

Evaluation Report

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Hidden Memories of Mental Healthcare

Padmini Broomfield

Oral History & Heritage Consultant

E: pbroomfield@ymail.com





HIDDEN MEMORIES
OF MENTAL HEALTHCARE

NOTTINGHAM
TRENT UNIVERSITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following consultation, older people with mental ill health, carers and retired professionals, have expressed a strong interest in documenting the heritage of early community care in Nottingham before this is lost.

National Lottery Heritage Fund application

[The Hidden Memories of Nottingham Mental Healthcare](#) project, led by Nottingham Trent University [NTU] and supported by a grant of £10,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund [NLHF] in 2020, set out to explore and document the intangible heritage of Nottingham mental health provision – from its tradition of innovation to the impact of closures of the old-state mental hospitals and the transition to community care. Working collaboratively with mental health service users, carers and professionals from the closed institutions, the project planned to document, share and preserve their memories before these were lost. Partnerships with local mental health service organisations would support the collection of experiences, promote dialogue and knowledge exchange among communities of interest and the wider public.

The impetus for the project stemmed from previous research and consultation carried out by the Project Lead Dr Verusca Calabria as part of her participatory doctoral study at NTU (Calabria, 2020)¹, which explored the experiences of giving and receiving care over a period of 50 years at mental health hospitals in Nottinghamshire, such as Mapperley and Saxondale hospitals, 30 years after their closure. The research highlighted Nottingham’s heritage of innovation in mental health services such as early community care through the introduction of extra-mural services, therapeutic community principles and an open-door policy from the 1940s onwards. The hospital closures and the move to community care in the 1990s led to a loss of the communities of support and belonging that existed therein, and participants were keen that the memories of those who experienced this transition were recorded and preserved before they were lost.



Mapperley hospital, originally the Borough of Nottingham Lunatic Asylum, opened in 1880 and closed in 1994. Saxondale hospital opened in 1902 as the Radcliffe County Asylum to replace the Sneinton Lunatic Asylum, which was demolished; the hospital closed in 1988.

Half of Mapperley hospital wards (the male side), converted into luxury flats with commanding views over south Nottinghamshire.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the original plan of Down Memory Lane reminiscence events, training in heritage, archival skills and digital photography, and the co-production of a touring exhibition had to be shelved. The programme was modified to make it practical and achievable within the UK Government restrictions on social contact and in-person meetings. The revised programme of activities – oral history interviews, training and exhibition – would be

¹ Verusca Calabria. *Oral Histories of the Nottinghamshire Mental Hospitals: Exploring Memories of Giving and Receiving Care*. PhD Thesis. Nottingham Trent University, April 2020.

delivered entirely online. To facilitate this, Calabria forged a partnership with the History department at NTU to recruit student volunteers from the MA in Museum and Heritage Development Studies who completed a comprehensive online course on the theory and practice of oral history and trained to conduct interviews using video conferencing software; students were also taught to transcribe the interviews and to create audio soundbites that have informed an online exhibition. A dedicated [project website](#) was set up to document the history of Nottingham mental healthcare, including hosting an [online audio-visual exhibition](#) and a [blog](#).

Outputs delivered: [detailed in Section 2]

- 5 student volunteers recruited and trained in oral history methodology, sound editing and transcription.
- 19 oral history interviews recorded with former nurses, social workers and carers.
- Written memories, personal photographs and memorabilia contributed by participants.
- Oral history training course delivered over 6 sessions using a blended learning approach.
- Project website set up to host a virtual exhibition, blog and a [comprehensive overview](#) of the history of psychiatric institutions and social psychiatry in Nottingham.
- Online audio-visual exhibition presents textual interview extracts, audio clips, photographs, and is organised in 3 themes: [Care in the mental hospitals](#); [The transition from hospital to community care](#); [Experiences of early community care](#).
- Blog posts by project team members and other contributors published.
- Project promoted on social media, local TV and Radio, and through partner networks.
- Talks and articles presented in academic and community settings.
- New partnerships developed have presented the opportunity for future collaborations.

Outcomes: The project achieved the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) ‘outcomes for people’ with a wider range of people who were involved in heritage, developed skills, learnt about heritage and had greater well-being through the delivery of the following activities:

- Online activities – remote interviewing and digital exhibition – enabled wider participation from the general public and special interest groups, both locally and beyond.
- Interviewees were involved in the co-production of the exhibition by helping select content from their own contributions that best represented their experiences.
- Student volunteers learned new skills in oral history, digital audio editing and transcription, and developed other transferable employability skills.
- Participants, inspired by their increased understanding and experience of the value of preserving intangible heritage, have pursued oral history for work and personal projects.
- Student volunteers found the provision of regular synchronous activities and support from the Project Lead helped their own wellbeing during lockdown.
- Measured using the National Economic Foundation (NEF) indicators of personal and social wellbeing, participant feedback indicates that the project helped them cope with the anxiety and confinement of lockdown by enabling them to connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give their time.

Legacy:

- The oral histories provide novel insights into valuable aspects of institutional care that bear on current mental health policy.
- Partnerships forged during this project have led to the development of a proposed new heritage project, “Documenting the Campaign for Middle Street”, to explore and preserve the story of the campaign by service users and their allies to save Middle Street Resources Centre, a local mental health service user-led organisation with a long history of co-production, from permanent closure in 2010.

- The new model of working – the online training course and remotely recorded oral histories – have demonstrated the creative and impactful nature of online delivery and its potential for training in community-based heritage projects that plan to document their own histories.
- The online audio-visual exhibition has created a permanent publicly accessible resource that is set to be used as a teaching resource on modules at NTU and other universities.
- The exhibition has also attracted interest from international mental service users and allied professionals interested in the heritage of mental healthcare, and has been added as a resource on the website of [Mad Heritage and Contemporary Arts in Sweden](#).
- A discrete community collection consisting of digitised oral histories and personal photographs will be deposited at Nottingham Central Library for future research.
- Collaborations are planned with heritage organisations to host public engagement events, and partnership projects set up with mental health service users, carers and professional groups.

Conclusion

The Hidden Memories of Nottingham Mental Healthcare project, launched at a time of considerable disruption caused by the pandemic, successfully pivoted to a fully online programme by developing a new model for remote delivery. Adapting the original programme of activities to suit the changed circumstances, it not only managed to fulfil its stated aims and achieved its planned outcomes, but also resulted in some unexpected positive outcomes. Co-ordinating all activities remotely had its challenges, including digital exclusion in communities, the logistics of training, and co-producing an exhibition from a distance. Recording oral histories remotely presented unique challenges regarding audio quality, building rapport with interviewees and providing support at a distance in the context of recounting lived experiences of mental ill health. These challenges were mitigated from the outset and are being discussed across oral history and heritage organisations at a national level as we transition to new ways of working.

However, this project also demonstrated that flexibility, creativity and resilience, in responding to events and seeking alternative methods of delivery, significantly expanded its original scope. An agile response to communications and promotion helped reach widespread communities of interest and has attracted interest from academics as well as professionals in mental healthcare, social work and the history of medicine. This has presented new opportunities for collaborations and invitations to share the findings more widely through publications in international volumes and public lectures. The online exhibition forms an important publicly accessible resource for teaching and learning across a range of contexts, from disabilities studies to community-based local history research.

