

FIFTY YEARS OF MIDDLE STREET
RESOURCE CENTRE:

THE HERITAGE OF WELLBEING
IN THE COMMUNITY



Evaluation Report





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the outcomes achieved from the Fifty Years of Middle Street Resource Centre (MSRC) Heritage project, alongside participants' co-production experiences and recommendations for future work. The Department of Social Work, Care and Community at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) was successful in securing a grant of £98,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, in order to explore, collect and archive the rich history and heritage of the centre with centre users, staff and volunteers as a way of celebrating MSRC's 50th birthday. This included collecting oral histories and producing a film documentary.

Project highlights included **participatory creative arts sessions** with centre members who took part in arts and craft, poetry and illustration workshops, led by professional artists. There were also eight events for the public to engage with the same workshops, that explored participants own mental health. **A touring exhibition** was created from centre members creative work and reminiscence activities, which was hosted by four different venues: Beeston Library, the 2023 Oral History Society conference "Making Histories Together", MSRC and Nottingham's Central Library. The content of this exhibition grew and changed over time, with public feedback being gathered by the project's paid heritage interns. The exhibition has now been digitised and the digital resources produced for the project are being used as a teaching resource at NTU Health and Social Care and Social Work courses and Manchester Metropolitan University Social Work courses. Public events also included a celebration event and **film screening of the project documentary** at Beeston Library and additional screenings at three academic conferences. This documentary has been entered into the selection process of a series of international film festivals in 2024-2025.

Centre members, volunteers and NTU students received **oral history interviewing training**, which enabled **30 oral history interviews** to be conducted, transcribed and archived. These interviews, along with visual materials comprising of portraits, artwork and historic news articles have been **deposited at the East Midlands Oral History Archive, University of Leicester**. The artwork and oral history excerpts are available on the project website. NTU hosted four heritage internships, where postgraduate students benefitted from developing professional skills in the heritage industry and have since secured jobs in the field. As part of the volunteering experience, a visit to the Nottinghamshire archives was organised so that participants could further explore the history of mental health care. Overall, the project **built strong relationships** with centre members and enabled the collection and **preservation of rich and deep oral histories and other heritage assets, such as memory boxes**.

Moving beyond the centre members and communities involved in the project, the reach of the heritage outputs and learning was at both national and international level. The heritage co-produced for this project was showcased at the 9th **Chinese Oral History Week in Beijing, China**, in November 2023, by invitation. The documentary film was shown at the **Museums and Beyond: Public Histories of Mental Illness in the 21st Century Symposium at the Mental Health Museum**, Wakefield, UK. The documentary film was also showcased at Nottingham Trent University School of Social Sciences Showcase conference in June 2024 as an example of impact activities with hard to reach groups. A sector-sharing and learning event on 5-6 September 2024 being held in Nottingham, requested by European professionals from the **GLAM industry (galleries, libraries, archives and museums)**, was organised to showcase the innovative mental health heritage outputs and outcomes achieved on this project.

There are three project outcomes, which will be demonstrated in this report:

1. **New creative skills** developed by centre members and staff as a result of participating in arts and craft workshops, poetry workshops, reminiscence and illustration sessions to co-create the project's heritage, as well as **public-facing creative outputs** including the touring exhibition and documentary film.
2. **Increased learning about heritage** developed from a number of activities, namely oral history interview training and conducting interviews, visit to the Nottinghamshire Archives, participatory heritage and NTU student internships; this learning was extended to wider public audiences who engaged with the project, which helped to improve perceptions of mental illness and reduce stigma.
3. **Greater wellbeing** for participants on an individual level, changing both participants' perceptions of their own mental health, but also changing public perceptions of mental health, leading to behaviour change.

15

Co-production Workshops

4

Public Exhibitions

8

Public Events

6

Delivery Partners

5

Academic conferences

4

Paid student internships

300+

People involved

30

Oral history interviews

15

Portrait photographs

1

Heritage Booklet

1

Film Documentary

3

Heritage of Wellbeing Postcards

In addition to the project outcomes, there are five key areas where a change in ideas and experiences led to future action.

- 1. Centre users' confidence:** Through taking part in visits, creative workshops and oral history interviews, their confidence developed through small supported aspects such as taking the tram together and working with Artists has influenced and inspired centre users to repeat these activities.
- 2. Centre staff understanding and communicating the values of Middle Street:** Due to the rich histories gathered through the oral history interviews and the creative materials generated by centre users, volunteers and staff members, staff have been able to clearly reflect upon and communicate to an external audience the key values of the centre.
- 3. Changing perceptions of mental health:** The exhibition survey demonstrated changed perceptions of mental health, not only with the centre, but within everyday life.
- 4. Positive behaviour change:** In relation to both participants and the wider public, positive behaviour change was highlighted through a deeper understanding of how mental health can impact upon society and a more compassionate and empathetic outlook on those that might suffer.
- 5. University facilitating a co-production based oral history participatory heritage project with people with diverse mental health conditions:** This generated an understanding that the centre members were the knowledge generators, challenging future research to adopt similar approaches.

Following an introduction to MSRC and those involved in the project, the evaluation methodology is shared. This is followed by quantitative and qualitative data on outcomes achieved under the headings: **new creative skills, increased learning about heritage and greater wellbeing.** A project-level evaluation reflects on what worked well, challenges of the project and lessons learnt, leading to recommendations. Finally, the report considers the legacy of the project and where ideas have led to action.



INTRODUCTION

Celebrating 50 years of the Middle Street Resource Centre, this project was co-produced with centre users, staff, volunteers and others, including young people, and funded by a grant of £98,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded to Nottingham Trent University in 2022. The project explored, championed and preserved the rich and hidden heritage of a mental health day centre in Beeston which has been supporting people with lived experience of mental ill health for over half a century. Whilst the history of mental healthcare in Britain has long been documented, the histories of people who with lived experiences of the mental health system continue to remain undocumented. This project gave voice to people that are involved in the day centre through the co-production of oral histories, memory boxes, illustrations, artwork, poetry and illustration that share the unheard testimonies of people who use, work and volunteer at Middle Street Resource Centre.

The Middle Street Resource Centre is considered such a special place by the people who used the Centre over the years, the volunteers and the staff and their views of this project are captured within this report. The project was led by Dr Verusca Calabria (Project Principal Investigator (PI), Professor Geraldine Brady (Co-Investigator), Dr Charlie Gregson (Co-Investigator) and Dr Dale Copley (Project Officer) from Nottingham Trent University. Providing the participatory activities were Lauren Hunt ([Thortify](#)), Ben Felstead, Bridie Squires and Raphael Apache ([Nottingham Community Artists' Network](#)), with Phil Formby Photography (www.philipformby.com) and Adrian Firth of Rad Digital (raddigital.co) who produced the design work for the exhibition, community history booklet, wellbeing postcards and website design. The heritage interns and volunteers also contributed their valuable time to the project through recording and analysing oral histories, curating the exhibitions and collecting feedback from the public.



Arts and Crafts public activities

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Dr Frances Howard was the external evaluator for this project. She adopted an ethnographic approach to the evaluation, opting to be present for as much of the project as possible, often experiencing workshops, the exhibition and documentary film as the participants did.

Frances conducted 'talk around art' interviews with participants from the creative workshops. She also interviewed centre staff and project stakeholders at various points during the project to reflect upon impact, progress and any changes that had been made.

In addition to these qualitative approaches, the evaluation was supported by a number of quantitative approaches designed by the project PI and project officer:

- Oral history training feedback forms (17)
- Public Heritage events participation surveys (42)
- Heritage interns 'transformation framework' created specifically for this project (4)
- Exhibition survey (59) and visitors book (48)
- Wellbeing postcards feedback (65 also qualitative comments)
- Website visits (www.mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk): 1.8K visits, with 1.5 unique visitors, with visits peaking during exhibition times
- X posts and interactions (@HealthMemories): 25 project-related tweets, with re-tweets from @NTUResearch, @OralHistorySoc and @NottmLibraries. Interactions peaked at 311.



Arts and Crafts public activities

¹This number also includes oral history interviewers and transcription volunteers.

