the NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES

COMMUNITY ARCHIVES DEVELOPMENT GROUP

HELPSHEET

ENGAGING WITH WIDER AGENDAS

1. Summary

Community Archives and other bodies involved in creating heritage resources for communities are now recognised as having an important and developing role in the creation, preservation and accessibility of all sorts of records of their geographic, ethnic, cultural or thematic communities.

This help sheet provides you with guidance to make connections between your core activities and wider agendas for improving life in local areas, or for specific communities. These may be set out by central government and central government agencies, local government or other regional bodies. Making those connections will make your work more relevant to the community or communities you hope to serve, or are serving. It will help you with funding applications, and it will help bodies like the Community Archives Development Group (CADG) make the case nationally for the value of community archives. Evidence of the importance of the work of community archives is vital if additional resources are to be made available to support existing organisations, and help create new ones.

Words in *red* are explained in the Glossary at the end of this Helpsheet.

This help sheet sets out:

- 1. The case for getting involved

- 2. The benefits to your organisation

- 3. Ways of planning, setting priorities and defining current activities

- 4. Means of collecting evidence

- 5. Guidance on evaluation and monitoring

- 6. Ways of planning for evaluation

- 7. Ways of fitting your activities into wider objectives

- 8. Next steps

- 9. Sources of advice

- 10. Glossary of terms

2. The case for getting involved in the 'community archive movement'

2.1   Is my organisation a community archive?

The Community Access to Archives Project (CAAP) defined a community archive as 'collections of material that encapsulate a particular community's understanding of its history and identity…The community itself may be geographically based, or relate to a cultural or thematic community of interest.' Your group may be part of a larger organisation, like a housing or community association, or it may be entirely independent. It might have begun as an activity promoted by a museum, library or records office. You might be collecting original documents, like photographs or local business records. Alternatively, your main objective might be to create a local heritage archive resource by copying and giving access to copies of records, the originals of which are elsewhere. If you have historical resources and make them available to your community, then you are a 'community archive'.

2.2.   We have only just started up. Surely this is too ambitious for us?

Community archives in the United Kingdom are at different stages of development. Your group may be in the early stages of collecting, and may not have any means of letting people use records, or you may not have any catalogues, or you may find the idea of working with other organisations very challenging. But there is strong support for the idea of communities taking an active part in recording their own history and making it relevant and of interest locally or more widely. Making plans and being prepared to be ambitious will help you gain the resources you need to make better provision for your collections, see more people use your resources and know about what you do, and see your collections and resources used in a wide variety of ways to benefit your community.

You may not be able to do this alone. There is merit in having the advice of 'official' bodies (often run by your local authority), like record offices, libraries (local studies departments) and museums. CADG can put you in touch with other community archives, whose experiences may be helpful. And it may be easier to work in partnership with others to reach out to bodies like schools, health groups and housing associations.

2.3   So what are the advantages for your group?

Getting involved with the local authority, official organisations and even other community archives can be very time –consuming. Many members and volunteers might feel that this was not why they got involved in community archives in the first place. So it is essential to identify the potential benefits to your group of looking for links and partnerships locally. These might include:

- More people will get to know about what you are doing. More people might also therefore get to benefit from what you are doing.

- A higher profile may encourage more people to get involved – as members or participants. It may also attract media interest and coverage

- More people might use your collections and so the community benefit will be greater.

- Those seeing your collections and your activities may see ways to help with wider community issues

- Working together to get support from local authority Record Offices, Libraries and Museums - copying documents and photographs, for example, and specialist advice, such as help with cataloguing and conservation.

- You may develop contacts who help you to find funding – to develop the archive; support fieldwork; training and development

- Explaining what you are doing and why, may lead to partnerships or new funding to improve premises, storage and finding aids

- Contacts in the wider world may lead to all sorts of opportunities to improve or develop what you are doing – such as better publicity, publishing and IT support.

Not all of these benefits need to be looked for all at once. Different community archives develop in different directions and at a different pace, depending on their members' wishes and priorities. But making contact with other groups and with the local authority institutions does open up opportunities which you may want to take up at some point in the future.

3. Planning, setting your priorities and defining current activities

Getting involved with other organisations can help your group to develop the way you want it to. However, getting what you want may mean having to comply with some of the rules of the other organisations. They may expect to understand what you are doing before they support you, or ask you to supply information about what *impact* your group and activities is having on the community. On the whole, you can learn a great deal from these other organisations and become more efficient and respected as a result.

