

Health and Wellbeing Cohort

Alumni Case Studies

Museum Development Yorkshire

Developed by Lily Wilks



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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MDY Foreword

Museum Development Yorkshire has been actively highlighting the importance of the Health and Wellbeing agenda to museums since 2015. We have done this via a mixed programme, including targeted grant funding, events and since 2016, a museum cohort. Now in its fourth year, the cohort has brought together museums across Yorkshire and the Humber for high quality training, targeted mentoring and peer support.

This document showcases work from museums across the region, illustrating the key role that museums can play to support improved health and wellbeing.

30

individual museums or
services have been
supported by Museum
Development Yorkshire
since 2016 to develop their
Health and Wellbeing
provision



The MDY team

Barnsley Museums

Dying Matters

Barnsley Museums worked with Barnsley Hospice, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trusts (SWYPFT), Creative Minds and Shawlands Trust to support those with a life-limiting illness to talk about lives and share stories, thoughts and explore feelings through poetry. They aimed to improve the holistic wellbeing of patients, carers and their families and support carers professional development.

Dying Matters was an innovative health and wellbeing programme supporting those in end-of-life care, their families, and care practitioners through creative expression. The project gave those living with a life-limiting illness and their families chance to talk about their lives and share stories, exploring thoughts and feelings through poetry. A series of poetry workshops were held in Barnsley Hospice facilitated by Diane Hinchliffe, an independent Emotional Health & Wellbeing Practitioner who utilises creative methods to engage individuals and groups.

The programme aimed to train Barnsley Hospice and SWYPFT staff in recognising and understanding the important contribution that using creative techniques has in enabling conversations. The project also aimed to support the wellbeing of staff to encourage conversations about death and dying, and coping with their work.

The staff developed skills, knowledge and understanding through engaging creatively with patients and their families around difficult conversations. 52 patients participated in 15 group- and 22 one-to-one poetry sessions. A poetry anthology, 'My Words' bringing together group and individual pieces from the project, selected by participants, was produced as a legacy of the project and critically will be used as a tool to facilitate more conversations between staff, patients and their families in the future.

Find the book at: www.barnsley-museums.com/content/downloads/AnthologyPoems-v105939.pdf

29 staff from across the partnership took part, and described the project as having a **'life-changing' impact** on their practice.

a meaningful collection – with a lovely balance of feelings and humour

For more information contact Jude Holland (JudeHolland@barnsley.gov.uk)

Being part of the sessions has allowed me to express my feelings, open up and give me more confidence in how I see things

My Words
Poetry for Wellbeing



Brontë Parsonage Museum

Pilot Textile Project with Keighley Asian Women's Centre

The Brontë Parsonage Museum worked with Keighley Asian Women's Centre to assist in increasing confidence, improving social skills and connectedness of participants whilst they learn new skills and about the Brontë's.

We emailed Keighley Asian Women's Centre having identified them as a group whose focus on women and young girls might resonate with the Brontë story and articulated what the museum had to offer in terms of health and wellbeing benefits. An initial visit was arranged and was followed by two further visits in the year. Each visit was deemed very successful and seemed appreciated. The Development Worker at the Centre identified 6-8 women who could be involved in a 4-6 week pilot project, ideally textile-based. The pilot lasted four weeks, and numbers ranged from 2 to 6 women.

For inspiration the commissioned textile artist identified a quilt in the collection that the three sisters had worked on and the women were to create pin cushions using a particular technique called English Paper Piecing. We agreed that conversation during these sessions would be encouraged about the heritage of domestic textile activities, how this connects to our daily lives today and the power of textiles as story-telling objects.

One week when we were without an interpreter conversation proved very difficult. However, there were times when conversation developed and it felt that there was genuine connection as the women shared stories. There were some glimpses of benefits to the participants: the two women who attended every week were elderly, and both suffer from arthritis, but spoke of feeling 'less pain' whilst sewing, and described how sewing was 'stress-free and relaxing', and how 'it was good to keep hands moving'.

The Brontë Parsonage Museum have obtained a grant to support the development of three outreach projects with Keighley Asian Women's Centre, Bevan Wellbeing Centre and Together Women Project.



