



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

# Talking Trees

Project Evaluation Report

Simon Langton Girls'  
Grammar School



**FAY BLAIR, PROJECT EVALUATOR**

**fayblair@hotmail.com**

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## PREFACE

We believe that enrichment, preparing our girls to be highly confident, active citizens, is essential for their rounded development. For many, having the opportunity to demonstrate their own sense of 'agency' helps define a sense of purpose that can define lifelong patterns that contribute to neighbourhood and community wellbeing.

We know from our past work with many voluntary and charitable organisations that there is great value, interest and social capital to be gained from inter-generational collaborative work. We recognise that our students have the power to help recalibrate social norms, about what is and isn't acceptable citizen behaviour among peers but also across the generations.

We see our students as champions to promote the change for more 'dementia-friendly' and 'mental-health alert' communities. The daunting statistical facts about mental health and the massive, rapid projected increase in dementia demographics and how this will particularly affect and burden women, is something we need to prepare for.

We know the public purse and burden of social care costs to support us in future is in crisis and unsustainable. We need to foster an 'asset-based' approach to increase community responsibility and capacity to help.

We can build momentum and 'agents of change' to help and make our more fragile, older members in society, feel wanted and useful and to celebrate their wisdom, through fun activities, and sharing stories as 'talking trees', in an arts-inspired way.

We are very grateful for the Big Lottery 'Awards for All' funding of £9,141 and to Fay Blair for making this project happen. We would like to thank all the project partners, the Westgate Parks team, Anna Bell, Lauren Baker and volunteers, AgeUK Canterbury and all those associated with AgeUK Canterbury's LAPWING project; the funders - Arts Council England, Canterbury City Council, NHS Canterbury & Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group, Kent County Council – and the many artists and creatives who supported our Talking Trees programme. Special thanks in particular to Sue Toft, Julie Davies, Nicky Thompson, Jo Eden, Laurie Harpum, Tracie Peisley and to Kent Creative Arts CIC for helping to promote the project and to Dr Pat Chung, Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy from Canterbury Christ Church University who advised and mentored this project evaluation.

***Hannah Blaskett-Foord, Assistant Headteacher Key Stage 4, Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School***



## SUMMARY

### The Talking Trees project

Talking Trees was a year-long enrichment project for 30 students from Simon Langton Girls' Grammar (SLGS), funded by the Big Lottery 'Awards for all', focused on brightening the lives of older vulnerable people in the city of Canterbury. It was an exciting intergenerational, partnership project, led by the school with AgeUK Canterbury and Westgate Parks (Jan-Dec 2016). It also contributed to a bigger AgeUK Canterbury project called LAWPING - live art practice wellbeing inspired network - a training and development programme for 30 professional artists, supported and promoted by Kent Creative Arts CIC.

The main goal of 'Talking Trees' was to help to build more dementia-friendly communities and offer ongoing opportunities for older people to lead more active, fulfilling lives. Following school-based training sessions - to learn more about dementia, mental health, and the needs of older people - students were introduced to AgeUK Canterbury's day centre and residents at Cranmer House sheltered housing scheme.

Students helped to facilitate small group arts activities, 'memory and wisdom tree' making and crafting activities, supported by professional artists, also including the celebratory events held in May and June. A highlight was devising and launching a Tree Trail for Canterbury's Westgate gardens which students designed with older people in mind. They helped guide older people around the trail, took part in creative workshops with artists and the public. A few led music recitals over the afternoon tea organised in Tower House. The public's feedback gathered through survey forms and from participants at the celebratory events, was encouraging and positive, showing that many people enjoyed the programme.

The project was highly successful in many ways. Over a programme of organised visits, relationships and friendships formed with the older people. Students' perceptions of older people changed. They understood better the values, needs, vulnerabilities and challenges that older people face. Students developed in confidence; a range of social, communication, team-working and reflective learning skills. Some continued with more befriending or volunteering work, whilst others realised that they want to support or study and work in the caring professions. Several have become champions to inspire others at school Assemblies, to get other students involved in a new, similar wellbeing project.

Talking Trees broadened the students' awareness and understanding of engaging socially with older people, some of whom live in the early stages of dementia. They listened to the older people's rich life stories and fascinating anecdotes. Through their relationships, students appreciated how much their visits helped to lift the wellbeing of older people. By offering social contact, rewarding and enjoyable creative experiences, something new and different to talk about and do, they saw how their contact helped to overcome the loneliness and isolation that many older people face.

The Talking Trees project concept was developed, co-ordinated and evaluated by Fay Blair on behalf of the school with SLGS teachers Hannah Blaskett-Foord supported by Melissa Challis. Sue Toft was the main artist working from AgeUK's LAPWING project. She guided the programme of creative sessions and the tree trail development work with Westgate Parks. Overall the project provided a valuable, out-of-school, community experience, for students to meet and socialise with older people (some for the first time), and for them to connect and engage in creative arts activities, to experience group facilitation and befriending, with the support and encouragement of professional artists.



**27 May 2016 celebratory event at Cranmer House sheltered housing scheme supported by LAPWING project artists and volunteers with Simon Langton Girls' Grammar students**

# THE PROGRAMME

## What the project entailed

'Talking Trees' was a year-long enrichment project for 30 students from Simon Langton Girls' Grammar. It was a Big Lottery funded, inter-generational, partnership project with AgeUK Canterbury and Westgate Parks (Jan-Dec 2016). It focused on brightening the lives of local older people by engaging them in fun facilitated group arts activities. Students undertook dementia and mental health sensitisation training prior to their programme of visits to residents at Cranmer House and AgeUK Canterbury's Day Centre. They also helped to produce a self-guided 'Tree Trail' leaflet for Canterbury's Westgate Gardens, designed with older people in mind. Kent Creative Arts CIC helped to promote the programme.

Thirty students completed the Talking Trees enrichment programme in 2016. (Appendix A). Some took part in the concluding celebratory events, the Taking Trees workshops (27 May and 5 June), whilst others helped to devise and test the tree trail for Westgate Gardens. An evening talk was organised for the community at AgeUK Canterbury (3 June) Ten Tall Tales from Westgate Gardens. In addition fifteen students also supported older people at the special Westgate Gardens Tree Trail activities day (29 May).



**Talking Trees**  
get social - get creative - share  
your tree stories - make memories

Celebrate and add to our  
memory/wisdom tree

**Sunday 5 June 2016**  
**11am - 2.30pm**  
**at Age UK Canterbury**  
**Castle Row**

with artist Sue Toft and Julie Davies - The Florist. That Teaches

RSVP - let us know you are coming, you're  
welcome to bring along a relative/friend/guest

Ring Fay on **07786 307 664**

Raffle and refreshments


Talking Trees' is part of the 'Lapwing' Arts & Wellbeing Project



5 June 2016 celebratory event at AgeUK Canterbury day centre



**Talking Trees creative 'memory and wisdom tree' making social activities with LAPWING project artists Sue Toft and Julie Davies, supported by Simon Langton Girls' Grammar student**



Overall the core programme elements were:

- Baseline, start of project and end of project, student self-completion questionnaire surveys; part of the overall evidence gathering to inform the project evaluation and gauge its impact
- Classroom-based sensitisation (two repeated sessions) in how to engage effectively with older people and build students' understanding and knowledge of dementia and mental health. (Jan-Feb)
- Facilitated group visits to see older people (Feb-April); programmed weekly two-hour sessions of students supported and facilitated to interact with older people, for the students to get to know them and then encourage them to join in with creative activities to create a collective memory and wisdom tree.
- Briefing and debriefing sessions - at the start and end of the visits for the students and the main artist, with reflective learning journaling from the students on what they found most surprising, challenging and enjoyable about their visits. This was part of the ongoing project monitoring.
- Three artist facilitated visits to Westgate Gardens to help design and devise a Tree Trail with support from the Westgate Parks Development officer and team of volunteers
- Supporting the final Talking Trees celebratory events at Cranmer House (27 May), AgeUK Day visitor centre (5 June) , and evening talk at AgeUK 'Ten tall tales from Westgate Parks' and the 29 May Westgate Gardens Tree Trail public trail 'soft launch' and creative arts activity day
- Project sharing at show case events: including school Assemblies, at AgeUK Canterbury and the 26 January 2017 KCC 'Creative Care' Expo in Maidstone, led by Kent Dementia Action Alliance.

## **Sensitisation sessions**

An important part of Talking Trees was preparing and managing the student expectations of the programme, especially the visits and to prepare them well for what they might encounter, particularly in what the students might interpret as negative behaviour. These sessions were highly interactive, taught sessions led by facilitator Fay Blair on dementia, and art therapist and LAPWING project artist, Tracie Peisley on mental health issues.



## **Monitoring and evaluation**

A baseline survey was carried out to gauge the students' interest and knowledge in dementia, mental health, and in their experience of engaging with older people and to seek students' views on volunteering. The survey was also designed to get them thinking about what they hoped to gain from the programme. Students were asked to list specific skills and interests so they could be matched to specific project tasks later on in the programme.

## **Visits to Cranmer House Sheltered Housing and AgeUK Canterbury's Day Centre**

The programme of visits (Appendix A) involved 30 (of the 39 students who originally signed up) who each worked in one of three different groups. Two groups visited AgeUK Canterbury and third group was assigned to Cranmer House. Students had the opportunity to write a 'pen-pal' letter to the older people in January, to introduce themselves, to begin forming a relationship in advance of the visits. Many of the older people (with support from Fay Blair) wrote letters back, much to the students' delight. Friendships formed and some of these befriending relationships have continued and students have kept in touch and visit their pen-pal friends (see 'project champions' on pp: 22-23.)

## **Project promotion and social media activity**

Kent Creative Arts CIC helped with web platform promotion of the project producing e-newsletter items, photo galleries, and recorded interviews from the sessions two of which were broadcast on Channel Radio. Fay Blair led the press and PR activity and also took the photographs featured in this report.

This Talking Trees project was also the intergenerational component of a larger AgeUK Canterbury led project called, 'LAPWING' - Live Art Practice Wellbeing Inspired Network Group project. This focused on raising the confidence, capability and capacity of Kent's professional artists to help them improve the wellbeing of vulnerable older people, many of whom are isolated and some who live with dementia, through engaging them in specially designed group arts activities.

www.indexmagazine.co.uk

EDUCATION

# School report

School project to aid those locals with dementia, digital innovation award for University of Kent and the Big Bang is back!

Words Kaz Russell-Graham

**S**tudents from Simon Langton Gini's Grammar School (SLGGS) are working with local agencies to create Talking Trees, an intergenerational project aiming to brighten the lives of Canterbury's older residents. Everything that Canterbury's older people hold dear about trees, ranging from art, anecdotes, tall tales, myths and special memories, will be explored by a team of Year 11 and Year 12 students, whose innovative work has attracted a Big Lottery grant. The school's Awards for All Big Lottery proposal was developed last year in collaboration with Fay Blair (Kent Creative Arts CK) and Age UK Canterbury, supported by Anna Bell, Westgate Parks Development Officer, and volunteers from the Friends of Westgate Parks. The school was thrilled to receive funding of £9,141 for the project, which began in January and runs for 10 months. A key feature will be a printed self-guided tree trail around Westgate Parks that the students will help devise. This will be launched at a parks Open Day on 29th May from 11am to 4pm. The ultimate goal is to help to build more dementia-friendly communities and on-going opportunities for older people by empowering young people in participatory arts engagement – very timely, with this year's National Dementia Awareness Week running from 15th to 21st May. Carefully selected community artists will mentor the students in how to engage with older people, with inspiration coming through: team talk visits with older people in communal settings, such as Carner House (an Enhanced Sheltered Housing Scheme), and day visitors to Age UK Canterbury. This will add some fun and enjoyment and help overcome older people's feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression and anxiety through sharing stories and co-creating a memory box, of which everyone will feel proud. Hannah Blackthorn is Assistant Head Teacher at SLGGS and one believes that the skills such as teamwork, building confidence and taking risks in a new environment are just some of the benefits to be gained by pupils. • For more information, visit [www.kentonlinearts.co.uk/Arts & Wellbeing/](http://www.kentonlinearts.co.uk/Arts%20&%20Wellbeing/).



