

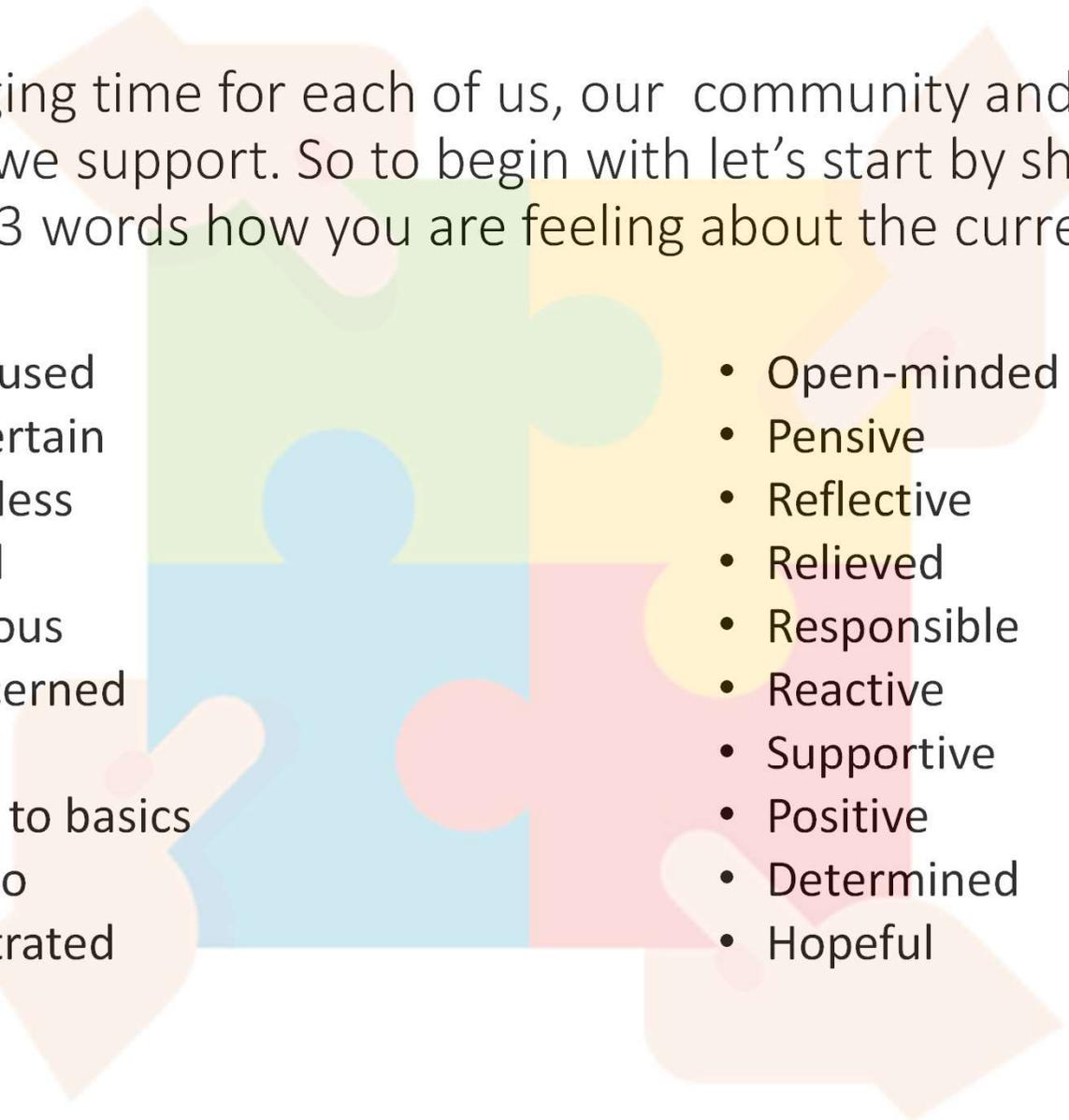


# #MuseumHour on Covid-19

*Run by Ben Melham (@Benmelham)*

*Write up by Holly Bee (@HThwaitesBee)*

It is a challenging time for each of us, our community and the communities we support. So to begin with let's start by sharing with each other in 3 words how you are feeling about the current situation.

- 
- Confused
  - Uncertain
  - Helpless
  - Tired
  - Anxious
  - Concerned
  - Sad
  - Back to basics
  - Limbo
  - Frustrated
  - Open-minded
  - Pensive
  - Reflective
  - Relieved
  - Responsible
  - Reactive
  - Supportive
  - Positive
  - Determined
  - Hopeful

Can all staff work remotely? Are there any museum disciplines which will find this more difficult than others? What is being done for staff who's roles do not suit remote working?

