

Case Studies

Health and Wellbeing in Welsh Museums



Foreword

The Welsh Museums sector tells the rich and diverse stories of Wales through their collections, exhibits and programmes. Museums in Wales are also undertaking positive work in the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve.

The Welsh Government bases its level of support and future decision-making for the museums sector on evidence-based analysis. An independent museums consultant was commissioned to collate a series of case studies from local museums to demonstrate the impact of Health and Wellbeing activity. The following ten case studies represent a range of museum types and collections from across Wales. Some examples of the Health and Wellbeing projects include volunteering programmes, resources for people living with dementia and creative activities. Physical health and mental wellbeing are also referenced by individuals working in heritage gardens.

Different communities have benefited from these initiatives in various ways. The Health and Wellbeing projects have championed inclusion and access through working with vulnerable groups.

These include people with additional learning needs and individuals in recovery from addiction. Some of the case studies also illustrate a greater collaboration with the local community, Ukrainian refugees, the LGBTQ+ community and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

Within this work, museum staff and volunteers have adopted new approaches and research to strengthen relevance and engagement. Best practice approaches have been learned along the way. These include training for example, as well as reviewing collection terminology and interpretation approaches to ensure artefacts and stories are meaningful and representative.

Some Health and Wellbeing projects have come to fruition because of strong leadership within the museums sector. Some projects have been made possible through funding schemes and increased partnership with external organisations. Funders are acknowledged in their own respective chapter.

Finally, all participants were asked to confirm where they thought the projects aligned with Welsh Government initiatives. Responses are presented at the end of the report with strong associations to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and The Programme for Government's Wellbeing Measures.

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Perthyn

An exploration of how collections can create community in Ceredigion

Project Overview

'Perthyn' (meaning 'belonging' in Welsh) is a pilot project created by Ceredigion Museum and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, delivered in partnership with the Common Cause Foundation. Through consulting with the local community, the development project is exploring personal values and if they could be connected with museum collections. Their ambition is to ensure every Ceredigion resident can discover an artefact that resonates with their sense of identity and values. This brings a range of positive social and intellectual wellbeing outcomes.

Key Objectives

- Support wellbeing.
 - Improve inclusion.
 - Enhance community cohesion.
 - Build relationships with new groups.
 - Improve museum staff knowledge.
 - Recruit external expertise and staff.
 - Establish a values-led methodology.
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Project Outputs/Outcomes

The pilot project included a variety of community engagement activities as well as behind-the-scenes work with collections. It utilised staff, volunteers and external consultants to capture values.

Values Workshops

300 attendees during 24 sessions with targeted groups and 16 local groups accessed the Values workshop. This included working with new partnership organisations, local groups and first-time

visitors. It successfully re-engaged people who had not returned in five years or more. The following organisations and individuals took part:

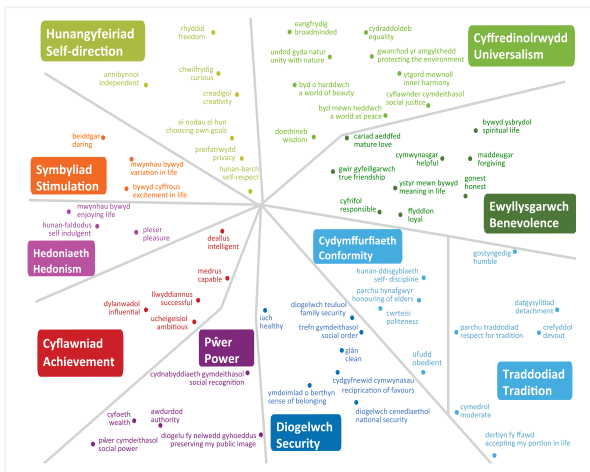
- Mental health groups, e.g. via MIND
- Faith groups
- English learning groups
- Refugees
- People living with life-limiting illnesses
- School groups
- Young carers
- Community hubs
- Older people
- Museum Friends Group
- Museum volunteers

Polaroid Perthyn

In this activity, 130 general visitors to the museum were asked to take a Polaroid photograph of an object on display. Participants were asked how it related to one of their life values and in what ways it was meaningful to them. The Polaroids were then integrated into a values map which improved understanding of community values.



Perthyn Polaroid Responses



Mapping Community Values

Auditing and Recording

Around 4,000 objects were reviewed. Records were either updated or created as preparation for use in a future delivery phase and to aid access to collections by the community. This process enabled staff to reach a deeper understanding of collection significance as well as familiarity with the MODES database and how to deliver training on collections.

Volunteers

Thirteen volunteers developed skills through training. This included object handling, cataloguing, research and caring for collections. Some staff worked with volunteers for the first time.

Health and Wellbeing

In the Values workshops, Ceredigion Museum used the UCL's Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit. Of the six wellbeing indicators from the Positive Wellbeing Umbrella, 19.9% experienced a substantial increase in feelings of wellbeing; 28.9% felt more inspired followed by 27% who felt more active; 17.9% who felt more alert, 16.6% who felt excited and 16.4% who felt more enthusiastic, compared to how they felt beforehand. Whilst the lowest increase was seen in the happiness indicator, at 14.4%, this was scored highly at the outset, providing less opportunity to increase. Qualitative

observations and verbal feedback relayed by project staff indicated that over 70% strongly agreed that they had 'a great time' and that the activity was of 'good quality'.

"It gave me a stronger sense of being part of a shared community and the opportunity to have a dialogue around the objects and values was really inspiring".

Project participant

Reflection

The museum team learned that people responded well to the concept of museum collections reflecting shared community values and that engagement with the project led to increased wellbeing. The number of objects that could be included in a collection significance assessment was over-ambitious in the pilot, so targets have been adjusted for the delivery phase.