OUTCOME 1: NEW CREATIVE SKILLS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Fifteen co-production workshops were facilitated by professional Artists, which generated creative outputs that explored centre members' heritage learning about the Middle Street Resource Centre. These included arts and craft sessions run by Lauren Hunt (Thortify), poetry workshops led by Bridie Squires and reminiscence and illustration sessions run by Raphael Apache and Ben Felstead (Nottingham Community Artists' Network). Other creative outputs included a touring exhibition and a documentary film. A small celebratory community history booklet, that traces the history of the Centre via a timeline and documents the project and the creative activities was also co-created with centre members for distribution at the centre and beyond. This section of the report shares the experiences of both the Artists and the participants through recounting the positive benefits of taking part in these heritage and art-based activities.

The Middle Street centre was already providing regular creative sessions for its members, however the heritage project has enabled an expansion of these activities with new opportunities for professional Artists to be connected to the Centre. These creative workshops helped to engage people with enduring mental ill health in continuing with activities or to try new activities. Project Lead, Dr Verusca Calabria described the co-produced heritage assets as "a vehicle for the people who use the centre to let the staff know their feedback and lived experiences. The creative outputs were a mechanism for communicating with them".

The below table gives an overview of the quantitative data from the creative activities.

Activity	Artists / Heritage Professionals involved	Participants	Number of sessions	Outputs
Arts and crafts	1	45	16	Individual artwork Exhibition – 3 versions 25 physical boxes on display across all exhibitions; 3 memory boxes featured in the exhibition panels. 3 memory boxes featured in the Wellbeing postcards
Poetry	2	15	3	Individual and group poems 10 Poems featured in the exhibition and documentary film
Illustration	1	8	3	8 Illustrations featured in the exhibition and documentary film
Photography	1	11	4	23 portraits taken for the oral history archive
Public workshops	4	75	4	The History of Mental Healthcare; Mental Health and and Nottinghamshire Archives; Writing Mental Health; The Art of Self Care
Touring exhibition	2	35	50 days on display	12 exhibition panels displaying co-produced creative work
Documentary film	2	23	2 screenings	Entry to future film international festivals

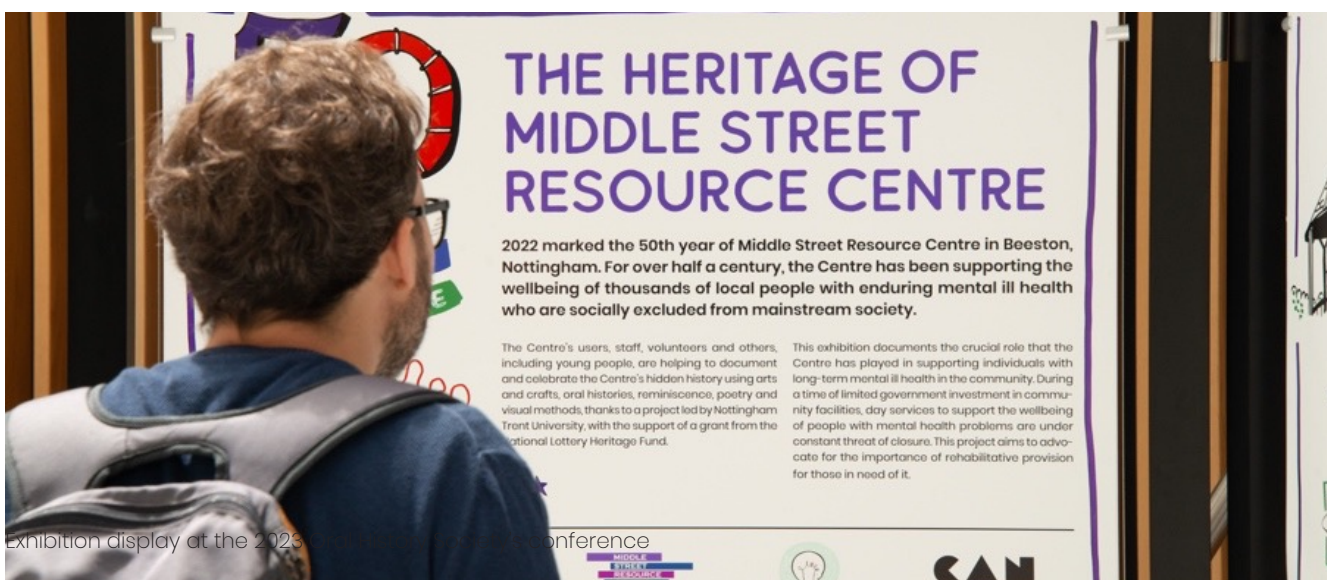
Arts and craft workshops

The creative facilitation approach from Thortify was to provide a range of different activities for the participants to try, depending on confidence level. Together the group created several memory boxes, concertina sketchbooks, a decoupage sculpture, which enabled some participants to work collaborative or own their own. The artwork was put on display as part of the first exhibition in 2023 at Beeston Library. Through the process of making art that reflected their memories of the centre, it was important that each participant felt they had made a contribution. As participants gained more confidence, they began to try new techniques and to work more independently, with some participants taking materials and artwork to continue at home. Giving participants freedom to choose and scope to explore different techniques, in particular for those who did not feel confident in arts activities, enabled them to consistently build confidence in individual participants over a number of weeks.



Arts and craft session with centre users

Workshop leader Lauren Hunt felt that the arts and craft workshops had awoken something positive in the lives of the participants, having initially felt that the activities 'weren't for them'. Feedback from centre members following the Beeston library exhibition of the group's artwork conveyed a sense of achievement and accomplishment through being part of creative arts engagement.



Exhibition display at the 2023 conference

“One of the really touching moments was when one lady she said to me in the first session, that she’s not creative at all and she felt really anxious about it. But then she went away and did this quilting technique that she made herself. It was beautiful”.

(Lauren Hunt)



Memory box made by a centre user

Participant evaluation, conducted by Thortify, through self-reported ratings of ‘creative confidence’ demonstrated a 16.7% increase, whilst the self-reported ratings of the ‘importance of being in a group’ decreased by 2.8% showing that participants were developing confidence in non-group settings.

Activity	Creative confidence rating	Importance of being part of the group
First session self-reported evaluation forms (completed on 25/01/23)	average 4.625	average 9.875
End of course self reported evaluation forms (completed on 10/05/23)	average 5.4	average 9.6
% increase/decrease	16.7%	2.8%

Centre members who took part in the arts and craft workshops gave feedback that working with different art materials and techniques had opened up an avenue to think back about the history of the Middle Street centre sparking different conversations, exchanges and routes to share their own experiences whilst working on their art.

“It’s amazing because we were all talking and mixing more. When we are talking in a circle and when we were making art at the same time. And we all felt the benefit from that, after we’ve done it. The art group makes me come out (to the centre), because as someone with anxiety, otherwise I’d stay at home. I mean, I’ve had days where I’ve got ready to go and then I think ‘no, I can’t go’. But once I’ve come there, you realise that you’re the not the only one and when you get time to discuss it, when we’re sitting together, I feel better about myself. In that group, we were painting and that’s the first time I’ve tried to do anything like that. Now I’ve got some painting bits at home, which I can do whenever I want”.

(participant)

Centre members reported on the value of the group as facilitating a safe space and a level of understanding, where people around them knew what they were going through. The art group took the time to reflect upon the key values of the Middle Street Resource centre, which included friendship and acceptance. They designed these key words on large decorative banners as part of the exhibition. The group were also able to reflect upon their own shared memories, through recounting exciting trips and the importance of a cup of tea and a biscuit to help people feel welcome. These themes were reflected in the visual art that participants chose to make.

One participant reflected that

“being part of this group has made me remember just how welcome you are made to feel when you come to the Centre. The feeling of inclusion and acceptance, and then for me, happiness. This project embraces all of our different stories and journeys that we’ve had. You walk in that door and your life transforms for that period of time you’re there, and that strengthens you”.