Photograph © Natasha Bangey, Kent Creative Arts CK

Source: Talking Trees article published in Canterbury Index Magazine, April 2016

Engaging students in the design and production of an event poster all contributed to their experience in organising an event and team working. Several students helped with securing sponsorship from local businesses for the prize draw which added to their communication skills experience.



## Tree Trail at Westgate Gardens, Westgate Parks, Canterbury

The Tree Trail open day at Westgate Gardens was held on Sunday 29 May. It was aimed at families and people of all generations but designed overall with older people in mind. Over 400 people attended the activities on what was a gloriously warm sunny day. The AgeUK Canterbury minibus brought older people to the event after their lunch and taxis brought groups of residents from Cranmer House.

This event offered a recreational, entertaining, day with artistic/creative workshop activities in an Impressive heritage park setting. Hospitality, afternoon tea, for the elderly visitors was provided in Tower House, The Lord Mayor's Parlour. Fifteen students helped out on the day.

**9. Maidenhair Tree**  
*Ginkgo biloba*  
Ginkgos are found as fossils from the Jurassic Period. Now extinct in the wild, the oldest known trees are possibly 2,000 years old and are in China. The ginkgo is revered for its medicinal properties. The name refers to the leaves, resembling those of the maidenhair fern. Look closely at the shape of the leaves of this fine pair of trees, as they are formed of two lobes.

**10. Tulip Tree**  
*Liriodendron tulipifera*  
As the tallest deciduous tree from North America it can get to nearly 200ft tall and 20ft around and is one of only two species world-wide. It is very long-lived and its size, straight trunks of first timber made it a tree prized by the Native Americans for canoe building. The flowers are 50mms across, are mostly green, so can be difficult to spot, but look like Tulips.

**Accessibility**  
The tree trail follows the wheelchair friendly path around the grassed area of the formal gardens in Westgate Parks.

**Toilets**  
At Toddler's Cove and Tower Way

## Canterbury's Westgate Gardens

**Tree Trail**

**The main entrance:** is by Westgate Towers in St. Dunstons Street.

**Pay & Display car parks:** Toddler's Cove; North Lane; Pound Lane; Canterbury West Station; Whitehall Road  
[www.canterbury.gov.uk/parking](http://www.canterbury.gov.uk/parking)

**Maps:** are at all access points to the parks.

Friends of Westgate Parks  
@WestgateParks  
[www.westgateparks.co.uk](http://www.westgateparks.co.uk)

## Westgate Gardens Tree Trail

LOTTERY FUNDED

A partnership project with  
Simon Langton Girls' Grammar

Part 1: front panel of the self-guided tree trail leaflet showing partners and sponsors

**The artists' workshops in the park**

The artists' open air workshops (under gazebo), below the terrace, were led by three LAPWING arts for wellbeing artists. The 'Pebble Poetry' (Nicky Thompson) and 'Poetrees' workshops (Jo Eden) and the mobile making sessions (Laurie Harpum) were designed to be inclusive and enjoyable for everyone.

**The tree trail**

The students handed out the draft tree trail leaflets to the public with a feedback form. Other student teams greeted people as they arrived and some escorted the more frail older visitors round the trail.

Part 2: the inside (A3) panel of the tree trail leaflet with map and tree highlight information

## Canterbury's Westgate Gardens Tree Trail



**1 Oriental Plane**  
*Platanus orientalis*



**10 Tulip Tree**  
*Liriodendron tulipifera*



**9 Maidenhair Tree**  
*Ginkgo biloba*



**2 Dawn Redwood**  
*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*



**8 Persian Ironwood**  
*Parrotia persica*



**3 Common Ash**  
*Fraxinus excelsior*



**7 Common Beech**  
*Fagus sylvatica*



**4 Scots Pine**  
*Pinus sylvestris*



**5 Common Walnut**  
*Juglans regia*



**6 Brewers Spruce**  
*Picea breweriana*

This tree trail was produced with the Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School as part of their 'Talking Trees' enrichment work led by Fay Blair and devised with LAPWING project artist Sue Toft, on behalf of AgeUK Canterbury  
[www.ageuk.org.uk/canterbury](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/canterbury)







## Part 3: the inside panel introduction to the tree trail leaflet tree highlight information

*You can see the beautiful trees from the lawn of the formal gardens and take a closer look from along the path. A leisurely stroll takes around 20 minutes.*

### 1. Oriental Plane

#### *Platanus orientalis*

All the specimens of this tree in Canterbury have the distinctive enlarged trunks; the one you see here is the largest. The Oriental Plane is one of the parent species of the more common London Plane. They are all noted for shedding plates of bark, giving the trunk their mottled pattern. This helps it to fend off pollution, by shedding its dirty blocked pores to expose clean bark almost every year.

### 2. Dawn Redwood

#### *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

Known as the Dawn Redwood, this tree was only known to exist as a fossil until living trees were discovered in China in 1941. This tree was introduced to Canterbury in 1947. The Dawn Redwood is related to the Coast Redwoods and the Giant Sequoia. This is a fast-growing tree but requires space for the buttress roots above the ground.

### 3. Common Ash

#### *Fraxinus excelsior*

Ash is found across Europe from the Arctic Circle to Turkey. They can live up to 400 years. In Viking mythology the ash was referred to as the 'Tree of Life'. In Britain it is regarded as a healing tree. Ash wood is one of the toughest hardwoods and absorbs shocks without splintering, so is used for sports handles, tools and oars.

### 4. Scots Pine

#### *Pinus sylvestris*

This common native evergreen tree can reach 35 metres and can live up to 700 years; this variety has survived since the last Ice Age. The resin forms amber as it hardens and is used as rosin for violin bows and printing plates. It has many uses; as well as being one of the strongest softwoods, the resin is tapped for turpentine, the inner bark for rope-making, as well as for its pine fragrance.

### 5. Common Walnut

#### *Juglans regia*

Walnut is one of the most valuable timber trees. Its dark brown/black timber fetches high prices in cabinet making and the root buttresses are valued for gun handles. The wood is known for its shock-absorbing properties and the leaves, bark, the green husks and the oil from the nut kernels have high value in medicinal properties.

### 6. Brewers Spruce

#### *Picea breweriana*

This ornamental tree is restricted in its natural habitat to eight or nine locations on high mountain ridges in Northern California and South Oregon. It has declined in numbers there due to climate change and fires. Its drooping twigs are an adaptation to growing high up where the snowfalls are heavy and frequent. Up to six metres of snow falls in a season, but the drooping twigs shed the snow quickly and effectively.

### 7. Common Beech

#### *Fagus sylvatica*

This magnificent deciduous tree can grow up to 40m tall and live to 400 years. The silver-grey bark has a smooth texture. When the leaves first unfurl they are a delicate lime green, providing a dappled shade beneath them, and in autumn they turn to glowing yellow, then orange then a russet brown that rustles in the breeze. In the 19th century beech oil was used for cooking and oil lamps. Beech wood is used in furniture-making, and the pulp is used for manufacturing a textile fibre known as Modal.

### 8. Persian Ironwood

#### *Parrotia persica*

This deciduous tree is native to the Alborz mountain range in Northern Iran. It is closely related to Witch-hazel and *Liquidambar* and has stunning crimson autumn colour. The strength of the timber is such that it is difficult to work. The name is derived from the Russian naturalist F.W. Parrot.

This trail was the product of the students' work led by a professional artist (Sue Toft) and the Westgate Parks team. The aim was to come up with self-guided tree trail leaflet to appeal to all ages, taking into account the needs of vulnerable people, especially mobility and energy level related issues. The trail was designed to inform and raise the public's knowledge and awareness of some of the Park's wonderful heritage and exotic trees.

In September taking into account the public's feedback the tree trail was edited, tree photographs updated and a leaflet designed, and by Christmas 5,000 were printed, all ready for Spring 2017.

An evening talk was also organised at AgeUK Canterbury, (3 June) called, 'Ten tall tales from Westgate Parks' which attracted eighteen people.

You can download and print off the tree trail and the latest activities Westgate Parks events programme from the Westgate Parks website: <http://www.westgateparks.co.uk/>

## RESULTS

Photographs and audio recordings were made by Kent Creative Arts CIC tracking key events of the project; the pre-visit student training at the school, visits to AgeUK Canterbury and Cranmer House and the celebratory events, including the Tree Trail day at Westgate Gardens.

The results of the surveys, questionnaires from the students and participant feedback from the range of celebratory events and including tree trail feedback, are summarised below and are detailed in the appendices:

Appendix B: Student questionnaire findings

Appendix C: Graphs of the project outcomes

Appendix D: Participant feedback

### Survey Feedback

The results of the students' self-completion questionnaires offer a rich insight to the impact of the project. They particularly show how the project affected them; how the students' own self-perceptions and their perceptions about older people, changed in the light of how the older people reacted to and benefited from their visits. The results clearly demonstrate a diverse range of skill development among the students. (Appendix B). The graphs of the outcomes are tell a compelling story (Appendix C).

The feedback from the older people participants at the celebratory workshops and from the Tree Trail day (Appendix D) shows that overall people very much enjoyed the events; the social nature of doing and achieving something together being a common theme. The majority of older people reported that taking part in the events cheered them up 'a lot' and 'lifted their mood'. People who attended the 'Ten Tall Tales' evening talk rated the experience highly.

**Feedback on the 'Ten Tall Tales from Westgate parks', evening talk 3 June 2016 at AgeUK Canterbury**



All students agreed or strongly agreed that ‘volunteering work, related to any kind of social care, supporting and helping vulnerable people, especially older people, is important’. This sentiment strengthened by the end of the project.

Students’ awareness of and knowledge of dementia and Alzheimer’s (a type of dementia) shifted and increased significantly. Many expressed that they realise that dementia certainly will touch their lives in some way; they want to feel that support and understanding is in place to help vulnerable older people.

In terms of agency, many stated that they wanted to know what to do to help in their own families as well as in society. There was a realisation that there is not enough support available for vulnerable people. Several realised that it could affect them in later adult life.

In terms of what student’s felt were the most important attributes, qualities or dispositions to have for this project to be successful, patience, understanding and confidence were most frequently cited. By the end of the project many students realised the prime importance of listening skills, confidence and empathy. This contrast is highlighted in the word cloud diagrams below.

**Word cloud from student views at the start**



**Word cloud from student views at the end**



Students views at the start of the project <http://www.wordclouds.com/>

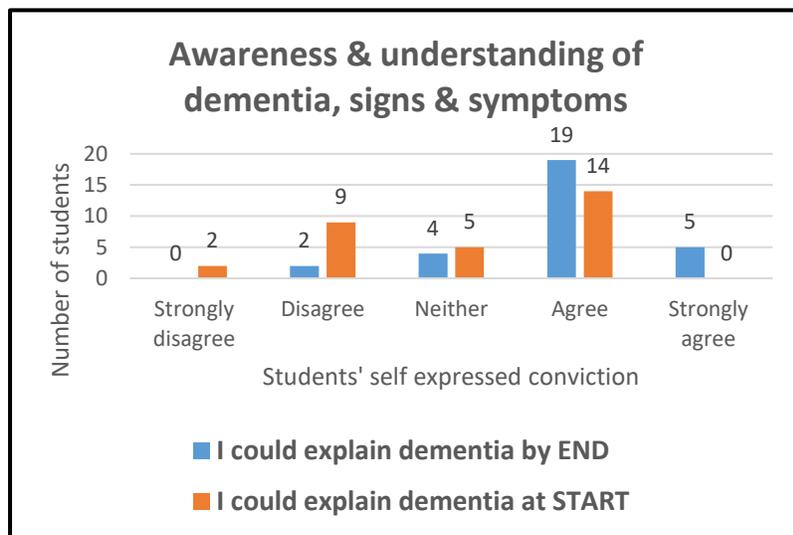
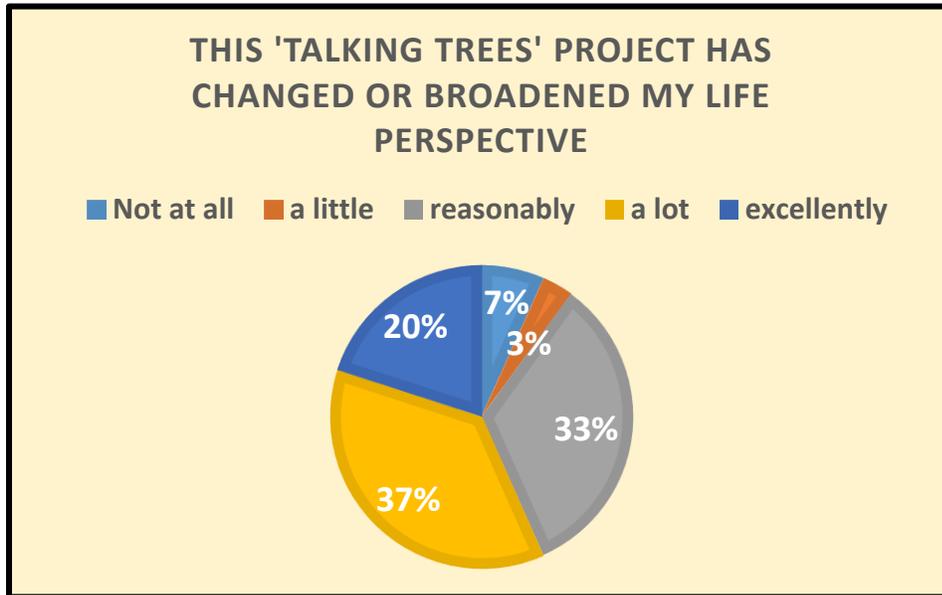
## Picture gallery

