



Learning for the Fourth Age (u4a) Limited

Annual Report for year ended
31 May 2015

Charity Number 1157818
Company Number 6586596

Foreword

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2014-15, we hope that you share our passion for making a positive difference to older people and their quality of life through opportunities for learning. We want to share with you our progress, as well as the ongoing challenges for our small and specialist charity working with older people receiving care. The Trustees know that our staff, along with our trained and supported volunteer learning mentors, are what make Learning for the Fourth Age successful. The Trustees are grateful to them, and also to our many partners who add so much value to the work we do with and for older people. We look forward to working with you over the coming year, as we continue to offer high-quality learning to older people, many in the latter stages of life, throughout Leicester and Leicestershire.

Toni Fazaeli

Chair of Trustees

Learning for the Fourth Age Charitable Objects

Learning for the Fourth Age 'advances the education and wellbeing of the public, in particular older people receiving care and support in Leicester and Leicestershire'.



Introduction

Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A) provides learning opportunities for older people receiving care. We focus on better quality of life, mental stimulus and delaying the onset of dementia by learning through activities and pastimes which bring pleasure and meaning. Trained and supported volunteer learning mentors encourage older people's existing interests or help them to develop new ones, using resources to meet individual support needs.

Although we have always been a not-for-profit organisation, L4A officially became a UK registered charity in July 2014. We currently work with almost 200 older people each week, benefitting from the time and skills donated by some 80 volunteers.

L4A has a strong track record of providing high-quality, personalised learning opportunities to older people receiving care. Independent evaluation shows that L4A makes a real difference to the quality of older people's lives, providing mental stimulus through, for example, using new technologies or engaging with absorbing practical activities such as gardening, art and music.

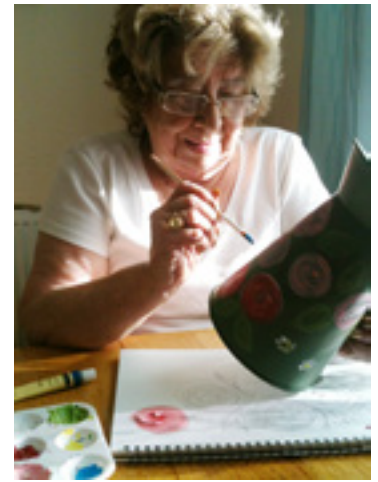
Our Trustee Board remains strong, and includes founding members of the organisation.



Our Services for Older People

Care settings

L4A provides learning to individual older people living in care homes and nursing homes. We are always looking for more places to work with so if you are interested in our services and would like to see more of it in your care setting, please do get in touch with us via info@L4A.org.uk



Domiciliary settings

Our domiciliary service works with people who are living in their own homes, including in wardened and sheltered flats, extra care units or in the community. If you or your loved one is interested in learning at home, please contact our Domiciliary Coordinator, Clare Miles: clare.miles@L4A.org.uk or call on 07964 091 693.

Projects

L4A also runs development projects to pilot new kinds of learning for older people or with new groups of volunteers and also innovations and new ideas in care settings. During 2014-15, L4A delivered two significant projects:

1 - Community Links

Funded by The Allen Lane Foundation, L4A was able to connect older people living in care settings to the community groups living around them. This successful project ran from April 2014 to March 2015 and broke down the mental and physical barriers that can stop care homes from being part of their communities. Please contact Fiona Smith on Fiona.smith@L4A.org.uk or by calling 07933 109 630 for more information or if you would like to support care homes becoming more linked to their communities.

2 - Memorable Moments

Funded by Leicestershire County Council's Innovation Bursary Fund, this project supports and inspires those experiencing memory loss to continue enjoying learning. If you or your loved one is interested in learning at home with memory loss, please contact our Domiciliary Coordinator, Clare Miles, clare.miles@L4A.org.uk or call on 07964 091 693.

Key Achievements

L4A worked with almost 200 older people each week throughout 2014-15. We recruited some 60 new volunteers. Our trained and supported volunteer learning mentors delivered some 6,500 hours of quality learning time to older people receiving care, on a one-to-one or small group basis, across Leicester and Leicestershire during the year. Over 80 volunteers benefited from training and support.



Difference made

Independent evaluation in 2013-14 demonstrated the positive impact that L4A makes for older people including the increase in confidence and the sense of wellbeing gained from learning. Some 200 older people directly benefited in this way during the year. In addition, the evaluation demonstrated the added value and positive difference that L4A gives to our volunteers, many of whom are young people. This helps them with their own career development, as well as giving deeper understanding for older people and creating benefits through intergenerational learning.

Other achievements

- L4A became a charity in July 2014, after more than 7 years as a not-for-profit social enterprise.
- Following public advertisement, we were delighted to welcome two new trustees, Karin Koller and Brian Wilson, to join our board in November 2014.

Examples of the very many great activities and learning that older people undertook included:

- Older people meeting with the Lord Mayor of Leicester who participated in a painting activity within a nursing home with L4A as part of a dementia awareness day.
- Creating 'Transitions', a book of personal life stories of residents in Agnes House that were compiled and produced with students from De Montfort University (DMU).
- Creation of a range of art work by older people, some of which has been exhibited locally.

