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CULTURE  
HEALTH &  
WELLBEING  
ALLIANCE

# Case Studies

## Health and Wellbeing

Vol.29 2022



## Editorial

Welcome to the 29th edition of the GEM Case Studies, on the theme of health and wellbeing. We are delighted to be sharing this broad range of case studies from museums across the UK who have sought to transform and enrich lives with their programmes and strategic approaches.

Thank you to the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance for their guest editorial on this publication, and their continued work to promote creativity and cultural engagement as a tool for improving health and wellbeing.

GEM hopes that this publication offers inspiration, motivation, and important lessons for any individual or organisation seeking to explore their role in promoting enrichment and better outcomes for their staff, visitors, and local communities.

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**Jessica England**  
Communications Manager, GEM



# Forward

## **This edition of GEM Case Studies focuses on how museums and heritage sites have developed opportunities to support the health and wellbeing of a broad range of communities.**

In recent years our understanding of how culture and creativity impact health and wellbeing has grown exponentially. CHWA's own reports on activity during lockdown have backed up recent large-scale studies commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, Arts Council England, World Health Organisation, Heritage Alliance and others – the latter highlighting in particular wellbeing improvements in adults as a result of regular engagement with museums and heritage sites, as well as benefits for children's social development, and memory function in older age.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the UK's existing health crises and inequities of access – increasing social isolation and impacting mental health, delaying diagnosis and treatment; effects worsened for those already at the sharp end of our structural inequities. Meanwhile, museums and heritage sites were closed to onsite visitors, with staff on furlough and facing their own

health and wellbeing struggles. Despite these challenges, the sector moved quickly to change its ways of working and ensure we could maintain and even build new connections with local communities, finding a range of imaginative ways to mitigate the worst effects of isolation.

These case studies illustrate a growing feeling within the museums and heritage sector: that we have a responsibility to engage with the communities in which we are situated, and that by doing so we can make a genuine difference to the health and wellbeing of those we connect with.

The case studies demonstrate a huge breadth of focus, whether exploring the challenges and opportunities of engaging with an older audience in the University of Cambridge Museums' project *Age Well* or connecting with local mental health services at Kew Palace, Historic Royal Palaces – through co-curating an exhibition with people with their own experiences of mental health issues. It is encouraging to see the number of programmes responding to the UK's growing crisis in young people's mental health. Projects like *'Let's Visit the Museum'*, *'Tackling the Blues'* and *'Life with Loss'* offer hopeful examples of work that prioritises young people's wellbeing, and sense of place and opportunity.

A crucial line throughout the publication is museums' dedication to improving the health and wellbeing of their staff and volunteers as well

as their broader communities and audiences. Since CHWA's inception in 2018, practitioner wellbeing has become a priority; as socially engaged cultural and creative practice becomes more and more mainstream, we are increasingly dependent on the skills of the cultural workforce to support people in challenging circumstances. It's great to see Haslemere Museum's use of the Museum 5-a-day framework to ensure their staff are to help staff cope better at the times when they need it most, and that Leeds Museums & Galleries have factored staff and volunteer wellbeing into their new strategic approach to programming.

We are really pleased to have been able to support the collection of these case studies through our ongoing partnership with GEM. Together they are a snapshot of the ongoing passion and commitment of museums and heritage education and outreach teams during the pandemic, allowing them to make a concrete difference to people's lives by responding swiftly and skilfully to a fast-changing landscape. We hope initiatives like this will continue to shine a light on this crucial work – to ensure more of it can happen.

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**Victoria Hume**  
Culture, Health and Wellbeing  
Alliance (CHWA)

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# Sensory Journeys:

## Bringing Stories to Life with Your Help

### Summary

South Shields Museum and Arbeia Roman Fort, part of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, are reaching beyond museum walls and connecting with people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Profound Multiple Learning Disability (PMLD), and audiences facing disadvantage, through digital sensory slow story telling sessions, using Foley Art. Participants create the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes to bring stories to life, using materials easily found or made at home, enhancing engagement through enjoyment, and enriching communication and literacy skills.

### Background

Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums is a major regional service in the North East which includes these two project venues. Arbeia Roman Fort has full-scale reconstructions of Roman buildings providing a unique and inspiring insight into Roman military life. South Shields Museum is a small social history and art museum focusing on South Tyneside. Both venues have strong formal and informal learning programmes and are rooted in the local community.

### Challenge

- Responding to the SEND community's request for more online museum programming for children and young people that is inclusive, on-demand, and structured, allowing families



to learn at home, at their own pace, and addressing Covid-19 disproportionately affecting the community's health and wellbeing.

- It also sought to address digital poverty.

### Approach

To develop inclusive online digital sensory story-telling sessions linked to local history and art, museum collections and the national curriculum accessible outside a museum setting.

### Intended outcomes

- Engage Special schools, SEND units, families with SEND/PLMD children and adults, and other audiences with the website and CD resource to help with isolation and lack of opportunity to access cultural offers due to Covid-19 or other reasons.

- To improve audience health and wellbeing by offering inclusive and meaningful sensory experiences.

### Intended outputs

- To record and edit three unique fictional stories focusing on the history of local mining, smuggling, and the Regina Roman tombstone with Foley Art.
- To create an accessible and easy to use website, supporting the stories with sensory and creative activities, collection objects, further information and a sound library.
- Develop a schools programme including Arts Award.
- To pilot the resources with families, schools and third sector services.
- Distribute 200 CDs.



**“ We found it valuable to co-create the resource with teachers, and individuals with special needs and disabilities to create an even more inclusive programme.**

### Obstacles and issues

- Initial plan was to write the stories in-house, but lack of expertise and time resulted in having to source writers and find budget.
- Stories had to be recorded at home due to Covid-19. When the museums re-opened, we recorded on-site, causing audio inconsistency.
- Limited time was available for editing or re-recording the sound files, and the project overran by six weeks, delaying the launch.
- The CD's were not ready when the website launched.
- Lockdown made it difficult to distribute the resources to targeted audiences.

### Actual outcomes

Positive feedback from all audiences that engaged with the stories, resources and on-line blended workshops. Hannah Fuller, Woodlawn Primary SEND School:

*'The sensory stories are just right for the children in my class. The opportunities for them to explore the past through touching, seeing, hearing and smelling make the stories highly relevant to their level of learning. This is how to engage children with SEND, particularly those whose needs are the most complex.'*

A parent responding on Twitter after the project was presented at MuseumNext conference:

*'It was so fun!! Had such a great time finding the objects to make noises with- it was like a scavenger hunt and story time all in one!'*

### Actual outputs

- Three unique sensory stories both online and in CD form written by local artists and writers, plus a website.
- Piloting of online Sensory Journeys workshops with two SEND schools; piloting of the CD with a profound and multiple learning disability adult group.
- Delivery of the Roman Sensory Journeys story to over 800 pupils via a webinar.
- CDs and transcripts included in the museum services 'Boxes of Delight' programme (Romans, Seaside and Mining Boxes.)
- Distribution of CDs to a respite home, adult disability service, hospice, families, schools.
- To date stories listened to from website 180 times.

### Lessons learned

- More time was needed than we initially allocated to developing each story/supporting resources.
- It is useful to conduct further research, consultation and interviewing of professionals working in the SEND community and families with special needs children. We found it valuable to co-create the resource with teachers, and individuals with special needs and disabilities to create an even more inclusive programme.
- Not everyone has a CD player. Consider additional ways of addressing digital poverty.

### Next steps

To continue the project and create a Sensory Journeys resource for all TWAM venues to bring their individual collections to life in a more inclusive way.

Obtain funding to commission professional children's writers and to continue to work with the Foley Artist; to create bespoke handling object loan boxes with 3-D objects of collection items and reproduction artwork that support the stories.

Build more partnerships with Special Educational Needs professionals, local and national schools, charities, and organizations that service the SEND/PMLD and communities facing disadvantage to help develop and share these resources.

### Find out more

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**Sensory Journeys: Bringing stories to life with your help**  
<https://southshieldsmuseum.org.uk/learning/sensory-journeys>

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# Let's Visit the Museum



“ They wanted their students to see new things and explore the museum and hoped a visit would help develop vocabulary and improve their student’s wellbeing.

## Summary

The Discovery Museum, part of Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, is in Newcastle upon Tyne. It is dedicated to sharing the story of Tyneside and its people. There are interesting objects and interactive displays exploring everything from the region’s shipbuilding heritage to inventions which changed the world making it the perfect place for all ages to learn and have fun.