The web link below charts some of the Talking Trees project activities and journey:

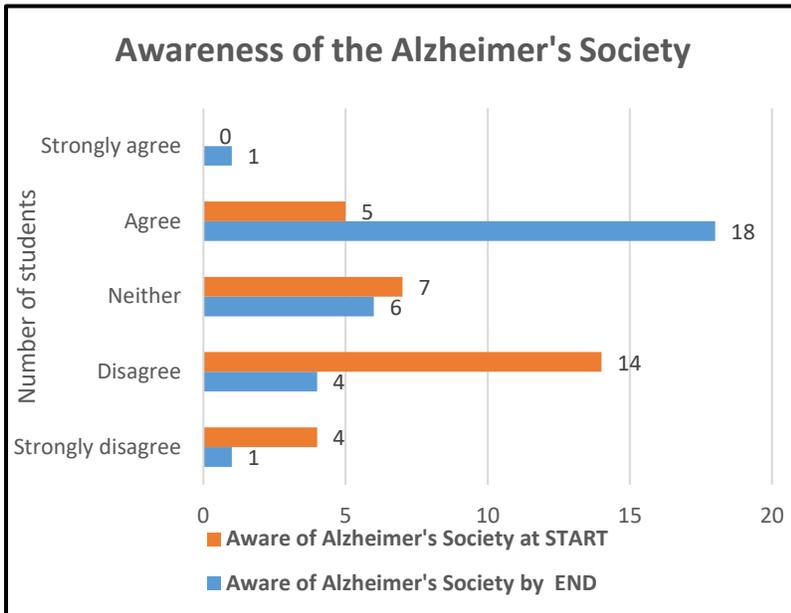
[www.ageuk.org.uk/canterbury/wellbeing/lapwing/talking-trees/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/canterbury/wellbeing/lapwing/talking-trees/)

## Highlights of the quantitative results

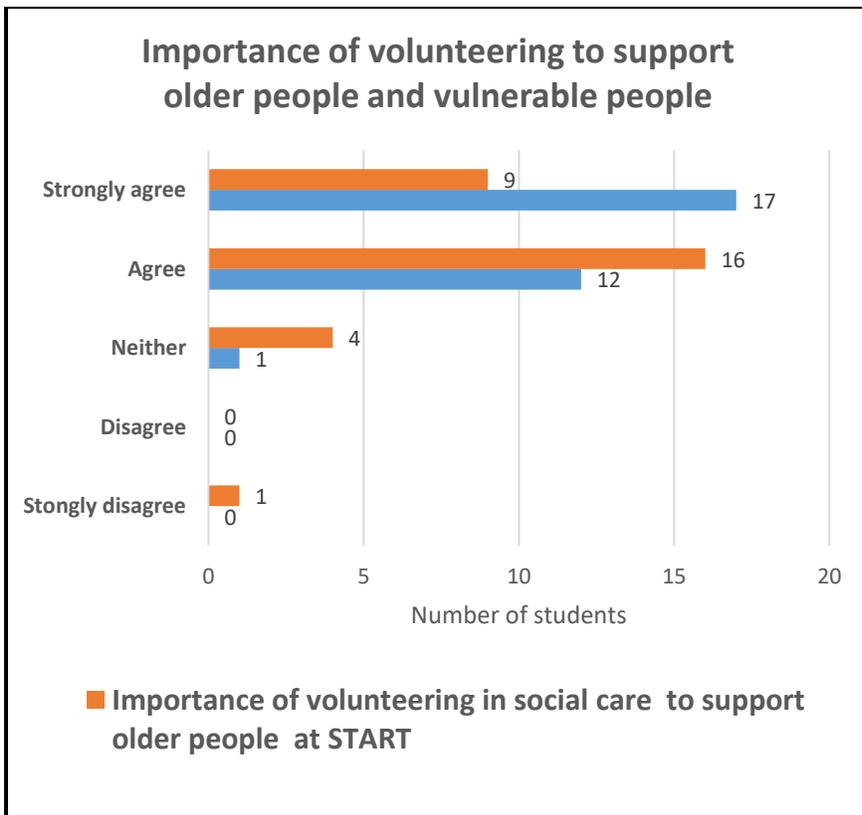
57% of students felt that the Talking Trees project had changed or broadened their life perspective ‘ a lot’ or ‘excellently’.



A positive shift in students' awareness and understanding of dementia was demonstrated by the end of the project. The number of those who 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' rose from 14 to 24.



A significant increase in students' awareness of the Alzheimer's Society was noted by the end of the project. The number of those who 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' rose from 5 to 19.



Students' conviction to the importance of volunteering, to support older and vulnerable people, was affirmed and further strengthened by the end of the project

The number of those who 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' increased from 25 to 29.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

**Among the Talking Trees project outcomes, discussed below, are aspects of the project learning, best practice model of ingredients for inter-generational projects, Talking Trees champion highlights and the project legacy. Key points are also summarised linked to other project learning, to the LAPWING project, where Talking Trees made a valuable contribution. Overall the Talking Trees programme was creative, challenging, rewarding, revelatory and empowering.**

The Talking Trees project provided a valuable, out-of-school experience for students to meet and engage with older people through volunteering in the community at AgeUK Canterbury day centre and at Cranmer House sheltered housing scheme. This challenged and helped to develop students' social conversational skills, especially when engaging with the older people and those who live with dementia. For others it was a chance to develop their creative, team work and caring skills. It was also a chance to learn with and from older people; about their perspectives, older people's rich life story experiences, prompted by the memory and wisdom tree creative activities facilitated by the professional artists.

The project was ambitious, challenging, rewarding and very successful as evidenced by the survey results. Questionnaires, at the start and end of the project, were completed by the students. Feedback forms were completed by the participants who attended the celebratory events. Students were engaged in reflective learning skills.

The structured conversational and creative exchange, between young and old, provided something interesting and new for many of the older people, stimulating enjoyment, mood uplift and appeared to enhance wellbeing, albeit transient. It offered insights as to what older people offer and also need in terms of practical support. Students were surprised at what a positive difference their company made to the older people, who really appreciated the 'fresh, young faces', breaking up their usual daily routines. Some students were inspired to do further volunteering. Respect and deepening intergenerational friendships evolved. In summary the Talking Trees project was:

- Creative** About socialisation and how to engage effectively with older people through the arts, creating a sense of community and connectedness. Discovering older people's new-found or revived talents, interests or memories. Celebrating individual contributions towards a group piece of artwork, a 'memory tree'. Learning from professional artists' practical know-how and group facilitation expertise
- Challenging** About working 'out of your comfort zone', overcoming practical difficulties, the unexpected Encouraging older people to work in new ways, new routines and new activities Overcoming awkwardness of starting and maintaining conversations with older people Adapting to older people's limited energy levels, falling asleep, concentration
- Rewarding** About stimulating and facilitating fun; enjoyable social experiences and meeting new people. Seeing a positive effect on older people, mood uplift, laughing, smiling and wellbeing Feeling a sense meaning and purpose through helping and supporting older people. Helping older people engage and achieve things they thought they couldn't do
- Revelatory** About understanding older people and dementia better and how to engage with them positively. Challenging assumptions, stigma, stereo-types about older people and

dementia. Discovering new-found values, talents and skills through engaging with older people; Affirmation to want to work in the caring professions or volunteering

**Empowering** About confidence building and increasing self-esteem helped through making new friends (young and old together). Enriched insights and commitment to want to work more with helping older people such as befriending. Extending and enhancing skills, know-how seeing that doing little things can make a big difference. Agency and being better informed to champion and influence others in how they can help older people.

## Project learning

Below are some overall observations about what would have made the project even better.

- Avoid running the enrichment programme at, or near, revision or exam periods. Some students found this stressful and were anxious. Others said they would like to have given more time to the project celebratory events but couldn't dedicate the time due to exam timetables.
- Keep the students numbers to a manageable size. It would have been overwhelming for more than fifteen students to visit at any one time. The large number of students meant programming them into three independent groups; two to AgeUK Canterbury, and one to Cranmer House.
- Always build in a good range and choice of activities and structure the sessions flexibly so there is something to appeal to all tastes and interests. The dynamics at each venue were very different, with residents at Cranmer House opting in to attend, whilst those as the day centre lunch club at AgeUK Canterbury were a captive audience. Some students were upset and found it difficult to deal with some of the older people who did not want to take part in some of the creative tasks on certain days at AgeUK Canterbury.
- Build in more time for student briefing before the session visits. The visiting time was very short and even though students were given a written briefing sheet to read at the start of each session, this left little time for them to digest the information and ask questions. The result was that some students were confused and a few got anxious, despite having a facilitator and teacher presence throughout.
- Organise student 'buddying' peer working in pairs, right from the start so that if one student misses a session their buddy can update them on what happened and what comes next. This would save time and possible confusion.
- Plan in more 'pen pal' writing as an early introductory activity before the visits start. The students who did write letters and struck-up a pen pal friendship, appeared to develop a closer relationship with their older people. Several continued with this befriending relationship beyond the end of the formal enrichment programme visits.
- Allow more time for student active in engagement in the planning and running of activities for the Tree trail activities day. Some students would have liked more time to prepare for this and take more of an active lead in perhaps also organising more activities for children on the day.
- Scope out the project guidelines for partnership working and key contractual terms and conditions up front, before the project starts. Mixed expectations and assumptions over copyright, access and use of material between the school and contracted photographer made things awkward and could have been avoided.

## Best Practice Model: key ingredients for intergenerational projects

The Talking Trees project experience showed that there are significant and relevant aspects to organising and running a successful project that could be transferable to other types of intergenerational work. These are useful aspects to discuss when scoping and planning a new project.

