



An intergenerational-friendly museum experience: bringing museums, older people and students together in Bristol

Report and resources from
South West Museum Development and partners'
Age Friendly Museums Network 2019

south west
museum
development
programme

Contents

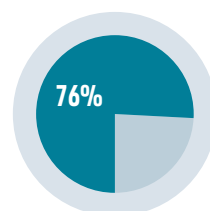
Introduction	2	4 Top Tips ... for creating a handling collection	9
1 Case Study	4	5 Involving young people as volunteers ..	10
2 What we learnt	6	6 Useful links and other resources	13
3 Top Tips ... for developing an 'Intergenerational Friendly' project ...	8	7 South West Museum Development	15

Introduction

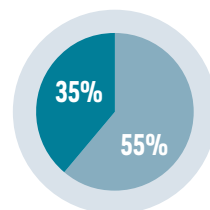
The Age Friendly Museums Network seeks to increase the participation of older people with museums and create opportunities to enrich their lives. Age does not need to be a barrier to experiencing culture.

There is a growing evidence base for the positive impact of creative activities, reminiscence and object handling on the health and wellbeing of older people, and for the role of such participation in reducing isolation.

In Arts Council England's **Arts and Older People Poll** published in 2016, **76%** said that arts and culture is important to making them happy. However, almost **two in five** people surveyed said that it is more difficult to take part in arts and cultural events compared to when they were younger.



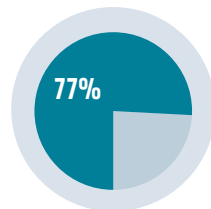
The 2017 Mendoza Review also highlights a concerning decrease in participation with increasing age. Its research finds that **35%** of those aged over 75 were engaging with museums compared to **55%** of people aged 25-75².



In the South West a combination of the challenging geography and gaps in the transport infrastructure, particularly in rural and coastal areas, mean that simply being able to access culture can be challenging. Societal and circumstantial barriers like these, which affect certain demographics disproportionately, can lead to social isolation, a lack of cultural participation and a reduction in individual health and wellbeing.

Younger people also experience feelings of social isolation, which may be helped, in some cases, by cultural and civic participation. National research has shown that taking part in volunteering, including with older age groups, can reduce feelings of isolation in volunteers.

According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' 2018 **Time Well Spent** report into volunteering in all sectors, the age group most likely to agree that taking part in volunteering made them feel less isolated was the 18 - 24 year old age group (from **77%** of those surveyed)³. Eighteen year olds involved in a South West Museum Development museum volunteering project in Devon in 2018 also self-identified that their participation had made them more likely to participate in community-based activities in future⁴.



Museums are uniquely placed to provide services and opportunities to their communities that are relevant and accessible to both young and old. Museum collections intrigue and inspire. Museums can share stories, involve individuals and encourage learning and discovery. These are ideal conditions to connect different age groups and increase participation in arts and culture for everyone.

This report shares one Age Friendly project's steps to success.

In 2019 South West Museum Development became one of the national Age Friendly Museums Network's Hubs. We joined other museum organisations across the UK in piloting partnership projects to make museums better places for older, more vulnerable people.

PROJECT PLAN:

Our pilot was designed to work closely with a museum to engage those who may not be able to physically access it. Our aim was to trial how museums can devise ways for older people to interact with museums and their collections in tandem with providing opportunities for student volunteers.

BUILDING ON OUR LEARNING:

This intergenerational focus came out of a successful Young Devon Museum Volunteers pilot project in 2018. We worked with three museums to welcome younger volunteers who gained museum experience alongside the regular, typically older, volunteer team. We wanted to explore this model in an urban location where there is a large University population who are seeking opportunities for social action volunteering.

MUSEUM PARTNER:

We worked with Glenside Hospital Museum to develop their existing outreach activity; a 'pop-up museum' which regularly travels to community centres across Bristol to share stories of the museum and the collections. The idea was to develop this work into a reminiscence activity, to take their pop-up museum to care homes for object handling opportunities for residents, supported by student volunteers.

