



## **END OF PILOT PROJECT REVIEW**

### **Baking a Difference: a collaboration between Learning for the Fourth Age and Planet Leicester Bakers**

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# **Baking a Difference!**

## **A NEW COMMUNITY BREAD PROJECT FOR LEICESTER IN 2017**

In an exciting new collaboration between Learning for the Fourth Age and Planet Leicester Bakers, a programme of specially created bread activities will be offered to older people in a number of care home and sheltered housing settings.

Media release & media enquiries:

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## **INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE BAKING A DIFFERENCE (BAD) PILOT:**

The BAD pilot, funded by The Big Lottery, aimed to promote engagement and inclusion of older people receiving care in residential settings through a series of themed bread baking sessions. This report presents the project's background, development, activities, outcomes and conclusions drawn.

It was envisaged that the bread making process could be 'deconstructed' so that the many skills and techniques required within it could be used to engage residents within the limited timeframe available for each visit. Timeframes were limited due to the need to work with both the concentration spans of older people receiving care and the existing schedules within the care settings. Through the project activities we sought to promote healthy eating, self-care, wellbeing and togetherness.

### **HEADLINE CONCLUSIONS:**

1. Hand making bread has much to offer 'fourth age' residents in care settings.
2. There are potential benefits in bread-making-based activities for mental and physical health, as well as day to day wellbeing, for older citizens in care settings.
3. The deconstructed bread making process offers physical activities that can be positive for physical functions that may now be underused by residents such as arm exercise, finger dexterity, minor cardio exercise through dough working and precision hand use.
4. The aroma of baking fresh bread in the care setting has a positive mental and emotional impact for some participants and potentially non-participants and staff in the setting.
5. People enjoy experiencing and where possible sharing the positive feelings that memories relating to bread in their lives can bring.
6. However, some residents could potentially feel frustration or sadness when revisiting an activity they no longer do, therefore compounding a sense of negativity. (NB this was outweighed by the positives for many but needs to be acknowledged).
7. Although time is restricted for activities in these settings the varied skills and techniques bread making involves means focussed activity sessions can be created at the right level to challenge and stretch residents in a positive way.

8. Although verbal communication might not have been possible for all participants, we observed reactions and activity that indicated the positive impact of the activities.
9. Further exploration and measurement of impact has the potential to lead to longer term bread making activity initiatives in care settings with older people.
10. This is a human resource dependent project. A good ratio of volunteers and staff to residents was vital to ensure people were well supported to take part. Also for health and safety reasons.

## **WHY BREAD?**

- Hand making and baking bread has the potential to evoke strong, mostly positive memories in people.
- It is perhaps something that they or their family have done in the past and not something people living in care settings would expect to have the chance to ever do, or do again.
- The project sought to ensure there was bread baked in the care setting on each project day, therefore offering the welcome aroma of freshly baked bread to everyone living in, working in or visiting the care setting.
- Making bread, particularly the working of the dough, can be a relaxing activity, and one which naturally encourages peer support and positive collaboration.
- By doing it as a group activity the project sought to increase engagement and reduce isolation for participants in the care settings.
- Precision is not vital in working, shaping and decorating bread dough: bread can look 'ugly' and still smell and taste wonderful.
- People often feel a sense of pride in what they have achieved with bread dough.

## **THE PROJECT PARTNERS: Why did we see an opportunity for collaboration?**

Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A), its staff and trained volunteer mentors, offered extensive experience and skills in delivering innovative education activities to older people in care settings, together with access to a network of local care home and sheltered housing settings in Leicester and positive relations with management and staff.

Planet Leicester Bakers offered practical bread making skills and knowledge, together with extensive professional adult teaching and training skills and experience. The founder and trainer has many years of experience of working collaboratively in the local voluntary and community sector, together with a track record of innovation and partnership working.

Both partners have many years of experience working in the Leicester/shire local communities with a wide variety of partner organisations. Both were therefore able to bring a rich knowledge and understanding of the local environment to benefit the project.

## **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

The core aims of the original project proposal submitted to the funder (Awards for All, the Big Lottery Fund) were retained: using bread related activities to promote engagement and inclusion of older people living in care settings.

As a pilot, the project benefitted from developing as activities were planned and delivered. Embracing learning from the delivery as we went was key to the project's success, as was adjusting to different settings and participants' abilities.

