

**GEM**

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75 YEARS

# Case Studies

**Social Impact**

Vol.31 2023



# Editorial

**Welcome to the 31st edition of the GEM Case Studies, focused on the theme of Social Impact. We are delighted to present a diverse variety of case studies from museums across the UK, highlighting their progress in enriching people's lives through transformational museum learning programmes.**

The case study by **the University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums** delves into the significant impact of including the voices of young people with SEND into planning and programming their learning activities. **Newcastle University** implemented a participatory project, inviting students to reimagine the future of housing within the context of climate change. **York Archaeology** showcased a great example of cultural engagement through a Social Prescribing project. **National Museums Liverpool** devised a potent programme helping young people recover from drug addiction through a series of workshops. **The Museum of English Rural Life** introduced a programme supporting mental health using the ancient Japanese tradition of Kintsugi.

**Berwick Museum & Art Gallery, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery,** and **Dulwich Picture Gallery** initiated projects to help communities combat social isolation and loneliness. **Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)** engaged local youth in archaeology through a digital skills-based programme.

The **Old Royal Naval College** forged a sustainable partnership with a hospital, conducting programmes to uplift children's spirits during hospital treatments and enhance cultural engagement in the local area. **David Livingstone Birthplace** organised a program for primary school children, demonstrating the diversity of job roles in the museum sector and enhancing employability skills. A similar approach was adopted for the programme at the **Cornwall Museums Partnership**, which enhanced access to museums, galleries, and heritage sites for young people with care experience. **The British Museum** pioneered an initiative to provide event support for families with additional needs by ensuring activities are welcoming for all learning needs and behaviours. **Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage** developed an Early Years project concentrating on family outreach and focusing on key social outcomes such as improving accessibility, health, and wellbeing, as well as equality and inclusion. **The Great North Museum: Hancock** established a support programme for primary school children of the

showmen and women who run Europe's largest travelling funfair, which visits Newcastle each June. **Colchester + Ipswich Museums** and **Ipswich Jobcentre Plus** explored what a partnership between such diverse organisations might entail.

These case studies showcase the meaningful impact museums can have on society, addressing critical social issues and fostering positive change. We hope that the case studies shared in the publication inspire you and provide valuable insights into the transformative power of museum learning programmes. We hope that this edition will encourage new ideas, collaborations and initiatives in your practice.

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**Katya Provornaya**  
Case Studies Editor

GEM Communications and  
Participation Manager

# Introduction

**How do you measure the social impact of museum learning work? What does good socially engaged practice look like? Does it look different in different places, depending on the people you are working with, at different times? It can be quite intense work, so what about boundaries and staff support? They are all big questions. And big questions often have big answers.**

“A Common Wealth”, the comprehensive report on the role of museum education, highlighted the importance of developing museum learning programmes to engage communities and tackle social exclusion. This idea has been vastly incorporated into contemporary policies and research focused on the social impact museum learning can create. Many of these ideas have informed the the Museums Association (MA) Manifesto for Learning and Engagement (2021), which GEM and Engage helped to develop.

The MA defines social impact (social value or having socially engaged practice) as when “museums influence positive change and foster rich and meaningful relationships between staff, volunteers and participants, enhancing the lives of everyone involved” and they foster this across the sector through the Museums Change Lives Campaign. The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester says that “socially purposeful” organisations are “dynamic, ethical and inclusive and... play a central role in the social, cultural and civic life of their communities”. The Cultural Learning Alliance brings together global research that says that people who engage with culture are 20% more likely to vote, twice as likely to

volunteer and 38% report better mental and physical health. The Durham Commission and Social Mobility Commission state that culture is a social justice issue (not just for the few, but everyone) and a social mobility challenge (inclusive access to employment and jobs). In other words, there is a body of research that supports what we all know as museum learning professionals: art and culture make life better.

That’s great, but big questions also need practical, “how do we do that?” answers, so, what does it all mean in practice? This GEM Case Studies edition is a great way to read about fabulous practice, as it contains a selection of inspiring example of museum learning work with social impact.

Leeds Museums and Galleries are a local authority museum service and, as such, have ‘civic-ness’ and a sense of social purpose at our heart. We are here because of the people of the city. Our strategic plan for 2022–27 starts with the lines: ‘We are people who care. We care for, and with, our communities and city. We care for objects, buildings, places, and spaces. We care for our world, and our staff and volunteer teams.’ That’s a really clear message about our purpose as a museum service. If a project or programme doesn’t promote care,



and hasn’t been driven by our communities, we don’t do it. That statement shapes how we operate (sustainably through nurturing long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships), how we co-create content (welcoming and always together), how we evaluate (measuring what matters), how we income generate (the triple bottom line and doughnut economics), how we recruit (using inclusive practices, from our communities, with fair pay and job descriptions that all involve engagement), how we look after our staff, volunteers and freelancers (through coaching and trauma informed practice), and how we advocate within our city (‘we help

the city thrive’). We didn’t get here overnight. So far, it’s been an 18-year process and there’s still more of the journey ahead. The paperwork helped us get there and helps us focus our energies, but social impact is about people and making change together.

#### **Kate Fellows**

Head of Learning and Access  
Leeds Museums and Galleries

GEM Yorkshire and the Humber  
Area Rep

#### **Find out more**

##### **Socially Purposeful Organisations**

<https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/socially-purposeful-organisations%20>

##### **“What do we mean by Social Impact?”**

[www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/measuring-socially-engaged-practice/what-do-we-mean-by-social-impact/#:~:text=Some%20prefer%20terms%20such%20as,the%20lives%20of%20everyone%20involved.](http://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/measuring-socially-engaged-practice/what-do-we-mean-by-social-impact/#:~:text=Some%20prefer%20terms%20such%20as,the%20lives%20of%20everyone%20involved.)

##### **Cultural Learning Alliance**

[www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/evidence](http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/evidence)

##### **“A Manifesto for Museum Learning and Engagement”**

[www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/learning-and-engagement/manifesto/](http://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/learning-and-engagement/manifesto/)

##### **Durham Commission on Creativity and Education**

[www.dur.ac.uk/resources/creativitycommission/DurhamCommissionsecondreport-21April.pdf](http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/creativitycommission/DurhamCommissionsecondreport-21April.pdf)

##### **“Creative Industries Toolkit”, Social Mobility Commission**

<https://socialmobilityworks.org/toolkit/creative-industries-toolkit-culture-and-leadership>

# Contents



08



12



16



22



24



32



10



14



18



28



36

## 03 Editorial

**Katya Provornaya**  
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## 04 Introduction

**Kate Fellows**  
Head of Learning and Access  
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**08 How Can Young People with SEND Demonstrate Social Impact by Being Involved in Meaningful Consultation around Inclusion and Accessibility with Cultural Venues?**  
**Miranda Millward, Thomas Procter-Legg, Helen Pooley**  
The History of Science Museum, Oxford, The Iffley Academy

## 10 Houses of the Future

**Sara Bird**  
Newcastle University

## 12 Social Impact through Social Prescribing: Archaeology on Prescription

**Dr Ashley Fisher, Meg Barclay, Ian Milsted**  
York Archaeology

## 14 In Their Own Words: How Can Museums Talk Drugs and Weapons from Experience?

**Adam Duckworth**  
National Museums Liverpool

## 16 Supporting Mental Health through Conservation and Repair: Kintsugi Conservation for Wellbeing at the Museum of English Rural Life

**Victoria Stevens, Phillippa Heath**  
Museum of English Rural Life, Compass Recovery College

## 18 The Union Chain Bridge and its Travelling Canvas

**Becki Cooper, Claire Beattie**  
Museums Northumberland

## 20 Visual Arts and Peer Learning for Creative Aging: Seniors Supporting Seniors

**Monique Wozny, Eleonora Sermoneta**  
Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

## 22 'Heritage Heroes': A Collaboration between Museum of London Archaeology and Streets of Growth

**Ayesha Purcell, Shantol Campbell, Katrina Foxton, Cat Gibbs**  
Museum of London Archaeology, Streets of Growth, Mazzi Cuzzi

## 24 Old Royal Naval College Hospital School Outreach Programme

**Claire Kirk, Ellen Lee**  
Old Royal Naval College and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

## 26 Mark Makers

**Alex Bowie, Kelly Robinson**  
Dulwich Picture Gallery

## 28 Future Careers with David Livingstone Birthplace Museum

**Romy Galloway**  
David Livingstone Birthplace

## 30 What Difference Can Museum Learning Make to Young People Who are Care Experienced?

**Celine Elliott**  
Cornwall Museums Partnership, Carefree Cornwall

## 32 Addressing the Social Impact of the Pandemic on SEND Parents

**Katharine Hoare**  
British Museum

## 34 'Sparkling Wonder, Making Connections' at Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage

**Christine Evans, Victoria Dawes**  
Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage (Clifton Park Museum)

## 36 From the Fair to the Museum

**Kate Holden, Jo McSwaine, Georgina Scott**  
Great North Museum: Hancock

## 38 Joy at the Jobcentre

**Eleanor Root**  
Colchester + Ipswich Museums Ipswich Jobcentre Plus



# How Can Young People with SEND Demonstrate Social Impact by Being Involved in Meaningful Consultation around Inclusion and Accessibility with Cultural Venues?

## Summary

This project focused on how to create a meaningful programme of consultation with a group of Sixth Form and Year 9 students with special needs from the Iffley Academy in order to:

- Gather feedback on access and inclusion for Vision 2024 – an ambitious redevelopment project to ensure the History of Science Museum (HSM) remains relevant, outward-looking and sustainable for the future.
- Create an Easy Read guide for the museum.

## Background

The Iffley Academy is a community special academy for young people up to age 18 with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The History of Science Museum (HSM) is part of the University of Oxford and has worked with Iffley Academy students on previous projects.

## Challenge

HSM's current Grade 1 listed building has poor access both in terms of its built environment and its displays.

How can access be improved for young people with SEND – what makes an accessible museum for them?