## Background

In November 2021, Discovery Museum learning team received an enquiry from a local school wanting a bespoke offer for their KS1 Year 1 classes. The teachers’ felt their classes had experienced significant disruption due to the pandemic. They wanted their students to see new things and explore the museum and hoped a visit would help develop vocabulary and improve their student’s wellbeing.

## Challenges

We had intended to develop a museum exploration session for an EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) audience. We met with the teachers to discuss their children’s needs and as this school’s Year 1 children were working at a younger level, we decided to develop and pilot the session for the group.

We agreed to pilot the workshop for free (usually we need to charge for our learning programme) in exchange for teacher feedback.



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## Approach

We decided to run a 1-hour workshop and planned to start the session by looking at mystery objects. We chose two objects that could be held and passed around by the children to encourage close looking and questioning.

Next, we incorporated museum exploration. We decided to use dice with inserts. The children would roll the dice to receive a Makaton symbol and clue, which would in turn lead them to an object. We hoped this would give the students a way of focusing on specific items in galleries that can otherwise be busy with objects.

The students would then take part in a final carousel of three activities, each linking to a different museum job. Activities included the children taking on the role of Conservator and trying to fix broken object puzzles, a sorting activity linking to Learning and Engagement jobs, and finally a curation-based activity where students created a mini museum gallery.



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## Obstacles and issues

Our first challenge in piloting the new workshop was Covid-19. The schoolteachers and children were unwell and so our initial January visit was delayed by a month until February 2022.

Our second challenge was a tight schedule. We had two Year 1 classes piloting the workshop. It was logistically challenging to work out toilet visits, lunch, and workshop timings in a brief period before heading back to school.

We had also not anticipated how busy the museum would be. Although our local authorities were not on half term break, we had a considerable number of visiting families from outside the area.

As with all pilot sessions we quickly spotted teething problems in the first session. It took longer than anticipated for the class to pass around and hold an object and to move the group to different areas of the museum. In addition, the slippery



laminated dice inserts fell all over the floor when rolled. At lunch time we found ourselves adding tape to the dice and discussing how we could alter the timings of the activities.

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## Lessons learned

Overall, at the end of the visit we felt positive. The children and teachers left the museum happy. The activities provided the children with just the right amount of structure to keep them focused while allowing them the freedom to explore the gallery spaces, ask questions and have hands on object experiences. This was also reflected in the feedback we received from the teachers.

*'An educational, engaging, and exciting workshop. It really allowed our children to investigate and explore.'*

*'The activity with the dice was great for our children. Clues were simple enough to understand yet still offered a good level of challenge/thinking.'*

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## Next steps

We have now also piloted the session with an Early Years group. After trialling the session with a reception class, we found the workshop worked just as well and again received positive feedback.

After receiving feedback from our EYFS pilot group, we are now going to add object labels to the sorting activity, along with an adult guide sheet to help grownups working with the children to encourage questioning about the objects.

Lastly, we are also considering creating a series of dice for each of our gallery spaces that teachers can book in advance to support their self-led time in the museum.

We intend to have the 'Lets Visit the Museum' workshop on our website and bookable for the next academic year.



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## Find out more

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# Museum 5-a-day: Still Important

## Summary

Museum 5-a-day is a project that encourages museum professionals to take care of their own wellbeing so they are in a position to deliver positive experiences to improve health and wellbeing for visitors.

## Background

The project first came about having been involved with Teachers 5-a-day aimed at teachers' wellbeing. I realised that museum professionals are often tasked with delivering wellbeing for visitors but there was very little out there to help with our own wellbeing.

## Challenge

To ensure museum professionals consider their own wellbeing. The new challenge was how to continue this during a pandemic.

## Approach

The idea of Museum 5-a-day was initially shared via the Surrey and Sussex Learning Liaison Forum for Heritage educators (LLF). A grant from the South East Museum Development Programme enabled us to take it further and provide workshops, take it to the 2017 GEM conference and produce a booklet.

At the heart of Museum 5-a-day is a campaign encouraging museum staff to care for their own wellbeing through 5 simple actions to help bring them consciously and mindfully into the moment. These 5 simple actions



are: notice, learn, exercise, volunteer and connect. Simply by considering these 5 actions and giving ourselves permission to take a few minutes out of our busy day we can greatly improve our wellbeing. The campaign was shared through museum networks and Twitter, but word of mouth and showing examples proved the best way to share.

## Intended outcomes

An easy way for museum staff to consider and improve their personal wellbeing.

## Intended outputs

- Page on the new Learning Liaison Forum website
- Museum 5-a-day book
- Twitter account

## Obstacles and issues

When Covid-19 hit, many museum staff suffered redundancies, furlough, working from home or working in isolation. All of these can be very detrimental to wellbeing, making Museum 5-a-day especially important. It also meant our usual networks and support groups were



“ **At the heart of Museum 5-a-day is a campaign encouraging museum staff to care for their own wellbeing through 5 simple actions...notice, learn, exercise, volunteer and connect.**

hit with uncertainty and were unable to meet. This made it was harder to share the message when it was actually needed most.

Luckily virtual meetings were possible and so we continued to promote Museum 5-a-day during our virtual meetings to those people who could attend. We hosted a GEM Twitter session during lockdown which allowed us to reach a wider audience. Learning Liaison Forum (LLF) also ran a mentoring programme during 2020 where Museum 5-a-day was sometimes used. When face-to-face connections are not possible, virtual connections become even more important.

However, with museums being closed and only some staff actually at work, many people did not have the usual access to work emails, computers or internet connection and many had to share computer access with family members, who were also trying to work or access schooling from home. In addition, with all the extra pressures and worries about the pandemic and lockdowns, although wellbeing support was probably at its most needed, it was easily overlooked as people just struggled with coping with the day-to-day.

Unfortunately, we have noticed that often the need for support and help with wellbeing is not considered at the point of time it is most needed. This is why establishing Museum 5-a-day into the everyday practice of museum workers is so important. Museum 5-a-day as an established part of the working day or week, recognised as important and embedded in our practice, it will make us not only happier but also more productive.

**Actual outcomes**

- A framework museum professionals can use to maintain and improve their own wellbeing.
- A face-to-face LLF Study day at Haslemere Museum.

**Actual outputs**

Our intended outputs were successfully actualised.

**Lessons learned**

However important an issue is, it is never easy to reach as far as you would like and it is difficult to maintain the momentum of a campaign. Having a platform where you can share with a captive audience makes things much easier.

There is nearly never enough time or money to take a project as far as you wish so be happy to achieve what you have achieved. Museum 5-a-day is about positive wellbeing and with any project there will always be obstacles and difficulties but it is important to take note of the achievements, Museum 5-a-day has definitely had a positive impact on a number of people and every one of these is a success.

**Next steps**

We will continue to share the Museum 5-a-day message as widely as we can and it will remain at the core of LLF.

We would love to share it with other groups and are happy to arrange a time to share over Zoom.

**Find out more**

<https://learningliaisonforum.org.uk/projects/museum-5-a-day/>

@Muse5aday Twitter account

<https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/five-ways-to-wellbeing-1.pdf>

For further details please contact Kay via email [education@haslemereuseum.co.uk](mailto:education@haslemereuseum.co.uk)



# History, Health and Happiness in the Community

## Summary

In April 2018 Heritage Doncaster became an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation. The NPO funding enables Heritage Doncaster to deliver a programme of outreach work called History, Health and Happiness.

## Background

Working with groups of adults and families, History, Health and Happiness aims to tackle isolation and improve wellbeing in Doncaster communities by using the museum collection as the basis for outreach and community engagement activities. The team takes local history stories and accessioned museum objects out to our communities, with conversation, crafting and cooking taking place, all

in response to a particular theme. Health and wellbeing is at the heart of what we do!

## Challenges

The original challenge was – and remains – to use history to enable people to feel good about themselves and their communities, and to feel more connected.

History, Health and Happiness successfully established a women's social group called Herstory in 2019, along with delivering sessions with partner organisations including the Alzheimer's Society. Our next challenge was to expand our outreach into new communities and to engage with different audiences – particularly with families. So how do you forge

friendships and trust in a community who traditionally have barriers to engaging with culture and the arts? How do you build relationships at a grassroots level when starting from scratch in communities?

Small steps were being made in early 2020, until the pandemic curtailed everyone's plans. Our challenge of breaking into new communities was now compounded by anxiety surrounding Covid-19, and the increased need for our work.