Next Steps

The delivery phase plans include:

- Reaching more community groups.
- Re-engaging with more partners.
- Integrating the values work into 'Collection Significance Assessments.
- Developing an activity plan.
- Developing formal and informal skills to integrate learning from the pilot.
- Upgrading MODES for the catalogue to interface with the updated website to increase access.



Key Contact

Carrie Canham, Curator, Ceredigion Museum, Ceredigion

From Town to Gown

A University Museum breaks down barriers, offering a diverse volunteer programme in Swansea

Project Overview

Widening participation is at the heart of The Egypt Centre in Swansea. The innovative volunteer programme includes people of all abilities from the age of 10, including those with mental health problems and long-term unemployed. Volunteering has a positive effect, alleviating loneliness, increasing skills, financial wellbeing, and increased confidence and self-esteem.

Key Objectives

- Provide opportunities to engage people aged 10 to 80+ years of all abilities and social background.
 - Increase wellbeing through a sense of belonging.
 - Increase employability skills.
 - Empower volunteers through increased confidence and self-esteem.
 - Widen participation fulfilling Swansea University's Civic Mission.
 - Provide practical and emotional support.
 - Enable intergenerational engagement and learning to provide a sense of 'family'.
-

Project Outputs/Outcomes

The adult volunteer programme started in 1998 and the young volunteer programme in 1999. Currently, there are 86 adult volunteers and 48 young volunteers. The longest serving volunteer has been with the museum for 24 years.

Volunteer Recruitment and Roles

Volunteers are recruited from the local community. A working partnership has been developed with organisations such as SCVS, the Job Centre and Elite Supported Employment who request placements for long-term unemployed and people with disabilities.

Once adult volunteers are DBS checked, they undergo an induction and receive training. This includes buddying up with an experienced volunteer and shadowing. The volunteer roles revolve around education, gallery, gift shop and administration provision. Volunteers assist, or once fully experienced, can lead or supervise, in these areas.

- Roles can be attained through progression, increasing skills and self-esteem over time.
- Pastoral care ensures personal issues do not become a barrier to development.
- Skills are developed through the provision of support with CVs, job applications and interview practice.
- Volunteers are offered social events, parties, and trips to other museums.
- Reward and recognition are provided internally through an annual Volunteer Award Ceremony and Volunteer of the Month scheme. Badges of recognition for specific skills and activities are also given. The museum nominates volunteers for national awards like the Marsh Award and The Queen's Award (the latter is equivalent to an MBE).
- Volunteers are able to communicate their views verbally with the Volunteer

Manager, or via email, a suggestions book, and the volunteer newsletter.

- Regarded as a key stakeholder, volunteers are included in pilot schemes, mentor programmes, education, and event plans.
- Volunteers are encouraged to show initiative e.g. they have written trails and guides for the museum.



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Young volunteers help on Saturdays by delivering demonstrations and tours. They may volunteer because they have been inspired by a workshop or seen other young people volunteering.

Health and Wellbeing

- The UCL's Wellbeing umbrella exercises were carried out and wellbeing increased by 28%.
- Volunteering has alleviated loneliness through the creation of life-long friendships.
- Increased confidence and self-esteem are often communicated.
- Marginalised individuals have had more involvement in university life.
- Many volunteers progress and gain employment which improves their financial wellbeing. The majority of the Egypt Centre's paid staff are former volunteers.
- A greater understanding of volunteers' life experience or particular conditions has improved self-esteem, e.g. those with autism, neurodivergent people or retired teachers who have shared their knowledge.

"It helps me build confidence and I also love feeling involved and part of the museum!"

"I've become a more proactive and confident speaker"

Project participant

Impacts for the Museum

- The volunteer programme was included as a case study in the report 'Culture and Poverty' by Baroness Kay Andrews OBE for the Welsh Government.
- Volunteer provision has broken down barriers to participation.

Reflection

Volunteer numbers have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis and some did not return after the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers were a necessity at first but became an attraction in themselves for visitors as they come with a wealth of talent, skills, and experience. The team at the Egypt Centre is no longer surprised by what the volunteers bring. It was essential to have a Volunteer Manager to ensure volunteers reach their potential.

Next Steps

- The volunteer project is ongoing.
- The Egypt Centre will continue to enter local and national awards.
- The UCL's Wellbeing Umbrella toolkit will be used when new volunteers start and the specific umbrella for young people will be utilised to evaluate young volunteers.

Key Contact

Wendy Goodridge, Museum Manager,
The Egypt Centre; Museum of Egyptian
Antiquities, Swansea University



The Egypt Centre Swansea



Young volunteers in the gallery

“The Egypt Centre strives to be as inclusive as possible. Through engendering a sense of family, belonging and community amongst its volunteers, it assists them to reach their true potential and improve not only their own lives, but also the lives of those who visit the museum”.

Museum Manager

Dementia in Focus

People living with Dementia and their carers in Monmouthshire

Project Overview

MonLife Heritage Learning runs a number of facilitated outreach programmes that use social history and historic objects from their handling collections to encourage social interaction, improve wellbeing and raise confidence levels. The service also delivers volunteer training in using objects for reminiscence and self-led reminiscence resources for use in residential care settings.

Key Objectives

- Improve wellbeing.
- Reduce social isolation.
- Improve confidence and self-esteem.
- Provide community-based activity.

Project Outputs/Outcomes

The dementia-related projects have proved invaluable in reaching both individuals living with dementia and their family caregivers or occupational therapists. Outreach provision has ensured the service is accessible, using their collections to enhance wellbeing.

