

**GEM**

We connect &  
learn together



# Case Studies

**Creating Community Partnerships**

Vol.27 2021



## Editorial

---

By **Devon Turner,**

*Case Studies Editor*

Communications Manager, GEM

Welcome to our community partnerships themed edition of GEM Case Studies. We are delighted to present an array of projects which create meaningful and sustainable community partnerships from all four nations of the UK, as well as abroad.

Learning within museums, heritage and cultural settings has gone beyond programming for communities to programming with communities; from start to finish. The events of 2020 including the Covid-19 pandemic and multiple lockdowns have illustrated the importance of community and local connections. The case studies within this publication highlight engagement with communities in all settings and age groups including early years, refugees, older people, higher education, people living with dementia and more...

Beginning with Northern Ireland Museums Council and their multi-museum initiative to become dementia-friendly, this publication highlights the importance of engaging with audiences that are more likely to be socially isolated and unable to visit museums and heritage settings in person. That focus on isolated communities is continued in the article by GEM Italy Reps on an audio project that linked people in the city of Bergamo at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, followed on by a case study from CITIZAN which explores bringing together various communities to

co-create a visual and aural history of Mersea Island's changing coastline over the last century.

The Museums Association's 2020 Learning and Engagement Manifesto states that, "Community groups should be valued and fully engaged with all functions of the museum." GEM believes this is central to effective and meaningful community participation and are delighted to include case studies from Paisley Museum and Lakeland Arts which illustrate this methodology. Creating long-lasting and sustainable partnerships is the cornerstone of successful community work within museums, heritage and cultural settings. This approach is explored in case studies by The Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum, National Museum Wales, V&A Dundee and Our Shared Cultural Heritage.

The case study presented by Avsar Consulting on working with diverse communities brings to light issues of avoiding a tokenistic way of working with people from the African Diaspora, those from South, East and South East Asia and other diverse backgrounds and brings up a need to further explore the question of, "Who is not in the room and why?" Unlock the Chains Collective and Kuumba Nia Arts demonstrate how theatre can be used to encourage self-representation and belonging of local African-Caribbean Community experiences in museums within their engaging

case study involving the Oxford Windrush Group.

When thinking of "community work" within museums, adult groups often come to mind, but this publication highlights two case studies by Great North Museum Hancock and Kettle's Yard focused on engaging the youngest museum and heritage enthusiasts with their parents through early years programming. Interaction with arts and culture throughout childhood and into early adulthood is invaluable for creating lasting engagement in arts and culture. Artwork as well as Reimagine, Remake and Replay explore how to meaningfully engage children and young people in creative programmes even amidst a global pandemic. A case study by Pro Artium looks at involving higher education groups with the arts in a remote learning setting.

At GEM, we connect and learn together. Let's continue to remain strong as a sector and advocate for the power of learning to connect communities and co-design programmes for lasting impactful engagement with museums, heritage and cultural settings.

This publication is funded by the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage. The Culture Recovery Fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, using funds provided by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

# Contents



**02 Editorial**

**Devon Turner**

**04 Creating Dementia Friendly Local Museums: Responding to and learning from the challenge of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**Rachel McCance, Michael Fryer and Rachel Toner**

GEM Northern Ireland

**06 Breaking the walls of isolation: A case study for Art Museums reaching communities in lockdown with digital radio broadcasting and storytelling**

**Emily Grassi and Maria Antonia Rinaldi**

GEM Italy

**08 Changing Minds, Changing Coast: A CITIZAN Project**

**Oliver Hutchinson, Danielle Newman and Lawrence Northall**

CITIZAN

**10 Defining Community towards the Democratisation of Museum Practice**

**Dr Collette Brownlee**

Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum

**12 'Nothing about us, without us': widening youth engagement at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales**

**Nia Williams**

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

**14 In Their Own Words**

**Peter Nurick and Sabrina Logan**

V&A Dundee

**16 Our Shared Cultural Heritage**

**Dr Sadia Habib**

Our Shared Cultural Heritage

**18 Creative and sustainable approaches to engage Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities with heritage sites in Hounslow**

**Rinku Mitra and Neena Sohal**

Avsar Consulting

**20 Theatre making in Museums**

**Euton Daley, Amantha Edmead, Beth McDougall and Nicola Bird**

Unlock the Chains Collective and Kuumba Nia Arts

**22 Taking Museum Play into the Community**

**Amy Baird**

Great North Museum: Hancock

**24 All at sea? A voyage through a community partnership**

**Karen Thomas**

Kettle's Yard

**26 Local Cultural Education Partnerships and the value of museums and heritage getting involved**

**Dr Ruth Taylor, Rebecca James and Corina Westwood**

Artwork

**28 Creative Writing and Closed Museums: Forging creative youth communities online during crisis**

**Niamh Kelly**

Reimagine, Remake, Replay

**30 Listening, Creating & Working Together**

**Paisley Museum Re-Imagined Team**

Paisley Museum

**32 Connecting to communities in Cumbria: Lakeland Arts' MEND project**

**Ella Luo, Amy Stretch-Parker and Natasha Scullion**

Lakeland Arts

**34 Transforming Museum Learning in the Covid-19 Age: The Case of Pro Artium**

**Dr Ellie Pridgeon**

Pro Artium

# Creating Dementia Friendly Local Museums:

## Responding to and learning from the challenge of the Covid-19 Pandemic

### Summary and background

This case study details developing and delivering dementia-friendly programming online combining collections-based reminiscence activity with a 'Love to Move' inspired chair-based exercise programme.

NI Museums Council and a group of 7 local museums have been on a journey working to become dementia-friendly since 2016. A working group meets twice a year with representatives from key dementia charities along with those living with dementia. Training, evaluation and partnership are key elements to this work.

### Challenge

The Covid-19 pandemic presented a threat to wellbeing and increased isolation to many at-risk groups. Lockdown provided a learning curve to meaningfully connect with these audiences through online engagement. The work pre-pandemic had focused on face-to-face engagements to work to ensure spaces and programming were as inclusive, accessible and fit for purpose as possible.



### Approach

In May 2020 the first online programme, 'Love to Move', was piloted with 3 local museums. Love to Move is a British Gymnastics Foundation accredited exercise programme and was recommended to local museums by the Alzheimer's Society NI. The rationale was to offer sessions delivered via Zoom

that engaged various aspects of brain function and importantly tried to engage both sides of the brain. Learning, music and exercises are all proven to have a positive impact for those living with dementia. The second phase, 'Memories, Movement & Museums', sought to build on this with the addition of 2 new museums to the original 3.

---

### Intended outcomes

- To deliver an online dementia-friendly programme of collections-based reminiscence and movement sessions.
- To deliver Phase 2 of the online pilot building on lessons learned in Phase 1.
- To foster partnerships between local museums, Love to Move programme and care homes and/or community support organisations.
- To offer opportunities for social connection and to foster wellbeing.

---

### Intended outputs

- 5 dementia-friendly museums involved delivering 6 weekly sessions.
- 5 care homes or community support organisations engaged.
- 80% participant satisfaction rating, with increased social connection and willingness to engage with their local museum again.

---

### Obstacles and issues

Obstacles/issues included technology, digital inequality, digital skills, furlough within the voluntary/community sector as well as the question of how to make sessions meaningful and engaging via Zoom. There was also the need to adapt and change the Memories, Movement and Museums phase due to staffing levels.

---

### Actual outcomes

Phase 2 of the project successfully built on the lessons of phase 1, including the development by 2 museums of a Covid-secure loan box for care home settings, and an induction for care home staff or service coordinators with each of the museums and the exercise facilitator. In the case of the 2 museums engaging with individuals at home, they provided downloadable packs of information and photos for use during the workshops. Exercise and reminiscence guides were also supplied for use between the weekly sessions.

The reach of the local museums changed: in phase 1 the Tower Museum in Londonderry/Derry worked with a care home in Belfast

“ **Staff enthusiasm, knowledge and skills, existing partnerships and the enthusiasm from those living with dementia to participate were all essential.** ”

which prior to online engagement would not have been possible and in phase 2 Armagh Robinson Library & No 5 Vicars' Hill engaged individuals from across NI in their weekly sessions.

---

### Actual outputs

5 museums involved in total, with 3 in phase 1 and 4 in phase 2. The museums involved were Armagh Robinson Library & No. 5 Vicars' Hill, Mid Antrim Museum, NI War Memorial, Tower Museum and Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Service.

The project engaged with 3 care homes and 2 community support organisations. Feedback from participants has been encouraging with close to 100% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they enjoyed the sessions and would take part in future sessions. The majority of participants also recorded they felt their mood was improved, and they felt more socially connected through taking part in the sessions. These are all encouraging outputs, but small sample size and the accuracy of responses are factors which may skew the feedback. Further pilot work and continued feedback is essential to prove wellbeing impacts.

---

### Lessons learned

Staff enthusiasm, knowledge and skills, existing partnerships and the enthusiasm from those living with dementia to participate were all essential. Local museums were able to design and deliver multi-sensory sessions, linked to their collections and using creative stimuli: objects, music, song and exercise. It is possible to connect museums to both care home environments along with carers and those living with dementia in their own homes, but technology needs to be considered and strategies to support engagement are crucial.

Developing resources to support engagement such as covid-secure loan boxes which enable object handling are important and continuing to learn and refine online engagement techniques is crucial. The DEEP guides are an excellent resource as are listening to direct feedback from those living with dementia as to what works and what doesn't.

---

### Next steps

The Dementia Friendly Museums programme continues, and the next working group meets in Spring 2021 to discuss lessons from the online project. Online engagement is likely to continue and a blended approach beyond the pandemic is being considered. Key to the continued success and improvement of dementia friendly engagement is communication and designing activities collaboratively.

We will build on this project and further develop creative online engagement programming in a new project linking collections-based reminiscence with storytelling.

### Find out more

**Rachel McCance**,  
NI Museums Council  
Rachel.mccance@nimc.co.uk

**Michael Fryer**,  
NI War Memorial  
outreach@niwarmemorial.org

**Rachel Toner**,  
Armagh Robinson  
Library and No 5 Vicars' Hill  
visitor.engagement.officer@gmail.com

**Karen Hutchinson**,  
Love 2 Move Practitioner  
karenhutchinson12m@gmail.com

# Breaking the walls of isolation:

## A case study for Art Museums reaching communities in lockdown with digital radio broadcasting and storytelling



### Summary

During the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak in Bergamo, a city that quickly became the symbol of the pandemic 'war zone' on global news, GAMeC (Bergamo's council museum of contemporary art) responded to the urgent calls of help of its community with an experimental and flexible storytelling project called Radio GAMeC.

### Background

Radio GAMeC ran initially for 2 months (March to May 2020) with daily broadcasts on Instagram. The project quickly expanded its reach and

reputation of the museum from the local to the international scene, to the point that UNESCO declared it one of the best museum initiatives in the world born during lockdown in 2020.