## Approach

In 2021-22, plans were made to set up new social groups in areas of the borough identified as having poor levels of wellbeing and at greater risk of isolation. New audiences





## “ Showing your face in a community and actually talking to the people who live and work there is more valuable in many cases.

were chosen as we wanted the programme to be as diverse and inclusive in its delivery as possible, and respond to needs identified by the communities themselves.

### Intended outcomes

The aim was to work to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the participants in the same way as evidenced by the women who attend Herstory. Research showed an 11% rise in feelings of connectedness with other people, a 23% rise in their feelings of confidence and an 11% rise in reported happiness (Sheffield Hallam University/ Arc Research and Consultancy Ltd).

### Intended outputs

1. Curiosity Club – a group for parents and carers and their pre-school age children in a community close to Doncaster town centre.
2. Let’s Make-do-and-Mend – an adult social group themed around up-cycling and craft in an ex-mining community approximately 7 miles from the town centre.

### Obstacles and issues

Social media advertising and connecting online can be effective and certainly has a place, but we have found that this approach doesn’t

necessarily reach the people you really want to reach! Our audience don’t always have access to the internet or may not feel confident in navigating social media. Therefore, a more community-based approach was deployed – getting down to the local shop and having a chat!

### Actual outputs

The original Curiosity Club sessions planned for September and October of 2021 were sadly abandoned owing to too few people signing up. We believe we underestimated potential anxiety about returning to ‘in person’ groups with Covid-19 still a major concern. However, a new round of pre-school sessions is currently being advertised in a different area with greater interest expressed in attending. A taster session was successfully trialled in April 2022 with a local Family Hub, with great interest in the museum’s collection of bugs and butterflies that were put on display.

A ‘Let’s Make-do-and-Mend’ social group has been successfully piloted in March 2022 with 6 attendees, all of whom are new to History, Health and Happiness activities. More sessions are already booked in with participants expected to return for more upcycling on a monthly basis.

### Lessons learned

Social media isn’t the be all and end all when it comes to getting word of your sessions ‘out there’. Showing your face in a community and actually talking to the people who live and work there is more valuable in many cases.

The initial success of the Make-do-and-Mend is perhaps down to a combination of social media activity along with a strong presence from the lead practitioner in the community – meeting key individuals and spreading the word in person, rather than digitally.

Conversely, the Curiosity Club possibly suffered from a lack of ‘in-person’ contact from the lead practitioner in the community, especially at a time when people were still feeling very nervous about Covid-19.

### Next steps

History, Health and Happiness continues to find success in collaborative partnerships, with recent projects working with Doncaster Mind and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Our online social clubs launched during lockdown continue to inspire their participants and the women of Herstory meet each week come rain or shine!

As communities recover from the impacts of Covid-19, museums will continue to be places of care and connection, utilising the stories contained in their collections to inspire, delight and challenge.

### Find out more

Contact **Victoria Ryves** (Programme Manager) and **Katie Mulkeen** (Community Engagement Officer) at [YourMemories@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:YourMemories@doncaster.gov.uk)

### Find out more and read our Impact Report for 2020/21:

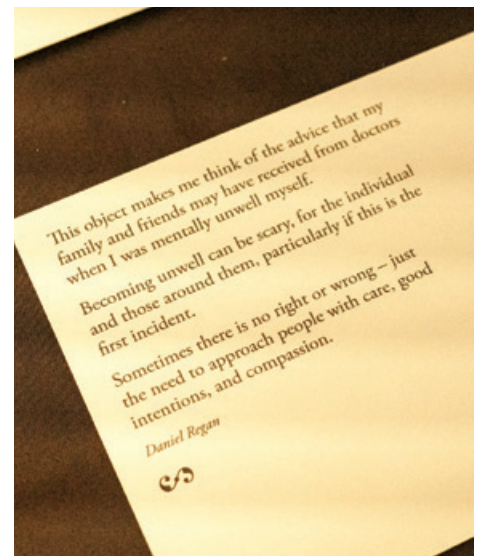
History, Health and Happiness: Impact Report 2020/21 ([heritagedoncaster.org.uk](http://heritagedoncaster.org.uk))

### Visit the Danum Gallery, Library and Museum Website:

[www.dglam.org.uk](http://www.dglam.org.uk)

Research and data compiled by Sheffield Hallam University/Arc Research and Consultancy Ltd

# Mental Health Journeys at Kew Palace



## Summary

'George III: The Mind Behind the Myth' drew upon Kew Palace's history to explore how objects help people articulate and process difficult thoughts and feelings, support mental ill health recovery and encourage conversation. We collaborated with people with lived experience of mental ill health to produce interpretation and inspire reflection.

## Background

George III was not 'The Mad King' of popular culture but a fascinating man, with interests and passions, who suffered cruel treatment for mental ill health at Kew Palace. Over 200 years later, one in four people experience mental ill health each year, we aimed to challenge this misrepresentation of mental ill health.

## Challenge

We wanted to address and confront negative stereotypes, particularly around men's mental health.

## Approach

Community participation was designed in from the start, working with partner organisations from our Community Access Scheme network to select and interpret historic objects.

We put out an open call in a national newspaper to invite Londoners to submit objects associated with their mental health journeys. We selected 10 and worked with the lenders to write labels. We filmed interviews with five lenders to feature in the exhibition.

“...one in four people experience mental ill health each year, we aimed to challenge this misrepresentation of mental ill health.”

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### Intended outcomes

- To start conversations, challenging the way people think, talk and feel about mental health.
  - To emotionally engage visitors, inspiring them to make personal connections.
  - To create a nuanced interpretation about George III.
  - To demonstrate how objects can help people articulate and process difficult thoughts and feelings.
- 

### Intended outputs

1. Mental health awareness training for staff and volunteers
  2. Labels for historic objects written by community participants
  3. Contemporary display of objects loaned by Londoners
  4. Improve access to Kew Palace for community partners
- 

### Obstacles and issues

Due to Covid-19, the exhibition was only open from 4 June–26 September (our usual season would start in April) and was delayed by a year.

We were unable to provide a 'reflection space' in the palace due to social distancing regulations. We were also unable to gather feedback onsite through written evaluation and face-to-face interviews with visitors.

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### Actual outcomes

The labels provided a poignant, fresh perspective on George III's story. Participants were moved to see their contributions given equal weighting and value alongside the curator's.

The visitor response was overwhelming: many noting the exhibition was even more relevant in 2021, given the profound impact the pandemic had on individuals' wellbeing. Many visitors appeared to be visibly moved, actively approaching staff to discuss reactions, many thanking us for the opportunity to talk about mental health, especially in a royal palace.

Staff and volunteers are now more comfortable and confident talking about mental health and wellbeing.

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### Actual outputs

We developed longer lasting relationships with community participants and lenders. For some, this has led to a greater sense of empowerment.

Two community participants joined HRP's Community Access Scheme. They plan to lead group visits to our sites, helping their peer networks to meaningfully engage with our spaces and stories.

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We established a partnership with Kew Gardens which enables HRP community participants to visit both Kew Palace and Kew Gardens for only £1 per person.

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### Lessons learned

The delay in the exhibition enabled us to extend and deepen our relationships with community lenders, enabling us to see the impact in sharing their mental health journey had in their lives.

Covid-19 popularised QR codes, which we used to create digital labels, survey links and access to filmed interviews. This created an online platform for the exhibition, enabling people to engage offsite, which we hadn't considered in our initial planning.

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### Next steps

This was a temporary exhibition with loaned objects. The mental health narrative will live on in our permanent displays at Kew Palace and in staff and volunteer training. The legacy of our approach to centring and integrating community work in interpretation is something we are developing further in our exhibition programme across sites.

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### Find out more

#### George III: The Mind Behind the Myth

George III: The Mind Behind The Myth | Kew Palace | Historic Royal Palaces  
(hrp.org.uk)

#### '10 Objects' films'

George III: The Mind behind the Myth exhibition legacy | Kew Palace | Historic Royal Palaces  
(hrp.org.uk)

**Esther Hallberg, Louise Savage  
and Sally Toon**

Hull Museums, Phoenix CSC

Early Years

# Tree Babies at Hull Museums

## Summary

In 2021, we started working with a local provider to deliver Tree Babies sessions in the museum gardens. They had a focus on parental mental health and engaging with nature.

## Background

The venue was Wilberforce Gardens which sit between Streetlife, a transport museum and Wilberforce House Museum. Streetlife was an important site for our Under 5s offer before the pandemic. Although the gardens are open to the public, it is quite secluded, as it isn't visible from outside the museums.