- We supported Aigburth care home to trial 'Open School in a Box' in conjunction with the National Extension College to give users access to a library of information for older people.
- We hosted a group of health professionals from Thailand in a cultural song and dance exchange for older people in partnership with DMU Square Mile.
- L4A was chosen to be the first beneficiary of the first ever 'Good for Nothing Leicester hack', which took place in October 2014. Volunteers from many different fields offered expert advice and practical help on the L4A website, fundraising strategy and information leaflets for older people and their relatives.
- We gave evidence to the Social Care Institute for Excellence about the benefits of learning for older people with long-term conditions.



Finances – 2014 - 2015 and Looking Ahead

Learning for the Fourth Age seeks to generate income from a mixture of sources to help give long-term financial sustainability. Our income was £87,976 in 2014-15.



As well as fee payments from care homes, individual older people and their relatives, L4A was also grateful to benefit from donations towards our core work from:

- The George Ernest Ellis Foundation
- The Henry Smith Charity
- The Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation
- The Newby Trust
- The Northwick Trust
- Several charitable donations from individuals.

Looking forward, L4A plans to continue work and expand secure funding as a charity boosting wellbeing and quality of life through learning for older people receiving care. We will continue to deliver our three existing services:

- Offering learning sessions to older people living in care settings
- Extending our work with older people living in domiciliary settings
- And working to develop and deliver on innovative learning projects, including linking with community groups.

Learning for the Fourth Age is be working closely with other charities, both small and large locally through the Leicester Ageing Together programme, which runs from 2015 until 2019. We are set to deliver three funded projects piloting innovative work with textiles, music and social prescribing as part of this programme, and hope to be able to collaborate with others in order to create yet more positive impact for some of the oldest older people living in Leicester and Leicestershire.

In addition, we will be piloting the usage of storytelling as a breakthrough technique for communicating with those who have dementia. This work will be funded by Awards for All and Santander.

Learning for the Fourth Age has secured some core funding, to be complemented by fees and new project funding, which will support our work with older people over the coming year and beyond. There is some medium-term funding until 2018 through Leicester Ageing Together and the Henry Smith Charity, as well as a further year of Innovation Funding from Leicestershire County Council to run until the end of August 2016, all of which give a valued contribution towards L4A and enable the good learning services to older people to continue and to develop.

By attracting grants and donations, which complement the fees paid, L4A aims to give the best value and high-quality services to older people in varied care settings.

Funds continue to be managed very carefully. It has been a challenging year and grants are difficult to secure for the charity sector. A major funded programme, in which older people made film documentaries of their lives (SPECs), successfully concluded in 2013-14, hence the reduced revenue in 2014-15. L4A continues to attract income from a range of sources and also to make efficiency savings where it can in order to ensure that the organisation can continue to provide its services to older people.

L4A's reserves policy is to hold 6 months of operating costs in order to meet potential liabilities and manage short-term fluctuations in income. The cash balance at the end of year was within the policy.

Donations are incredibly helpful to L4A and individuals or others can give financial support for L4A's work. Please contact info@L4A.org.uk or look for Learning for the Fourth Age at Virginmoneygiving.



"I just wish we had L4A in the north of England too where I live in a care home."

Trustees

Ms Toni Fazaeli (Chair)
Mr Robert Hunter (Minutes Secretary)
Ms Melissa March (resigned August 2014)
Mr Nicholas Meyer (resigned March 2015)
Ms Karin Koller (appointed November 2014)
Mr Brian Wilson (appointed November 2014)

Company Secretary

Ms Melissa March

Staff and volunteers

Melissa March continues to lead the organisation as chief executive, and coordinates our work in care home settings. In addition to overseeing all the services that improve the quality of life for older people each week, she has focused on finding significant funding to provide the secure footing the charity needs going forwards.



Clare Miles continues to create life changing impact for those who are living in their own homes by leading and coordinating our domiciliary service. Funding through the Memorable Moments project continues to benefit local older people by providing them with a positive identity, focused activity and an increased sense of wellbeing.

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Fiona Smith's Community Links work also continues to connect isolated older people to the communities around the care settings in which they live. This work increasingly focuses on providing stimulation, fun and learning for those who have dementia and continues to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of older people.

The Trustees and staff give huge thanks to the team of volunteer learning mentors, for their commitment to their own training and their dedication to giving personal, thoughtful and valued learning opportunities to older people.