The trainer from Planet Leicester Bakers had no previous experience of delivering training specifically in care home and sheltered housing settings and therefore working with experienced L4A staff and volunteers and being able to be flexible in delivery were both of great benefit. Flexibility and being able to respond to the need for change in delivery is vital in adult education and in care settings even more so.

## **THE PROPOSED PILOT PROJECT**

Originally the proposed project aimed to work in one care home and one sheltered housing unit to deliver six pilot sessions in each.

Each of the sessions was to focus on a specific theme (e.g. a brief history of bread, bread from around the world, memories of bread etc.). In the sheltered housing unit we planned to encourage people to build and care for their own sourdough starters between sessions.

## **ACTUAL PROJECT DELIVERED**

The project was delivered in three settings with one session a week over four weeks in each setting (12 sessions in total): one care home, one nursing home and one sheltered housing setting. The settings were uniquely different in several ways:

- Abilities and limitations of residents participating
- Mixture of ability in the groups
- Time of day of L4A's activity slot
- Involvement of staff

Further detailed planning led to more practical, focused activities in the first two settings whilst the sourdough starter plan was retained for the sheltered housing group.

## **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

Session plans were drawn up weekly, responding to the groups, settings and ongoing learning. Participants would come and go and some attended all sessions. The sessions were timetabled for 1.5 hours and took place at times already allocated to L4A in order to fit with the existing rhythms of the settings.

### ***Setting 1.*** Care home. Afternoon sessions after lunch.

#### **Context**

**Residents:** The majority of the participants had either limited verbal communication abilities or reduced cognitive function. Others had physical limitations resulting from a stroke, for example. Confusion and at times a certain level of distress was apparent and this meant that the group would grow or diminish in size during the session. Some residents just watched from afar, which was good as our presence caught their attention and offered something new and different in the week. In week two a male resident's partner was visiting and assisted him. She was very positive about the session and was able to share some insight into his fascination with the dough and his past manual employment. One female resident attended each week and the change in her mood from week one, when she was disbelieving and a bit agitated, to week four, when she happily posed for the camera and smiled, was noticeably positive.

**Staff:** Apart from one session where a care assistant helped an individual, no care home staff attended the sessions. However, there was a good response from staff who commented positively during the programme and welcomed the project. The kitchen staff were very positive and helpful.

**Layout:** The kitchen was adjacent to the dining room where sessions were held, just after lunch. The oven was already on and it was therefore easy to bring ready-proved rolls in to bake, either straight away or after the group had decorated them. The fact the activity followed lunch meant people stayed on after eating and week 3 was a very large group in particular.

#### **Activities and observations**

##### **Week 1:**

A small starter group of five, of limited abilities doing simple practice dough work, using hands to work and stretch bread dough. A science experiment, using yeast to blow up balloons was undertaken with success. One resident ('D') was very disbelieving of the activities, especially the science ("You can't make bread in a bottle!" she exclaimed during the experiment). However, she was in the end the most regular attendee and by week 4 was very engaged and smiling.

Following consultation with care and catering staff, who raised the issue of swallowing difficulties for some, bread rolls were baked as a batch to ensure soft crusts for easier swallowing and digestion. One resident's relation who was visiting enjoyed the bread, as did everyone, and enjoyed the session. One resident told the volunteer at the end that the session was 'good'.

**Trainer's session report quote:**

*"Mixing the practice dough also led to disagreement from the same participant but the whole group got involved in working the dough and feeling it. They seemed to see the change in the tenacity of the dough and this will be something to explore further next session."*

**Week 2:**

A slightly bigger group of six, half returnees and with a new participant who was able to encourage and support the others joining in too. Activities were planned to include repeat activity (the science and dough working) in order to trigger remembering of the previous week.

One resident had their partner visiting and she helped him a lot. He was captivated by the repetitive dough working and it transpired that he worked in building maintenance. She was gently encouraged to let him continue at his own pace. This demonstrated the challenge for all carers and supporters, be they family, friends, volunteers or staff, in getting the right balance between supporting people to take part and encouraging independence.

All residents remained seated and engaged throughout the session, enjoying the fresh baked bread and jam at the end, this time also being given a choice of jams.

**Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"The mixing of the practice dough gave the chance for hands on work as they took turns to mix the flour and water. Some found it quite a challenge physically, but took part, commenting on how hard it was to mix. One new male participant was captivated by the gentle working of the dough."*

*"The mess on the table reflected the amount of activity! The opportunity for remembering was there, as was the physical challenge of working dough, which is very different to clay or playdough because of the stretchiness that can be developed."*

*"All steps made are of value and the mere introduction of something different and new I feel, for this demographic in particular, is potentially beneficial as it stretches people physically and mentally.... It would be good to have just a minimal idea about people's*

*past jobs/hobbies as different aspects of the process could be emphasised depending on individuals' histories (if appropriate)."*

### **Week 3:**

Stencil making and dough shaping. The staff had laid the tables out into a big square before we arrived and seven residents were ready and waiting for us. It was a busy and very positive session. Everyone acknowledged personal hellos from the trainer at the start. One resident was helped by a care home assistant. The resident who had been helped by his partner the previous week was alone this session and a difference was noted (see the quotes below). One new participant ('L') could not verbally communicate but showed strong indications that bread making was a part of her former life. For the second time a member of staff thanked the trainer for bringing the activity into the home.

### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"Stencil making: People chose their patterns/letters. The actual tracing and drawing was a challenge but with help (some a lot) everyone managed to produce a stencil outline. Everyone was engaged and even though it was a struggle for most this was a positive start....Everyone was using pencils and working with their hands to some degree."*

*"Dough shaping: This was very positive. People really enjoy working with the dough. There was time to spare and I started to show L, who had created a baguette shape on her own initiative, how to plait, which she very much enjoyed. And suddenly everyone was copying her. It was terrific. We need to include this in next week's session somehow; even with the tight timeframe it would be good for people to be able to create their own plaits for baking and eating."*

*"One resident who had his partner by his side the previous week was noticeably more engaged and showed abilities not obvious the previous week. He used both his hands and improvised with a spoon and butter knife to cut up his own bread for eating without help. He also plaited ably (he started copying L on his own initiative) and managed to draw rough circle outlines for his stencil and engaged more with trying to communicate and with eye contact."*

*"Bread eating. Again everyone stayed for the whole session, even the one or two who might have become impatient. Another resident joined us just for this activity and was very welcome. Everyone tucked in, including one or two who didn't eat all their bread the previous week. Those who wanted jam chose their flavour."*

### **Week 4:**

The lowest numbers this session, with three at the table of which two participated. One other resident watched quietly from afar and enjoyed bread at the end. The residents used their stencils to dust rolls and plaited their own bread for tea. The main activity was

the creation of an artistic display to show their work and share with visitors/staff/other residents.

The gluing and art activities maybe were new to people, or perhaps had been done with children or grandchildren in the past. Whether they had done these before or not they were positive activities for physical and mental engagement.

### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"Stencilling the buns, using the stencils made the previous week. This was OK. Difficult to make sure the flour didn't smudge, but the residents liked the patterns they made and letters."*

*"Plaiting – again a very good activity. The participants certainly enjoy this and seemed proud of their work. The cook agreed to make sure people got the ones with their names for tea."*

*"Art work about the project to display in the home: This was very successful. The residents enjoyed gluing and seeing the photos (D. particularly loved the pictures, particularly the one of her hands – I admired her hands and she seemed to appreciate this). D also posed, pretending to sprinkle seeds again so I could take a photo."*

*"There were again smiles and enjoyment. At this point I would see this programme as something that could happen regularly, periodically (perhaps once a month or 3 weekly?). The benefit is in the activities in the here and now. Some residents will remember previous weeks' activities, some not, and it is possible to find other shaping and work that is new and could be linked in. Art work in particular is a good additional activity that holds endless possibilities. The home's manager was keen to display the collages for visitors to see."*

## ***Setting 2.*** Nursing home. Morning, pre-lunch sessions.

### **Context**

**Residents:** A different setting to setting one, with some residents able to communicate more easily. Even those with limited dexterity were able, with assistance, to engage with dough work and again seemed to enjoy the feel of the dough. Small achievements were again celebrated and welcome by the residents, volunteers and nursing home staff. Some residents who just watched in week one were fully engaged by week four. Some residents were quite sleepy but this seemed to improve as the weeks progressed.

**Staff:** The nursing home employs an activity co-ordinator who was very enthusiastic about the project, from start to beyond the finish. She was involved throughout our delivery of the project. The cook was also very helpful and positive.

**Layout:** The activity took place in the dining area, adjacent to the living room. This meant residents not taking part could still be close to the activity. The kitchen was right next door to the dining room and a hatch made it easy to liaise with the cook.