A Holistic Approach

To offer a unified approach to supporting people living with dementia, museum staff obtained funding from the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) to partner with the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS). This enabled participants to increase their physical activity for an hour a week, over a ten-week period. Afterwards, the Heritage Learning Service

provided themed reminiscence sessions, object handling and a craft-based activity.



Object handling and reminiscence

Creative Conversations

'Creative Conversations' is a weekly programme located at Cadw's Caerwent Roman Town. It provides activity for people living with Dementia and their carers. On alternate weeks, participants engage in a reminiscence activity and historic object handling. This allows opportunities for conversation and new learning. Following each reminiscence and handling session, a related craft is offered, providing focus and relaxation opportunities.

The programme was shaped around the interests and experiences of participants who complete a personal questionnaire entitled *'This is me'* at the beginning of the programme. This person-centred approach enables participants to 'be the expert' on a particular subject, which has proved invaluable for confidence and self-esteem.

Volunteer Reminiscence Scheme

A wide selection of reminiscence boxes can be hired out by care workers or used by the learning service volunteers. A training programme for community volunteers has been developed to aid

capacity, so that resources can be taken out to care homes and used in memory cafés in community venues. The first training session was delivered in February 2024 to 14 volunteers and was supported through 'Be Community Monmouthshire', a Monmouthshire County Council community leadership programme.

Volunteer training includes how to use museum objects as prompts/triggers for encouraging the sharing of life experiences, why museum objects are valuable in reminiscence work, the benefits of reminiscence for the participant, safeguarding and how to safely facilitate a reminiscence session.

Health and Wellbeing

Through observation, attendance, impact cards and questionnaires, feedback has been obtained relating to wellbeing.

"I always go home feeling relaxed and less stressed"

"[It] helped me to gain confidence... [it] stopped me feeling lonely at home".

"... I got something to get out of bed for".

[I have experienced a] ...reduction in anxiety and increased confidence and learning to be more creative"

Project participants

Reflection

Helping people to 'live well with Dementia' means listening and responding to what participants want and adapting programmes to ensure that this is at the

heart of planning. A crucial part of encouraging people to participate in the programmes is working with community organisations, memory clinics, health board practitioners, commissioners and community workers.

More work possibly needs to be done around demonstrating the value of using museum collections with people living with Dementia and their carers and sharing this with medical professionals. This would encourage social prescribing to become an embedded part of holistic support for this target audience.

Funding and capacity to deliver vs. demand is a challenge. Meeting the need with diminishing budgets will become more difficult, potentially leading to a reduction/cessation of services.

Next Steps

- A further cohort of volunteers will commence training in summer 2024.
- The museum programme intends to develop a 1980's themed reminiscence box, as the trend is showing there are more people with early onset dementia.
- Funding has been obtained for at least two more NERS programmes across the county, so the project will continue.
- Further funding is being sought to continue and develop the Creative Conversations programme at Caerwent.
- Expansion of the reminiscence service will occur through the volunteers.

Key Contact

Karin Molson,
Heritage Learning Officer,
MonLife, Monmouthshire



Out and About

A monthly outreach programme exploring LGBTQ+ histories in Conwy

Project Overview

'Out and About' was developed for LGBTQ+ History month by Conwy's Museums Service. This new initiative created spaces for the public of all ages to learn about LGBTQ+ history, share their own stories, be creative and connect with the community. The Museums Service was able to strengthen their collections.

Key Objectives

- Increase visibility of Conwy Museums Service to the LGBTQ+ community.
 - Increase LGBTQ+ artefact donations.
 - Contribute to LGBTQ+ research in North Wales.
 - Celebrate LGBTQ+ histories and stories through art and/or new collections.
 - Support wellbeing with LGBTQ+ people.
 - Engage with an under-represented Museum audience.
 - Create new volunteer opportunities.
-

Project Outputs/Outcomes

The 'Out and About' project began in February 2023 for LGBTQ+ History Month. Within the first year, the project reached 71 people for the first time.

Gender and Sexuality Workshop

Partnering with a person-centred counsellor (with expertise in working with the queer community) this workshop created a safe space for LGBTQIA+ friends and colleagues to come out about their identity. It also included how to deal with potential judgement.

Craft Workshops

Working with a local Conwy-based artist, participants created their own mini sketchbook using pressed/dried flowers inspired by LGBTQ+ references and symbols. A tote bag workshop inspired by the Pride Display at Colwyn Bay Library and Pride celebrations also proved popular.



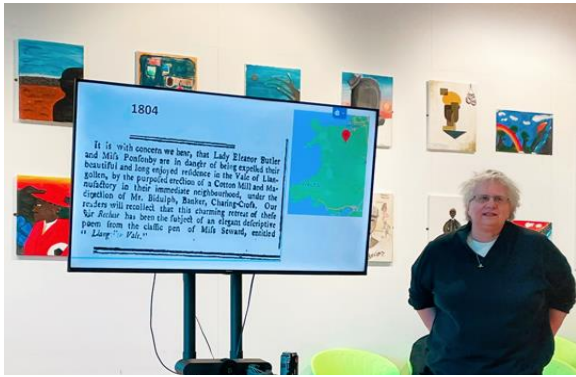
LGBTQ+ themed flower sketchbooks

Proud Creative Writing Workshop

A Welsh historian and writer who specialises in Welsh Heritage and LGBTQ+ history delivered a creative writing workshop, responding to four texts from Wales' often hidden or forgotten LGBTQ+ history. The texts ranged from the Ladies of Llangollen to Hugh Despenser the Younger. Each participant produced a piece of prose or poetry.