Initiated in response to an urgent need expressed by the people who witnessed the transition to community care, the project has contributed to the documenting and preserving of these memories before it is too late. The partnerships forged have led to plans for new projects with local mental health groups and heritage organisations. The research has contributed to the historiography of mental health care, which still remains largely unexplored. Early feedback has proven its relevance to interdisciplinary collaborations and offers the potential for further development.

Long-stay patients knew the routines of the wards, they knew the staff, they knew how everything worked, and it gave them some security, and obviously that all changed and it took quite some time for many of them to adjust to life in the community. Some I don't I think ever did, to be honest, and they would talk about how life was different now, and recall the days when they were in Mapperley Hospital in a positive way.

[Administrator and later secretary at Mapperley in the mid-1980s who went on to train as a social worker in mental health](#)

1. Introduction

The voices of ordinary people ... have the power to help historians, policymakers, and practitioners in mental health rediscover aspects of care that were perceived to be helpful, which have been lost with the move to care in the community.

[Blog post by Dr Verusca Calabria](#)

1.1 Project background

[‘The Hidden Memories of Nottingham Mental Healthcare’](#) was led Dr Verusca Calabria at Nottingham Trent University [NTU], supported by a grant of £10,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund [NLHF]. Calabria [Project Lead] is based in the department of Social Work, Care and Community at NTU. The project aimed to explore and document the heritage of Nottingham mental health provision – from its tradition of innovation to the impact of the old state mental hospital closures and the transition to community care. The project originally planned to engage collaboratively with mental health service users, their carers and retired staff from the closed institutions, to document, share and preserve individual and collective experiences of the changing dimension of local mental healthcare provision before these were lost. Partnerships with local mental health service providers and heritage organisations were set up to promote the project to audiences who traditionally do not engage with heritage. The Middle Street Resource Centre, Rushcliffe Mental Health Carers and Nottingham Mental Health Trust would help involve mental health service users, carers and retired professionals through their networks. Public art galleries such as Bonnington Gallery and New Art Exchange, and Nottingham Central Library would host public events and the exhibition.

Nottingham has been at the forefront of **innovation in mental health care provision** with pioneering initiatives that helped to shape national policies for psychiatric care. The city’s Mapperley Hospital was, in 1952, the first residential psychiatric hospital to introduce an open-door policy and social rehabilitation measures that fostered a psychotherapeutic atmosphere. Nottingham was the first health authority to set up a community mental health team in 1982, ahead of the national policy of community care that came into effect in 1990; the Nottingham Advocacy Group became the first mental health user group set up in the mid-1980s in England before user-involvement was widely accepted by professionals or policy makers. This history of innovation and the impact the transition to community care had on mental health service users, their families and professionals has not been fully documented and is little known in the general community.

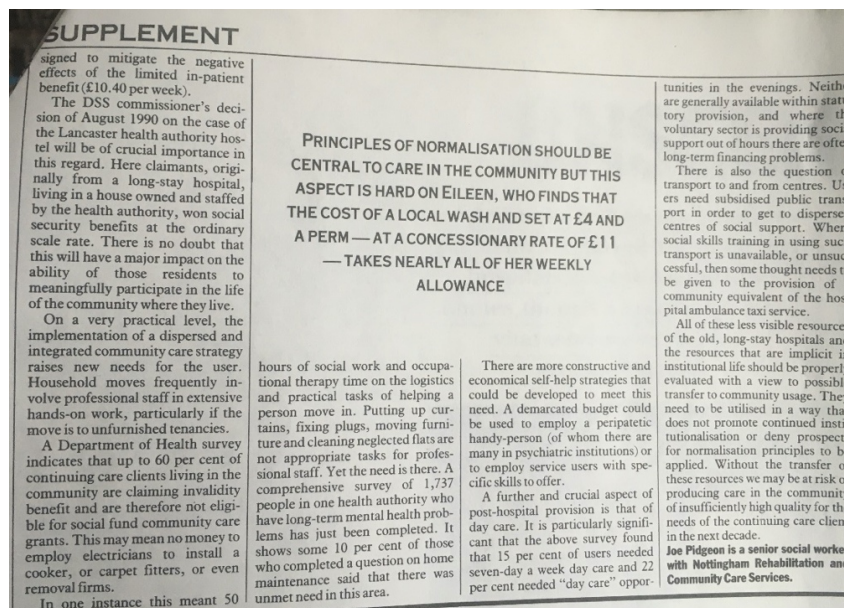
The need for this project had emerged during consultation carried out as part of Calabria’s doctoral participatory research, which focused on the experiences of those who gave or received care at the now-closed mental hospitals in Nottinghamshire from the 1950s until their closure in the 1990s. Challenging some of the negative views and criticisms of institutional care, the research demonstrates the value of the spatial and social aspects of inpatient mental health care in the old system of care for service users’ recovery, and captured the loss of hospital communities as places of safety and belonging. Participants expressed a need to document this heritage of early community care in Nottingham following the NHS and Community Care Act of 1990.

The original plan for the Hidden Memories project was to deliver a series of Down Memory Lane events in which participants would be invited to reminisce, with the help of archival artefacts, about the changing experiences of mental health care during the transition from asylum to community care. Participants would receive training in accessing historical archives at Nottingham Central Library and in using digital cameras to photograph local places that represented their stories. The reminiscences, historical artefacts and digital photographs would support further discussion sessions, inform the co-production of a touring exhibition displayed at venues around the city, and a specialist report for the Nottingham Mental Health Trust.

Revised plan: The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown with restrictions on social contact, shortly after the project launch, required the plan to be modified to make it suitable for the changed circumstances. A revised programme enabled all activities, training and outputs to be carried out remotely. Instead of public reminiscence events and a co-produced physical touring exhibition, remotely recorded oral history interviews and digital artefacts were collected to inform an online audio-visual exhibition. While some aspects of the project were constrained by these changes, the alternative approach achieved all the planned outputs and outcomes, and the shift to online working produced some unexpected outcomes that offer the potential for new approaches, collaborations and follow-up projects.

This project has made me realise how much work, how much effort and how much relationship building went into this whole process [the hospitals' closure and move to community care]. And it's gone. It's a regret that we didn't feel able to or didn't feel we needed to or didn't feel we had the time to keep some kind of comprehensive record of what we were doing over those years. We didn't really sit down and say, can we evaluate the impact of closing the mental hospitals has had on the residents or the service users who are now living on somewhere on this continuum range. What's happened to them? And what did they think about what we did?

Joe Pidgeon, social worker (1980s) at the Rehabilitation and Community Care Service at Mapperley Hospital, responsible for closing down the hospitals and rehabilitating people in the community.



Extract from an article published by Joe Pidgeon in 1991 in Social Work Today to highlight the shortcomings of the then new system of community care.

1.2 Planned outcomes

“... to record and reflect on participants’ personal and collective community strengths and concerns in relation to mental wellbeing, promote dialogue and knowledge exchange among communities of interest and the wider public.”

NLHF application

Aim [NLHF application]

The project set out to explore and document the heritage of early community care in Nottingham following the Community Care Act of 1990. The overall objective was to preserve the social history of the Nottingham mental health provision, which is at risk of being lost.

The project planned to

- “engage collaboratively with older people with lived experiences of mental ill health, their families as well as retired staff and the wider community”.
- provide participants with training in heritage skills and digital photography to identify, document, preserve and share the local heritage of Nottingham mental health provision.
- raise awareness of the local hidden heritage of innovation in mental health services and better understand the changing dimension of care experiences.