## **Activities and observations**

### **Week 1:**

The week one session plan from the previous setting was followed and was an opportunity to assess the setting and participants. As a result the second week's plan was altered to include more tactile activities to accommodate one resident with severe sight loss.

The bread was baked for lunch but not enjoyed as a group which was slightly disappointing. Two of the residents were particularly engaged and took part in the experiments – the balloons caused much excitement. Another resident did not actively take part but staff and volunteers commented on how engaged she was.

The trainer was concerned at the end of the session that there would be enough to engage them through the full four weeks, but this proved unfounded.

### **Trainer's session report quote:**

*"There was some talk with one or two about the 1970s bread strikes – this seems to be a common previous experience of bread baking. They remember their mothers baking bread at this time. Historically this correlates as many may have been in the 30-40 age bracket at that time. They would have known the post-war move to processed, Chorleywood bread in the 1960's and the excitement of the ready sliced loaves. It's easy to imagine that because they were older they would have had lives full of wholesome home cooking etc. but thinking about it many were in their 20s – 40s at a time of post-war change and the introduction of more processed food (and the rise of the TV chef)."*

### **Week 2:**

A very busy session with more people involved and some arriving late. This added to the feeling of busy-ness and engagement. A lot was achieved. There had been a request for sweet dough from a couple of residents the previous week. Therefore a sweetened and a savoury dough were prepared ready for shaping. Lots of tactile sprinkles were supplied, giving residents decision making opportunities. Unfortunately the baking of the bread was too close to lunch and there was no room in the oven. The cook accommodated us by putting the bread in the fridge for a later bake.

### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"The sweet dough was shaped by everyone into snakes and hedgehog type balls. The savoury dough was also shaped and sprinkle dipping took place, which everyone enjoyed, choosing their sprinkles and dipping. The resident who had just watched the previous week took part, shaping and dipping her roll. She smiled and really seemed to enjoy it. Another new resident had bread baking experience and I hope to chat more with her if the opportunity arises. The more able two couldn't stop shaping dough! They all painted on egg wash and added sprinkles or used scissors to cut spikes in their sweet buns. The resident who doesn't like crowds was encouraged by the L4A worker to come over and at least inspect the work and she too smiled and seemed impressed with her fellow residents' work."*

*"Some residents might not take active part straight away but there is definitely benefit in holding their attention and slowly encouraging just a little bit of activity."*

### **Week 3:**

The focus was on stencilling and shaping practice dough, so as to get the bread in the oven sooner. Chatting with a resident with a visiting relative was very positive as the relative could evoke memories of past bread making and also love of computers.

### **Trainer's session report quote:**

*"The stencilling was tricky but successful. To make it easier and more tactile I had made some potato shapes for people to draw round. This worked really well. It was an opportunity also to chat with people who hadn't taken part but were watching from nearby, and visiting relatives. Even those who had just watched previously also wanted to take part this week."*

### **Week 4:**

Use of the stencils to decorate readymade rolls and art work were undertaken. It was unclear whether the art work would be displayed.

### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"The final session and again a full house, with people fully engaged. Really noticeable that those who in previous weeks have been happy just to watch actively took part this week, and I don't think anyone fell asleep!"*

*"Everyone had a go at stencilling with flour and the stencils made last week. It worked really well and the buns looked great. Again, the kitchen was very helpful. No smudging by anyone!"*

*"The art work was a big job. Everyone got stuck in with glue and sprinkles. I really hope some space was found on a wall to display them. Nicky (staff activity coordinator) was very helpful and printed off her pictures so it looked really good and the residents seemed impressed with everything they had achieved over the three weeks."*

*"It's a balancing act between gently pushing and encouraging people to try a little harder to do things that they obviously find difficult, physically, and stepping back. Particularly the case with use of hands. It is good though to see the achievement possible."*

**Setting 3.** Sheltered housing setting: Morning, pre-lunch sessions. The trainer worked alone without volunteer assistance at this setting.

### **Context**

**Residents:** This setting had the lowest level of care needs and provision being more accommodation than healthcare. Participants were able to fully communicate memories and views on bread in their lives and the activities undertaken in the sessions. The group each week was of a good size and worked well together partly because many participants were used to taking part in a range of other activities with L4A together, such as art or music appreciation groups. People came and went but were helped by other participants passing on information etc. if they missed the session. There was talk of baking bread together for a future community event and plenty of enthusiasm about the project.