Arts and craft work by Centre users

One of the most enjoyable aspects for the workshop leader, Lauren Hunt, who knew very little about the centre when starting the project, was listening to participants' conversations, whilst they were engaged in the arts activities. Hearing about centre members' reflections upon their own development and their own journey, felt like a privilege. Participants were complementary about the openness of the arts and craft sessions, having the freedom to work with a wide range of materials and techniques. One participant reported that they found the arts workshops a lot more free-flowing than other arts sessions they had attended and that this was valuable because it allowed her to let loose with her imagination and see where the materials would take her. The Artist approached the project with an intentional openness, designed to be more inclusive and more nurturing of participants, as the below quote shows:

"We tried to leave things very open and wanted it to feel intuitive for people. One lady had the idea to make a timeline and so we all wrote quickly, a kind of brainstorm, using logos and images, thinking about all the different ways that they could show these memories. My intention was to try and make the blank page a little less intimidating, so we were looking at sort of shapes and patterns, and they just dived in, inspired to make collages".

(Lauren Hunt)

Poetry workshops

The poetry workshops were facilitated by Bridie Squires, Nottingham Trent University's first Writer in Residence and founder Nottingham spoken-word collective GOBS. Bridie worked with both wellness and reminiscence techniques in her series of poetry workshops. For the workshops within the centre, the immediate environment was used as inspiration, sharing different ideas and hearing stories from people who have been coming to the Centre for a long time. After walking around the garden and the indoor spaces, participants worked collectively on writing exercises and then worked on individual poems.

"When I was a kid, I mostly wrote poetry about my mental health. I didn't really talk much, so that was my main communication and how I was processing my emotions. So, when my mental life improved, I think communication was a big thing to help me process and the way I communicated with myself through mental health poetry, helped me to put things into words that I didn't really quite understand and hadn't really fully dealt with yet. And for me, a lot of my memories of the Centre have been when I first came here and my mental health was pretty bad. But this has helped me a lot and my more recent memories have been extremely positive".

(participant)

“We had a discussion in the cafe first about some brainstorming ideas and we walked around the centre getting different bits of inspiration and made some notes and as a group we would take turns writing a line, or someone would come up with a phrase and then someone else would finish it. So as well as your own individual poetry, we could do something as a group as well, because obviously you find shared experiences with others”

(participant)

CON[FREE]DENCE

By Ray Winstanley

So hard to build but quick to fall
Sometimes there is enough, others none at all
Stand at the counter, working the till
This is where confidence, begins to till
Some want a drink, some want to feed
But for me being useful, is all that I need
Trusted with money, and casting a smile
It is hard for my depression to say this is not worthwhile
If I was good for nothing, then I could not do this
Defying depression, absolute bliss
Depression's still there, but in the back of my head
I will be damned to feel better off dead
If you feel it is too hard, that you are not good enough
Take my advice and try call Depression's bluff
Stand at the till and just breath and feel free
Build up your confidence and get my Coffee.

For both the arts and craft and poetry groups, the garden at the Middle Street centre proved a key source of inspiration. In sharing their stories and experiences of the Middle Street centre, centre members frequently reflected upon the value of this space and access to nature for them.

“The hidden gem is the garden. We've got this amazing green space out back there that you can't see from the road and so bringing that to life, through the art project, was quite important. There's a real synergy with that particular piece of creative work re-creating the garden in an old suitcase, or whatever, and what we know from scientific studies that show being in touch with nature is really important for positive mental well-being. We've got flowers growing there. We've got ponds, we've got wildlife coming in, some groups have built bird boxes and bee boxes, and insect and hedgehog houses, all sorts. We've got this, this whole kind of ecosystem going on out there. So, being able to go and sit in the garden and take in the beauty of nature is so important. Through the creative workshops, people have been voluntarily re-creating that sort of nature experience for themselves”.

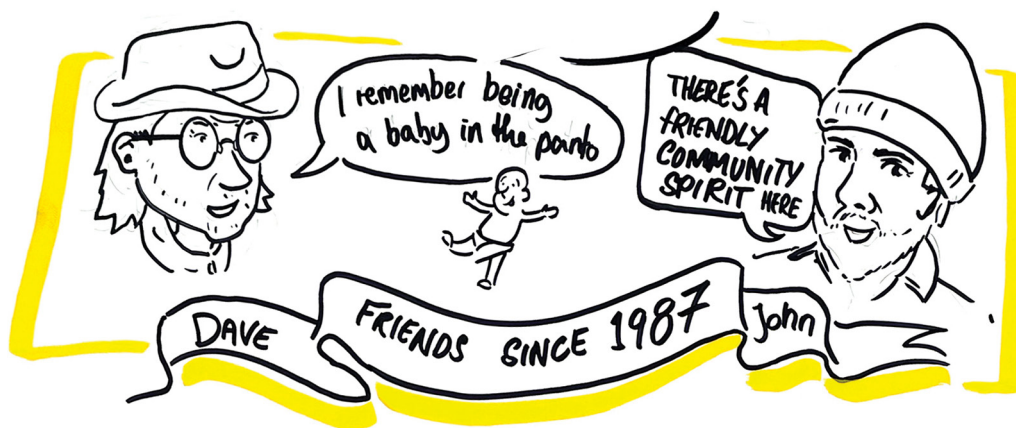
(Middle Street staff)



This co-produced memory box represent the garden at the centre

Reminiscence and illustration sessions

Led by Raphael Apache from Nottingham Community Artists Network, the illustration sessions happened in an informal drop-in style. Raphael began by sitting and drawing in the café space, which attracted a crowd of people. These centre members were then encouraged to share their stories, which Raphael was able to illustrate live. He facilitated several sessions where participants would sit around the table having a coffee, and Raphael would illustrate objects, parts of the building and even portraits in response to the conversations (see example below). Wanting to fit in with the lively atmosphere in the café, the reminiscence and illustration sessions were enjoyed by centre members, fun to be part of and created strong imagery and memory work. Making a visual record of people's past experiences was an important resource for the project as the illustrations created were used as part of the touring exhibition, the project booklet, the documentary film and were placed in the oral history archive. In addition, staff are also using these illustrations to develop their website and show what the centre means to people who use it.