Planned activities

- a series of Down Memory Lane events to gather reminiscences and related memorabilia from individuals who had experienced the transition from asylum to community care.
- training in accessing historical archives in partnership with Nottingham Central Library.
- training in using digital cameras to photograph local places representing their experience of mental health.
- the co-production of a touring exhibition displayed at venues across the city.
- a specialist report for Nottingham Mental Health Trust.

Impact of Covid-19: Just as the project was launched, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown halted all activities. Ongoing restrictions on people’s movements and social contact made it impossible to run group reminiscence sessions, archive visits and in-person training. After a complete review of the original planned activities, Calabria proposed a revised plan of action, which was accepted by the NLHF case officer. The original aims of gathering memories, training participants and producing a publicly accessible exhibition were retained but modified to be carried out remotely.

The revised plan

- Collect personal testimonies through oral history interviews recorded remotely.
- Recruit and train student volunteers to support activities.
- Deliver the training using a mix of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning activities over a course of 6 sessions.
- Students to complete the training and commit to recording at least 2 interviews each, produce verbatim/part summary transcriptions and edited sound bites from the interviews.
- Produce an online exhibition published on a dedicated website to present the multiple realities of the changing dimension of care, showcase the digital items collected to a general audience and create a teaching and learning resource.
- Deposit collected digital materials in the Local Studies and Archives at Nottingham Library.
- Share findings through the specialist report, academic papers and a blog.

1.3 Evaluation methodology

This report is based on a summative evaluation carried out by an external consultant commissioned in March 2021. The report measures the project’s achievements and outcomes as outlined in the grant application and its impact on project participants, volunteers, staff and the local community.

The report is informed by a review of the following:

- Project information and documentation
- NLHF grant application
- NLHF approved changes due to Covid-19
- Website, blog, articles and social media content
- Online audio-visual exhibition
- National Economic Foundation (NEF) wellbeing outcomes
- Feedback comments



Paul Blakeman
@Paul_SWK

This is great and @Verusca is a star. If you're interested in the evolution of mental healthcare, it's a must.
@D2N2SWTP @derbyshcft @NottsHealthcare @Rethink_



Dr Verusca Calabria @Verusca · Mar 11

Pleased to launch the @HealthMemories #oralhistory exhibit this week which explores & documents the changing dimension of the provision of #Nottingham mental healthcare @HeritageFundM_E @SocialWorkNTU @OralHistorySoc @OHS_HigherEd

mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk

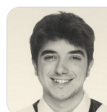


NTU Museum and Heritage Development
@NTU_Museum

This fascinating online exhibition by @Verusca reveals the changing dimension of care practices in #Nottingham thru oral histories.

Our recent grad, Fede, shares his work placement experience as the project adapted during the pandemic

@HealthMemories



My experience of volunteering on this project — Mental hea...
In 2019 I moved to England to do a master's course in museum and heritage development. By February 2020 I ...
🔗 mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk

12:59 PM · Mar 10, 2021 · Twitter Web App

Feedback comments on Twitter following launch of online exhibition



Project Twitter post featuring an image of an advertising poster for nurses at Mapperley Hospital in which Judith Estrop, interviewee, featured in 1966.

2. Achieved outcomes



I should like to say what a privilege it was to be involved in this project, I felt very much helped and supported in order to recollect some of my memories. It was a real pleasure and I hope that I have been able to provide some information that may be useful for future practitioners.

Judith Estrop, nurse at Mapperley hospital (1966-2006)

Judith Estrop playing cribbage with a patient,

2.1 Project delivery

‘The Hidden Memories of Nottingham Mental Healthcare’ project has achieved all its aims and objectives as set out in the NLHF application despite setbacks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Project Lead responded to the pandemic restrictions by revising the programme of in-person sessions and training and moving all activities and outputs online enabling the project to continue throughout lockdown. The project team delivered all activities and outputs, and achieved the stated outcomes as well as some unexpected outcomes.

The table below lists activities and outputs in the revised plan outlined in section 1.2 above

Activity	Summary of outputs Details in Section 2.2
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1. Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 student volunteers recruited and trained • 17 interviewees shared memories and copies of personal memorabilia • Cross-faculty links developed within NTU • Collaboration with local heritage organisations and mental health support groups • Worked with organisations providing mental health services
2. Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devised and delivered online training in oral history • 5 students attended the blended learning course
3. Oral Histories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 interviews recorded remotely • Interviewees were retired staff, social workers, carers and local community members • Documented memories of former hospitals and transition to community care • A community collection of personal photographs and life documents collected
4. Exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project website set up: https://www.mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk/ • Virtual thematic exhibition with audio-visual content created • 6 blog posts published
5. Publicity & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital publicity via press releases, flyers and on social media • Call for interviewees circulated by partner networks • Findings promoted on local media, online events, and in academic and community publications
6. Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent digital exhibition online • Oral histories to be used for teaching and learning across disciplinary contexts • Oral history recordings and digitised visual materials to be deposited at Nottingham Central Library in Autumn 2021 • Oral history interviews and images will inform publications by Dr Calabria • [Proposed] Public engagement event at the Castle Lab in 2022 • [Proposed] New heritage project planned with Middle Street Resource Centre

2.2 Achievements

I am so proud to have worked on this project and to have collected the memories of the wonderful staff who were involved in the transition to community care.

Tweet from Louise Meiklejohn, student volunteer

2.2.1 Participation

The original plan of engaging collaboratively with people at public events, training participants in archives research and photography, and co-producing a touring exhibition were no longer possible. Instead, volunteers were recruited and trained to record oral histories remotely.

- The Project Lead recruited and worked with **5 volunteers** – students from the MA Museum and Heritage Development at the University’s School of Arts and Humanities – who responded to the call for volunteers as part of a core placement to complete their courses. After completing the online training in oral history methodology and practice, the students assisted in recording, processing and editing interviews and the co-production of the digital

exhibition. All training, collaborative working and oral history interviewing was conducted online.

- Between June 2020 and February 2021, the team recorded **19 oral histories** with former nurses, social workers and carers who remembered the transition from the mental hospitals to care in the community in the 1990s. Participants also contributed written memories, personal photographs and memorabilia in digital form, which has formed a discrete community collection. Although co-production was difficult to achieve under the circumstances, a level of decision-sharing was possible. Participants were sent the transcript and asked to help choose textual/audio extracts and images to put on display that best represent their experiences.
- The project provided a much-needed **opportunity for former staff to reflect** on their contributions to the implementation of innovative mental healthcare practices from the 1960s to the 1990s, such as the introduction of group and occupational therapies, and early care in the community from the 1960s onwards. The oral histories reveal the social and spatial aspects of the old system of care, important for mental health recovery, which have been done away with since the advent of community care. Recording these memories and reflections has ensured the preservation of the hidden legacy of the local mental hospitals which has been largely overlooked due to the stigma attached to these sites. It offers important insights for current mental health policy and practice.