- Zero hours contracts in retail, custodial and FOH feel very unstable
- Custodial staff still going in, but possibly have reduced hours. They need health precautions for work and financial/emotional for time away
- Even with a closed museum, the FOH team has a lot to contribute, they know the visitors best and will have great outreach ideas
- Retraining FOH staff in collections care and cleaning to keep their work going
- FOH could review operating procedures and other policies that affect them
- Working with collections is either suspended or needs strict procedure
- Accessing the digital records remotely is a useful ability if can be set up
- Chance to show the human face of the museum – staff blogs and profiles
- Some staff are working in isolation in the office, which can be stressful
- Set up group chats, online meetings and Teams to keep human connections with colleagues
- Don't overstretch staff, be mindful of individual situations and stresses
- Send regular comms to staff even if you're unsure, silence is the most disorienting thing
- It's ok to take time to respond thoroughly (as long as holding information has been sent)

With many people now self-isolating, what can museums do to support and engage with these people? Do you have any ideas to share for supporting, calming and brightening communities and individuals that does not involve physical presence?

- People, including our own teams, are all experiencing different reactions to the pandemic, be sensitive to different needs and pressures
- This is an opportunity to respond to anxiety and foster community
- This is an opportunity for internal systemic change and to think outside the box about how we present ourselves online
- Experiment! Be open with audiences that it's new for us too and invite them to test out new workshops etc. online
- Mentoring young people remotely
- Keep social media content going and positive, share collections and positivity
- #ColourOurCollections activity and Ashmolean Museum #IsolationCreations
- Advice from NT gardeners about home gardening
- Collecting stories and thoughts from people, collectively documenting this period
- Setting up community Facebook groups and video chats for keeping in touch
- Book and movie clubs online
- Promote greenspace as a safer place to go
- Podcasting reaches out and provides friendly voices

Continuing this theme, with school closures due to come in to force at the end of this week across the UK, what can museums be doing to remotely support learning and engagement of children and young people in particular?

- Take time to make long term plans, don't rush just to move lots online
- We already have a lot online, need to promote it and make it easy to find and access
- Talk to schools about what they need
- Families rely on us for leisure as well as learning, include fun in provision
- Parents are not trained teachers, we need family-focused activities
- Keep in touch with community partners
- Use existing platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Instagram
- Virtual museum trips
- Posting science experiments that can be done at home
- Get kids to share their artwork, stories and ideas
- Kids in Museums adapting #TakeoverDay
- Children's Museums have shared some great information on the science behind the virus to help adults explain it to kids

What historic comparisons do we have for this type of epidemic/enforced shutdown impacting our sector? What lessons can be learned from these?

- AAM on museums and pandemics in history: <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/03/10/lessons-from-history-museums-and-pandemics/>
- Look at the response of open air museums with farmland during the foot and mouth outbreak
- Museums in Singapore during SARS
- Spanish flu
- Museums during natural disasters – floods, fires, earthquakes, hurricanes
- Detroit Institute of Arts during the city's bankruptcy: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/08/arts/design/grand-bargain-saves-the-detroit-institute-of-arts.html>
- Need to keep track of everyday needs like security and maintenance

Having access to accurate and useful sources of guidance and further information is really important. Where have you been getting your information from? Can you share any useful links?

### On Covid-19

- Daily updates from WHO: <https://www.who.int/>
- Heritage Alliance on Covid-19: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p4w-6tGao9SmwDAfSB9yOY5482Tvmgz9miZyfn8XnNQ/mobilebasic>
- NCVO on Covid-19: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/>
- Museums Galleries Scotland on Covid-19: [https://www.museumsgalleriescotland.org.uk/stories/coronavirus-covid-19/?utm\\_content=buffer655a9&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://www.museumsgalleriescotland.org.uk/stories/coronavirus-covid-19/?utm_content=buffer655a9&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)
- PBS on taking care of others and ourselves: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/how-to-help-others-in-the-covid-19-crisis>

Having access to accurate and useful sources of guidance and further information is really important. Where have you been getting your information from? Can you share any useful links?