<b>T</b>	<b>Time and trust:</b> takes time to build through investing in relationships and familiarity; 'pen pal' writing letters in the old-fashioned way' was a good way to initiate friendships
<b>A</b>	<b>Awareness:</b> especially of oneself and others; a sense of 'agency', for empathy and developing the confidence and ability to effect positive change with others
<b>L</b>	<b>Leading by example:</b> Listening skills and learning from peers and professionals is vital
<b>K</b>	<b>Knowledge &amp; know-how:</b> of older people, dementia and mental health conditions and know to engage positively with challenging symptoms and behaviours
<b>I</b>	<b>Inspiring people:</b> through creative innovatory approaches; getting people to collaborate to think and interact differently adding something new to their day-to-day life routine
<b>N</b>	<b>Network building, new volunteers:</b> continually adding new social interest, adding news is vital for stimulating and helping to maintain cognitive function, avert loneliness, etc
<b>G</b>	<b>Giving back to the community:</b> appreciating the value and benefits of volunteering where both generations, young and old bonds friendships, builds mutual respect
<b>T</b>	<b>Teatime, social groups around the table:</b> the drinking of tea is an important social ritual in many older people's lives through which creative activity and wellbeing, fun social group work can be delivered; clustering up to 6-8 people round a table works well.
<b>R</b>	<b>Reflective learning:</b> is vital for personal growth and development, building confidence to sustain effort, being responsive and adaptive to the needs of all individuals
<b>E</b>	<b>Empathy, enthusiasm, engagement, an enquiring mind</b> - fostering this in us and others and generating an interest in other young people to become to support older people
<b>E</b>	<b>Energy levels and effort:</b> understanding the pacing of the sessions and the practicality of the working environment with older people and entertaining them for wellbeing
<b>S</b>	<b>Socialisation and sharing in social groups:</b> gatherings and celebrating success. Sensory aspects factored into the group activities catering for those with visual and other physical and cognitive impairments

## Talking Trees project champions



Simon Langton Girls' Grammar 'Talking trees' project champions, Katy Elliott (left), Leeluu King (centre) and Kate Shilling (right) presented their project experiences to their Year 9 School Assembly in October 2016.



Project champions later shared their learning on Talking Trees at a School Assembly presentation at Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys. This was to inspire Year 12 students from SLGS to sign up for a new joint project, co-ordinated by with support from Deputy Head Girl, Harriet Ogle (right).

Mohona Sengupta, (centre) a former SLGS talking trees champion now in the co-ed sixth form at SLBS will link with Leeluu King (left) as mentors to SLGS Year 9 students with the SLBS Year 12, to take part in a new project 'Projects from precious places'. This is funded by KCC's Kent Dementia Action Alliance. This is a powerful legacy of 'Talking Trees' that will encourage more students to help create more dementia-friendly communities.

## **Talking Trees project champion highlights**

Some students demonstrated a significant commitment to Talking Trees activities, contributing in different ways at different times, during and beyond the formal project sessions. Below are highlights of some of this student engagement work.

### ***Lotte***

Through her pen-pal relationship with Bobbie at Cranmer House, has become a regular visitor and takes out Bobbie for trips with her family for example, taking her to the theatre. Lotte ran the tea serving at the plant sale day at Cranmer House.

### ***Leeluu***

Through her pen-pal relationship with Cranmer House, later visited to help out at later creative workshops with her younger sister. She secured sponsored prizes from local firms for the Tree trail day in Westgate Parks. Leeluu as a Talking Trees champion, is recruiting Year 9 students for 'dementia friends' sessions at her school, and helped support another new project for SLBS with their deputy head girl Harriet led by AgeUK Canterbury with LAPWING project artist Nicky Thompson who led a workshop at the tree trail day.

### ***Kate:***

Through her pen-pal relationship with Elsie, performed in Tower House in the Westgate Gardens, to older people audience and socialised with Elsie and others who came to the event. Kate also secured sponsored prizes from local firms for the tree trail day. She also visited Elsie at Cranmer House and helped at creative writing workshop in the autumn, 5<sup>th</sup> November 'Family and Friends' with creative writer

### ***Mohona***

Through her pen-pal relationship with Daphne, Mohona helped with several 'hopping' hop picking theme sessions at Cranmer House, in August for the Westgate Parks scarecrow making competition (8<sup>th</sup>October). This was leading up to creative writing workshops at Cranmer House. Monona moved up to the SLBS for her sixth form in September. She helped to recruit Year 12 students for a 'dementia friends' session and for the dementia-friendly community project.

### ***Katy***

Enthused by her AgeUK Canterbury visits, also took part in the professional artist' Live Art Practice Wellbeing Inspired Network Group', the LAPWING' training programme, in arts for dementia and arts for community mental health wellbeing at AgeUK Canterbury. She shared her project experiences at her school with younger Year 9 students and the training sessions, Katy provided an invaluable young person's perspective at the project December 2016 showcase event with the artists at AgeUK Canterbury.

## Linking to other project learning: the LAPWING project

Here below is a checklist of ingredients relevant to the overarching LAPWING project – Live Art Practice Wellbeing Inspired Network Group - managed by AgeUK Canterbury , the arts for wellbeing training for the professional artists <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/canterbury/wellbeing/lapwing/> One student, Katy Elliott, was highly motivated and also took part in some of the LAPWING training sessions held April-June 2016, offering rich insights and mutual learning within the group.

<b>L</b>	Legacy of learning: artist and volunteer commitments to make a difference for more ‘dementia-friendly’ and ‘mental health alert’ communities; leading by example
<b>A</b>	Adaptive and heightened self-awareness: of how to support others through emotional resilience; Accountable for safeguarding and reporting back on progress and problems
<b>P</b>	Partnerships, peer learning, development of professional practice, with perseverance, patience and open mind for on-going learning, enriches our lives and those of others
<b>W</b>	Wellbeing, and willingness to try; collaboration with keen organisations and individuals
<b>I</b>	Inspiring and innovatory approaches with reflective learning on what works and doesn’t
<b>N</b>	Noticing and negotiating how best to maintain interest group interest embracing every individual’s needs and wellbeing; reflexive approach ‘on the ground’
<b>G</b>	Growing in confidence and outreach: Giving back to the community, connecting as citizens to people as neighbours, friends, casually and through befriending is important

## Overall project Legacy

It is clear that the Talking Trees touched the imagination and hearts of many of the students, so much so that several have continued and deepened their friendships with the older people they met. Several have also become ambassadors and champions for the ethos of the project, leading presentations about their experience on the project sharing this with other students to raise their awareness and interest to help.

It is encouraging that the students’ presentation to the Year 9 student assembly at the Simon Langton Girls’ Grammar School, and also with Year 12 students at the Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys (6<sup>th</sup> form co-educational year) has resulted in joint working on another project called ‘Postcards from precious places’. This involves AgeUK Canterbury again working with project artists from the Westgate Parks Tree Trail day, Nicky Thompson and also Catherine Arnell from Expression Arts, another LAPWING project artist. This new project will involve peer sharing and learning, offering more students the chance for an intergenerational experience to get to know older people, to understand their needs and socialise with them through creative artist-led sessions.

AgeUK Canterbury was successful in securing an innovation fund award from KCC, Kent Dementia Action Alliance for this new project for 2017 working with the Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys with support from the Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School. The aim is to help create more dementia friendly communities. Student sensitisation training in dementia, and supporting students in visits to AgeUK Canterbury, and helping to support older people at another Westgate Gardens Tree Trail day on Sunday 21 May 2017 are planned. This legacy is encouraging and helps to develop more dementia-friendly and mental health-alert communities.



# Tree Trail launch

## Westgate Gardens Sunday 21 May 2017 11am—4pm






LOTTERY FUNDED



- Explore our fantastic new Tree Trail
- Take part in FREE creative activities with Expression Arts & Pebble Poetry
- and 'Tremendous Memories' with the Friends of Westgate Parks

**Creative activities 12—3pm**

For more information call 07786 307 664

A free partnership event supported by:





Simon Langton  
Girls' Grammar  
School



CANTERBURY  
CITY COUNCIL





Simon Langton Grammar  
School for Boys



Kent  
County  
Council  
kent.gov.uk

## APPENDIX A

### 'Talking Trees' Project: PROGRAMME SUMMARY

GROUP 1 STUDENTS AGE UK	GROUP 2a STUDENTS AGE UK	GROUP 2b STUDENTS CRANMER HOUSE
7 <sup>th</sup> JANUARY	14 <sup>th</sup> JANUARY	14 <sup>th</sup> JANUARY
<i>School Classroom: Students baselining; skills &amp; interests filling out a questionnaire: Fay Blair</i>		
21 <sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2016	28 <sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2016	28 <sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2016
<i>School – classroom: Course introduction 2.05- 2.15pm by Fay Blair 2.15 – 3.30pm Tracie Peisley - Community Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing. 3.45pm Session feedback (Photography/voice recording interviews &amp; editing– Nathalie Banaigs Kent Creative Arts CIC)</i>		
		<i>SATURDAY 30<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 3- 4.30pm Fay at Cranmer House intro to Simon Langton Girls visits</i>
4 <sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY	11 <sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY	11 <sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY
<i>School – classroom : Dementia Awareness 2.05 – 3.15pm Fay Blair Feedback. 3.30 – 3.45pm intro to recording &amp; evaluation &amp; audience engagement planning</i>		
		<i>25<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY CRANMER HOUSE /Memory Tree Ideas Tea time talk</i>
25 <sup>th</sup> FEBURARY	3 <sup>rd</sup> MARCH	3 <sup>rd</sup> MARCH
1pm to 2.15pm	1pm -2.15pm	2.30 pm – 3.45pm
AGE UK	AGE UK	CRANMER HOUSE
Fay Blair -Memory Tree ideas	Fay Blair - Memory Tree ideas	Fay Blair - Memory Tree Ideas
10 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	17 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	17 <sup>th</sup> MARCH
1pm – 2.15pm	1pm- 2.15pm	2.30pm – 3.45pm
AGE UK	AGE UK	CRANMER HOUSE
<i>Fay and LAPWING artist Sue Toft – starting the memory tree work</i>		
		<i>24<sup>th</sup> MARCH CRANMER HOUSE Fay - Prep for plant sale day</i>
24 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	14 <sup>th</sup> APRIL	14 <sup>th</sup> APRIL
1pm-2.15pm	1pm-2.15pm	2.30pm – 3.45pm
AGE UK	AGE UK	CRANMER HOUSE
<i>Fay and LAPWING artist Sue Toft continuing with memory tree work</i>		
		<i>SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2-4pm Fay - PLANT SALE – CRANMER HOUSE</i>
21 <sup>st</sup> APRIL	28 <sup>th</sup> APRIL	28 <sup>th</sup> APRIL
<i>2.05 – 3.45pm Westgate Parks – Tree trail development: Fay Blair with artist Sue Toft &amp; Westgate Parks team</i>		

<b>12<sup>th</sup> MAY &amp; 19<sup>th</sup> MAY</b> <b>TESTING Tree Trail for Westgate Parks – all groups</b> <b>Designing the public feedback form for the trail Fay Blair, Artist, Friends of Westgate Parks (10 students)</b>		
		<b>FRIDAY 27<sup>th</sup> MAY 2.30-4pm</b> <b>CRANMER HOUSE</b> <b>CELEBRATORY EVENT</b> <b>LAPWING Artists Sue Toft &amp; Julie</b> <b>Davies student supported (2b)</b>
SUNDAY 29 <sup>th</sup> MAY	SUNDAY 29 <sup>th</sup> MAY	SUNDAY 29 <sup>th</sup> MAY
<b>SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup> MAY WESTGATE PARKS</b> <b>Public open day – soft launch of Tree Trail with Westgate Parks Team &amp; Volunteers, Sue Toft &amp; Fay Blair</b> <b>Handing out the tree trail to the public; Getting the public to complete a feedback form on the trail;</b> <b>Morning slot 11- 1pm Lunchtime slot for media 1-2pm; Afternoon slot 2-4pm;</b> <b>Escorting residents from Cranmer House and Age UK Canterbury Day Centre round the park with their</b> <b>walkers. (15 students from all groups) Prize draw competition. Student music recitals in Tower House;</b> <b>Creative activity workshops with LAPWING artists, Jo Eden, Nicky Thompson, Laurie Harpum</b>		
<b>FRIDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> JUNE Evening Talk 6pm for 6.30 – 7.30pm</b> <b>"Talking Trees" Ten Tall Tales from the Westgate Parks</b> <i>Aidan Potts, Canterbury City Council</i> <b>AGE UK CANTERBURY</b> <b>Tea/coffee/juice/nibbles Age UK Canterbury Day Centre members and Cranmer House Residents</b>		
<b>SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup> JUNE 11-2.15pm</b> <b>AGE UK CANTERBURY – CELEBRATORY EVENT</b> <b>Artist led by LAPWING artists Sue Toft &amp; Julie Davies, student</b> <b>supported Fay Blair (Group 1 and Group 2a)</b>		
<b>Westgate Parks project team</b> <b>updating photos for Tree Trail leaflet.</b> <b>Revised drafting and design of Tree Trail</b> <b>Fay Blair with Canterbury City Council and Westgate Parks</b>		<b>Hop Picking stories and Scarecrow</b> <b>designing at Cranmer House Aug &amp;</b> <b>Sept with student guests</b> <b>October: Scarecrow making &amp; trail</b> <b>competition at Westgate Parks</b> <b>Creative Writing ' Friends and family'</b> <b>October with student guests</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 12<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER Student led with Fay Blair</b> <b>SHOW CASE PEER SHARING SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES</b> <b>Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School: to all 120 Year 9</b> <b>Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys to all 110 Year 12</b>		
<b>10th DECEMBER - PROJECT SHOW CASE EVENT at AGE UK CANTERBURY</b> <b>Fay Blair with LAPWING PROJECT artist participants and project champion student Katy Elliott</b> <b>Printing and Publication Westgate Parks Tree Trail leaflet</b>		
<b>26th JANUARY 2017 10 – 4.30pm PROJECT SHOW CASE Kent Creative Care Expo, KCC, Sessions</b> <b>House, Maidstone: Project Display and presentation on Talking Trees led by Fay Blair</b>		

## APPENDIX B

### Student questionnaire survey findings

#### BASELINE STUDENT AND END OF PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

##### The students: their knowledge and expectations

Thirty students responded to the survey, (50%) 15 from AgeUK Canterbury and 50% (15) from Cranmer House

##### Students views on volunteering to support and help vulnerable especially older people

All students (30,100%) agreed or strongly agreed that 'Volunteering work, related to any kind of social care, supporting and helping vulnerable people, especially older people is important'.