Images from the textile sessions

For more information contact Diane Fare (diane.fare@bronte.org.uk)

East Riddlesden Hall, National Trust

Wellbeing Garden

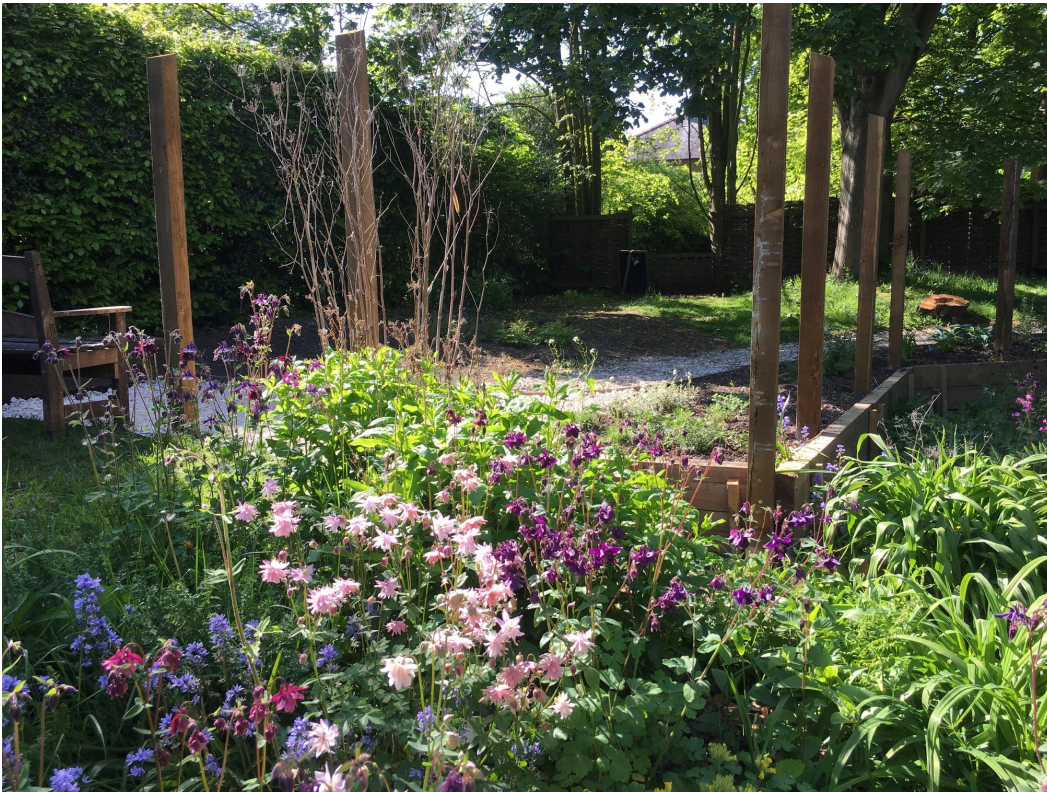
Research has shown that access to green spaces is effective in the treatment of depression. Keighley is one of Bradford's most deprived areas, with less than 15% using outdoor spaces.

We designed the wellbeing garden as a place where people can pursue a variety of activities, whether it be quiet contemplation and meditation, socialising with friends, or even just appreciating nature and the changing of the seasons.

Our main partnership with Dementia Friendly Keighley was established following a course of training sessions run at the property. Our collaboration led to building a garden to support people living with dementia.

Over the last six months, we have been building the foundations of the garden to populate with plants in the new year, including a pond, seating area, paths and flower beds. Grant funding from Museum Development Yorkshire supported this work. The project is still ongoing and is due to be complete in May 2020.

I learnt that there is a great need for this in the community, and the project has just snowballed as a result, with more and more people wanting to be a part of it or championing the project.



Left: The Garden, Right: Garden Path building

For more information contact Emily Taylor (Emily.Taylor@nationaltrust.org.uk)

Mindful Engagement with Art at Beverley Art Gallery

Beverley Art Gallery investigated whether using the principles of mindfulness to engage with artwork would have an impact on the wellbeing of participants.

We invited participation from a targeted group of adults with mental health problems, and from East Riding of Yorkshire Council staff members who were interested in mindful practice. The final number of participants for the pilot was seven. Sessions took place once a week for six weeks and lasted 45 minutes to an hour. Participants shared refreshments in an informal space, then proceeded to the gallery spaces where the mindful engagement sessions took place.

