



Learning
for the Fourth Age



Annual Report

for year ended 31st May 2016

A real difference to the quality of older people's lives

This year, Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A) continued to offer many stimulating, innovative and varied learning opportunities for 200 or so older people across Leicestershire, as well as giving fulfilling and positive experiences for around 140 dedicated and trained volunteers. A huge thank you to our staff and volunteers and our partner organisations and funders who have enabled L4A to thrive during 2015/16, and make a real difference to the quality of older people's lives.

The Board and our staff team are passionate about the power of learning for very old people. We continue to achieve the benefits identified by independent evaluators of L4A: creating enjoyment, meaning, interest and greater wellbeing as older people learn new skills, and retain and increase knowledge. We design our learning to meet each older person's particular interests, which can range from family and local history, music, crochet, painting, writing, using ipads to research areas of interest etc. Older people involved with L4A say it is fun and prevents boredom, and how vital this is now that they are less able to live independently and go out and about, and as they are

experiencing declines in their health. Who I am and what I can do is our positive focus, not what I can no longer do.

One highlight this year is our 'The Power of Stories' project, which has proved to be an innovative approach that engages and enthuses older people in care settings. We applied for big lottery funding to expand 'The Power of Stories' so that more older people can enjoy participating in storytelling, and the selection process included television appearances and voting by the public on their top projects. It was a great honour that L4A gained strong public support, and won £43,600 of funding to develop and extend storytelling over the coming year.



I am proud to have been the Chair of L4A for the past nine years, and during this time our charity has grown and strengthened to the point where we now are financially resilient and we have an inspiring and expert staff team and Board. They will lead L4A up to our tenth anniversary in 2017, and the decades to come. It has been my pleasure and privilege to have jointly founded L4A with Melissa March, and to lead the Board of Trustees. My thanks to everyone for their support during periods when, like all small charities, we have faced challenges, as well as during the many times

when we have exceeded our own hopes and expectations with ongoing successes. I have every confidence that as Brian Wilson, one of our trustees, takes over as the new Chair in autumn 2016 and with Melissa as the Chief Executive, L4A will continue to thrive and each year to make a difference to hundreds of older and very old people who live in care homes, in sheltered accommodation or in their own homes supported by care workers.



Mono prints of
Leicester Buildings.

Introduction

Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A) provides learning for older people receiving care in Leicester and Leicestershire

We focus on better quality of life and improving wellbeing for those living in care homes, nursing homes, sheltered housing units and their own homes. Our sessions bring meaning, purpose and pride to the lives of individuals, empowering them to achieve new or long held goals, to do things that are worthwhile to them and to feel fulfilled.

Our team of over 140 volunteers bring meaning to the lives of older people, encouraging their existing interests, developing new ones and using high quality resources to meet individual support needs.

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 and provides mental stimulus, for example using new technologies, and getting engaged with absorbing practical activities, such as gardening, art and music.

Our vision, mission & values

Our charitable objects state that 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’.

Our Vision

Older people receiving care have a great quality of life, and are fulfilled through learning.

Our Mission

To offer learning opportunities to older people receiving care, primarily in Leicester and Leicestershire.

Our Values

At Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A), our values are central and inform our governance and our work with older people and the benefits that we provide for them. Our values are:

- We see learning as a tool for creating well being and a good life
- We value learning internally for ourselves as an organisation, as well as learning being our specialism for older people and our volunteers
- We are committed to personalising services
- We empower our service users by offering them real choices in what and how they learn
- Staff (and volunteer) development is at the core of our people- and learning-centred organisation
- We are determined to deliver quality, as well as to innovate and find creative solutions to problems
- To constructively challenge stereotypes about care settings, older people and what constitutes learning
- We share our ideas, our experiences and work with others, as L4A is a demonstration organisation and a thought and practice leader for learning in the fourth age.



Our Services for Older People

In Care Settings

L4A provides both individual and group learning to older people living in care homes and nursing homes. We are always looking for more settings to work with so if you are interested in our services and would like to see more of it in your care setting, please get in touch with us via info@l4a.org.uk

At Home

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, Ali Sinclair by emailing ali.sinclair@l4a.org.uk or calling 07508 402 420 for more information.

Projects

L4A also runs development projects to pilot new kinds of learning for older people and innovations and innovative ideas in care settings, for fourth agers or with new groups of volunteers.