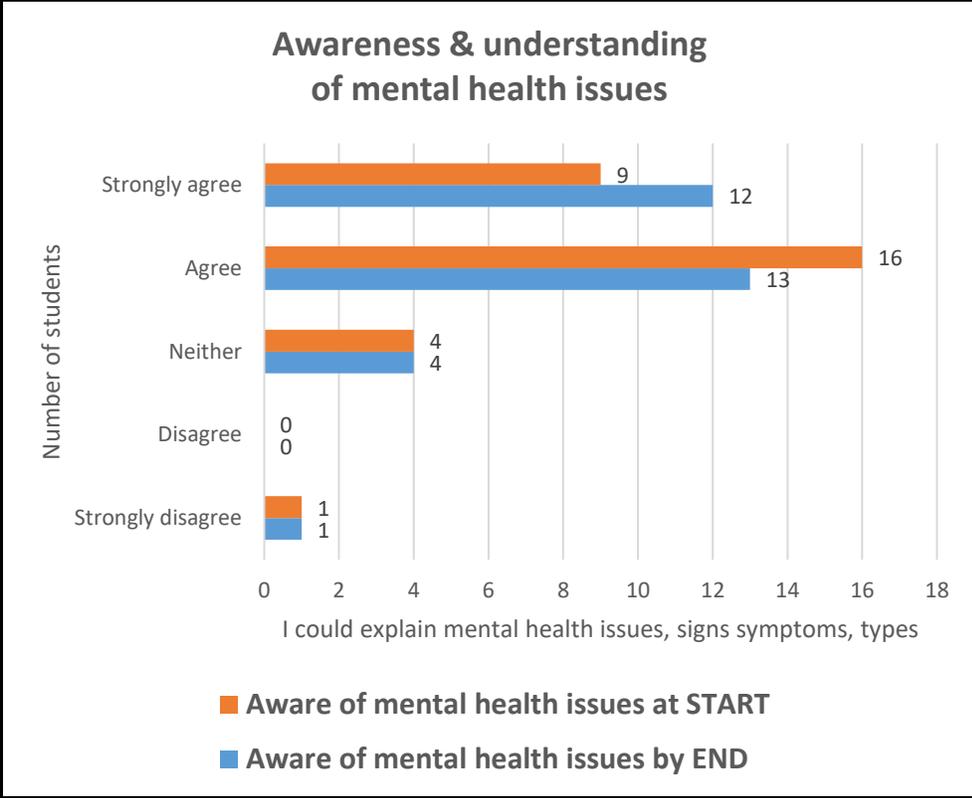
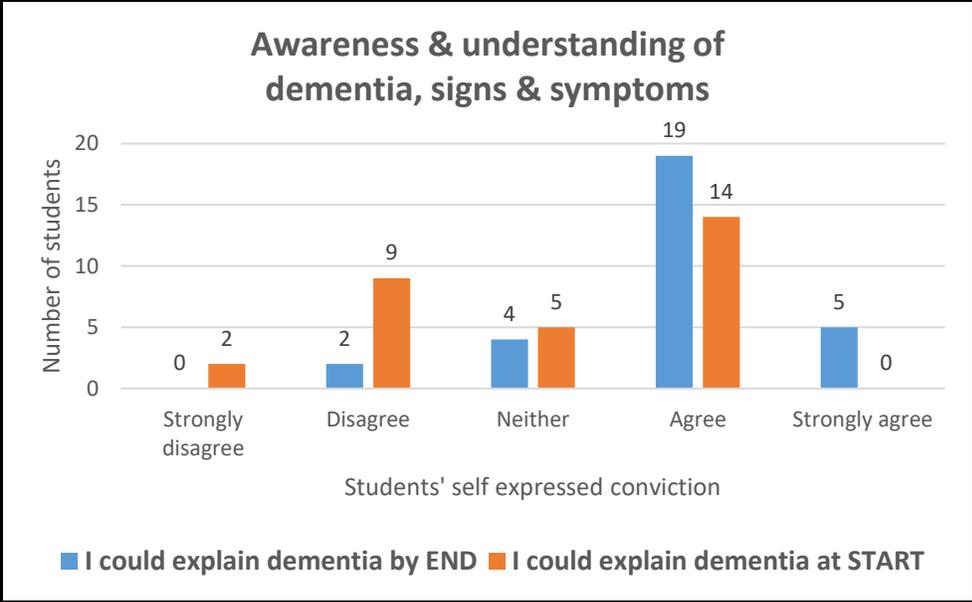
##### Students' knowledge and awareness of dementia and mental health issues

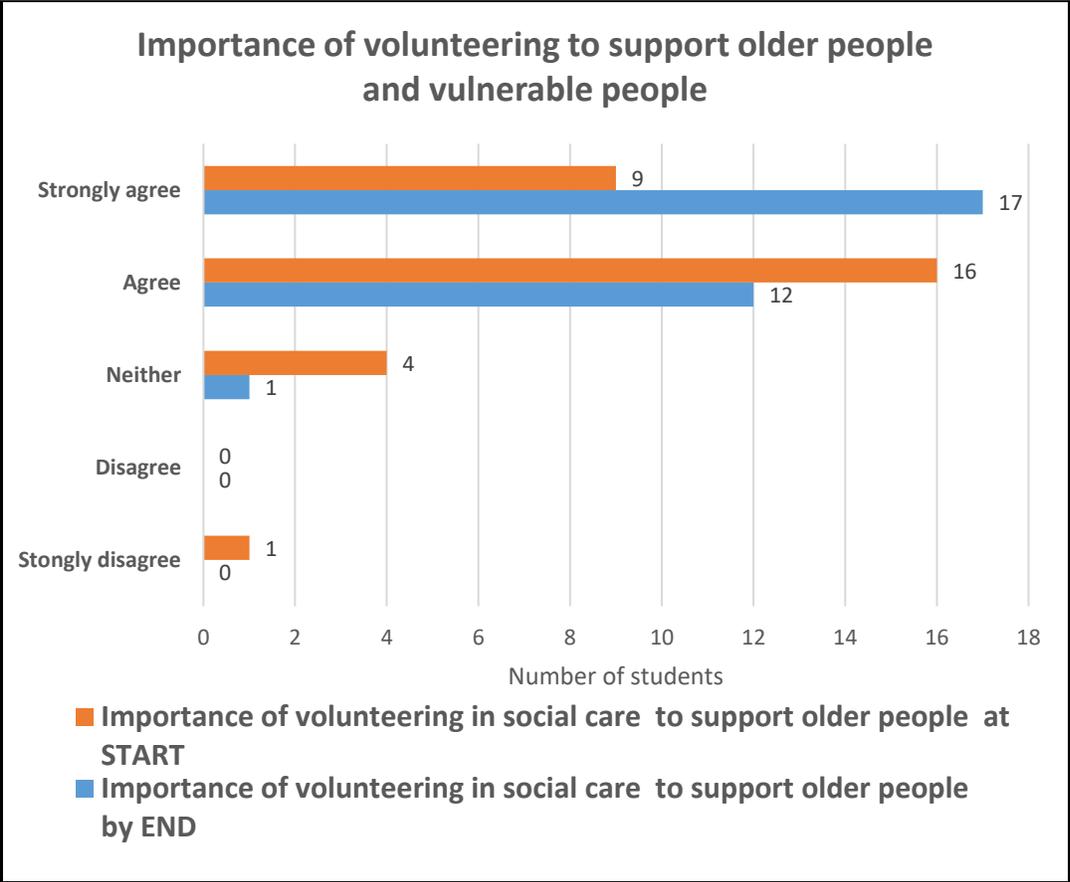
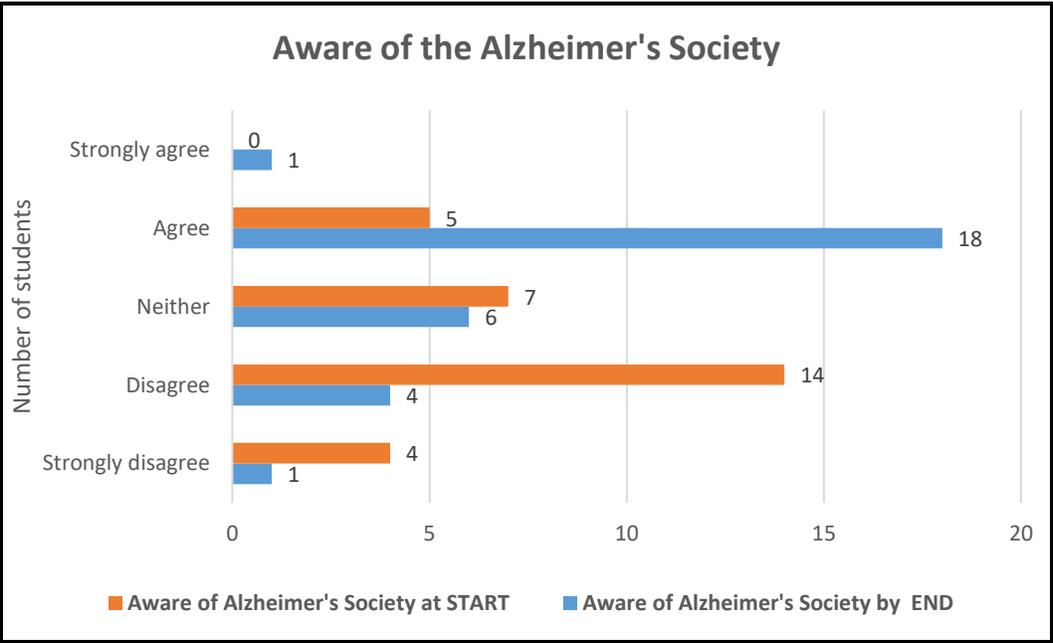
A small proportion (14, 47%) of students agreed or strongly agreed that they 'know about Dementia' and 'could explain the symptoms and signs & different types'. **At the end of the project this increased to a majority of students (24, 80%) of students; an increase of 33%**

A small proportion (5, 17%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were 'aware of what Alzheimer's society does'. **This shifted to the majority of students (24, 80%) by the end of the project; a shift in 63%**

The number of students who strongly agreed that they 'know about mental health issues such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depressions, psychosis, and 'could outline the symptoms signs and different conditions, **shifted from 9, (30%) to 13 (43%) of students, indicating a increase of 13%.**

Students were generally much more aware of mental health issues compared to dementia at the start of the project. Students insights to mental health, related to their own personal experiences, or of family or friends. Similarly, regarding awareness of dementia, students who were highly aware said they had gained this through personal or family interaction with grandparents of relatives, family and friends. It appears talks and information at school about mental health has been more prominent in the school. A few students mentioned that their parents worked in professionals related to either dementia or mental health.





