

## Remembering and reminiscence

**As an alternative to more formal oral history interviews, you might prefer to organise informal group reminiscence sessions. You can get together with a small number of participants from your street to talk about memories of childhood and play.**



### What is reminiscence?

Reminiscence is an activity where people recall and share their memories and experiences and discuss the past. People love to talk and these informal sessions can be very lively affairs, as participants sparked off memories with each other.

### Tips to help get your session going

**If you are going to record your session:** it's helpful to set some ground rules about listening to one another and not talking over each other! Try and make sure one person is talking at a time. This gives everyone the chance to speak and to listen to other people's memories. At the beginning go round the room and ask everyone to introduce themselves.

**What's my role?** Think of yourself as a facilitator, someone who keeps the conversation going and has a bag of tricks and questions to keep the discussion flowing. You should have a few questions ready to ask in order to help jog people's memories, and keep them focused. Also be prepared to share your own experiences. Sometimes people don't feel comfortable coming forward with their own memories, but may feel more comfortable if they are asked a question to respond to.

**Handling objects and photographs can help to stimulate people's memories:** have some 'props' to share. These could be pictures depicting play, historic photographs, or images of the local area. Old toys such as skipping ropes, balls, yo-yos, spinning tops, roller skates, dolls, playing cards, conkers, bucket and spade....etc. They don't have to be fancy or particularly old.

**Numbers:** reminiscence sessions work better in smaller groups, so try to keep it to around 8-10 people. This will allow everyone to take part, hear and listen to each other.

**Choose a quiet space:** it is important to keep possible distractions, such as TVs and mobile phones off, and you might find it easier to begin or end with tea and biscuits, rather than serving refreshments at the same time.

**How to get started:** it's a good idea to start by asking everyone to introduce themselves by saying where and when they were born and how long they have lived locally.

**Taking turns:** you can ask each person to pick an object on the table that reminds them of a story connected to or about their childhood. Everyone takes it in turn to share their stories around the group. You will be amazed at how one story will lead to another.

**When to finish:** depending on size of the group and how long they can last, 45 minutes to an hour should be long enough. At the end, thank all the participants and make sure you have gathered their names and addresses, and obtained written permission to use their words if you are recording them.