Queer Welsh Stories - Creative Writing

A bilingual creative writing workshop that introduced and explored LGBTQ+ Welsh History, including Welsh language terminology was held. Participants learned about Welsh LGBTQ+ people, such as John Gibson, Mary Charlotte Lloyd, E. Prosser Rhys, Jan Morris and Henry Cyril Paget, and creatively explored L, G, B and T identities, focusing on North Wales.



Proud Creative Writing Workshop

'Echoes of LGBTQ+ in Llandudno' Talk

In partnership with Llandudno Museum, the fascinating histories of the LGBTQ+ community in Llandudno were presented. A coastal holiday break often brought a sense of anonymity and freedom to LGBTQ+ people who felt they could not express their true selves back home.

Museum Priorities

Museum engagement methods, collection priorities and the Museum forward plan have been strengthened to incorporate under-represented groups and individuals. 'Out and About' enabled heritage to be identified and recorded for the first time and provided volunteers with new 'hands-on' activities with the public.

Museum Partnerships

The project has strengthened partnerships with Welsh LGBTQ+ historians, artists and local communities.

Health and Wellbeing

An alternative safe space was created for the LGBTQ+ community at different venues across the county. This allowed people to come together, away from the pub. The workshops offered opportunities for the LGBTQ+ community to express themselves creatively. The feedback forms illustrated that participants expressed feelings of reduced isolation, improved feelings of connection and inclusion.

"Offering accessible sessions like this one, creating visibility through stories told today, for example, regular sessions to bring the local LGBTQ+ community together, to learn, share, connect. Today was great. Thank you. WE NEED THIS!"

Project participant

Reflection

The craft activities worked well with young people at weekends rather than weekdays. The talks and workshops were the most popular activity with adults, irrespective of when they were scheduled. Resources such as refreshments were difficult to obtain within the budget.

Next Steps

- Work with more organisations and collaborate with more people.
- Continue to search for different venues to provide sessions.
- Deliver a further workshop on gender and sexuality in March 2024, as funding has been obtained from Pride Cymru.
- Develop access to all the stories inspired by the museum collections of Conwy, including women, disabled, LGBTQ+ and minority ethnic people.
- Accession more artefacts with diverse themes.

Key Contact

Rachel Evans, Museum
Development Officer, Conwy
Culture Centre, Conwy



Volunteering for Wellbeing

A person-centred approach to volunteering; embracing differences and creating an inclusive environment in Conwy

Project Overview

'Volunteering for Wellbeing' is an initiative that includes welcoming individuals with specific health and wellbeing needs into volunteer roles. Creating an inclusive environment at Llandudno Museum and Gallery required forging partnerships with external organisations and has encouraged people to learn at their own pace and build their confidence and skills. This placed this independent museum at the heart of the community.

Key Objectives

- Ensure inclusivity: accommodating individuals who are neurodivergent, autistic, have additional learning needs (ALN) or anxiety disorders, as well as people in recovery from substance misuse.
- Provide a safe space for individuals to grow and make connections at their own pace.
- Provide skills to enable individuals to help reach their potential.
- Provide a welcoming space where volunteers can try different activities and experience teamwork.
- A 'No barriers' ethos: openly communicate that everyone has a variety of abilities and talents.
- Act as an intergenerational wellbeing hub.
- Work with external organisations.
- Offer gardening in the museum grounds to promote physical wellbeing.

Project Outputs/Outcomes

Creating new partnerships

Often organisations refer an individual to the museum for a volunteer placement.

- **Job Sense:** Supports people with complex disabilities or are deafblind.
- **Conwy Employment Hub:** Aids people to gain volunteering experience.
- **Bangor University:** Targeting students.
- **Llandrillo College:** Working with ALN students on the Life Skills pathway.
- **Adferiad:** Finds placements for Drug and Alcohol clients in rehabilitation.
- **Cyfle Cymru:** Mental health clients.
- **DWP:** Department for Work & Pensions.
- **MIND:** Mental Health Support.
- **Conwy Connect:** Enabling people with learning disabilities.
- **Cornerstone:** A Sanctuary Trust, supporting housing for men.
- **Care Tech Community Services:** Supporting housing for women.

"Llandudno Museum has grasped the principles of wellbeing and fully committed to it, through the various projects and initiatives".

"The museum is clearly playing a huge part in improving the lives of the people who have taken part in these projects!"

Freelance Museums Consultant for GEM.

A Varied Training Programme

The in-house training programme is wide-ranging and includes themes such as customer care, collections, historic walks and tours. Training on how collections inspire creativity and community engagement has been popular.

To ensure training is varied, use is made of staff expertise, retired educationalist input and museum experts.



The garden wall mural

Health and Wellbeing

Museum volunteering has provided learning, work opportunities and enhanced feelings of belonging to a community.

- 10 young people have progressed by securing employment work or further training.
- A volunteer from Care Tech found new confidence and embraced creative skills inspired through the collections.
- A volunteer from Sanctuary Trust found a new lease of life and fulfilment through learning new skills, developing relationships and building a sense of community through teamwork.
- Volunteers via Cyfle Cymru have improved wellbeing through enjoying nature and gardening.

Reflection

Experience has indicated a need to allow sufficient time and space to suit individuals with either mental health or specific disabilities. Sometimes an individual has been referred back to a stakeholder organisation for further support.

The training and regular activities have broken down perceptions of what a museum is for, and who can volunteer.

If things could be changed, it would be that museums are not viewed simply as containers of the past but that they can contribute to the future of communities by providing a positive sense of place, connection and engagement. In an ideal world, museums would be formally recognised under social prescribing. This may leverage some funding for the work. This is an independent museum not financially supported by the local authority and its work changes people's lives.