## Approach

Museum staff planned and delivered a range of consultation events and activities at school, HSM and other recently refurbished cultural venues in Oxford to enable students to articulate and demonstrate what makes an accessible and inclusive museum experience.

## Intended outcomes

- To ensure the voices of young people with SEND are at the heart of museum plans to tackle barriers to access.
- To enable young people with SEND to support work that impacts peers in the wider public and community.

## Intended outputs

- A report providing evidence and suggestions for improving physical access at HSM and engagement with the collections.
- Feedback on a planned Easy Read guide.

## Obstacles and issues

- This type of consultation work takes time and resources. It takes time to build rapport with students and to develop their confidence in sharing their views. The support of additional museum staff was required to enable recording of observations of student reactions, participation and verbal responses.
- Providing clear explanations to students at each stage of what we were doing and why required thought. We were lucky that Iffley Academy had recently been rebuilt, so we were able to frame the museum redevelopment project in this context.
- We had hoped to show architectural models and “fly through” films of the architectural plans but these were not available within the timescale of the project. The architectural drawings and floorplans we had were hard to visualise and make sense of, so we didn't use these with the students. This meant that we couldn't get very detailed feedback on very specific architectural changes.



## Actual outcomes

- All students were able to give their feedback via a range of strategies such as facilitated discussion, voting, annotating images etc. We also used staff observations and recorded any comments students made during activities and visits. All of this feedback fed into a report for senior museum staff to reference in future planning meetings and decisions for Vision 2024.
- An Easy Read guide to the current HSM building was created and student feedback was incorporated throughout with changes made to include their suggestions.
- Teachers and museum staff observed a growth in confidence in many of the young people in engaging with different cultural spaces.

## Actual outputs

- HSM staff have much better knowledge of the needs of young people with SEND and are able to advocate for them within the redevelopment plans.
- Students were able to use this consultation work and their visits to a variety of venues as evidence

for their ASDAN qualification (an accredited qualification which focuses on the development of personal, social and work-related abilities).

## Lessons learned

- Planned sessions require a structured and scaffolded approach which provides the time and a range of opportunities for all students to practise sharing their views.
- Students needed to go through a series of activities over time to elicit feedback on unfamiliar environments and feel secure in offering their feedback.
- They needed to be actively engaged at each stage of the process and have a range of ways to give their feedback.
- The planning process for listed buildings is long and has many stages with new questions coming up all the time. It would be good to work with the group over a longer period to have a way to ask for feedback on specific questions or alterations to plans as they come up.

“ Teachers and museum staff observed a growth in confidence in many of the young people in engaging with different cultural spaces.

## Next steps

- This multi-modal consultation has provided a model with which to consult with other groups with access needs for Vision 2024.
- This consultation model has also shown how other venues within the Oxford University Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) might seek to consult with young people with SEND (for example, Harcourt Arboretum) for their NHLF programme.
- This project is part of a wide-ranging partnership between Oxford University GLAM and the Iffley Academy. Please see our webpage for all our other collaborative project work.

## Find out more

[glam.ox.ac.uk/iffley-academy-partnership](http://glam.ox.ac.uk/iffley-academy-partnership)  
[iffleyacademy.co.uk](http://iffleyacademy.co.uk)  
[www.hsm.ox.ac.uk](http://www.hsm.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.asdan.org.uk](http://www.asdan.org.uk)  
[miranda.millward@glam.ox.ac.uk](mailto:miranda.millward@glam.ox.ac.uk)  
[helen.pooley@hsm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.pooley@hsm.ox.ac.uk)

# Houses of the Future



## Summary

Newcastle University Library's Education Outreach team worked with 36 students aged 12–14 from three schools in the North-East – Sandhill View Academy, Royal Grammar School and Ponteland High School to create model *Houses of the Future* to meet the changing needs of housing due to climate change. These models formed a public exhibition at The Farrell Centre throughout the summer.

Inspiration for the houses was taken from the archive of renowned architect Sir Terry Farrell. Tours, mini lectures and talks from academics in Architecture, Engineering and Biotechnology as well as bespoke tours of The Farrell Centre and The OME all provided further inspiration to inform their planning.

## Background

The Education Outreach team have been working with local schools and colleges to develop online resources, workshops and project-based learning opportunities inspired by Newcastle University Library's Special Collections and Archives.

## Challenges

Too often the potential consequences of climate change are talked about in negative language with little emphasis placed on solutions and how individuals can shape the future to address these issues. This project puts students very much at the heart of the debate about what they can do in the future through the subject lens of Architecture and Engineering and Biotechnology.

## Approach

Students were encouraged to think creatively of solutions to specific problems within climate change: strong wind, flooding, fuel poverty and species extinction, and to build model houses showing the potential solutions.

## Intended outcomes

Students will feel inspired by the written and built heritage around them to think creatively of solutions for our houses of the future, considering the challenges of climate change.

## Intended outputs

Each student will create a model house for the future to meet the challenges of climate change around a given theme of flooding, strong winds, species extinction or fuel poverty.

Collectively their houses will form a public exhibition at the Farrell Centre, with accompanying video and exhibition booklet.

## Obstacles and issues

Part of the strength of this project was the multiple partners and experts involved in the project. However, this did lead to its own problems in terms of people's availability and we had to be flexible in terms of delivery e.g. students delivering a tour and talk rather than lecturer. Also, our planned tour of the Engineering building proved impossible as the building was at an intensive stage of construction. Instead, the project architect delivered an in-person presentation to the students.

One of the main problems was the very tight deadline between the students completing their houses and the exhibition launch. This involved lots of planning in advance to prioritise the booklet getting printed (allowing time for glue to dry!) as well as ensuring permissions were in place to display, photograph and video the students and their work.

As this was a project around subject disciplines that we had not worked in before we were very keen to ensure that it was effectively evaluated by producing a Theory of Change. However, the budget did not stretch to having independent evaluation, so it was a constant difficulty to remember to make observations on the day and to remain objective.

## Actual outcomes

As evidenced in the write up from the students about the design of their houses, students did feel inspired by the written and built heritage around them to think creatively of solutions for our houses of the future, considering the challenges of climate change. Their houses are evidence of how they considered the issues and adapted their houses to meet the needs, such as wind turbines, roof gardens etc..

## Actual outputs

On conceiving this project, it was always the concern that the students may not deliver and that their houses, whilst interesting, may not be inspiring and thought provoking to an external audience. This was absolutely not the case. The students were incredibly proud of their houses, taking photos and talking about it back in school and to family. As their houses were of such a high standard, it made the exhibition booklet and online exhibition really stand out as something to be proud of.

## Lessons learned

The key lesson learned in this project has been to be clear and state what the objectives of the project were with all partners from the outset.

Through being very clear from the outset as to our outcomes we were able to plan appropriately. We started



“ Students were encouraged to think creatively of solutions to specific problems within climate change: strong wind, flooding, fuel poverty and species extinction, and to build model houses showing the potential solutions.

by thinking about what we wanted in the exhibition and worked backwards, putting in the scaffolding for the students to achieve this.

Budget is always a key concern in any project. We were lucky enough in that everyone was able to dedicate their time for free. This enabled us to put our budget to effective use where it was needed, such as equipment to build the houses and exhibition launch.

When creating an exhibition, it is very hard to hand control over to the students. This is exactly what we had to do and found that the driver of having a genuine audience ensured that the work completed was of a high standard.

## Next steps

This project has been a learning curve in that we have never used a business archive as inspiration for a project

before, nor worked with engineering and architecture. This project has given us the confidence to see inspiration and heritage all around us and to think outside the box.

Using Theory of Change has also been insightful and interesting, and we would seek to continue to conduct in-depth evaluation of key projects in the future.

## Find out more

### About the project:

[speccollstories.ncl.ac.uk/houses-of-the-future/index.html](https://speccollstories.ncl.ac.uk/houses-of-the-future/index.html)

### Newcastle University Library's Education Outreach team:

[archivesalive.ncl.ac.uk](https://archivesalive.ncl.ac.uk)

### The Farrell Centre:

[farrellcentre.org.uk](https://farrellcentre.org.uk)

# Social Impact through Social Prescribing: Archaeology on Prescription



## Summary

Archaeology on Prescription is an award-winning (Museum & Heritage Show Community Engagement Programme of the Year 2022). Social Prescribing project using archaeology as a tool to support mental health and wellbeing for York residents, and has been hugely successful in its impact on participants' lives.

## Background

Participants who experience mental health difficulties, including social isolation, depression, and anxiety, and who can also be disabled, with learning and access needs, are socially prescribed the project through the NHS and York Centre for Voluntary Services, as well as local community organisations. The archaeological process is broken down into manageable steps to make it accessible. Staff are supported to deliver sessions through a comprehensive training programme.

## Challenge

Excavation sessions cannot happen during winter. This risked participant progress made during the excavation sessions, as they faced several months with nothing until next Spring. Knowledge of this potential gap increased anxiety as participants finished their final excavation sessions.



## Approach

A Winter Programme of post-excavation processing and historical crafting sessions. Post-excavation sessions, led by the excavation site team, focused on record entry and research of the local residents. Historical crafting sessions led by our in house experimental historical interpreters taught participants Viking-era crafts.

## Intended outcomes

These sessions were intended to maintain the positive impact on participants' mental health and wellbeing, which had been achieved during their excavation sessions. It also provided a social space, opportunities to learn new skills, and a regular activity during the week.

“By the end of the Winter Programme, participants had learned an array of historical, digital, craft and social skills, with many participants commenting this was their first time using a computer.”

## Intended outputs

Participants designed and created their own co-curated exhibition based on these Viking crafts which formed part of the Jorvik Viking Festival.

## Obstacles and issues

During the Winter Programme, participants were increasingly invested in it, becoming at risk of being over-reliant on delivery staff and attending the weekly sessions. As Archaeology on Prescription is a social prescribing project, participant journeys had a clear end date, allowing for new participants. Those participants reaching the end of their time became increasingly anxious, which risked undermining their positive wellbeing progress.