Lorenzo Giusti, director of GAMeC, explained that he attributes this success to the central stage given to learning and civic duty in the museum's leadership. In talking about GAMeC as a 'public square' and 'observatory' for contemporary society, he hinted at the idea that he intends that the museum be regarded, rather than as a square, as a polymorphic and flexible space where intersecting circles representing its

many communities can meet. A radio seemed the most natural platform where these communities could meet and converse while the museum was closed. Essential to the birth of Radio GAMeC was the partnership established with Lara Facco, press and communication consultant, and Leonardo Merlini, literary critic and journalist.

### Challenge and intended outcomes

The main challenge for the museum was to reach its local communities with a project that would not only relieve the boredom of lockdown, but effectively support mental and

physical wellbeing. Bergamo was at the time a real outpost in the war against the virus, one of the first communities to face an unknown emergency. Radio GAMeC invited residents and organisations to speak on air about what they needed and how the museum and listeners could help them. One of the most tangible targets of the show was to raise funds for the local hospital.

---

### Approach and intended outputs

The medium of radio broadcasting was chosen for its flexibility, perfectly suited to a polyphonic storytelling approach, and evocative of momentous radios in history, namely Radio London. Radio GAMeC aimed at becoming a sounding board for its local communities and their needs, bridging local and global experiences.

Intended outputs included producing new content for the museum to inform a new strand of 'post-pandemic programming' and a radio broadcast intended not only as a means to an end but as the end itself, a key to reading our times together.

---

### Obstacles and issues

When the decision was made to start Radio GAMeC, the research and training on digital tools and platforms was limited by the lockdown and by what was already available to staff and contributors working from home. Understandably, those working on the project were living the same crisis of their public, and in its technical imperfections the broadcast transmits the sense of urgency and emotion that they were living too.

The museum has a very small staff and Radio GAMeC was only one of the community projects delivered during lockdown (e.g. community workshops on bereavement).

---

### Actual outcomes and outputs

The outcomes moved beyond the original expectations. This empathic project created a deep connection between the museum and its territory, which no longer perceives the museum as a distant or elitist institution, but as a real asset. Beyond the local, GAMeC developed strong networks both on national

**“This empathic project created a deep connection between the museum and its territory, which no longer perceives the museum as a distant or elitist institution, but as a real asset.”**

and international level, positioning itself as a model of museum deeply engaged with civic, environmental and humanitarian issues (see the recognition received from ONU in the category “Welcome. Working for refugee integration”). Actual project outputs were numerous and included the following.

- 66 daily episodes on Instagram Live (March-May 2020), later uploaded as podcasts.
- 5 pop-up events in the museum's courtyard during the Summer of 2020.
- In Autumn 2020, Radio GAMeC started travelling to visit a variety of areas within the territory of Bergamo to record harder to reach stories.
- “Ti Bergamo. A community”: an exhibition collecting experiences by Italian and international artists, local museums, organisations and charities was created. A programme of events was hosted in a classroom recreated within the exhibition using recycled school desks. The space, called Aula Magna (Lecture Hall), aimed at welcoming school pupils unable to attend school due to self-distancing regulations, inviting them to transport their classrooms from their formal learning environments to the museum.
- Approximately 200 guest speakers were involved in the project up to February 2021.
- GAMeC supported the fundraising of 5 millions euros for Bergamo's Hospital Papa Giovanni XXIII through the Italian NGO (Cesvi).

---

### Lessons learned

- By opting for a daily broadcast rather than a one-off event, the museum made a real difference in showing how responsible and committed it felt towards its public.
- The urgency of the project meant that the planning of a social media strategy was not prioritised. In hindsight, the director felt that the museum didn't capitalise enough on the tools offered by social media and broadcasting platforms.

---

### Next steps

The museum is still experimenting with digital tools, privileging parameters of content development and audience reach rather than the statistical exposure that online platforms can provide.

In mid-February 2021, Radio GAMeC started a new daily broadcast on Clubhouse, addressing current issues in arts and culture and aiming at a community of interest represented by museums, institutions and professionals.

### Find out more

Listen to Radio GAMeC. The Saturday Night Live episodes are in English.  
[www.gamec.it/en/radio-gamec](http://www.gamec.it/en/radio-gamec)

Read about the exhibition Ti Bergamo – Una comunità.  
[www.gamec.it/en/ti-bergamo](http://www.gamec.it/en/ti-bergamo)

Read about and watch the Aula Magna discussions (Italian only)  
[www.gamec.it/aula-magna-4/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=aula-magna-4](http://www.gamec.it/aula-magna-4/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=aula-magna-4)

Museum contact:  
[www.gamec.it/contattaci](http://www.gamec.it/contattaci)

**Emily Grassi**  
[emilygrassibanks@gmail.com](mailto:emilygrassibanks@gmail.com)

**Maria Antonia Rinaldi**  
[mantimail@icloud.com](mailto:mantimail@icloud.com)

# Changing Minds, Changing Coast:

## A CITIZAN Project



### Summary

Funded as a National Environment Research Council (NERC) COVID-19 mitigation public engagement project, Changing Minds, Changing Coast (CMCC) is working with the public on Mersea Island (Essex) to co-create a visual and aural history of the islands changing coastline over the last century. This project

brings together evidence from maps, photographs, documentary sources and oral histories to map changes to coastal habitats and to coastal heritage threatened by accelerating coastal erosion. By contacting a wide range of local island residents, different perspectives contribute to the programme.

“By contacting a wide range of local island residents, different perspectives contribute to the programme.”

# Coastal erosion, driven by our changing climate, is dramatically altering our coastline, revealing both heritage and impacting lives. It is imperative that we understand these changes both now and historically as many people live within these areas of change.

---

## Background

This project is situated within CITiZAN, the Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network, a Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) NHLF project which highlights the threat of coastal erosion to foreshore and intertidal sites. CITiZAN works with a network of volunteers to record, monitor and promote sites across five discovery programmes. Mersea Island is one of these areas and all three CMCC project officers have worked in the region.

---

## Challenge

Coastal erosion, driven by our changing climate, is dramatically altering our coastline, revealing both heritage and impacting lives. It is imperative that we understand these changes both now and historically as many people live within these areas of change. The CMCC project aims to help unite and inform communities by co-creating and exploring this impact together.

---

## Approach

We planned to create five basemaps spanning 100 years in 20-year intervals combining visual datasets from local residents' collections and a series of oral histories. This would allow us to demonstrate the rate of change in an accessible way.

---

## Intended outcomes

- To determine whether visual data and aural histories can be combined to provide a useful dataset for understanding coastal change and inform public debate.
- To develop better capacity for online community engagement within the team.

---

## Intended outputs

- Five basemaps combining the data in 20-year intervals.
- A publicly accessible online interactive output.
- A display at Mersea Island Museum.

---

## Obstacles and issues

Although the project had been designed to work in a COVID-19 secure way, the ongoing pandemic has impacted our ability to increase the local reach of our project beyond a group of eight volunteers. It was difficult to establish a useful date for some postcards, particularly if they were not franked, and people often had flexible accounts within the oral histories. Developing a data management system that was useful for both print and aural media was problematic due to the different nature of both. The data was difficult to divide for presentation due to the interconnectivity of the foreshore environment. Sadly, Mersea Museum remains shut until August 2021. This necessitated a postponement of in person engagement. Planned fixed point photography stations could not be installed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

---

## Actual outcomes

This project served as an excellent pilot study to understand how best to combine these datasets and the potential for information within them. The basemaps clearly illustrate the changes to the island's coastline set against environmental, archaeological, and social indicators.

Additionally, the project officers involved gained valuable insight into how to network with the local online

community and create ways to include them in the narrative. This was done through the creation of online historical image quizzes and long-term commitment to community social media involvement.

---

## Lessons learned

- Communication and flexibility between team members was vital to find solutions to many of the issues raised.
- It is essential to establish the parameters of a project and database management system from the start.
- It is very difficult to make new connections and run a community-based project when you cannot regularly visit the community.
- Social media takes a great deal of effort and time to both create and maintain. Joining existing online communities requires similar outputs.
- Alternatives to social media are necessary to reach the widest possible audience given the subject matter of this particular study.

---

## Next steps

We will continue to work with Mersea Museum to create a bespoke digital trail to begin at the museum when they reopen. Funding pending, it is hopeful that this project will expand to include other sites along the River Colne and Blackwater Estuary or become a national project.

## Find out more

For more information on CITiZAN and the CMCC project, please see our website

<https://citizan.org.uk>

Contact the authors at [citizan@mola.org.uk](mailto:citizan@mola.org.uk)

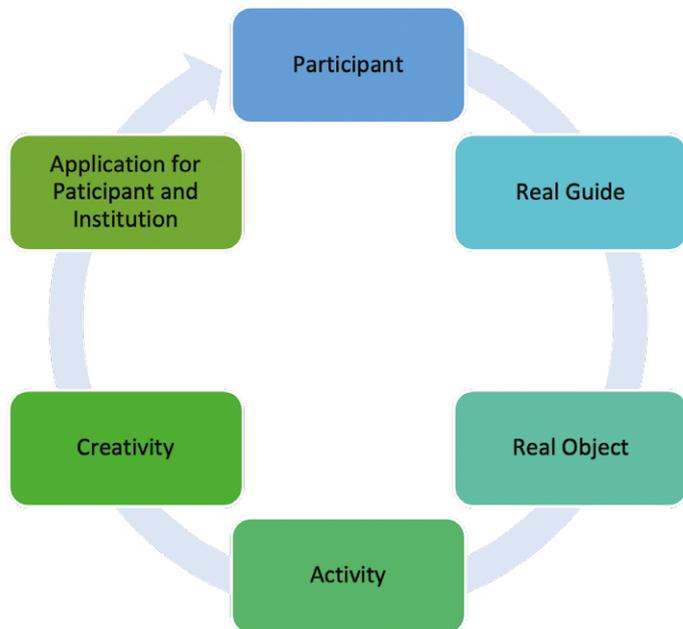
# Defining Community towards the Democratisation of Museum Practice

## Project and background

What does the word community mean for museums? For Lisburn Museum, this involves democratising museum practice through a shared authority approach which helps to maintain links to our museum community which was particularly beneficial during lockdown.

The Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum was one of the first local authority museums to appoint a dedicated education professional. It now has an integrated education team. The team develops tailor-made programmes with participants, participant-based practice having been at the centre of our programming since 1993. Working together creates a museum community. However, we had not until the last few years considered issues such as recognising child agency in programme development or establishing a shared authority approach in programme and exhibition development (Nolan & Robinson, 2013).

The aim of a shared authority approach is to work with participants on projects which encourage two-way learning transactions (Brownlee, 2021). Developing a shared authority approach improved museum access to marginalised groups and challenged participants' negative perceptions of museums as elitist. It democratised our practice based on the belief that knowledge should never be a barrier to culture. This approach may seem alien to traditionalists as it requires reframing the role of 'museum experts'.



“ It democratised our practice based on the belief that knowledge should never be a barrier to culture.

