



**European Approaches  
to Inter-Generational  
Lifelong Learning**

**Women's Library Projects**

**ENGLAND**  
**Case Study Identity Card**  
**2007**



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## EAGLE CASE STUDY

# ENGLAND

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The EAGLE-Project is co-funded by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture under the SOCRATES GRUNDTVIG Programme.

Grant Agreement Number: 229981 - CP - 1 – 2006 - 1 - GR- GRUNDTVIG – G1

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Design, Logo and Title Photos by Claudia Fuchs & Brigitte Gall, FIM-NewLearning





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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Executive Summary*

Magic Me is an intergenerational arts charity, founded in 1989 serving people across the East London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The Women's Library's move to a new building in Aldgate (2002) led to the inspiration for a programme of projects in collaboration with The Women's Library, Mulberry School for Girls and local older women from the Borough. An annual project has been held each year since, with a core regular group of older women and new young women each year.

Established in 1926, The Women's Library houses the national archive of women's history, one of the world's largest collections of material about women.

Young women, all from Bangladeshi families, were recruited through the school and older women, from different backgrounds, who lived locally, were recruited through visits to older people's centres and the local press. Groups meet weekly at The Women's Library and for activities during school holidays.

The groups come together to learn about one another, and through enjoying creative activities together. Each year the intergenerational group has used different arts mediums to research and develop a project.

With the young women on the brink of beginning their adult lives, and the older women looking back over rich lives, the exchange is always an arena for discovery, mutual enjoyment and shared experiences.

In 2005 the cultural mix and exchange within the group was an antidote to the increased tensions within the local community, following the bombs in London in July, an example of how intergenerational work is fundamental in creating safer and stronger communities.

## Magic Me

The UK's leading provider of intergenerational arts projects



## 2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

<i>Title</i>	Women's Library Projects
<i>Country/ Countries of origin</i>	England - London <u>Comments:</u> The project is based in Tower Hamlets in the East End of London, which has a diverse community population.
<i>Duration</i>	Starting Year: 2003 End Year: 2008 <u>Comments:</u> Current funding will take the project to July 2007 with fundraising underway for Year 5.
<i>Status</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Running</li> </ul> <u>Comments:</u> May continue beyond 2008 if future funding and appropriate projects are identified.
<i>Managing institution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Voluntary/social sector/foundations</li> </ul> <u>Comments:</u> Magic Me specialises, and has led the way, in running intergenerational arts projects for 18 years.
<i>Contact de- tails</i>	Last Name: Langford First Name: Susan Title: Ms Position/Role: Director Institution: Magic Me Street: 18 Victoria Park Square Town: London Post Code: E2 9PF Phone: 0044 20 3222 6064 Fax: 0044 20 3222 6065 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:info@magicme.co.uk">info@magicme.co.uk</a> URL: <a href="http://www.magicme.co.uk">http://www.magicme.co.uk</a>
<i>Funding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public</li> <li>▪ Private (foundations &amp; trusts)</li> </ul> <u>Comments:</u> The local School working with Magic Me on this project always contributes in some way, either by a small amount of funding or through its own resources; a state girls school which has become a Specialist Arts school.
<i>Partnership arrange- ment/organis- ational form</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bottom-up, grass root initiative</li> <li>▪ Others</li> </ul> <u>Comments:</u> Magic Me approached the Women's Library as it was local, has a national archive of women's history/women's institute and they thought that it would be an interesting project. They wanted to get local women involved and Mulberry school is the nearest school.
<i>Scale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community based</li> <li>▪ Local</li> </ul>