## Challenge

We had been concerned about how to bring back under 5s sessions safely during the pandemic. Our own Under 5s focused session, Transport Tots at Streetlife, had included sharing a lot of equipment, was indoors and included refreshments.

In addition, over the past three years we've been exploring wellbeing and wanted to see how we could be involved in social prescribing.

## Approach

Tree Babies is a programme developed by Blossom and Berry to help improve parental mental health through engaging in nature. Louise from Phoenix CSC had external funding and approached us with a proposal. The sessions could be held outside (weather permitting), which





## “ We wanted to provide a quality experience which improved wellbeing, particularly in light of the uncertainty and isolation that the pandemic caused.

made them more Covid-19 safe, enabling us to welcome audiences back in a way we were more comfortable with. The first 6 week block began in October 2021.

### Intended outcomes

We wanted to gradually welcome Under 5s and their families back into our museums programme and build our confidence back up in delivering for this age group during and after Covid-19.

We wanted to provide a quality experience which improved wellbeing, particularly in light of the uncertainty and isolation that the pandemic caused.

### Obstacles and issues

The initial set up of the programme was a bit daunting as it was the first in-person programming we had done since the start of the pandemic. Organising sessions and liaising with staff when we were working from home most of the time, was difficult.

Indoor sessions (and containing the mess) could be challenging.

Some first time participants had never been to the museum before and so just getting there and settling in to an unfamiliar space was an obstacle.

### Actual outcomes

The sessions helped to improve participants wellbeing;

*‘Our weekly sessions here are something that has improved our mental health and general well-being. We need more child friendly spaces in the city centre.’ – Tree Babies participant*

In the first block, just one toddler and his grandma attended every week, (having come across the course by accident). However, word spread

and through linking up with the social prescribing link workers in our area, from December 2021 we began to welcome 12–15 people to the sessions.

We know from Transport Tots, that the neutral and central venue of the museum can help with relaxation and not feeling judged. However, the expertise and approach of the facilitators was key;

*‘We have loved coming to these sessions as it is stress free, my children can be themselves, and I can talk openly about my mental health without fear of judgement.’ – Participant*

*‘The lovely ladies who facilitate this group are incredibly hands on with support and put any doubts you have to the back of your mind.’ – Participant*

Although it was initially a way of making use of our lovely outdoor spaces, we’ve observed participant families exploring the museum afterwards regularly, many of whom had never visited before.

### Lessons learned

It was more difficult to organise an on-site activity remotely (and we quickly realised how important face to face planning was) but the Front of House and Phoenix Wellbeing staff were great at handling the new situations and ironing out any initial issues.

When sessions had to move inside, sometimes this meant quite a lot of mess, but we learned as we went, and decided between us what worked and what didn’t.

The background of the Tree Babies Guides in mental health support was key to the success of the session, it isn’t something we could have done as well ourselves.



### Next steps

We hope to continue running Tree Babies and we are expanding the programme to include Relaxed Kid sessions over the school holidays and reintroduce more Under 5s activities to the museums.

Later this year, Tree Babies will be part of research into language development in young children in indoor and outdoor museum spaces by Manchester Metropolitan University for the Humber Museums Partnership.

### Find out more

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# Life with Loss: Exploring Grief and Loss with Students

## Summary

In January 2022 we launched our new workshop Life with Loss: Understanding Grief and Memory. This workshop uses our collection to open up discussions with children and young people on the universal emotions of grief and loss. The workshop focuses on the life of Holocaust Survivor Solly Irving, who was the sole survivor from his family. The project has been generously funded by the Irving Family and we are grateful for all their support.

## Background

We have an existing programme of Holocaust Education school workshops for KS2+. Rather than creating another factual workshop we wanted to consider how the world around us was changing as a result of the pandemic.

## Challenge

Covid-19 changed children's lives forever. We were aware that children were experiencing language around grief and loss but may also be directly experiencing the death of loved ones for the first time.

## Approach

We reflected on what it would look like to create a workshop which helped children specifically to talk about this mental health topic. To work with them to explore this through another person's life and then to give them a chance to reflect artistically on their own experiences and thoughts.

## Intended outcomes

We aimed to open up conversations about grief and loss with young people, and to raise the emotional literacy of young people by giving them the language to speak about their emotions.

## Intended outputs

We decided to create a Holocaust Education workshop based in the collection for KS3+, with the potential for a KS2 workshop. This workshop would include a new film about Solly, object handling and a creative activity.

## Obstacles and issues

An expected issue was that whilst our staff are trained Mental Health First Aiders, we are not experts on grief and bereavement. Anticipating this, we partnered with the charity Grief Encounter who support bereaved children. They provided staff training, reviewed materials and are on hand to answer any questions.

Another obstacle we faced was how to evaluate the project. A key learning objective was the understanding of emotions and so we wanted to evaluate how students were feeling throughout the session. This is not something we had previously evaluated in school workshops. Based on a project from 2017 with general visitors, we created an 'emotional evaluation' tracking student's emotional responses to different sections of the workshop.

## Actual outcomes

Throughout the pilot workshops, students from KS2+ discussed grief and loss confidently, demonstrating that this workshop was age appropriate.

The emotional evaluations showed that students were recognising emotions and able to demonstrate the emotional maturity of young people as they explore these difficult topics. The responses also show that difficult topics such as the Holocaust can be taught in a way that include emotions of sadness and nervousness alongside inspiration.





“ For us, this was about recognising our strengths as a team, whilst acknowledging our limits and knowing when to seek outside support.

## 2. Building on previous work gives confidence

Talking to students about grief and loss was going to be new to us, even as trained Mental Health First Aiders, however, our team has worked with emotional evaluations and emotional literacy for years both in programming and in staff support. Using this previous experience and translating it to a new topic gave us the confidence to create an environment where children can reflect on sensitive issues in a safe way.



### Actual outputs

We created two workshops, one for Primary (KS2 Years 5 & 6) and one for Secondary, alongside two different age-appropriate versions of the film. This was based on our training from Grief Encounter where we learned that it is actually possible to open up difficult conversations around grief and loss with very young children.

We also created a Teachers Resource which outlines top tips for teachers to help children process grief, as well as signposting to various resources, including our partners Grief Encounter.

### Lessons learned

#### 1. Importance of working together

Working with Grief Encounter has been invaluable to the process of creating the film and workshop, ensuring age-appropriate language is used and we are providing the right support for the teachers and students.

We also wanted to make sure that we were working closely with the Irving family. As this project is so personal to the family, we wanted to ensure that they had the final say in each of the various elements of the session. For us, this was about recognising our strengths as a team, whilst acknowledging our limits and knowing when to seek outside support.

### Next steps

We have been researching into digital ways of capturing our emotional evaluation data, such as live audience polling using smartphones or clickpads, and will be trialling these different methods of evaluating going forward.

### Find out more

<https://jewishmuseum.org.uk>  
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# Belonging and wellbeing – creating safe spaces for everyone in Leeds

## Summary

A sense of belonging is an important part of wellbeing. This is a principal which underpins the work of the community team at Leeds Museums and Galleries (LMG). We strive to use our collections, our sites and staff to develop meaningful relationships with people, which leads to an increased sense of belonging and wellbeing. Providing a safe space for discussion, friendship, creativity, distraction, and of course refreshments is at the heart of what we do.

## Background

Leeds Museums and Galleries is the largest local authority-run museum service in England, with nine sites and a diverse range of collections.

## Challenge

Our approach is to allow the engagement programme to be led by our staff, communities and collections. This means every site, every day, and every project is very different. The

challenge of this is that programmes can seem disconnected, so we wanted to identify a single vision without compromising the reactive nature of our work.

As a team we identified three core principles: belonging, creativity and wellbeing.

We wanted to offer creative opportunities to the people we work with to help increase a sense of belonging at our sites, which we felt would support the wellbeing of the people we work with.

## Approach

We approached this as a team by thinking about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which in very simple terms identifies that there are five levels of human needs. If the bottom tiers (which include essentials such as shelter, food and security) are not met, then the higher tiers (self-actualisation) cannot be met. This articulated what we had always known – we couldn't

start projects focused on 'upper tier' levels of need without providing security and a sense of belonging, so that people felt comfortable to relax, trust us, and lead projects.

## Obstacles and issues

There are significant challenges to this approach. Firstly, it means that what we do doesn't 'look' like work. How can chatting to someone about horror films or public transport be work? We have had to overcome our own prejudice about what constitutes work. We developed a mantra – time spent chatting is never time wasted.