## Approach

The shared authority approach was used in the establishment of two Children's Research Advisory Groups (CRAGS), which assisted me in formulating questions and methodology for children's focus groups. The approach was integral to an intercommunity programme, World War One and Us and a women's single identity project,

The Easter Rising and Us. Both were part of Northern Ireland's Decade of Centenaries initiative. Lisburn Museum also engaged in a NI Museums Council (NIMC) Playful Museums initiative. The Museum formed a cross-sector Nursery Advisory Group (NAG) to assist with future programme development with under-fives. A further men's shed project is under development.

## Challenges

There was some resistance from traditionalists who may not view a shared authority approach as part of museum work. None of these projects would have been possible without additional investment from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, its Good Relations department and in particular, NIMC. For the education team, greater capacity building and skills training may have been needed for some staff, whereas others rose to the challenge. Most of these projects were time bound and relied on the same two or three people to complete. They had to be integrated into existing work which often meant juggling multiple expectations.

There is now a wide acceptance that participants bring their own experience and learning to museums (Falk & Dierking, 2013). Bearing this in mind, work with CRAGS and the NAG has informed our practice with schools and pre-school providers. New management within the museum, along with the expectations on local authority museums to deliver Community Planning (2015) themes,

have meant this shared authority approach has found a place within wider Council initiatives.

The NAG group helped to develop our Flaxie character and programming for young children. It encouraged the museum's investment in a bespoke animation, programming and special events for this age group. NIMC funding also resulted in a co-curated exhibition and a book co-authored by participants. This approach often creates change, within participants and institutions. It is the potential of impact which has implications for museum relevance within communities and consequently, for museum sustainability.

## Outcomes and lessons learned

Shared authority practice involves a basic principle of andragogy, that learning starts from where the person is at and interactions work from there. It is difficult to attract certain communities to programmes, finding the right gatekeeper is always essential. There also needs to be a readiness within an institution to commit to a different way of working

as well as an acceptance that some staff will never buy into it. This approach is time consuming and exploratory; it needs resources and flexibility but above all, institutional commitment.

Shared authority is an evolutionary change within our institution as it means embedding participant-based practice in core museum work. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we established a virtual museum to keep in touch with our communities who continued to contribute to the museum virtually. For those who do not have digital access, we plan to maintain links through developing Cultural Take Out (education resources) to go. At Lisburn, we perceive our work in the context of a museum community which involves, staff, participants and non-participants. Integral to such a shared authority approach is valuing participants as much as collections, essential for democratising museum practice.



A contemporary collecting project with Lisburn Museum

# COVID-19 AND ME...

Share your stories, photos, thoughts and memories

Help us collect the history of the pandemic  
in Lisburn & Castlereagh



## Find out more

**Dr Collette Brownlee,**  
Education Services Officer:  
Irish Linen Centre and  
Lisburn Museum

collette.brownlee@lisburn.gov.uk  
www.lisburnmuseum.com

## References

- Dewey, J. (1947) *Democracy and Education: an introduction to the philosophy of education*, New York, Macmillan
- Falk, J. H. & Dierking, L. D. (2013) *The Museum Experience Revisited*, California, Left Coast Press.
- Hein, G.E. (2012) *progressive Museum Practice: John Dewey and Democracy*, California, Left Coast Press.
- Moore. (2000) *Museums and Popular Culture*, Leicester University Press
- Seligmann. (2014) 'Learning museum, a meeting place for pre-service teachers and museums'. In, Nichols, S.K. (Ed) *Journal of Museum Education* (9) (1) *Museums Universities and Pre-Service Teachers. Museum Education Roundtable*, pp42-53
- Nolan, T. R. & Robinson, C. (2013) (Eds) *Shared Authority: The key to Museum Education is Social Change*, *Journal of Museum Education* (38) (2). *Museum Education Roundtable*.
- Simon, N. (2010) *the Participatory Museum*, California, Museumz.
- Illustration
- Brownlee, C. (2021) *Museum Education: exploring its value for schoolchildren, teachers and museum professionals* (Thesis for EdD, QUB Belfast)

**Nia Williams**

Amgueddfa Cymru / National  
Museum Wales



# 'Nothing about us, without us':

## widening youth engagement at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

### Summary and background

The Amgueddfa Cymru Producers are independent young people between the ages of 18-25 from diverse backgrounds who act as agents of change in the museum. This initiative is part of Hands-on Heritage, funded by Kick the Dust a £10M National Heritage Lottery Fund pilot programme to make heritage relevant to the lives of young people aged 11–25.

### Challenge

Past initiatives have been light on empowerment, and museum spaces are not often considered fun places to hang out. Young people feel that they have no voice in the way the museum is managed. The National Lottery's own research found that young people value heritage less than adults

and are less likely to participate. With our museums closed because of COVID-19, there was a real danger that our engagement work would collapse, and our online approaches would prove even less appealing. Our staff lacked confidence in working with young people online.

### Approach

Our approach has been to hand over space and resources to the young people themselves. During lockdown, we launched the Amgueddfa Cymru Producers. Their work has included reframing policies, mentoring Directors, co-producing exhibitions and launching their own Instagram account. This work is supported by a network of partners, and part of a wider provision for the young people involved.

“Our approach has been to hand over space and resources to the young people themselves.

### Intended outcomes

- Young people's skills and creativity develop with pathways to employment.
- Young people have a voice in all aspects of museum work.
- Youth-led cultural experiences create new programmes and interpretations of Wales' heritage.
- Children's Rights are embedded in museum policies and practice.

### Intended outputs

- A five-year programme of exhibitions, events, digital resources, and campaigns delivered by young people.
- Over 40 young people are employed as Amgueddfa Cymru Producers and facilitators with 2,400 participating.
- New research and policies are published.





- We were already working closely with several partners, these trusted relationships enabled us to pool resources and expertise quickly.
- The fact we pay partners for their time, as part of our partnership agreements, was essential in enabling new partners to collaborate at a very challenging financial time.
- Mentoring members of the senior team provided opportunities to understand and explore what's working and what's not.
- Valuing the importance of kindness as part of our practice. The young people have worked with great kindness, empathy and solidarity – all essential values for institutional and individual well-being.

### Obstacles and issues

Life in lockdown posed additional pressures for vulnerable young people. Being without the museum buildings enabled us to step back and reflect on how best to navigate these different needs. We continued to work with a network of partners specialising in supporting young people such as Llamau, Barnardo's, Promo Cymru and Children in Wales. They too faced new challenges with the lack of basic technology making some young people unable to access services online. We pooled resources, working with Llamau for example to develop creative competitions for young people to win digital credits.

New partners such as the Sub-Saharan Advisory Panel Young Leaders Network, and Jukebox Collective advised us on reframing interpretations and programmes in response to Black Lives Matter.

Young people are amongst the hardest hit in terms of employment. We launched the Amgueddfa Cymru Producers to provide paid opportunities for young people and needed to review our payment and recruitment policies to emphasize the importance of lived experience. Three Youth Engagement Facilitators have been appointed as a commitment to establishing permanent progression routes for young people.

### Actual outputs

The Amgueddfa Cymru Producers have:

- Launched a youth Instagram account called 'Bloedd';
- Published the first edition of Cynfas magazine, with Arts Council Wales, to celebrate Black culture and artworks in the collections;
- Completed the Future Has a Past Exhibition;
- Delivered events including 'In conversation with David Olusoga and LGBTQ+ History Month celebrations';
- Reframed social media policies with Marketing and Digital Media Teams.

Shared learning in a virtual seminar, with the twelve UK organisations, Virtually Kicking the Dust, and delivering a webinar for heritage professionals, Kicking the Dust – Young People on Heritage.

### Lessons learned

- Remote and virtual working have enabled our Producers to work across Wales with great speed, democratising access to planning boards and making it easier to participate. Online forms are more equitable and less hierarchical with opportunity to chat, comment or verbally participate.

### Next steps

- Scale up the Amgueddfa Cymru Producers initiative as part of the future core workforce.
- Research the impacts of the initiative with Cardiff University and the young people involved.
- Focus on developing more diverse routes into the museum workforce; developing apprenticeships, placements and internships with Creative and Cultural Skills.
- Deliver Amgueddfa Cymru 2030, a ten-year Strategy based on our call to action, Inspiring People, Changing Lives. It places social justice at the heart of our operation, based on people's basic human right to participate, be represented, and have a voice in our work.

### Find out more

For more about the Amgueddfa Cymru Producers, see <https://museum.wales/getinvolved/young-people>

For examples of work, see <https://museum.wales/cynfas/>

For the evaluation of Kick the Dust, see [www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/kick-dust-year-one-evaluation](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/kick-dust-year-one-evaluation)



# In Their Own Words

## Summary

Collaborative project with Amina MWRC training local Muslim, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women as freelancers to deliver guided tours of V&A Dundee's permanent Scottish Design Galleries in multiple languages.

## Background

Since 2014, V&A Dundee has been working with local communities engaging those physically/geographically closest, yet – through multiple barriers – feel distanced from the museum.

In 2015, an innovative place-based funding programme from The Rank Foundation supported multiple local cross-sector projects, V&A Dundee's developing community programme being one. Since then, the museum has worked with many local groups, building relationships and engagement both pre- and post-opening.

## Challenge

Ensuring people feel ownership of a new museum like V&A Dundee is essential, this being the foundation on which quality community engagement can be built, but at early discussions with groups (including Amina) we regularly heard "It's not for me".

Furthermore, with the museum aiming to present an introduction to how Scottish design has informed (and been influenced by) global culture, the galleries would benefit from a range of alternative perspectives, many of which could be found in our communities.



## Approach

The programme covered how to design and deliver tours, which included curatorial input and learning descriptive language. To make it relevant, each participant developed their own tour, selecting five objects that interested them or held meaning for their communities.

## Intended outcomes

- Increase opportunities for Muslim and BME women to engage with the museum as participants, volunteers and paid employees.
- Deliver an inclusive programme co-designed by the community.
- Support local Muslim and BME women to build skills, self-confidence and resilience.

## Intended outputs

- Train ten participants to deliver gallery tours.
- Tours delivered in English or local community languages.
- Deliver twenty guided tours (ten free tours for local BME groups and ten commercial tours).
- All participants paid freelance rates when researching and delivering public tours.

## Obstacles and issues

With the first cohort, we tested our ideas so by the second we were able to concisely explain the training programme and had promotional material such as case studies and photographs to help with recruitment.

# “ Ensuring people feel ownership of a new museum like V&A Dundee is essential, this being the foundation on which quality community engagement can be built...

Project continuity was interrupted when illness forced Peter, Communities Producer at V&A Dundee and one of the project coordinators, to take time off, however the wider team was able to step in. A concern was how the second cohort would build a rapport with new staff members and then Peter on his return.

Understandably, the major disrupting factor has been Covid-19. With the museum closed and staff furloughed, participants were left in limbo. On our return, rather than running a third cohort, we felt it was more important to focus on supporting those who had already been trained and consolidate their learning.

## Actual outcomes

Although the outputs of the project changed, the outcomes didn't.