### 3 DESCRIPTION OF COLLABORATING GROUPS

<i>Collaborating Group I</i>	<p>Older women</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> The women are predominantly white Jewish or Christian with one Nigerian black woman. They mostly are from lower economic-socio backgrounds, living in social housing and living alone. Most of the participants to date have been widows. 9% of the population in Tower Hamlets are over 65; around 70% of these are white.</p>
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p>8 per year</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> The project runs from February to July with a group reunion and showcasing of the arts work at the Magic Me Annual Celebration in October.</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group I</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 55</p> <p><u>Maximum Age:</u> None</p> <p><u>Age distribution:</u> Predominantly in the 70's, oldest to date 91 years old.</p>
<i>Collaborating Group II</i>	<p>Younger females</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> Recruited from Mulberry School for Girls, which is a state school with an intake of 95% British born Bangladeshi's. Many Bangladeshi parents want their daughters to go to a girl's school. Mulberry is high achieving, over subscribed and has Arts status. The school has a tradition of working externally. Pupils are from lower economic-socio backgrounds.</p>
<i>Total number of Collaborating Group II</i>	<p>10 per year</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> The project runs from February to July.</p>
<i>Age group(s) of Collaborating Group II</i>	<p><u>Minimum Age:</u> 14</p> <p><u>Maximum Age:</u> 16</p>

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## 4 DESCRIPTION OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES

The practice description of intergenerational learning practices serves a twofold purpose: i) a qualitative practice description of the case and ii) a quantitative assessment of additional case descriptors.

### *Description of Learning Arrangement & Learning Practice*

There are always three main aims in any Magic Me project

- Learning creative skills and producing creative work - working with artists to do that
- Community development – meeting with people that you wouldn't usually meet of different ages, culture and ethnicity, using some kind of theme that focuses on that
- Promote personal development and skills, increase community and social awareness, build confidence and identity and the feeling of being useful

Problems addressed for older people is their social isolation and getting involved in something with young people, when they come to the project say that they feel like 'people' again. They enjoy learning from the resources that the library has to offer but would not necessarily visit on their own. Both groups explore their fears and preconceptions of the other generation by addressing prejudices about aging. They learn to understand how other people think and feel, and share experiences, which promotes respect and community cohesion.

Weekly sessions are led by two artists using a combination of visual and written activities, using a participatory and action based approach. Each project has end goal eg the creation of a calendar, set of photos, collection of poetry. This creative aim is usually linked in with The Library's exhibition programme. Topics have included: Beauty, Women and their Homes, and Heartfelt issues.

Photography has featured in 3 of the 4 projects, with participants learning about design, styling, art direction, lighting and editing. A sound project about women's voices taught how to use sound tracks, making decisions and choices with the actual recording and editing done by a radio journalist. Outputs are displayed on the Magic Me, The Women's Library and Mulberry School websites.

Recruitment for the older women is done by flyer, visiting groups Magic Me have worked with before, LinkAge in Tower Hamlets have also helped find people to participate. Also use the exhibition of one project as a way to start recruiting for the next one. The young women are recruited through the school. The project is offered to a year group in an assembly then Magic Me hold an introductory workshop that pupils can come to. The Head of Arts also targets pupils who they feel would benefit from participating in the project. Recruitment has got easier as time has gone on and word has got around that it's a good thing to do. The quality of the work is very good and people like to do, and be associated with, things that are professional. Magic Me gained funding to do an extra event at a Festival last year which attracted wider interest.

Separate meetings with each group are always undertaken first to prepare them for the projects and get to know their peers, using creative arts and discussion. This is a good way for the artist to get to know the group dynamics and an opportunity for peer groups to find out more about the project and decide whether they want to take part.

Magic Me contract freelance artists for each project who design and run the activities, and arrange dates and times. Sometimes people from the Women's Library will also be involved e.g. Curator.