Each session focussed on a different work of art. The principles of mindfulness were used to study the artwork, taking particular notice of colours, shapes, textures, and objects, and noticing the participants' own reaction to these, without judgement.

I have bee[n] feeling less 'bothered' by events and people, and even by my own negative feelings

I feel that my mind has become less busy and has slowed down enough to appreciate the artwork

Feeling more able to just take each day as it comes despite uncertainties at work and in personal life

I was here last week, and I just fell right back into the painting

Immediately after the meetings I've felt relaxed

Enjoyed feeling able to go up really close to it and look for a lot longer than I would have done if I had been on my own in the gallery



A Panic Session © East Riding of Yorkshire Council

We have learnt how well mindful strategies and artwork can come together to encourage positive wellbeing. We have also discovered that mindfulness can encourage a deeper form of engagement with our collection items and gallery spaces; and vice-versa, our art collection can be used to encourage mindful looking.

The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale results revealed that all the participants showed a positive change in wellbeing, with four of them exhibiting a change that was both positive and meaningful.

For more information contact Lucy Cooke
(Lucy.Cooke@eastriding.gov.uk)

Pilot Project, Mindful Looking in the Mercer

Harrogate Museums wanted to understand how mindful activities could take place within the Mercer Art Gallery setting. They worked with Sally Edward, a mindfulness instructor.

This pilot project took the form of three mindful looking sessions within one month in the Mercer Art Gallery, each 45-minute session took place at a different time and day of the week to test what format would work best (morning, lunchtime, Sunday when gallery is closed).

These mindful and slow-looking sessions responded to specific artworks in the Gallery. Sally started the session with the group seated in a circle, she led a grounding exercise involving deep breathing to calm and centre everyone. She asked people to focus on either one selected painting as a group, or to look individually at chosen images for a prolonged period of time. She gently suggested ways of approaching the looking exercise but then allowed people to look in their own way. People came back together to talk about their experience, conversation guided by Sally. She rounded off the session with another calm breathing exercise.

As a self-guided mindful exercise, we also set up a 'Mindful Looking Chair' – an armchair in the gallery with an egg timer and an invitation to sit and look for an extended period of time – a notebook records people's responses.

The participants reported a high level of engagement, and feelings of calm and relaxation. Nine of the participants heard about the classes from the exhibition leaflet when visiting the gallery. Participants really valued the social aspect of looking at paintings in a group and hearing each other's opinions.

Due to the noise in the gallery space hosting the sessions in one of the studio rooms using works of art from the collection would enable quieter undisturbed looking. Our next move is to develop more self-led activities that can be used within the gallery by all visitors who wish to. We are also investigating social activities that can be run by gallery staff or volunteers.

Grounding exercise at the beginning was very relaxing ...looking at each picture for a longer time than normal allowed me to see the details, see facial expressions clearly etc. I liked the format of the sessions

So interesting to hear different responses to it and interpretations. Sense of joy and excitement.

I felt peaceful and found it easy to focus. I had seen the painting before but enjoyed focussing on the different parts more closely

Calming and restful, break in the day, afterwards I felt really calm. Peaceful beginning and end sessions.

Thought- provoking looking at pictures for longer and v interesting hearing other ideas of their interpretations

For more information contact Karen Southworth
(Karen.Southworth@harrogate.gov.uk)

Heritage Doncaster

History, Health and Happiness

Heritage Doncaster's History, Health and Happiness programme aims to tackle isolation and improve wellbeing in four key areas of Doncaster, using museum collections as the basis for outreach activities.

Doncaster is the biggest metropolitan borough in the UK and as a result many residents find it difficult to access our museum sites in person. Conversations with GPs and Doncaster's social prescribing organisations highlighted a need for regular, community based activity. As a result our programming takes place in 4 key communities across Doncaster and focusses on outreach activity.

We strive to make participants feel more connected to others in their community, and have a greater understanding and pride in the place they live. The activities aim to respond to community insight and the needs of the communities in which they take place.

We are working with academic partners to rigorously evaluate the health and wellbeing outcomes of our work. It is anticipated that the results of this evaluation will form part of the strategy for a Borough wide 'Arts on Prescription' proposal. We strive to be a sector lead in the arts demonstrating the impact heritage can have on wellbeing and tackling loneliness.

Initial evaluation findings from Herstory (a programme working with working age women in Denaby Main experiencing isolation and mental health) shows that all participants have moved at least 2 points on the confidence scale, increasing their confidence since May 2019.