**Staff:** Housing wardens also attended and participated fully.

**Layout:** A kitchen along a nearby corridor meant bread could be baked and enjoyed. The activities took place in a large, spacious room used for dining.

### **Activities and observations**

#### **Week 1:**

We did introductory activities including the science experiment and working dough to see how it changed. There was a lot of talk, both by the trainer explaining things and the residents. Everyone was very engaged and enthusiastic about the idea of building a sourdough starter.

#### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"A much more able group, keen to take part and with lots to share. We talked a lot about experiences and memories of bread, of their own bread baking (a couple still do bake). A lot of information was shared."*

*"We did the various activities and they all really enjoyed it. They are interested in wild yeast and having a go at building starters, so we will do that next week."*

*"It is difficult to remember and record what was said – it would be good to have a 'scribe' to help with this. I feel like I'm missing a lot."*

### **Week 2:**

The group grew to 10, with two new participants. Everyone was supplied with a jar, Whissendine organic stoneground flour and instructions to begin to build their wild yeast starters. They very much enjoyed this and it initiated a lot of discussion. Everyone named their starter promoting individual ownership of the starter but also a shared sense of identity as everyone engaged in the fun naming activity together. Again they also very much enjoyed the fresh baked (this time tin sourdough) bread.

Although measurements in tablespoons were given many were more comfortable with ounces.

### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"The (sourdough) loaf fresh from the oven was thoroughly enjoyed. They loved the flavour ('how bread used to be'[was one comment])."*

*"One resident was remembering being sent to get bread from the baker, whose name she also recalled. Another spoke of the war time National Loaf and how sturdy it was."*

*"There have been odd mentions of, as a group, them doing some bread for a fair etc. Or even starting their own business!"*

### **Week 3:**

Six returnees were joined by a new couple and two wardens, one of whom was new to the group. There was less activity this week and more talk, but that was due to the group being keen to listen and learn. The trainer had made and brought in a banana loaf using surplus dormant sourdough starter and shared the recipe, along with a pancake recipe.

There was much sharing activity between residents; of learning so far and of starters. There was also talk of sharing flour through group buying as bread flour tends to only be sold in a minimum of 1.5kg bags.

The three dough kneading techniques were demonstrated and intermittent kneading was of interest for those with hand issues.

### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"Seven sourdough starters came out of the eight started over the past week. One resident had given up but then passed their starter to the new couple, who were delighted. The new warden received some starter from her colleague. Another returnee had started up another starter for a friend who had asked her to do so as she had gone on holiday. Therefore there was a lot of sharing going on and I think some will be passing some on to relatives/friends."*

*"All the starters looked healthy. Everyone was clear they needed to put them in the fridge if they weren't to be fed regularly and if they turned black/a dubious colour or started to smell unpleasant they should be discarded and started again. We talked through the banana loaf and pancake recipe and also the bread recipe. Unfortunately there wasn't much action today, but that was because everyone was so interested in learning about their recipes and using their wild yeast."*

### **Week 4:**

This was an opportunity for a review of the project and to close with final tips and also shaping of bread activity. The group presented the trainer with a gift and thank you card to show their appreciation for the project, which they had thoroughly enjoyed.

### **Trainer's session report quotes:**

*"Excellent final session. Eight participants, including two staff. One staff member has been keeping her starter fresh and making bread or pancakes almost every day. John, one of the residents, brought his first sourdough loaf in, made with the starter he had built. We all enjoyed a slice and discussed shaping and further tips. One couple who had been gifted the starter of another resident had decided it was not happy so discarded it and started afresh. They brought their new starter in, named and looking healthy. They plan to use it. One other resident was concerned as her starter was quite thick, but she had decided on 100% wholewheat and it looked and smelt fine. She was planning a trip to the shops later to get some bread flour. One resident decided not to progress with sourdough, but gave her jar to the staff member who had missed the previous week."*

*"Very positive feedback. We shaped buns and discussed the importance of this stage of the process. The buns were baked for tea. We also had a go at plaiting with practice dough."*

## PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS AND NOTES

*Note: consent for photo sharing could only be secured from setting three, the sheltered housing setting. Therefore other photos have been kept anonymous.*



The first session at setting one saw a successful science theme used to engage and excite the residents. Yeast, flour and water combined to blow up balloons on beer bottles. Practice dough was worked and fresh baked rolls were also enjoyed.

Dough work and shaping encourage hand use, which can become less frequent in care settings. Residents also were able to take delight in their shaping achievements.

