

Oral History

Help Sheet 1: Developing an oral history project

Getting started

Think about the sorts of memories you want to collect:

- Who do you want to interview? For example: family members; people from a particular area; or employees from a local organisation.
- What themes do you want to explore with interviewees? For example: childhood; changes to their neighbourhood; or what their work life was like in the past.

Then decide how you plan to share the memories you've recorded. You could:

- Share an individual's memories as whole interviews, transcripts of interviews or sound bites or digital stories on a website or YouTube channel
- Use collective memories about particular themes to tell stories in an exhibition or on a website.

Planning your project

1. Make a note of your aims ie the main things you want to achieve. For example: gather and share the memories of older family members.
2. Identify the themes you want to explore. For each, list the sorts of things you'd like to discover. For example "Childhood" can be broken down into: earliest memories; parents; siblings; the first house you remember; your neighbourhood – people and shops; games and pastimes; going to school; and family holidays.
3. Create an interview plan with questions that will help you explore each theme.
4. List the heritage outcomes you would like to see at the end of your project. For example: original oral history recordings made and being properly kept; an exhibition for a reunion event; a talk in the community hall; school children using the memories to make digital stories and sharing these in an assembly/publishing and promoting them online. This is especially important if you want to apply to the Heritage Lottery fund for a grant.