The other side of this is that there is a fine line we tread to keep what we do professional, and to keep our staff and participants safe. We regularly discuss this 'line' among our team, follow safeguarding procedures, and talk about how to deal with requests that may blur professional boundaries.

We are also mindful of the emotional toll this work can have on staff. We talk in our meetings about things that will make us feel more supported, for example carrying crisis numbers with us so we can direct people to support without feeling that we have to solve problems that we aren't equipped to solve.

## Actual outcomes

Cambridge Dictionary defines belonging as 'feeling happy or comfortable'; the full definition also includes the words 'welcoming' and 'accepting'. Several research papers





## “ Thinking about our work through a filter of wellbeing and belonging made us analyse why people might not feel welcome.

have indicated a link between a sense of belonging and wellbeing (for example, Barnwood Trust 2015), our difficulty was to define what a sense of belonging looked like in a museum or gallery. Thinking about our work through a filter of wellbeing and belonging made us analyse why people might not feel welcome. Perhaps this was because the galleries themselves were not accessible enough, perhaps there was no visibility of people ‘like me’ in the museum – either in the staff team, or in displays. Mostly it was work we were already doing – co-curating displays to include different narratives or providing our spaces for local community groups to use (generous hosting), but now we could join this work up to see a wider purpose – everyone in Leeds must feel a sense of belonging at our sites.

### Actual outputs

We started to think about our KPIs in these terms. We felt that people turning up (attendance figures) told us very little – but if people chose to return to our programmes this could imply a sense of belonging. We changed our KPIs to reflect this. We had also actively been involved for years in contemporary collecting, co-curating and generous hosting. Again, once these activities were added to our KPIs we could tangibly show that communities were making choices to tell their stories, change their displays, or hold their own programmes within the museum space.

### Lessons learned

Before we work with anyone we need to talk to them about what they want, what would make them feel welcome, and remember the hierarchy of need.

This doesn’t exclude staff needs – if our staff don’t feel safe, or that they belong, they will also not be able to access the upper tiers of the pyramid.

We are also still working out the fine line between relationships and partnerships, and how to translate this to the rest of the museum staff team so that this kind of engagement work can be the responsibility of the whole service.

### Next steps

This is the first tiny step on a very long journey. We need to do a lot more work to link wellbeing and belonging. We have started to develop new evaluations using the Five Goals to Wellbeing, which we hope will help us to demonstrate the enormous impact we could have on the wellbeing of people in Leeds.

### Find out more

<https://museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/working-with-communities>

**Esther Amis-Hughes**

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# Muso Baby:

## Manchester Museum's Social Prescribing Programme for Mums Experiencing Postnatal Depression



### Summary

Manchester Museum launched its social prescribing programme, Muso Baby in March 2019 in response to local need. Working with a music therapist, the programme delivers a therapeutic intervention in a non-clinical setting for parents experiencing or at risk of postnatal depression or anxiety, and their babies.

### Background

Muso Baby consists of a series of six interactive music sessions, which share techniques with parents for bonding with their babies through music, actions and song. The sessions provide a safe space for parents to share their own experiences with a small group, whilst aiming to support bonding with their little one. They

also present an opportunity to meet new people who may have similar experiences and develop supportive peer relationships, whilst exploring the museum's collections.

Sessions follow a routine including welcome and goodbye songs, well-known rhymes and action songs, and time to socialise and speak informally about challenges, ending with a guided meditation.

### Challenge

Postnatal Depression affects at least 1 in every 10 women within a year of giving birth, and many do not recognise symptoms or seek support.

Symptoms can include low mood and a persistent feeling of sadness and isolation, difficulty bonding with

your baby, and a loss of interest in the wider world. All of which would be dramatically exacerbated during the pandemic.

When the first lockdown began in March 2020, we were keen to maintain access to the programme, moving it initially to Facebook enabling much needed access for the wider family, who were home schooling at that time.

In October 2020, Muso Baby was once again reintroduced as a six week programme for parents with babies, online via Zoom, enabling the more social elements of the original sessions in the museum in this new virtual space.

### Approach

Prior to our initial pilot we connected with as many health practitioners as possible, building relationships and a contact list. We arranged to attend the Perinatal Health Forum to share the programme to those who may wish to refer their clients.

### Intended outcomes

The programme offers mums access to a therapeutic intervention in a none-clinical setting, using the museum collection as inspiration for session content.

It offers a safe space for parents to connect and be supported by peers attending the sessions, reducing feelings of isolation. Muso Baby helps to nurture emotional connections between the parent and child through music therapy.

## “ Muso Baby helps to nurture emotional connections between the parent and child through music therapy.



### Intended outputs

- For participants to feel an increase in their wellbeing through engaging in the sessions.
- For parents to feel more connected to their babies.
- For parents to have ‘useful’ take-aways that they can draw on independently beyond the sessions to help support their wellbeing.

### Obstacles and issues

In a time when Health Services have been stretched, – we are consistently looking at new ways of connecting with colleagues.

### Actual outcomes

Of the nine cohorts we have facilitated since October 2020, all parents have exchanged contact details to stay in touch beyond the sessions.

### Actual outputs

Participants have told us...

*‘I’ve bonded more with my babies and my babies have really responded to the music so the music element I’m going to try carry on with every day. It’s help me to realise I’m not alone in my feelings as well’*

*‘My struggle is real and music is therapy and this was a really nice way to enjoy and learn’*

*‘It’s given me and my baby a time to focus on each other and enjoy the music’*

*‘The structure and contact with other adults was valuable as I’m isolated in a place where I don’t have local friends or family.’*

### Lessons learned

- The optimum group size to maintain a safe space, and facilitate enough time for all participants to access the support of the therapist and each other was six to eight parents.
- Share as much information in advance of the sessions as possible to help to alleviate any anxiety.
- Offer to have informal conversations about the sessions in advance, so participants know what to expect.
- A proactive approach is needed in building up contacts to spread the word about the programme to those who might refer. Connecting with your local Linkworkers, perinatal mental health organisations and health care providers is crucial.
- Investigate any opportunities to pop-up at health practitioner training events to talk about, share and promote your programme.
- It makes a difference to participants to receive a personalised welcome after their referral to the programme.

### Next steps

Looking to the future we are aiming to return to onsite delivery, whilst also recognising the positives/ opportunities of online delivery.

For some participants joining in online has been more accessible, especially with the sleep deprivation associated with newborns and travel costs.

We are currently piloting a hybrid programme of both online and onsite delivery, as we recognise for many online is a helpful stepping stone. We’ve had a number of enquires asking for onsite sessions

### Find out more

#### Muso Baby – A Therapist’s perspective

<https://mmhellofuture.wordpress.com/2019/07/19/muso-baby-a-therapists-perspective>

#### Muso Baby Virtual – A Therapist’s perspective

<https://mmhellofuture.wordpress.com/2020/05/28/muso-baby-virtual-a-therapists-perspective/>

For more information about PND [www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-natal-depression/overview](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-natal-depression/overview)

If you’re looking to work with a music therapist, you can find more information on ‘The British Association for Music Therapy’ (BAMT) [www.bamt.org](http://www.bamt.org)

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Family Programme Coordinator,  
Manchester Museum

# Supporting Wellbeing during the Covid-19 Pandemic:

## When people come together even when they are apart

### Summary

An engagement project, established in April 2020, which resulted in colourful blankets made up of handcrafted squares by staff, volunteers and the public during the Covid-19 pandemic. The exhibition is designed to be a symbolic hug of kindness, a representation of the love placed into every stitch and an effort to reflect spirit, hope and community.

### Background

The National Wool Museum is part of Amgueddfa Cymru.

The project was supported by The Ashley Family Foundation and Community Foundation Wales.

### Challenge

Covid-19 lockdowns meant that people could no longer meet, and many, faced with social isolation, felt significant impacts to their health and wellbeing.

### Approach

We invited people to join us in knitting, crocheting, felting or weaving rainbow squares from their homes to make a celebratory rainbow blanket.

### Intended outcomes

- Support people's wellbeing during isolation through creativity, in line with Amgueddfa Cymru's vision and Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- To thank our key workers.

- Maintain and support our relationship with existing volunteers and reach out to new audiences.
- Encourage people to develop new skills from home.
- Donating the blankets to Welsh charities, following the exhibition.
- The exhibition to be a reflective space, supporting communities following the covid lockdowns.

### Intended outputs

- Create a giant colourful rainbow blanket.
- Produce an exhibition interpretation video.
- Work with partners to include additional exhibition elements.