An illustration from the reminiscence events

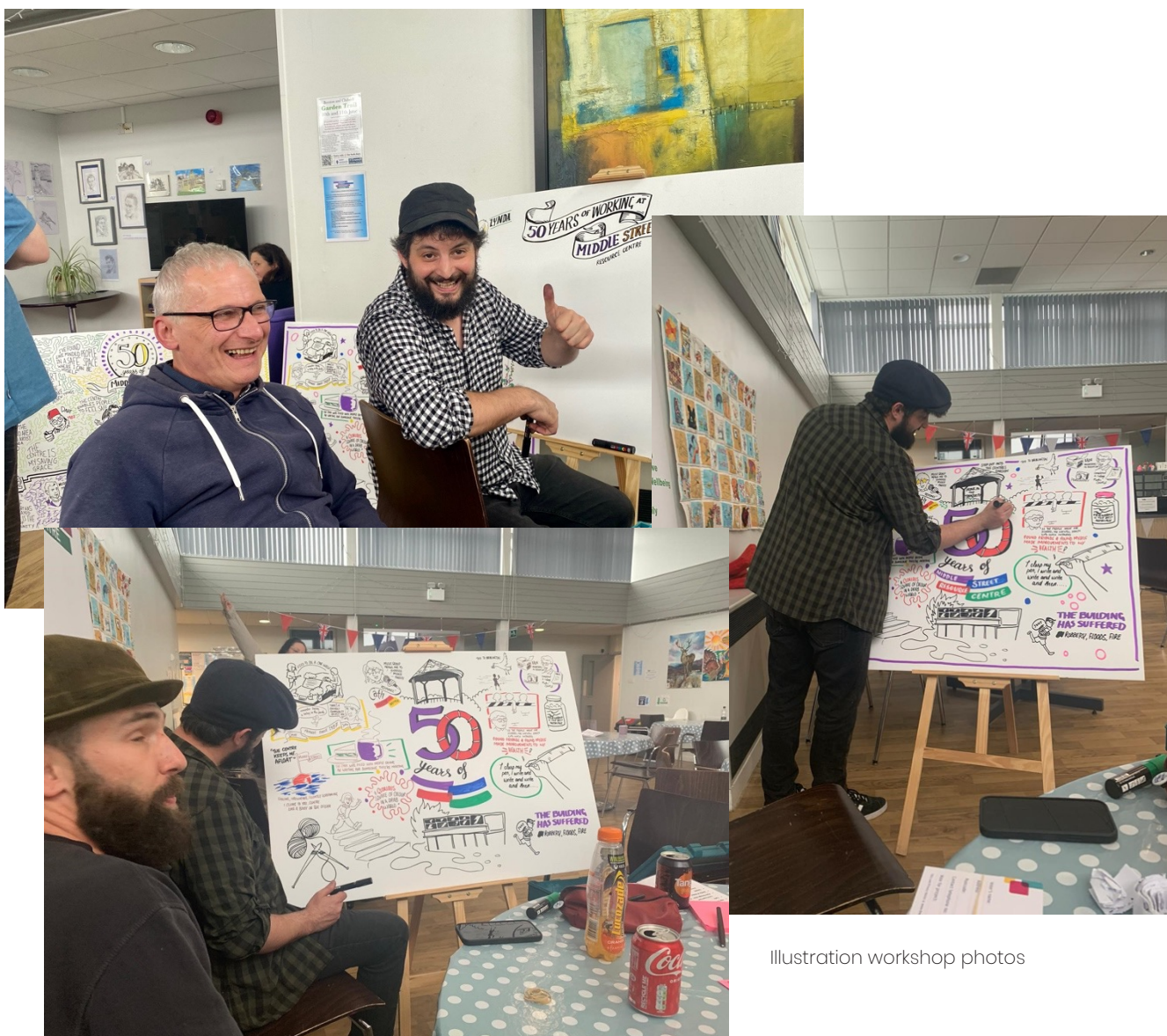


Illustration workshop photos

Documentary film-making

The creative outputs from the arts and crafts workshops, poetry, illustrations and excerpts from the oral history interviews were used as heritage assets within the documentary film. Additional footage was taken of staff and centre user interviews to capture the rich history of the Middle Street Resource centre and the value of the project. Capturing the stories of project participants for the film further supported materials for the Oral History collection that has been archived and enabled centre users and staff, who had been involved with the centre for a long time, to communicate and amplify their views and experiences to a wider audience.

Film-makers spent a considerable amount of time listening to the oral history interviews, selecting short excerpts, as well as collecting new footage. The assemblage style of the final documentary film: filmed interviews, audio recordings, illustrations and participant poetry were representative of the way that the Middle Street centre functions, as an honest and authentic mix of diverse people all supporting one goal, to highlight the importance of access to place-based support structures to support people with mental health needs. The aesthetic of the film captures the different groups coming together, the meanings attached to the spaces within the Middle Street centre and people doing different activities.

Following the film screening launch, held at Beeston library on 28th February 2024, attended by 50 people, project Lead Dr Verusca Calabria advocated for the creative output as an important piece of legacy work, which would support learning (formal and informal) about the history of mental health in future:

“The film helps to amplify an element of the history of mental health care that is very seldom told because within mental health there are a number of stakeholders, for example those that are particularly disadvantaged, or marginalized even, whose voices are never heard. When I play some oral history clips to my students, they are often surprised that people with serious long term mental health conditions can talk for themselves. People assume that this can't be somebody who is suffering, because they can speak. That's why the documentary film is so important in humanising mental health, and for making people visible, who are generally forgotten. But in the film, you see that these people are actually knowledge producers”

(Verusca Calabria)



A still from the film documentary

The film has now been screened 3 times to the public. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with several audience members expressing being affected emotionally by understanding the importance of accessing a safe place to access emotional and social support for people with enduring mental health conditions. One audience member at the Beeston library screening who has been a regular user of the Centre following a mental health crisis recalled that the film helped him realise how the Centre has acted as a sanctuary during his convalescence. Similarly, a volunteer in the audience was moved to tears remembering how the Centre has saved her life by providing a life line support. When the film was shown at a conference about the public history of mental illness, a retired psychiatrist who witnessed the demise of mental health services since the advent of the austerity programme commented: “This film needs to be shown to commissioners of services and politicians to get them to realise the importance of funding day services.”

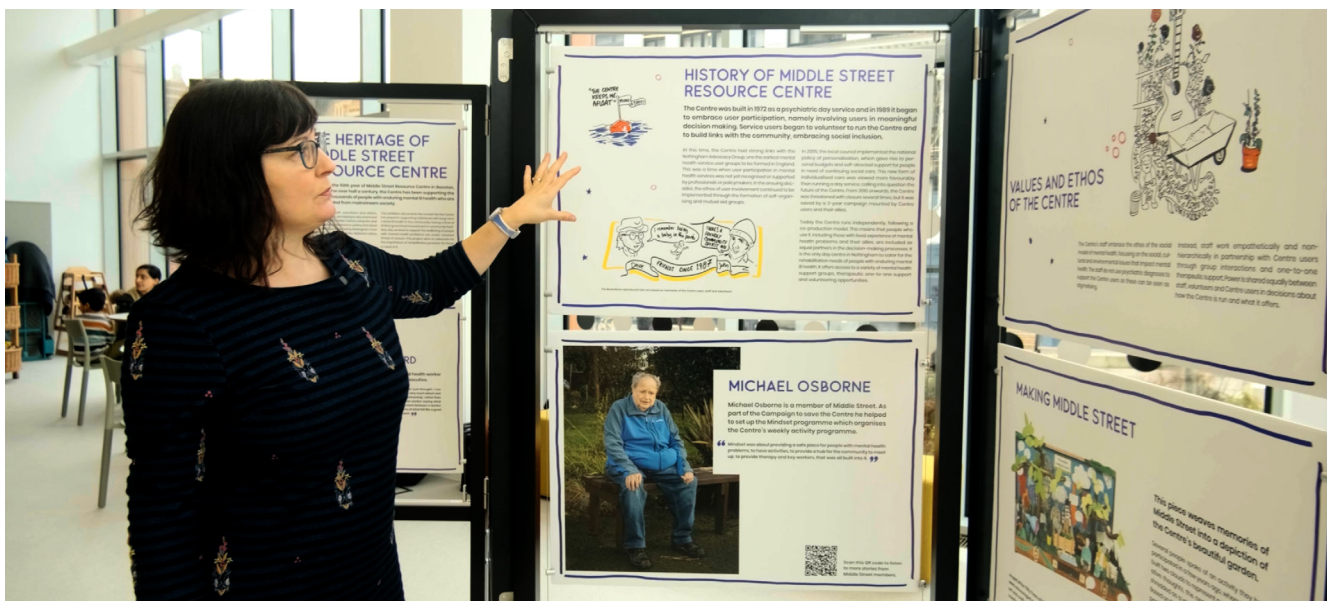
Touring exhibition and public perceptions

The audio-visual exhibition, made up of twelve panels in total, comprised of research on the history of mental health day centres, a timeline of the history of the Middle Street centre, with photographs and comments from centre's staff and members. The artwork, memory boxes, poetry and illustrations created during the creative workshops added another layer of visual interpretation, as well as celebrating the creative achievements of the participants. The online version of the exhibition also has embedded audio clips from the oral histories. The graphic style of the exhibition panels worked well to capture the way the centre is run in a welcoming, fluid and informal approach. There is also a [digital version of the exhibition](#).

The themes of the exhibition included:

- Making Middle Street
- The campaign to save the centre
- Values and ethos of the centre
- The people make the place
- A safe space

Centre staff reported that they felt the exhibition truly told the story of the Middle Street Resource Centre, not only in terms of the text and visuals but also in terms of the atmosphere. Many centre users fed back that they had learned a great deal about the history of the centre from the exhibition, the interview excerpts and the creative outputs that were on display. This co-production approach to creating exhibition outputs ensures that participants feel at the heart of the exhibition. They feel 'heard' and they also feel 'seen' through generating an important resource for people in future. A further output from this project is a National Lottery Heritage Fund [case study](#) on disability heritage to support organisations to develop best practice when coproducing heritage with vulnerable groups.



Verusca Calabria at the exhibition at Nottingham Central Library

As stated in the project highlights section, the project exhibition was on display at four different venues: Beeston Library, the Oral History Society conference, the Middle Street Resource Centre and Nottingham's Central Library, and the content changed and grew each time. Below are outcomes, sample comments and feedback from each of the venues.