## Why students felt it's important for them to know about dementia and mental health issues

Many expressed that they realise that dementia certainly will touch their lives in some way; they want to feel support and understanding is in place to help vulnerable older people.

In terms of agency, many stated that they wanted to know what to do to help in their own families as well as in society. There was a realisation that there is not enough support available for vulnerable people. Several realised that it could affect them in later adult life. Verbatim comments were:

- *Awareness is the first step of accepting/overcoming anything*
- *It is important to be educated and be able to offer support for those who need it*
- *So if I saw anyone with these symptoms I could lead them to places that can help*
- *Mental health affects so many people for numerous reasons and there just is not enough support meaning that many people have to suffer silently and on their own*
- *It teaches you to be respectful of others and know about how people feel whether they show it or not*
- *So I understand what they are going through and take things more into consideration when I am around them*
- *To increase understanding and sympathy across age ranges and break down stigma*
- *I would like to know how to treat people with dementia*
- *To help friends, relatives and society*
- *If ever I see an elderly person with these problems I want to know what to do to help them*
- *Because those I know may be affected*
- *Because anyone can be affected by it*
- *I would like to be more aware of what it is so if my grandparents get it*
- *Because it could affect me in my future or anyone around me*

## Student expectations of the Talking Trees enrichment project

At the start of the project (views gathered in the January baseline questionnaire)

Patience; Creativity; organisation;  
Social; friendly; motivated;  
Organized; empathy; calm;  
Empathetic; talking-to-people; understanding;  
Patience; creative; easy-to-talk-to;  
Friendly; confident; communication-skills; patient;  
Listening-skills; friendly; patience;  
Compassionate, friendly, understanding; patience; good-listener;  
Enthusiastic; creative; friendly;  
Creativity; listening; organisation;  
People-skills; determination; confidence;  
Patience; people-skills; friendly;  
Friendly; caring; sociable;  
Caring; understanding; listening-skills;  
Confidence; creativity; resourcefulness; resilience; Positivity  
Understandings; patience; enthusiasm;  
Calm; confident; committed;  
Patience; confidence; kindness;  
Social-nature; keen-interest; engage-others; creative-mind;  
Willingness-to-help; friendly-personality; creativity  
Enthusiasm; patience; listening;  
Calm; easy-to-talk-to; good-listener;  
Patience; empathy; organisation;  
Thoughtful; organised; respectful;  
Friendly; kind; patient;  
Kindness; patient; confident; caring-attitude;  
Patience; kindness; confidence;

**At the end of the project: (views gathered in the July-September questionnaire survey)**

Patience, kindness, time  
Group-work, listening-skills;  
Enthusiasm; chatty; hardworking  
Patience; empathy; confidence  
Understanding; listening-skills; how-to-care  
for-elderly-people;  
Confidence;  
Patient; confidence; open-minded;  
Confidence; creativity;  
Kindness; listening-skills; perseverance;  
Patience; kindness; empathy;  
Patience; be-understanding; kind;  
Confidence; enthusiasm; time;  
Patience; interest; teamwork;  
Teamwork; listening-skills; understanding;  
Respect; organisation; understanding;

Patience; determination; hope;  
confidence; dedication; resilience;  
Responsible; communication-skills; creativity;  
Patience; understanding; respect;  
Confidence; communication; dedication;  
Willingness; creativeness; social-skills;  
open-mind; ability-to-come-out-of-yourself; willing-attitude;  
Respect; compassion; understanding;  
Patience; listening-skills; determination;  
Empathy; listening-skills; patience;  
Confidence; listening-skills; patience;  
Creative; considerate; friendly;  
Kind; patient; understanding;  
Patience; empathy; friendliness;  
Confidence; communication; dedication



## Q.5 most enjoyable aspect during this project?

- **23 mentioned connecting with people, meeting new people, visiting the older people through the visits and, for example, hearing their incredible life stories and about WW2, exchanging photos, the relationship they formed with a specific person, people by becoming a pen pal before the visits. 2 students mentioned making the tree; 3 mentioned the Tree Trail in Westgate Parks**

Making the tree

Meeting people at AgeUK

Helping out on the tree trail day, especially showing the people from Cranmer House round.

Talking to Audrey

Meeting and learning about other people

Making the tree

I enjoyed meeting new people

Meeting new people

Going to AgeUK talking to the elderly there

Meeting the people

Meeting new people

Talking to the old person

Visiting our pen pals and exchanging photos and hearing their incredible life stories

Being in Westgate Park

Talking to people about their experiences and WW2

Making friends

Meeting new people

Meeting new people

Meeting the elderly

Talking to new people

Talking to the people at AgeUK

Visits

Interacting with the old people

Going to meet people

Giving out leaflets to the public {Tree trail day}

## Q.6 How has this project influenced what you think, plan to do in the future?

- Valuing the Importance of volunteering, community work and working with older people
- More respect and understanding for mental illness. Think more about older people, think more about respect for the elderly, what to do and say
- Spend more time outside; Should be more events like the tree trail
- Increased confidence to talk to people in groups, do more group activity, more likely to talk to older people. Helped define a study/career path (medicine, caring professions).
- More likely to help people; Do more volunteering; Make more visits; to do things that make other people happy

To do things that make others happy

I see the importance of community work

It has influenced me to be more likely to talk to older people or in spare time volunteer again with older people

Made me think about the elderly more

I would like to think that I consider people more in what I do/say

Doing more group activities

It has improved my confidence

I now want to help as many people as I can

I've been influenced to do more volunteering

Talking to the people in groups

This project has made me more sure about studying medicine and also has helped me choose my EPQ topic (on the lines of mental health)

Increased enthusiasm for helping elderly people

Spent more time outside

It has made me realise that just because someone is old doesn't mean that they should be treated any differently

I will be more likely to help people and make more friends

I may volunteer

I want to continue to meet new people even more so

More respect and understanding for mental illness

I will maybe volunteer at things like this again

I now can talk to more people especially older people

I have discovered that I want to do a job that is connected to people

Nope

It hasn't influenced me

Helped me empathise with the elderly

It's made me think there should be more events like the tree trail

## Q. 7 What most surprised you?

- **The attitude of the people, how welcoming, friendly, open they were and prepared to share; Alzheimer's, what it is, what it does and severity of mental illness, and how it affects people differently; How many shared common interests with the elderly, the diverse characters; How much detail older people remember of their earlier lives, (talking about WW2); How much I learnt, how much fun it was; the large number of people coming to the event; The difficulties, some of the people on my table at AgeUK did not want to speak.**

The attitude of the people

The elderly people

How different all of the older people were. Some of the people on my table at AgeUK did not want to speak to us whereas others would quite happily tell you their own stories but also ask you what you were doing as well. For example one time we had a conversation about living by the sea.

How much they share

That I learnt lots

How welcoming older people are

The different people/ characters there are

All the difference in people - seeing how dementia affected them

How fun it was

Less worried about talking to people than I was in a group

They were more open than I thought

They were more open than I thought

How much the residents remember the little details of their life even though most of them have dementia.

The large number of common interests we shared with the elderly residents

The public coming to the event (Tree Trail day in Westgate Gardens)

People's willingness to talk about WW2

How friendly people were

The difficulties

Alzheimer's in general: what it is, what it does

Mental illness severity

How easy it was to talk to the people

How easy it was to talk to new people

How well I could relate to the older generation

Talking to the older people

Nothing really

Talking with older people

How friendly people were

## Q.8 What did you find most challenging?

- **The most frequently mentioned challenge was talking to new people, especially at first, starting the conversation and maintaining the conversation sometimes, and talking in a group. The next most frequently mentioned issue was getting, persuading everyone to join in the activities without forcing them. Dealing and overcoming problems especially in engaging with people who have problems hearing; working with someone with sight impairments takes getting used to, or when people fall asleep mid conversation was also raised by several. A few mentioned finding the time to commit to it, building up the trust with the other residents**

Talking to new people;

Convincing the older people to join in the activities

The initial meeting and getting to know people

Starting the conversation. It was overcome as usually one of the activities would get them interested or if they were not interested in trees they might make a comment which would lead to a conversation

When the elderly didn't like the activities. Making conversation with new people

Talking to others in a group; became more confident

learning to deal with different problems and how to overcome them

Getting everyone included in the activities - and this we just were able to do continue without forcing them into anything

Starting conversation with certain people

Finding the time to commit to it

Getting them involved in the activities. Including everyone

Building up the trust with other residents and getting them to engage in the project.

Interacting with a blind person for the first time: it just takes getting used to

Talking to the elderly Talking to the older people being friendly

Talking to people when they kept falling asleep. I overcame this by continuing the conversation with others or changing the conversation with others or changing the conversation to suit the other people.

One lady was very hard to hear so having a conversation with her was difficult. Fay helped

Speaking to older people but we managed to with practice

To continue talking to the people even though I found it difficult to

Challenging conversation starter.

Trying to understand the symptoms of dementia but this was overcome by the sessions before Cranmer House that explained it.

To find topics in common I overcame this by listening to others interest

Getting over the nerves of talking to people who might be depressed/ struggling with dementia - this got better with time as I realised they were just normal people

Some of the people deaf and could hear. I didn't overcome this

Talking with older people

Asking questions as she could not hear well however we worked it by her just telling me anything

## Q.9 The THREE most important things you got out of the project?

- **Becoming more familiar with older people and how quickly a relationship can grow over a few weeks. Getting involved in the community, the importance of volunteering. Socialising, making new friends. Learning more about dementia and all kinds of mental illness, the problems of older people. Raising awareness of dementia and that many people need support. Increased self-confidence, communication skills. Feeling of hope and gratitude and the need to be considerate. Team work and learning to work more efficiently with others**

Friendliness, social skills, relaxing

I made new friends; I got in touch with the environment in Canterbury; I got involved with my community

Gave me more confidence; got to know more people; felt more involved

The enjoyment of the two ladies we showed round the tree trail and how much they know about all the plants even though it was their first time visiting it for the first time; Seeing the older people smile and enjoy and enjoy a younger generation's company; Increased confidence in talking to strangers

Learning more about dementia; talking more to the elderly; understanding the elderly more

How to consider others in what I do; that I know it is something I would like to continue

Creative release; group activities - fun! Meeting new people

A higher level of confidence; I feel more at ease with older people

Learning to work efficiently with others; that there are many people in need of support that I can help; I know more about dementia and mental help

Working in a team; Leading activities; Learning about all kinds of mental illness

Importance of volunteering; Be considerate; Make people aware of dementia

Elderly people need more support; Facts about dementia

Made friends; Learnt history (stories); Got involved

Made friends; Got involved with the community; learnt history

Self-confidence; a feeling of gratitude; hope for a better future for people living with dementia

A new pen-friend; Organised sponsorship for tree trail questionnaire; Created awareness of the problems of elderly people. Communication skills; Volunteering; Creativity

It helped me to feel less anxious whilst around new people; Made me realise the importance of talking to people; Made me see how quickly a relationship can grow and develop over a couple of weeks.

Confidence; good deed; making someone happy

Meeting new people; helping community; socialising

I learnt the importance of holding onto memories that are precious; A sense of community

Helping others; meeting new people; Finding out more about dementia

Organisational skills; Giving back to the community; Learning new skills

A better compassion for older people; Breaking down my own stigma around dementia; The enjoyment of making connections with new people. Never seen an old people's home (before)

Understanding of dementia; More respect of older people; Understanding of what causes dementia

Meet new people; Worked with friends; Creativity

Confidence; Good deed; Making someone happy

## Q.10 Changes, results and impacts you saw on you or others?

Changes in the social skills in my classmates

The older people were more open towards us at the end

Saw the interest of the elderly people grow

The older people seem a lot happier after we had chosen to come and see them. My perceptions of older people have not really changed as I always thought that they would like to talk to us, but I know some of my friends who also did this where surprised that they wanted to see us.

I understand dementia more and what it is

I know that I would like to work with people and help them in the future

the residents opened up more as the weeks went on

More confidence

I saw the people I worked with blossom and grow (both peers and elderly)

That the people at AgeUK were happier when we visited

I saw how the residents started to enjoy us coming over in comparison to the first time when most of them were nervous and not very talkative. Also it was nice to feel more confident around them and to know that being there made their day better.