L4A is delighted to be working as part of the Leicester Ageing Together (LAT) programme, which is a consortium of 16 charity partners in Leicester and is funded by The Big Lottery Fund for five years from 2015.

Memorable Moments

Memorable Moments supports and

inspires those experiencing memory loss to continue enjoying learning at home and is funded by Leicestershire County Council's Innovation Bursary Fund. 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.

Musical Care Homes

This project brings music, singing and instruments into care homes to engage older people in listening, performing and enjoying music together in a shared group. Musical care homes also involves staff from the care homes and family, friends and the local community too. We are proud to be working in partnership with Soft Touch Arts to deliver this project as part of LAT. Please contact Ali Sinclair on ali.sinclair@l4a.org.uk or by calling 07508 402 420 for more information.

The Power of Stories

L4A was delighted to be featured on regional news as part of The People's Projects. Five charities pitched projects to the TV audience in order to gain votes from the public and L4A The Power of Stories won. Stories really do have the power to help older people feel healthier and happier. Listening to stories together unlocks memories and prompts people to share their own stories - making friends in the process. Working with professional storytellers, the work also involves training and supporting carers, care home staff and volunteers with storytelling

skills. Please contact Fiona Smith on Fiona.smith@l4a.org.uk or by calling 07933 109 630 for more information.

Tactile Textiles

Textiles are a wonderful and engaging medium to engage older people in care homes, especially those with dementia. We work with groups of young volunteers drawn from the local community, which allows the skills and experiences of the older people to be valued as they are encouraged to share them. This includes jointly creating pieces of textile art to represent 'snapshots of time' for all concerned. This project is part of LAT. 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 in this way.

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

The George Ernest Ellis Foundation
Santander
The Henry Smith Foundation
The Newby Trust
The Northwick Trust
Awards for All

Our funders included Leicestershire County Council Innovation Fund, Leicester Ageing Together and The People's Projects.

By attracting grants and donations, which complement the fees paid, L4A aims to give the best value to older people and care settings. If you are interested in support us in any way, please get in touch with Melissa March by emailing melissamarch@l4a.org.uk or calling on 07545 842 315.

If you would like to a regularly monthly donation to support L4A's work, please visit our online giving page here: bit.ly/2gPIO11



Key Achievements

- Working together with other partners through Leicester Ageing Together to deliver life changing work for local older people, including those with dementia, through three innovative projects.
- Working with primary school age children and supporting this new age range to have a positive benefit on the lives and learning of older people in care homes.
- Hosting a poetry performance and a creative writing workshop to engage care home and sheltered housing residents in Leicester's Everybody's Reading Festival.
- Securing three year funding from Esmee Fairbairn to find a sustainable and long term solution for our domiciliary service from September 2016.

The fantastic team of staff in Clare Miles, Ali Sinclair and Fiona Smith who stepped up and covered for our co-founder and CEO, Melissa March, for a year of maternity leave. This shows the strength and depth of the team, and L4A's resilience.

Appointing Joyce Wells as a trustee of L4A in June 2015. Recently retired, Joyce owned and ran a care home in Leicestershire for almost 30 years, as well as a domiciliary care service providing thousands of hours of personal and social care each week. She is a welcome asset to our board.



Key Figures

Over 225 older people benefiting from our work across all projects in Leicester and Leicestershire during the last year.

170 volunteers working in care homes and in the community to support older people across our range of initiatives and funded work.

163 learners from our services to care homes.

63 people volunteering for our domiciliary service supporting over 90 older people at home.

In addition to older people and our volunteers, family, friends, staff members and other people also benefit from our ongoing work.

Finances

L4A continues to generate income from a mixture of sources in order to give long-term financial sustainability, including grants and donations for core costs; project funding to deliver innovations and demonstrate new ways of older people getting the most from different kinds of learning; and sales to individuals and organisations. Our income for 2015/16 was £93,208. By also attracting grants and donations to complement fees, L4A aims to give best value and high quality learning for older people receiving care in a variety of settings.

2015/16 is the first full year of L4A needing to meet the Charity Commission accounting requirements, as L4A moved from being a social enterprise company limited by guarantee to a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Building on our 2014/15 annual accounts which were prepared on a cash basis, L4A changed financial reporting to an accruals basis for 2015/16 accounts and also restated the 2014/15 accounts on an accruals basis. This means for 2014/15 there was a surplus of £7,078 and for 2015/16 a relatively small deficit of £5,192, with £57,352 being carried forward as deferred income for 2016/17.