Exhibition at Beeston Library (2nd to 28th February 2024)

Feedback from the exhibition comments book from people who use the Centre included:

“I was nervous at first at the thought of a project and very unsure of what contribution I could possibly make. It’s been a revelation to see how it’s brought us together and how it’s allowed us to open up. Fears have turned into fun and the thought “I can’t do this’ have turned into ‘look what I’ve achieved. The project has changed my own views on my perceptions of situations”.

“It’s difficult to completely express in words what this project had meant to me and our group. This act of re-creating these memories and experiences has deepened our friendship and our bond as women, sisters together. The creative process flowed with the help and encouragement of Lauren and those around us. It was fun, moving and inspiring and I feel honored to have been part of the process”.

Exhibition at The Oral History Society's Making Histories Together Conference, Nottingham Trent University (23rd and 24th June 2023)

This prestigious 2-day international conference, in partnership with Nottingham Trent University and the East Midlands Oral History Archive, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Oral History Society. The conference provided great exposure for the project as it attracted 230 delegates, including seasoned practitioners and those new to oral history, ranging from new postgraduates to community-based projects.



The project team, Dale Copley, Verusca Calabria and Geraldine Brady, in front of the exhibition display at the conference

Audio-visual exhibition, Middle Street Resource Centre café, Beeston, Nottingham (July/Oct 23)

Over 300 individuals who rely on the Centre for mental health support engaged with the exhibition. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and acted as a platform for centre users to feedback to the Centre staff and volunteers. Overall, centre users felt the exhibition portrayed the welcoming and supporting atmosphere of the centre; staff and volunteers felt that it challenged stereotypical perceptions of day centres and showcased the importance of the long-term psychosocial support provided therein.

Comments included:

“I would be lost without the Centre, lovely to see being celebrated”.

“Brilliant way of charting the history of this great resource”.

“The centre is a special place, this comes through the exhibition”.

“Lovely welcome here, thank you everyone for everything you do”.

“This centre is for everyone and it is amazing”.

“I’m thankful for the staff’s help and support over the years, I wouldn’t be here without it”.

“A vital resource for the Beeston community”.

Audio-visual exhibition at Nottingham Central Library (Dec 23/Jan 24)

In total 90% of visitors who engaged with the multimedia exhibition rated it as excellent and 70% stated that the exhibition improved their understanding of the needs of people with enduring mental health conditions and awareness of the importance of support structures in the community.

Comments included:

“It was really uplifting to read their stories and gave me a sense of hope”.

“I found it very illuminating. I am not local, but it appears to play a very important role in the culture of mental health/society”.

“An honest and truthful understanding of the need for safe, creative and democratic space for people who rely on shared peer support to help with their own human condition and some fragility to the sole something which honest we all share and need”.

“A powerful reminder of the value of collective experience in shaping how we make sense of madness and distress”.

“Fascinating insight. Learned a lot from the stories - very valuable to have this resource because it helps me understand the importance of this type of care centre”.

“The graphics are beautiful. The words and quotes are very poignant. It is an easy to comprehend exhibition for all and the use of QR codes is very useful as it means I can look at the information later”.



Arts and Crafts public activities

OUTCOME 2: INCREASED LEARNING ABOUT HERITAGE

There were four mechanisms within the project that facilitated increased learning about heritage: oral history interview training and conducting interviews, the visit to the Nottinghamshire Archives, participatory heritage workshops and NTU student internships. 41% of participants stated that they had no experience of oral histories before the project, with 100% of participants reporting an increase in this knowledge following the oral history training.

The below table documents the range of heritage learning activities with the number of heritage professionals involved, participants, volunteer hours and outcomes.

Activity	Heritage professionals involved	Participants	Number of volunteer/paid hours	Outcomes
Oral History and transcription training	2	17	280	Skills and learning gained include: history of UK mental health policy; oral history interviewing skills; interview preparation; designing an interview guide; digital audio equipment standards and use; post interview data processing; transcribing dos and don'ts; transcription standards and archival forms; transcription software
Visit to Nottinghamshire Archives	2	9	1	types and nature of historical documents in archives; accessing archival documents; history of local mental health services
NTU student paid internships	1	4	250	Skills / learning evaluated: Archival research, Information management, Ability to engage with different audience groups, Administration, Social media, marketing Communications, Teamwork, Co-production, Database/digital , Evaluation, Basic computer skills, Understanding of removing barriers to participation for underserved groups, Organised and proactive approach, Interpersonal skills and positive attitude, Excellent listening skills.
Recording of oral history interviews	1	30	10	Putting the skills and learning from the oral history training into practice.
Training in interpreting heritage assets	2	n/a	n/a	
Production of heritage learning materials	2	26	100	Exhibition flyer, exhibition learning materials, Legacy of MSRC booklet
HLF co-production case study	2	n/a	0	
Wellbeing Postcards	3	16	100	Skills and learning include the memory boxes made by the people who use the centre informed a wellbeing asset to be used with young people to improve their wellbeing The process of developing the memory boxes helped to devise a Do-It-Yourself Self Care Memory Box Pack for wider use
Self Care Do-It-Yourself Memory Box Pack	1	16	150	The process of developing the memory boxes helped to devise a Do-It-Yourself Self Care Memory Box Pack for wider use
A Brief History of Middle Street Booklet	4	15	90	Some of the people who use the Centre helped to design the timeline that makes the centrepiece of the booklet, engendering a sense of pride in participants

It was clear that all participants and people involved with the project learnt about the heritage of the Middle Street centre. Many activities were organised so that participants could not only share their own stories, but also engage with the history of the centre. These ranged from informal reminiscence events, sitting in the café with old photos and newspaper articles; to two group visits to the Nottinghamshire Archives; training of volunteers for oral history interviewing and transcribing; and the four heritage internships offered to NTU students.

Heritage was a unique angle of this project, with participatory heritage at its heart, so that centre members and volunteers could be offered new experiences and take an active role in decisions about how their stories would be told. Staff reflected that centre members had not been involved with heritage before but through visiting new places, like the Nottinghamshire Archives and Nottingham Central Library, working with new partners such as Thortify and Nottingham Community Artists Network, they had become interested and involved. Before this project many centre users were unaware that the Middle Street Resource centre had existed for fifty years, and those that have been involved with the centre for a longer time, were able to re-engage with its key historical events, such as the Campaign to save the centre in the 2010s. Learning about the heritage also gave an opportunity for centre staff to re-connect with external champions of the centre, involved in the campaign, such as Councillor Kate Foles, a friend to the Middle Street Resource Centre.

Skills development

30 new oral history interviews and associated materials have been transcribed, indexed and deposited in the East Midlands Oral History Archive. These were accompanied by portraiture of people who had given their histories, taken by photographer Phil Formby, who spent time building relationships with the centre and its members. Being involved in participatory heritage through oral history interviewing was reported as being ‘empowering’ by the participants. Drawing on a co-production approach to research, participants have been involved in data generation and as a result developed skills in interviewing and transcribing, which offers an alternative approach to traditional research which is extractive only.



Portrait of Kate Foale by Phil Formby

From the 9 volunteers who trained to be oral history interviewers, they reflected on the range of skills they developed; from the art of asking questions to elicit as much response as possible, to the technical aspects of using the digital audio recorder and making sure that everything that has been discussed during the interview is actually captured safely on the digital recording device. In addition, the opportunity to learn more about the Middle Street centre’s history was facilitated through the interviewing role:

“It was quite different for me to be on the interviewer side of it. I’ve done job interviews before, but I hadn’t really explored someone’s personal experience of the centre and that was enlightening, actually. It was really interesting to find out from the people who I interviewed what their involvement had been with the Centre and some of them have dated back to way before the charity took on its running. So, I got a really good picture of how individuals had interacted with the Centre and what their thoughts, feelings and experiences have been, which helped me to put together an almost jigsaw puzzle in my mind of how the centre had ended up being what it is today. Also, being involved in that side of the project helped me to feel that I had been of some practical use. To know that something I did is going to be in the archives, the eternity, is a fantastic feeling”.