The training programme involved using handling objects to develop descriptive terminology and flower arranging sessions to understand design concepts. This increased self-confidence and a greater sense of ownership of the museum and wider cultural sector.

When we returned from furlough, we were still unable to practice or deliver tours in the museum. We pivoted to supporting programme participants to write articles for the website, inspired by objects from their tours.

## Actual outputs

Six women have been trained over two cohorts (although due to personal circumstances, two have taken a break and we hope they can re-join in the near future).

The four remaining women have written and recorded articles in two languages, three of which are on the museum's website. Throughout, the project covered childcare and travel costs, as well as contributors' fees for their articles.

Despite the pandemic, the women collectively delivered six tours before the museum closed, including one short tour to the Duchess of Cambridge when she officially opened V&A Dundee in January 2019. Public tours will follow as restrictions ease and participants have had more practice.

## Lessons learned

- Take time for informal conversations – the investment of time is essential for building trust and confidence.
- It was challenging to coordinate the project between two members of staff – one full time, one part time – from different organisations, with conflicting priorities and schedules.
- Participants felt the first cohort was too short and wanted more time with the curators. This feedback informed the second cohort and led to more involvement from wider museum team.
- Flexibility is key, so have a plan B for every session.
- Adaptability around school runs, holidays and even bus times increased engagement.
- Partnership approach can build trust and engagement faster.
- Involving other cultural partners added variety to the programme.



## Next steps

When the museum reopens, the focus will be on practicing tours in the galleries alongside any additional training (e.g. health and safety, HR induction) to become a freelancer for the museum

We will also consider how to best share the offer of community language tours with audiences who may find this beneficial.

## Find out more

To learn more, please contact Peter Nurick, Communities Producer – Access & Inclusion, V&A Dundee or Sabrina Logan, Development Officer, Amina MWRC  
peter.nurick@vandadundee.org  
Sabrina@mwrc.org.uk

The articles written as part of this project can all be found on V&A Dundee's website:  
[www.vam.ac.uk/dundee](http://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee)



# Our Shared Cultural Heritage

## Summary

Our Shared Cultural Heritage (OSCH) explores and celebrates the shared cultural heritage between the UK and South Asia.

## Background

Funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund's (NLHF) Kick the Dust programme, and led by the British Council, Our Shared Cultural Heritage (OSCH) is a partnership project for young people to collectively explore shared cultural heritage of the UK and South Asia and change the ways that museums connect with young people.

This focus is especially pertinent with the development of the first permanent South Asia Gallery in the UK at Manchester Museum.

## Challenge

Key questions are how heritage is defined and to what extent such definitions are relevant to young people. Young people are highly under-represented in the heritage sector – as employees, as volunteers, and as audiences (Lanchin, 2019). Whilst themes of identity and belonging are important to young people from South Asian backgrounds, unfortunately, many do not see heritage organisations as inclusive (Imran, Clark, Iconic Consulting, & Bolton, 2018).

## Approach

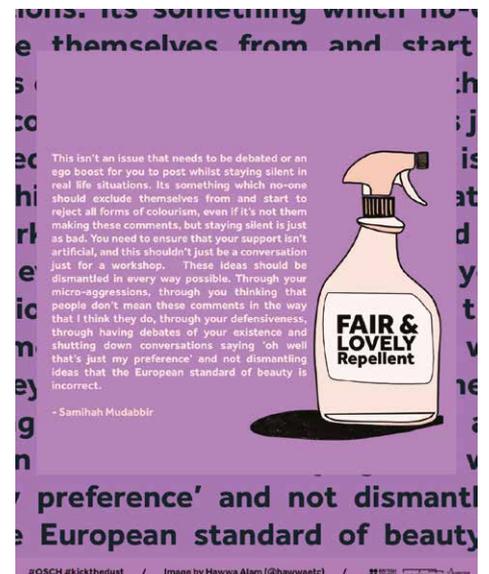
In order to redress the fundamental lack of connection young people feel towards formal heritage presented in



museums, OSCH has sought to make heritage spaces more relevant and useful for diverse young people. As the Coordinator, I have worked hard to dispel the myth heard too often that young (South Asian) people are not interested in heritage.

## Intended outcomes

The project supports young people, aged 11-25, from the South Asian diaspora and their peers to become content creators, writers, researchers, and decision makers. OSCH offers paid opportunities for young people to lead on engaging their peers from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds with new ways of exploring cultural heritage. Our intended outputs include intercultural exchange, social



action projects, a manifesto for change and paid apprenticeships.

## Obstacles and issues

As a result of the onset of Covid-19, OSCH activities, events and meetings planned and delivered by young people at Manchester Museum shifted online. Providing young people with continuity, particularly through opportunities to connect with others, and become active and vocal participants in organisational decision making, felt more urgent than ever. I set up a social media presence and a blog for them. Through the use of technologies like Telegram, Padlet and Zoom, my young people continued to organise activities, events and campaigns as well as developing and

delivering training for staff at the Museum and the heritage sector more broadly.

Participants engaged in oral history training, collected stories, shared their heritage objects and connections with youth groups, contributed to the planning for the Museum's first multi-faith prayer room, set up a Radical Readers group in collaboration with DecoloniseUoM (a university student group), created anti-racism resources, recorded an official Museum podcast, explored the significance of statues of empire and colonialism, delivered seminars, talks, workshops, and spoke at conferences and events about the hundreds of activities they had organised, delivered and participated in before and during lockdown.

#### Actual outcomes and outputs

Programme outcomes include online cultural heritage workshops for young people and communities; campaigns on anti-racism; training and teaching the heritage sector widely on how to support young people. Outputs

include organisational change; paid opportunities for young people to engage in work experience, internships and apprenticeships; a digital presence – blog and social media.

The blog and social media (set up in April 2020) have consistently attracted followers and fans locally, nationally and globally. There have been 96 blogs with 11,484 views and 5,720 visitors to date. During South Asia Heritage Month, young people did a takeover of our Museum website attracting 16,644 visits and 11,344 unique visitors, reaching 70 countries and 1,593 cities.

#### Lessons learned

Museums need young people: therefore, I set up Manchester Museum Young Collective who are ethnically diverse young people whom I support to produce events and campaigns reflecting their passions and interests. I find them as many paid opportunities as possible at the Museum and beyond.

Engaging with young people requires flexibility; they often keep different hours. Being prepared to respond at different times, on weekends and on your days off to queries from young people is important.

When experimenting with and evaluating new young people-led models of engaging with cultural heritage, institutional support and support from colleagues matters. It takes a team to uplift a Young People's Coordinator; with institutional backing, real change happens. Mutual trust and understanding has resulted in young people being actively involved in museum recruitment policies and as co-curators of the upcoming South Asia Gallery.

#### Next steps

The project has so far established cultural heritage as an important framework to explore cultures and create a dialogue between communities, and as a point of critical reflection, supporting young people from different backgrounds to creatively explore and understand individual and collective identities. The big question now is, "how do we take this forward and build on the excellent work done so far?" We are thinking of ways to formalise and expand our movement of young people in museums.

**“As the Coordinator, I have worked hard to dispel the myth heard too often that young (South Asian) people are not interested in heritage.”**



#### Find out more

OSCH Manchester Museum  
Coordinator – Dr Sadia Habib  
sadia.habib@manchester.ac.uk

OSCH social media:  
Twitter: @OSCH\_Mcr  
Instagram: osch.youngpeople  
Blog: <https://sharedculturalheritage.wordpress.com>

#### References

Imran, A., Clark, I., Iconic Consulting, & Bolton, K. (2018). Literature Review for Our Shared Cultural Heritage. First Draft of Literature Review. The British Council.

Lanchin, S. (2019, 27/8/2019). What is Kick the Dust? Retrieved from <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/what-kick-dust>

# Creative and sustainable approaches to engage Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities with heritage sites in Hounslow

## Summary

Over the past three years, we, Avsar Consulting have worked with three heritage sites in the London Borough of Hounslow to develop sustainable community partnerships. These are Boston Manor House and Park, Osterley Park and House and currently with Chiswick House and Gardens. Avsar Consulting connect people with arts, culture and heritage, particularly in areas with least engagement.

## Background and challenge

Over 50% of residents in Hounslow identify as being Black, Asian or minority ethnic. Like elsewhere, these communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Hounslow has a number of heritage sites, but a disconnect often exists between them and the diverse local communities.

The main challenge has been to ensure that partnerships are mutually beneficial. Many groups were wary of a 'tokenistic consultation' and felt that the time taken for participants to become actively involved was not always considered by organisations. We had to allocate a considerable amount of time to ensure that community participation was central to shaping sustainable activity plans and strategies.

## Approach

As a team with South Asian heritage, our approach was to instil confidence and foster open dialogue with communities who had limited experience of engaging



with heritage. Initial workshops were held at community venues to establish trust and were often held in Hindi and Punjabi. We worked with creative practitioners to explore relevant themes and stories, developing a range of active listening sessions which led to ideas for co-producing change in programming, interpretation and volunteering.

## Intended outcomes and outputs

The organisations shared common aims and outputs.

- To better raise awareness of heritage sites amongst Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents.
- To develop skills through apprenticeships and placements.
- To enhance the health and wellbeing of local communities.
- To hold consultation workshops and pilot activities.
- To analyse barriers and motivations to engagement.
- To incorporate community needs into activity plans.

## Obstacles and issues

There were a number of challenges to contacting and engaging specific communities with heritage sites.

- Awareness to and access of heritage sites was often a barrier to engagement.
- If people had visited, it was often to enjoy green spaces.
- The historic houses were often perceived as being irrelevant.
- Some groups were very localised and did not consider certain areas of the borough as being 'local' to them.
- Meeting a diverse range of groups meant we had to offer a wide range of activities to engage participants. This was not always possible with limited budgets and timescales.
- Time was often taken up with internal meetings to understand the working practices of different organisations.
- Ensuring community participation remained central to the organisation's activity.

## Actual outcomes and outputs

Activities led to raised awareness and understanding of local heritage sites amongst communities. These translated into promotion through word of mouth, inclusion in community newsletters and radio stations. By using creative approaches to engage people of all ages, we were able to shape long-term activities that reflected the needs and interests of different groups.



“By using creative approaches to engage people of all ages we were able to shape long-term activities that reflected the needs and interests of different groups.

A series of creative workshops took place at Boston Manor House following outreach sessions at community venues. Pilot activities were offered to a range of community groups at Osterley House and Park across the site. As a result, a robust and wide-ranging Activity Plan with community input was developed for Boston Manor House and Park and a community engagement plan was developed for Osterley Park and House with a focus on co-producing long-term outputs.

#### Lessons learned

The projects enabled participants, us and the organisations to reflect on ways to meaningfully engage local people with heritage sites.

- It can be a challenge to maintain contacts established by consultants particularly as the pandemic has reduced staffing levels and paused community activity.
- We have realised the importance of keeping in touch with community colleagues as projects have been paused.