The most rewarding projects for members and participants are often those that are well planned. It is important to have clear objectives for what your group aspires to do, and how it is going to achieve those objectives. You can draw up your own plan or contribute to the wider planning process of the organisation of which your group is a part. Your plan should

- define the period of time it will cover,
- define your audiences –who you want to reach
- set out your objectives, indicating which is most important,
- establish the resources each objective will need – people, premises, equipment
- define your budgetary needs – how much money will this project need if it is to be a success
- set goals you want your group to achieve

Taken together the plan should define your *objectives* and the *targets* you have set for your group.

 If you have been in existence for some time it is also important to define your current activities and what your current circumstances are. This is your *baseline*.

4. Collecting evidence

Your activities may be based on your own resources and members of the group, or be shared with others – for example pages on a web site maintained by another organisation, records you have collected held by a record office or museum, people attending an event in which you had a stall.

Some examples of activities are;

- Collecting activity - oral history with individuals or groups; acquisition of records

- Cataloguing of collections

- Use of collections - remote and in person

- Use of on-line resources – own web site, web site as part of another organisation.

- Publishing

- Appearance/use of collections in other productions – books, film, theatre etc

- Producing exhibition/display

- Participation in event

- Workshops/lectures/training sessions

- Outreach activities - to schools, groups, hospitals, prisons

You can monitor your own activities in these areas by collecting quantitative data, for example

- Numbers of people using the collections

- Numbers of enquiries received

- Number of visits to a web site

- Number of people attending an event or workshop you have arranged.

You can also collect data about those who contribute to and those who benefit from your work. As well as a record of numbers you can also look at sample surveys run over a period of time. These can be in the form of self-completion questionnaires and ask questions about:

- Gender

- Age group

- Ethnicity

- Disability

- Place of residence

- Why people are using your resources/archive

- Satisfaction with your service/activity/event

- Suggestions for improvement.

- Information about how what you are doing/offering fits in with people's other interests

- Opinions about your usefulness and how valued you are in the community

- Which particular aspects of what you do are most valued – and why

This will provide lots of evidence about the people that are being touched by your project. It will also give you some idea about how useful they think what you are doing is and help you develop the archive. This creates an impression of how successful you are by using what is sometimes called 'qualitative data'.

You can also add to this by using simple evaluation forms at events, lectures, or outreach activity. You may have had a target for the number or types of people you wanted to reach (for example people aged 25-40). Asking people attending your event to complete a form can give you information on:

- Numbers reached/participating

- How participants felt they had benefited

- Enjoyment and satisfaction

- Would like to work with you

- Would like to attend future events

This is a simplified version of the evaluation framework used in the Museums Libraries and Archives (MLA's) **Inspiring Learning for All** website. www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk. Further help and advice on using this sort of questionnaire is available from your regional MLA office (for contact details, please see below).

Taken together the data you collect will provide evidence of how you are applying existing resources. The results of your activities are your ***outputs***

5. Guidance on evaluation and monitoring

If you are able to collect data about what you are doing, you will have a robust basis for making a case for improvements for your group. This can form a funding bid from your group alone, or a proposal to work in partnership with another organisation. These may involve you in a mixture of improving things or activities you are already undertaking, or embarking on new programmes.

To demonstrate how you will make use of new resources you will need to be able to show what your ***targets*** are – for example raising the number of people using your archive, or undertaking a specified number of outreach activities to schools. If your application succeeds you will need to say what these targets are and show how you are reaching them. In the jargon of official bodies these will be your ***performance indicators***. Gathering the data together to see how well you did against your targets and performance indicators will form your evaluation.

6. Planning for evaluation

Evaluation is a central tool employed by government and local government bodies. Funding bodies, especially lottery funders, also have to justify how their money has been spent, and what effect it has had on communities.

Evaluation can cover your existing activities, and it is an appropriate tool for helping you proving that external funding for new project work was put to good use. In those circumstances it will also help bodies like CADG make the general case for the value of community archives to a wide range of government bodies and funders.

What initial processes should you go through?

- Start early and get a picture of what you are doing now.

- Get everyone in the community archive to agree how important it is to evaluate what you are doing

- Decide what you going to evaluate – all of your activity – or just the most important part.

- Ensure that evaluation covers the most important part of what you have targeted, and includes how it is being done.

- Think how you can use any routine monitoring, and try not to create competing demands. Don't gather data you don't need!

- Use your results to shape your work in progress and how you plan future developments.

CADG has developed an Impact Assessment Framework (see below) to help you carry out your own evaluation. However the data you collect can also be used for external evaluation, and a funder might make this a requirement of a grant.