CHARITY PARTNER:

We approached the Bristol Hub at the University of Bristol, who run 'LinkAges', a project to combat loneliness and social isolation in students by supporting them to volunteer and visit care homes to deliver fun activities for elderly residents. This partnership with Bristol Hub enabled us to recruit student volunteers who had an interest in this work and a well-developed understanding of safeguarding issues.

SEEKING EXPERTISE:

Early in the project planning we sought advice from the Bristol branch of Alive Activities, a UK-wide charity who work to enrich the lives of elderly people. They provided guidance on working in care home settings to deliver outreach activities. Alive Activities also shared resources to help prepare the students for working with older people, specifically looking at working with those with particular needs. This formed a significant part of the induction and training for the student volunteers.

WORKING TOGETHER:

The work of both Bristol Hub and of Glenside Hospital Museum were a great fit with the objectives of the Age Friendly Museum Network, and so this pilot pop-up museum project for care home residents, facilitated by student volunteers took shape - an **Intergenerational-Friendly Museum Experience for Bristol**.

THANK YOU:

This project was supported by the British Museum; the Age Friendly Museums Network received funds from the Baring Foundation to deliver this work.

"I think this is a great project which manages to address a multitude of issues simultaneously. I think that both residents and volunteers gain a lot [...] I really felt that residents were happy to take part and wanted us to come back, which is incredibly encouraging."

University of Bristol Student volunteers

¹<https://www.comresglobal.com/polls/arts-council-england-older-people-poll/>

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-mendoza-review-an-independent-review-of-museums-in-england>

³https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/volunteering/Volunteer-experience_Full-Report.pdf

⁴<http://southwestmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/young-devon-museum-volunteers>

1 Case Study

Glenside Hospital Museum

Glenside Hospital Museum is on the University of the West of England's health and social care campus in Frenchay, north Bristol. Situated in the former hospital chapel, the museum and its collection provide an insight into the evolution of mental health treatments, and show the history of mental health care over the last 150 years. In its time, the hospital was recognised for an ethos of wellbeing that helped patients receive the good care they needed. The museum is therefore particularly well-placed to be part of important contemporary discussions around health and wellbeing in museums.

Glenside's Age Friendly project - a pop-up museum session facilitated by student volunteers for elderly care home residents in Bristol

The reminiscence sessions were delivered in a communal space at participant care homes. They were informal and lasted around forty-five minutes to an hour, with residents seated in circles around tables to encourage conversation.

Volunteers, led by the museum's Curator, briefly introduced the Hospital where the museum is based. They put out some introductory objects from the museum's collection and invited discussion. Volunteers explained their uses, introducing the theme of caring for people who are unwell. Then volunteers gave the group of residents at each table a handling object.

This object was loosely wrapped in bubble wrap and a brown paper bag so that it did not look like a 'museum object' and had an air of mystery which invited discovery. Brown envelopes containing 'hints' about the object helped the discovery

process, and started off discussion with the residents. Handling objects were manageable and tactile.

Volunteers asked care home residents to think about what the object is, how old it might be and how it was used for caring. Volunteers facilitated feedback from groups in turn; discussions often drew in the whole group, while more objects were being unwrapped. Volunteers helped to continue discussions with individual residents. At the end of the session, the objects were gathered back in and packed away by the volunteers ready for the next session.

Our project aims:

- To create opportunities for museums located in urban areas to better engage with elderly, vulnerable audiences beyond a traditional way
- To exemplify how museums can reach more diverse audiences through programming and outreach
- To encourage museums to recruit student volunteers on a more flexible basis, as well as to help them build the infrastructure and partnerships to do this well
- To provide an opportunity for student volunteers to gain new skills, including interpersonal skills
- To provide high quality museum volunteering that offers new experiences for students
- To provide more opportunities for museums to test, experiment and demonstrate their potential for engaging in the agenda of health and wellbeing
- To demonstrate how loneliness and social isolation in both age groups can be tackled by museums

What we did:

- Three pop-up museum sessions at three residential care homes in Bristol using the handling collection from Glenside Hospital Museum
- Worked with the University of Bristol's Bristol Hub to recruit suitable student volunteers for the project
- Worked with the Curator of Glenside Hospital Museum to train and induct volunteers to work with the handling collection
- Worked with Alive Activities for guidance and advice on working with elderly people and people with dementia
- Alive Activities provided contacts and arranged the pop-up museum sessions
- Museum learning and safeguarding consultant, Lizzie Mee, developed safeguarding guidelines for museums' inter-generational activities