### Obstacles and issues

As people were unable to meet, the exhibition was managed and created remotely. We had to work creatively to overcome challenges.

It was difficult to forward plan due to the ever-changing covid circumstances. We had to be flexible deal with the changing circumstances.

The National Wool Museum is in a remote location and coupled with Covid-19 restrictions, accessibility was an issue. We created a digital element to the exhibition to overcome this.

### Actual outcomes

The project far exceeded our initial expectations. Due to the amazing

public response, what began as one blanket became many more each representing the rainbow, the symbol of peace, hope and light that follows darkness.

We created additional exhibition partnerships and digital elements. We extended the contribution deadlines to continue to support people during isolation. Visitors as well as exhibition contributors expressed the benefits of being involved in the project and visiting the exhibition.

*'I felt like I was still part of the team even though we were all remote working in our own homes.'*  
– Contributor.

### Actual outputs

The exhibition featured:

- Over 2,000 rainbow squares crafted with a variety of materials.
- Local primary school Ysgol Penboyr rainbow print artwork.
- National Wool Museum staff member's poem and an original Welsh language poem.
- *Stories of the Squares* exhibition video documenting contributor experiences.
- A Connect to Kindness Community Art Project artwork in partnership with Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services which included a collage of exhibition photos.





“This is an amazing exhibition of people’s time and thought in the lockdown we never expected. Seeing the exhibition has been a revelation of the kindness of people. It almost made me cry!

Visitor

“I decided to take part in the Exhibition of Hope project, because I felt if we couldn’t be together, at least we could all make together.

Contributor

- An online exhibition webpage included, amongst other things, a brief tour of the exhibition and the interpretation video.
- Over 200 people contributed approximately 1,800 hours of their time.
- Crisis charity created physical packs to send to services users.
- The exhibition was featured in Adult Learners’ Week 2020. Non Mitchell, the Museum’s Craftsperson demonstrated how to felt and weave a square.

#### Lessons learned

- At the beginning of the project, a risk-assessment covering various issues that might arise was created. In hindsight, this should have been continuously updated to reflect the evolving pandemic. Nevertheless, the unique nature of the project highlighted the need to remain flexible and creative, to respond to situations as they arose.

Over-estimate required funding. We did not expect the project to expand as much as it did. Applying for additional funding would have been helpful.

The project underlined the need for digital aspects to a community exhibition, as well creating a physical exhibition.

#### Next steps

- The Exhibition of Hope will be on display at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea from July – October 2022. It will return to the National Wool Museum during the Winter 2022–23.
- Following the exhibition, the blankets will be donated to Welsh charities.
- One blanket will be accessioned and remain on permanent display at the National Wool Museum.

#### Find out more

[kate.evans@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:kate.evans@museumwales.ac.uk)

#### Exhibition interpretation videos and tour:

<https://youtu.be/pXcV4b-4tw8>  
<https://youtu.be/Q1FdQxKJJew>  
[https://youtu.be/m0H\\_3i7EZol](https://youtu.be/m0H_3i7EZol)

# Northumberland National Park Recovery Curriculum Development

## Summary

National Parks are landscapes for everyone, and can restore our health by reconnecting with nature. The learning programme at Northumberland National Park uses the special qualities of Northumberland – its rich history, diverse species of flora and fauna, and great geographical features – to provide a unique environment for learning outside the classroom.

## Background

As we moved through the pandemic, it became clear that people missed being immersed in the outdoors. Demand from schools once the programme reopened led to us wanting to develop a new approach – to help school groups to reconnect with the outdoors in a way that enhanced their health and wellbeing, as well as learning about traditional curriculum subjects.

## Challenge

We were keen to take a different approach to learning outside the classroom once schools were able to visit us again, following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. Our challenge was to develop a Recovery Curriculum that would encourage school groups to see the health and wellbeing benefits of engaging with us, whilst still running our traditional programme.



“ Our challenge was to develop a Recovery Curriculum that would encourage school groups to see the health and wellbeing benefits of engaging with us...”



### Approach

We worked to develop a flexible programme of opportunities for all age groups, including school visits out into the National Park, our staff visiting schools, loan boxes, online teaching, and a new suite of digital resources that could be used in the classroom. We also offered a travel grant scheme, helping schools to part cover the cost of their coach in order to make a visit to the National Park.

### Intended outcomes

Removing barriers and providing new ways to engage with nature/local heritage by developing a series of flexible sessions that included:

- Reconnecting with nature in a safe environment.
- Improving children's health and wellbeing
- Sparking imagination through creative projects
- Increasing social interaction
- Reflecting different learning styles.

### Intended outputs

- 5 new sessions with bookings expected for loan boxes, Wellbeing Walks and Christmas sessions.
- Dedicated webpage and flyer, to be sent to 150 schools across Northumberland.
- 4 new digital resources.

- At least 75% of teachers responding to say the health and wellbeing of their students improved following the session.

### Obstacles and issues

- Getting to grips with digital platforms.
- Dealing with a waiting list for some sessions!
- Developing new sessions while still home working.
- Handling with cancellations/postponements of bookings due to Covid-19.
- Adapting some sessions to be delivered online when schools could no longer attend in person.

### Actual outcomes

The sessions were developed, with some being trialled in the summer term, and the curriculum officially launched in September 2021. Sessions included wellbeing walks, mindfulness sessions, Arts Award, poetry workshops inspired by The Lost Words, and special Christmas workshops taking place at our Walltown site, which include storytelling, winter walks and crafts.

### Actual outputs

- Dedicated webpage online and flyers printed, distributed to all schools in Northumberland, plus others.

- 5 new sessions and 6 digital resources developed.
- 2 loan box bookings.
- 10 schools have utilised the travel grant.
- 90% of teachers responding to the evaluation reported the health and wellbeing of their students had improved following the session.
- 300 engagements so far, with a fully booked series of Winter at Walltown workshops in November.
- A quote from our evaluation: *'It was great to see the children being totally immersed in the environment, and that the safe settings gave the children the confidence to explore a rural landscape, which was a first for some.'*

### Lessons learned

Health and wellbeing mean something different to everyone, and so there is no one size fits all approach. We found that simple, less prescriptive activities often work best.

Children loved being 'free' in the landscape and enjoyed the opportunity to just be creative in whatever form suited them.

### Next steps

- Embed the idea of the health and wellbeing benefits of the outdoors into our regular programme.
- Further develop digital resources, and explore interactive platforms such as Padlet.
- We plan to further promote our loan box service, and encourage school groups to engage with the nature around them in their own settings.

### Find out more

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[www.thesill.org.uk/learning/northumberland-national-park-recovery-curriculum](http://www.thesill.org.uk/learning/northumberland-national-park-recovery-curriculum)

# Creating space for cancer conversations

## Summary

Cancer Revolution: Science, Innovation and Hope' was a world-first exhibition on cancer running at the Science and Industry Museum from October 2021 to March 2022. It shared personal stories alongside the revolutionary science behind our understanding of cancer and its pioneering treatments. The perspectives of both scientists and cancer patients were central to the exhibition, looking ahead to a more hopeful future for cancer care.

## Background

The exhibition was open to visitors from all demographics although recommended for children over seven. The community partnerships programme specifically approached communities with experience of cancer, and lower than average diagnosis and cancer treatment rates across Greater Manchester.

## Challenge

This is a very emotive topic with 1 in 2 of us being affected by cancer in our lifetimes. We had to support the wellbeing of visitors whilst sharing the science that might save lives.

The Covid-19 pandemic was ongoing during the exhibition and guidance changed frequently. This prevented us being able to engage with current cancer patients as planned because they were required to shield so could not visit public places.

## Approach

- We adapted our approach to partner with organisations supporting people affected by cancer or those who had finished receiving their treatment so were less likely to be shielding in the pandemic.
- Attendance was limited to support social distancing.
- Staff and volunteers were given training by Cancer Research UK to allow visitors to be better supported whilst visiting the exhibition.
- Aftercare signposting was provided both in the exhibition and was spoken about at all related events.

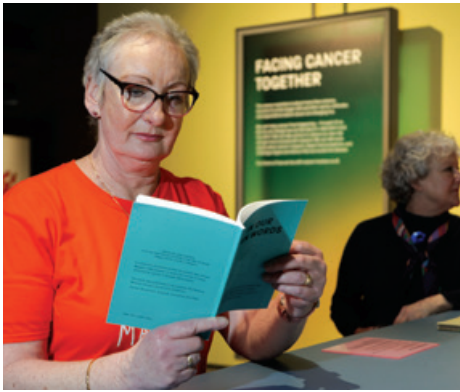
## Intended outcomes

The community partnership team focused on inspiring hope and supporting people to have better cancer conversations which are free from taboo and myths. We also encouraged people to learn from each other about their experience of cancer, whether it is from a professional or a personal perspective. This was an aim identified by patient and scientist advisory groups at the outset of the exhibition planning.

