



MUSEUMS CHANGE LIVES

MUSEUMS
ASSOCIATION

MUSEUMS CHANGING LIVES

“More museums, small and large, with different audiences and governance, are using their fabulous collections and creativity to build socially engaged practice. Such commitment is needed now more than ever and the Museums Change Lives document is both a powerful advocacy tool and a crystal clear statement of our intent.”

Maggie Appleton, chief executive, RAF Museum
and vice president, Museums Association





MUSEUMS CAN INCREASE OUR SENSE OF WELLBEING, HELP US FEEL PROUD OF WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM, CAN INSPIRE, CHALLENGE AND STIMULATE US, AND MAKE US FEEL HEALTHIER.

With society facing issues such as poverty, inequality, intolerance and discrimination, museums can help us understand, debate, and challenge these concerns. They can also enhance everyone's life chances by breaking down barriers to access and inclusion. Museums are doing this through active public participation, engaging with diverse communities, and sharing collections and knowledge in ways that are transforming lives.

Museums of all sizes, with collections ranging from fine art to social history, are changing lives – often in partnership with community groups, health charities and other third sector organisations.

The Museums Association (MA) is campaigning for museums to develop their role as socially-purposeful organisations and there is growing evidence that they are working with their communities and delivering positive social impact. This type of work helps museums be more sustainable and the public benefits it generates underline the importance of continuing public investment in them.

Whether it's Experience Barnsley Museum's Dementia Cafe or Cardiff Story's work with refugees and asylum seekers, museums across the UK are making a positive and lasting difference.

"Museums Change Lives is a powerful statement of the difference that modern museums can make. It shows that they can be an essential part of the fabric of society and relevant to diverse and changing communities. It has a strong international resonance and has been discussed at events from Albania and Argentina to Taiwan and Ukraine. It is having enormous influence around the world.

This is a movement for our times; a framework for promoting real impact by all museums, regardless of location, collection or mode of funding. I am delighted that the MA is continuing to promote its ambitious vision."

David Fleming

Director, National Museums Liverpool
President, Museums Association

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION INSPIRING MUSEUMS TO CHANGE LIVES

MUSEUMS
CHANGE
LIVES



ENHANCING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Museums enhance our quality of life and improve our mental and physical health.
- Museums work in partnership with health and wellbeing organisations to support a range of people in society with different needs.
- Meaningful participation and volunteering promotes wellbeing and self-confidence and can broaden the horizons of participants, the museum and the public.

CREATING BETTER PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK

- Museums help us to value the places where we live, work and visit, and help us to understand where we have come from.
- Museums create a sense of belonging by engaging with communities and encouraging active public participation in decision-making.
- Museums use engagement, learning and collections to generate understanding within and between different groups and communities in society.
- Museums generate partnerships with community groups, charities and third-sector organisations to create spaces that are open and accessible to all.

INSPIRING ENGAGEMENT, DEBATE AND REFLECTION

- Museums work with the public as active and creative participants in the life of the museum – using it as a space for exchanging opinions, experiences, ideas and knowledge.
- Museums help us to understand and negotiate the complex world around us, encouraging us to reflect on contemporary challenges such as discrimination, poverty and climate change.
- Museums use their research and collections to challenge assumptions, foster debate, and motivate people to contribute to positive change in the world. They are not neutral spaces.
- Museums inspire learning and creativity for children and adults, and work actively to ensure that a broad and diverse audience can access these opportunities at any stage in life.

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ENHANCING
HEALTH AND
WELLBEING**





TUNBRIDGE WELLS MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY DEMENTIA PARTNERSHIP

The wellbeing of people living with dementia was markedly improved when they were encouraged to explore the collection at the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery as part of a collaborative project with the Alzheimer's Society and Canterbury Christ Church University.

Object handling sessions were designed to give participants a sense of achievement and fulfilment through learning something new and evaluation showed that feelings of wellbeing had significantly and steadily increased over the two-year project.

"Museums tap into our curiosity, a quality so primal that it's one of the last things to be effected by dementia," says audience development manager Jeremy Kimmel.

"Museums can use the bizarre and the wonderful to engage, excite and intrigue people who feel they're slowly losing their humanity and help them to feel like themselves and not be defined by a disease."


GLASGOW MUSEUMS CONTACT THE ELDERLY

Since July 2006 Glasgow Museums have been offering monthly Sunday tea parties in their venues for Contact the Elderly, the national charity dedicated to tackling loneliness and social isolation among older people.

The events bring together small groups of people aged 75+ who live alone and may have little contact with family or friends. They are collected from their home by the same volunteer driver every month and taken to a gathering for the afternoon at a different venue each time.