We needed to hire accessible rooms given the range and variety of participants' needs, which were expensive. The sessions proved very popular, so we had to hire rooms more frequently to keep up with this demand.

## Actual outcomes

By the end of the Winter Programme, participants had learned an array of historical, digital, craft and social skills, with many participants commenting this was their first time using a computer.

Several participants mentioned that the sessions were the highlight of their week, without which they didn't think they could have got through the winter.

Existing friendships strengthened and new friendships formed as participants attended sessions with different people from their excavation sessions.

Participants formed a WhatsApp group, which scheduled social and research meetups outside of Archaeology on Prescription.

## Actual outputs

Participants produced trial craft samples, learning crafting skills which they practised at home. In the later half of the programme they co-produced larger crafted items to form a reflective display which was exhibited in the JORVIK Viking Festival. Items included trichinopoly jewellery, nalbinding hats and bags, Viking-style pottery, and papier mache dragon and a wicker man.

Part of this display included participants completing "live" post-excavation activities, demonstrating to family, friends and the public their new digital skills.

Participants proudly showed off to their family and friends what they made during their Archaeology on Prescription journey.

After the exhibition, participants took their creations home, with many now in pride of place in participants' houses.

## Lessons learned

Continuity and regularity of experience for participants throughout the project.

Managing endings: we adapted communications of the participant journey on Archaeology on Prescription to be clear and positive, including inviting leavers to an informal "graduation celebration". Participants now understand what Archaeology on Prescription involves from the start, which helps them prepare for next steps.

Next steps: newsletter clearly communicates follow-on opportunities for graduates, including volunteering opportunities. For example, finds processing within York Archaeology and subsidised places on the Training Dig, which enable graduates to further develop their archaeological knowledge. Other local community archaeology volunteer opportunities are also advertised.

Volunteering opportunities within York Archaeology have been so popular we are continually developing additional roles to cater for demand.

## Next steps

- Ensure Archaeology on Prescription remains a social prescribing project, which uses archaeology as a tool for wellbeing.
- Change site location when the council redevelops the area. However, any new site will continue the principles laid down in Archaeology on Prescription.
- Securing long term funding (and be part of the national conversion around funding social prescribing).
- Explore partnerships with local organisations to develop similar heritage wellbeing projects to become embedded in the wellbeing provision of York.

## Find out more

TakePart@yorkat.co.uk  
yorkarchaeology.co.uk/  
archaeology-on-prescription



# In Their Own words: How Can Museums Talk Drugs and Weapons from Experience?

## Summary

In 2022, National Museums Liverpool (NML) began a volunteer programme for people in recovery from drug addiction to support drugs and weapons focused workshops. These workshops are delivered to young people including college students and people aged 16-24 years old that are not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

Through hands on activities with Border Force collections, discussion and myth-busting, groups can gain insight into the impact of drugs on themselves and their communities. Volunteers share personal experiences in their own words, with honesty, understanding and emotional depth, to forge meaningful connections between themselves and participants, and between participants and learning opportunities.

## Background

National Museums Liverpool and the Maritime Museum are home to the UK Border Force's national collection. Their drug awareness programme is supported by the Spider Project, a community recovery project, and the Prince's Trust, who provide opportunities for young people.

## Challenge

NEET young people are vulnerable to criminal activity and can be disengaged from learning and

cultural opportunities. Beyond session content, we reconsidered how workshops were delivered and who they were delivered by, to help bridge the gap between museum and factors impacting the community.

## Approach

Spider Project were approached to identify service users with lived experience of drug addiction who would benefit from volunteering with NML, as well as providing ongoing advice and support for volunteers and the museum. Volunteers reviewed session content and received training.

## Intended outcomes

The intended outcomes of this process were to improve the learning offer related to the Border Force

collection through a process that would provide skills and a meaningful experience for people directly impacted by the themes addressed within the sessions.

## Intended outputs

NML offer a package of workshops Contraband, Drugs and Weapons Awareness, which are delivered over 2 hours with a break in between.

## Obstacles and issues

Engaging vulnerable people in recovery required external expertise and support. Spider Project were present during initial meetings and training, they continue to provide support but do not have capacity for their staff to be present at museum workshops, however, a museum



facilitator is always present. This contributed to some volunteers, who relied on this support, dropping out. To increase flexibility, there is a group of volunteers, who individually opt into bookings that work around their other commitments, and they can volunteer together.

Session content can be distressing and potentially incriminating, so we rely on a code of conduct to protect those involved, but also, there is flexibility to be shaped by participants, who can initiate discussions, opt out or take breaks when required.

## Actual outcomes

Both participants and groups leaders have commented on the positive changes in behaviour that have resulted from young people participating in the workshops, highlighting the thought-provoking and inspiring input from the volunteers, to help them make more informed choices.

*"The service you and your team provide is both engaging and purposeful, with every student highlighting the clear benefits and thought-provoking reflection that could help keep them safe in the future",* Maria Stratton, Sports Science Tutor, Wirral Met College.

The volunteers involved have also highlighted the benefits to their recovery, feeling an increased sense of connection, purpose, and wellbeing. Several participants have achieved their first year of sobriety while volunteering and it has supported those training to be councillors with Rise Recovery and YMCA.

*"I've loved it. This has given me direction and purpose to my recovery",* Aaron Flaherty, Volunteer.

*"I want to give back what I was given freely in rehab. Doing museum workshops gave me that opportunity. Now I've got a paid job working at a rehab centre and I know what I want to do with my life",* Robert Coakley, Volunteer.

**“These volunteers have demonstrated that people in recovery are an underutilised talent pool for museums, with an understanding and first-hand experience that museums can underserve through second-hand interpretation.”**



## Actual outputs

Contraband, Drugs and Weapons Awareness is a package of 2 workshops, each 60 minutes long, with a break in between. The package is bookable free of charge via the museum website.

## Lessons learned

These volunteers have demonstrated that people in recovery are an underutilised talent pool for museums, with an understanding and first-hand experience that museums can underserve through second-hand interpretation. This is an opportunity to ensure that we are a truthful, relevant, and connected tool for our communities, by not only addressing integral issues, but also, by creating new pathways to belonging. This programme brings expertise from lived experience and enables vital museum resources to connect with some of the people most affected by these issues.

The combination of presenting sensitive content through people and object that are directly connected to the issues enables participants to think and feel deeply, to make more informed choices and potentially to change lives. These powerful learning opportunities are potentially distressing for all involved, therefore this requires thoughtful planning and long term partnerships with industry experts and experts from experience, together in a safe, welcoming and flexible environment.

## Next steps

As part of NML's Waterfront Transformation Project, the Maritime Museum is due to temporarily close in 2024 to be redeveloped. This provides an opportunity to expand NML's outreach learning offer.

## Find out more

spiderproject.org.uk  
ymcattogether.org.uk/health-wellbeing  
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk  
Adam.Duckworth@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk





# Supporting Mental Health through Conservation and Repair: Kintsugi Conservation for Wellbeing at the Museum of English Rural Life



## Summary

Kintsugi is a traditional Japanese method of object repair that visibly accentuates and enhances the damage an item has sustained to create a new, equally beautiful object. This year, the Museum of English Rural Life, working with students of Compass Recovery College, explored the wellbeing that can come from conservation and repair in a series of Conservation for Wellbeing workshops. Taking a damaged book of their choice, students repaired it using an approach that was personally meaningful and expressive to create something that was patched but equally perfect. The sessions explored book structures in a very hands-on and tactile way, looking at how books

were made, the processes behind repairing them and the wide – and sometimes unconventional – material choice available.

## Background

The MERL's partnership with Compass Recovery College began during the Covid-19 pandemic as part of its National Academy of Social Prescribing and Arts Council England-funded Thriving Communities programme. This built on our existing health and wellbeing programmes and created new arts, heritage and green health opportunities for participants to benefit mental and physical health, develop confidence, improve wellbeing and support social prescribing.

## Challenge

This was the first time that The MERL had explored the potential role of conservation in supporting health and wellbeing.

## Approach

We used the tactile nature of conservation and the known therapeutic effect of collaborative making in a relaxed and supportive environment to ensure inclusive and successful delivery.

## Intended outcomes

The aim was to explore people's creativity and individual lived experience through books and making.

## Intended outputs

We hoped each participant would be freed from convention to create their own vision of their book using the materials they chose to include. An exhibition of their work was an aspiration.

## Obstacles and issues

The delivery was at times challenging due to the size of the group and there being only one person delivering the practical knowledge. Ensuring everyone had sufficient time and support was difficult, and the needs of the quieter, more reserved members of the group could easily have been lost in the busyness of the sessions. However, this created some great collaborations between participants, with new friendships

“The aim was to explore people's creativity and individual lived experience through books and making.”

and support networks being created and participants actively helping each other with their projects. Low confidence in individual abilities and feelings of comparison with others' work was also hard to reconcile, despite reassurance that the individual journey with the project was the key, not necessarily the need to create a perfectly envisioned practical project.

## Actual outcomes

The resulting individual projects were incredible: each reflected the individual participant's creativity, preferences and character. Several participants expressed how proud they felt of their work, and what it meant to them to be able to develop something so unique and meaningful over the 6-week course. 92% of participants rated the course 5 out of 5 and all would recommend it to others. It was clear to see the confidence that people were gaining in their practical abilities, once the need for perfection was removed and expression could take full rein. 85% of participants identified a positive shift in their wellbeing before and after the course with one participant noting

“I have learned about Kintsugi and it has been good for my mental health as well”. Participants too identified that the course gave them a sense of belonging, an opportunity to connect with others, make contributions and a chance to learn new skills.

## Actual outputs

All participants left with a magnificently repaired book that was completely individual to them and their journey. The exploration of new materials and completely new techniques created a body of work that was beautiful, inspiring and hugely varied. We hope to develop an online exhibition of participants' work to celebrate this impressive library of creativity.