(volunteer oral history interviewer)

Feedback from Oral History training cohort rated 100% satisfaction with the training session. Understanding ethics and legality following the training was rated 60% ‘very well’ and 40% ‘fairly well’. Confidence in interview skills was rated 85% ‘very confident’ and 25% ‘fairly confident’. 100% of participants felt ‘very well informed’ about the project following the training.



Oral history volunteer Kim interviewing Middle Street Resource Centre trustee volunteer and former centre user Val

The experience of being interviewed, as well as undertaking interviews was overwhelmingly positive for participants:

“I’ve been able to share my story through this project. Firstly, with the oral history interview and then with the poetry. That was probably the biggest involvement I had and learning new skills in terms of learning to talk to people a bit more and learned a bit more about the Centre through the exhibition as well. I’d pick up information from talking to people here, but there’s always more to learn, and there was lots I don’t know. You might have the same story from two people, but it sounds completely different. And lots of people may be thinking, well, their story is not important, no-one would be interested in it, but there’s lots of people in history before that are now we’re the household names! So, it’s always interesting to get the stories and details from different perspectives”.

(Volunteer and participant)



Oral history volunteers discussing oral history skills

“It’s been a privilege to do some really lovely oral history interviews, that were insightful, life affirming and bigger in scope than the project. Oral history is always a privilege and having access to these participants has been a testament to the project and with the nature of the topic, people were able to speak in-depth relatively quickly”.

(Dale Copley, Project Manager)



Oral history volunteers practising interviewing

Participants also reported positively upon their experience of preparing to be interviewed, taking the time to reflect about what is important about the Middle Street centre for them. Without this project and the experience of oral history interviews, this opportunity to engage with the history and participants' lived experiences of the centre would have been lost. The following excerpt from a centre volunteer highlights the value of being interviewed for them:

“In preparation for my own oral history interview caused me to sit and think about the journey that I’d come through in a way that I hadn’t thought about before. So I was able to map out my experience at the Centre. But it helped me to recognize that actually, my mental well-being is significantly better as a direct result of the Centre being here, but it’s not just about the fabric of the building. You know, when we talk about the history of Middle St. it’s actually about the people. We could have this building of any shape or size, but it’s about the people, who have made it the place that it is, and the volunteers. And that reflection was for me what encouraged me to come back to volunteer”.

(Oral history interviewer)

Feedback from the Nottinghamshire Archives trip was overwhelmingly positive and centre members came away buzzing with excitement. They felt enlightened because not only were they exploring the history of the Middle Street centre, but they were exploring the wider history of mental healthcare in Nottinghamshire that they didn't realise existed. This experience opened participants eyes to historically what was going on across Nottinghamshire, but with a specific focus on mental health through the ages. There were some quite troubling aspects that emerged in terms of how mental illness was dealt with in the past, but there were also some positive affirmations about how mental health is supported now in a much better way.

Project Lead, Verusca Calabria, stated that: “this project acts as ‘counter heritage’ because it challenges traditional ways of knowing the past of mental healthcare. It also acts as a form of resistance to cuts in mental health, while simultaneously creating spaces where we can create relational connections and relational spaces outside of the bounds of mental health institutions. This participatory approach to heritage is supporting having placed-based spaces where people can choose to be together, like the Middle Street centre”.

Heritage internships

4 NTU students undertook 50 hours paid heritage internships each (totalling 200 hours), which were evaluated through the completion of an individual ‘transformation framework’ and an exit interview. This framework was designed by Charlie Gregson, a heritage expert and NTU Museum Studies Senior Lecturer (co-investigator on this project) to support intern skills development and reflection, in the context of NTU employability aspirations and skills required by industry. Interns were required to benchmark their skills and then revisit these scales by the end of the project. The exit interview provided a reflective SWOT analysis or Personal Development Plan which highlighted the strengths that the interns needed to keep developing. See appendix 1 at the end of this report for a table charting the development of skills and personal qualities and areas for all 4 interns.

When reflecting upon their skills development, 75% of the heritage interns reported improvements in archival research, information management, the ability to engage with different audience groups and administration. Social Media marketing was identified by interns as an area for development with 75% reaching a good level of ability and 25% being experienced by the end of the project. This was the same for digital and database skills. Teamwork and communication improved for all but one intern and the biggest area of skills gain being in evaluation (75% progressing to experienced ability). For interpersonal skills and positive attitude, interns rated their development at the highest level, progressing to Leader for 50%. Listening skills and understanding of removing barriers to participation for underserved groups increased to either good or experienced for 100% of interns.



Megan Williams, heritage intern, at the launch of first exhibition at Beeston Library, February 2024, which she helped to curate.

The exhibition was a key vehicle that the project created to change public perceptions of mental health. Designed to raise awareness to the history of mental health, as well as the Middle Street centre, members of the general public, across four venues were able to experience and celebrate what the centre members had made and done. This public facing element of the project was seen as vital for working towards behaviour change, destigmatising mental health and educating the public audience on the experiences that were familiar to Middle Street centre members, but perhaps not to them.

Reflecting upon the touring exhibition, a Middle Street centre trustee reported that:

“I think it captured some of the real essence of what people were saying about their experiences, thoughts and feelings about their involvement with Middle Street over the years. The other thing that I thought was really great about the exhibition was that we had some fantastic artists, who came in and captured visually what people were saying was their experience at the centre. So, we had this whole kind of visual and textual experience that the exhibition gave to challenge the public’s perception of mental health”.

(Trustee of the Centre)

Feedback from the exhibition comments book, on display at the Beeston library included:

“It’s lovely to see the Middle Street Community given some limelight. I’m sure that some many people from Beeston don’t know of it. Great to see how it’s gradually opened up to the wider community of the years. Best of all to see the stigma gradually declining”.

(Member of the public)

The NTU student heritage interns held an important role of gathering feedback from the public during the Nottingham Central library exhibition. Participants have been understandably quite interested in changing perceptions of mental health and have been keen to discuss the idea that the Middle Street centre was innovative. But public feedback also confirmed this:

“I have learnt about the language of mental ill health. I have some new language that helps me to avoid describing it in deficit terms, ‘mental health problems’, for example”.

“The exhibition has given me ideas to put time into simple things like walking, writing and reading”.

“It has given me an idea of alternative person-centred approaches – maybe minimising the need to psychiatric and similar medication. The medical model – psychiatric diagnoses – is not the whole story”.

“As I have suffered with poor mental health myself, it is so heart-warming to see a main exhibition given over to the subject and I have learnt that it is recognised. It has made me aware of the people who are more in need than me and that there are people dedicated to helping them, which is very encouraging”.



Heritage interns Zhuoran Wang and Madhavi H. Jayawardan deinstalling the exhibition at Nottingham Central Library

OUTCOME 3: GREATER WELLBEING

Wellbeing outcomes, changing perceptions of mental health and behaviour change

Activity	Wellbeing professionals involved	Participants	Number of sessions	Outcomes
Group visits for centre members	4	26	4	Increased confidence
Wellbeing Poetry and art-making workshops	4	48	12	
Wellbeing postcards	2	10	3	

Being a heritage project designed around a mental health day centre, participants already had a high level awareness of wellbeing and perceptions of mental health. One of the key aims of this project was to give the centre staff and users more visibility and bring voice to their experiences as a way of changing public perceptions of mental health, leading to behaviour change. Participants strongly felt that mental well-being is not talked enough about, and the stigma attached can be a barrier to them participating in wider society. The Middle Street Resource centre offered an alternative to this, where people could be together, whether they had experienced or were experiencing poor mental health, to be sociable and comfortable in an environment beyond their own home.

When asked about their own wellbeing during the project, outcomes such as self-esteem, creative confidence, new social connections and reducing loneliness were all mentioned, as indicators of wellbeing. However, centre members recognised that wellbeing was not always progression and that people living with mental health challenges have good days and bad days. This makes wellbeing challenging to track across the project, as centre members described both times of mental health crisis and times when they felt much better. What was significant about this position was the opportunities staff and centre members had to reflect upon their own mental health journeys and to listen to those of others. Below, an oral history interviewer describes listening to some difficult and negative experiences of those he was interviewing. Despite these past experiences, he was able to positively reflect about the contribution of the Middle Street centre has made to negating these narratives:

“I learned quite a lot about other people’s mental health journeys and some of it was quite shocking for me to hear. Stuff like electroconvulsive therapy, that people openly shared with me. And I don’t know whether they would have shared that if this project hadn’t been going on. But because we were capturing their own experiences of what had happened in the past, when they wouldn’t have been involved in their own mental health treatment processes. For them, not knowing what was going to happen next was quite a scary time. But they were able to reflect positively that they’ve come out the other side and they have continued to be involved in their mental health journeys through the Middle Street centre”.