We ensure prudent management of funds seeking to act efficiently and to invest in quality and innovation in our work with older people. As a small charity during 2015/16, the Board invested in some additional staffing capacity. This was in order to give sufficient management for resilience in the year when our

chief executive was on maternity leave and also to continue to create new opportunities that benefit older people. This planned investment contributed to the small deficit at the end of the year, and to very positive securing of a significant new funding stream from The People's Projects, which will start to deliver at scale during 2016/17. L4A continues to operate broadly within its reserves policy of six months of operational costs in order to meet potential liabilities and manage short-term fluctuations in income. The cash balance at the end of 2015/16 appears as a larger figure than the policy as L4A received a grant payment of some £43,000 towards the end of the year for work to be delivered mostly during the coming year, 2016/17. L4A followed our treasury policy and placed some funds in the Charity Investment Bank in order to earn interest to further invest in L4A's object.

Donations are extremely helpful to L4A and individuals or others can give financial support for L4A's work. For example, one donation paid for an apprentice to do the graphic design of last year's Annual Report, and other donations helped with volunteers travel costs to enable them to get to older people living across Leicestershire and for materials for older people to use in arts and crafts sessions.

If you would like to make a donation to support L4A's work, please visit our online giving page here: bit.ly/2gPIO11

Looking Ahead

Income for L4A's activities increases during 2016/17 to some £151,000 which represents a growth in the number of older people with whom XXX L4A XXX will engage, a commensurate increase in the number of volunteers who will both help older people learn and will in turn develop their own skills and understanding of older people, as well as some new developments in quality and activities proven to make a really positive difference such as story telling and using new technologies with older people. The L4A Board will continue to give prudent stewardship of funds for our charity and to operate within our reserves policy, and is set to achieve a small surplus at the end of 2016/17

Staff

Melissa March continued to lead the organisation and coordinate our work in care settings each week until August 2015 when she went on maternity leave. In addition to overseeing services that improve the quality of life for older people each week, she has found significant funding to provide the sure financial footing the charity needs going forwards.

Clare Miles continued to create life-changing impact for those who are living in their own homes by leading and coordinating our domiciliary services. The work has found some continued funding through the Memorable Moments project but continues to benefit local older people by providing them with a positive identity, focused activity and an increased sense of wellbeing. She stepped up to cover safeguarding, staff line management and other key areas of strategic work from August 2015.

Ali Sinclair joined the team in July 2015 to ensure continuity and development of our service delivery to care settings across Leicestershire. She is also managing our musical care homes project. Ali has been key in finding ways to improve and enhance how we work with our volunteers and brings many valuable skills. We were pleased that, because of successfully attracting new funds, we were able to confirm Ali into a permanent post from April 2016.

Fiona Smith continued to connect isolated older people to the communities around the care settings they live in. 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. Fiona is leading our life changing tactile textiles project as well as other work for LAT. Fiona also stepped up to cover most of our CEO's work whilst she was on maternity leave.

Volunteers

Our team of volunteer learning mentors make our work possible through their collective work with individual older people every week. All our volunteers are inducted and have proper safeguarding, DBS, checks, as well as ongoing support and development. Our trustees and staff want to thank you all for your commitment and dedication as you give up your time, skills and thought to create positive change in the lives of older people.



Working together with Partners

We sincerely thank all our 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 giving 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
Aigburth
Ashlands
Brook House
De Montfort University
DMU Square Mile
Lester Hall
Linden Primary School
Harley House
Harley Grange
Holloway House
Hunters Lodge
Leicester City Council
Leicestershire County Council
Pilgrim Home
Scraptoft Court

Scalford Court
Soft Touch Arts
St. Georges
Syston Lodge
Thurn Court
University of Leicester
Vernon House
Voluntary Action LeicesterShire
William House
Wyggeston QE Sixth Form College

“I have enjoyed doing things I have always wanted to try but not had the time or confidence to – either because of other responsibilities or the fear of others laughing at me. I am constantly thinking of new things I might have a go at!”