## Lessons learned

- It is essential to have additional support to deliver the project; this does not have to be conservation staff, just willing helpers. Extra pairs of hands to help with tricky practical activities, such as cutting materials and holding items as well as to act as a sounding board are important.
- Connected to this, participants identified that written instructions and guidance would have been helpful.
- Keep the group size under 10 to ensure all participants get equal attention.
- Have a space for quiet 'time out' activities if the busyness of the programme becomes overwhelming for participants.

- Make sure that a wide and varied range of materials are available, and more directed and specific pre-course information encourages participants to bring material with them.
- Ensure that risk assessments for hazardous activities such as cutting are thorough. A high level of PPE is required, such as anti-cut gloves and retractable knives.

## Next steps

The images from the course will create an excellent online resource, and this is an initiative we hope to create as soon as possible. Repeating the course at The MERL in 2024 is definitely an option. A similar course was delivered for Norwich Museums over a four-week period in April and May 2023. It is hoped that an online binding course for relaxation and wellbeing will be delivered later in 2023.

## Find out more

**A paper on the Kintsugi Conservation course was delivered at the Archives and Records Association's conference in September 2023.**

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# The Union Chain Bridge and its Travelling Canvas



## Summary

The Union Chain Bridge Project is a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Project based in rural north Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. There is a large and varied public engagement programme delivered by Museums Northumberland to share the story of the world's oldest vehicular suspension bridge and its recent restoration.

## Background

An intergenerational activity was delivered in the small towns of Berwick-upon-Tweed and Eyemouth. Museums Northumberland commissioned artist Claire Beattie to lead in a series of Union Chain Bridge-inspired art workshops connecting

older (> 60 years) and younger (< 5 years) community members in the two areas, which cross an international border, but are only 8 miles apart.

## Challenge

The purpose of this project was to reduce social isolation and loneliness, reported by some during the consultation phase of the Union Chain Bridge project, by making use of the often-cited benefits of bringing different generations together.

## Approach

The plan was to undertake bridge-inspired art workshops in each of their community settings before going on a trip as a group to see the Union Chain Bridge itself.

## Intended outcomes

Through this heritage and art project, the overall aim was to provide a positive impact on participants' wellbeing, specifically reducing feelings of social isolation, and that new long-lasting cross-border and intergenerational community connections would be made.

## Intended outputs

- To deliver a series of art workshops in community venues.
- To deliver an intergenerational, cross-border trip to the Union Chain Bridge.
- To reduce feelings of social isolation by forging new community connections.



## “The purpose of this project was to reduce social isolation and loneliness.”

## Obstacles and issues

- Generating initial buy-in. Some older people reported previously experiencing patronising activities.
- Differing views. Some older participants had no interest in connecting with younger groups whilst some relished this.
- Perceptions of art. Some older people felt that they couldn't take part because they "couldn't draw in a straight line".
- Physical mobility and dexterity.
- Staff needed more capacity to plan tailored sensory activities for a special education needs (SEN) school participating in the project.
- Trip planning for the diverse needs of all groups was particularly challenging.

## Actual outcomes

Based on the evaluation, the project had achieved its goals. It had a positive impact on wellbeing and people felt less isolated. "It made me feel really good – I thoroughly enjoyed it and I wish I could do it again". They enjoyed working

together, learning about the Union Chain Bridge, and doing more unusual art activities. A teacher told us, "It gave the children a good experience to be included within the community". However, these new community connections have not been maintained beyond the duration of the project. Groups or individuals have not stayed in contact, but participants are keen to repeat the experience and to engage with future opportunities. Some have requested that future projects should be longer.

To promote group cohesion during the initial art workshops, a "travelling canvas" was introduced by the team. This canvas moved around each venue building up paint layers during each workshop. The team felt that this was a particularly effective way to build rapport before the group trip took place. The resultant artwork was printed on a mug for each participant to keep. However, some participants still did not go on the group trip. Taking some people out of their setting was, in some cases, not practical. The team felt that having one trip which catered to each group adequately was logistically hard to achieve.

Interestingly, some participants may have increased their self-confidence, especially doing art, resulting in a positive shift in the perception of art. In one venue, participants started taking more ownership of their surroundings by removing pictures they didn't like and replacing it with their artwork.

## Actual outputs

- Art workshops were delivered in community venues.
- An intergenerational, cross-border trip was delivered, for those who could participate.
- A "travelling canvas" was created, and mugs were produced.
- Social isolation was lessened, and people felt good, albeit perhaps temporarily.
- Perceptions of participating in art sessions were changed.

## Lessons learned

- Longer initial contact time with groups would have ensured an easier introduction of intergenerational sessions.
- Intergenerational trips require huge amounts of forward planning.
- The perception of art can be a barrier to engagement.
- To create lasting community connections, longer term interventions may be more successful.

## Next steps

Museums Northumberland continue to deliver the rest of the Union Chain Bridge Project public engagement programme. In some cases, this includes engaging with the same individuals. For example, more accessible visits to the Union Chain Bridge are planned for those older people who couldn't attend the trip. A separate, facilitated visit has been offered to the SEN school involved.

## Find out more

[www.museumsnorthumberland.org.uk/project/union-chain-bridge-project](http://www.museumsnorthumberland.org.uk/project/union-chain-bridge-project)  
[www.unionchainbridge.org](http://www.unionchainbridge.org)  
[www.clairebeattie.com](http://www.clairebeattie.com)



# Visual Arts and Peer Learning for Creative Aging: Seniors Supporting Seniors

## Summary

Between August 2022 and April 2023 the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (Canada) partnered with local stakeholders to create visual arts programmes targeting the senior audience. By providing seniors with training, socialisation and peer-learning opportunities, *Seniors Supporting Seniors* responds to pressing issues such as isolation and cognitive decline.

## Background

KWAG has a history of serving seniors through programmes that foster active learning, artistic exploration, and partnerships with relevant stakeholders to promote seniors' wellbeing.

## Challenge

During the pandemic many seniors faced increased periods of isolation; their life quality was severely impacted, and as a result they experienced a sense of disconnection and loneliness that, in some cases, still persists in the post-pandemic. KWAG responded with the *Seniors Supporting Seniors* programme.

## Approach

KWAG connected with community stakeholders and partners (local libraries, community centres, Alzheimer Society Waterloo-Wellington) to discuss the challenges that seniors face in our community: isolation, loneliness, lack of socialisation opportunities, cognitive decline.

Following consultation, KWAG launched a call to recruit senior volunteer educators, to co-develop and co-facilitate visual arts programming for their peers.

KWAG staff and the Alzheimer Waterloo-Wellington Society trained educators about museum/art education principles, and supporting older adults experiencing cognitive decline.

Concluding their training, seniors developed visual art programmes specifically designed to support participants, regardless of their artistic and manual skills and abilities to ensure an enjoyable experience. The workshops were senior-led and senior-developed with the facilitation of KWAG staff.

To increase accessibility, we brought the programme directly to partners' facilities (such as community libraries and senior care homes).

The programme was funded through the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility's Community Grant Program 2022-2023.

## Intended outcomes

- Support seniors' cognitive, emotional, and social wellbeing;
- Provide socially responsive programmes and community service that tackle isolation and loneliness;
- Foster an active lifestyle in the target audience;
- Support peer participation in community life through mentoring and volunteerism;

- Developing partnerships with community organisations involved in seniors' wellbeing;
- Encourage lifelong learning and visual arts appreciation.

## Intended outputs

- Recruit Senior Educators;
- KWAG Staff facilitate co-designing sessions with leaders and identify suitable art activities;
- Establish partnerships with relevant community organisations;
- Connect with partners to identify community locations to host workshops;
- Deliver 8 workshops;
- Evaluate programme.

## Obstacles and issues

- Access to transportation proved to be a considerable participation barrier for the seniors.
- Despite our efforts to advertise our programme we did not see much diversity amongst Educators. However, we observed more diversity amongst workshop participants. Our goal in the future is to attract more diversity amongst Educators through working directly with the Research Institute for Aging to create a needs assessment to assist with tackling this issue directly.
- Reliance upon public grants might impact programme continuity.

## Actual outcomes

- Educators experienced leadership opportunities and agency over programme design and development and explored artistic media and techniques. We partnered with the Alzheimer's Society Waterloo-Wellington, Kitchener Public Library, Waterloo Public Library, and Rockway Community Centre.
- Educators and participants shared that they experienced increased:
  1. Opportunities for learning and acquiring skills;
  2. Boost to creativity, inspiration, and opportunities for meaning making;
  3. Peer socialisation, connectedness, belonging;
  4. Positive emotions (hopefulness, optimism, enjoyment);
  5. Self-esteem, confidence boost;
  6. Improved communication between loved ones;
  7. Feeling in control of their health and wellbeing.Partners noticed that:
  8. They become more resilient, and supported them with the development of coping strategies;
  9. A boost in self-esteem, confidence, and mood in repeat participants;
  10. A willingness to participate in future Community Artmaking Sessions;
  11. New learning and creative engagement opportunities to build on existing artistic skills;
  12. Isolation and loneliness mitigation through peer socialisation.

“To increase accessibility, we brought the programme directly to partners' facilities (such as community libraries and senior care homes).”

## Actual outputs

- Awareness campaign to recruit senior volunteers to be educators and 2 public info-sessions.
- We recruited 5 senior educators.
- Provided dementia-friendly training in partnership with Alzheimer Society Waterloo-Wellington.
- Facilitated 6 art-making and education training sessions for educators. Educators developed two programmes: Watercolour Greeting Cards, Gelli-Printed Friendship Bookmarks.
- Delivered 12 Community Art-making Workshops (November 2022–April 2023).
- 200+ participants.
- Celebrated the accomplishments of the educators through 2 social gatherings.
- Evaluated community partners, senior educators, and participant feedback.

## Lessons learned

Overwhelmingly, seniors value in-person experiences. Face-to-face, hands-on, and experiential learning allows the seniors to feel more active and connected with each other.

In order to design a truly accessible programme, it is key to consider the

diverse lived experiences and needs of ageing adults.

In health and wellbeing initiatives, privileging participants' agency and a co-design approach is key to overall programme relevancy and engagement.

To ensure programme continuity and a service for the seniors, we need to diversify our funding streams.