New and existing partnerships were developed that helped support activity delivery. Developing cross-faculty links at NTU proved mutually beneficial – the project gained student volunteers with an expertise in heritage while the students found a much-needed opportunity to replace work placements that had been cancelled due to the pandemic in order to be able to complete their course. Partners from mental health service providers, service-user and carer groups, Middle Street Resource Centre, Nottingham Mental Health Trust and Carers Council, helped promote the project and find potential interviewees. Nottingham Central Library and Nottinghamshire archives will preserve and provide public access to the collected audio-visual material. Interest in the project activities and findings has led to new partnerships and collaborations being developed with Nottingham Castle, Middle Street Resource Centre as well as national and international researchers.



The staff at Queens were wonderful, very professional and very good at what they did. But to go from Saxondale Hospital to Queen's Medical Centre was vastly different in terms of the homely environment that was lost.

[Maria Paola Ditch, nurse at Saxondale hospital \(1985-1988\)](#)

Maria Paola at Saxondale hospital, mid-1980s.

2.2.2 Oral history training

What I valued most about being part of this exciting project is the complete and enriching training received from Verusca on how to conduct oral history interviews.

[Blog post by Federico Arguinarena Diaz, student volunteer](#)

The student volunteers participated in online synchronous and asynchronous training in oral history theory and practice. The Project Lead, an experienced oral historian and trainer, designed a new course and adapted the content to make it relevant for MA students and online teaching. The new model overcame the constraints of the digital format and remote delivery while taking advantage of its opportunities.

- The course combined real time sessions with off-line self-study and mock interviewing practice.
- The use of the university's Microsoft Teams learning suite facilitated video conferencing, sharing documents and off-line working.
- Students were provided with a reading list and links to videos and online content.
- The course adopted 'flipped learning' where participants were asked to learn about new topics prior to attending scheduled sessions.
- This mix of preparation followed by interactive and practical sessions was aimed at promoting independent learning and developing general employability skills.

The course was designed to prepare students in the methodology, ethics and practical aspects of recording interviews. Between sessions, students completed problem solving and enquiry based tasks after analysing relevant articles, oral history content and online videos. These included analysing interview transcripts and evaluating relevant literature to consider the qualities required to be a good interviewer, the skills they may need to develop, and differences between oral history and other types of interviewing. Students carried out mock interviews with family and friends and wrote self-reflective observations on the experience. Their responses to these tasks indicate a high level of critical thinking and analyses of the history material. Examples include the following:

As an interviewer, having empathy towards interviewees does not mean supporting the narrator's political position, but it means having the ability to be non-judgmental while conducting the interview.... It is important not to fall into the debate of goodness and badness, and to conduct the interview as neutral as possible. I think that is the crucial concept and skills to develop for being a good interviewer.

Yu-Hao Wang, student volunteer, in response to set task

I think it is important for me to try not to get carried away with political views during the interview and accept that there is a possibility that there might be some things that I do not agree with, and in a natural conversation would challenge. Most importantly, the interview is a space for listening and reflection between myself and the narrator.

Emily Hands, student volunteer, in response to set task

2.2.3 Oral histories



The Coppice Hospital, now repurposed into luxury flat

The thing that did help, sometimes coming into hospital was like a sanctuary. People could come out of their lives from what was overwhelming them and distressing them, and have time away from their stressful environment.

Christine Millburn, nurse in early 1980s at Mapperley and the Coppice hospitals.

The team recorded 19 oral history interviews with 17 participants, namely retired nurses, social workers, carers and local community members. Memories collected span a period of 30 years – from the 1960s to the 1990s. The following summarises the multiple experiences of the impact of the transition from institutional to community care practices in Nottingham and its value into the future:

- The testimonies reveal aspects of care in the old system that were helpful when undergoing a mental health crisis and convalescence but perceived to be lost in the current system. These included access to a place of safety and a sanctuary during mental health crisis; the long-term positive relationships formed and fostered between staff and patients; the welcoming, home and family-like atmosphere of the hospitals; structured rehabilitation in the form of occupational therapy and recreational activities and access to group therapy.
- The oral histories reveal both the successes and failures of the new system of community care, such as the generous investment in inpatient care in the early days, which was gradually reduced in the last 20 years; the interviews also discuss instances of neglect in the community for people with long-term mental health conditions in need of continuing care.
- The testimonies offer unique insights into care practices prevalent before and after the shift away from institutional care to care in the community and its impact on all those involved.
- The insights will be of interest to mental health, social work and allied professionals, policymakers and commissioners of mental health services.
- Interviewees and other participants sent in copies of personal photographs, memorabilia and written reminiscences, including contributing to the project blog.
- The oral histories now form an important resource for research into the impact of the transition of health care provision from psychiatric hospitals to community care.
- The potential for their use in teaching and learning has already been recognised by NTU staff, as seen in the following feedback from an NTU lecturer:

That looks fantastic! The website looks really clear and easy to navigate with great information. I could see a use for that in the module Disability & Equality EDUC23122 where we look at how mental health treatment has evolved over time – possibly I could direct students to the website for an independent research task. I think they'd like the local aspect and also that it is based on NTU research!

Email feedback from Luran Doak, Lecturer in Education, School of Social Sciences, NTU

2.2.4 Exhibition

I think this exhibition is particularly important for those of us who only remember the mental health system as it is.

Email feedback from Melanie Bailey, Lecturer in Health and Social Care, NTU

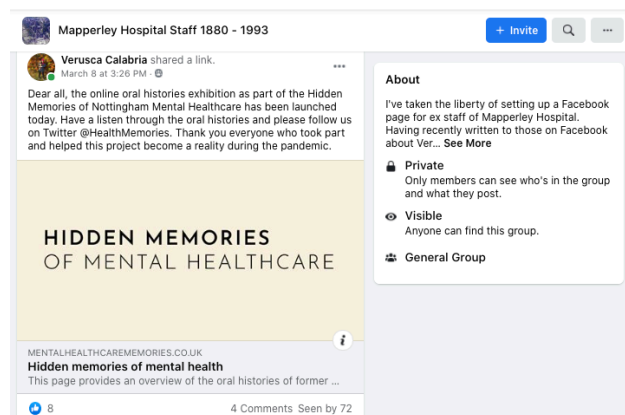
The original plan to co-produce a touring exhibition that would be displayed at various local art-based and community venues had to be abandoned. Instead, a [project website](#) hosting a digital exhibition has been published creating a permanent and publicly accessible resource.

- The website provides a [comprehensive overview](#) of the history of the rise and fall of local psychiatric institutions, and of the development of social psychiatry in Nottingham, of which little is known in the public domain.
- [The audio-visual exhibition](#) is informed by the research, oral histories and other content collected during the project and invites contributions from viewers.
- It is organised under 3 main themes that reflect the changing dimension of the provision of mental healthcare: [Care in the mental hospitals](#); [The transition from hospital to community care](#); [Experiences of early community care](#).
- Each section presents a brief overview of the theme and a selection of stories, interviewee profiles, memories and images.
- The digital format showcases the range of content collected – edited audio clips, written memories, personal photographs, newspaper cuttings, documents and ephemera.
- Hosted on the project website, it now forms a permanent resource that will be used for teaching and learning in undergraduate and postgraduate courses in social and health care, education and history at NTU, the University of Lincoln and the University of Huddersfield.



Please take a moment to listening to the [#oralhistory](#) extract from the people who worked directly in the Nottingham mental Hospitals and contributed to the [#mentalhealthcarememories @HealthMemories](#) . I'm very happy and proud to have worked in this project .