## Intended outputs

World Cancer Day coffee morning, radio shows in priority communities, craft workshop and at least one book written by the general public about their experiences of cancer.





### Obstacles and issues

The exhibition ran during the Covid-19 pandemic and there were several changes in guidance which delayed, cancelled and limited participants at events.

One aim was to engage with those currently living with cancer, however the pandemic prevented this.

### Actual outcomes

The intended outcomes of the project were successfully achieved.

- The events facilitated better cancer conversations. The exhibition itself generated conversations, but we also had feedback that conversations continued beyond the visits.
- The aim to inspire hope was harder to measure but there was feedback that this was achieved

### Actual outputs

The coffee morning included a curator-led tour and refreshments, for local Community Champions who help with early diagnosis and cancer screening programmes.

We spoke on a local radio station in a priority borough.

The book had an open brief but the final creation was a poetry book called *In Our Own Words*. We worked with the creative writing group from Maggie's Manchester, a cancer support centre, who wrote poems about their cancer experiences. The poetry book was added to the exhibition permanent collection, provided to all ten borough library services and the writers received individual copies during a visit to the exhibition.



“The community partnership team focused on inspiring hope and supporting people to have better cancer conversations which are free from taboo and myths.

Unfortunately, the craft workshop for current cancer patients had to be cancelled after several pandemic related delays.

A BSL tour of the exhibition and Q&A with d/Deaf health specialists was hosted after we received feedback that the d/Deaf community has low diagnosis rates but wasn't reflected in the exhibition.

### Lessons learned

- Taking a more cautious approach to Covid-19 safety measures enabled our vulnerable target communities to feel confident visiting the exhibition.
- We ended up approaching local writing groups rather than doing an open call out for the book to support staff workload.
- We are keen to utilise creative writing as a method for future partnership projects as the outputs are both personal and flexible in terms of reaching a broader audience.
- Creating an illustrated book required a lot of input from museum staff. This knowledge will inform our

budget and staffing allocations for future writing projects.

- Improving the amount of pre-visit information would support more independent visits from the d/Deaf community.
- BSL tours need several interpreters stationed at key locations within the exhibition, or there needs to be an interpreter for each Deaf attendee if facilitating an event where not all attendees are BSL fluent.

### Next steps

Working with the d/Deaf community has helped discussions about the accessibility of future exhibitions in Manchester.

We have shared all these findings internally at the Science Museum Group which will support other sites hosting this touring exhibition.

### Find out more

**Claire Critchley**  
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 scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk

# 'Tackling the Blues': Promoting mental health awareness at Tate Liverpool



## Summary

Our aim was to create a summer programme called 'Creation Stations' in the Clore Studio at Tate Liverpool from 27 July to 31 August 2021. The programme was broadly themed around mental health, seeking to promote key messages from schools programme 'Tackling the Blues' (TtB) with families and young visitors.

TtB supports children aged 6 to 16 who are experiencing, or are at risk of developing, mental illness using education, arts and sports-based approaches. It is delivered in partnership between Tate Liverpool, Edge Hill University and Everton in the Community.

## Background

Tate Liverpool joined the partnership in 2020 to develop an arts-based offer in 28 primary and secondary schools across Merseyside. To date, the schools offer has now engaged 2,231 children and young people in mental health awareness sessions.

Underpinning some of this work is the New Economics Foundation's '5 Ways to Wellbeing' – connect, keep learning, be active, take notice, give. The learning team at Tate Liverpool sought to use this model to raise mental health awareness in the gallery.

## Challenge

- Promoting positive mental health messages in the gallery using the 5 ways to Wellbeing.
- Developing a physical presence for TtB.

## Approach

Using arts-based approaches, the programme encouraged healthy discussion around mental health. Activities in the family programme were themed around the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, and the studio was designed to reflect themes via an imagined neighbourhood comprising: The Connection Café (Connect), The Learning Lookout (Learn), The Draw Explore (Be Active), The Bureau of Marvelous Missions (Take Notice) and The Giving Garden (Give).

In each area visitors could take part in an arts-based activity that linked to the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and Tate's

national collection of contemporary art. Activities were supported by TtB mentors (students from Edge Hill University) who encouraged participation and conversations around mental health.

## Intended outcomes

- Improving knowledge of 'The 5 Ways to Wellbeing'.
- Connecting gallery staff with TtB mentors to promote knowledge exchange.
- Embedding mental health messages in gallery and learning programmes using creative learning.

## Intended outputs

- Creating a physical TtB presence in the gallery.
- Recruiting TtB mentors to engage gallery visitors in conversations about the 5 Ways to Wellbeing.
- Creating a creative environment to develop awareness of mental health with families.

## Obstacles and issues

Due to the universality of the space, sometimes visitors were unaware of the objective to promote wellbeing and therefore TtB mentors would need to repeat key messages.

TtB mentors are typically recruited from education courses at Edge Hill University and therefore needed to adapt their teaching approach to an informal learning setting.



Due to the short lead-in period, links to the collection could have been better embedded within activities and mentor confidence in the collection could have been developed further.

#### Actual outcomes

- Creation Stations became a site to begin dialogues about mental health.
- Community artworks were produced demonstrating creative learning about the 5 Ways to Wellbeing.

#### Actual outputs

We engaged 3,129 visitors in the activities delivered in 'Creation Stations' with many visitors engaging in discussions around the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. From collecting some light-touch feedback from visitors, some themes around wellbeing were understood. For example:

*'I just wanted to let you know how great today was. I've been feeling really rubbish recently and it was an absolute tonic hanging out in the creation station!' – Adult carer*

Whilst for children the experience was more general:

*'I love it here. It was the best time of my holiday' – Child*

Additionally, TtB mentors developed ownership of Creation Stations, demonstrated by ongoing expansion of ideas to the planned activities. Gradually, different artworks and activities were generated. For example, one mentor created a 'worry bin' to encourage visitors to throw their worries away.

#### Lessons learned

We learned that TtB mentors were the most powerful mediators of the 5 ways to Wellbeing. Even when activities promoting wellbeing were accompanied with text, it was only through engagement with mentors that families understood the objective of Creation Stations to develop mental health awareness.

In the future, TtB mentors will require more training in museum education during their induction to Creation Stations – both to aid their confidence in talking about the collection, and to enable them to convey messages through facilitation.

Lastly, we will create a research strategy to measure the impact of the programme on gallery communities and mentors more rigorously.

#### Next steps

Due to the programme's success, we will host Creation Stations again this summer (2022). This time, we will conduct a period of research and evaluation with Edge Hill University to measure knowledge exchange between gallery stakeholders and mentors, as well as the impact of the programme on mental health awareness.

**Using arts-based approaches, the programme encouraged healthy discussion around mental health.**



#### Find out more

[www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/creation-stations](http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/creation-stations)

<https://sites.edgehill.ac.uk/tacklingtheblues>

Contact Alison Jones for more information:  
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# Age Well:

## Supporting older people's health and wellbeing through cultural connections

### Summary

Taking place through partnerships across the Cambridgeshire region, *Age Well* is the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) framework that brings together programmes with and for older people, specifically those living in or supported by social or residential care who have complex and or chronic health conditions.

### Background

Although the framework is a new development for the UCM, many of the practices and partnerships within it have been developed over a sustained period through consultation and collaboration with a breadth of older people and health and social care providers.

Evaluation of the *Building Connections* programme, the forerunner of

*Age Well* which ran from 2018-2021, highlighted that museum programmes were often seen or employed by participants as part of positive strategies for health. These observations, by Dr Hilary Bungay of Anglia Ruskin University, provide the wider context for this project.

### Challenge

The challenges driving this work forward are the high levels of health inequality, loneliness and isolation experienced by older people in the Cambridgeshire region; *Age Well* aims to strengthen the UCM's response to this and contribute to its new UCM strategic research initiative, *Collections, Connections and Communities*.

### Approach

Working collaboratively with clinicians and care providers, *Age Well* takes

place primarily through targeted activity, with gateway opportunities within the public programme.

The three established *Age Well* practices have a shared delivery approach whereby artworks and artefacts act as stimuli for people to take time, be curious, imagine, share, learn and create together. Evaluation has identified that the health and wellbeing impacts of the practices are that people feel connected, skilled, uplifted, absorbed, inspired, valued and overall positive.