Students much more comfortable interacting with new elderly people

The elderly got more talkative as they know you

When we first arrived, most of the people were reluctant to talk or get involved. However as time went on I realised that the people became happier and brighter when we returned.

I experienced how to appreciate life and others

People became easier to talk to

Befriended and have continued to visit Cranmer Resident Bobbie Jones taking her out monthly

Through the sessions some of the people I met seemed to enjoy our company more and cheer up

I saw a positive change in the attitude of the people I spoke to

The second week I came, the difference in the table I was on was great! They were far more willing to talk and were talking between themselves more too.

Values: became more considerate of the older generation

I didn't see any really

More comfortable speaking to strangers and the elderly

I experienced how to appreciate life and others

**Q.11 List THREE key qualities, dispositions you need to have for this project to be successful**

Patience, kindness, time  
Group work, listening skills  
Enthusiasm; chatty; hardworking  
Patience; empathy; confidence  
Understanding; listening skills; how to care for elderly people  
Confidence  
Patient; confidence; open-minded  
Confidence; creativity  
Kindness; listening skills; perseverance  
Patience; kindness; empathy  
Patience; be understanding; kind  
Confidence; enthusiasm; time  
Patience; interest; teamwork  
Teamwork; listening skills; understanding  
Respect; organisation; understanding  
Patience; determination; hope  
confidence; dedication; resilience  
Responsible; communication skills; creativity  
Patience; understanding; respect  
Confidence; communication; dedication  
Willingness; creativeness; social skills  
An open mind; ability to come out of yourself; a willing attitude  
Respect; compassion; understanding  
Patience; listening skills; determination  
Empathy; listening skills; patience  
Confidence; listening skills; patience  
Creative; considerate; friendly  
Kind; patient; understanding  
Patience; empathy; friendliness  
Confidence; communication; dedication

## Q.12 Should other students have the chance to have this project experience?

- Based on students own interest and positive experience of meeting new people, doing something out of school, volunteering. Students see it as a valuable experience. As long as it's optional. Because they feel it's important to know about and engage practically with older people and know about these issues (dementia, etc.). A few found it a little boring, and one felt it was not well organised and one felt the constant evaluation was a bit of a waste of time.

18 60% yes

11 37% maybe

1 3% no

So they can learn new skills

It was very interesting

I think for certain students it is beneficial but for others they do not see the benefit that older people gain.

It really made me more aware of the people in society and how to help

It was unique and interesting

It was interesting but a little boring

Because it is important to learn about this

It was a good experience

All Year 11 had the chance to participate

I think they would like it

It not only helps others but yourself

Yes but should have more involvement in the tree trail itself

As long as it is optional, I feel that those who want to get involved should as it builds confidence and teaches you all sorts of skills

It is a good thing to experience

They could volunteer outside of school

It's beneficial for the youth of today to communicate with the elderly

It wasn't very well organised, but if it was, I think could have been more rewarding [ID

It is a valuable learning experience you rarely encounter

I really liked the visiting of AgeUK but I did think all the lead up to it and constant evaluation was a bit of a waste of time. I would rather have had more time meeting the people

Broaden perspective on dementia

As meet new people and be creative

It's a good thing to experience

### **Q.13 Overall how much did you enjoy this enrichment project?**

The majority of students (63%) enjoyed taking part in this project 'a lot' or 'excellently'. Only a few (7%) said they did not enjoy the experience.

### **Q.14 How much has this project changed or broadened your life perspectives on the need for communities to become more dementia friendly mental health alert?**

For the vast majority (90%) of students, the project changed or broadened their life perspective on the need for communities to become more dementia friendly and mental health alert.

### **Q.15 Would you like to take part in school presentation (about this project)?**

Several students volunteered and shared, presented their insights via a:

Talk to all Year 9 Assembly (3rd October) Simon Langton Girls School

Talk to all Year 12 Assembly (16<sup>th</sup> October) Simon Langton Boys' School

Showcase event (10 December) with 'arts & wellbeing' trained artists (as part of the overarching LAPWING project led by AgeUK Canterbury)

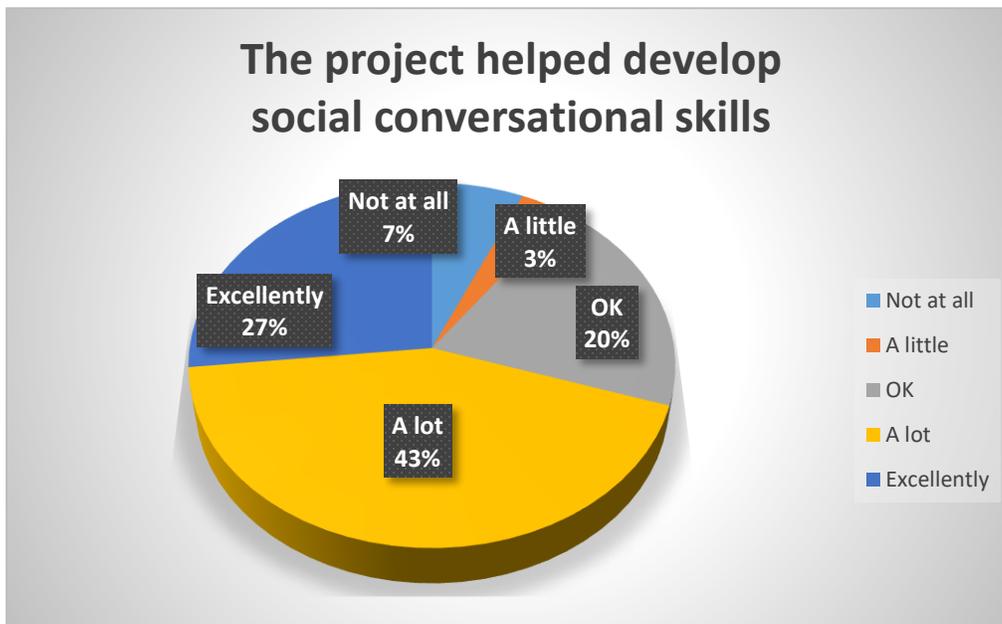
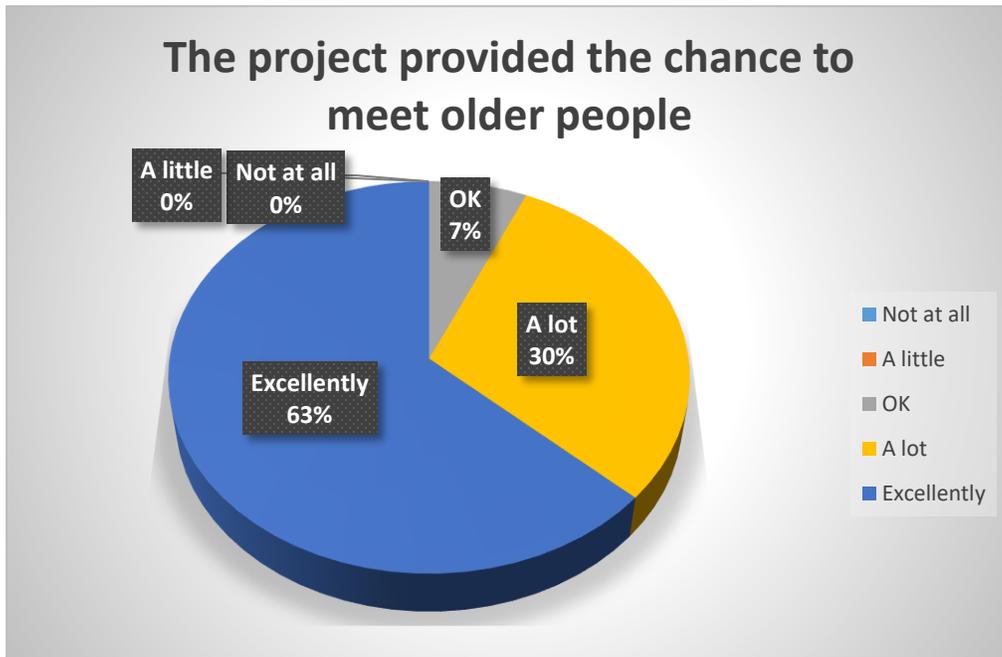
*(Mohona Sengupta, Katy Elliott, Kate Shilling, Leeluu King)*

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

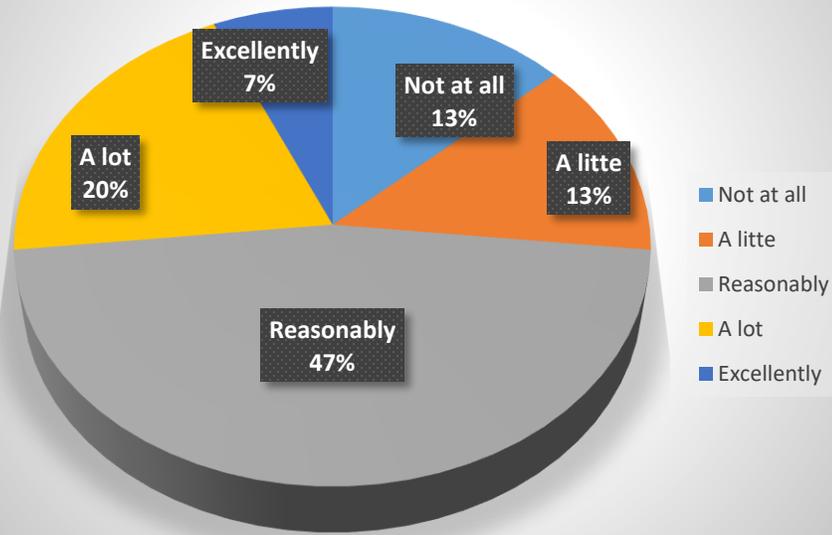
- *Perhaps less paperwork would make it more enjoyable.*
- *The (tree) trail needed to be defined at the beginning I had never heard of one before. More activities for kids, face painting as the trail would have been better; we could have organised that.*
- *More time with the elderly*
- *I think the project should have been better organised because it was around exam time and a lot of time the students didn't know what they were supposed to be doing*
- *I have enjoyed giving talks at my school, reflecting on my experience, helping to organise the scarecrow competition 2016 and the 'postcards for precious places; project at my new school (SLBS).*

## APPENDIX C

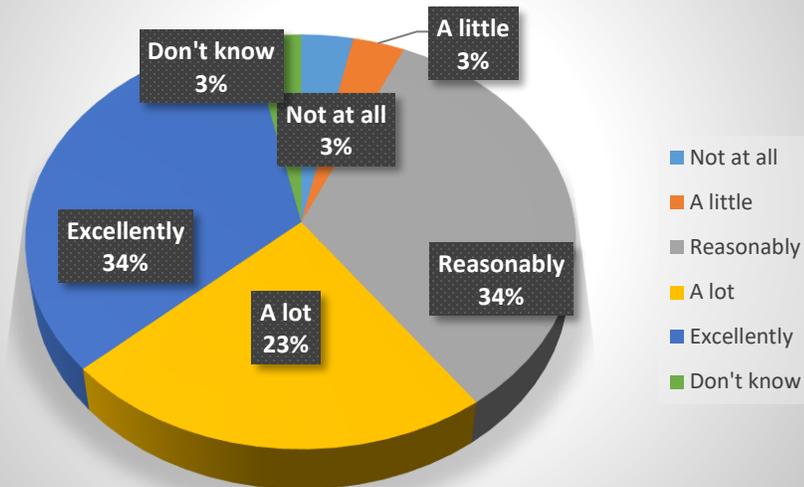
### GRAPHS: Outcomes of the Talking Trees project