Next Steps

- The Volunteering for Wellbeing project is ongoing.
- Develop Additional Learning Needs work so that a basic qualification can be gained using an Easy Read version (via Agored Cymru).
- Increase opportunities for those facing mental health and addiction difficulties.
- Engage volunteers in further training.

Key Contact

Dawn Lancaster, Director of
Llandudno Museum and Gallery,
Conwy



Llandudno Museum and Gallery Conwy



A volunteer's life-changing journey of self-discovery began with welcoming visitors

"I had come in search of confidence and I found a passion that ignited my soul. I discovered a talent I never knew I had. The museum gave me the platform to share my artistic skills which brought joy to visitors of all ages. This journey has not just changed my life; it has given me a sense of purpose".

Museum Volunteer

Reaching Refugees

A Ukrainian/Welsh Cultural Exchange Project featuring an art-based exhibition in Pembrokeshire

Project Overview

Tenby Museum and Art Gallery places great importance on providing all members of the community with access to arts and heritage. Their wellbeing project targeted Ukrainian refugees who had recently arrived in their community. This independent museum sought ways to break down barriers to engagement through a Ukrainian/Welsh cultural exchange project which encouraged Ukrainian residents to practise their language and creative skills. This included sharing their stories, heritage and traditions. The art work inspired by their country, Tenby or Welsh culture was presented as a community exhibition.

Key Objectives

- Be inclusive.
- Offer equitable provision.
- Build relationships with targeted groups.
- Support wellbeing for Ukrainians.
- Community cohesion.
- Break down barriers.

Project Outputs/Outcomes

The cultural exchange project was advertised in village halls close to where Ukrainian families resided. The Pembrokeshire Association of Volunteer Services (PAVS) was also a key partner in helping the museum to reach this

audience. The project sought to attract twenty people from the community to commit to a ten-week programme, meeting once a week.

Refreshments were offered to provide a welcoming environment which helped as an initial icebreaker. Traditional British food and drink was offered for tasting such as tea, crumpets, cakes and Marmite. By far, the Welsh delicacy of Bara Brith proved popular and many asked for the recipe.



Advertisements were translated into Ukrainian

Relatable themes

Participants were encouraged to practise their language skills and exchange stories. Museum volunteers relayed information relating to Welsh culture and wide-ranging themes were adopted such as Welsh food, music, history and war.

Creative Outputs

On alternate weeks, participants were encouraged to express themselves through art. A range of media were

available for them to use, such as acrylics, watercolours, collages, pencils and photography. Some of the art work produced included scenery and landscapes from Ukraine as well as local scenes in Tenby. Some participants chose to create images relating to prayer or representing the Ukrainian flag.

At the end of the project, the artworks were brought together and displayed at the museum. The descriptions of the art and information about the participants were translated into Ukrainian. An opening event included inviting friends and families of the participants to the community exhibition.

Health and Wellbeing

The cultural exchange project forged a mutual understanding and appreciation of the different cultures and similarities that bind people together.

- The project provided a safe and welcoming environment, reducing isolation.
- The museum staff and volunteers celebrated their own culture and developed further knowledge about Ukraine.
- Artistic skills and freedom of expression were developed by participants.
- One Ukrainian continues to volunteer at the museum over a year later. Key activities include welcoming museum visitors to enhance language skills.

“Breaking down the barriers of language to make art and heritage enjoyable for all was really rewarding for everyone”.

Events and Education Officer

- The celebration event encouraged the wider community to visit the museum for the first time.

Reflection

As language and communication was a major barrier, the museum team learnt a few Ukrainian words, using language books. Getting everybody together in one place at one time was also initially challenging and a few people did not attend all sessions.

The impact of the project was positive for all involved. There is now a better understanding over the practicalities of organising projects with hard-to-reach groups. This will help steer future projects with other audiences. The need for funding to pay for artistic materials was crucial in ensuring the success.

“The project no doubt helped raise awareness of the presence of refugees in the area at the time and the social media coverage helped us to achieve this goal”.

Events and Education Officer

Next Steps

- Source funding to enable the museum to develop similar projects in future.
- Investigate the idea of selling the art work for the benefit of the participants.
- Learning will continue to inform the training of museum volunteers.

Key Contact

Glyn Harries, Events and Education Officer, Tenby Museum and Art Gallery, Pembrokeshire



Caring for our Heritage Gardens

Garden volunteers reap benefits in health and wellbeing by caring for heritage gardens in Denbighshire

Project Overview

Two of the historic properties included in Denbighshire's Heritage Service portfolio are Ruthin's Nantclwyd y Dre and Llangollen's Plas Newydd. These historic properties are framed within the landscape and include heritage gardens. While volunteer gardeners have offered their services at these sites, ambitions to review and develop opportunities further were explored to diversify and increase provision for people within the communities. The project aimed to enhance social, physical and mental wellbeing, while also improving the garden planting schemes.

Key Objectives

- Encourage wellbeing for volunteers by offering physical activities outside, connected to nature.
 - Increase the number of volunteers.
 - Increase community cohesion by encouraging larger groups to use the grounds.
 - Create a Garden Management Plan to include research on historical planting in the garden schemes.
 - Support events and activities in the garden spaces for the wider community to develop social wellbeing.
 - Strengthen partnerships.
 - Illustrate that the Heritage Service has relevance to Denbighshire County County's Wellbeing Plan.
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Project Outputs/Outcomes

Capitalising on existing knowledge

Feedback from garden volunteers across the sites, as well as the gardener at Plas Newydd was key to identifying development opportunities.