Mental Health Care Memories @HealthMemories · Mar 8
Have a listen to the #oralhistory extracts from carers, nurses and social workers who remember the care provided at the Nottingham mental hospitals [mentalhealthcarememories.co.uk/care-in-the-me...](#) @SocialWorkNTU @Crichton_Royal @AsylumMagUK



Exhibition promotion on social media

2.2.5 Publicity and promotion

We send [Verusca] congratulations on completion of this project – it must have been a challenge.... They are still interested if anyone has experiences to share.

Nottingham Carers' Council email to their members

Moving all activity online meant publicity and promotion was digitised.

- Press releases, digital flyers and social media promoted the project, call for participants and the exhibition launch.
- An [information leaflet](#) for potential interviewees presented an FAQ style explanation of what was involved in oral history interviewing and how their contribution would be used.
- Partner organisations promoted the project and call for participants to their networks.
- Student volunteers helped publicise the project and exhibition on Twitter.
- The blog contains reflections from the project team as well as memories and photographs contributed by other participants, such as the children of former staff who have [memories of social celebrations](#) at the local hospitals.
- The Twitter account [@HealthMemories](#) had attracted 208 followers [at 19.4.2021] with good interaction in Likes, Retweets and Replies from those connected to mental health services or the closed hospitals, some of whom shared memories of their own.
- The Project Lead was interviewed by Notts TV and has been invited to give an interview at BBC Radio Nottingham.
- The Project Lead presented an online talk on 'The hidden heritage of asylums in Britain' at an online public symposium on 'Difficult Heritage' organised by the University of Oslo, October 2020.
- Articles published in academic and community publications helped reach wider audiences:
 - *Calabria V. (forthcoming)* 'There was an awful lot that was good and that was necessary': the hidden heritage of the old state mental hospitals, in: Elisabeth Punzi, Christoph Singer, Nika Söderlund, Cornelia Wächter (eds) *Narrating the Heritage of Psychiatry*, Brill Press.
 - *Calabria, V. Memories of Community Care* [Nottingham Aspect, Issue 28, November 2020] <https://online.fliphtml5.com/ayxew/fiwm/#p=16>.
 - *Daylight robbery, but they call it 'Care in the Community'* [Asylum, 27 (4), Winter 2020] <https://asylummagazine.org/2020/12/asylum-27-4-winter-2020/>
 - The Asylum magazine issue 27 (4) is also available in Italian.
- The article in Asylum magazine elicited an email from a reader, a professional who had previously worked in Nottingham mental healthcare settings, comparing its services to those elsewhere in the country:

I enjoyed reading your article in Asylum magazine.... It's fair to say when comparing my personal experiences, you can observe a 'community aspect' within Nottinghamshire's inpatient services which perhaps does not exist in other areas of the country. For example, in my short period at [a Nottingham based centre] I participated in activities on an onsite farm, whereas in my current role near [large UK city], there is very little therapeutic offer either on or outside of the ward environment, it's very restrictive....

Email feedback to Asylum article

2.2.6 Legacy

I've just added this [the exhibition] to one of my modules, thank you for sharing [online exhibition]. I look forward to listening to these & discussing with students on the second-year module on the history of mental illness (ideas about, treatment of) in modern Britain (History dept).

Tweet: feedback on exhibition from an academic at Lincoln University

The project research, collected materials, outputs and partnerships create a legacy for the future, which sheds light on meaningful care practices in the old state mental hospitals that have been overlooked since their closure. The findings bear on current mental health policy and offer the potential for further collaborative projects between the University and community groups.

- The collected perspectives of former carers, social workers and nurses about the impact of the changing provision of mental healthcare will be of interest to researchers, professionals and commissioners of services in Health and Social Care. This knowledge will help to influence change in current mental health policy through dissemination in publications.
- All material – oral histories, digital copies of personal photographs, documents, newspaper clippings and ephemera – will be deposited in the Local Studies and Archives at Nottingham Library where it will be preserved as a permanent public resource for future generations.
- The research, website and digital exhibition form a permanent resource on the social history of mental health care in Nottingham, including personal testimonies of those who witnessed the closure of psychiatric hospitals and the transition to community care.
- The online exhibition and memorabilia have created a knowledge resource that will be used for teaching and learning on a number of courses at NTU and other universities.
- The research and materials collected will inform forthcoming publications on the history and heritage of mental healthcare in Britain by Dr Calabria.
- Partnerships developed during the project between NTU and other academic institutions, local mental health service providers and heritage organisations have laid the foundations for future collaboration and knowledge sharing, including:
 - A proposed Down Memory Lane reminiscence event to be hosted at Nottingham Castle Lab in late 2021 inviting audiences traditionally less engaged with museums.
 - Collaborations, to explore the new model of online training and interviewing to implement it into future blended offers, have been discussed with Nottingham Castle and other Social Sciences departments at NTU.
 - A proposed new project in partnership with Middle Street Resource Centre and Nottingham Castle to document and make visible the history of its campaign to save the centre from closure and to raise awareness of the importance of day mental health services for people with long-term mental health difficulties.

The danger here is that we have discharged a lot of people into the community into isolation, into areas of poverty, there's not enough support for them.

Mark Holmes, mental health nurse at the Queens Medical Centre in Nottingham in 1994

2.3 Outcomes

It has been such a rewarding experience recording individuals' memories and gaining first-hand knowledge of what Nottingham health care provision was like and how it has changed over the years.

[Blog post by Louise Meiklejohn, student volunteer](#)

The Hidden Memories of Nottingham Mental Healthcare project had set out to engage with those who gave or received care, their families and the wider community, to capture memories, provide training and co-produce a public exhibition. The activities were designed to involve a wide range of people in learning about heritage, developing skills and improving well-being. All outcomes listed in

the grant application were achieved. In addition, the move to full online delivery of the revised programme brought about several unexpected positive outcomes [details in Section 3.1 below].

2.3.1 A wider range of people will be involved in heritage

- Students from the MA in Museums and Heritage Development course at NTU who responded to the call for volunteers found an unexpected opportunity to learn about and do oral history.
- Participants who shared their memories in recorded interviews or in writing represented a wider demographic and geographical spread than anticipated.
- The permanent digital exhibition and website content has and will continue to reach more people locally and globally than a physical exhibition.
- Published articles – in a general interest magazine, mental health periodical and academic publications in international volumes – have reached readers beyond the local with an interest in the legacy of past models of mental healthcare.
- The project archive of audio and visual materials will be publicly accessible.

Before this project, oral history was a discipline unknown to me. I have become absorbed in this methodology and have understood its importance for preserving the social history of disenfranchised groups, who are usually silenced in the mainstream, for future generations.

[Blog post by Federico Arguinarena Diaz, student volunteer](#)

2.3.2 People will have developed skills

- Adopting a flipped learning approach to the course curriculum design, through asynchronous problem and enquiry-based activities, promoted independent learning, developed students' employability skills, and also promoted inclusivity as it catered for different types of learners, including those for whom English is a second language.
- Students developed skills in oral history theory and practice, recording interviews remotely, audio editing and analysing personal testimonies.
- Students with no prior knowledge of oral history learned about its role and importance in collecting and preserving the social history of often under-represented groups.
- Students reported that the project had helped them develop organisational and communication skills.
- Students also reported gaining a better understanding of mental health issues.
- In designing an online training course, the Project Lead developed her own professional skills, creating a new model of blended learning with the potential to be applied in participatory projects at NTU, and community and heritage projects elsewhere.
- Interviewees reported benefitting from being given the opportunity to reflect on the changing dimension of mental health provision through time and to be able to contribute towards preserving the local hidden heritage of mental healthcare.
- Conducting oral history interviews remotely was a new learning experience for all since guidance and best practice for this new method are still being formulated.
- Volunteers and participants developed skills in writing blogs and social media.