## Next steps

We are currently working with the University of Waterloo's Research Institute for Aging to better assess the needs of the senior audience, and exploring synergy opportunities to tackle barriers to participation.

Meanwhile KWAG is committed to enhancing the quality of life for the older adult community through continuing to offer free seniors' programming with an emphasis on maintaining an active and enjoyable lifestyle using the visual arts as a tool for connection.

## Find out more

**Government of Ontario, (2021). *Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Toolkit.***  
[files.ontario.ca/msaa-age-friendly-community-planning-toolkit-en-2021-01-01.pdf](https://files.ontario.ca/msaa-age-friendly-community-planning-toolkit-en-2021-01-01.pdf)

**Schwarzer, Marjorie, (2021). *Museums and Creative Aging: A Healthful Partnership.***  
**American Alliance of Museums.**  
[aam-us.org/2021/06/01/new-report-museums-and-creative-aging-a-healthful-partnership](https://aam-us.org/2021/06/01/new-report-museums-and-creative-aging-a-healthful-partnership)

**The Creative Aging Resource:**  
[creativeagingresource.org](https://creativeagingresource.org)

**Creative Aging International:**  
[www.creativeageinginternational.com](https://www.creativeageinginternational.com)





# 'Heritage Heroes':

## A Collaboration between Museum of London Archaeology and Streets of Growth

### Summary

Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) and Streets of Growth (SOG) developed a three-day workshop engaging local young people in archaeology through a digital skills-based program. Participants created online content designed to communicate the archaeology beneath SOG's new headquarters to other young people.

### Background

Whilst undertaking archaeological works at the Middlesex/Boar's Head site (Tower Hamlets), MOLA developed a relationship with SOG, a local charity who had been granted space by the developer to establish a new headquarters. SOG support minority ethnic young people aged 15-25 in Tower Hamlets and across East London, through programmes designed to break cyclical poverty and deprivation via empowerment and skills-building.

### Challenge

Having recently taken up residence in their new headquarters, SOG wanted to incorporate archaeology and heritage into their skills-based programmes, whilst enhancing young people's sense of place within the new headquarters. MOLA were keen to use their expert knowledge of the site to deliver meaningful community engagement, meeting local needs and priorities.



### Approach

MOLA have previously developed a workshop model in which young people are 'commissioned' to create archaeologically inspired online content, gaining experience of working to a brief, meeting client objectives, and receiving constructive feedback. For this project, SOG facilitated a partnership with local filmmaker, editor, and videographer, Mazzi Cuzzi and his team, who provided digital skills training to participants.

### Intended outcomes

For participants to:

- Enhance their understanding of local heritage and archaeology;
- Improve digital and film making skills;
- Practise collaborative and team working skills;
- Gain confidence.

### Intended outputs

- Participant-created videos exploring the site's history and heritage;
- Behind-the-scenes documentary.

### Obstacles and issues

To deliver the project during the summer holidays, the team had to work within a very tight deadline, with a much shorter planning period. This created some challenges in delivery, as conversations outlining roles and responsibilities had either occurred over email, through an intermediary, or in short meetings.

As a pilot collaborative project between multiple partners from different sectors, with different structures and work-patterns, it was a challenge to ensure all groups clearly understood each other's specific objectives and how they needed to achieve them. Similarly, the exact logistical requirements were difficult to identify until everyone was in the space, which impacted on delivery. In future, this can be mitigated by a more extensive planning phase.



“Working with young people is always dynamic and exploratory, requiring a high level of flexibility from the delivery team.”

Working with young people is always dynamic and exploratory, requiring a high level of flexibility from the delivery team. This became an additional challenge when balancing the needs and priorities of different groups of young people to ensure all participants had an enriching experience. This could be mitigated in future by further conversations prior to delivery identifying any additional support needs.

Lastly, without a live excavation or post-excavation analysis, the archaeology discussion was relatively abstract. While finds discovered during excavations were included, in future we will explore ways in which we can bring the heritage of the site to life more vividly.

### Actual outcomes

Young people gained:

- Increased awareness of the archaeology and history of their area,
- Understanding of careers in archaeology,
- Experience communicating complex concepts to general audiences,
- Professional experience taking on different project roles within a team.

Organisations gained:

- Development of partnership between MOLA and SOG,

- Development of workshop models meeting local needs and diversifying heritage sector.

### Actual outputs

- Two videos were successfully created, for use in participants' portfolios, and to be shared on social media (subject to Comms checks);
- One behind-the-scenes documentary.

### Lessons learned

**Collaboration**  
The project was significantly enhanced by partnerships. SOG's insight and community knowledge ensured the project addressed the specific needs and interests of their participants. Collaborating with SOG ensured the workshop was not an isolated opportunity, by integrating it within a broader activity and support programme, with greater cumulative impact. Mazzi Cuzzi and his team provided hands-on filmmaking expertise. MOLA's involvement facilitated the opportunity to be "commissioned" by a national organisation, with specialist knowledge of the site's archaeology and archaeological communication, and the chance for participants' work to be shared on a large social media platform.

### Conversation

Informal conversations with participants allowed the project to respond to participants' interests, strengths and weaknesses. As opposed to pedagogic teaching, the SOG team, Mazzi Cuzzi, and MOLA engaged participants in an ongoing dialogue throughout the workshops, which:

- Helped participants fulfil specific roles within their teams and contribute;
- Allowed staff to respond to participants' curiosity and interests, to better engage them with local history themes;
- Facilitated discussions about careers in archaeology, thus supporting engagement and confidence building.

### Next steps

MOLA and SOG are exploring funding to develop this output, potentially focusing on different finds and/or buildings archaeology.

### Find out more

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# Old Royal Naval College Hospital School Outreach Programme



## Summary

The Hospital School Outreach Programme is run by the Old Royal Naval College (ORNC) and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Members of the ORNC learning team run sessions in the children's wards every 8–12 weeks.

## Background

ORNC is a Baroque heritage site, formerly a hospital for old and injured sailors, and later a naval college.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a large NHS hospital. The Hospital School is run by Newhaven School and supports inpatient and outpatient children's wards.

## Challenge

- To provide activities for children to take their minds off their treatment, help them to interact socially and provide learning opportunities to help bridge the gap until they can return to school.
- To reach out to a local area where ORNC is less well-known and encourage people to take part in our free family programme.

## Approach

The ORNC team liaised with hospital school staff to explore their curriculum and to establish suitable activities. We adapted content to provide short, engaging sessions that delivered

maximum impact. After each session the team reflected on what worked well and areas for improvement.

## Intended outcomes

1. To enable children to benefit from learning while they are in hospital.
2. To take ORNC to those audiences who might not otherwise engage.
3. To encourage independent exploration of ORNC.
4. To have a positive impact on the wellbeing of patients and families.
5. To support our local hospital.
6. To increase children's confidence and develop their skills.



**“We opted for arts and crafts activities and handling collections that could be tailored to the needs of everyone.”**



## Intended outputs

Creative workshops resulting in artworks produced by children and their families.

## Obstacles and issues

We learnt that sessions needed to be adaptable, flexible in terms of individual/group work, the age of participants and in terms of allowing participants to join and leave at any point. We opted for arts and crafts activities and handling collections that could be tailored to the needs of everyone.

## Actual outcomes

In 2022, we worked with 39 people. Feedback included:

*“Thank you, it was good not being all bored”, Patient*

*“I liked that we all did it together and the teachers were nice and smiley”, Patient*

*“I cannot overstate the benefits that the opportunity to leave rooms and beds for a special and stimulating experience gives to our patients/students. The positive impact on well-being is enormous. I was particularly pleased to see a patient who REALLY needed to mobilise finally being persuaded to leave the bed”, Hospital staff*

*“The whole ward gets a lift and from my point of view, as Ward Manager, they have a significant impact on the well-being of the children as well as benefiting from the learning side of things.”*

*It's not just about the number of children taking part – we have been able to get anxious and reluctant children to finally get out of bed. It lifts the children and rolls out to the entire ward and the staff”, Hospital staff*

*“I didn't know anything about the Naval College before – we'll go and have a look at half-term”, Parent*

## Actual outputs

4 workshops took place in 2022. The Hospital School put the finished pieces on display in a public area, highlighting the work produced throughout the year and promoting the achievements of the patients.

## Lessons learned

Having a strong and open working relationship with the school staff really does add benefit to our offer. Furthermore, we have learned that it is not only the patients that get something from the sessions. Parents, siblings and even other staff have joined in with activities and is proving to be an opportunity to have a bit of well-deserved time for wellbeing.

## Next steps

A positive relationship has been built with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to the extent that the programming is continuing into 2023 and is currently being expanded to include family programming during the school holidays.

We also have recently started working with another hospital after being put in touch with them by Queen Elizabeth staff. It is great to see our offer being expanded, allowing more unwell children and young people to participate in fun and engaging workshops.

Other heritage sites are also benefitting from the project as we strive to share best practice with others in the sector. Recently we held a session for Royal Museums Greenwich as they were thinking of starting their own hospital schools programme and wanted to learn from our experiences. In the coming months we will be further spreading the word about the programme at the borough-wide World Heritage Learning Group.

Also, our Family Programme Manager is now working with the hospital Play Specialist to look at running joint family activities for the holiday periods.

## Find out more

**The Hospital Schools Outreach Programme was recently shortlisted for the Learning Programme of the Year at the 2023 Museums & Heritage Awards:**

[ornc.org/news/hospital\\_school\\_outreach\\_award](https://ornc.org/news/hospital_school_outreach_award)

# Mark Makers



## Summary

Mark Makers is a creative wellbeing project which was developed specifically to support Year 6 students in their final year of primary school as they start to think about the transition to secondary school.

## Background

*The project is informed by learning from our Health and Wellbeing work, which is delivered by working collaboratively with health and education partners to use the arts and creativity to support increased outcomes within the areas of mental health, social isolation, long-term health conditions and promote positive wellbeing.*

## Challenge

In a previous schools creative wellbeing project, teachers highlighted the increased levels of anxiety and poor mental health among students post lockdown. The transition between primary and secondary school was highlighted as a particularly challenging period.