Outreach activities
from Heritage
Doncaster



For more information contact Victoria Ryves (Victoria.Ryves@doncaster.gov.uk)

Hull Museums and Heritage Learning

Staff Wellbeing

Hull Museums and Heritage Learning wanted to support colleagues through a series of events during the significant organisational changes. They plan to deliver quarterly wellbeing events for staff and feed this into programming for the public.

For our second set of events, we worked with our local Mind office. Although they weren't able to support us with staff they gave us resources and social media support. We are building on this relationship and exploring a number of other opportunities around post-natal support and gallery mindfulness.

Wellbeing Week June 2019: We looked in house to find expertise to lead these sessions. The best attended was the birdwatching with over 20 attendees including many front of house staff. Which included: Bring your Dog to Work Day, Staff walking tour of the city, Birdwatching, Yoga sessions, Mindful sketching.

Moth Box opening September 2019: East Park Animal Education Centre offered us a moth box for our gardens and we opened it together with a group of about 8 staff, helped to identify the moths and then release them.

Mental Health Awareness Day October 2019: Drop in coffee morning attended by 21 people including 6 staff volunteers and donations of cake. We raised money for Mind in the process. 10 minute guided meditations. Mindful sketching at the gallery.

We discovered that it's difficult for front of house staff to take part in these sessions during the working day (even on lunch breaks). Sessions that were outside, drop-in and actively sanctioned by supervisors and managers (events they also attended) worked best. If we changed the timing/length of some events we might get more staff attending.

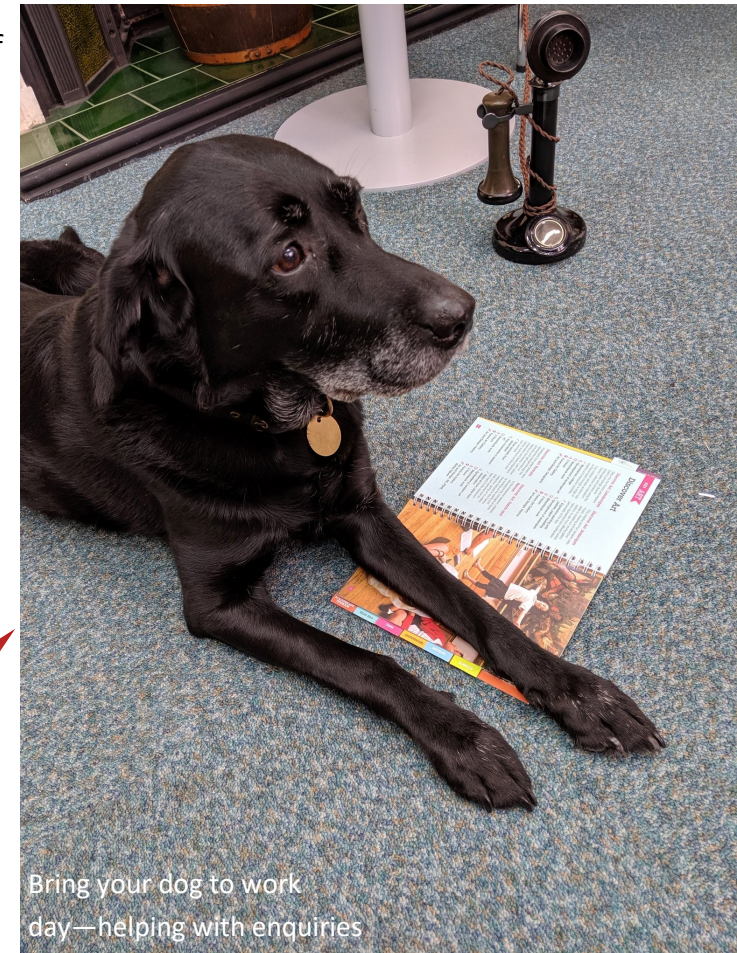
Events like the moth box were more popular, they were activities in their own right, that had wellbeing as a sort of by-product. There is a real appetite for these types of events and there were great suggestions from staff about what we could do in the future.

I was in the zone and I could completely concentrate on one thing for a bit.

Quote from
Mindful Sketching

I loved it! Seeing [the dog] at odd times throughout the day made me really happy. She seemed to enjoy meeting new people and it was a nice stress relief to sit and give her a cuddle.