Overall [interviewing] was an exciting experience, and I managed to get some vital information. ... [It] gave me the idea for a personal project where I will interview my grandfather in the future.

[Andreia Rodrigues, student volunteer, reflecting on the mock interview during oral history training](#)

2.3.3 People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions

- A student, who had enthusiastically contributed to all aspects of the project and gained new insights and experience, has since found work as a research assistant on an oral history project, while also volunteering remotely as an oral history interviewer for a new heritage project.
- Another student, inspired by their mock interview during the training, planned a personal project to interview their grandfather for family history.
- Others commented on how engaging with personal testimonies had enhanced their understanding of lived experience of mental ill health and helped change their attitudes.
- Feedback and social media replies indicate an interest from academic leaders in health, social care, mental health and history of medicine courses in using the project materials in their teaching and learning activities.

The project has changed my way of approaching mental health problems by normalising and accepting them, and empathising with people with mental health problems and their family members.

[Blog post by Federico Arguinarena Diaz, student volunteer](#)

2.3.4 People will have greater well-being

- An interviewee emailed to say that it had been a “pleasure and privilege” to be interviewed and that the interviewer’s supportive and skilful approach had helped recollect their memories.
- One student commented on how the project had helped their own wellbeing during the isolation of lockdown by providing motivation and a structured activity to focus on.
- Former staff of the closed hospitals who had expressed the need to preserve this intangible heritage have been very supportive of and pleased to see the results of this project.
- The publicity about the project and the website encouraged several people to share their own memories, anecdotes and reflections on social media.
- Interviewees reported that continued contact from the project team checking on their welfare after the interview and involving them in the exhibition creation helped reduce isolation.
- Participation in the project has delivered well-being outcomes as defined by the National Economic Foundation [NEF] as set out in the NLHF project application, details outlined below.



Thank you so much for forwarding the completed exhibition. I found it most interesting and sometimes a quite emotional listen. I do hope that by listening to past staff experiences and those relatives who have experience of using past mental health services will promote and inspire good practice to the new generation of professional mental health carers, both, in hands-on care and management.

Email feedback from Kate Holmes, nurse at Mapperley hospital (1966-1086), interviewed for the project

New Economic Foundation (NEF) wellbeing outcomes

This project has been a fantastic experience as it has allowed me to expand my skills, as well as to engage with individuals on a personal level on a topic that is of interest to me.

[Blog post by Louise Meiklejohn, student volunteer](#)

The project set out to measure its impact using NEF indicators of personal and social wellbeing when engaging with heritage, the Five Ways to Wellbeing: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give. Participants commented on how engaging in the activities had helped their wellbeing.

Connect: By engaging in synchronous and asynchronous training activities, interviewing / being interviewed, and being involved in the project, participants were able to connect to others. This was of particular significance during the lockdowns that left people isolated and lacking support from friends and family. This was particularly relevant to mental health carers at a time in which regular face-to-face social support events were suspended.

Be active: At a time when people were confined indoors and all normal activity – of attending classes, socialising and for some even working – had stopped, participation in the project provided structure and a stimulating activity they could do and have a routine. It was particularly relevant to the 2 international students who volunteered for this project, who were unable to travel home during the first lockdown. The project reduced their sense of isolation by providing regular social support.

Take notice: For the project team students, the research, interviewing and processing of the memories they collected introduced them to a methodology and a subject matter that some of them were unfamiliar with. Participation in the project made them explore and recognise a lesser-known aspect of their local history but also understand the experiences of those who gave or received care.

Keep learning: The Project Lead had to learn new skills to convert, adapt and deliver the planned activities in a wholly new and unexpected way. Feedback suggests that the experience has been

positive and enhancing for all.

Give: Interviewees who contributed their memories and personal artefacts generously gave their time and shared personal stories that they felt should be shared more widely. The project team volunteers gave their time and skills to ensure the project was completed successfully and on time.

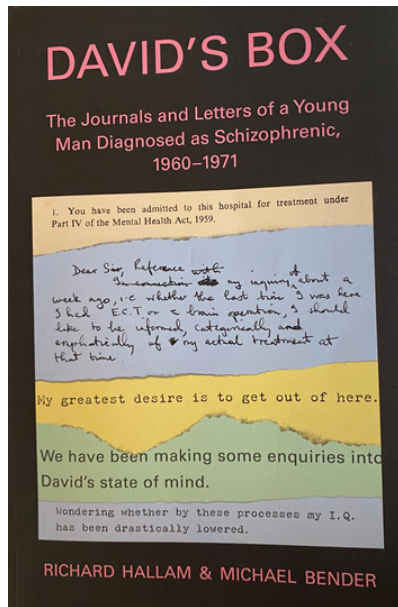
Having access to online structured learning sessions helped me tremendously during the first lockdown, by motivating me and keeping me active, which I greatly appreciated. It seems ironic that a project aimed at collecting memories and testimonies on mental health services helps the wellbeing of the researchers themselves.

[Blog post by Federico Arguinarena Diaz, student volunteer](#)



Evening Post, December 6, 1994

3. Review



I read your article in the latest Asylum magazine and thought you might be interested in receiving a copy of a book I published with a colleague (we are both retired Clinical Psychologists). It is based on the diaries of a young man diagnosed as schizophrenic who was in and out of psychiatric hospitals for long periods....

Email and book sent in by a retired Clinical Psychologist in response to Asylum article

3.1 What worked well

I felt that you got some great insights to those who worked at the old mental health hospitals and it was nice to hear the well-rounded perspectives along with the care in the community and where there are still failures happening there.

Email feedback to exhibition from Melanie Bailey, Lecturer in Health and Social Care, NTU

Overall, the move to online delivery of all aspects of the project – training, recording oral histories and exhibition – was very successful with all outputs delivered on time. There were some **unexpected benefits** to continuing the project throughout the lockdown:

- The revised plan to recruit volunteers to conduct oral history interviews provided new opportunities for students whose other work placements had been cancelled.
- International students unable to travel home found it beneficial to have a group project to work on which helped reduce anxiety and social isolation by connecting with others.
- The success of the student involvement and their positive feedback on the experience has sparked off interest in further cross-faculty collaborations.
- Conducting interviews remotely provided companionship and a positive experience for people confined to their homes during lockdown.
- Remote interviewing enabled the team to reach participants who had moved away from Nottingham such as a mental health carer who was pivotal in campaigning for carers rights in Nottingham, but moved to Scotland during the pandemic.
- Promoting the project on social media and inviting digital contributions resulted in memories, artefacts and feedback sent in by people from as far away as Canada.
- Sharing findings in online and specialist publications reached professionals who have since shared memories, feedback and examples of their own research.
- Designing and delivering the oral history course online was as much a learning and professional development accomplishment for the Project Lead as for the students.

Project management was efficient with all outputs delivered on time and to budget.