On working practice

- ACE on resilience: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/what-resilience-anyway-review>
- DCN on inclusive messaging: <http://www.musedcn.org.uk/>
- Energise on supporting volunteers: [https://www.energizeinc.com/hot-topics/2020/march\\_0](https://www.energizeinc.com/hot-topics/2020/march_0)
- MAVA on supporting volunteers: [https://mava.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page\\_id=5&club\\_id=286912&item\\_id=52039](https://mava.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=5&club_id=286912&item_id=52039)
- Transition Network on working remotely as a team: <https://transitionnetwork.org/resources/virtual-teams-guide/>
- Podcast recommendations: Museum Archipelago, The C Word, Museums in Strange Places, Cultura Conscious, Habemus

Having access to accurate and useful sources of guidance and further information is really important. Where have you been getting your information from? Can you share any useful links?

### From museums

- MCN on digital resources: <http://mcn.edu/a-guide-to-virtual-museum-resources/>
- Open Objects: <http://www.openobjects.org.uk/2020/03/stuck-at-home-view-cultural-heritage-collections-online/>
- Mar Dixon's spreadsheet of resources for families: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1H4HOnduxxoN1MfuKdh8N3cDfVpTkgWtE4HAy9ubRxak/edit?fbclid=IwAR34GciU8yJC9kEimzTfJXfzA7\\_D0SI7CqsMDMEp8HJv9y91IA5ndHjJ9gA#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1H4HOnduxxoN1MfuKdh8N3cDfVpTkgWtE4HAy9ubRxak/edit?fbclid=IwAR34GciU8yJC9kEimzTfJXfzA7_D0SI7CqsMDMEp8HJv9y91IA5ndHjJ9gA#gid=0)
- Kennet and Avon Canal Trust's briefing to volunteers: <https://katrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Message-to-Volunteers-on-17-March-2020.pdf>
- A message from NML to visitors: <https://twitter.com/walkergallery/status/1240305823903072258/photo/1>
- Chatter Pack resources for home activities: <https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home>
- BuzzFeed list of online museum visits: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/andyneuenschwander/13-museums-you-can-visit-online-during-your-quarant>

Are there any groups, either museum-side or visitor-side, in the museum community which are being overlooked in all of the current planning and response? And what can we do to include them?

### Internally

- Volunteers, zero hours, and seasonal staff are all vulnerable and can already be afterthoughts and unsure of pay. We need to protect their income, divert roles and keep communicating
- Staff hired through agencies face automatic termination
- Team up FOH and education staff remotely to share knowledge about the site and visitors
- Online skills development, especially for EMPs
- Keep supporting the museum comms team, they are flourishing at the moment and may easily start working overtime
- Middle managers are being asked to figure out the practicalities of transition
- People at the top bearing the emotional burden of making all decisions and showing calm
- Freelancers, think about what work they can still do and keep them in the loop
- Independent museums will be hit hardest
- Break down department siloes