Alongside the social element of a tea party, looking at objects helps the guests to start conversations with other members of the group and with museum staff. The museums also put on workshops, talks and activities.

While the tea parties are giving people who may have little contact with family and friends a chance to socialise, they are also enabling the museums to reach an audience they were not engaging in other ways.



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ROMAN BATHS AUTISM FRIENDLY AWARD

The experiences of a student with Asperger's informed a project that improved access for people on the autistic spectrum to the building and collections at the Roman Baths complex in Bath.

The student told staff about what he found unsettling as a visitor, from sudden smells or the unexpected spray of water used to keep the atmosphere moist; the building now incorporates quiet areas, appropriate lighting and sound control.

Information for people with autism uses a combination of text and images to prepare them fully for their visit. It includes simple directions explaining where to buy a ticket and how to operate the audio guide and flags up details such as the hand-dryers in the toilets that make a loud noise.

Front-of-house staff have a system of logging pre-arranged visitors with special needs to ensure that the appropriate support is available. The redesigned site has won numerous awards, including the Autism Friendly Award from the National Autistic Society.



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SCOTTISH MARITIME MUSEUM SCOTTISH BOAT BUILDING SCHOOL

The Scottish Boat Building School teaches trainees – some of whom are young offenders, long-term unemployed or facing other personal challenges – basic woodworking skills that are not only transferable to the wider workplace but are also used to return older vessels to the water or improve displays in the museum.

Repairs carried out on private boats also boost the museum's commercial arm, helping the project to become self-sustainable. Working in tandem with local agencies, the project markedly improves the self-confidence of the trainees, the vast majority of whom have gone into further employment.

“Museums are ideally placed to connect to the audiences that may not engage with other organisations,” says director David Mann. “We can be the non-confrontational place where people can receive the health and social benefits that activities like this can offer.”

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CREATING
BETTER
PLACES**





MY PRIMARY SCHOOL IS AT THE MUSEUM

My Primary School is at the Museum is a pilot project led by King's College London to explore the potential benefits of children receiving full-time lessons in a cultural setting. The three pilots in Liverpool, South Tyneside and Swansea took primary school children and relocated their classrooms into museums.

In Wales a reception year of two forms (children aged 4 – 5 years old) from St Thomas Community Primary School was based at the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea for two five-week residencies.

Teachers, parents and staff all remarked on the difference it made, with many children growing in confidence as they learned about the objects and were able to re-visit favourite items.

The museum's link with the sea was a popular theme and a team of marine biologists from Swansea University brought fish, snails and crabs from their trawl and encouraged the children to handle and talk about them.

The evaluation of the three pilots showed a range of outcomes for children in terms of increased confidence and improved social skills. The museums gained a deeper understanding of younger audiences that enabled the development of more relevant programmes; and teachers discovered more creative ways to deliver the curriculum in non-traditional spaces.

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NATIONAL MUSEUMS NORTHERN IRELAND URBAN VILLAGES

National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) has developed a social inclusion programme targeting people from deprived areas in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.

Working with partners including the Urban Villages initiative, the programme included visits by curators for handling sessions at libraries and community centres, bringing many people into contact with a museum for the first time.

In other activities, groups have visited museums. The Seniors Group from the Markets area of the South Belfast Urban Village, for example, went to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum to meet curators and have a 'behind the scenes' tour of the museum store, sharing their own stories with the staff.

"We are committed to making our collections as accessible to as wide a range of audiences as possible," says Arlene Bell, capital programme manager, NMNI.

"Connection with authentic heritage objects stimulates interest in history, art and nature and can act as a catalyst for many different types of engagement."



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ST FAGANS PARTICIPATORY FORUMS

Public engagement is helping shape the £25.5m re-development of the much-loved St Fagans National History Museum on the outskirts of Cardiff.

As a museum of the people and for the people, St Fagans is aiming to become a 'truly participatory museum', one in which the views and needs of the community are at the heart of what it is and what it offers.

As part of this approach, nine participatory forums representing different audience groups

are acting as community partners and champions for museum partnerships throughout the redevelopment and beyond.

Activities tailored for each group have led to people helping to develop the gallery displays and learning programmes while also influencing architectural and gallery design.

There have also been opportunities for supporters to lend a more practical hand. The first buildings to be completed at the site comprised a recreated Iron Age farmstead and hundreds of local volunteers and schoolchildren helped construct the six-foot thick clay walls and conical thatched roofs.