- The original plan was revised to work within lockdown restrictions while still maintaining the aims and objectives of collecting and sharing personal testimonies.
- Directing all activities, involving volunteers and interviewees, entirely online during an uncertain time demonstrated flexibility and excellent organisational skills.
- A new online training course was designed to prepare newly recruited student volunteers to record, edit and interpret oral history.
- Effective systems were put in place to carry out all communications, training, collecting and sharing online, and commissioning a new website.
- The project team followed Ethics Committee guidelines regarding remote interviewing and ensuring interviewees' welfare.

I would like to thank Verusca, for her patience, determination, tutelage and passion for social history and teaching, accompanying us during this unique journey.

[Blog post by Federico Arguinarena Diaz, student volunteer](#)

The oral history training was specifically designed to be appropriate for online delivery and develop wider employability skills.

- Splitting the course content over 6 half-day sessions with off-line learning and preparation in between broadened the scope of what was covered.
- Pre-session tasks of reading, reflecting and analysing encouraged students to develop transferable skills in critical thinking, communication and organisation.
- The approach encouraged students to be more critically engaged and enabled greater interactivity and discussions during the live sessions.
- Recording and reviewing mock interviews developed interviewing and listening skills and provided the confidence to record interviews for the project or family history.
- The course model has created a foundation that can be developed for other online training.
- The Community Engagement and Participation Manager at Nottingham Castle has expressed an interest in the blended learning oral history course to be delivered to a local youth group from marginalised communities to document their involvement in volunteering for the Castle when it reopens this year.

[There were] plenty of opportunities to practice and reflect on our own skills as well as our colleagues.... The reading also allowed us time to reflect on what oral history is and is not, and helped shape my approach to my interviews.

[Blog post by Louise Meiklejohn, student volunteer](#)

Oral history interviews were recorded remotely despite it being an unfamiliar technique not previously used or recommended before the current pandemic, and while guidance was still being developed by oral historians. Despite these challenges, there were several positives:

- Interviewees represent a range of experiences, professional roles and periods of service.
- Interviews could be arranged more easily and included individuals who were not local.
- Measures were taken to ensure that potential challenges identified, particularly pertinent to remote interviewing, were considered and procedures put in place to address them.
- Strict protocols were put in place regarding confidentiality and privacy issues.
- Interviewees were contacted after the interview to check on their welfare.

- Interviewees were sent the transcripts and were involved in selecting quotes, audio extracts and personal images for use in the exhibition.

Digital exhibition published on a dedicated project website provided the platform to showcase a wider range of content about the heritage of mental healthcare than would have been possible with a panel-based physical exhibition.

- Presented in 3 themes, the online format better facilitated an audio-visual display of recorded and written testimonies, photographs and other related artefacts.
- It is more accessible to a much wider audience, increasing its impact beyond the local and reaches visitors with general and specialist interest in mental health issues.
- The permanent exhibition will have a longer run and can be added to with material from future projects and contributions from researchers and the public.
- The digital format saved time, budget and staff resources in transferring panels to host venues, and overcame issues of closed access during Covid and long-term storage.
- It forms a teaching and learning resource for undergraduate and postgraduate courses in health, social care, history and education at NTU and other universities.
- It also forms a much-needed resource for local history research for the general public.

I just wanted to let you know that I explored the online audio-visual exhibition and thought that it was brilliant! ... It is a really good idea and I'm sure members of the community will really enjoy hearing the stories and seeing the pictures.

Email feedback to online exhibition from Melanie Bailey, Lecturer in Health and Social Care, NTU

Partnerships – new and existing – provided support when the project had to be revised.

- Local mental health organisations such as the Carers' Council and Rushcliffe Carers group promoted the project to their networks, reaching interviewees and other participants.
- Working with the School of Arts & Humanities at NTU was of mutual benefit with MA students acquiring training and work experience while supporting the project.
- The research findings have prompted interest in cross-disciplinary collaborative working from other departments at NTU.
- The website and exhibition have attracted expressions of interest from academics and mental health professionals who plan to use the content for their teaching.
- A proposal to hold a public engagement event at the Nottingham Castle Lab offers the potential for future collaborations between NTU and local heritage organisations.
- There is a proposal to develop a new Heritage project documenting the history of the campaign to save the Middle Street Resources Centre, Beeston, in partnership with Nottingham Castle.

So proud of the work our @NTU_Museum students achieve with placement partners, esp throughout COVID-19! Right back at you @HealthMemories and @Verusca thank you for creating such an interesting and worthwhile oral history project.

Tweet: Lecturer, Museum & Heritage Studies, NTU

Community response from mental health service users, carers and professionals has been positive as the project followed up on their previously voiced need to document and share this hidden legacy. Collecting and publishing their memories has enabled their voices to be heard and

experiences acknowledged.

Very interesting and informative.... It was interesting on hearing staff voices.

[Mapperley Hospital Staff 1880-1993 Facebook group](#)

3.2 Challenges

Covid-19 and the lockdown presented a significant challenge, not least the time and effort to completely rethink and redesign activities from in-person to online.

- All activities – public reminiscence event, training, co-producing a touring exhibition – designed for maximum collaborative working had to be shelved.
- An alternative and modified programme of activities had to be devised at a time of continuing uncertainty and decisions made quickly to get approval from the NLHF.
- Transferring all aspects of the project to online delivery required new and untested approaches, identifying appropriate tools and learning unfamiliar procedures ahead of the University blended-learning policy, which came into effect in September 2020.
- Recruiting and training new volunteers without meeting them in person meant relying entirely on digital or telephone communications.
- The intensive and hands-on training in oral history, including recording and editing interviews, had to be creatively converted to be suitable online.
- Establishing a new procedure and protocols for recording interviews remotely had to be learnt at a time when guidance was still being developed by oral historians.
- Interviewing participants remotely raised technical and practical issues of getting good audio quality, establishing a rapport with and supporting interviewees during the interview.
- University research regulations required the use of MS Teams for recording the interviews, which conflicted with advice from the Oral History Society's recommended standards to use alternative applications to produce better audio quality.
- Although there had been initial enthusiasm to engage with the project activities, the team were unable to reach out to service users who remembered the transition as Middle Street Resource Centre has been shut since March 2020 due to COVID-19; none of the service users who use the centre responded to the online promotion campaign, reasons unknown.
- Using an online platform such as MS Teams may have discouraged some members of the community, including service users, to come forward to participate if they lacked access to a stable internet connection, computers and/or digital skills. A flexible approach to permitting more accessible means such as telephone interviewing would have been more inclusive.

3.3 Lessons learnt

The successes achieved and challenges overcome during the project, along with feedback from participants, have highlighted some key learning points for future projects:

- **Responding to unexpected events:** flexibility, creativity and resilience in designing and delivering an alternative approach enabled the project to continue through lockdown, deliver all activities and outputs and achieved unexpected positive outcomes.
- **Project management:** switching to a revised programme, of recruiting and managing volunteers, designing and delivering a new training course, collecting and editing memories for display, was very time-consuming for the Project Lead and could have benefited from a Project Assistant post to support and maintain communications with participants and coordinate social media activities.