Funding

Funding was secured for an outreach gardener based at Nantclwyd y Dre to work on the key objectives. The development work will continue between February and December 2024.

Partnerships

To ensure successful outcomes the team sought to strengthen partnerships with:

- **Local colleges:** Student placements were obtained from Ellesmere, Llysfasi and Myddelton Colleges.
- **Adferiad:** A local mental health group that supports individuals with activities.
- **Nature for Health:** This group champions access to green spaces to reduce stress and anxiety.
- **TidyTown Teams:** Actively supports litter picking and environmental improvements to ensure localities are better places to live, work and visit.
- **The National Garden Scheme:** Participation allows the museum to emphasise volunteer opportunities and welcome new visitors.
- **Local producers:** Help turn fruit and vegetables from the heritage garden into jams and chutneys.



Harvesting produce improves physical wellbeing

Adaption

Short-term garden projects have been developed to accommodate groups with a limited time commitment or individuals who prefer to volunteer in warmer seasons. Successful activities have included tree planting, the creation of a natural play area and designated areas to eat in the grounds.

Health and Wellbeing

Both sites have assisted in enabling people to spend time outdoors, increase physical fitness and develop new knowledge and skills. The activities have also helped to cultivate friendships.

“As my life revolves mostly about my wife with Dementia, it is quite nice to have something to look forward to and have some relief”

“I just enjoy being out and meeting different people and having a chat”

“I always walk the dogs here at Plas, and it feels good to give something back”

“It improves my gardening skills”

Garden volunteers

Reflection

As volunteer gardeners have a range of skills and experience, the museum team encourages everyone to bring new ideas and approaches. As a result, the heritage garden plans have evolved and changed for the better at both sites. This creates a positive environment and enhances wellbeing because it is inclusive. Individuals often have an increased sense of purpose, enthusiasm and commitment. Short term projects are popular and have also helped groups to feel satisfied and fulfilled. We have a dedicated gardener at Plas Newydd but obtaining funding for another officer to steer work at Nantclwyd y Dre and in the community, has been crucial.

Next Steps

- Obtain evidence and evaluate the impact of having a dedicated outreach gardener for the community.
- The funding for the outreach gardener ceases in December 2024; a case will be made to bid for a permanent position so that wellbeing benefits can continue.
- Volunteer training will be developed to widen skills.
- Further outreach provision, such as talks, will be explored.
- Funding will be sought for the bog garden at Plas Newydd to improve interpretation.

Key Contact

Carly Davies,
Acting Heritage Manager,
Denbighshire Heritage Service



Anti-Racist Wales

Researching, re-examining and reclaiming the heritage and culture of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Monmouthshire

Project Overview

MonLife Heritage, via Abergavenny Museum and Chepstow Museum, is contributing to the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan through a project entitled "Researching, re-examining and reclaiming: the heritage and culture of Monmouthshire's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities". The ambition to share global stories by using museum collections to represent varied communities included investigating objects relating to empire, slavery and colonisation. Integral to this was the development of community partnerships resulting in greater connections and representation of Monmouthshire's heritage. Through this work, funded by the Welsh Government, the project led to numerous wellbeing outcomes, including learning, improved communication, social cohesion and increased confidence.

Key Objectives:

- Work with communities and experts to decolonise collections, identify social injustice and tell stories.
- Install new permanent displays.
- Provide training and support to front of house teams.
- Enhance record information in the Collections Management System relating to colonisation, slavery and empire, including key terms and taxonomy.
- Co-create community displays.

- Create a dedicated web space featuring ethnic minority community histories featuring collections, people and places within Monmouthshire.
 - Establish networks and encourage contributions from local communities.
 - Collaboratively develop educational resources with schools.
 - Ensure the workforce is better informed.
 - Develop an organic activity programme.
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Project Outputs/Outcomes:

Community Partnerships

Working groups were established with a variety of community organisations to support developmental work. For example:

- Plas Gunter Mansion
- Ukrainian Community
- The Thomas Society
- Town of Sanctuary
- The Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association

This included discussing the inclusion of items in community exhibitions, translating documents and assistance with historical research e.g. pilgrimages relating to Abergavenny and Korea. Collaborations also occurred with the authority's wellbeing teams.

Exhibitions and Public Programmes

- The 'Objects in Focus' exhibitions were launched to explain inclusive history and the power of collections to stakeholders.
- Public talks were delivered.

- An exhibition bringing the Ukrainian community together.
- Black History Month participation.
- Digital audio content and an exhibition booklet created.
- An area related to decolonisation was added to the collection website.

Collection Records

Key terms were selected for use in the MODES database to highlight empire and colonies.



Selected artefacts for 'Objects in Focus'

Staff

A Collections Engagement Officer was appointed to establish allies, advocates and existing resources. For front of house teams and volunteers, training was provided and a briefing sheet was devised about the project, key objects and terminology. This enabled staff to confidently speak to visitors about the 'Objects in Focus' exhibition.

Health and Wellbeing

The project encouraged dialogue about the histories of ethnic minority communities and considered the terminology used. It provided opportunities to share knowledge and for people to socialise and connect within the community. Ensuring collection cataloguing and object interpretation was representative strengthened equality and relevance. The museum team gained confidence in communicating and recording Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories.

“Simply talking to groups about what is important to them helps us better display the stories we have...from a broad range of perspectives”.
Community Engagement Officer

Reflection

It is important to keep a digital record to improve access to the collections.

Time is needed when working with multilingual communities for whom neither Welsh nor English is their first language, so relationships organically evolve. There are challenges revealing “hidden histories” with few related objects.

The front of house team needed coaching to understand the benefits of engaging with the public to obtain feedback.