Resident 'L' (top) was also able to silently lead the way in getting others to try more challenging shapes such as plaiting. Inspired, a male resident who had not been very proactive the previous week suddenly started his own plait. Not before long the whole table was having a go!

The use of phone photography was also a positive part of the project. The resident in the third photo loved seeing her hands captured in this way and two weeks later very much enjoyed seeing the photos again and even posing for more.

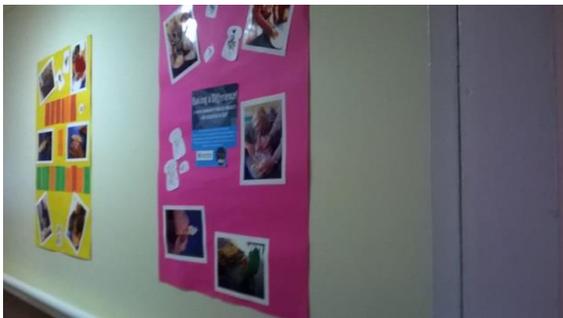


The use of art to bring the project together at the end offered additional skills use. Some giving the feeling of freedom and a mindful repetitiveness, such as just gluing with little restriction.



Other tasks demanded more intricate, precise work, such as using bread sprinkles (in this case sesame seeds) to decorate paper bread shapes. Concentration was also required.

For the first and third settings being able to sit together and enjoy freshly baked bread, straight out the oven, was a highlight. Again, opportunities for decision making and choices were given with the introduction of new jams. In this photo the male resident had been supported in his first week by his visiting partner. Attending alone the next week, he acted more independently, keen to do things for himself such as spreading butter and jam.



The manager at setting one was delighted to be able to display the art record in the corridor near the front entrance. This meant participants could revisit their work but also other residents and visitors could see that their fellow residents and loved ones were capable of unexpected skills, activities and achievements.

Mixing the dough in each setting, but in particular the care homes, was an interesting experience for many. It was hard work for some, exercising arm, shoulder and hand muscles that perhaps had become underused. The changing pliability of the dough was a pleasure for people to work with and they could see it change.



Shaping the dough was a further challenge and step forward. Doing simple rolls in a way that would result in a firm round bun was intricate and pleasing. Finding ways for those with limited hand use was a challenge but not unachievable. Every effort was celebrated.

In setting two one of the residents had very restricted eye sight. Tactile activities were therefore particularly important. Shapes carved from potatoes were brought along as outlines for drawing stencils. The following week the group successfully dusted all the buns with their stencils, using a sieve and flour, and not a smudge was made!



Setting two, despite a range of disabilities, had more able residents than setting one. The art work at the end of the project therefore meant more gluing and sprinkles as well as hand writing – something some care/nursing home residents may do less of once living in a residential home.

The sheltered housing setting was completely different and offered the opportunity for residents to build and care for their own sourdough starter. Weighing out, mixing, following instructions and sharing knowledge and starters were all utilized skills.



John Seymour had a history of keen bread baking and was delighted to be able to try his hand at sourdough bread. It was very tasty! The whole group shared his enthusiasm for the project. He wrote at the end:

*"I've been baking bread as a hobby for a very long time – 40 years! But in the four weeks of this course I have learnt so much – all sorts of tips that I know will be very helpful in the future. It's a great hobby: I recommend it."*

Patricia came with her husband Michael, arriving in week three. They were very enthusiastic and 'adopted' another resident's starter. Unfortunately it did not survive, but in week four they arrived with a new one they had started themselves, called 'Andy Pandy'. Michael shared a bread memory that the project had reminded him of:

*"At the age of 12 we bravely (my friend and I) slept in a tent in our garden. Little did my mother know at 2am we sneaked down to a bakery where his dad worked. I recall him doing all of most what we told (on the course). Of course it was on a larger scale. Boy did that bread taste nice coming back at 4am. Would we do it today?!"*



Marjorie had, like John, bread baking experience. She was delighted with the opportunity and was not afraid to go for broke with a 100% wholemeal sourdough starter. She commented:

*"I thought I was going to make bread, but it started as a science lesson. Very interesting."*



The sheltered housing sessions also involved the wardens, who were very engaged in the project. Elaine, second from the left, reported that she was caring for and using her sourdough starter regularly, making pancakes when she wasn't baking bread.