- **Oral histories:** recognising that remotely recorded interviews, despite the challenges, also helped document this moment in time, of conditions and experiences during the pandemic, and efforts made to adapt to and find innovative solutions to an altered working environment.
- **Advantages of online activities:** reaches a wider audience; includes participants unable to attend in person due to distance, disability or time constraints; saves time, budget, resources in hiring venues, transport and equipment; is environmentally friendly.
- **Disadvantages of online delivery:** excludes individuals lacking the technology, skills or confidence to get online or dependent on good internet connections; reduces social interactions that are key to community projects; may impact on audio quality, establishing rapport and providing support during oral history interviews.
- **Online training:** offered the flexibility of spreading content over several sessions; pre- and post-session tasks encouraged reflection and analysis skills; combination of self-directed learning, practical and discussion elements developed transferable skills; blended learning model could benefit heritage projects adapting to new ways of working.
- **Participatory projects:** involving people in documenting and sharing of local heritage can encourage communities of interest to initiate their own efforts. The Project Lead's previous research led to a participant setting up the Mapperley Hospital retired staff group, while this project has provided the impetus for a proposed new collaborative heritage project with Middle Street Resource Centre.

The system was being starved of resources, we have seen it now for over a period of 30 years.

Graham Machin, carer and former Chairman of Middle Street Resource Centre

4. Next steps

This project emerged from previous research and consultation during which mental health service users and professionals expressed the need to document and share the hidden heritage of early community care in Nottingham. During the course of the current project, some of this content was uncovered and shared but it also revealed a deeper and richer story of innovation, community activism and advocacy that has been identified for further collaborative heritage endeavours. This finding will be of relevance to policymakers, commissioners and practitioners in mental health and social work today.

One such is the story of Middle Street Resource Centre in Beeston, Nottingham, where the community have expressed interest in a **new project, "Documenting the Campaign for Middle Street"**, that will explore further the impact of changes in mental health care services on local communities. It will document the history of the Middle Street Resources Centre in Beeston, a former psychiatric day hospital that was threatened with closure several times in the 2000s but was saved by new alliances, local campaigns and continued efforts to keep it going. The community are keen to capture this story of activism, the impact of saving the centre and its new role in the community. The experience from the current Hidden Memories project and the positive responses it

received will inform the design and development of the new project. In partnership with the centre organisers, the project will develop more of the participatory methodology and co-production that had to be reduced in Hidden Memories due to Covid restrictions. Oral history will offer the opportunity for day centre users to participate in documenting and sharing their stories which they have already begun to collect on [their website](#).

In addition, Nottingham Castle has expressed a strong interest in collaborating on the new project when it reopens, given their new strategic themes focus on healthcare, activism and rebellion.

A new model of delivery was developed that successfully navigated the switch from in-person to online activities, ahead of NTU blended learning policy that came into effect in September 2020. It demonstrated resilience in carrying out the project during lockdown by pivoting to online delivery, with all participation, training, interviewing, communication and promotion carried out digitally through email, social media and video conferencing. While this presented some challenges and limitations, it also had advantages and benefits that present new possibilities for future projects. The new approach used in the training – using a mix of online and offline learning to develop a broad range of skills – demonstrated the creative and impactful nature of online delivery and its potential for other training. Conducting oral history interviews online and publishing a digital exhibition had the advantage of reaching geographically distant participants and new international audiences interested in the lived experiences of mental health. As uncertainty about Covid-19 and ongoing restrictions continue, using this experience to develop a blended approach of in-person and online activities needs to be explored in future heritage projects.

The online exhibition has created an audio-visual resource of personal testimonies and memorabilia documenting the hidden social history of mental health care in Nottingham. It has attracted interest from academics and mental health professionals nation-wide who are keen to use the content in teaching or advocacy. It has been identified as a teaching resource on modules in Disability & Equality by a Social Sciences lecturer and in a History module which explores mental illness in modern Britain at NTU. The resource will also be used to influence the content of undergraduate and postgraduate Social and Health Care and Social Work curricula at NTU, the postgraduate history and geography curricula at University of Lincoln and the postgraduate history curricula at university of Huddersfield.

Publications: The oral history interviews and images collected will go to inform a book by Dr Calabria on the meaningful aspects of care practices in the old state mental hospitals by Palgrave Macmillan Mental Health in Historical Perspectives series. In addition, the findings have informed a book chapter by Calabria on the hidden heritage of the Nottingham Mental hospitals in a forthcoming internal volume entitled, “Narrating the Heritage of Psychiatry”, and a subsequent book chapter for an international volume on the legacy of psychiatry and de-institutionalisation, UBC press, Disability Culture and Politics series. Dr Calabria plans to submit a piece for the newsletter of the History of Psychiatry special interest group, hosted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, whose mission is to include the lived experiences of mental healthcare in the medical curriculum of psychiatry.

Collaborations between NTU and organisations in Health and Social Care, heritage and community sectors were mutually beneficial and has created a robust foundation to develop future partnership projects that benefit the communities they serve. Arrangements for NTU to use the Castle Lab, a Nottingham Castle gallery space, to showcase the local history of mental healthcare innovation, activism, and rebellion and the proposal to hold a public engagement event at the Lab will forge closer links for research projects led by the university to be shared in publicly accessible venues. These public-facing activities will reach new audiences and provide heritage institutions with opportunities to showcase new academic research in the city to the general public. The project has also demonstrated the potential for further cross-faculty collaborations: there is an interest in continuing the successful partnership with the MA in Museum and Heritage Studies course;

colleagues in the School of Architecture, Design and the Built Environment and the School of Social Sciences have expressed an interest in using the model of collaborative oral history to create an impact in community-led projects and have invited the Project Lead Dr Calabria to present findings at an NTU Global Heritage workshop in June 2021.

5. Conclusion

The Hidden Memories of Nottingham Mental Healthcare project achieved the stated aims and outcomes outlined in the NLHF application. Despite setbacks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, it responded quickly by devising a modified programme of activities that could be carried out remotely. The alternative approach and an efficiently managed process saw the project develop new methods of working, delivering training and recording oral histories, thereby creating an innovative model that can be emulated by other projects. The online activities continuing throughout the lockdown made it possible for participants to get involved, connect to others and reduce the sense of isolation. The project has, in conducting training and interviewing remotely using new technology, captured on record the reality of life and conditions during the pandemic, experiences of participants, and the adaptability and innovation shown in finding solutions.

The recorded personal testimonies and digital artefacts documenting the experiences of those who witnessed the transition to community care now form a resource available for public access and use in teaching and learning. Participants, who shared their memories and memorabilia and contributed to the production of the digital exhibition, had the opportunity to remember and reflect on their experiences, which they had been keen to preserve before they were lost. The archive and online exhibition have realised their aspirations and also received interest from academics and professionals who recognise its potential for cross-disciplinary research and collaborative working. The project's legacy lies in the foundations it has laid for further projects exploring the heritage of mental healthcare in Nottingham and its relevance for mental healthcare practice today.

We need a sense of identity of who we are and where we've come from. It's a bit like why we celebrate all the people who fought in the world wars, so that we don't forget what they did so that we could be as we are today. I think to improve services and treatments and so to look back and think what worked, what didn't work... to carry forward improvements, to remember the kind of legacy that we've left really, and not to forget all those people who worked and lived and were patients in those times. So, in a sense, it is about keeping it alive so that we can examine our heritage, to understand how we've arrived here today, where we've come from and our sense of identity of who we are.

Judith Estrop, former nurse, reflecting on the importance of preserving the heritage of Nottingham Mental healthcare