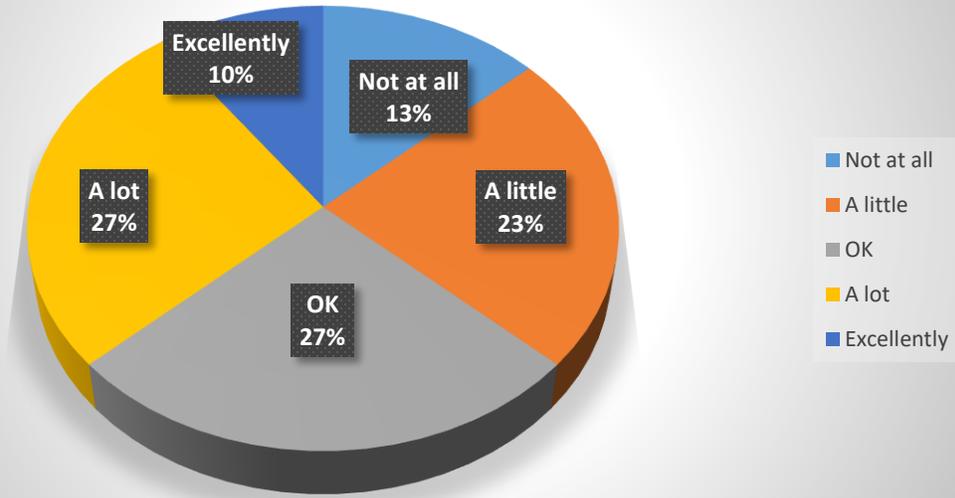
## The project developed team working



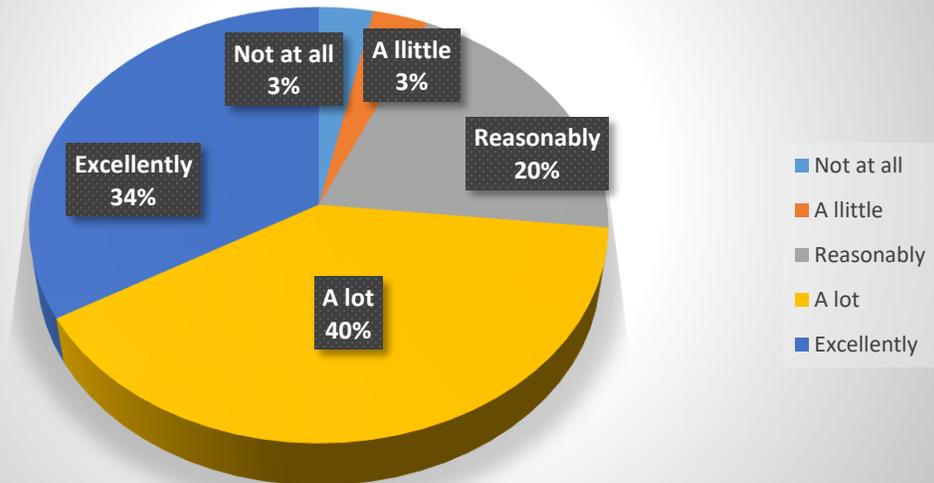
## The project made you work out of your comfort zone



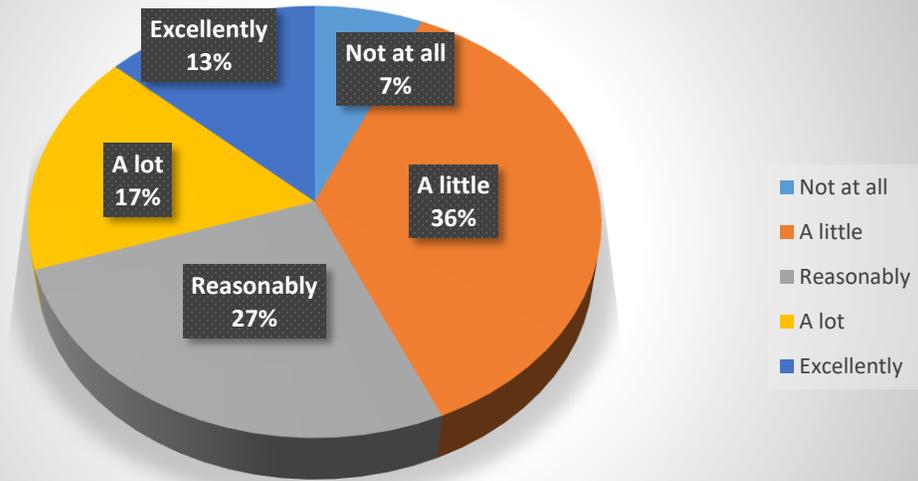
## The project built your confidence



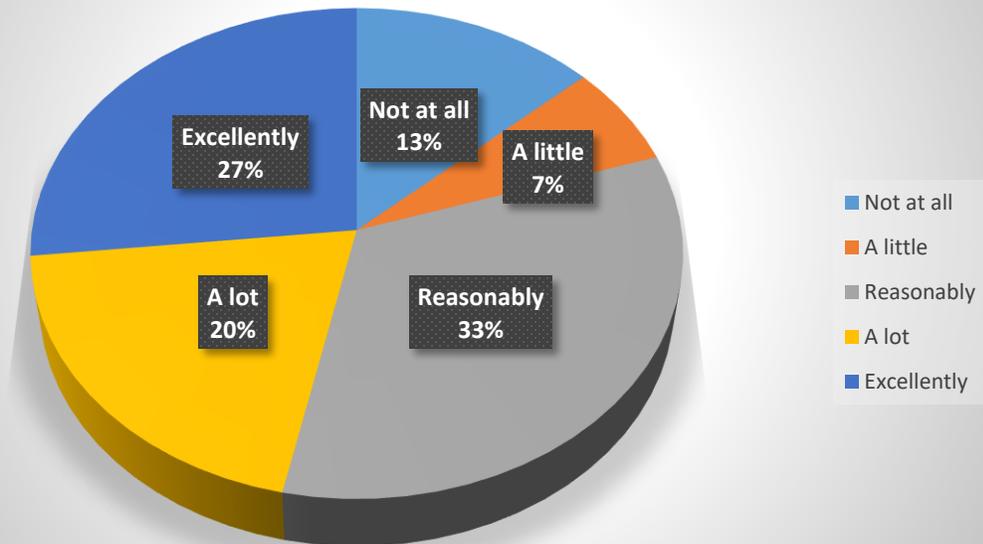
## You gained new knoweldge about dementia/mental health



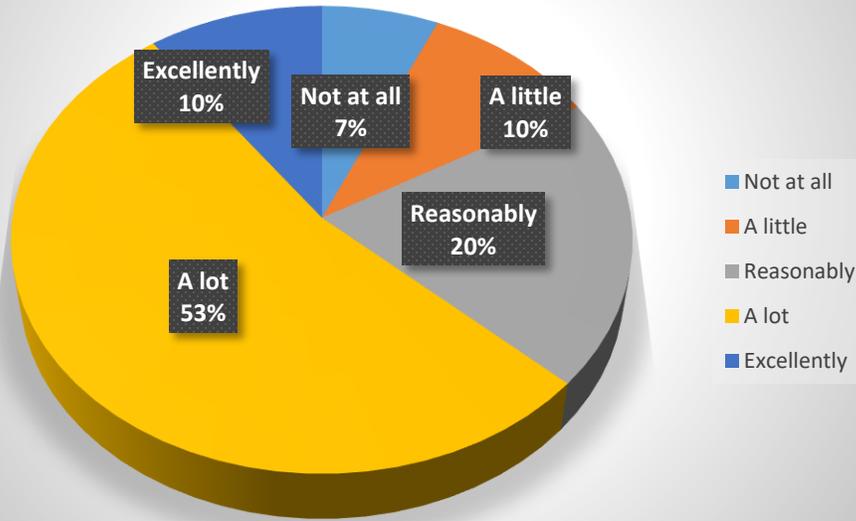
### We did arts/creative work



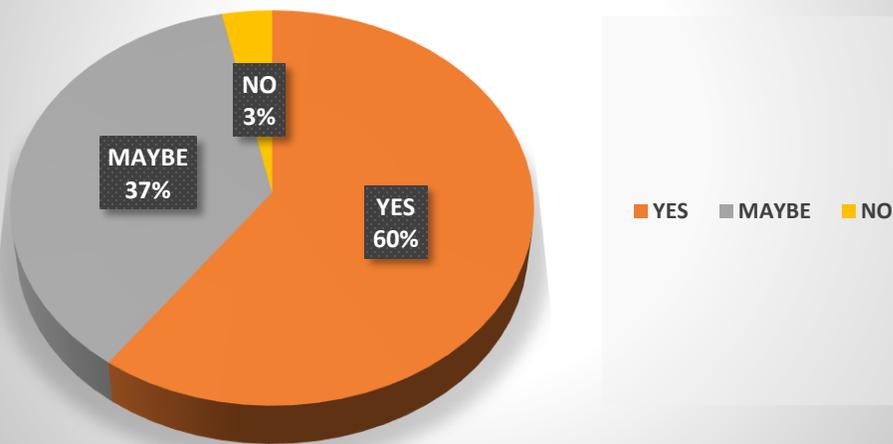
### We got experience in organising or running a group



## We enjoyed this Talking Trees enrichment project

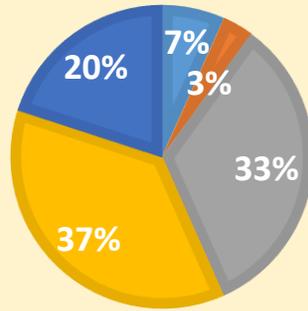


## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE Should other students be offered this kind of project experience?



**THIS 'TALKING TREES' PROJECT HAS  
CHANGED OR BROADENED MY LIFE  
PERSPECTIVE**

■ Not at all ■ a little ■ reasonably ■ a lot ■ excellently



## **APPENDIX D: Participant feedback**

### **Talking Trees workshops – the celebratory events**

#### **27<sup>th</sup> May (Cranmer House):**

12 feedback forms gathered. Attendees in lounge 20.

- 83% said they enjoyed the session a lot or it was excellent (10 out of 12)
- 83% said it cheered them up 'a lot'/'totally lifted their mood' (10 out of 12)

A few highlights of residents comments on what they liked best:

*The hard work that went into putting this on was worthwhile*

*Nice to see so many people in the lounge at once*

*There was a great sense of fun generally*

#### **5<sup>th</sup> June (AgeUK Canterbury Day visitor):**

14 feedback forms gathered. Attendees in dining area 30.

- 86% said they enjoyed it 'very much' or thought 'it was excellent' (12)
- 71% said it cheered them up 'a lot' or 'totally' (10 out of 14)
- 64% took part in apple making; 21% took part in leaf making
- 100% met and talked to new people.

#### **Westgate Parks Tree trail day: Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

##### **Artists Creative Workshops feedback:**

**Three workshops were: 'Poetrees', Pebble Poetry and Mobile Making**

31 feedback forms gathered from the three workshops.

- Everyone 100% (31) said they enjoyed the workshops 'a lot' (10) or thought they were 'excellent' (21)
- 90% (28) said that the workshop cheered them up/ lifted their mood 'a lot' or 'totally'
- *Great fun for all 3 ages to be engaged*
- *Welcoming and relaxing Very different to anything I've seen before*

- *I wrote two poems having thoughts I wouldn't be able to*
- *Simple but lovely mobiles, friendly, passionate facilitator*
- *I love handicraft but don't usually get an opportunity to do it with my daughter*

### **Trail feedback:**

30 feedback forms gathered. Estimated audience on the day 400+ with many family groups. 40 attended the tea time recitals in Tower House (mainly older people invited from Cranmer House and AgeUK Canterbury. 15 students attended as volunteer helpers with two teachers. Many students helped to escort some of the older, more infirm people round parts of the trail. Two students gave music recitals to the invited audience of older people.

- **90%** (27) enjoyed the tree trail 'very much' or thought it was 'very good' or 'excellent'
- *in a lovely setting, peaceful, good for children, safer*
- *The range of trees in such a small area*
- *Exploring the park learning more things and find a bit of peace*
- *Good reason to walk around a nice park; interesting facts*

## **Talking Trees Evaluation Report**

### **Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School**

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e-mail: [fayblair@hotmail.com](mailto:fayblair@hotmail.com) t: 07786 307 664

twitter: [@fay\\_blair](https://twitter.com/fay_blair)

*Fay Blair - Advisor and mentor on funding bids and project evaluation to promote the arts, heritage, culture, environment, health and wellbeing; nurturing Kent's creative arts.*