At the end of the four weeks in setting three, the residents presented a gift and card to the trainer, with the message:

*"We have enjoyed the past 4 weeks and will put your teaching into practice. The lovely breads and buns were a bonus. Thank you. From Tuesday morning club at Wyggestons."*

## KEY IDENTIFIED OUTCOMES

Observation and feedback in relation to the project and individual sessions was secured from L4A and care setting staff, L4A volunteers and PLB's baker/trainer. Verbal feedback from some residents who were able to communicate verbally and physically was also recorded.

**Concentration levels:** Engagement was achieved for a full 1.5 hours by the majority of participants – either through their attention being held and/or physical activity with the dough and other skills. Volunteers commented several times about the achievement of engaging specific individuals and capturing their attention for such a long period. This is a direct result of the many and varied planned activities, as well as the readily available sensitive support offered to individuals.

**Independent decision making and activity:** Residents were encouraged to make decisions and choices themselves and, where possible/appropriate, as groups.

**Use of hands:** bread dough is not heavy like clay, nor does it need to be sticky. It becomes extensible and easy to work. Residents found pleasure in this, as well as the intricacies of shaping dough and using sprinkles to decorate breads. Hands that perhaps were not being used as often as in earlier life were now being exercised and pleasure was gleaned by everyone from taking part in the tactile activities.

**Other possible physical benefits:**

Working the dough not only exercised the hands but also the arms and shoulders. From the comments of residents they were obviously feeling the physical effects. Coordination was put to the test through the more precise work of decorating bread and dusting rolls with a sieve and flour. The repetitive nature of some of the work, including gluing, was calming.

**Sense of achievement:** Creating simple bread shapes and decorations brought a sense of achievement and pleasure for many. At the end of each programme residents put together bread related displays of photos taken during the project and of their work. These artistic displays in themselves brought a sense of achievement, as did the chance to visually reflect on what they had achieved over the weeks. The use of instant photography through the sessions also engaged and excited residents.

**Memories:** It was difficult in the first two settings to have actual discussions about bread in people's pasts or lives, but the expressions and physical actions or skills of some residents gave some indication of it being a past activity, and one they found familiar. In setting two some memories were shared of making bread and also visiting relatives could offer memory sharing. In setting 3 some residents had previously made bread and enjoyed the chance to make it again and learn new techniques such as sourdough. They

also were able to recall and share distant memories of collecting bread as children and local bread related businesses.

**Informal team building:** In all the settings the activity gave the opportunity for residents to work together, help each other out and share knowledge and skills. As is so often the case with bread work there was no conflict triggered by the activity, and in some instances there was a sense of coming together and willingness to help out and share. In some settings where people are thrown together and just expected to get on this activity could have potential for smoothing tensions and easing distress. It also provided the opportunity for residents to work together and engage positively with visitors (from the project) and staff in the setting. Further work, including through more formal impact assessment, could be of value in exploring this further.

## **DELIVERY LEARNING**

### **Volunteers/help in delivery**

This is a people resource-heavy project. In the care homes having the help of experienced volunteers/staff who were familiar with how the setting worked and had relations with the staff and management was crucial, as well as them knowing the residents. However, this needed to be balanced with ensuring expectations of residents' capabilities and potential were not limited.

It was definitely a project the proof of which was in the delivery. Any volunteers or staff who had been sceptical before delivery were converted to being major supporters after being involved in just one session.

### **Varied abilities**

For the care home settings in particular it was a challenge having a range of residents with a very different physical and communication abilities. The experience and ability of the trainer is important in ensuring sessions with appropriate activities for all can be delivered, keeping all levels of ability engaged.

### **Timing of the sessions**

It was a positive to be able to deliver the sessions so as to bake and eat the bread together as a group. Setting one offered this, as did the sheltered housing setting. Consideration needs to be taken into access to the oven, appetite and also the timings of other meals.

### **Length of the sessions**

1.5 hours is not a long time but the deconstructed process does lend itself to this, allowing an hour for activity and half an hour for the social breaking of fresh bread together. It also proved to be a good length for keeping people's attention throughout, even of those not normally given to concentrating throughout a whole activity session.

## **Flexibility**

This was a steep learning curve for the trainer as someone new to such settings. As with adult education more generally, flexibility was crucial, with an ability to accommodate comings and goings. Treating each session as a follow on, including the right level of recap for returning participants but learning for new, was helpful.

