Libraries Archives Council, Programme Manager

NIACE, Older and Bolder Information Officer

North Staffordshire Age Concern

North Yorkshire Libraries, General Manager

Nottingham Elders Forum

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Libraries

Museums Development Cambridgeshire County Council

Sheffield Age Concern

Suffolk Age Concern

Suffolk Libraries, Adult Services Manager

West Midlands OPAG, Shropshire Association of Senior Citizens