(Oral history interviewer)

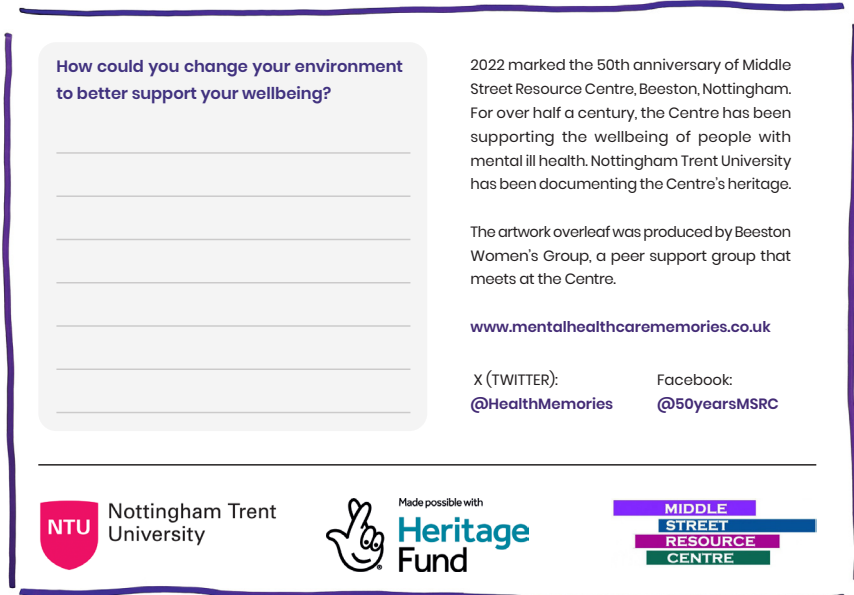
For the participants of the creative activities, being involved in these groups and working with the Artists and artforms had an immediate effect upon wellbeing. They viewed the participatory workshops as adding value to the existing activities at the centre, reporting that had those activities not have been on offer, there would have been a void in their lives. In addition, being part of activities at the Middle Street centre enabled participants to feel part of a bustling creative community.

As part of Thortify’s evaluation, participants of the arts and craft sessions were asked to self-report wellbeing at the beginning and end of sessions. This happened both at the start and end of the series of sessions, and for the public one-off creative activity workshops.

	Series of ten creative arts sessions with Middle Street	One-off Public workshop 1	One-off Public workshop 1	One-off Public workshop 1
Wellbeing rating before (scale of 1-10)	5.25	6.73	6.3	7.57
Wellbeing rating after (scale of 1-10)	5.7	9.33	8.8	9.28
Difference / perceived impact	Increase 0.25 (8.6%)	Increase 2.6 (38.6%)	Increase 2.5 (39.6%)	Increase 1.71 (22.6%)

The self-reported wellbeing rating demonstrated an increase in participant wellbeing after each arts and crafts session. For the Middle Street participant group, who engaged in a longer term series of sessions, this gain was smaller, due to the nature of participants longer-term mental health conditions. For the shorter engagement through one-off public workshops, there was more of a significant increase in self-reported wellbeing, with the highest increase being 39.6%. This quantitative analysis shows the benefits of both short term i.e. one-off and longer term engagement in arts and crafts activities for people's wellbeing.

Three Heritage of Wellbeing interactive postcards were created as an additional heritage asset for this project, accompanied the exhibition as an educative tool to help the public reflect upon their own mental health needs and perceptions, improve wellbeing and reduce stigma around mental health. These postcards were also used in workshops with NTU students and local youth groups, as a way of bringing attention to our own mental health.



The back of one of the Heritage postcards

3 sessions were delivered, during January and February 2024, with the aid of the postcards to a total of 65 young people (18-25) in the community and at NTU. The evaluation revealed that 92% improved their understanding of their own mental health needs after engaging with the interactive postcards. In addition, 93% stated they more likely to take their own mental health needs into consideration in the future. Sample comments include:

“It’s shown me that I know what will help me I just need to prioritise them.”

“I already struggle with my mental health so these questions have helped me to think about it more in order to help my mental state.”

“It shows the power of reflection to help with getting insight into one’s mental health state.”

Students and young people in the community utilised the heritage postcards as learning tasks from the project. Feedback included:

- Being able to take their own mental health into consideration and a better understanding of the needs of others with mental illness.
- Spending time in green spaces, avoiding negative environments and calling upon peer support.
- Knowing how and when to support someone they saw was struggling.
- Encouraging better listening and sharing skills, including how to start a conversation about mental health.

“ One of the things this place has taught me about,
is that everybody is just a person ”

Centre User



The front of one of the Heritage postcards

Knowledge Exchange

A further area of impact in relation to behaviour change towards mental health is the co-productive approach of the project, which encourage knowledge exchange, between centre staff and members. Being able to share and destigmatize mental illness was powerful in terms of the wider public in understanding their own mental health needs. From a heritage learning perspective, being able to track and document the changes in the Middle Street Resource centre over 50 years, consciously revealed tensions and contradictions in mental healthcare policy. Centre staff and members reported that looking back at the history of the centre, enabled them to argue that mental health is not a new problem, it's always been there, but new ways of dealing with it are being found. In addition, the approach of the Middle Street Resource centre may not have been considered beneficial in the past, but now the value of bringing people together in a community sense is viewed as invaluable by centre members.

A staff member at the centre further explains::

“What the centre was doing 50 years ago, is probably barely recognizable to what it’s doing today. It’s been used for different purposes, for example, it was a psychiatric day centre, but the mandate has always been to benefit mental health and it’s been a massive part in letting people have healthy and productive lives. Now Middle Street is an open centre, you don’t have to be referred here, this means people who do have mental health problems, and people who may or may not, get to interact more and actually realize that they’re not that different from each other and that helps reduce the stigma”.

PROJECT LEVEL LEARNING

What worked well within the project was the person-centred approach to participatory heritage and the language of co-production when making decisions about the project. Middle Street centre users were able to take an active role in shaping and contributing to the rich oral histories. Enabling active voice was a key tenet of the co-production approach of the project, described in the [National Lottery Heritage Fund case study](#). The ethos of coproduction in this project meant that the histories of the people who use the centre were told through a whole life history approach rather than simply through their illness stories to educate the public, humanise people with mental illness, and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness.

A wider impact of the project was the discussion that was awakened within the community about the centre and its enduring values. Centre members felt that part of the project's legacy was the communication of these values: friendship and acceptance that had remained a consistent offer 50 years into the centre's history. The project facilitated an important mechanism for reflection. The Project Heritage Officer Dale Copley argued that:

“Because we kept talking about what makes Middle Street special and what the Middle Street story can tell us about the history of mental health, that has provoked a conversation about what Middle Street is like now and what values go all the way through its history. There's obviously been huge changes in the way we deal with mental health as a society, but there have been some things where Middle Street were either way ahead of their time or have always been consistent in their values”.

Through communicating its story and values, the project enabled the centre to be more externally facing with connections made through the professional Artists, through Nottingham Trent University and academic networks, but also through the visibility of the creative outputs such as the exhibition and the documentary film. Part of this legacy is a wider recognition of the work of the Middle Street centre and new levels of partnership that will continue to grow beyond the life of the project. There was a strong sense that the centre had evolved into something that is no longer a closed day centre where people had to be referred to and is now a very open environment, where people experiencing a range of mental health conditions are no longer hidden. Centre users shared their learning about the shift in purpose of the organisation to becoming more open, like a community centre, which facilitates social mixing.