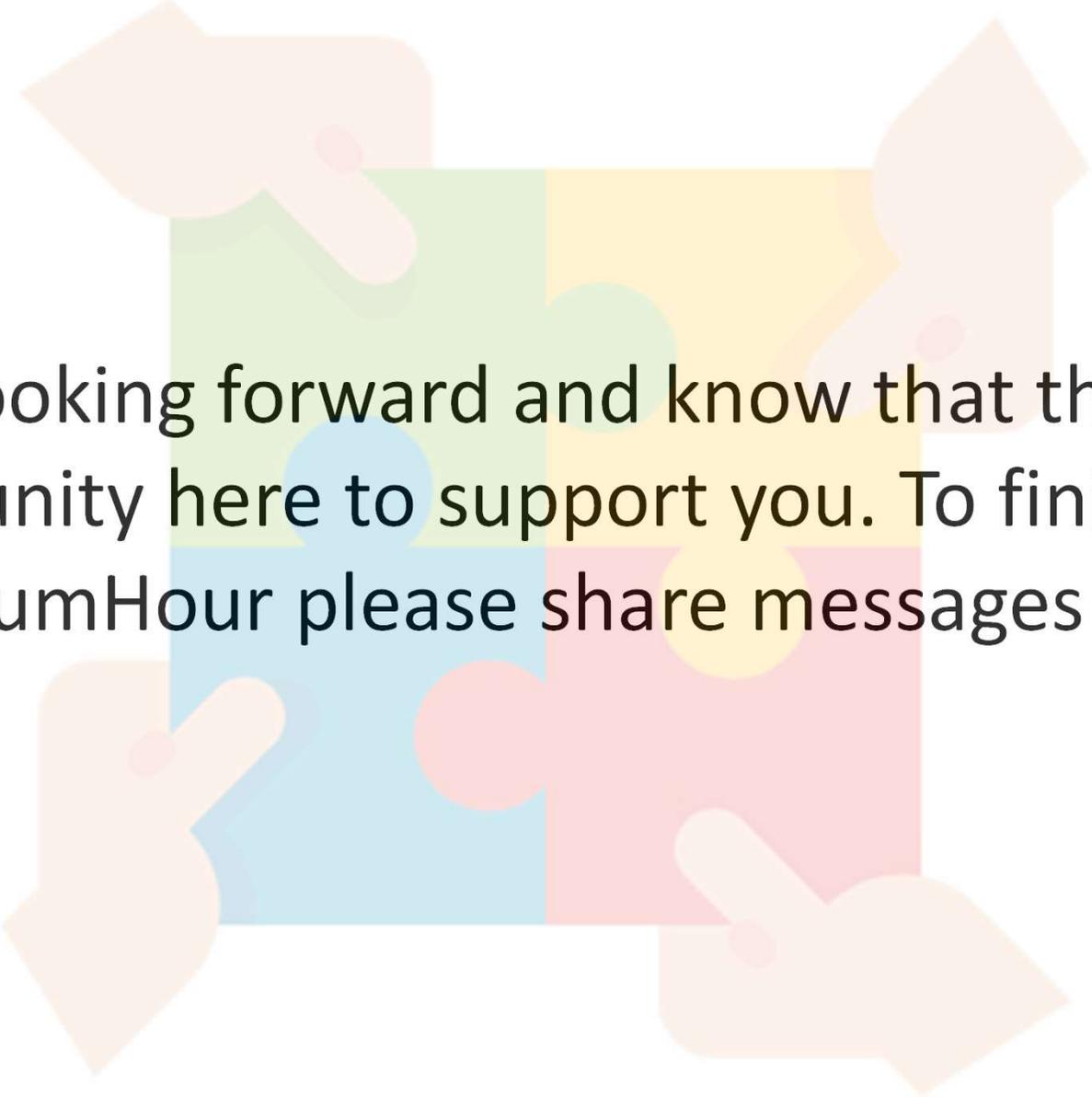
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### Externally

- Artists and community partners we were working with on site, use online video chats to keep together
- Keep up the contacts the education team have
- SEND families need accessible activities and resources
- Keep accessibility standards up online and consult on how to do that
- Older, lower income and rural audiences who have less access to digital
- Team up with local media to keep reaching out
- Team up with mental health support networks and charities, that will be needed at this time

Loss of income from closure or declining visitor numbers will be challenging for all sizes of institution. What can be done now to address this problem?

- Take problems that arise to review management and internal comms structures, we need phased plans
- This event shows us the need to have strong business continuity plans in place
- This shows the importance of good data, we need to know what is core and what is extra in our activities
- Museums Association has asked the government to divert £120m for the 2020 Festival of Britain and the £250m Cultural Investment Fund to emergency support for the cultural sector
- Social media donation drives
- Plan big relaunches to bring people back in
- Join together in shared initiatives, passports and consortia
- Promote online content and make it high quality
- Grants programmes remain open
- Follow the lead of indie business drawing on community support for survival
- Campaign to the government, if corporations can be bailed out so can culture
- Broaden our income streams, thinking about off-site and online opportunities
- If refunding for cancelled events, ask attendees if they would be willing to make a donation
- Opportunity for a skills audit to make the most of staff and staff development
- Take the gift shop online, add paid ebooks
- Revisit how we use our reserves
- Hours may need to stay reduced and slowly build back up



Keep looking forward and know that there is a community here to support you. To finish #MuseumHour please share messages of hope.



  **Ben Paites**   @BenPaites · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10 We should seize this opportunity to work on things we may not normally have time for when we're in the office. I'll be focusing on research and developing new online resources (which are my favourite things, but usually I have little time for) #MuseumHour



**Lana Pajdas** 🇺🇸 @LanaPajdas · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10 Don't forget that science works fast and develops cures & vaccines.

Travel restrictions are protective to nature, already impacting the air quality over lockdown areas.

It is just time to slow down.