For more information contact Esther Hallberg (Esther.Hallberg@hcandl.co.uk)



Bring your dog to work
day—helping with enquiries

Leeds Museums and Galleries

The Mindfulness Festival at Kirkstall Abbey (2018-19)

We wanted to utilise our spaces better for audiences who want to access the Abbey but may not wish to do so in a formal learning environment or a structured session. The Abbey is unique in that it offers a reflective and meditative space amidst the bustle of a busy metropolitan suburb. There is a growing demand for use of spaces such as this for mindful and spiritual activities. We often use the Abbey for largescale commercial events such as film screenings and also for crowded community events such as deli markets and festivals, but less for smaller scale sessions that allow for those who wish to engage with the Abbey as a peaceful retreat.

A partnership was established with Leeds MIND. We were signposted to Steve Hart who has been teaching different meditative practices and who has now set up his own organisation, Leeds Mindfulness. After running some taster sessions Steve set up his own regular Tuesday drop-in session entitled 'Mindfulness At The Abbey'. An annual mini-festival was established which would run for a full fortnight and involve a range of meditative practices and practitioners.

Taster sessions explored secular and spiritual mindfulness practise from sufi and zen traditions to self-compassion, and rainbow visualisation, plus a chi-kung session. In 2019 we added yoga and a mindful walk and poem devised by Clare Wigzell, directly inspired by Kirkstall Abbey and its history, plus meditative walks devised by Brahma Kumaris Leeds in conjunction with our curator of archaeology which led visitors around the ruins with a focus on qualities such as strength, compassion and hospitality, and linking the historic use of the Abbey with modern mindfulness practice. Adam Hussein interpreted the ruins through a dance and chant in the Sufi tradition. Sessions were free with no booking required to try to reduce barriers. We used the UCL wellbeing umbrella to monitor people's feelings at the beginning and end of sessions, and a wellbeing book for freehand comment.

We learned that new audiences could be brought into our space by engaging with the Abbey's using it as a resource for meditation and reflection, and tying this to its history as a place of meditation, prayer, and hospitality. The sessions had a significant effect on the wellbeing of those who attended and by undertaking events such as this we have now established regular group with an emphasis on wellbeing, included a five year funded Abbey gardening project and more use of the Abbey for meditation and spirituality.

Mindfulness in this place is powerful magic

A very pleasant interlude from the busy world

Wonderful reminder to be kinder to self and take this out into the world

The room is a very appropriate space for mindfulness. It amplifies silence, prayer and concentration

For more information contact Patrick Bourne
(Patrick.Bourne@leeds.gov.uk)

Adam Hussein Sufi dancer
performing in the Chapter House
for Wellbeing week 2019



Leeds University Library Galleries

General Programme Health and Wellbeing Activity

Since taking part in the Health and Wellbeing Cohort Leeds University Library Galleries have increased the amount of health and wellbeing related activity offered in their general programme including 'Sketch Club', Pen to Paper', and public art walks. They have also been involved in campus-based initiatives for staff, including activity for Staff Health and Wellbeing Week.

We have a 'Sketch Club' each Friday, a creative drop-in event where materials and a weekly suggested focus are provided. The attendance to Sketch Club had a 62% increase in the 2018-19 academic year so we're now thinking of ways to support this increased attendance without impacting on the atmosphere.

We have also developed a creative writing version of Sketch Club called 'Pen to Paper'. Like Sketch Club, materials and a weekly focus are provided, as well as creative writing activities. The poet created the activities and it has started to attract attendees who get opportunities for creativity.

We've also offered more public art walks on campus this year, both as publicly bookable events and to groups who have enquired (including teams within the University, and external organisations/Special Interest Groups). These are advertised as an opportunity to take some time out in fresh air and discover artworks on campus and have been well attended (even in the rain!).



For more information contact Laura Wilson (L.J.Wilson@leeds.ac.uk)

What would you say the best thing about Sketch Club is?