Lessons Learnt

Key lessons learnt through the project include allowing for flexibility and adaptations based upon participants needs. For example, the intention to set up a steering group for the project was not achievable due to the bottom-up nature of user participation. Within oral history training, participants learnt that there is no fixed way of measuring involvement and that different measures of co-production need to be enacted to ensure participants can be recruited and stay engaged. This new understanding challenged our ideas on 'participatory' research projects. There was also learning on the part of Nottingham Trent University, as portfolio holder for the project, in terms of running a heritage project and maintaining heritage assets as higher education institutions are not designed to act as heritage asset holders. Publications from the project and heritage assets, such as the Wellbeing postcards and the film documentary, are being used for teaching at NTU and other higher education institutions nationally and internationally on courses such as on the BA in Social Work at Manchester Metropolitan University and the MA in Public History at the University of Amsterdam. The Self Care Memory Box Do-It-Yourself Pack is being made available to other mental health peer support groups via the [project website](#).

There are two additional important learning points that have arisen from this project. Firstly, it is of paramount importance to balance the needs of people with mental health conditions with the standard engagement usually required on a heritage project, which does not take into account fluctuating mental health. This requires a flexible approach to the planning and delivery of activities, including setting realistic output targets for projects of this nature.

Secondly, when working with people who have suffered from serious and ongoing mental health difficulties, there is a risk that telling one's story could cause relapse. It is therefore imperative to build in appropriate professional support to mitigate this risk. Supporting the reminiscence sessions with illustration work helped some of the centre users who did not feel comfortable or confident in sharing their stories in the more formal setting of an oral history

interview. This was a key piece of learning for the project which providing inclusive methods to explore and preserve the heritage of vulnerable groups.

For this project, the project team had the assistance of two psychotherapists working on site at the centre that could offer psychological support to participants. Additionally, the project team benefited from the expertise of Professor Geraldine Brady from NTU working with vulnerable groups who helped developed a wellbeing and safeguarding guide for staff and volunteers.

Legacy and academic outcomes

The archiving of the 30 oral histories and associated materials at the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) represent a longitudinal legacy for the project. These primary source materials are added to the project narrative and art based outputs, as well as the digital presence being hosted on the Hidden Memories of Mental Healthcare website (www.mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk/middle-street-heritage). Being able to access outputs and resources digitally has built a longevity to the project, that can be used for future projects and research in perpetuity. A co-production case study has been created and published through the National Lottery Heritage Fund in order to support other organisations wanting to take a co-productive heritage approach when working with marginalized/vulnerable participants. As well as the handover of the recording equipment and the exhibition frame to Middle Street at the end of the project, so there are resources for centre members, should they want to continue any of the activities from the project.

As part of the legacy of the project, Lauren Hunt of Thortify has created 'self-care do-it-yourself memory boxes' that she will be disseminating at the skills sharing event in September and to other mental health groups in Nottingham. This resource has been added to the website (<https://www.thortify.co.uk/selfcarememorybox>).

In terms of **academic outcomes**, the project has attracted local, national and international interest. Project Leader Dr Verusca Calabria was invited to present the project at four conferences:

- The prestigious Oral History Society's hybrid conference "Making Histories Together" (July 2023), which celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Society which attracted 230 delegates from academic and the heritage and museum sectors.
- The International Health Humanities Conference 2023, University of Derby (September 2023)
- The 9th Chinese International Oral History Week, University Communication of China, Beijing, China (November 2023).
- Museums and Beyond: Public Histories of Mental Illness in the 21st Century, The University of Huddersfield and The Mental Health Museum, April 2024.

Verusca Calabria was also interviewed by Notts TV about the project in November 2023, alongside other press coverage and social media presence. One article was written for a special issue of Memory Studies about slow memory work and a forthcoming article is asylum magazine. The project developed Verusca Calabria's academic practice in a more collaborative direction, including working with artists. She now plans to embed this new approach in a toolkit that will improve the sharing of skills between professionals in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM) sector and academics in researching the social history and heritage of healthcare more broadly.

Next steps

Following this project, a new external funding application is being developed with international partners from the Galleries, Libraries, Art exhibitions and Museums (GLAM) industry. Verusca Calabria was recently invited to join the management committee of the newly launched [COST-Action European Healthcare Histories](#), a new European network of academics and heritage and museum practitioners interested in using a comparative approach to researching health histories across Europe. She is also the Chair of their Public Engagement and Heritage Working Group and will be organising an event, hosted at NTU in September that will showcase the impact of the art-based creative skills that were used on this heritage project (illustration, poetry, filmmaking etc.) to European academics working in the field of heritage and history of health.

IDEAS LEADING TO ACTION

Feedback from centre staff confirmed that the project had supported the Middle Street centre to develop organizational maturity as an independent charity. During the course of the project, the centre received the Kings Award for voluntary service for being “a shining example of volunteer-led mental health support, providing a safe haven within the community”. Being in a transition phase from a relatively young independent charity, to one that is becoming nationally recognized for its contribution to volunteering and supporting people’s mental health, the centre is now working with some key cultural partners in Nottingham. As a result of the project the organisation has undergone a step change in terms of organization maturity and confidence. Middle Street was not the only organization involved to develop confidence through the project, as a result of the successful arts and craft workshop with centre members, [Thortify](#) applied for an Arts Council England grant to continue their participatory work with other groups.

Through its various outcomes and outputs, the project evidenced five key areas where a change in ideas and experiences had led to future action.

- 1. Centre users confidence:** Through taking part in visits, creative workshops and oral history interviews, the confidence developed through small supported aspects such as taking the tram together and working with Artists has influenced and inspired centre users to repeat these activities.
- 2. Centre staff understanding and communicating the values of Middle Street:** Due to the rich histories gathered through the oral history interviews and the creative materials generated by centre users, volunteers and staff members, staff have been able to clearly reflect upon and communicate to an external audience the key values of the centre.
- 3. Changing perceptions of mental health:** The exhibition survey demonstrated changed perceptions of mental health, not only with the centre, but within everyday life. The heritage postcards further revealed that stigma around mental health had been reduced whilst wellbeing outcomes had been improved.
- 4. Positive behaviour change:** In relation to both participants and the wider public, positive behaviour change was highlighted through a deeper understanding of how mental health can impact upon society and a more compassionate and empathetic outlook on those that might suffer.
- 5. Improved mental health** of project participants engaging with the creative activities and young people engaging with the wellbeing postcards.
- 6. University facilitating a co-production based oral history participatory heritage project** with people with diverse mental health conditions: This generated an understanding that the centre members were the knowledge generators, challenging future research to adopt similar approaches.



Arts and Crafts public activities

CREDITS

This project is led by Nottingham Trent University and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

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APPENDIX 1

This table compiles data from the NTU heritage intern's 'transformation framework' and charts the development of skills and personal qualities.

	Intern 1 Skills and Personal qualities	Intern 2 Skills and Personal qualities	Intern 3 Skills and Personal qualities	Intern 4 Skills and Personal qualities
Archival research	No ability < good	Good ability < experienced	Some < good	Some stayed the same
Information management	Good ability < experienced	Experienced stayed the same	Experienced < experienced	Some stayed the same
Recording of oral history interviews	Good ability < experienced 1	Good ability stayed the same	Some < good	Good stayed the same
Administration	Some ability < good	Some ability < good	Good stayed the same	Good stayed the same
Social media marketing	No ability stayed the same	Some ability < good	Some < experienced	No ability < good
Communications	Good ability stayed the same	Good ability < experienced	Good < experienced	Good stayed the same
Teamwork	Good ability < experienced	Good ability < leader	Experienced stayed the same	Experienced > good
Co-production	No ability < good	Some ability < good	Some < good	Experienced > good
Database/digital	No ability < experienced	No ability < some	Some < good	Good stayed the same
Evaluation	Good ability in < experienced	Good ability < experienced	Good < experienced	No ability < some
Basic computer skills	Experienced stayed the same	Experienced stayed the same	Experienced stayed the same	Good stayed the same
Understanding of removing barriers to participation for underserved groups	Some ability < experienced	Some ability < good	Some < good	Good stayed the same
Organised and proactive approach	Some ability < to good	Good ability < experienced	Good stayed the same	Good stayed the same
Interpersonal skills and positive attitude	Experienced < leader	Experienced < leader	Good < experienced	Experienced > good
Excellent listening skills	Experienced < leader	Experienced stayed the same	Some < good	Good stayed the same