- People are seeking relevant ways to connect to heritage sites which are not always immediately apparent. Some groups are not interested in participating but that's part of the process.
- Participation does not have to take place at heritage sites, many people would like an equal relationship where knowledge and skills are shared and led by the community.
- Assumptions are often made of community groups and we need to ensure that a range of individuals participate. Many people do not see themselves as just part of a specific community especially considering intersectionality.

#### Next steps

- Hounslow is now embarking on a research project to monitor engagement and audiences with providers in the borough. Organisations need to acknowledge that engagement and participation takes time, expertise and resources.
- Partnerships with communities can change the way heritage sites work, so real collaboration can take place and they truly become part of the local community.

#### Find out more

Avsar Consulting – Rinku Mitra and Neena Sohal

<https://avsar.co.uk>

Boston Manor House and Park

[www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20174/heritage\\_and\\_arts/1855/historic\\_houses](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20174/heritage_and_arts/1855/historic_houses)

[www.hounslow.gov.uk/BostonManorPark](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/BostonManorPark)

Chiswick House and Gardens

<https://chiswickhouseandgardens.org.uk>

Osterley Park and House

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/osterley-park-and-house](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/osterley-park-and-house)

**Euton Daley, Amantha Edmead,  
Beth McDougall and Nicola Bird**

Unlock the Chains Collective and  
Kuumba Nia Arts

Community-  
led practice

# Theatre making in Museums

## Summary and background

Unlock the Chains Collective and Kuumba Nia Arts work to change the way African and African-Caribbean stories are shared on stage and in museum spaces. As members of the Oxford Windrush Group, a partnership of grassroots, creative and institutional organisations, Euton and Amantha, develop inclusive theatre-making and performances in collaboration with Community Elders, University Students and Young People.

## Challenge and approach

Although there is a strong local African and African-Caribbean community in Oxford, many of the existing narratives shared in University Museums have excluded interpretations of African and African-Caribbean objects by local people.

To challenge this lack of self-representation, Amantha and Euton created spoken word performances responding to museum collections that helped people to share their own stories. Euton and Amantha worked alongside museum teams to reconnect local communities (students, Elders, Young People) with these collections, to not only reinterpret the objects but to develop a sense of belonging and shared histories. Their Protest-Theatre interventions, performed in museum galleries, challenged existing narratives and invited people to think together about the sometimes difficult and sometimes joyful stories associated with museum

objects. These performances were collaboratively created with young people, or performed as two-handers by Euton and Amantha who performed theatrical offerings of: performance poetry, dramatic monologues, storytelling and song, on stage or to small groups as site-specific chance happenings in museum galleries.

## Intended outcomes and outputs

To encourage self-representation and belonging of local African-Caribbean Community experiences in Oxford Museums. We wanted to work together with local intergenerational communities to create two experimental performances stimulated by museum collections.

## Obstacles and issues

One practical obstacle we faced was integrating performances into spaces not made for performance. The Pitt Rivers Museum is densely populated with collections and cases,

poor acoustics, uneven sight lines and low lighting levels. Although, the Museum has a small flat floor lecture theatre and old-library space in which we did test performances during opening hours, we all felt that the sterile appearance served to reassert the separation of people from their objects. This meant working together in the main museum space to create a stepped-stage in the museum entrance which meant adapting the performance styles to ensure they were as accessible as possible so that local Elders and families were able to sit comfortably, see, hear and interact with the performance.

To bring performances to visitors during opening hours, we experimented with chance happenings using our two-hander performance with small groups. These intimate shows helped us to connect with visitors who were encountering these histories often for the first time.





“These intimate shows helped us to connect with visitors who were encountering these histories often for the first time.”

- Including local people with lived experience, knowledge and networks through the Community Connectors programme ensures co-production of relevant programmes in museums.

#### Next steps

This year we are working together to mark and celebrate our third Windrush Year and the Ashmolean Museum team with Nicola Bird are co-developing the next phase of the Nice Cup of Tea Project. We are also working to support fundraising work and identifying how our assets can be best used to create more permanent interventions in museum and University Spaces.

#### Actual outcomes and outputs

A long-term outcome of the Windrush Group and this performance led project is more sustainable relationships with local African and African Caribbean people and the museum teams. These relationships have helped museum teams to better advocate to decision makers for African and African Caribbean people's equitable involvement and engagement in the museums and has led to further programming together.

Amantha and Euton developed two new pieces, This is Me, performed as part of the Windrush Launch held

at the Pitt Rivers Museum and Nice Cup of Tea for the Nice Cup of Tea exhibition and related programming at the Ashmolean Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum and Museum of Oxford.

#### Lessons learned

- Being part of long-term relationships with grassroots-led groups and creative partners ensure that creative programmes are asset and expertise led and are shaped equitably by all partners – for example local theatre practitioners coming together with museum spaces through membership of the Windrush Group.

#### Find out more

[www.prm.ox.ac.uk/windrush-group](http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/windrush-group)

[www.ashmolean.org/article/a-nice-cup-of-tea](http://www.ashmolean.org/article/a-nice-cup-of-tea)

[www.ashmolean.org/event/windrush-day#](http://www.ashmolean.org/event/windrush-day#)

# Taking Museum Play into the Community

## Summary

There is no such thing as hard to reach audiences, only hard to reach museums. Our aim is to make the Great North Museum a place for everyone; building relationships with families who might not see themselves as museum visitors. But at the end of funded projects, how do you continue to grow these relationships?

## Background

As Newcastle University's museum, the Great North Museum: Hancock inspires curiosity, learning and debate through a stimulating, innovative and provocative science, and cultural engagement programme. Families with young children, and the Under 5's Mouse House programme forms the nexus for our extensive early years offer.

## Challenge

In 2018, a project funded by Newcastle City Council's Culture Investment Fund allowed us to engage with Newcastle's Community Family Hubs – West Team (CFHW). The team is based in Lemington, Newcastle, one of the 10% most deprived wards in England (3138/32844).

Alongside experienced professionals from CFHW we were able to engage with families in a setting familiar to them, providing a bridge to the more unfamiliar setting of the museum. We sustained this relationship once the funded project ended. In turn, this allowed us to create a strong partnership with Healthworks in Lemington, a centre which is part of the CFHW team.

## Approach

During Summer 2019, we participated in Healthworks' Family Fun days which brought a range of groups and organisations working across the city together for the shared vision of supporting families. The opportunity gave us direct access to families and provided a fantastic networking opportunity to work alongside groups such as the National Literacy Trust's Small Talk (ST) and Hungry Little Minds (HLM) team.

ST and HLM raise awareness of the importance of 'Chat, Play and Read' with EYFS. They have no permanent physical space in which to engage

directly with families but address similar issues to the museum's EYFS programme and the new relationship allowed us to co-deliver takeover sessions and events in the museum.

## Obstacles and issues

Covid-19 presented a challenge in reaching families with whom we had no existing relationship and without a dedicated budget. We wanted both to support families with wellbeing and home schooling through the pandemic and to promote the museum as a place to enjoy when reopened.

The strong community partnerships we had recently established with

### Pteranodon

Pteranodons grew up to 7m in size. They weren't dinosaurs, but flying reptiles that lived at the same time.

**To make the finger puppet**

- Cut out
- Colour in on both sides
- Fold along the dotted lines
- Cut along the solid lines across its body and push the band downwards
- Glue or tape the head on using the neck tab
- Put a finger through the belly band and make it soar!

You can find more activities on the Great North Museum: Hancock website at: [greatnorthmuseum.org.uk/learning/museum-activities-from-home-or-school](https://greatnorthmuseum.org.uk/learning/museum-activities-from-home-or-school)

Newcastle University

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

CREATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMME

What colours will yours be?

CFHW, Healthworks, ST and HLM gave us a collaborative and creative opportunity to establish new ways of working.

### Intended outcomes and outputs

Together with ST and HLM we co-developed storytime videos via social media alongside simple 'at home' activity ideas, cross-posting content to gain a wider reach. We also offered an 'at home' EYFS reading and drawing activity. 25 families participated, each receiving a free storybook bag.

We assisted the Healthworks team, by offering activity packs to their local families, during October half-term, in lieu of the Family Fun days which could no longer take place.

Providing these activity packs allowed us to engage with families who may experience barriers to technology and digital poverty and therefore unable to engage with our online activities. We also decided to make these activities available for all families via the museum website.

### Actual outcomes

50 activity packs containing simple activities for families to do at home, including challenges, craft and outdoor trails were collated. The Healthworks team personally delivered the packs to families' doorsteps alongside material from other groups.

The success of October activity packs led to:

- 50 packs produced for the Christmas holidays;
- 160 packs provided for February half-term;
- 125 packs being produced for Easter holidays.

### Lessons learned

Community partnership working takes time, mutual respect, and good communication from all involved. This enabled different groups to come together for the common goal of supporting families in our community.

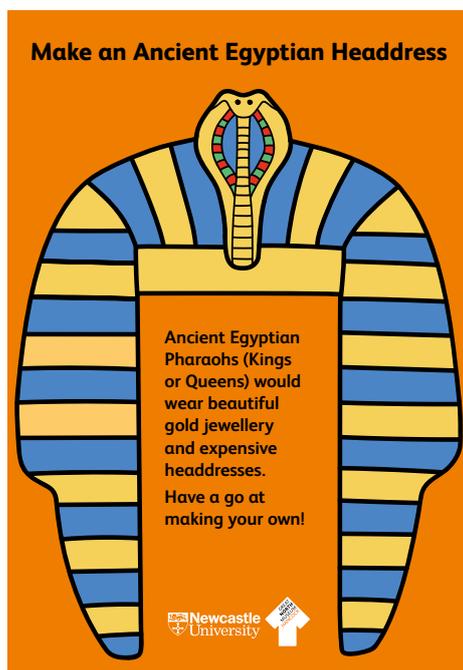
It also opened the doors for other museums in our organisation to support Healthworks by providing further resources for the activity packs. These were created without dedicated funding, using resources at hand, such as staff time and a printer. The collaborative approach made for a more exciting resource for users and the feedback from our local community certainly made it worthwhile for us.

### Next steps

We are looking forward to working in person alongside our community partners when it is again safe to do so and are talking to potential new community partners to continue our work.

We want to build on our learning during the pandemic to sustain it in the long-term and are looking forward to welcoming families back into the venue in person.

## Community partnership working takes time, mutual respect, and good communication from all involved.



### Find out more

Find out more about our Community Partners and their brilliant work:

Healthworks, Lemington, Team [www.healthworksnewcastle.org.uk/](http://www.healthworksnewcastle.org.uk/)  
Facebook page: 'Healthworks Newcastle'

Small Talk and the National Literacy Trust  
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/>  
<https://wordsforlife.org.uk/>

Hungry Little Minds and the National Literacy Trust  
<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>

Find out more about the Great North Museum: Hancock and this community project:

**Amy Baird**,  
Assistant Learning Officer  
[amy.baird@twmuseums.org.uk](mailto:amy.baird@twmuseums.org.uk)  
<https://greatnorthmuseum.org.uk/>

# All at sea?

## A voyage through a community partnership

### Summary

Kettle's Yard has built a valued partnership with local Cambridge charity, the Red Hen Project, to support some of the city's most vulnerable families.

