

2.2) SESSION 1 – INTRODUCTION TO ORAL HISTORY/REMINISCENCE SKILLS

Overview

This first in a series of 12 sessions was really important as it set the scene for how oral history would be used throughout the remainder of the programme. Using the local community – *Leith* as an overarching theme, this session introduced the group to how oral history would be used over the next 12 weeks to explore the history of Leith.

Importantly, time was also taken to explain that sectarianism would also be a theme that would gradually be introduced over the coming weeks. In doing so, the group were informed of the future anti-sectarian work that would be taking place.

For more detailed feedback of how this session ran – please check section 1.9.

Session plan

Running Time – 1hour 30mins (approx.)

1. Presentation from photo archive

2. Reminiscence (*Pairs activity*)

3. Why reminiscence?

4. Reminiscence Quiz

5. Selection of audio clips

6. Look at end products

1. Presentation from photo archive

- **To start this session off, gather images of your local community and create a slide show to showcase to your group. This activity works really well to stimulate memories and is also a really good icebreaker to get your group discussion flowing.**

The Leith anti-sectarianism Project used the example of the Leith co-operative society and local dance halls; however feel free to use any piece of local history that you think will work well with your group.

If your group is into sports for example, it may be historical photographs of the local football team. Alternatively if your group is made up of people who have previously worked in a specific occupation, for example the fishing industry, you may want to showcase images of this.

When showcasing your images you should try and encourage your group to contribute as much as they can and be mindful for individuals who may perhaps dominate less confident members in your group.

2. Reminiscence Icebreaker (PAIRS ACTIVITY)

- **For this activity split your group into pairs or groups of 3 and hand out some additional images.**

These do not need to be very specific, but should have a theme that each member of your group can connect with. Example images can include a picture of school, or the seaside.

Ask each participant *'share a memory of what this means to you.'*

This activity is similar to the initial photo presentation, but by splitting into smaller groups, even more personal experiences and memories can be captured as each member of your group reminisces.

- **Once each group has had some time to discuss, bring them back together and go through each themed picture individually. This is an opportunity for each set of pairs to share with the wider group what they discussed.**

3. Why Reminiscence? - Selection of audio clips

- **For this activity you should play some audio recordings to the group of people recalling memories and reminiscing.**

The examples used by the Leith anti-sectarianism Project were recordings that the Living Memories Association used of people from Leith discussing how things were in the past.

If possible use recordings that have some connection to your local community. Alternatively you can use recordings that contain broad themes that your group members can connect with. Examples could include discussion on jobs and employment or perhaps local entertainment venues that may have existed in your community.

- **Following each recording, ask your group for their thoughts on what they have just heard. This alternative method of listening to audio recordings, will further allow your group members to reminisce and share their memories.**
- **You may want to record the comments you gather on to a flip chart during this activity.**
- **During this activity you should also take the opportunity to explore the importance of reminiscence work. You can achieve this by asking your group such questions as:**

‘What do you think is important about reminiscence work?’

‘What are the key things that make up reminiscence work?’

‘Why would you get involved in an oral history project?’

A key point to emphasise to your group is the ability oral history has for capturing a time in the past that isn’t as prevalent or no longer exists.

You may also want to highlight that oral history captures memories from individuals in their own

language/dialect. This can give oral history accounts a great deal of authenticity that can often be lacking from more formally written accounts.

4. Look at end products

- **For this task you should showcase to your group different materials you may need when delivering an oral history project.**

A good example to show is digital recorders. Ideally if you have a couple of these, you should allow your group some time to play around using the recordings and getting a feel for how they work.

To add a bit of nostalgia you could also show some older tape recorders, which might in turn stimulate more memories in your group.

- **Another good example to show your group is some books of actual oral history projects or links to oral history project websites, such as *Living Memory Association* and the *Scottish Oral History Centre*.**

<http://www.livingmemory.org.uk/>

<http://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/research/sohc/>

5. Reminiscence Quiz

- **To finish off this session, you should end with a fun quiz with questions relating to the past that your group will enjoy answering.**

Depending on the demographics of your group this will vary. The following questions were used with an older group of men at PDP:

1. Which actor uttered the immortal words “Quite frankly my dear I don’t give a dam.”? Clark Gable

2. Who was the Prime minister of Great Britain at the beginning of World War 2? Clement Attley

3. Which British football team were first to win the European cup? Celtic

Which two actors sailed in the African Queen? Humphrey Bogart/Catherine Hepburn

4. Which rock and roll star said “See you later” to an alligator? Bill Haley

5. In which year did Sir Edmund Hillary conquer Mount Everest? 1952

6. Who wrote the novel 1984? George Orwell
7. If you were standing in Saint Peters` square and buying a coffee with roubles which city would you be in? Moscow
8. Which word connects a type of bridge with a card game? Pontoon
9. Which Family of fish has no skeleton? Sharks
10. Which American President ordered the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima? Ike Eisenhower

Things to consider

Remember if your programme is going to have a number of sessions and you are looking to introduce sectarianism gradually each week, it is really useful in this session to provide an overview of how the subsequent sessions will link in.

Although this session did not *explicitly* mention sectarianism, the group were informed that future sessions would increasingly have more anti-sectarian themes.