7. Fitting your activities into wider objectives

The most difficult thing to measure is *impact*. What you do may contribute to longer term changes in your community, for example increasing people's skills, enabling people to get qualifications, or to improve employment. These in turn contribute to longer term changes in your community and are the *outcomes* of your activity or project work.

If you have targeted your project at specific groups of people, for example people of different age groups or from minority ethnic groups, then it will be appropriate to try to evaluate the impact of your work on those groups.

If you have received external funding for your project, then you may be required to show that you have made the best use of the funds you have received, demonstrating value for money.

Value for money questions you will be asked are grouped into three areas

- Economy: has your project used the resources given efficiently?

- Efficiency: did you achieve the extent and quality of work from the project that you had hoped for?

- Effectiveness: Were the resources that went into your project effectively used to get the best results in terms of impact on your users, and any partners, and for your future work?

Government bodies are at the moment grouping areas of community improvement into three broad areas, called Generic Social Outcomes. These are:

- Stronger and safer communities

- Healthy and well being

- Strengthening public life

The table below gives some examples of the sorts of activities that fit into each of these broad areas, measures appropriate for each, and the kind of project work that can be shown to contribute to each social outcome. Together they make up an **Impact Assessment Framework** which, while not perfect, will help you to demonstrate to others that your activities have a wider importance.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

GSO THEME	ACTIVITY	MEASURE	EXAMPLE
A. STRONGER & SAFER COMMUNITIES	Bringing people together	Number of members and participants[1]	Winkleigh and Keswick - bridging gaps between established rural community and incomers.
	Inter-generational work	Age profile of members and participants	Ark case study – mining and WW II dvds
	Improving people's access to services and taking part in the community	Anecdotal and examples: keep a note of when this happens	Cambridge Community Archive Network - summary of case study
	Promoting Community identity /cohesion	Note evidence such as newspaper reports, mentions in parish magazine, number of events organised or participated in	'Our Brick Lane' from Eastside CH case study; 'Football, racism and cultural heritage project' Northampton BHP/A case study
	Regeneration of areas	Participation in consultations; examples of working with regeneration agencies. Outcomes of such projects	Partnership work to restore Central Park, East Ham from Eastside CH.
B. HEALTHY & WELL BEING	Improving health	Details of relevant projects .Numbers of people taking part. Anecdotal evidence from participants	'Women Working out' and 'Fit for Life'; from Eastside CH case study
	Work with people with physical and sensory impairment	Details of relevant projects .Numbers of people taking part. Anecdotal	'Look at me' from Eastside CH case study

[1] It is worth remembering that the membership – and certainly the active membership – of a Community Archive group may be relatively small. However, the number of people *participating* in some way – as donors, interviewees etc – may be quite large. So both members and participants need to be included in data collection.

		evidence from participants	
	Work with people with mental health problems	Details of relevant projects .Numbers of people taking part. Anecdotal evidence from participants	Sankofa reminiscence work - Northamptonshire BHP/A case study
	Promotion of healthy living	Details of relevant projects .Numbers of people taking part. Anecdotal evidence from participants	Brighton and Hove history trail from My Brighton and Hove case study.
C. STRENGTHENING PUBLIC LIFE	Training to improve skills - project personnel/volunteers and wider audiences	Details. Who,when,where. Numbers. Outcomes – anecdotal evidence for example volunteers going on to employment	'Lesser heard voices' My Brighton & Hove case study
	Promoting volunteering	How many volunteers recruited	Northampton BHP/A on creation of database from NBHP/A case study.
	Lifelong learning - adult and pre-school	How many people or groups involved in the project	'Imagining Industries' school work in partnership with local archives - Eastside CH case study
	Curriculum based learning	Details. Schools involved. Number of pupils. Key Stage or other course learning to which project contributed or formed part of.	'Black is also British' and black history course at Northamptonshire University, Northamptonshire BHP/A case study. 'Ferrers' Voices' - Northamptonshire BHP/A case study.
	Creating historical resources	Resources created. Usage – by whom,how, often and why.	WISE case study, Glasgow & Norfolk

8. Next steps

When you are ready to carry out an evaluation you will also need to

- Identify who will do the evaluation

- Identify what resources are needed

- Identify how long you want the evaluation to run

- Decide who will receive the results of the evaluation and how they will be communicated

.
The evidence you collect will form the basis for your planning, and help make the case for more resources for your project. It will make it easier for you to contribute to wider agendas, and in turn make the case locally, regionally and nationally for the value of community archives.

9. Sources of advice

There is no shortage of advice available to the developing Community Archive – starting with http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/   the Community Archives national directory, a meeting place and resource for all UK community archive organisations.