## Approach

Mark makers aimed to support students and teachers to gain a greater understanding of how to plan and facilitate arts-based approaches to wellbeing and mental health to help with transitions.

## Intended outcomes

To support our local schools with creative ideas for their transition work with Year 6 students and how they can use Dulwich Picture Gallery as a resource for this work.

## Intended outputs

Creative wellbeing sessions with seven partner schools for their Year 6 students led by a professional artist at Dulwich Picture Gallery and in our purpose-built art studio.

A teachers CPD session for lead teachers on the project and wellbeing leads to support a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

## Obstacles and issues

The biggest obstacle we had was making contact with Year 6 teachers to let them know about the project and arrange for their classes to come to the Gallery.

As all of the schools we worked with had not been to the Gallery in recent years, and this was a pilot project, there was no point of reference for them. We contacted twenty schools, some various times, and managed to make contact with ten of the year six teachers. Two of these schools cancelled at the last minute due to staff illness and insufficient cover to allow them to leave the school and one because of school strikes.

It is clear from this process that time, staffing and resources are a barrier to getting schools to come to the Gallery for the sessions.

We originally planned a teachers CPD, however, time was an issue on getting teachers to come to the Gallery, so we created a resource pack instead.

## Actual outcomes

The project had an impact across three key areas:

- Increased resilience and wellbeing developed through a variety of art activities that utilised the Gallery's historic collection of art.
- Supported Year 6 students with developing techniques and tools including mindfulness, relaxation and creative problem solving that can be used to help with the transition between primary and secondary settings.
- Introduced children to a place of local cultural capital by actively recruiting local schools that don't engage with the gallery.

## Actual outputs

The project worked with seven partner schools and reached over 400 children. Teachers received a resource pack to help support using creative methods in the classroom to support wellbeing.



**“The project is informed by learning from our Health and Wellbeing work, which is delivered by working collaboratively with health and education partners to use the arts and creativity to support increased outcomes within the areas of mental health, social isolation, long-term health conditions and promote positive wellbeing.”**

## Lessons learned

We learnt to set aside more time for contacting and liaising with schools to get them involved in the project. After we had run some sessions, we found that testimonials from other teachers who had taken part in the project were very useful for other teachers to understand what they would get out of participating.

We need more lead up time for a teachers' CPD to ensure that staff can make the session. Alternatively, hosting two CPD's on different afternoons may work best. Lots of schools have staff meetings on different days so it is hard to get an evening when they all align. This would also make it more accessible for teachers who want to attend as there would be less limitations.

## Next steps

We have been successful in a second round of funding for this project and will start with a new iteration of Mark Makers in autumn.

We have also added the Mark Makers sessions to our core offer of schools workshops so that all schools can access them. We have developed the session so it is suitable to all key stages.

We were particularly surprised and excited by how well received taking part in a slow looking activity in the Gallery was and hope to develop this activity further.

## Find out more

[mschools@dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](mailto:mschools@dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)



# Future Careers with David Livingstone Birthplace Museum

## Summary

A partnership project between the David Livingstone Birthplace Museum (DLBM) and 32 pupils from David Livingstone Memorial Primary, working to foster a connection with their local museum and build knowledge of it as a place of work.

## Background

DLBM is an independent museum based in Blantyre, Scotland, dedicated to exploring the life and legacy of Scottish Missionary Dr David Livingstone.

Museum Galleries Scotland's *Workforce of the Future* provided funding for the project which welcomed a Primary 7 class into the museum to get behind-the-scenes access, learn about the diversity of job roles in the museum sector and increase employability skills.

## Challenge

The museum and the primary school are based in Blantyre where many residents face barriers to accessing cultural spaces, both as audiences and workforces. Despite the partner school being a twenty-minute walk from the museum, only three pupils from the class had ever been inside. Moreover, none of the 32 pupils knew someone who works in a museum or the heritage sector.



“Since the project end, pupils have visited the museum at weekends, chatted with staff and attended events within our wider public programming.”

## Approach

Over six Wednesdays the class took part in workshops to introduce pupils to a range of museum jobs and provide opportunities to practice museum-based and transferable skills.

Activities included:

- Interviewing staff;
- Researching the daily tasks of different job roles;
- Object handling;
- Curating;
- Interpretation writing;
- Storytelling with museum collections;
- Presenting tours.

## Intended outcomes

- To increase knowledge of museum work and the job roles available.
- To build knowledge of the museum, from who works there to the histories held in it.

## Intended outputs

A co-produced audio tour to celebrate the pupils' engagement in the project and embed their voices within the museum.

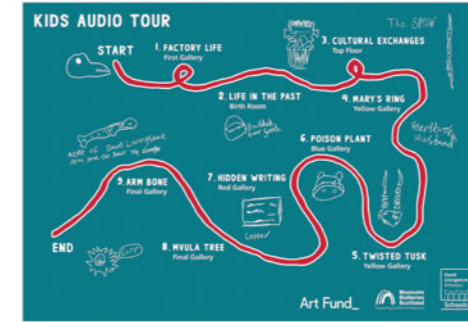
## Obstacles and issues

A central challenge was designing effective outputs within the limitations of the project. Like museums across the sector, DLBM tackled funding constraints and a reduction to staff capacity during the project. This had significant impact on staff availability for development and delivery.

Another challenge of the project was participants' unfamiliarity with museum spaces and contexts. Understandably this could manifest in a lack of confidence and focus in engaging in particular activities.

## Actual outcomes

Pupils demonstrated an increased understanding of museum work and jobs. Personal Meaning Maps showed the addition of details like 'Curator', 'Labels' and 'Tours' to their ideas surrounding museums. Pupils went from knowing one museum-based job of Security Guard, to recounting



various roles and staff members, from Learning Officers to Gardeners.

Each pupil received a free year pass to the museum for their families, extending the pupils engagement with the museum, and increasing reach to family members.

During the project, the majority of the class went from never having been inside the museum, to being part of how other young visitors learn about and experience the museum. DLBM now has familiar faces when they visit. Since the project end, pupils have visited the museum at weekends, chatted with staff and attended events within our wider public programming.

## Actual outputs

The learning team and the pupils created an audio tour now available for young visitors to the museum. This output was resource-light and required minimal installation. It functions via a printed map available at the museum reception with the route and stops, and a QR code for the audio clips hosted on the DLBM website. As an output that has good visibility both in the museum and online, it did not require a lot of technical expertise and is something that can be updated easily with minimal additional costs.

Also created was a suite of trialled and evaluated workshop plans for engaging future partner schools in learning surrounding the museum as a workplace and employable skills.

## Lessons learned

Towards tackling pupils' challenges with focus and unfamiliarity, the project's structure of multiple sessions with one group of pupils was a great opportunity for consolidating learning and building relationships.

The tangible output of the audio tour also helped tackle these challenges. It gave pupils focus for completing a task and maintaining an enthusiasm for the activities. Rather than practising a skill in an open-ended way that they might use in the future, they were applying it immediately to a tangible and public output.

While outcomes of sustained connections and fostering a sense of ownership amongst local audiences are harder to accurately assess within a small-scale project, this experience has shown us how we can apply methods within learning programmes that contribute to these longer-term goals. Methods that have worked well here that we would use in future projects include designing for longer-form repeat interactions and co-producing visible outputs.

## Next steps

The project was designed for the partner school to be a primary that feeds into the local secondary school that DLBM has an existing partnership with for work placements and apprenticeships. It is hoped that when pupils are considering work placements, they will be more inclined to consider the museum through previous engagement. While this impact is not measurable within the scale of this short project, we aim to build in monitoring this type of legacy data into feedback collecting structures across the museum.

We will monitor the uptake and feedback from the audio tour and use this data to inform the intended development of further interpretation for this age range.

## Find out more

[romy.galloway@dltrust.uk](mailto:romy.galloway@dltrust.uk)

**David Livingstone Birthplace, Kids Audio Tour**  
[david-livingstone-birthplace.org/audio-tour-for-children](http://david-livingstone-birthplace.org/audio-tour-for-children)

**Workforce of the Future, MGS**  
[museumsgalleriescotland.org.uk/project/workforce-of-the-future](http://museumsgalleriescotland.org.uk/project/workforce-of-the-future)



# What Difference Can Museum Learning Make to Young People Who are Care Experienced?



in London and some UK cities, small rural museums often need to charge in order to be economically viable. Unfortunately, this can mean many people can't access them, including young people who are care experienced who often live on very limited financial means. The sector has an opportunity to recognise that in these circumstances, entrance costs mean there will be no chance for engagement apart from through free entry; "lost revenue" can be turned into social impact which is intrinsically valuable.

## Approach

With the young people we created *Culture Card*, a card which allows free access for the holder plus a guest to museums, galleries and heritage sites who sign up as partners. We recognised the opportunity to develop creativity through connecting organisations, sharing and celebrating the skills of the young people we engaged with, exploring collections and familiarising the young people with the sites as a result. A programme of activities developed with artist Emma Saffy Wilson, encouraged young people to explore their own creativity, developing a touring exhibition of their work. Networking with sector colleagues created further chances for engagement and, crucially, encouraged organisations to sign-up for Culture Card.

"Care Experienced" is someone who, at any stage of their life and for any length of time, has been looked after by the local authority and includes those who have spent time in foster care, a children's home, been "looked after at home" under a supervision order or in kinship foster care. CMP developed the Culture Card project to maximise potential connections between the organisations, using a "needs led" approach that centred the young people.

## Challenge

The project addressed the challenge of paid entry at local museums; unlike many larger organisations

## Summary

Working in partnership with Carefree Cornwall, Cornwall Museums Partnership (CMP) was able to improve access to museums, galleries and heritage sites for young people who are care experienced.

## Background

Following the initial approach by Zoe Birkett, Penlee House Gallery and Museum's Education Officer, to see if any young people that Carefree Cornwall supports would like to visit, a project grew that included other neighbouring museums in Cornwall who were keen to connect with young people who were care experienced.

