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**Open Call for Artist/Creative Practitioner Led commission to explore the impact of grief/loss on communities**

**“Finding Connection Through Loss”**

Libraries Unlimited has successfully obtained funding for two artist/creative practitioner led commissions to work with libraries and their local communities to explore the impact of grief and loss.

We are particularly keen to engage D/deaf and disabled people, and people of colour in our commissions and engagement. This ties in with our wider work as a charity seeking to add value in our communities by promoting diversity and inclusion in all our activities. In addition to the £10,000 commission we have secured £2,000 of funding to support accessibility needs for artists and/or community members.

The timelines for this project are short and details can be found towards the end of this document.

**The project and what we want to achieve**

Library teams hear stories about loss from their users every week. Loss of family members, loss of connections with their community or neighbours, loss of employment opportunities, loss of support structures. These stories and experiences have only been amplified by COVID and the impact that is having on communities. Libraries are a space where people come to share their stories and to feel connection – whether they arrive on their own or with friends and family, within the library they will be part of something bigger. Some will choose to just “be” in the space and others will want to interact. For example an elderly man who went into Exeter Library and stood in the middle of the floor looking slightly bewildered. When approached by staff he shared how coming to the library was something he had done every week with his wife of over 60 years. She had recently died and this was his first visit back. Library staff were excellently placed to hear his story and support him in that moment, signposting him to support services and further community connection.

We will commission two artists to explore, with communities, the impact of loss particularly over the last year. One will be from an identified pool of creatives and one will be decided via this Open Call process.

Alongside the exploration work led by the commissioned artist/creative practitioner we will be working in partnership with End of Life Doula UK to run a number of advance planning workshops, and bereavement cafes through October – December 2021. This wraparound, community focused service, will be integrated to increase engagement with the artists and support individuals that engage with the artists who may find the experience triggering.

We are seeking to have an impact on the individuals that engage with the artists and their work, and this will create understanding to help us form a foundation for future bids (to Arts Council England and others) to develop a large scale programme (in terms of reach and impact) supporting individuals and communities that are experiencing loss in all its forms.

**More about us**

Libraries Unlimited is the charity and National Portfolio Organisation that runs all54 public libraries across Devon and Torbay. Our mission is to bring ideas, imagination, information and knowledge to people’s lives and communities. In order to play a key role in the recovery of Devon and Torbay communities after the onset of COVID, we have dedicated our work to 5 strategic objectives – at the heart of communities and supporting their development, a space for learning, exploration, growth and regeneration. We have been operating library services with established, and proven, COVID secure working practices since March 2020 in buildings when possible and digitally.

**Project Commission (including budget)**

We have two available commissions of £10,000 each. One artist/creative practitioner will be commissioned from a previously identified shortlist, and one from this Open Call.

One artist/creative practitioner will work in Paignton around the topic of grief and bereavement in an urban area which is easily accessible by different areas of Torbay, which experiences pockets of severe deprivation.

The other artist/creative practitioner will work in Okehampton and Holsworthy, in an economically deprived area of rural Devon, around the concept of lost childhood / loss of peer connection.

We have no preconceived expectations about methodologies or final products, we welcome a variety of proposals from a range of art forms. In line with the Arts Council England funding we will expect a high quality experience and output. We will require the artist/creative practitioner to actively engage the local community in the appropriate geography to explore what grief/loss means to them. They should also work with the library teams to ensure some outcomes of the project are an increase in footfall into those libraries. We have a small additional budget to support any accessibility needs and artists/creative practitioners able to engage a diverse range of community members will be more favourably considered. We are particularly keen to see D/deaf, disabled individuals and people of colour, involved in the project. Any products must meet our guidance on accessibility, style and appropriateness.

The commissioned artist/creative practitioner will also need to be able to participate in evaluation elements of the project – from those that engage with the exploration, those that engage in any product that results from that exploration and other stakeholders (including but not limited to End of Life Doulas involved with the wraparound services and library staff).

The project ends in January 2022 and we anticipate if an outcome has been a physical installation then this will remain in place until the end of March 2022. Any physical installations will need to meet our library Health & Safety requirements. We are happy and able to support with the writing and review of risk assessments for associated activities / installations.

We anticipate the budget will be paid broadly in two instalments at the beginning and end of the project, when evaluation requirements are met. Specific dates will be agreed with the artist on a case by case basis. There is an additional £2,000 available for the project to support accessibility – whether that is of customers or artists.

**Project schedule**

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| 9am Monday 20 September 2021 | Deadline for expressions of interest |
| 27 September 2021 | Shortlisted artists (up to five) will be contacted and will receive £250 per day for two days research and development work |
| 9am on Monday 11 October 2021 | Deadline for shortlisted artists to submit refined proposal |
| 18 October 2021  (week commencing) | Successful applicant will be confirmed and contacted |
| 25 October 2021 | Successful commission begins |
| 10 January 2022  (week commencing) | Commission will be completed and any products installed in the specified location |

**How to apply**

**First round**

Any artists / creative practitioners interested in this opportunity are invited to submit an expression of interest (no more than 2 A4 pages of text/images or 2 minute video) by 9am on Monday 20 September 2021.

This expression of interest should include:

* A proposal of what you would like to do and who it will engage with, including how it will be delivered in the current circumstances.
* Identify which area you prefer to cover (or if you have no preference):
  + Paignton around the topic of grief and bereavement
  + Okehampton and Holsworthy around the concept of lost childhood / loss of peer connection.
* An indication of methodologies likely to be used including types of materials and what the final product may be.
* A summary of your creative practice and experience, including any images, information, or links from past projects that you think will be relevant to your proposal.

Submit your expression of interest / application to: Emily Macaulay, Service Delivery Manager, Libraries Unlimited [emily.macaulay@librariesunlimited.org.uk](mailto:emily.macaulay@librariesunlimited.org.uk) (via WeTransfer if a video file).

**Research and development**

We will select five artists/creative practitioners to receive 2 days funding of £250 per day to undertake research and development of their idea in order to submit a full application. This would need, as a minimum, to include a preliminary conversation with library staff in the area selected.

**Second round**

The full application (due by 9am on Monday 11 October 2021) should be no more than 10 A4 pages of text/images, or a 5-minute video and include:

* A plan of what you would like to do and who it will engage with, including how it will be delivered in the current circumstances.
* Details of plans to engage with the community
* Indications of:
  + Type of materials to be used
  + Methodologies on how the final product is to be achieved including any specialist equipment to be used
  + Inclusion of an indicative risk assessment and risk controls on key foreseeable risks for installation and deinstallation work and security of displayed work when open to communities (if the product is a physical one).
* A breakdown of how you will use the £10,000 budget (and potential use of the £2,000 accessibility support budget if appropriate). This should include any ongoing associated costs (such as if an installation needs maintenance in the period until the end of March 2022).

Unsuccessful applications will be held on file for twelve months as we are committed to developing our work around exploring, and responding to, grief and loss across a wider area and over a longer time frame. We will be seeking further funding to allow us to deliver that aim and may wish to return to unsuccessful applications if additional monies are obtained.

Shortlisted artists may be contacted for further information. The selected applicant will be invited to a meeting to discuss the proposal and contractual arrangements. Due to the changing nature of the current COVID 19 situation, the project schedule is flexible and may need to adapt to certain circumstances.

If you have any questions about this project, or commission, or require assistance to submit an application (or if the forms of application make this project inaccessible to you) please contact Emily Macaulay at [emily.macaulay@librariesunlimited.org.uk](mailto:emily.macaulay@librariesunlimited.org.uk) or on 07971 475270.