



**The Suitcase Library**

**Overview:** *'An Intergenerational project that builds links in our local community between elders living in Care settings and children in local school.'*

**Project:** a partnership between ACEarts, Wessex House Care Home, King Ina Junior school.

The project will enable the placing of artists in the local school and in care settings where the activity will take place. All participants will create their own artists books\* on the theme of 'PLACE'.

The works produced will go into the 'suitcase libraries' and be exchanged between the partners in their own venues. There will be a grand suitcase opening event where all participants can come together and share their work, talk about the project and enjoy being socially engaged and part of a bigger collective.

The Suitcase Libraries will also be open to view by the public at ACEarts during our Artists Book event (SABE) in September 2019.

**Need:** Somerton Town is undergoing big changes: a major high street redevelopment which will give the town five new retail premises, a large housing estate on the outskirts is set to bring 1000 new residents, and there are also plans for a new large sheltered housing scheme in the centre of the town.

The Suitcase Library will be a platform to encourage community cohesion, be something new and exciting for all generations and something unique to Somerton; we want to preserve and enhance our stable and safe community. The participating groups working together, and the intergenerational partnership will mean the development of strong and positive relationships between people from all backgrounds.

**Success:** This project is designed to improved quality of life for older and younger people by enabling participation in meaningful, collaborative activity.

It will assist in breaking down inter-generational barriers between care homes and their local communities. It will benefit and nourish the well-being of both older people living in care and children in local schools.

**Care homes:** Elders in care homes don't always have regular visit from and dialogue with children. This project provides the perfect opportunity for meaningful discourse and shared experience through the swapping of the books and discussions about the creative development of the work during planned visits.

When an older person living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease receives the suitcase library for them to enjoy, it will stimulate memory and start conversations.

The creative sessions are designed to be effective for older people and those living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

As the number of people living with the condition is expected to reach one million by 2025, the sharing of books and messages can help to improve quality of life through cognitive stimulation, social interaction and meaningful engagement.

**School:** Our school sessions are designed to cater for and encourage all abilities to participate. We work with professional artists who have a wealth of teaching experience and excellent communication skills who are adept at providing stimulating activities for all. Children learn about themselves and others through art activities which promotes social and emotional development.

**Future:** For the second stage of the project, we have plans to develop the project and reach out further into our community. Funding allowing we will increase the number of participants, the type of venues where people can participate and 'tour' the Suitcase Library with other community groups and organizations including our library. We hope to have an online library so people can access the books remotely.

**Risks:** Supervision will be needed during the activity. We will ensure tools and equipment are appropriate for level and ability. Clear instructions will be given to all participants and all equipment tested for safety. Tools and equipment will be safely stored.

**Background:** Somerton has a population of 5000+ and has benefited from the newly refurbished gallery space and the outreach work ACEarts have carried out over the last 3 years.

**Accessible to all:** The participants are the children at King Ina School and Wessex House Care setting. However, this project aims to reach out to the whole community, showcasing the suitcase books in an exhibition and as an art form in their own right. Inspiring a community and helping to develop creative talent in the town.

**Why us:** over the past 3 years, ACEarts have built up strong relationships with the community, we are a well-respected charity and the community supports us and our remit.

We currently support 100 local visual artists and host 10 exhibitions per year, showcasing a wide range of media and ways of working. We want to encourage and support a broad spectrum of the arts which include book binding and artists books, printmaking, drawing, wood carving, jewellery and more.

Involving the whole community and creating the Suitcase Library platform, will ensure that we have an organized network of artist and makers who all contribute to the successful running of the project.

Nina Gronw-Lewis, our gallery manager, is passionate and dedicated to the arts in Somerton, her knowledge and experience are key to delivering our aims.

*\*artists' books = 'Artists' books are books made or conceived by artists. Artists' books that maintain the traditional structure of a book are often known as book art or bookworks, while*

*those that reference the shape of a book are known as book objects.'* V&A  
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/a/artists-books/>