<b>Location of the learning activity</b>	<p>Formal setting i.e. educational institute and library          Informal setting i.e. community facility/building</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> The activities usually take place at the Women's Library, a local community centre was hired for photo shoots and the peer sessions for the younger women are done in school.</p>
<b>Learning activities (related to policy objectives)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community development, living &amp; safety</li> <li>▪ Education, training &amp; learning</li> <li>▪ Media education incl. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)</li> <li>▪ Social inclusion/participation, active citizenship</li> <li>▪ History and reminiscence</li> <li>▪ Arts &amp; culture</li> <li>▪ Leisure time</li> </ul> <p><u>Comments:</u> The cross-cultural aspect is very specific to this project. The older women were particularly drawn to the project. The right environment is important, having a setting where you feel comfortable and are able to ask questions. The venue is for all women, not just young or older people.</p>
<b>Fields of Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Skills for the Knowledge Society</li> <li>▪ Individual competence development (for private and professional purposes)</li> <li>▪ Societal/economic exchange and consultancy</li> <li>▪ Development and continuity of societal values</li> <li>▪ Productive cultural assimilation;</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge &amp; Learning Exchange/Flow between the target group(s)</b>	<p>Balanced and bi-directional e.g. shared activities, studying together, discussion, exchange of knowledge, culture, living communities, learning</p>
<b>Interactions between the target group(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ one-to-one</li> <li>▪ group based</li> <li>▪ many-to-many</li> </ul>
<b>Categories of the learning activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-formal</li> <li>▪ Informal</li> </ul>
<b>OECD/DeSeCo Competences addressed by the CS</b>	<p>1 = Competence Category 1: Using Tools Interactively          1.1 = The ability to use language, symbols and text interactively          1.2 = The ability to use knowledge and information interactively          1.3 = The ability to use technology interactively          2 = Competence Category 2: Interacting in Heterogeneous Groups          2.1 = The ability to relate well to others          2.2 = The ability to cooperate          2.3 = The ability to manage and resolve conflicts          3 = Competence Category 3: Acting Autonomously          3.1 = The ability to act within the big picture          3.2 = The ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects          3.3 = The ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs</p> <p><u>Comments:</u> Cover all of the competences, the flow proportion differs depending on the actual activity they are doing and on the arts forms in the subject.</p>



<p><i>EC Key Competences addressed by the CS</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Digital literacy and ICT skills</li> <li>▪ Learning-to-learn</li> <li>▪ Interpersonal and civic competences</li> <li>▪ Cultural awareness</li> </ul>
<p><i>Success factors and barriers of the CS</i></p>	<p>One critical incident for the project was the July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 London terrorist bombs, one just a few minutes from the Magic Me office and The Women's Library. The mood and pressure following the incident affected what was going on within and outside the group. What it did show was that community cohesion was an important factor in building understanding and relationships, highlighting the valuable work of Magic Me. The 'heartfelt' issues project was designed in response to this to deepen participants' understanding of one another's beliefs and life choices.</p> <p>Older participants enjoy the attention they get from the group; managing the many individuals needs and egos and bringing shy people forward is a real challenge for the artists facilitating the group. Experienced artists with real skills with groups are needed.</p> <p>Older women can suffer from health problems and illnesses that can mean they miss large portions of the project.</p> <p>With any arts project fine-tuning and adjusting the original plans will be needed once the group meet and work on the topic. Projects are often deliberately open at the start then become more focused with the groups' input and ideas. What matters is whether people have moved from where they were at the start of the project by developing skills and deepening their understanding of the subject, and their relationships with one another.</p>
<p><i>Results of the CS</i></p>	<p>There is always a specific output for the project e.g. an exhibition, photographs, calendar, sound track, poetry.</p> <p>An evaluation on attitudinal shift for the participants is undertaken at the initial discussions then at the end of the project, which reflects deeper understanding and awareness of people's needs and issues. Artists comment on interactions within groups. Teachers comment on their knowledge of pupil's development and improvements within school. The Women's Library commissioned an external evaluation of their community programme. Magic Me was part of the review, and the evaluators talked to Magic Me staff and artists, and project participants. Build in group and individual reflection for self direction. Getting people to think for self evaluation and appreciation, and appreciation of others.</p> <p>Participants reported higher self-esteem and personal fulfilment, skills development and an increase in social activities. Through this project the younger women will have improved future career and job opportunities. They all enjoy the publicity that the projects get in the local media and the older women appreciate school invitations and enjoy being recognised within the school as part of the education process. The older women learn about other things going on such as events and get into the 'circuit' of things, and share information with each other re events etc. The older women performed at the Capital Age Festival, a Londonwide event for older people in February.</p> <p>Participants note that they feel more confident to speak out in other situations but it is difficult to attribute positive outcomes to the project. People need to make the link for themselves that taking part in a community activity is beneficial, and also we don't know what would have happened if someone hadn't taken part.</p> <p>Some of the younger and the older women are now on the Magic Me Advisory Group to advise on subsequent projects and comment on what Magic Me does.</p>