The long-term partnership started small with one-off creative workshops to co-creating a new children's book inspired by painter Alfred Wallis.

### Background and challenge

Cambridge was cited in 2017 as the UK's most unequal city. The Red Hen Project supports children and their families in North Cambridge, with areas of significant social deprivation to overcome barriers to learning. These barriers may include challenges with, behaviour, finance, domestic violence, or anything that makes life difficult.

North Cambridge families shared their perceived barriers with us to visiting Kettle's Yard including fear of being

judged, perceived costs (Kettle's Yard has free entry) and not knowing what to expect (Can I bring a pushchair? Will the children be engaged?)

For children, access to arts and culture benefits their development; children can be confident to explore, take risks, challenge and communicate. Ensuring that all children have access to culture is a social justice issue and enables social mobility.

### Approach

Kettle's Yard's took the strategic decision to work long-term in North Cambridge. This has enabled the organisation to sustain relationships and understand the changing needs of our community. The Red Hen Project is a small charity enabling close bonds with families. We noticed a request through Red Hen's social media, that families wanted art activities: something we could provide. We took time to listen to the Red Hen's expertise and understand the wider context of the families' challenges and needs. Our initial sessions were short workshops supporting an on-going healthy eating project. Inspired by domestic textile prints by Ben Nicholson, families were invited to 'play with their food', printing with fresh produce. Children who previously refused to eat their greens were now laughing and tasting the vegetables! Parents learnt how to prepare vegetables and the children had been empowered to try something new, take a risk and explore materials.

### Intended outcomes

Our aim is to increase ownership of Kettle's Yard by our neighbours in North Cambridge by:

- Enabling families to build cultural capital;
- Embedding arts and culture into everyday life for local families;
- Developing a long-term partnership with families.

### Intended outputs

- A series of co-created artworks, events and projects.
- Increased repeat visits and ownership of Kettle's Yard by local families.

### Obstacles and issues

Kettle's Yard's and the Red Hen Project's partnership has grown alongside our ambition. We built on the success of the initial workshops, developing further projects; exploring meal time behaviour, cooking on a budget, wellbeing, and supporting early years literacy.

Unfortunately, although our ambition has grown, our capacity has not! We have a small Learning and Community team at Kettle's Yard and the Red Hen Project have just three members of staff. In order to grow we have had to either expand the partnership by working with other organisations or build in additional staffing for all partners into funding applications to enable the best outcomes for our families. It's important to recognise and be honest about your limits from the outset to address these to make the project successful.





“It’s important to recognise and be honest about your limits from the outset to address these to make the project successful.”

#### Actual outcomes

Since Kettle’s Yard reopened following a capital project in 2018, we have welcomed our Red Hen families repeatedly through group and independent visits to the gallery. In 2019/20 Red Hen families co-created a new publication inspired by Kettle’s Yard’s collection. Alfred’s Adventures in the Children’s City was created as part of the ‘Play and Picture Books’ project and the illustrations feature the children who took part alongside artist Alfred Wallis. The project was an early years literacy project funded by Talking Together in Cambridgeshire.

#### Actual outputs

- Sustained on-going partnership.
- Co-created outputs include ‘Make your own...’ online activities, a collaborative patchwork blanket and a published storybook.
- Families regularly visiting Kettle’s Yard independently.
- Over 200 Red Hen families (approximately 1,000 people) engaged to date.

#### Lessons learned

- Value everyone: every community plays host to a wealth of skills and knowledge that can support the richness of collaborations.
- Allow time: slow down, leave the jargon behind and allow time for a conversation.
- Practice integrity, openness and kindness through collaboration.
- Navigate ambitions and broaden horizons: ensure projects have capacity in place to achieve your ambitions. Working together we can also broaden each other’s horizons – how can you build further upon and develop from your last project’s success?

#### Next steps

Throughout the pandemic Kettle’s Yard has prioritised supporting existing partnerships. During the first lockdown, we regularly provided 89 Red Hen families with activities and resources. As the families have gained digital access over time, we have been offering online workshops. We hope to soon begin ‘door-step’ sessions with our Play and Picture Books Red Hen families for the next stage of our early years’ literacy project.

#### Find out more

The Red Hen Project:  
[www.redhenproject.org/](http://www.redhenproject.org/)

Kettle’s Yard:  
[www.kettlesyard.co.uk](http://www.kettlesyard.co.uk)

Get in touch:

**Karen Thomas**

[Karen@kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk](mailto:Karen@kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk)

# Local Cultural Education Partnerships and the value of museums and heritage getting involved

## Summary

Have you ever wondered what Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) do, how museums and heritage can get involved, and how LCEPs help you connect with your local communities? This case study gives you an insight to LCEPs and describes two museums' experiences.

LCEPs bring together arts and cultural organisations, along with many other organisations working with children and young people, to create new, joined-up ways of working and sharing resources

to enable more children and young people to take part in arts and culture. Local Cultural Education Partnerships can be responsive to local needs, with high-level support from senior leaders and decision-makers in their area.

## Background

Across the South East of England there are 16 Local Cultural Education Partnerships supported by Artswork as the South East Bridge, funded by Arts Council England. Many of the LCEPs include museums as members.

Some LCEPs in the SE have been running since around 2015 and they are at various stages in synergising (maximising existing resources); mobilising (influencing and enabling partners); and/or delivering (providing opportunities for children and young people). Research by Ben Sandbrook of SE LCEPs has shown that there are great benefits in the early stages of convening and bringing different parties together in the partnership as well as delivering activities.

**“ LCEPs bring together arts and cultural organisations, along with many other organisations working with children and young people, to create new, joined-up ways of working and sharing resources to enable more children and young people to take part in arts and culture.**



“...you can never be sure what will spark a child’s imagination.”

### Challenge and approach

The challenge LCEPs are addressing is to: develop a vibrant cultural environment, access to and involvement in culture for children and young people by bringing organisations together to work in partnership, share data and intelligence and develop joint delivery. The approach is to bring organisations together to look at gaps in the local arts and culture offer for children and young people by sharing data and intelligence and engaging young people in dialogue about their needs. Then focusing work, linked to local plans and writing action plans to source funding and deliver activity.

### Rebecca’s story (Reading Museums)

Rebecca has been involved from the beginning in Reading LCEP as member and facilitator -e.g., sharing their education space for LCEP meetings. Now a member of the steering group, Rebecca has always felt the aims of the LCEP married with her aims as a museum educator. She feels that the opportunity to share information is key especially for Arts Award and Artsmark and it has been helpful to hear what others have tried. Gains have included LCEP facilitated training and contacts made through the LCEP e.g. working with libraries and ‘Take Over Days (where young people take over running an aspect of the museum).

Challenges include finding the time to get to meetings and to get involved in projects.

### Lessons learned

Approach with an open mind. Have a spirit of generosity, you may have to give before you can receive, and you can never be sure what will spark a child’s imagination.



### Corina’s story (Isle of Wight Heritage Service)

Several museums were involved in the formation of the Isle of Wight LCEP. Also, several different projects were funded on the Isle of Wight that helped create new collaborations and develop work with the LCEP: a resilience bid by 5 museums; a Museums and Schools commission; and ‘Lift the Lid -on Island Culture’, a project to celebrate the Island’s cultural heritage in new and visionary ways. These were all building on the work of the LCEP, by establishing a Cultural Manifesto in schools and engaging vulnerable young people in their heritage.

Corina sees great synergy between the Isle of Wight Council’s vision ‘for the IOW to be an inspiring place to grow up, work, live and visit’ and the LCEP’s ambitions. This also links with the Museums and Schools project to engage with schools from under-served locations and lower socio-economic groups.

Corina explains, the IOW LCEP provides strength in numbers and ambition – the networking and sharing of skills and good practice is invaluable but the LCEP is also a gateway organisation – allowing a central harness of ‘youth voice’ and

for us to respond as more than the ‘sum of our parts’. There is great power in partnership to increase impact. The LCEP reflects the great cultural resources on the Isle of Wight – it provides a firm platform for partnership work, joint projects, events and formative evaluation.

There is incredible strength in networking and working alongside other sectors – the LCEP has provided access to a wide scope of expertise and practitioners. Heritage has supported carnival, music has supported diversity workshops, storytelling and art ideas bring a new inspiration into how we interpret our collections.

### Find out more

**Dr Ruth Taylor,**  
Strategic Manager, Artswork  
ruth.taylor@artswork.org.uk

**Rebecca James,**  
Marketing and Learning Officer,  
Reading Museums

**Corina Westwood,**  
Human History Curator, Isle of  
Wight Heritage Service

# Creative Writing and Closed Museums:

## Forging creative youth communities online during crisis

---

### Summary and background

This case study focuses on Reimagine, Remake, Replay (RRR), a 4-year project that engages young people in museums across Northern Ireland, for which I am a Youth Ambassador. The project uses creative and digital programmes to enable participants to explore museums and interpret collections. I lead the Creative Writing programme at the centre of this case study.

---

### Challenge and approach

As it was clear young people would face immense disruption to their education, employment and mental health due to the pandemic, RRR moved to remote activity to support participants.

I developed and delivered creating writing sessions in lockdown with all previously planned activity cancelled. It was a trial both in bringing writing as an activity to the project and as our first online full programme.

I developed 4 hour-long sessions on Zoom and we used the free messaging app Slack to share information. On weekly calls, we looked at writing in different forms – museum labels, poetry, blogs, social media. Participants wrote their own pieces, using National Museums Northern Ireland's online collection, and submitted these for feedback.

---

### Intended outcomes and outputs

I hoped participants would connect with museum objects and be inspired

to respond to them, despite not being able to go to museum spaces and actually see them.

The aim was that participants would develop confidence and joy in writing. I specifically hoped that developing their communication skills would connect participants to each other and their heritage; fostering creative and critical thinking but also a supportive and creative community.

---

### Obstacles and issues

Participants received individual feedback, which was time-consuming to construct. However, several participants identified feedback as a strength of the programme and so it is highly worthwhile: "Niamh supplied really in-depth and useful individual feedback for each of the tasks I submitted", "It was such thoughtful and heartfelt feedback you could tell she really read your piece and really cared about your work!"

Using new online platforms was challenging as we were not sure how groups would interact on them. I learned from trialling ice-breakers, breakout rooms and online presentation tools. With the first run of the programme, we had past participants who already knew each other and the project. However, in a second run of the programme with all new recruits, it was important to give the group discussion time to get to know each other and become more comfortable over the sessions.

---

### Actual outcomes

Participants reported an engaging, enjoyable programme on which they learned new skills, explored heritage and connected with others. Their feedback within the programme evaluation speaks volumes:

"I felt like a part of a little community during this course – everyone was welcoming and thoughtful – on top of which it gave me a lot of respite during the stress of lockdown. It was great to be involved in creative writing in an open, respectful, and engaging online course." – RRR Participant

This proves the importance of allowing open discussion time on calls for participants and of creating a welcoming environment where participants speak, hear from others and share ideas. Evaluations even suggested extending the length of the programme.

