

# saying the unsayable

## Opening a Dialogue about Living, Dying and Death

### Welcome to the exhibition and what we hope you will get out of it

We welcome you to this art exhibition 'saying the unsayable: opening a dialogue about living, dying and death'. The material for the exhibition is the culmination of a project with 11 diverse community groups across Birmingham and the photos they have taken to depict the issues in the title.

Why the title? Well we recognise that in the 21st century we have become increasingly unfamiliar with many aspects of dying and death. There are a variety of reasons for this. These include

- the welcome and enormous advances in medicine and technology, so we are living much longer
- our changing lifestyles and the changing structures of and places where we find our intimate and social networks. The 'neighbourly care system' is disappearing

I wonder how many of you have experienced a death of someone close to you. It is now not unusual to reach the age of 50 or so before we are witness to such an experience or even to be in the presence of a dead body.

This unfamiliarity with the features of dying in the 21st century is sharpened by the need to reshape some of our rituals to guide our behaviours at such times. We increasingly need to find a language, a form of words and shared ways of knowing for how to bring the subject up of dying and death and dialogue with others on the subject. How then do we find ways to talk to one another close to us or with those around us? – as we do all still die!

We hope to offer and provide a possible entry point to such discussions by using some art forms - firstly the image as a way in to form your own stories about what the image might trigger or say to you, and secondly the use of newly constructed ceremonies to use in our every day lives at these times . How exciting! See over the page for what is on offer here at the exhibition.

### While you are here at the exhibition we suggest you hold a range of questions:

- what does living with dying and death mean to me?
- which images mean or connect to me the most?
- what words would I use or what stories would I tell to share any meaning of those images to those around me or later to my family and friends?

By the beginning of August all the exhibits and the supporting exhibition guide will be available to view on our website [www.wellbeingindying.org.uk](http://www.wellbeingindying.org.uk)

### As you leave today:

Some questions and a message to all those of you who have travelled here to this exhibition In relation to our subject area 'saying the unsayable: opening a dialogue about living, dying and death':

- What will you take away with you today?
- Which of the images most struck a cord of connection to you and the opportunity to open that dialogue with yourself and others?
- What image would you now take/find to depict any aspect of living, dying and death that you could use to open up a dialogue with your family and close others

Thank you for coming

Don't forget to leave us your comments in our comments book about the whole exhibition experience.