“I am feeling better in myself, not so much depression and I look forward to the visits”

“Age has taken away my ability to sing but this has given me the opportunity to learn a new skill and take up a new hobby [painting and drawing]”

CASE STUDY – older person

Mr B, in his 80s, is living in a very rural part of Leicestershire with a full time carer following a stroke. He was a very keen artist and described himself as ‘a literary explorer’! He has worked in the probation service and is a very independent minded gentleman who is finding himself isolated by his condition and increasingly bored. He and his learning mentor have explored various genres and authors, enjoyed games such as scrabble and are now enjoying poetry together.

He says “I think we are both enjoying our sessions. I know I am recalling more and learning more than I would have believed likely.” [The volunteer] is patient and sympathetic, and it is my hope that he is as positive about it all as he appears. If I have a regret, it is that the state of my

health prevents me from getting more out of our meetings, but what the hey, can’t have it all.”

And a record of work from the visiting volunteer shows: “We have been following poets, moving from Gray to Auden to Joyce Kilmer... basically wherever it takes us! Kilmer’s “Trees” leads to Ogden Nash etc. The last visit was Wilfred Owen. But we are learning to lighten things as necessary so ended with Betjeman. We usually read alternate verses, discuss the poems and learn a bit about the poet and the poem. It is a bit like being at school – I often go away with homework! Last week we spontaneously looked up details on the internet from an electronic encyclopedia. I have sometimes also been emailing him information in between weekly sessions.”

“She never ceases to surprise me!”

“She is always ‘game’, even with messy jobs!”

“We are both learning, sometimes very surprising facts to us!”

CASE STUDY – family member

The volunteer has visited my mum regularly for some months now. Mum has accompanied instrumentalists and singers from quite an early age and it is great that she has been able to carry on this ‘way of life’ with L4A. My mum has MS and Alzheimer’s disease. Both are largely stable conditions. The volunteer has got to know how the affect mum. She has realised this by adapting plans and working out practical issues like ways of getting to the piano and back to mum’s chair too.

Also on occasions when unexpected things happen like an unsolicited phone call, which can be a worry for mum, she is able to diffuse the situation without fuss. Mum doesn’t remember a lot to tell me but she is always happy for the volunteer to come and we both very much appreciate her visits. Thank you for all your input to the lovely visits that Mum has had.



CQC inspection quotes

“On the second day of our visit a number of people were in the lounge upstairs being entertained with songs and activities by the school children. Two people told us that they enjoyed the activity. One said “It’s a wonderful thing they’ve done today, all the children had a lot of fun and so did we” and “Very well organised and lovely to see children visiting us.” The other person has similar praise for the entertainment and said “There’s plenty of good and different activities organised by the staff”.

A CQC inspection report from May 2016, referring to L4A

“The provider told us in their PIR that they also used the services of an independent organisation that provided expertise in meaningful activities. We saw this support being delivered on the first day of our inspection. We spoke to coordinators from this organisation who told us that they supported people to continue to engage and learn because “People do not stop learning when they get old. They can continue to learn either through activities or engaging in conversation around a subject.” They went on to say the care home “is very engaging. There is a lot of collaborative working. [Deputy Manager] sends in the activities coordinators to sit in our activities and learn from our techniques so they can continue them with the residents. It’s all about what people can do, not what they cannot do.”

Another CQC inspection report from April 2016, referring to L4A



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: offering learning sessions to older people living in care settings, offering learning to older people living in domiciliary settings and working to develop and deliver on projects that focus on innovative learning for old and very old people.

We are delighted to be working closely with other organisations, both small and large, through the Leicester Ageing Together programme, which runs from 2015 until 2019. We are set to deliver an innovative social prescribing pilot as part of this programme from September 2016, as well as to continue with our Tactile Textiles and Musical Care Homes work.

We will expand and continue our Power of Stories project and will work to embed the impact and

changes in staff, residents and volunteers before the project ends in March 2017.

We will embark on three years of work funded by Esmée Fairbairn to find a sustainable and long term way to continue our domiciliary work of giving learning opportunities for those isolated in their own homes, but without being reliant on external funding.

We hope to be able to collaborate with others in order to create yet more positive impact for some of the oldest older people living Leicester and Leicestershire. L4A aims to continue being innovative with our ideas and approach, to continue demonstrating high quality learning for older people and to continue to raise expectations about the need for learning as part of overall care and support in later life for older people. We firmly believe in cultivating the life spark and curiosities of older people.