Next Steps

- Develop school packages and apply the research around terminology.
- Ensure the activities generate film, photography and recordings and publish some content on to the website.
- Investigate the potential of developing an exhibition celebrating Christian pilgrimage.
- Deliver a series of public talks.
- Consider how the work is embedded in the core offer and apply learning, once the project ceases in December 2024.

Key Contact

Rachel Rogers,
Museum and Arts
Manager,
MonLife, Monmouthshire



MonLife

Monmouthshire



Championing inclusivity by re-examining collections

"It is possible to work with community groups to create change. Understanding what change is needed comes from creating spaces for the groups we work with to guide our decision making".

Community Engagement Officer

AccessAble: Wellbeing Art

Creatively engaging visitors with additional learning needs in Anglesey

Project Overview

Oriel Môn in Anglesey worked with members of the additional learning needs (ALN) community to creatively engage attendees with the museum's collections. Collaborating with a range of local artists to facilitate art and mindfulness sessions, as well working with a Makaton specialist, proved fruitful. It enabled staff to assess the accessibility of the Museum as well as improve the health and wellbeing of young people with disabilities and additional learning needs. A community exhibition was produced.

Key Objectives

- Improve the wellbeing of attendees.
 - Deliver art workshops exploring mindfulness.
 - Ensure events were accessible and inclusive.
 - Evaluate the Museum's spaces for people with disabilities and ALN.
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Project Outputs/Outcomes

Creative workshops

As a creative response to Oriel Môn's collections, attendees engaged in seven workshops exploring mindfulness and art.

Utilising three different artists ensured a wide range of creative media were available. Options included sewing, printing, silk painting and animation. This culminated in an exhibition.

Evaluation

Over twelve sessions, Oriel Môn staff took the opportunity to evaluate the impact of the project and reviewed access provision for people with disabilities and ALN.



Animation workshop

The evaluation of the museum and exhibition spaces was undertaken in the form of verbal feedback and Makaton evaluation symbols with a Makaton specialist. This change to the standard method of collecting information ensured better inclusion as all participants were able to evaluate their experience.



Canolfan Byron Group undertake evaluation.

Health and Wellbeing

The project provided a safe place for participants to socialise and communicate with others outside their 'bubble' e.g. artists, staff and visitors to the gallery. Reducing isolation levels improved their confidence, self-esteem and happiness.

In addition, the activities developed life skills. There were opportunities to improve problem solving, creative thinking and time management skills. Their creative skills were enhanced through the sessions which were led by professional instructors. Producing a public exhibition was an excellent way of showcasing their experience and creative work to visitors.

"It's nice to get together like this for the first time since the pandemic. We feel like we've been forgotten and it's lovely to have a conversation and catch up with everyone."

Project participant

Reflection

The project was undertaken during Covid-19 conditions and restrictions. This affected the timescale of some workshops and the duration of the project overall. There were, however, many positive outcomes.

The opportunity to learn and develop creative skills was appreciated by the participants from Canolfan Byron and a good working relationship was developed.

The project led to an increase in awareness of the barriers some ALN

visitors may face when visiting Oriel Môn. For example, individuals with sensory sensitivity may require ear defenders. It also illustrated how the collection can be used successfully along with staff expertise to create meaningful and inclusive experiences for *all* members of the community.

The workshops strengthened partnership with Canolfan Byron. It has helped to alter their perceptions of what Oriel Môn can offer to people with disabilities or ALN. Some of the attendees had never visited prior to taking part in the project and they have subsequently visited repeatedly.

Artists who specialise in neurodiversity have since hosted art workshops on the gallery's behalf with a local ALN school. They have also facilitated summer sessions with neurodiverse young people.

Next Steps

- Develop further workshops and activities to support the health and wellbeing of visitors.
- Collaborate further with Canolfan Byron.
- Be mindful of any future modifications to the site to ensure that spaces remain accessible to all.
- Continue to create a safe and inclusive environment within the workshops, museum and galleries.

Key Contact

Kally Davies,
Learning and Engagement
Co-ordinator.
Oriel Môn, Anglesey



House of Memories Cymru

Digitising museum artefacts to stimulate memories and conversations in Ceredigion

Project Overview

The House of Memories scheme is a museum-led dementia awareness initiative, devised by National Museums Liverpool. Through the creation of an app, populated with digital objects from museum collections, the resource enables families and caregivers to stimulate memories and conversations with people living with dementia. A series of training and workshop activities also ran alongside this award-winning scheme. Initially devised in England, the programme expanded into Wales in 2020 and launched in October 2022.

Ceredigion Museum was one of 14 museums partners across Wales which participated in House of Memories Cymru.

Key Objectives:

- Contribute to a bilingual app to represent Welsh heritage and heritage within Ceredigion.
 - Improve wellbeing and quality of life for people living with dementia.
 - Support carers and families in the community.
 - Make museums and heritage relevant and accessible to more people.
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Project Outputs/Outcomes:

Selecting archives and artefacts

Six subject themes were identified as relevant to the demographic. To accompany the digitised image, a short simple description and question relating to

the objects were devised, which created a story around the object. Where viable, content was brought to life using sound, music and descriptions to encourage discussion and engagement.

Themes chosen at Ceredigion Museum centred around lifestyles, industry, Welsh community and transport. Subject topics linked to the region and different eras. Cooking, cameras, diaries, garages, sewing and entertainment were featured.

The iconic Welsh dresser, used to display crockery, was featured in the app alongside associated images such as Welsh cakes and baking equipment e.g. rolling pins and cake cutters.

Cameras from different decades, such as the Kodak Brownie and Kodak Instamatic created square photographs depicting family scenes.