You may also be able to get help and support from your **County or Local Record Office**, usually the responsibility of the County, Metropolitan or London Borough council. They will be able to help you with any technical aspect of archive collection, storage and accessibility. They should also be able to help you with broader issues about local and family history, including directing you to local specialists.

Similar help can be found at your local library, and especially the library with a Local Studies department relevant to your community or neighbourhood. Local Studies departments often hold many of the source materials you will need to develop your own archive.

Advice may also be forthcoming from your local Museum, especially if it is registered and has a professional museum curator. Many museums have good links with community projects and may be able to help you develop yours.

Additionally, there are a number of specialist agencies which have a particular interest in community archives. Each region in England, for example, has a Museums, Libraries and Archives Council who can help you to find specialist support, sources of funding and most other things you are likely to need. The names and addresses of these are listed below.

MLA East of England   110 Northgate Street, Northgate Business
                         Park, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1HP
                         01284 723100
                         www.mlaeastofengland.org.uk

MLA East Midlands   56 King Street, Leicester LE1 6RL
                         0116 285 1350
                         www.mlaeastmidlands.org.uk

MLA London   4th Floor, 53-56 Great Sutton Street,
                         London EC1V 4AJ
                          020 7549 1700
                         www.mlalondon.org.uk

MLA North East   House of Recovery, Bath Lane,
                         Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 5SQ
                          0191 222 1661
                         www.mlanortheast.org.uk

MLA North West   Ground Floor, The Malt Building
                         Wilderspool Park, Greenall's Avenue,
                         Warrington WA4 6HL
                          01925 625050
                         www.mlanorthwest.org.uk

MLA South East   15 City Business Centre, Hyde Street
                         Winchester S023 7TA
                         01962 858844
                         www.mlasoutheast.org.uk

MLA South West   Creech Castle, Bathpool, Taunton
                         Somerset TA1 2DX
                         01823 259696
                         www.mlasouthwest.org.uk

MLA West
Midlands   Second Floor, Grosvenor House
                         14 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RS
                         0121 631 5800
                         www.mlawestmidlands.org.uk

MLA Yorkshire   Ground Floor, Marshall Court,
                         1 Marshall Street, Leeds LS11 9YP
                         0113 394 4840
                         www.mlayorkshire.org.uk

This leaflet is produced by the **Community Archives Development Group**, **(CADG)** responsible for the Community Archives national directory and which may also be a source of help. CADG can be contacted through our website :

http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/community_archives/terms_of_reference/

Other bodies you might find useful to consult include :

Commanet

Commanet is a charity that promotes and supports community archives. We offer advice on sources of funding and on setting up and running a community archive group. We supply Comma software and provide training, support and web hosting for community archives. We are partners with The National Archives and others in the Linking Arms and Community Access to Archives Projects. We are also involved in a number of community archive projects across the UK and worldwide, for example, Comma software is used for the Community Memories element of the Virtual Museum of Canada.

Contact: Commanet, PO Box 27, Leeds, LS13 1XS

http://www.commanet.org/

CommunitySites

CommunitySites produce the CADG directory, and also creates websites for not for profit organisations and provide content management systems suitable for community archives.

Contact: Jack Latimer, 25 Hanover Street, Brighton BN2 9ST
Tel 07977 445709

http://www.communitysites.co.uk/page_id__68.aspx

UK Villages

UK Villages provide a national and local community website, hosting community content and providing funding for a range of projects, including heritage related activity.

Contact: UKVillages Ltd, 48 Mill Way, Grantchester, Cambs CB3 9NB

http://www.ukvillages.co.uk/ukvillages.nsf/villages+in+England+Scotland+Wal
        es+and+Ireland

Information Commissioner's Office

For advice on keeping information on people obtained from surveys.

http://www.ico.gov.uk/

10 Glossary

Terms used in evaluation

Baseline – starting point of what you are doing now and of existing circumstances which might be altered by subsequent project work. The position from which your activities and achievements will be assessed.

Impact – the effect of your activities or projects on users that contribute to longer term changes in state, attitude or behaviour of individuals and communities – for example increased take up of employment.

Objectives and targets – your aspirations and objectives, set out in a plan or statement and which outline the improvements you hope to bring about.

Outputs – the results of activity reflecting the application of resources [examples – number of people using the archive, number of outreach events run etc].

Outcomes – longer term changes in social or economic or physical conditions which are due to your work or to which your project has contributed [example: volunteers working on the project increase their IT skills, and go on to employment].

Performance Indicators – the sets of quantitative and qualitative indicators which are used to measure progress and achievements to achieving your initial objectives and targets [example: quantitative – number of people attending a talk; qualitative – percentage of those who thought the talk good or very good].

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