Working together with Partners

We sincerely thank all Learning for the Fourth Age partners and supporters. It is no exaggeration to say that we could not have achieved so much without your generosity of time and resources. You have helped us make a difference to older people during the year, as well as having given volunteers training and support, often helping them learn new skills too. There are too many partnership organisations to mention them all, but they include:

- Agnes House (Wyggeston's Hospital)
- Aigburth
- Ashlands
- Brook House
- Collaborative Business Support
- Community Opportunities
- De Montfort University
- DMU Square Mile
- Guthlaxton College
- Lester Hall
- Harley Grange
- Holmes Court
- Holloway House (Abbeyfield)
- Hunters Lodge
- Leicester City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Scraftoft Court
- Scalford Court
- Seed Creativity
- St. Georges
- Syston Lodge
- University of Leicester
- Vernon House
- Voluntary Action Leicestershire
- William House (Wyggeston's Hospital)
- Wyggeston QE Sixth Form College

Case Studies of our work

CASE STUDY – Volunteer Learning Mentor making a difference

For at least one hour each week, J¹ visits E at her care home. Together, they play and sing a selected range of music that E has spent time choosing during the previous week. E plays the piano and sings whilst J accompanies her on the flute. They are often watched and overheard by fellow residents and staff members who enjoy listening to them playing and singing together. Both feel that they are sharing an interest and supporting each other to develop their own skills, too, and this is empowering for both of them. E has no children or grand children but she does have a supportive nephew nearby and music is something fresh to talk about with him. She looks forward to the visits each week and searches through books of music and hymns to select the music to practise and to play together the following week. Before moving in to Aigburth, E had not played the piano or sung in years but J has given her the motivation to reignite that interest and rediscover that part of her identity again.

E loves J's visits, enjoys engaging with the younger generation very much and practises the piano regularly each week. Without meeting J, E's social circle would be entirely made up of care staff, care home residents and her retired friends. She would not meet anyone significantly younger than herself but is clearly very enlivened by working with those from different generations. She would not do any of these things without J's regular input and they have built up a good friendly way of relating. E feels that she is more confident, happier and has a greater sense of wellbeing. J brings so much joy to a local older person by enabling her to take up an existing hobby again and feel that she can still contribute, be valuable and feel useful. This is ensuring that age is not a barrier to trying new things and developing skills. J is also regular, reliable and great fun. J will take her experiences of supporting older old people to learn and do more than they thought they ever could again with her, and this will enhance J's career ambitions to become a qualified nurse.

¹ Initials are used rather than full names for confidentiality of individuals.

CASE STUDY – Older person enthused by history and communicating using new technology

M is a single lady in her 80s who has lived in sheltered housing for the last eight years. She has been working with a volunteer to improve her computer skills and also to try to trace her family tree.

M is quite an active lady with a great interest in travel and history. She has no close family and has said that she feels isolated and lonely.

M has found that meeting one to one with a volunteer has really stimulated her interest in her history and encouraged her to find out all kinds of additional information. She has also enjoyed tracing old friends using the internet and is now using the computer to send photos to family members in Australia and email friends across the UK and is a regular on Facebook. M is always keen for the next session, and enjoys sharing her latest online discoveries with the volunteer learning mentor and working out what she wants to learn about next.

This experience has helped M to remain socially engaged and independent in spite of increasing health problems, and the volunteers who have worked with her have found it a memorable and stimulating experience.

CASE STUDY – Volunteer Learning Mentor gives and gains from Learning for the Fourth Age

Hamish joined L4A as a volunteer because he was looking to gain experience in working with older people in care settings, relevant for when he applied to medical school. We have just received word that he has been accepted into medical school in Exeter. L4A is really pleased for him – well done, Hamish! We are also even more delighted that he is looking forward to continuing his work as a volunteer with L4A during university holidays.

He says: “a lot of skills that the medical school admissions tutors look for in personal statements and interviews such as communication, teamwork, organisation are all covered in the Learning Mentor role so it can really help a potential medical school (or other healthcare profession) applicant.

“I have been a Learning Mentor since March last year and have really enjoyed it and I believe it will be a very valuable experience for my university degree and future career. I received my A-Level results and did a lot better than I expected and my place at the University of Exeter Medical School has been confirmed which I am very pleased about. The experience gave me a lot to talk about in my personal statement and interviews and I believe it was very useful in receiving an offer from University.”

We all wish Hamish the best of luck in Exeter and are sure he will excel in his chosen career as a doctor. We hope that he will remember specifically the person-centred way of working that L4A shared with him, to bring learning and wellbeing into the lives of his future patients and to always remember that you are never too old to learn – there is no such thing!

CASE STUDY – Family member describes the positive impact of L4A

“A year ago my mother was diagnosed with the early stages of dementia and in order to keep her mind as alert as possible I tried to find activities that would stimulate my mother and reflect her interest in art. I am delighted to say that I made contact with Clare Miles from Learning for the Fourth Age and after a couple of introductory meetings to get to know one another mum has enjoyed sharing weekly art sessions with either Clare or one of her volunteer workers, both at home and when moving to residential care.

At one point mum had a serious stroke and there was great concern that she would not make much of a recovery: I am certain that the continuation of the art sessions played an important part in mum’s return to good health.

As a family we are most grateful for the input from Learning for the Fourth Age and could not recommend the services of this supportive organisation highly enough, which come at a more than reasonable price. Long may L4A continue with this outstanding work.”



Future Prospects

Looking forward, L4A plans to continue our work as a charity boosting wellbeing and quality of life through learning for older people receiving care. We will continue to deliver our three existing services:

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- Working with older people living in domiciliary settings;
- Working to develop and deliver on innovative learning projects, including linking with community groups.

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