‘Remembering Lennox Castle’ to launch on 24 February

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The ‘Remembering Lennox Castle’ project launches on Friday 24 February 2012 and focuses on the lives and memories of Lennox Castle Hospital ex-residents.
Lennox Castle Hospital on the outskirts of Glasgow, at the foot of the Campsie Fells, closed in 2002. This year will mark the 10th anniversary of the closure. After 10 short years the story of Lennox Castle Hospital is almost forgotten with members of the public more often than not associating the name with Celtic football club’s training ground rather than a famously large institution which was home to hundreds of people and was a major employer in the local area.

C-Change and Project Ability, two Glasgow-based organisations who work with people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, have successfully applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project that will mark the anniversary of this date.

‘Remembering Lennox Castle Hospital’ invites ex-residents to tell their story in their own words of their memories of living in the ‘Castle’. It is an oral history and research project where ex-residents are supported to amass and conserve their memories of Lennox Castle Hospital. To increase the scope of the project an invitation will be extended to others who have experience of long stay hospitals including ex-residents, staff and family members. Project Ability and C-Change will support people to work individually and collectively to gather personal, factual and historical information about life in Lennox Castle and to present the information using words, images and objects to allow them to share these stories with others.

The project will create opportunities for people to make an individual and collective contribution towards a memory bank of objects, recollections, stories and images. This unique body of work will be contained in a website to be accessed by the participants, their friends, family and supporters and the public.

Elisabeth Gibson, Executive Director of Project Ability, said: “Many of our artists lived in Lennox Castle Hospital or in similar kinds of institutions and still have vivid memories. Today it is inconceivable that we would exclude people with learning disabilities from our communities. This project will give people the opportunity to reflect on their experience and the tools to share their stories.”

C-Change’s Marketing and Development Manager, Sheryl Walker, said: “This project will be an excellent opportunity to illustrate the captivating stories and memories of those that resided in Lennox Castle. C-Change was founded as result of the hospital’s closure 10 years ago and has supported many ex-residents to positively transform their lives. Many of these individuals had never experienced a life outwith the hospital, but have exceeded expectations by going on to fulfil their right to become full and active citizens of their communities”.

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: “The Remembering Lennox Castle Hospital project will open up an important area of social history to many more people. The past community of Lennox Castle Hospital made an important contribution to shaping the area’s character and now it is all but forgotten. This project will preserve this unique heritage by bringing stories to life, letting everyone get involved and share their past.”
‘Remembering Lennox Castle Hospital’ will launch on Friday 24 February with a Consultation Day in Project Ability,

where invited participants will set out and design the project content. The event will be facilitated by consultant David Douglas.

Notes to editors

About Project Ability

Project Ability is a visual arts charity which provides opportunities for people with disabilities and mental health issues, of all ages, to take part in visual arts activities, develop their creativity and achieve their artistic potential. Based in new custom built and fully accessible premises in the centre of Glasgow they deliver a year round programme of training events, workshops, master classes, residencies and exhibitions. On average 300 people attend Project Ability each week. Project Ability was set up in 1984 and is the leading organisation in Scotland in the area of visual arts and disability.

Find Project Ability on Facebook

Contact: Elisabeth Gibson (Executive Director) on 0141 552 2822 or director@project-ability.co.uk

About C-Change

C-Change was founded in 2001 on the principle that everyone has the right to live in their own home and live the life of their choosing. C-Change remains at the forefront of successfully delivering innovative, flexible and person centred support solutions. Their vision is to support real positive change in the lives of individuals and families with support needs, regardless of age and personal circumstances.

Contact: Sheryl Walker (Marketing and Development Manager) on 0141 427 2946 or sheryl.walker@c-change.org.uk

About Lennox Castle Hospital

Lennox Castle Hospital was officially opened on September 24, 1936, by the then Lord Provost John Stewart as the Lennox Castle Certified Institution for Mental Defectives. It was purpose built to accommodate 1,200 residents in 20, 60 bed villas and was the largest institution of its kind in the UK. In the early 1970s the bed complement reached a peak at 1,620, by 1991 this had fallen to 830. The 1990 Community Care Act, and less than 60 years after it opened, resulted in a phased closure plan for the hospital. Throughout the 1990s the hospital closed down and residents were resettled in the community mostly in and around Glasgow.