

Reminiscence Box Toolkit

What is Reminiscence Therapy?

Reminiscence Therapy involves discussing events and experiences from the past and aims to evoke memories, stimulate mental activity and improve a person's wellbeing. Research has shown that Reminiscence Therapy can help older people with depression to focus on positive aspects of their past, encouraging positive thoughts. It is particularly useful for people living with dementia, as they often have a better memory for the distant past than they do for recent events.

What is a Reminiscence Box?

Reminiscence Boxes provide a meaningful activity for users with dementia. They provide carers and loved ones with an opportunity to reconnect with people with dementia, stimulating conversation so that you can share stories and memories together.

Reminiscence Boxes can also be enjoyed alone, allowing users to reflect on the items inside in their own time. Our Stirling Reminiscence Box has also been enjoyed by tourists visiting Stirling, Memory Groups, a variety of community groups and local children.



Using the Boxes

When using the resource with someone who has Dementia, do so in a brightly lit environment and reduce excess background noise, e.g. switch off radios or televisions. Speak clearly and slowly in a friendly tone, be patient and don't rush the participant's responses or interrupt them.

Don't use phrases like 'Do you remember when...?', as this can be stressful and may make the participant think there's a 'right' answer, similarly, asking specific personal questions unprompted can be stressful. General questions will encourage the participant to open up. For example: 'Have you ever been on holiday to Spain?', becomes, 'Where did you like to go on holiday?'. Similarly, don't ask for their favourite memories or their opinion on their favourite things: 'What is your favourite building in Stirling?' becomes, 'Are there any buildings in Stirling you particularly like?'.

Our Reminiscence Box Contents

- A4 double-sided sheet with around 15 Reminiscence Questions.
- A4 double-sided sheet explaining what this resource is (feel free to use the text from the introduction to this Toolkit). You can also use this sheet to thank local organisations/individuals who have donated images.
- A4 sheet Content Key, which numbers all the photographs alongside their brief description.
- 20+ images, no smaller than A4, all of these should be numbered and with a brief description on the back.



Creating your Reminiscence Box

Checklist/Step-by-step guide

1. Decide on the themes for your Reminiscence Box, this will help you select the contents. Our boxes focused on Stirling's heritage and questions and content were based on the following themes:
 - a. Work, home, and travel
 - b. Leisure, sports, and local events
2. Find content for your Box that fits the themes. You could contact your local history society, archive and/or museum, to see if they have any digitised images relating to your chosen themes that you could use in your Box. You could also ask your community/class/residents to donate images. As the images in your Box will all be reproductions, donated photographs can be scanned and then returned to their owner. Be sure to ask for permission to reproduce the images from donors, and explain the project clearly. See page 4 for more copyright information.
3. Once you've decided on your Box contents, create some interesting Reminiscence Questions which can't be answered with a 'yes' or a 'no', this helps the conversation flow. See the [Using the Boxes](#) section for more information.
4. Decide how many boxes you are going to create.
5. Print the contents of your Boxes. If you have the budget, you could have the images professionally printed. See the [Box Contents](#) section above for more information.
6. Assemble your Boxes! Be sure to label them clearly.



Design and Content Do's and Don't's

Don't:

- Use a small font size, a serified font, or multiple different fonts.
- Create visually cluttered resources with lots of images and text, or use a patterned background, for example.
- Use a high sheen finish which could cause glare as this can make the images harder to see for people with poor eyesight.

Do:

- Do ensure that the text is large and use a sans serif font, we used size 16 for our question sheets and size 27 for image descriptions.
- Make sure that there is a good amount of blank space around any text.
- Use a high-contrast colour scheme between the text and background
- Try to ensure any printed resources are on a thick/robust paper stock so that they will last longer and can be wiped clean.
- Write or print the following on the back of each image:
 - Number the images and provide a Content Key with all images listed on it, this helps keep track of what's in the Boxes and can help with conversations.
 - A clear and simple description of the image, e.g. 'A photograph of sheepdogs and their owners at the Strathendrick Sheepdog Trails around 1975.'
 - Who the image was donated by/provided by. Some museums and archives will provide you with their preferred wording, e.g. 'Image courtesy of Stirling Archives'.

Copyright

The [Scottish Council on Archives](#) has produced a detailed guide on copyright, and [Heritage Digital](#) has produced a guide specifically for heritage organisations. If in doubt, ask the donor, archive, museum or library that you are working with, and they will let you know what the terms and conditions for using their images are. Always ask for permission to copy and reproduce any images from your Box. We are grateful to The Stirling Smith and Stirling Archives for allowing us to reproduce and include images from their collections for our Boxes with the condition that we acknowledged their organisations on each image.