



#ConnectMe – Resource Pack 3

Celebrate your street – together!



Unit 13 Co-creating events – devising a socially distant experience

The fact is, your street is a ready-made stage which has a fascinating, ever-changing set, ready-made to tell an amazing story. At present it may be hard to create an event which draws your whole street together at one time but you might devise an event which celebrates your place and its history by trying out some of the following ideas.

With the ease of filming and recording material using a mobile phone, families or social bubbles could:-

- **Create a video walk** which shares the history they have discovered through their research, stopping to explain or discuss notable discoveries and revealing locations. This could then be shared with neighbours who could follow the walk, maybe find clues, and take part in a street quiz with a prize.
 - Research and then walk your street noticing themed original house names, architectural details, trees, plaques, or obvious gaps or “lost houses”.
 - Is there a spectacular view of a local landmark?
 - Is there evidence of an interesting historical event?
- **Devise a street trail guide** this can be as playful or serious as you like, but a simple map with points of interest clearly marked – the historic tree at number 10, the view of the cathedral between number 20 and 21 etc. – and then be given to neighbours to try out.
 - Look up, out, along and beyond - try to see your place anew, sense its particular atmosphere and character; cherish its idiosyncrasies and its patterns, its shapes, colours and smells. How can you share them with your neighbours and friends?





- **Every house tells a story.** Having individually researched the history of their home and its previous occupants, neighbours could record their discoveries to create a patchwork snapshot of the street now and what it was like in the past.
 - Were the houses built at the same time or is there a wider historical spread? How was this place developed?
 - Create a family tree for your house – how many people have lived there and what did they do for a living?
 - Dress up as a previous researched occupant and take a photograph outside your front door, or create your own plaque celebrating the lives of previous inhabitants.

- **Creature connections.** There might be a wildlife connection with animals who move between and around the street.
 - Can you plot their journey, times of visits and activities?
 - What are the hidden pathways connecting gardens and families?
 - Create a photo-montage capturing the animal's movements over specific period and share these as a *Kitty Capers* or a *Foxy Freeway* display on a board in a front garden or on your neighbourhood's preferred digital platform.
 - As a group, find the human pathways which echo those of the animals captured in the photos. Will you get treats and a chat?

- **Create a personal memory walk.** Are there elders who have lived a lifetime on the street who have a story to tell? With care, and appropriate permissions and safeguarding measures in place, collect their reminiscence which might inspire or be an integral part of your celebration
 - Take a walk down Memory Lane beside the elder encouraging them to guide your journey and reminisce. A family member or carer is a vital addition to any work with potentially vulnerable people.
 - Is there music which comes up in their conversation – can you underscore sections of your walk with their greatest hits?
 - Are there children or young people who would like to get involved? What do they see, feel, notice in the street?
 - Share the contrasting versions and open an intergenerational discussion.

- **Create a visual celebration – This is my Place.** Is there a communal archive of photographs or images of the street and its inhabitants from a century ago?



- Perhaps each house on the street could recreate a photograph on your celebration day and each household could share a story or simply share an image of their place?
 - Where do you find beauty in your street? What makes this place feel like home? Encourage your neighbours to photograph the wonders of their place – an autumnal tree, a carved porch, an unusual post box, people, neighbours, a view
 - Paint or sketch your street and display your pictures in a window
- **Write a playlet, scene or story.** Encourage any dramatic writers or performers of any age to celebrate your street with a scene, poem or a song inspired by its history.
 - How might people from the past view the present street?
 - What was there before the houses were built?
 - Reflect the generational makeup of your street or household
 - Tell a story in an engaging and accessible manner – use your research freely and flexibly to create an event rather than a fact laden lecture.
 - Create a document to share which outlines your detailed research.
 - Rehearse, film, and share your short piece. Or perform it live to small socially distant groups.

Here are some suggested elements that will enhance your creative story-telling:-

- **Opposing views** - rivalry or competition which is positive and creative. The conflict always enables the audience to see and experience their place in new and unexpected ways.
- **Timelessness**, perhaps a sense of ghosts or a parallel world – your place has been many things over the centuries, has seen many events and people come and go. It is part of a continuum and you can imagine that all the elements might be present at one time like layers on an onion. It is up to you to decide which layers are the most exciting or interesting.
- **Purpose** - a question, a journey or a quest which drives things forward and which encourages us all to move and discover the place together.
- **Direct address** by performers in-role is used frequently to engage and draw the audience into conversation.

- **Surprises** help to re-define the rules of place by playfully disrupting its use and energy – art in unexpected places, historical figures at work in a modern landscape, music on a street.
- **Magic moments** help the participants see their space afresh – to look carefully at a familiar view or to realise that they are connected to a key social or historical aspect of their place.

Another great addition to your creative armoury are **HISTORI-GOGGLES**. This means imagining that you are wearing imaginary spectacles that allow you to strip all the modern trappings of your street out and mentally compile how it would have looked at different points in the past. This will help you creatively re-imagine your own street for your own purposes but can also be used collectively when you can gather in small or larger groups.



These imaginary spectacles were developed on our first project in Sweetbrier Lane to help a group of Cub Scouts see beyond the immediate built environment of this familiar street. With adult participants on the same project, histori-goggles garnered memories of open fields with horses and livestock and other specific local events, activities, and landmarks. Histori-goggles can be a state of mind when creating your celebration, or a fun addition to your final event to help engage younger people.

Having investigated your place and begun to think about how to share your discoveries, put on a pair of Histori-goggles and take a walk

- What did your place look like two hundred years ago?
- Can you still experience a view which has not changed over the years?
- Where is the past still present in your place – a name, a building, a story?
- What would people who lived or worked here in the past make of your place as it is today?
- What questions might you ask your predecessors? What might they ask you?

This walk using Histori-goggles may give you some inspiration and creative ideas for your Celebration.

- Are there characters, activities or places which need to be revived or re-built?
- Is there a point where shift occurred from rural community or agriculture to urban, suburban or absorption into a new place?
- Has your place been gentrified over the years? Or has former opulence been reclaimed by ordinary people? Has industry been replaced by housing?

Whilst Histori-goggles are a vital tool in exploring and connecting more deeply with your place, they are also a playful way to engage your audience's imagination during a performance. You need to be confident in modelling this new way of looking, but it produces giggles and a sense of shared engagement with the story.