**Faith I Weddle** @faithiweddle · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10: There is so much passion in the field that this crisis will spark a change for the better in the sector. Fairer contracts, less hierarchy, more community; that's what I'm hoping for. ❤️ #MuseumHour



**Museums DCN** @museumDCN · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10.1). Through the concern and worry, this is an opportunity to create a fresh perspective on all of our practice. Remote working will support our colleagues now and in the future, key online inclusive messages will challenge people's preconceptions of museums... #MuseumHour



**Meredith Peruzzi** @etoile · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10: This isn't going to last forever. I am seeing GREAT remote teamwork from my staff. We are doing everything possible to keep afloat and it's inspiring. This adjustment period is hard and my team is rising to the challenge. #MuseumHour



**David Hingley** @David\_Hingley · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

Adversity brings out the best in our amazing teams, breaks silos, reshapes systems.

If we needed any reminder about the importance of serving our communities and visitors their physical absence shows collections and content may amaze, but people bring them to life. #MuseumHour



**GEM** @gem\_heritage · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10. We all work in an incredible sector with resilient and amazing people.



**Ben Melham** @Benmelham · Mar 19

A really well attended [#MuseumHour](#) which trended UK wide and received 130,000 impressions (so far). 🙌 to everyone who took part. Some really great conversations on an important topics.



**Laura Blair** @lauragrayblair · Mar 19

Replying to @lauragrayblair and @museumhour

A10: I'm really looking forward to seeing families come back through the doors, especially some of the children who come regularly and will be so excited to be able to learn at the museum again. That enthusiasm will be a lot of fun. [#MuseumHour](#)



**Rachel Coman** @rach\_hogwarts · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10) human interaction whether that be online, face to face or even a quick wave/smile/acknowledgement is so empowering at a time when a lot of us are social isolating. I'm very grateful for the top tips for online exercise, blogs and podcasts [#MuseumHour](#) [#feelingthemuseumlove](#)



**MuseumsGalleriesScot** @MuseumsGalScot · Mar 19

A10 The last few days has shown how much the museum workforce cares about people. You've offered support to each other, made resources available, and enabled digital access to collections for those at home. We are here to listen and support you through this time. [#MuseumHour](#)



**jennylilac** @jennylilac · Mar 19

A10. [#MuseumTwitter](#) has been a huge support. You're starting to feel like coworkers. You're a lifeline right now. Thank you. [#MuseumHour](#)



**Blue tokay** @BlueTokay · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10 museums and culture are so important to people and give folk inspiration. They'll still be there when we get over this! 👍 [#MuseumHour](#)



**kortnialys** ♥ 🇪🇺 @kortni\_alys · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

There's always a silver lining, lots of organisations have already and will continue to start to see the increased need to provide additional access to their online and digital content. Let's keep this up! @Stagetext @museumhour #museumhour #access #subtitles #livesubtitles



**Jen Kaines** @JenKaines · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10 #MuseumHour dealing with change is what we as a #museum sector do every day, & we're really good at that. Also we are great at supporting each other. Yes it's going to be different, yes no doubt there will be hard times but together is where we are strongest. Thanks all



**Museum Mum** @museum\_mum · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10. I think museums will have to become more agile, and speak more directly to audiences without expecting them to walk through our doors This is our opportunity to prove our relevance to people, and use our authority for greater good! (and create ham art, obvs) #MuseumHour



**Vanessa Hardy** @vanessajhardy · Mar 19

A10: Having to think differently in times of crisis can often lead to amazing solutions which will have long-standing benefits. Building virtual connections will bring the museum sector to more #diverse and #inclusive communities .#MuseumHour



**AnabelRoqueRodriguez** @anabelroro · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

10: I've been thinking a lot about the sentence: "At the end, it's people who help people." it's so true. Look for the helpers, look for the people singing or clapping from their balconies, look for the people who ask you how you're doing... twitter.com/leonardocarell... #museumhour



**Yorkshire EMP** @YorkshireEMP · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

A10: There are so many organisations within the sector who can provide support - there are so many individuals on twitter sharing their top tips. We have a strong community and there's always someone you can reach out to if you need support or just someone to chat to! #MuseumHour



**HeritageVolunteering** @HeritageVols · Mar 19

Replying to @museumhour

Q10: Too much of our sector is tired and outdated. The situation we find ourselves in isn't ideal, but we have an amazing opportunity to change things for the better. Creating a more modern, engaging & resolute future. We can make that happen & it starts now #museumhour



**Holly Bee** @HTHwaitesBee · Mar 19

#MuseumHour A10: I think seeing what worries people is weirdly what makes me feel hopeful, I've seen way more chat about emotional support, keeping communities going, the need to care for staff, and inclusive approaches, than I have for money worries and closing ranks