---

### Actual outputs

We uploaded participants' writing to our website. However, a participant, Hannah Sharp, had the idea of collecting pieces into a publication for print and online. Hannah is an illustrator and we created a paid opportunity for her to design two issues, with the input of both cohorts.

“ I felt like a part of a little community during this course – everyone was welcoming and thoughtful – on top of which it gave me a lot of respite during the stress of lockdown. It was great to be involved in creative writing in an open, respectful, and engaging online course.

## Contributors



**Méabh Magee** Hi! I'm Méabh and I'm a student at Stranmillis University College. I loved being part of the Creative Writing course with RRR as I have always enjoyed being imaginative and thinking outside the box!



**Caoimhe** I am a Photographer and Writer based in Belfast. My work explores the subjects of Environmental Issues and Mental Wellbeing.



**Katie Ireland** I'm an illustrator, designer and entrepreneur with a BA in Fashion & Textiles and I'm working freelance costume trainee in film/TV whilst studying MA Film.



**Ryan Harling** Having grown up in Hong Kong, the draconian laws imposed on my home this summer made me reflect on the freedom of expression that we would lose. The writing programme was a great way to focus my thoughts on this, get feedback from other fabulous young writers, and get creative!



**Eilish Mulholland** Eilish Mulholland is a 22 year old graduate based in the North of Ireland. She has been shortlisted for the Anthony Cronin International Poetry Award in 2018, longlisted for the Chair of Ireland Commemorative Anthology in 2020 and is currently working towards her first collection of short stories.



**Isabella Koban** Hiya! I spend most of my time sketching, painting, watching horror films and listening to true crime podcasts. I did a lot of essay writing during my film degree but wanted to venture out and explore creative writing, which I did! It was super fun and really helped me work some creativity out during lockdown 1.0.



**Rachel Maxwell** I am a recent masters graduate of Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies. I am an avid reader and have thoroughly enjoyed combining my interests for literary heritage and creativity throughout the RRR creative writing programme.



**Aidan MacLean** I'm 17 and from Lisburn, County Antrim. I'm currently studying A levels and hoping to study music at university. In my spare time I like to write music for my band and sometimes poetry, just for fun.



**Sorcha Ní Cheallaigh/Soso** Derry/belfast human poet and writer who joined RRR in April 2020 and it's been true love ever since. Soso's RRR side effects have included clear skin, great friendships and general improved self confidence.

**Amber Lively** I'm Amber, a core RRR participant and I have loved being a part of the programmes. Reading and writing are huge passions of mine and the creative writing course was very inspiring.

### Lessons learned

- Success is when participants take the lead. For the second publication run, the group fed into the design by discussing their experiences of writing, lockdown and museums. This second time around, a participant is writing the foreword, setting the tone of the work instead of me. This agency increases participants' ownership over the programme and makes for an authentic exhibition of their work.
- Participants explored feelings, ideas and interests in their heritage through writing. They also explored the history they are currently living through in the pandemic.
- Museums are rich in language – there is value in sharing interpretations and meanings of artefacts. Through the process of writing, young people have articulated and thereby made connections to their heritage, realising the value and relevance of museums to their lives.
- Community and creativity have been lifelines for young people during the pandemic. They afford the opportunity to try new things, gain experience, have a sense of accomplishment or wonder, feel supported, be social, escape. Beyond the pandemic, museums should remember the value of this and let it shape their role in society.

### Next steps

We already have next steps in having run the programme again and we will continue with Creative Writing as a key part of the project.

**Find out more**

[reimagineremakereplay.org](http://reimagineremakereplay.org)

# Listening, Creating & Working Together



“Our vision for the Museum is to be democratic and open – building trust, encouraging community participation and dialogue...”

## Summary

A £42m transformation of Paisley Museum is underway, reopening 2023 with £4.9m NLHF funding. When Covid-19 struck, we decided to re-assess our audience engagement plans, engaging in a listening exercise with 67 organisations, community groups and stakeholders across Renfrewshire to better understand their needs and how the museum could support them and their clients.

## Background

Paisley Museum (est 1871) includes the recognised collection of Paisley patterned shawls. The Museum plays a key role in the economic regeneration of the town centre. Target audiences are early years, formal, families, young people, sensory impaired. Our vision for the Museum is to be democratic and open – building trust, encouraging community participation and dialogue when it reopens in 2023.

## Challenge and approach

We were challenged to respond to the impact of Covid-19 across Renfrewshire and in particular those who have become isolated or economically disadvantaged as a result on our communities, stakeholders, partners and ‘newly vulnerable’ groups, to find new ways to make the Museum relevant, responsive and supportive.

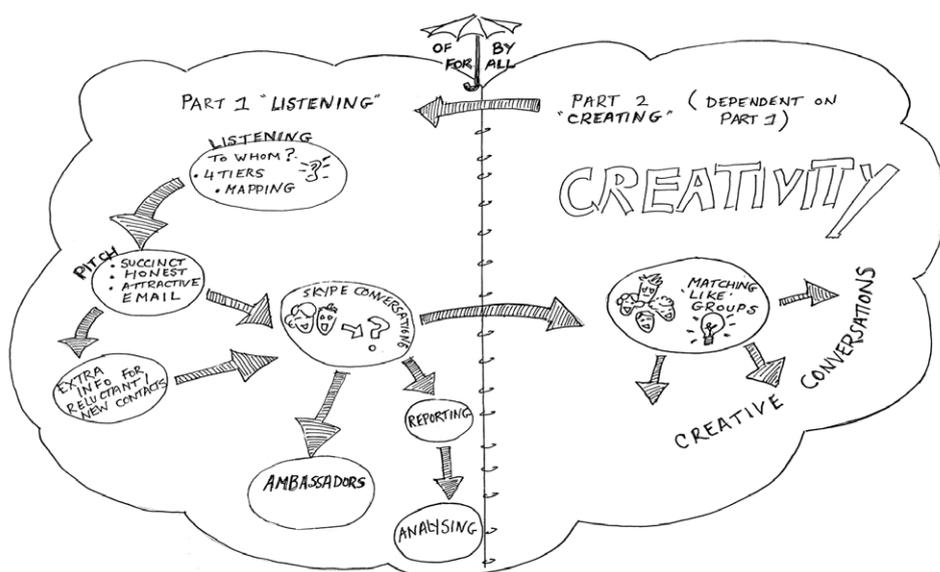
We developed a ‘Listen and Create model’, holding conversations with organisations during Autumn 2020 asking about their objectives, opportunities and what Paisley Museum could offer them.

## Intended outcomes and outputs

The aim of the ‘Listen Phase’ was to gain an understanding and provide a genuine opportunity to listen to organisations and services across Renfrewshire and to understand their priorities and what challenges they are facing to ensure the Museum provides services and activities that meet the needs of those in Renfrewshire. This phase was designed to provide qualitative data to shape and inform our development and co-production of services and activities.

## Obstacles and issues

We hoped to meet face-to-face, but this was impossible due to Covid-19 restrictions. We were aware of barriers especially digital/technological ones as many groups had no wifi or laptops. We tried phone calls, but some groups could not be connected with and there were also those that were overwhelmed



“By taking time not merely to listen, but to hear what was said, we have developed a new platform for dialogue with the communities we serve and made new friends in the process.”

by the impact of the pandemic. We were prohibited from using Zoom, the preferred platform for many community groups and staff were working from home juggling busy lives.

### Actual outcomes and outputs

From 67 conversations, we learned that priorities are the following.

- Community Health and Wellbeing
- Tackling Social Isolation
- Employability and Skills
- Local History and Heritage
- Confidence/Belonging/Feeling of Ownership
- Play/Literacy and Creativity
- Youth empowerment

Several organisations would like to co-create activities and events during development phase and when the Museum reopens.

Several organisations expressed that they would really like to co-create a wide variety of activities and events, programmed during our refurbishment as well as when the Museum reopens.

We shared these priorities with participants in three group sessions in February-March 2021. This 'Create Phase' will shape our partnerships, programmes and services. Jambol Radio asked us to support and be

partners in their Our Heritage NLHF bid, to recruit ambassadors to re-interpret and share collections with people of African and Caribbean heritage.

From these sessions we established 3 main preferences of how community partners would like to proceed during the next 'Create Phase'.

- They want to be actively involved, co-creating the engagement programme.
- They want to be consulted on ideas.
- They want to be updated on the project process.

### Lessons learned

Having the opportunity to re-access our engagement plans and take the essential time to listen to organisations has been invaluable to understanding of the needs of our communities across Renfrewshire and how we can redefine the Museum to support them.

We have established many new relationships with our community partners and want to continue this act of 'listening' and developing our programme.

We will build upon the lessons we have learned including the need to be honest, open, adaptable and really listen to our community groups and partners.

### Next steps

This process has created a new dynamic between the Paisley Reimagined Project, our stakeholders, partners and audiences. By taking time not merely to listen, but to hear what was said, we have developed a new platform for dialogue with the communities we serve and made new friends in the process. Our next step will be to begin to better understand how all parties can harness the potential of these new relationships to better inform everything we do. We will work with staff and participants to create a new architecture for how audiences can shape service provision. We will audit and widen our representation, ensuring that as many voices as possible are represented.

### Find out more

<https://reimagined.paisleymuseum.org/>

[www.renfrewshireleisure.com/museums](http://www.renfrewshireleisure.com/museums)

<https://twitter.com/PaisleyMuseum>

# Connecting to communities in Cumbria:

## Lakeland Arts' MEND project

---

### Summary

The Participation and Learning team at Lakeland Arts is working with community groups to explore the meaning of making and mending, and its impact on mental wellbeing during the pandemic.

---

### Background

Lakeland Arts is an arts organisation in Cumbria that has four venues: Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Blackwell the Arts & Crafts House, Lakeland Museum, and Windermere Jetty Museum.

---

### Challenge

The pandemic demanded a complete rethink in our current approach. When we returned from furlough last October, we wanted to explore how creativity and making impact wellbeing. We were fortunate to receive an Art Fund Respond and Reimagine grant, in part to fund our work, and to avoid being re-furloughed.

---

### Approach

In development with Ian Read, the team's Head of Participation and Learning, the whole team devised their own focuses and group partnerships under the MEND project umbrella. We reached out to groups who have been adversely impacted by the pandemic, and we approached them with open-ended ideas of what they could make and create.



---

### Intended outcomes

We aimed for 4 central outcomes:

- Participants would make something together;
- The making and creative process would contribute to their wellbeing;
- The project would be a new, exciting and/or challenging experience;
- The experience would make them open to working with us again.

---

### Intended outputs

Each of us reached out to different groups to own different 'strands' of the project. We knew we wanted to 'make' something with the groups, but the actual output was unknown; we were aware that trying to be definitive would be futile during the peak of the pandemic!

---

### Obstacles and issues

We have made rapid changes to the project due to successive COVID-19 measures, such as being forced to

accept that in-person work was simply unfeasible. Some workshops have been rearranged because participants have felt too overwhelmed in lockdown.

