£9,900 to ‘Wor Women on the Home Front’ to mark First World War Centenary

06/03/2014

Today, Tyneside Women’s Health has received £9,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a project, ‘Wor Women on the Home Front – exploring North East women's role in WW1’. Awarded through HLF’s First World War: then and now programme, the project will focus on supporting service users of Tyneside Women’s Health to explore the impact of the First World War on women and their families in the North East of England.

Culture Secretary Maria Miller, who is leading the Government’s First World War programme, said: “Women rose to the challenge during the First World War, often defying cultural and social barriers to achieve quite incredible things at the front and back at home. With the First World War generation all but gone, it is vital that we capture the memories of local people so their stories are not lost. This project is a fitting way to pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of the North East’s women in this centenary year.

Participants will access local archives with heritage experts and be shown how to conduct their own research in order to build a valuable record of previously unheard stories of life on the Home Front for local women. Participants will collect personal stories from older people within the local community whose parents and other family members lived and served during the First World War. Participants will be trained in oral history so they can collect and record these untold personal stories. Inspired by their research, participants will then unlock and capture their own personal stories through researching their family history and taking part in a series of facilitated storytelling sessions and creative workshops. Using digital technology such as tablets and smart phones participants will be empowered to record their untold stories in various formats.

The aim of the project is to raise awareness of the role of women in the North East during the First World War. The lives of many North East women changed during this time as they had to adapt to living without men of fighting age, taking on work opportunities previously held by men. The project will explore how family life in the North East changed as women went to work and were left to bring up families on their own while men were away fighting or if they were killed in action.

Regular blogs by service users will mean that the wider public can be kept up to date with developments and join in with the research. All research and stories that are uncovered will be digitally archived as a permanent record of the project, as well as forming part of an exhibition at the end of the project to coincide with International Women’s Day in 2015.

Elaine Slater, Project Manager at Tyneside Women’s Health, said: ‘This is a fantastic opportunity for service users to learn about local history and what other cultural facilities are available in the North East. Our aim is to help women improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing and this project enables this by helping women learn new skills, visit new places and introduce them to digital technology, all of which will help reduce isolation. We are very excited to be working in partnership with Curiosity Creative and thank the Heritage Lottery Fund for enabling this.’

In the run up to International Women’s Day on Saturday 8 March – this project will look at the role of women during the First World War and the impact the conflict had on women in the North East.

Notes to editors

Tyneside Women's Health (TWH) is a leading women's mental health organisation based in the North East of England. TWH was set up in 1985 to provide mental health support to women in a women-only environment. The organisation serves women across Tyneside via a centre in Gateshead and a centre in East Newcastle. In year 2012 – 2013, 425 women accessed TWH for support with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. This support is provided by utilising a range of services such as mental health courses, counselling, support groups, therapeutic and creative activities, and drop in sessions. Innovative projects such as this are also utilised to help women develop creative skills to enhance their wellbeing as well as practical skills to enable progression. Participation in the project will be offered at both the Newcastle and Gateshead centres to ensure we reach as broad a spectrum of women as possible. Tyneside Women's Health website, Twitter: @TynesideWH.

The project is delivered in partnership with Curiosity Creative. Curiosity Creative is a not-for-profit social enterprise based in the North East of England and is the North East Digital Story Centre, dedicated to the creation and archiving of digital stories in the region. We work with communities and individuals to support them to document their own meaningful stories about aspects of their lives. Participants are enabled to explore personal views, opinions and stories in a safe, supportive environment. Our facilitated workshops and projects provide enjoyable and transformational experiences by using the potential of digital storytelling as a tool for self-reflection, self-expression and dialogue around real and current issues. We run projects which empower people to talk about and value their lives and personal experiences, increasing a sense of self-esteem and facilitating the potential for future social action. Our work also assists people to better understand the diverse identities of the North East by recording and sharing personal memories in an accessible way and unlocking hidden stories. The North East Digital Story Centre wbsite, Twitter: @Cur_Creative.

HLF-funded First World War projects include:

First World War Centenary Project, IWM London
An HLF grant of £4.5m is transforming IWM London (part of Imperial War Museums) by creating new ground-breaking First World War Galleries.

Flintham Society – Keeping the Home Fires Burning?
Keep the Homes Fires Burning? is a community history project looking at the impact of the First World War on life in the Nottinghamshire village of Flintham.

Tank Museum – Access all Areas, Dorset
Holding the world's finest tank and armoured vehicle collection, The Tank Museum is a popular visitor attraction in the heart of Dorset. HLF's grant is being used to house 130 'at risk' vehicles, putting the entire collection indoors for the first time.

Through its First World War: then and now programme, HLF is making at least £1million available per year for six years until 2019. It will provide grants between £3,000 and £10,000 enabling communities and groups right across the UK to explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage and deepen their understanding of the impact of the conflict. Twitter: #understandingWW1.

UK Government Centenary plans
In June 2013, the Government set out its plans to mark the centenaries of the First World War commencing in 2014. These plans include a £35m refurbishment of the First World War galleries at the Imperial War Museum (IWM); The Government's principal partners in the commemorations will be the Heritage Lottery Fund and the IWM, but will encompass support for a multitude of other initiatives, large and small, as they come together in the months and years to come.

Further information

Images and interviews, please contact

Tyneside Women's Health: Elaine Slater, Project Manager on 0191 4777 898, email: elaine.slater@tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk.

Curiosity Creative: Alex Henry, Director on 07970 672 674, email: alex.henry@curiositycreative.org.uk.

Heritage Lottery Fund press office: Laura Bates, email: lbates@hlf.org.uk.