The relaxed environment

It gives me an excuse to take a break and do something mindful

It's a great break from the world outside, always happy I came in

Relaxing fun

A peaceful place to relax and draw

The peacefulness of the gallery

Social

Tranquil escapism

A quiet space with no interruptions

Pannett Art Gallery

Four Projects from Pannett

Pannett Art Gallery have engaged in four health and wellbeing projects. A number of these were made possible via funding from Museum Development Yorkshire. 'Art in Hospitals' aimed to improve the hospital environment, having a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of staff, visitors and patients at Scarborough Hospital. 'Improving Accessibility of the Collection' worked with Whitby DAG and WHISH to make the gallery more accessible and approachable for visitors with various disabilities. Pannett Art Gallery worked with artist Jane Poulton to combat social isolation of older people in rural areas with the creation of the Sea Around Us Exhibition. The 'Whitby Memories' Project took art into care homes in order to counter loneliness and provide social stimulation for older people in care homes.

The Sea Around Us exhibition project was developed as a direct response to the identified need of isolated older people in rural areas. We brought together a group of individuals to curate an exhibition of works from our collection on the theme of the sea. The group not only selected the paintings, they also wrote the interpretation. We encouraged an emotional response to the paintings rather than offering historical or factual information, which meant there were no wrong answers. The project was extremely successful, with fantastic feedback from participants, and the exhibition was a great success with visitors. We have continued our relationship with some of the participants.

Each project built on the one before, building our confidence and further developing the relationships we established. We have reused the resources developed in each stage of the project for health and wellbeing projects and also in other community engagement initiatives.



The mental benefits were great, a person had to think, to interact with the ideas of others. Also ... social contact was pleasing

Both Images of the Sea Around Us—Credit: Jane Poulton



Living alone it is a joy to mix, especially on such a project. Sharing thoughts, ideas with an end result of an exhibition boosts your confidence and helps you feel your opinions and ideas matter. ... It was amazing to see the exhibition on the walls with our input as if it was worth reading

For more information contact Helen Berry (Pannett.Gallery@whitbytowncouncil.gov.uk)

The Dementia Project Partnership

Ripon Museums Trust wanted to develop a programme that utilised their assets to provide an environment where people with dementia and their carers could relax and take part in activities that encouraged interaction and motor skills. They worked with Museums & Arts HBC, Active Health & Lifestyle HBC and Dementia Forward.

We used the 5 Ways to Wellbeing to structure the project. We recruited volunteers and brought them together for training days on understanding how people with dementia see the world, how to use objects from our collections therapeutically and coaching techniques to draw out conversations from participants and their carers. Using adverts posted in the community, we recruited a group of people with dementia and their carers to take part in a series of sessions centred around a multi-sensory activity e.g. printing, pottery, aromatherapy massage. Everyone took part in this, preferably sitting around one big table. We used simple questionnaires to get conversation flowing. Photos were taken of participants taking part and sent to each couple after the session with an informal record of some of things they had said and done. We used the Edinburgh scale to evaluate how participants felt before and after each session.



Feeling very confident at the moment, feeling great now

Person with dementia

Staff member

Session lifts my mood every week

For more information contact Carrie Philip
(Carrie.Philip@riponmuseums.co.uk)



What did we learn?

- A greater understanding of our assets – objects from the collections, our settings and the magic ingredient, the warmth and inclusiveness of our volunteers
- The stress that carers are under and how valuable taking part was to their wellbeing and social inclusion.
- How we can make our museums more welcoming for everyone.
- How quickly participants' conditions progress – a large proportion of our participants have moved into nursing homes as they become more difficult to care for at home.
- Barriers to participation for nursing homes and how we can overcome them.



York Archaeological Trust

Changing Lives— Volunteering for the Future

York Archaeological Trust wanted to offer a more flexible and supportive introduction to volunteering for people who hitherto have not felt heritage was for them and develop a new model of volunteering with the five steps to wellbeing.

We were approached by Changing Lives, a local group offering support to individuals recovering from alcohol or substance dependency. They wished to set up volunteering opportunities as part of a varied activities and events programme. Introductory visits were developed in partnership and facilitated by a specially recruited volunteer whose doctoral research focuses on museums and mental health.

Handling sessions explored “own-voice” connectivity with both archaeological artefacts and items of personal significance for staff and participants. Supported visits to JORVIK and DIG, led by our specialist volunteer, allowed participants to begin to explore their relationships with heritage environments.

Gardening sessions allowed volunteering opportunities resulting in visible achievements, such as planting a new border and building a bug hotel.