### Intended outcomes

The aim of *Age Well* is to improve the health and wellbeing of older people by engaging them with collections at UCM, and their associated physical and digital spaces.

Evidence will be gathered by measuring and exploring people's experiences and responses to the collections and their feelings of; connectivity, being uplifted, inspiration, feeling valued and becoming more knowledgeable.

### Intended outputs

*Dance with the Museum* – people are invited to wake up their minds, bodies and imaginations through music and movement inspired by collections.

**Partnership strands** Cambridge City Council sheltered housing, Addenbrooke's Hospital Arts, Worthwhile Waiting GP network – muscular skeletal, social prescribing initiative.





“**Being flexible and responsive to people’s needs, remaining open and curious, always working collaboratively, and investing in consistent contact have all helped people know they are valued.**”



**Time with the Museum** – people are invited to explore collections and share responses and ultimately to have ‘conversations that matter.’

**Partnership strands**, residential and day centre network, Arthur Rank Hospice and Cambridge Older People Enterprise.

**Portals to the World**, for people with a dementia diagnosis and a regular care giver; people are invited to learn together about collections, with the focus being on ability over disability.

**Partnership strands**, Dementia Compass, NHS Memory Clinic and Alzheimer’s society.

#### Obstacles and issues

- People can feel self-conscious about dance and are uncomfortable in museum spaces, perceiving them as something for other people. How should we build trust with our participants, helping them to feel comfortable somewhere new?
- Chronic health conditions and high pain levels often lead to low motivation. How can we address this sensitively?

- A high volunteer to participant ratio is needed for programmes. How do we recruit and retain an inclusive volunteer body?
- Cambridgeshire is characterised by isolated villages and limited public transport, however groups often come together for sessions, enjoying the social connectivity. How do we overcome this lack of transport?
- Relationships with clinical/care staff can be inconsistent. How can we invest for sustainability, and support our time poor partners?
- Forming new groups facilitated online or by telephone has limitations. How can we ensure social connectivity is enabled?

#### Lessons learned

- Participants are more comfortable with the idea of movement is rather than dance. We can slowly build confidence and trust.
- Recruitment needs to be ongoing, and this kind of work should take place in the community as well as the museum.

- Being flexible and responsive to people’s needs, remaining open and curious, always working collaboratively, and investing in consistent contact have all helped people know they are valued.
- Ongoing volunteer training and development has fostered and maintained momentum, positivity and interest.
- A close relationship with Dial-a-Ride has resulted in participant transport being more reliable.
- Having a network for care/clinical staff allows for ongoing investment in individuals and organisations. Establishing shared and agreed approaches to communication modalities for online or in telephone groups, ensures that all voices are heard, and people can feel confident in the dynamic.

#### Next steps

As part of Cambridge University, *Age Well* has an academic correlation resulting in the opportunity to undertake a discrete piece of work to sit alongside programme evaluation. Both are to feed directly into next phase of the UCM development, helping to further democratise collections and spaces and move the museums further into the wider realm of social benefit.

#### Find out more

##### Look, Imagine, Move:

[www.youtube.com/c/FitzMuseum/playlists/Look%20Imagine%20Move](http://www.youtube.com/c/FitzMuseum/playlists/Look%20Imagine%20Move)

##### Relax, Look, Imagine:

[www.youtube.com/c/UniversityofCambridgeMuseums/playlists/Relax%20Look%20Imagine](http://www.youtube.com/c/UniversityofCambridgeMuseums/playlists/Relax%20Look%20Imagine)

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# Encouraging Sustainable Wellbeing Through Heritage Learning



## Summary

Following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Wessex Archaeology took the decision to re-imagine its learning programme by using the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a foundation for the delivery of heritage learning.

## Background

We understood our responsibility to enhance young people's wellbeing but weren't sure how to begin this work in the unprecedented context of a pandemic.

## Challenge

The main challenge was to revise our education work in a way which engaged young people whose modes of engagement had necessarily changed.

## Approach

We sought to holistically embed the five ways to wellbeing throughout our schools programme to differentiate our new work from our pre-pandemic engagement, whilst allowing for further changes in response to dialogue with audiences.

For this purpose, the five ways to wellbeing can be defined as –

1. Connect with other people
2. Be physically active
3. Learn new skills
4. Give to others
5. Mindfulness

## Intended outcomes

The main aim was to train our Community & Education staff to use the five ways to wellbeing to elevate

our schools programme delivery during the pandemic.

We wanted to understand how to deliver this in a cost-effective manner which had maximum impact for school pupils across the country. The changes had to be cost-effective to ensure this represented a sustainable development which could be advocated for within the wider company and included within commercial archaeology project tenders. For this to happen, the changes had to maintain or enhance the delivery of our Community & Education methodology.

## Intended outputs

The intended outputs had to be realistic given the pandemic context. In our case, this meant using the five ways to wellbeing to revise our pedagogy and maintain learning aim delivery. Our learning aims will always be tailored to enhance knowledge of the arts, science, heritage, and culture using archaeology. This allowed us to sustain engagement levels as far as possible so that audience engagement during the pandemic could be compared to pre-pandemic levels.

## Obstacles and issues

The primary challenge faced was finding a balance between meeting our learning aims and facilitating the five ways to wellbeing. Learning and wellbeing do not necessarily go hand in hand. Uniquely, for the project to be worthwhile, the five ways to wellbeing also had to be implemented at a national scale across our five regional offices.

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### Actual outcomes

Community & Education staff now have an in-depth understanding of the five ways to wellbeing and how they prove essential to the evolution of our school's programme.

Full project outcomes are yet to be evaluated. Measuring project impact would involve comparing evaluation feedback from our school's programme from before and after integration of the five ways to wellbeing. This would focus on both quantitative and qualitative feedback, measuring the time spent engaging, and frequency of key words related to improved wellbeing in responses.

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### Actual outputs

Further evaluation would indicate whether audience engagement levels have been maintained throughout this new strategic approach. If so, this suggests the five ways to wellbeing represent a cost-effective and sustainable mode of engagement.

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It is important to note here that sustained engagement would be taken to suggest learning aims have been met and we have continued to offer an archaeological education different to what already exists, and that teachers value.

With the addition of qualitative evaluation, we could put together a comprehensive analysis to feed back to sector-wide publications.

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### Lessons learned

The main learning point from the project is that extensive consultation is always an advantage when revising our pedagogical approach. In-depth consultation would have examined how each of the five ways to wellbeing can be integrated specifically within an archaeological context. This would have involved consulting archaeological education research and considering the experiences of educational practitioners. Theories developed during this stage would

then have been trialled through pilots with a small group of schools and partners.

Unfortunately, this was not possible due to the changed priorities of our partner organisations. However, the pandemic taught us that acting dynamically to mitigate negative impact is still worthwhile.

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### Next steps

Our next step will be to determine whether the five ways to wellbeing should become a permanent feature within our post-pandemic transition. For sustained implementation, our current use of the five ways to wellbeing should fit sector-wide best practice as indicated by Historic England's Strategy for Inclusion, Diversity and Equality and the upcoming Historic England Wellbeing strategy with which it interfaces. If these publications indicate the validity of our approach, our Community & Education methodology can be revised to reflect this. Such changes would recognise the need for further investment to revise evaluation feedback forms to reflect the emphasis on wellbeing. Further substantive action could include extending this work to our events programme and training wider staff, who occasionally work with Community & Education, in the five ways to wellbeing.

We know that supporting the positive wellbeing of young people is important but need to determine whether this is a pandemic-era necessity rather than best practice.

**“We sought to holistically embed the five ways to wellbeing throughout our schools programme to differentiate our new work from our pre-pandemic engagement, whilst allowing for further changes in response to dialogue with audiences.”**



### Find out more

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# GEM is for everyone interested in learning through museums, heritage and cultural settings

**The Group for Education in Museums (GEM) was founded in 1948 and strives to support and empower our community of colleagues to connect and learn together.**

Our vision is of a connected and equipped community of people enabling learning across museum, heritage, and cultural settings, creating inspiring experiences, relevant for everyone; that promote equality – transform and enrich lives.

GEM delivers a range of services to support museum educators, including professional membership, training and development opportunities, career mentoring, regular publications and dedicated representatives across all four nations of the UK, Europe, and Worldwide.

Learn more about GEM on our website [gem.org.uk](http://gem.org.uk) and find out how our membership could benefit you.



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