

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Magic Me	Grant ref: 9651	Programme area: Older Londoners\b) Healthy lifestyles of those over 65 years
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 03/12/2009: £60,000 over three years (3 x £20,000) towards the salary costs of the Programme Staff and some project costs for work with people aged 65+.		
Visiting Grants Officer: John Merivale	Date of meeting: 20 th March 2013	
Met with: Susan Langford, Director		
<p>1. Introduction to the organisation:</p> <p>Magic Me (MM) was established 20 years ago to provide creative projects bringing together young and old for mutual benefit, learning and enjoyment. In its earliest days the projects centred on work between people living in residential care and children in local schools working together in poetry, drama and photography.</p> <p>Magic Me’s Director – and founder – Susan Langford is one of the 33 people listed in Gordon Brown’s book “Britain’s Everyday Heroes” where he commends the organisation’s ability to bring together young and older people from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures.</p> <p>The organisation works with those aged 9-25 and those aged 55+, while within the upper age group there are many who are over 70 – particularly those living in residential care. In 2006 funding was secured for a three-year project called “Our Generations” which in part targeted those aged 75+. The impetus for this piece of work lay in the 7th July London bombings, after which there were heightened tensions between communities and an increased fear of strangers. MM wanted to explore new ways of working within this changed context and to deepen its understanding of what intergenerational practice can offer to complex communities. Through a series of creative arts projects focusing on the interests and concerns of all involved, a number of objectives were achieved (as evidenced by comprehensive independent evaluation).</p> <p>These objectives included: the provision of new arts opportunities for older people who could not reach mainstream provision (including those with dementia); building positive relationships between young and older people (particularly youngsters at risk of social exclusion); challenging misconceptions and prejudices between generations; reducing isolation and feelings of uselessness amongst older people; and generating debate about ageing and ageism. The evaluation found evidence of real progress in meeting these objectives - and more (e.g. in generating more positive participation amongst young people in the classroom).</p>		
<p>2. The project funded:</p> <p>The project is MM’s continuing intergenerational work in Tower Hamlets. The agreement is that the grant is for work with the 65+ age group, as this is your priority. This includes work with those in care homes; using older people to help young people through secondary school; helping care staff better understand their clients; and arts-based social activities with older people using young volunteers.</p>		

3. Work delivered to date:

MM's arts activities range from workshops to events and parties. The list is long:

- A 5-month project involving a printmaker and story-teller, adults and school pupils – resulting in artwork to transform the buses on the 205 route from the City to the Olympic Park. Older people visited the schools to work with children on printing.
- Weekend at Wilton's – photography, dance, music and puppetry at the music hall.
- Where the Heart is – film-making exploring aspects of love reflecting participants' lives and that of Sylvia Pankhurst, in partnership with the Women's Library at London Met University – featured on BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour.
- Cocktail parties in care homes – including input by Goldsmith's drama students, and performances by Royal Academy of Music students. Etc...

Statistics are impressive: 128 volunteers, 150 residents at parties, 45 new volunteers inducted over course of the grant, 20 volunteers having professional training in Dementia. Corporate support and other fundraising mean that MM expects to host 10 parties a month in different care homes. MM won Awards for All Ages 2012, in the Combatting Isolation category.

4. Difference made:

MM takes evaluation seriously – involving, for example, students at Queen Mary College to contribute to an evaluation posing the simple question: *How would your life be different if you didn't have cocktails in care homes in it?*

As with all 'quality of life matters', the most telling way to measure success is through feedback. A small selection gives some flavour:

- *"I usually don't like activities, but this is different – I really enjoy this. I love the conversation and how relaxed and natural it is."*
- *"I can really say I enjoyed it, and that is a lot for me to say. It takes a lot for me to enjoy myself but tonight was just right."*
- *"Amazing! I have never seen the residents so lively – I am in shock."* (Carer)
- *"The letter inviting me to the project didn't say how it would blow me away."*
- *"Every single person here has taught me something. I discovered how ... wisdom, enthusiasm, energy and creativity can merge in a very positive way and produce significant and beautiful pieces of work."*

Such endorsement speaks for itself. But MM does not see the whole world through rose-coloured spectacles – it is quite clear where prejudice also remains in some people's minds, and MM continues break this down using surprise and imagination.

5. Grants Administration:

The grant is being properly used, albeit as a proportional contribution across MM's projects, and has been acknowledged in annual accounts. The payroll details were seen to be in order.

The grant has aided MM's development, in that it has been able to devote time to seeking further grants, has made contact with new care homes, and reviewed its risk assessment procedures such that it can run parties at lower cost using volunteer leaders.

Monitoring reports have been consistently good.

6. Concluding comments:

CBT's grant has helped MM to maintain and develop what it already does well. Over three years, MM has more diverse projects underway, new client groups, 100+ extra volunteers, and a wider range of income sources.