## Intended outcomes

The aim of the project was to improve access for the target audience, to advocate for the opportunity to connect with young people who are care experienced within the sector and to celebrate their creativity while raising public awareness about the need to support them.

## Intended outputs

Outputs included the development of the card (design and manufacture) with young people, an apprenticeship for a care-experienced young person, the creation of the Culture Card webpage, launch event and a touring exhibition of young people's work plus advocacy across sectors (heritage and care) for collaborations elsewhere by supporting "sister schemes" in other parts of the UK.

## Obstacles and issues

The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the initial plans, but we were able to move some elements online; additional

funding meant we were able to develop the second phase of the work in line with our original intentions more recently.

## Actual outcomes

The opportunity to engage with young people who are care experienced is now embedded in partner organisations: youth workers at Carefree Cornwall also now regularly connect with local museums, galleries and heritage organisations to develop programming that meets their objectives, including holding celebratory events and staff training events in museum sites. Young people who are care experienced are accessing the sites regularly and future engagement is being explored.

## Actual outputs

The card has been distributed to all young people who are care experienced in Cornwall; the webpage currently hosts links to 39 sites offering free access for card-holders (including 6 English Heritage,

7 National Trust and 13 Cornwall Heritage Trust locations); a sister scheme has been developed by Barnado's in Plymouth; an exhibition opened in December 2022 and is opposing-up in different places throughout 2023.

## Lessons learned

Enabling young people to lead the project wherever possible, developing skills, confidence and experience throughout was at the core. Perseverance has been key to success – smaller organisations were often more agile and able to respond to opportunities quicker than larger sites. Relationship building with partner organisations has also been essential.

Funding came from a variety of sources which enabled different elements to be paid for by different pots, e.g. the "process" was funded by one, the development and distribution of the card by another etc.

## Next steps

Young people are currently developing a film to be shared with museum partners about "How to provide a good welcome" which will maximise the opportunity the sector has. Inclusive volunteering opportunities are increasingly requested by partner organisations, which feels like potentially the next "needs led" area of focus. Carefree Cornwall and CMP now have a "memorandum of understanding" underpinning future work together.

“We recognised the opportunity to develop creativity through connecting organisations, sharing and celebrating the skills of the young people we engaged with.”



## Find out more

info@cornwallmuseumspartnership.org.uk



# Addressing the Social Impact of the Pandemic on SEND Parents



## Summary

Following the final lockdown, the British Museum worked with parents from a special school to offer social support for those who had only recently been able to re-engage with their onsite school community. A series of visits engaged parents with the Museum collection including time to socialise.

## Background

For families with additional needs, the pandemic meant loss of access to specialist equipment, one-to-one teaching, respite care and support workers. Medical vulnerability meant some children remained at home as others returned to the classroom.



## Challenge

Special school parents said they felt isolated without the usual routines and interaction of a school day.

## Approach

- The project aimed to engage parents in a cultural experience which supported wellbeing, intellectual interests and social interaction.
- The parents were from a local support group; drawing together existing borough networks run by staff the parents knew.
- Museum staff offered the knowledge of collection and space.

## Intended outcomes

Each visit began with a welcome, followed by time in the galleries, refreshments at the café and a shop visit. There was a focus on socialising with other parents and Museum staff and supporting personal interests to feed the mind. Practically, the visits also aimed to encourage parents to think about how they might visit again by themselves or with their child.

## Intended outputs

The project sought to build relationships between local parents and the Museum through facilitated gallery interactions, enriched by time to socialise over coffee plus something from the shop to act as a starting point for them to share their day back home. The project sought to build relationships between local parents and the Museum through facilitated gallery interactions, enriched by time to socialise over coffee plus something from the shop to act as a starting point for them to share their day back home.

## Obstacles and issues

Two main challenges were cost and making time. Fortunately, the project was funded through existing support from John Lyons Charity for SEND school work at the Museum. Covering the costs for resources and refreshments would have been difficult without this. Before launching, the project was discussed with the funder to enable budget to be pivoted in response to the impact on planned



school workshop delivery due to the pandemic. The other issue was external demands on time. Some of the parents had existing arrangements which needed to be accommodated. One parent had a later school drop-off time for her child. She was very keen to participate but was unable to arrive at the same time as the others. To accommodate this, we kept the same structure, timings and meeting points for each visit and confirmed the gallery focus beforehand so that whatever time she arrived, she would know where to find us.

## Actual outcomes

The visits formed part of the group's regular meetings. This meant the date was already ring-fenced as time when parents expected to be attending an organised activity. We had participants for each visit and some parents came every time. It was noticeable that confidence grew as the parents became more familiar with Museum staff and spaces. Parents really enjoyed being able to suggest which galleries to visit - sometimes related to their own heritage or inspired by a personal interest.

## Actual outputs

Different spaces prompted different conversations. Gallery conversations centred on the objects, while the café became a time for informal chat about children and life events. One parent talked about preparing of their Maths GCSE and we chatted about how the exam had gone on the next visit. Going to the café and shop made the parents feel valued, supported wellbeing and enhanced social impact.

## Lessons learned

Originally scoped as facilitated visits, it became clear the parents did not want to just listen; they wanted to discuss their own knowledge and thoughts with other parents and Museum staff. Visits thus became a dialogue rather than a tour. Where galleries linked to personal heritage, parents shared information and lived experiences. Conversations were inspired by objects and the parents took ownership of the discussion.

In effect, the visits became a "school trip" for the parents with all the associated excitement and sense

“The project prompted a pilot initiative to embed event support for families with additional needs by making activities welcoming for all learning needs and behaviours.”

of exploration. One parent had previously visited with her child and said “I usually rush round with my son. It was wonderful to have time to move around the galleries slowly. I spotted things I had not seen before”. Another parent said “My daughter would love the Museum. It has made me think about bringing her here”.

## Next steps

The project prompted a pilot initiative to embed event support for families with additional needs by making activities welcoming for all learning needs and behaviours and supporting parents to support their child. In addition, Camden Borough have proposed a second iteration of the project with new parents which will enable us to keep learning about developing an inclusive visit experience.

## Find out more

[www.britishmuseum.org/learn/schools/access-and-sen](http://www.britishmuseum.org/learn/schools/access-and-sen)

[www.britishmuseum.org/visit/family-visits](http://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/family-visits)

Contact Katharine Hoare at [learning@britishmuseum.org](mailto:learning@britishmuseum.org)

# 'Sparking Wonder, Making Connections' at Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage

## Summary

"Sparking Wonder, Making Connections" created programmes to engage families with children aged 0-5 across Rotherham Borough. This project primarily focuses on family outreach and looking at key social outcomes around improving accessibility, health and wellbeing, as well as equality and inclusion. The project aims to reach families from various geographical and cultural backgrounds, supporting them to co-create their own programmes and making connections to the museum.

## Background

Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage, based at Clifton Park Museum. The service focuses on engaging with local families across Rotherham.

## Challenge

- Extend the reach of our early years offer to families not currently engaging, particularly diverse communities.
- Address health and wellbeing of families.
- Develop ways of working to improve inclusion, accessibility and address barriers to engagement.



## Approach

We targeted key partners and families to co-produce collections-based experiences/activities to meet their needs and interests. Relationships were developed to address barriers and sharing opportunities provided alongside training. Programmes were delivered with artists and early years practitioners, supported by training from health and wellbeing experts and advisors in anti-racist practice. Work focused on four groups of families: BME Young Carers, FS2 children at Ferham Primary School, a Rotherham Early Help toddler group and young parents and babies from YWCA Rotherham.

## Intended outcomes

- Re-imagine our early-years family programme;
- Co-create unique experiences for families;
- Explore intergenerational family models;
- Create connections to the museum;
- Embed health and wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Invest in artist development.

## Intended outputs

- 4 family programmes with new audiences;
- A framework for early years programme;
- Creation of an artist framework;
- Learning to shape the direction of the early years programme.

## Obstacles and issues

The project worked with families from some of the most economically deprived communities in Rotherham and most affected by social isolation. We needed to understand how this impacted engagement and look at ways we could create a safe space for learning.

Many of the families included children with diverse needs and adults with English as a second language requiring interpreters and additional support. Groups were varied in terms of ages and abilities, needing careful planning. Confidence levels amongst



the adults were low across at the start of the project and required encouragement and support through the delivery.

Using collection in early years activity was challenging and required creative solutions, such as using visuals/immersive projections for topic inspiration.

Connecting the outreach work back to the museum was also a challenge and some activities connected better than others.

The project timescale was short (10 months).

## Actual outcomes

We created new connections to families we had not previously worked with, developing a better understanding of their lived experience as well as the challenges and barriers they face.

We co-created new programmes using storytelling, music, movement, visual art, sensory play, drawing and photography which strengthened family connections based on their own priorities, individual needs, interests and cultural heritage. Through the programme we embedded health and wellbeing, inclusion and sensory approaches in all of the activities – creating positive experiences for our families to share together.



“Developing a strong developmental and impactful framework was key to the creation of purposeful programmes.”

## Actual outputs

- 4 bespoke early years programmes were co-created with the families.
- Creation of health and wellbeing focused home learning activities.
- Creation of an impactful framework for our early years programme, which we will further develop.
- Embedded health and wellbeing and inclusive practice into the programmes, and will work to embed across settings and future practice.
- Begun to create a network of “tried and tested” artists and have refined the processes to support them.

## Lessons learned

- Developing a strong developmental and impactful framework was key to the creation of purposeful programmes.
- Embedding thinking about inclusion, diversity, health and wellbeing was central to the project, and was important to engage the wider team and service to embed change long-term.

- Artists were carefully matched to family groups and paired together to co-create programmes. Not all artists had previously worked in this way but found it beneficial and a model of working we will explore further.
- Co-production can be a challenging approach and focuses on process rather than outcome. Some artists struggled with the concept, and we will need to think about how we recruit and create training to support artists.
- Co-production with families means that outcomes will look very different across different groups e.g. in informal settings like toddler groups compared to formal settings such as a primary school.