The participants feedback and their enthusiasm for new engagement has been hugely helpful. We have a much greater understanding of the common barriers facing some people seeking access to heritage and volunteering opportunities. We have gained outside views on how best to share interests and to create welcoming, supported spaces in which to explore the wellbeing value of voluntary involvement, learning, connectivity and contribution. We have learnt to skilfully and sensitively develop initiatives that consider both participants and facilitators. We are convinced of the value of partnership working and the need for support from professionals.

Mental health
distraction

I would love to volunteer, a great idea!
I didn't know I was welcome to

Always good to be reminded of
my city's past

Engaging, learning, interesting, social involvement,
venturing out of comfort zones

For more information contact Christine
McDonnell (cmcdonell@yorkat.co.uk)



Building a bug hotel

Credit: York
Archaeological
Trust with kind
permission of
Changing Lives



York Army Museum

Developing Audio Described Tours

York Army Museum wanted to increase their ability to welcome visitors with visual impairments to the museum. They worked with a GOAL (Get Out And Live) group from Blind Veterans UK, VocalEyes who provided audio description training and MySight (previously York Blind and Partially Sighted Society) who provided awareness training and trialling of the audio described tours.

The experience of being part of the cohort also helped us with our advocacy and funding applications with the result that we were successful in securing sufficient funding to add to the MDY wellbeing support grant to allow us to provide two days of training from VocalEyes. MySight trialled our first audio described tour, the feedback was excellent and is helping to increase staff/volunteer confidence in delivering the tour.

Evaluation and ongoing feedback from staff and volunteers has highlighted an increase in understanding and feeling confident in helping visually impaired visitors, and also in designing our audio described tours.

Tweet from Collections Manager

Loved training @YorkArmyMuseum from @VocalEyesAD today!
Feel much more confident in helping our visually impaired visitors #Accessibility



One of our younger volunteers won the Lord Mayor of York's Shine Award for his continued role in developing accessible resources at the museum

For more information contact Allison Freeman
(yamactivitiesofficer@gmail.com)

Staff Volunteer and Wellbeing Programme

York Museums Trust wanted to measure the impact of volunteering on wellbeing with additional activities and bringing staff together from different departments to improve levels of connectivity, communication and collaboration.

It started from conducting a volunteer's survey about how we could increase volunteer and staff collaboration and improve wellbeing. With the support of the Trust's Inclusion Team, we decided it would be a social activity as opposed to a formalised staff and volunteer get together which we already do with Christmas and Summer parties. We put out a call for staff who would be willing to share skills, knowledge or expertise in something and planned an event each month which over the year would cover all of the five ways to wellbeing. As we had no funding for the project, this was all staff volunteered time which aided in the strong sense of community amongst the staff and volunteers of the Trust. We keep a record of numbers attending each session, along with pictures and verbal comments from the attendees and we bring back popular events annually such as chocolate and Christmas decoration making.

What came out of this project?

- Skill sharing
- Knowledge of collections
- Greater understanding of people's roles and interests



It was great to meet one of the garden guides and do the blunder tour – I never knew the Museum Gardens had so much bloody history!



Left: Edible Garden Walk, Above: Remembrance Poppy Making

Making the poppies was a lovely relaxing but fun way to spend my lunchtime

For more information contact Fiona Green (Fiona.Green@ymt.org.uk) or Philip Newton (Philip.Newton@ymt.org.uk)

I...felt I was able to just “be” in those paintings for quite a while

Learned a lot about printing and therefore feel much more confident, really enjoyed the practical work, had a lot of fun and a good laugh

A perfect atmosphere for thinking quietly and independently

It was very interesting to hear what other people thought of a painting which was often completely different to my thoughts. I looked around the room and thought how wonderful it all was and how it brought the paintings alive. We did well. Feeling proud of what we have achieved and thinking about people coming and reading our thoughts

I felt very relaxed and comfortable. It was a great insight into learning how to use mindfulness in a way I would never have considered

It was brilliant to get other peoples views, so completely different to mine

So therapeutic for me, loved every aspect of the experience

It helped to be absorbed in an interesting project, mentally it soaked up hours each week

A great opportunity to take time to write and think in a peaceful setting surrounded by inspiring objects

I feel like I’m floating

Visiting York Dungeons with people outside of work was a great way to get to know each other better without working hanging over you

For further information please contact:

Liz Denton

Museum Development Yorkshire

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