## **Health and safety issues**

Working with the setting staff was important to ensure any dietary and eating requirements were taken account of. Again, having support volunteers/staff who are familiar with individuals was very helpful, as well as having setting staff at hand to report and check any incidents with.

## **FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

The project collaborators are in full agreement that this pilot has provided a solid base for further development of the concept. The therapeutic value of the deconstruction of the bread making process and introduction of hand making bread into residential settings for older people has been strongly indicated by this project.

Learning for the Fourth Age and Planet Leicester Bakers are taking forward new ideas and partnerships in order to build on and use this valuable experience. This may include academic research, business development and further funded delivery in health, care and well being settings.

## **THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Learning for the Fourth Age and Planet Leicester Bakers would like to thank those who have made the Baking a Difference pilot project happen and for their input and support:

Staff, management and residents of the three settings:

Scraptoft Court Care Home  
Harley Grange Nursing Home  
William House, Wyggeston's Hospital

Volunteers with Learning for the Fourth Age

Funders: The Big Lottery

## **APPENDIX: MEDIA ACTIVITY, RELEASE, CONTACT DETAILS**

A media release was distributed prior to the project starting and resulted in interest from the BBC. Planet Leicester Bakers baked bread on BBC Radio Leicester's morning show, and Melissa March from L4A was interviewed. There was also interest from BBC East Midlands Today, but the sudden general election, coupled with the challenges of the nature of the settings meant that on this occasion coverage was not possible. Extensive social media coverage was achieved on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Linked In. News articles and updates were posted on the websites of L4A and Planet Leicester Bakers.



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release: Thursday 26 January 2017

### **NEW! LEICESTER COMMUNITY BREAD PROJECT: 'BAKING A DIFFERENCE' TO PILOT IN RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

Learning for the Fourth Age, in a new collaboration with Planet Leicester Bakers, has secured Awards for All funding for an exciting new project, 'Baking a Difference'. The project will be piloted in care home and sheltered housing settings during 2017.

Baking a Difference will exploit the loveliness of bread to bring people together in residential settings through a range of bread themed activities. The initial project will consist of two 6 week programmes for residents who wish to take part.

Michelle Stratford, Founder of Planet Leicester Bakers, explains:

"Bread is a wonderful vehicle for bringing people together and engaging in non-competitive, fun activities. Working and shaping dough can be very relaxing, as well as physically beneficial, while bread can also be a lovely subject to help start conversations. Planet Leicester Bakers is delighted to be able to work with highly regarded Learning for the Fourth Age in developing and bringing this project to people who often don't readily have the access, knowledge or the confidence to take part in bread activities."

Programme planning is already underway. Activities will range from story-telling and reminiscing to actual hands-on dough work. It is also hoped that some residents may take up the challenge to create, care for and bake with their own sourdough starter, or 'wild yeast'. Some studies have indicated that providing the opportunity to nurture a living thing can enhance wellbeing.

Melissa March, Founder and CEO of Learning for the Fourth Age, commented:

"Learning for the Fourth Age is very excited to be able to bring such an innovative project to some of the settings in which we work. We already offer a range of learning activities for residents, including art and crafts, storytelling and computer skills, and to introduce the theme of bread will be very interesting. It holds the possibility of further improving residents' wellbeing and social engagement."

Ends.

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS:

- Further information and interviews:  
Melissa March, Learning for the Fourth Age. Mobile: 07545 842315  
Michelle Stratford, Planet Leicester Bakers. Mobile: 07816 178022
- Learning for the Fourth Age was established 10 years ago. Research shows that learning in the later stages of life can boost confidence, give residents a more positive outlook on life and delay on the onset of dementia. L4A believes that there is a gap in provision of educational and learning services to people who live in care homes and seeks to address this gap.  
Visit [www.L4A.org.uk](http://www.L4A.org.uk) for more information.
- Established in 2014, award winning Planet Leicester Bakers seeks to bring communities of common interest across Leicester and Leicestershire closer together through exploiting the extraordinary power of handmade bread. Offers include training, community projects, micro-bakery sales, team building and public speaking. In 2015-16 the Sharing Bread project offered basic bread training in community settings across Leicestershire.  
Visit [www.planetleicesterbakers.co.uk](http://www.planetleicesterbakers.co.uk) for more information.
- Awards for All has funded the Baking a Difference project. It is a Big Lottery fund, offering small grants for grassroots and community activity that aims to improve life for local people and neighbourhoods.  
Visit <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk> for more information.