The nature of our workshops and outputs also shifted. Amy turned guided outdoor group activities for children into downloadable activity sheets that children could do with their families. Ella's work with a women's refuge group shifted mediums, from textile skills to digital gaming.

The co-production process meant that both Lakeland Arts and the groups were committed to find solutions to obstacles that were often beyond our control.

---

### Actual outcomes

Participants were excited to be taking part in a creative project, particularly during a challenging lockdown. They have been enthusiastic about working with us in the COVID-safe, physically together future!

Natasha's work with Young Carers has created time and space for themselves through making art together online. They have had the chance to learn new skills and raise their confidence about trying new things.

As a team, this has impacted our own wellbeing, especially after furlough. We have not met each other as a team in months, but we feel connected through this project. It has enabled us to think more imaginatively about our

role in the local community. Through these partnerships, we are addressing our role in social justice and our advocacy for cultural democracy that lives beyond museum walls.

“Through these partnerships, we are addressing our role in social justice and our advocacy for cultural democracy that lives beyond museum walls.”

---

### Actual outputs

Ella is building an interactive text game with Springfield, a domestic abuse charity. She is also leading creative workshops with Lighthouse, a mental health support charity.

Amy is making downloadable nature-based sessions and a 'Manual of MEND' with Ulverston Food Waste and home-schooling families.

Natasha is creating miniature 'gallery' spaces with shielding adults and Young Carers, as a response to lockdown and their relationship to their domestic spaces.

---

### Lessons learned

- In Cumbria, a county with disparate and rural communities, being able to work remotely with groups has made collaborative working more accessible and cost-effective.
- Leaving our outputs open gave us the flexibility and resilience to modify our plans quickly, and to respond to the needs of our partnered groups effectively.
- Our partnerships were integral to our learning strategy and our approach. Without them there would be no MEND project.

---

### Next steps

This summer we are embarking on a new phase in the MEND project. We will tour around the South Lakes, sharing our outcomes of MEND through storytelling and objects in our collection. We will particularly be focussing on areas that are rurally isolated.

We are working with local NHS groups to explore future routes to supporting our communities, primarily through the model of social prescription. We have also partnered with the Institute for Social Futures at the University of Lancaster to assist us in researching and evaluating the outcomes of the MEND project.



### Find out more

Lakeland Arts MEND website:  
[www.lakelandarts.org.uk/mend](http://www.lakelandarts.org.uk/mend)

Lakeland Arts MEND Instagram:  
MEND (@mendwithus)

Springfield: Springfield Support

Lighthouse: The Lighthouse

Mud Wood Club Instagram:  
@themudwoodclub

Ulverston Food Waste Facebook:  
Ulverston Food Waste Project

Young Carers South Lakes:  
Carer Support South Lakes –  
Young Carers Support

# Transforming Museum Learning in the Covid-19 Age: The Case of Pro Artium

## Summary

Established in 2016 by University of Leicester art historians Drs Conny Bailey, Miriam Gill and Ellie Pridgeon, Pro Artium (or For the Arts) offers adult learners the opportunity to engage with artworks and building heritage within museums, universities and local community spaces. We are currently

working with Northampton Museums and Art Gallery to deliver popular art history lecture series based on the remarkable paintings and objects in their collection. Pro Artium also works with Leicester Vaughan College (LVC) and the WEA, and with under-represented multi-generational groups to deliver accessible art history and

material culture courses to older people and those who identify as disabled. Current partners include the University of Leicester Attenborough Arts Centre – an organisation which champions emerging talent and disability-led performances.

This GEM case study highlights how Covid-19 required Pro Artium to transform its learning offering during 2020 from face-to-face to remote delivery. However, there was a hiatus of several months from March 2020 when teaching sessions were suspended or cancelled. There were specific challenges due to Covid-19 and during learning delivery transformation, as well as key lessons learned for the future as outlined below.

## Challenge, obstacles and approach

When lockdown began in March 2020, Pro Artium faced several immediate challenges. The closure of heritage and education venues at short notice led to the suspension of learning programmes. These were both short term fixes rather than solutions. For several months, Pro Artium assumed that learning opportunities within heritage organisations had folded forever, or that sessions might resume in late 2021. Like so many organisations, Pro Artium suspended decision-making and planning for several months – a ‘wait and see’ approach to the unprecedented situation.

The actual outcome – a return to teaching, albeit remotely – was an





“**Visual subjects, such as History of Art, Archaeology and Architecture, work remarkably well online – in fact many educators and learners prefer it...**”

unplanned but welcome solution. Our WEA sessions re-commenced relatively quickly because the organisation has the capacity to deliver remote learning through its robust online Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) platform. Other institutions onboarded with remote delivery of Pro Artium sessions from Autumn 2020.

So, business as usual for Pro Artium? Well not exactly. Remote delivery via Zoom and Microsoft Teams brings with it inevitable challenges – network connection failures, and learners with no access to computers or the internet. Likewise, online facilitation can be difficult for learners who identify as disabled, especially if they require assistive technology. Furthermore, it is not possible to examine and engage with artworks and buildings in-situ as part as the learning experience

– an activity that is integral to the Northampton Museums and Art Gallery sessions. In addition, it can also be challenging to engage large groups of adult learners in discussions online.

However, there are many positives to teaching remotely. Visual subjects, such as History of Art, Archaeology and Architecture, work remarkably well online – in fact many educators and learners prefer it as a delivery method because they can engage with participants and images. Furthermore, Pro Artium learning sessions are now accessible to audiences across the UK and beyond. One unexpected outcome of the Covid-19 crisis is the expansion of Pro Artium teaching delivery, not least because adult learner numbers have surged over the past year.

### Lessons learned and next steps

There are several lessons to be learned from this Pro Artium case study. Even if your project, programme or work is suspended, never simply wait for something to happen. It is important to be proactive and to constantly refresh your offering. Going forwards, museum freelancers must plan for all eventualities. A case in point is that heritage organisations are already creating agreements and contracts for freelancers with Covid-19 and remote working clauses.

In the future, Pro Artium will continue programme delivery by partnering with more heritage institutions and academic organisations. We have recently joined forces with WEA Northamptonshire to deliver teaching sessions for spring 2022. Of course, online delivery is not the end of the road. The transformation of Pro Artium’s offering – like all heritage engagement and learning in the age of Covid-19 – is not yet complete. We are currently considering ‘blended approaches’ to learning, whereby learners can attend face-to-face sessions onsite, or participate in sessions remotely from home. So please watch this space for news of future developments.

Thanks to Northampton Museums and Art Gallery for their ongoing support and use of images for this article.

**Image top** Accession number: 2002.78.8. Lucien Pissarro, Kew Gardens. 1892. Oil on panel. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Northampton Museums and Art Gallery.

**Image left** Accession number: 2002.78.33. Auguste Rodin, Tête de Jeune Femme. c.1902-7. Bronze. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Northampton Museums and Art Gallery.

### Find out more

Website: <https://proartium.wordpress.com>

Email: [proartium@gmail.com](mailto:proartium@gmail.com)

Twitter: @ArtiumPro

Instagram: @ProArtium

Facebook: @ProArtium



## To learn even more about creating community partnerships, refer to the following projects:

### **Alison Ayres, Cambridge University**

A community partnership between the University of Cambridge Museums and Arthur Rank Hospice to explore collections and making together.

### **Jenny Davis, Arts Uplift CIC and Museums Worcestershire**

"Suitcase Stories" is a combination of reminiscence and arts workshops using museum handling objects from the 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's and arts such as music, stories or drama to improve the people's lives living with dementia from Worcestershire.

### **Diana Morton, Open Museum**

To reach older people who were isolated during lockdown, the Open Museum teamed up with the Weekday Wow Factor to support their online discos with weekly museum quizzes.

### **Fiona Johnston, Palace of Holyroodhouse**

Adapting in Adversity; illustrating the continuing importance of Community & Access Programmes at Palace of Holyroodhouse.

### **Rana Ibrahim and Helen Pooley, Multaka Oxford and History of Science Museum**

Multaka and the History of Science Museum: co-creating a livestreamed digital family event.

### **Jenny Haslett and Michael Fryer, Northern Ireland War Memorial**

Wartime Christmas Activity Packs for Care Homes at Northern Ireland War Memorial.

### **Julia Riley and Alexia Southern, Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre**

Exploring the Universe with Jodrell Juniors. During 2019/20 JBDC partnered with Stanley Grove Primary Academy (SGPA) as part of the Association of Science and Discovery Centre's Explore Your Universe Programme.

### **Lindsey Braidley, Roman Baths**

"Wellbeing Wonders" explores a health and wellbeing journey through time at the Roman Baths.

### **Esther Amis-Hughes, Leeds Museums and Galleries**

From Partnerships to Friendships: How Covid-19 caused Leeds Museums & Galleries to pivot their planned community engagement programme and forced them to listen to what people really want and need.

### **Mark Lewis, Tenby Museum and Art Gallery and Artisan Avenue**

Tenby Museum and Art Gallery and Artisan Avenue teamed up to prepare for a rolling display of works for when the museum can reopen.

### **Nicola Wallis, Fitzwilliam Museum**

It takes a village to raise a child: how dynamic community partnerships enable the Fitzwilliam Museum to support young children and those who care for them.

### **Sarah-Cate Blake, Fitzwilliam Museum**

"Fitz-Stitch" was a participatory community engagement project involving creating textiles inspired by Fitzwilliam Museum collection.

### **Su Hepburn, Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust**

Teacher Ambassadors: beyond the focus group and focusing on authentic and meaningful partnerships with educators.

### **Tali Krikler and Caroline Marcus, Caroline Marcus Associates**

To mark HMD 2021, and building on the HMD 2020 programme, Caroline Marcus Associates, together with South Hampstead Synagogue in partnership with the National Holocaust Centre and Museum delivered a virtual community and school programme using award winning films and workshops to address a challenging and difficult history of the Holocaust.

### **Victoria Robb, National Mining Museum**

"Maths for Miners" is Scotland's first, museum based, fully outdoors maths trail developed with feedback and a need from museum communities, namely family visitors and members of the Midlothian STEM network.

### **Judith Hewitt, Devil's Porridge Museum**

"Lamented no longer: A Landgirl's Tale" is a project created by The Devil's Porridge Museum involving young women interviewing Bettie, a 94-year-old former Land Girl.

---

**A large print version is available on request. Please contact the GEM office.**

#### **Editor**

Devon Turner  
GEM,  
The Joiners Shop,  
The Historic  
Dockyard, Chatham,  
Kent, ME4 4TZ

office@gem.org.uk

#### **GEM Case Studies 28**

**Young People**

Publication:  
Autumn/Winter  
2021

Case Studies is published twice a year by GEM but all opinions expressed remain those of the named authors.

**Cover:** Fran Monk, Amanda Edmead performing as part of the Nice Cup of Tea Project

© GEM 2021

Designed by  
Steers McGillan Eves  
01225 465546