Holiday snaps and family celebrations

To evoke memories of driving in a rural county, digitised images of a 1957 AA

handbook and road atlas from an Aberystwyth resident were chosen. In addition, a 1950s photograph of a local petrol station, a fuel ration book and a short film of a local garage were also incorporated.

The King's Hall was a popular cultural venue from the 1930s to the 1980s, used as a base for singing, performances and dancing. An archive image of the Art Deco building was utilised in the app to encourage memories associated with recreation.

The sound of a 1940s Singer sewing machine overlaid the object image on the app. It was presented alongside a quilt from the collection and a magazine featuring a sewing project. Many of these items were iconic at a time when many people chose to make their own garments.

Strengthening Partnerships

The project resulted in wider promotion of the app along with the museum's reminiscence collections. Care homes were particularly targeted as the resources can be used in residential settings.

Health and Wellbeing

The House of Memories app has a personalised quality, allowing users to save favourite museum objects to a digital memory tree, memory box or timeline. A feature called "My memories" allows people to upload their own images to create slideshows or albums. Creative outputs can also emerge as some participants may decorate their own memory box which is referenced as an extension activity in the app. A section 'Tips for carers' provides guidance on how to

work with people's memories and encourage family and friends to contribute to the process. This helps build confidence, relationships and positive social interactions.

Reflection

Volunteers would ordinarily have been involved in the selection of artefacts but this was hindered by Covid-19 restrictions.

People are commonly diagnosed with dementia between 60-80 years of age, so some themes are more relevant to a particular generation. There is a need to expand this project to provide examples from different eras.

"Working with dementia specialists and care homes can help museums achieve more than working in isolation"

Community Engagement Officer

Next Steps

- Identify 12 objects in the museum displays to create a memory walk.
- Continue to adapt and update collections to ensure relevance.
- Update images within the app.
- Encourage volunteers to be involved in reminiscence work.
- Use the People's Collection Wales as a platform to upload reminiscence-based collections.
- Review to ascertain which topics were popular.
- Investigate more outreach provision in care homes.

Key Contact

Amanda Partridge,
Community Engagement Officer,
Ceredigion Museum





Wellbeing Links: The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The wellbeing case studies link with the Welsh Government’s Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Each participant provided a case study illustrating where their project linked with these national initiatives.

	A PROSPEROUS WALES	A RESILIENT WALES	A HEALTHIER WALES	A MORE EQUAL WALES	A WALES OF COHESIVE COMMUNITIES	A WALES OF VIBRANT CULTURE & THRIVING WELSH LANGUAGE	A GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE WALES
CEREDIGION MUSEUM		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
EGYPT CENTRE, SWANSEA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
MONLIFE, MONMOUTHSHIRE			✓	✓	✓	✓	
CONWY CULTURE CENTRE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LLANDUDNO MUSEUM, CONWY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TENBY MUSEUM & ART GALLERY, PEMBROKESHIRE	✓	✓	✓		✓		
PLAS NEWYDD & NANTCLWYD Y DRE, DENBIGHSHIRE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
ORIEL MÔN, ANGLESEY			✓	✓	✓	✓	
MONLIFE, MONMOUTHSHIRE			✓	✓	✓	✓	
CEREDIGION MUSEUM		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Table 1: Compares wellbeing links

Wellbeing Links: Programme for Government's Wellbeing Measures

The wellbeing case studies link with some of the Welsh Government's 10 Wellbeing Measures outlined in the Programme for Government.

Each participant provided a case study illustrating where their project linked with this national initiative.

PROJECT	CELEBRATE DIVERSITY & MOVE TO ELIMINATE INEQUALITY IN ALL OF ITS FORMS.	PUSH FORWARD TOWARDS A MILLION WELSH SPEAKERS & ENABLE OUR TOURISM, SPORTS & ARTS INDUSTRIES TO THRIVE.	MAKE OUR CITIES, TOWNS & VILLAGES EVEN BETTER PLACES IN WHICH TO LIVE & WORK.	PROTECT, RE-BUILD AND DEVELOP OUR SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE.	PROVIDE EFFECTIVE, HIGH QUALITY & SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE.	CONTINUE OUR LONG-TERM PROGRAMME OF EDUCATION REFORM, AND ENSURE EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES NARROW AND STANDARDS RISE.	LEAD WALES IN A NATIONAL CIVIC CONVERSATION ABOUT OUR CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURE. GIVE OUR COUNTRY THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE PRESENCE IN THE WORLD.
CEREDIGION MUSEUM	✓	✓	✓				
EGYPT CENTRE, SWANSEA	✓		✓	✓			✓
MONLIFE, MONMOUTHSHIRE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
CONWY CULTURE CENTRE	✓	✓	✓				
LLANDUDNO MUSEUM, CONWY	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
TENBY MUSEUM & ART GALLERY, PEMBROKSHIRE	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PLAS NEWYDD & NANTCLWYD Y DRE, DENBIGHSHIRE	✓	✓	✓	✓			
ORIEL MÔN, ANGLESEY	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
MONLIFE, MONMOUTHSHIRE	✓	✓	✓	✓			
CEREDIGION MUSEUM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Table 2: Compares wellbeing measures

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Perthyn: Ceredigion Museum

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Ffederasiwn
Amgueddfeydd
Cymru

Museums
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Cymru



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House of Memories Cymru: Ceredigion Museum

Amanda Partridge, Community Engagement Officer, provided content for this case study.

House of Memories is an award-winning dementia project. It was originally devised by National Museums Liverpool and delivered in England. The project was expanded into Wales.

Funded by: Welsh Government





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