POOLE MUSEUM CULTURE VOLUNTEERS

Poole Museum's mission is to be at the heart of its communities and actively engaging them to enrich people's lives is central to its work. This means reaching out and finding ways to promote wellbeing.

A key way of doing this is through Culture Volunteers Poole (CVP). The museum works with community participants, some of whom might be experiencing mental health issues or feeling isolated, to develop skills, increase confidence and gain experience. Many of the volunteers regularly move on to full time employment.

"With the skills and confidence I gained during my time with CVP I have since been able to find employment as an office temp and now work in a full time role," says a CVP volunteer. "Whilst my depression will likely always remain an issue in my life, with the self-respect and the independence I've gained it's become something I can manage rather than the defining element of my life."

The staff are very proud of the work and have seen first hand how it can change people's lives. The next step is to expand it through a social prescription scheme in partnership with Bournemouth University.





LUTON CULTURE MUSEUM MAKERS

Ranging from retirees to students, and schoolchildren to young professionals, the Museum Makers are a team working with Luton Culture to help transform Wardown Park Museum into a brand new cultural attraction while making new friends and learning new skills along the way.

The new museum, housed in a former Victorian home and military hospital, will chart the history of Luton while a café, art gallery and learning programme ensure the building will be at the centre of community life.

“As a fashion graduate with a background in costume design, I was keen to work with the costume stores,” says Mary Hearne, a Museum Maker.

“I learned a lot of practical skills such as correct storage of delicate items and the gentle conservation and mounting of garments. Working in such a positive atmosphere has helped me with building confidence in my decision-making and people skills.”

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GLASGOW WOMEN'S LIBRARY MIXING THE COLOURS

The Mixing the Colours project led by Glasgow Women's Library explored women's role in addressing sectarianism.

It involved a wide range of women from very different communities in activities including film screenings, creative writing, discussions and a conference, and produced a raft of new resources, including a film, publication and new library materials that have begun to chart the complex terrain of women and sectarianism.

"There were a huge range of positive outcomes, not least the fact that several of the women participants have gone on to have their creative writing published," says Adele Patrick, the library's lifelong learning and creative development manager.

"The topic is a very highly charged one but we have found that using the museum, archive and library resources, looking at imaginative and creative ways to address the subject and taking care to listen to the participants and community curators that ground breaking insights and new ways of interpreting heritage can result."

"Museums like our own are making a powerful and profound impact on people and communities each and every day. Museums Change Lives demonstrates with a spectrum of compelling, moving and inspiring evidence the critical and dynamic role museums working with people have to play in changing lives for the better and is a huge endorsement for the wide array of effectively engaged, imaginative and innovative museum teams."

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UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER EXCEPTIONAL AND EXTRAORDINARY

Four disabled artists have used the resources of eight of the UK's most renowned medical museums to create artworks that aim to examine public attitudes towards difference.

The Exceptional and Extraordinary project, initiated and led by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester, comprises new commissions by Francesca Martinez, Julie McNamara, David Hevey and Deaf Men Dancing which feature comedy, dance, live performance, film and digital media.

"Our research shows that museums are trusted institutions that can host and, importantly, influence debates about these kinds of issues," says Richard Sandell, professor of Museum Studies. "Collections and the stories that they hold can be especially powerful in engaging visitors to think – and to think differently – about difference.

"Museums aren't to blame for negative attitudes – but there is a link between them and the way that disability is presented in the media and public realm. This means that museums have an opportunity to tell these stories responsibly and ethically."

Sandell says that Museums Change Lives offers a compelling vision for the social role and value of museums and galleries in the twenty first century and is also an invaluable source of inspiration to enrich future practice. "At a time when a growing body of international research highlights the unique contributions that museums can make to a fairer, inclusive and cohesive society, Museums Change Lives helps to focus attention on our core priorities."

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CARDIFF STORY WORKING WITH REFUGEES

Cardiff Story charts the history of the city through the voices of the people who have made it their home or place of work and one of the most important narratives is the clear influence migration has had on the Welsh capital.

All activities are driven by a strong sense of community and relevance and the museum ensures that everyone who moves to the city is represented in its collections and events.

So when ten Syrian refugee families arrived in the city, the institution worked with agencies and charities to ensure they felt part of Cardiff's past and present and recognised the museum as a community space in which they could feel at home.

"When they visited the museum, there were welcomes but no labels," says manager Victoria Rogers. "Some families happened to be from Syria, some happened to be from Cardiff. It was all about people coming into contact with each other, saying hello over the interactives with which their children were playing."

RIPON MUSEUMS RIPON EVOLVE

Ripon Evolve is a centre for young people that offers a personalised approach to study, qualifications and work experience. Ripon Museums work with Evolve on art projects, community events and volunteering and work experience opportunities.