## Next steps

Learning from the project will inform the future development of our early years programmes and our wider family offer. We have created a “Sparking Wonder” pack for under 5's based on activities from the project which can be done in the museum and then at home. These are also included in new sensory backpacks at Clifton Park Museum.

## Find out more

### Project film and visual stories:

[youtube.com/channel/UCy118RK1cNvPrvXOGsRRu0Q](https://youtube.com/channel/UCy118RK1cNvPrvXOGsRRu0Q)

### Nelson's Cub Club:

[facebook.com/cliftonparkmuseum](https://facebook.com/cliftonparkmuseum)

### Contact:

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# From the Fair to the Museum

## Summary

Newcastle's Town Moor School exists for a fortnight each year to host the primary age children of the showmen and women who run *The Hoppings Fair*, Europe's largest travelling funfair, which arrives in Newcastle each June. In 2022, with their normal venue no longer available after the pandemic, the school ran as a museum-based programme at the Great North Museum: Hancock.

## Background

The school has made day visits to the museum in previous years. When we were approached about space hire for the fortnight, we opted to offer a more in-depth museum-based experience.

## Challenge

- Home schools attended by children outside travelling season set work, but children have varied connection with them and often miss experiences such as educational visits.
- Travelling families may feel unwelcome in cultural venues.

## Approach

- Use the full museum space.
- Design a mix of museum activities plus time for sport and work from home schools.
- Work with an artist.
- Host a separate afternoon opera project, run with the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain.

“Children were excellent owners of museum space – investigative, creative, enthusiastic and respectful of other visitors.”



- Support temporary school staff and volunteers.
- Welcome families on site.

## Intended outcomes

- Make the museum part of the learning experience.
- Work with stakeholders and the children themselves to produce a memorable experience and raise children's cultural capital.
- Support a sense of belonging in the space.

- Enable learning from home schools.
- Learn more about the needs of this community.

## Intended outputs

- Daily timetables;
- Sessions led by museum staff;
- Museum activities which school staff can deliver;
- A support pack for school staff;
- Space for the external opera project;
- A celebration event to close.

## Obstacles and issues

For the museum

- Timing of the initial enquiry made planning time short; we had to work the project around other schools' bookings.
- Off-site activities were not in the original timetable and co-created activities missed out as workshops were prioritised.
- The support pack was sent to the school but not read by all school staff and volunteers in advance.
- The school day is short (10am – noon), so activities were rather crammed in.
- Planning with the external opera project was at distance and organisation suffered.
- The artist donated her time for free; this is not sustainable (or fair) in the longer term;
- School gave a donation, but full costs were not covered.
- We are lucky not to have to charge for our school workshops, but the project adversely affected overall visit numbers.

For the families

- The additional travel distance to the museum compared with the previous location was a problem for some.
- There was confusion around organisation for the opera project.

## Actual outcomes

- Stakeholders were hugely positive – including families; school organisers; wider museum staff; Showmen's Guild representative; Freemen of the Town Moor.
- Children used the full museum.
- Good weather allowed use of the outdoor space especially by EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage).
- Self-guided museum activities were flexible where home schools had set differing amounts of work for children.
- Some children took a while to settle into their groups.

- Children were excellent owners of museum space – investigative, creative, enthusiastic and respectful of other visitors.
- Relationships were built with project stakeholder groups.

## Actual outputs

- Overall things ran smoothly.
- The support pack was largely successful (but could be improved).
- The celebration event gave an opportunity to talk to families and get feedback.
- We had some existing materials to give away at the celebration event which was a nice addition.
- Opera and art activities were popular.
- An afternoon activity was useful for some families.

## Lessons learned

- Start planning earlier to give time to better organise space and activities.
- Pin down activities delivered by other participants, whether the school (e.g. sports sessions) or externals (e.g. the opera project).
- Produce a full timetable and support materials based on that knowledge, with enough time for everyone to go through it in advance. Have additional copies always on hand.
- Put more priority on co-production with children so that it goes ahead.
- Children may not have been used to using cultural venues but they settled into it brilliantly.
- A closing event was great for both us and the families.
- The Hoppings families were brilliant to work with and pleased to be welcomed on site.
- Museum colleagues were enthusiastic about their experience of the school in the venue.
- This project has helped build wider relationships beyond the project.

## Next steps

- As this is written, we are running the 2023 school and want to carry on in future.
- Seek external funding to enable afternoon activities in future, possibly focused around achieving Arts Awards.
- Work with other cultural venues in the area to provide activities for future years in order to increase variety and build capital, while continuing to provide the main location for the school.

## Find out more

<https://hoppingsfunfairs.com>

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018-12/Townmoorhoppingsmainbody.pdf](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018-12/Townmoorhoppingsmainbody.pdf)

[www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/161107-primary-at-museum-report-stage-7-visual-interactive.pdf](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/161107-primary-at-museum-report-stage-7-visual-interactive.pdf)

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## Acknowledgements

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# Joy at the Jobcentre



## Summary

Since 2015, Colchester + Ipswich Museums and Ipswich Jobcentre Plus have explored what a partnership between two such different organisations might look like. Avoiding a project-based approach, we have created a resilient and useful partnership that continues to grow.

## Background

We started without agenda but with an ambition to be useful for families experiencing poverty, disability, social isolation, mental health difficulties and familial breakdown.

## Challenge

We know that 1 in 3 children in Suffolk live in poverty and the situation is getting worse. In a recent survey of families experiencing poverty, 90% of under 12's had never heard live music, seen a live performance, or engaged in heritage or cultural services outside a school environment.

## Approach

Together, we have built our activities from craft tables in the Jobcentre's entrance to week-long takeovers with live animals, shared meals, and dance. As well as Jobcentre-based

activities, we run free events and give vouchers to families supported by the Jobcentre to empower them to enjoy their local cultural offer and get creative on their own terms.

Our strategy is reactive, and we only plan few months ahead, creating an offer that's bespoke for our hyperlocal community.

## Intended outcomes

We hope to increase aspirations, invite creativity, and foster good memories, fuelled by the belief that fun shouldn't be restricted by finance. As this work is always changing and piloting new ideas, we don't have set targets for engagement.

## Intended outputs

As our partnership has taken root, ambitions have begun to crystallise:

1. Create opportunities to be imaginative for vulnerable families without judgement.
2. Build spaces for people to create authentic human connections.
3. Support people to share their concerns about progression into work and training through work coaches and clients taking part in creative activities together.
4. Offer respite to families living in abusive households.
5. Empower people to access their local cultural offer.



“After joining a Joy at the Jobcentre event, nearly 90% of parents felt more confident about joining cultural activities in future.”

## Obstacles and issues

Jobcentres and museums are very different places, and we've worked a lot out as we go - our events are responsible for the DWP listing "glitter" on their banned materials list. The Museum team have learnt to adapt their activities to not cause disruption for DWP staff who are often having sensitive discussions in nearby offices.

As ever, our resources are limited. We feel the mismatch between the huge number of underserved families and what we're able to offer acutely. We advocate and encourage other organisations to get involved and they've begun their own collaborations directly with the Jobcentre, regularly running free activities or giving away discounted/free tickets.

## Actual outcomes

After joining a Joy at the Jobcentre event, nearly 90% of parents felt more confident about joining cultural activities in future. This is reflected in staff seeing an increase in families coming to activities at Ipswich Museums.

We take our mandate to continue this work from Jobcentre clients' feedback, for example a child who was selectively mute after domestic violence spoke to her grandma for the first time in three years, to share her Joy at the Jobcentre experience.

*"This is the best possible day I could have done"* – feedback from a child participant.



## Actual outputs

In 2022, 342 people joined Joy at the Jobcentre events coordinated by Ipswich Museums across Suffolk, hundreds of free tickets for events were distributed via work coaches, and 207 children received gifts from 'Elfridges', the Christmas gift bank coordinated by Ipswich Museums.

*"I got a break because they were so occupied they weren't fighting and arguing and the holidays can be so expensive it was great that it was free"*, – feedback from a parent.

## Lessons learned

We've learnt the importance of understanding, not underestimating our communities. For example, dates of activities are based on when families report feeling stress, often during half terms and the end of the summer holidays. We don't guess at what families might want – we ask. For example, as hunger rose, we began offering shared meals at events and as the financial burden of Christmas loomed, we opened a free gift pick-up.

Relationships sit at the heart of everything we do – we open the door wide and invite everyone to join us. To date this work has involved collaboration with over 50 partner organisations and

countless families, to create high-quality and highly accessible cultural opportunities.

## Next steps

Our partnership has no prescribed timeline or Gantt chart, meaning Joy at the Jobcentre has no end. Budgets are tightening but our ambition grows – as we have no set project plan, we can be adaptive to new circumstances and keep building Joy at the Jobcentre.

Throughout 2022, we shared our pioneering approach with other Jobcentres and cultural organisations all over East Anglia to create a Cultural Jobcentres Model, which we hope will roll out across the UK.

Our plans for 2023 - 24 include events, free tickets, a free back-to-school stationery shop for children missing school as families can't afford basics to attend, and much more JOY.

## Find out more

**Joy in the Job centre**  
[cimuseums.org.uk](http://cimuseums.org.uk)

**YouTube video**  
Joy at the Jobcentre – February 2022 – YouTube  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovDa1zvaDGs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovDa1zvaDGs)

## About GEM

**GEM, the Group for Education in Museums, has been helping anyone who delivers learning in museums to connect and learn together for over 70 years. We support sector colleagues in a variety of ways, including training courses, mentoring, publications like the GEM Case Studies, and other professional development opportunities.**

GEM's **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.

Our **MISSION** is to support and empower our community of colleagues to connect and develop their knowledge and skills to deliver learning.

GEM membership is available for individuals and institutions, with discounts available for students, volunteers, job-seekers and small sector organisations.

You can find out more about the benefits of joining GEM here:  
[www.gem.org.uk/join](http://www.gem.org.uk/join)



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