



A fox skull can spark all sorts of conversations.

RAMM + older people

“I learned that stimulating the
mind is good for you.”

Participant

Case Study: Gentlemen's Group

RAMM + older people

Gentlemen's Group: Inviting older men into the museum

The challenges

Isolation is a serious problem among older people.

Men are less likely to get involved in engagement opportunities unless they are targeted directly.

Older people often have transport needs.

How can lifelong learning be further integrated into what RAMM has to offer?

The background

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (RAMM) has found that lightly structured conversations stimulated by objects in a lively and informal setting work well for older people. The team wanted to build on this model, and its successful partnership with Age UK, to extend its outreach to older men. Research for organisations such as the Big Lottery Fund and the Young Foundation explains that men are often underrepresented in cultural engagement projects unless they are targeted, sometimes because they are reluctant to seek help, and because few men are visible in many outreach services.

The project

RAMM staff and volunteers took handling objects to a group of 10 older gentlemen who had indicated they were interested in intellectual stimulation, and who were identified by Age UK (<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/>) as isolated. Over six sessions, the group covered a range of topics, including World War Two, and local finds from the archaeological and natural history collections.

What changed?

RAMM had not previously worked with this specific audience. Most of those who took part said they had met like-minded people. All of the participants said they enjoyed this pilot project and wanted it to continue in some format.

What did people say?

"I enjoyed it." *Participant*

"I learned that stimulating the mind is good for you." *Participant*

What next?

This was a powerful and valuable experience for those taking part. Age UK Exeter managed to secure funding – from donations of pensioners' winter fuel allowances – to continue. The project, called the Museum Group, focuses on local history and uses a pub for its meetings.

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