When Callum Axtell joined the museum's maintenance team he wanted to build his self-confidence and skills. Working with established volunteers he was able to try a variety of tasks, and learn new skills as well as experiencing the social side of work. Dave Rushton, a maintenance volunteer at the museum, says the experience has been satisfying for him too: "I have enjoyed

"Working with established volunteers he was able to try a variety of tasks, and learn new skills as well as experiencing the social side of work."

the opportunity to pass on my knowledge of traditional methods and skills to the next generation."

Callum volunteered for one day a week over two years, becoming an integral part of the team. During that time he restored a paupers funeral bier for display, painted church pews to use in the museum's learning space and carried out garden maintenance and general upkeep of the three museum sites.

His self confidence and enthusiasm for the museums grew to such an extent that he was happy to don historical costume to promote events and feature in newspaper articles. These skills directly contributed to him successfully gaining a place on an exchange trip abroad followed by full time employment in a local timber yard.





NORWICH CASTLE WORKING WITH YOUTH OFFENDERS

Norwich Castle has worked with young offenders and children and young people at risk of offending in partnership with the Norfolk Youth Offending Team (YOT) since 2004. Each year the museum runs a 10-12 week programme with an artist and member of the museum's learning team for young people supported by workers from the YOT team.

Many of the young people have low self-esteem and the programme helps them to develop their team working and inter-personal skills, and gives them the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities in a community setting and to re-assess some of their behaviours.

Each course is reviewed with the YOT team, looking at what went well and what could have been improved, what impact the course has had on each young person and what they have achieved.

Programmes have included making short animations with an experienced film-maker and exploring social media, crime and punishment and bullying. The latest course used graffiti on the castle walls as inspiration for participants to work with an artist to sculpt their own designs

into clay which was then cast into plaster blocks resembling the castle's limestone bricks.

The celebration at the end of each course is an important feature when the young people can show their work to an invited group of parents, siblings and stakeholders. Displaying their work helps to raise the self-esteem of the young people and seeing key adults respond positively to their work is an immensely affirming experience.



THE FOUNDLING MUSEUM LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE

The Foundling Museum tells the story of the Foundling Hospital, the UK's first children's charity and first public art gallery. The story resonates particularly strongly with looked after young people: children under the age of 18 who are growing up in children's homes, hostels or in foster care. Enabling vulnerable and marginalised young people to work alongside artists and to explore life's possibilities, lies at the heart of the museum's work.

In 2014 Foundling Fellow Lemn Sissay produced *Superman was a Foundling*, a striking text-based mural in the museum café that explored the powerful role that fictional looked-after children play in our culture. Sissay, who grew up in both children's homes and foster care, describes the project as addressing the disparity between our admiration for fictional orphaned, adopted, fostered and foundling characters, and our disregard for their real-life counterparts.

The mural has generated other projects, including work with Foundling Fellow and natural history sound recordist, Chris Watson. Watson ran a project with a group of young adults who had grown up in children's homes in London, to record the sounds of the dawn chorus on the site of the original Foundling Hospital. None of the young people had heard of the museum or the Foundling Hospital. They responded enthusiastically to the story and the collection. In the words of one participant; "Every brushstroke of every painting was painted for me."

Working with Lemn Sissay and listening to the young care-experienced adults talk about the positive impact that understanding their place in history and culture had on them has inspired a new three-year project to develop a bespoke training and mentorship programme run by care-experienced young adults.

The scheme will enable the young adults to devise and deliver workshops at the museum for children currently in homes, hostels and foster care. It will provide paid employment and valuable life skills, including public speaking, critical and creative thinking and people management.





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RESOURCES FOR SOCIALLY ENGAGED PRACTICE

A TOOLKIT TO HELP SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED INSTITUTIONS:

www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1150803

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION CODE OF ETHICS:

www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics

MY PRIMARY SCHOOL IS AT THE MUSEUM:

www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/-/projects/my-primary-school-is-at-the-museum.aspx

HOUSE OF MEMORIES:

www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/learning/projects/house-of-memories

MUSEUMS CHANGE LIVES: FURTHER RESOURCES AND CASE STUDIES:

www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR MUSEUMS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING:

museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com

OUR MUSEUM: COMMUNITIES AND MUSEUMS AS ACTIVE PARTNERS:

ourmuseum.org.uk

IMAGES

Eye for Colour ©Gareth Jones;
Children in The People's Republic
gallery at Museum of Liverpool
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House of Memories celebration tea
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