38

elderly residents
attended the pop-up museum sessions

3

university student volunteers
helped facilitate the pop-up museums sessions

9

staff across the care homes
supported and attended the sessions



2 What we learnt

Evaluation approach

The students who took part in the 'Intergenerational-Friendly Museum' project were asked to complete formative evaluation, to understand their expectations and motivations for volunteering, followed by a post-event evaluation to assess how they experienced their involvement.

Glenside Hospital Museum contributed to an overall evaluation of the project after the pop-up sessions had all been delivered as a condition of a small grant.

Care Home residents were invited, through a simple and informal 'show of hands', to share their responses to the pop-up museum in terms of enjoyment and learning, applying the UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures.

Staff members at each care home were also asked to share their feedback after each session and observers recorded briefly how the students, museum volunteers, carers and elderly participants interacted during the sessions.

Findings:

The Museum

“It was so rewarding to see that people enjoyed the activity and the volunteers gaining skills.”

“One of our aims is to engage diverse audiences with our collection and get people thinking about health and wellbeing. The volunteers supported the participants in developing conversations; without their participation there would have been less discussion and it would have taken additional time to unpack and pack. [We appreciated] the opportunity to pilot and develop the project, and how to ensure that it remains flexible. [We learnt that we need to] provide more information to care homes of what to expect from a session and how to advertise it well to residents. But we received excellent communication, support and coordination [from South West Museum Development]. It made participation easy and gave confidence to the volunteers that they knew when, what and how to support the project. We have started to develop the information to go with our handling collection so that volunteers or new members of staff, or other facilitators, could borrow the museum and deliver a session.”

The student volunteers

The student volunteers all identified the opportunity of volunteering with a museum as a key motivation for joining the project. They were expecting to gain better communication skills, to meet older people who they wouldn't normally have the opportunity to interact with, as well as practical experience of working in a museum environment.

They developed an awareness of the importance of participants' getting up close or holding objects as a key element in successful reminiscence and outreach work.



The volunteers felt well-supported by us at South West Museum Development and by Glenside Hospital Museum. The students would have found more information on the museum's collection as a whole useful, to help them feel better prepared for going into the sessions. They recommend that more volunteers be recruited to support future sessions and a wider range of objects, where possible, to enable even more exploration, conversation and sharing of memories with residents.

The volunteers felt that the project successfully managed to address multiple issues such as isolation, loneliness and a lack of connection between younger and older people. They particularly enjoyed meeting the residents, hearing their own stories and learning about the museum and its collections.

The Care Homes

“Most of us remember these kinds of objects!”

‘Really enjoyable – something quite different from what we usually have’

‘The lady who was talking a lot, she never chooses to come to our other activities!’

‘I saw high levels of engagement from some participants who are usually very quiet’

‘It was very nice to talk to the young people and hear about the museum’”

The three sessions worked differently according to the nature of prior discussion with the care home. Good communication about the practical requirements ensured that a suitable space, and room set-up, promoted an open, intimate and reassuring atmosphere and space to handle and explore objects and information. Where there was more discussion during the planning stages the session was more successful. The level of care home staff capacity to attend the session had a big impact on session effectiveness. Care Home staff were key in supporting participants to attend and in informing the pop-up museum facilitators of any additional needs of individuals, and ensuring that those individuals were still able to take part.

Conclusions:

- Working in partnership with older people's organisations can help museums to find an audience for their outreach activity and negotiate arrangements for sessions.
- Good communication between partners helps to fully realise these benefits.
- Working in partnership with a student volunteering organisation supported effective volunteer recruitment.
- Student volunteers make a difference to the extent to which participants can access, interact with and enjoy pop-up museum contents, and they enhance

the sessions by putting participants at ease.

- A minimum of two students is needed per session, where sessions involve unpacking, distributing and collecting a group of objects.
- Induction, training and familiarisation sessions empower students to be confident with supporting sessions.
- If students are to lead sessions then familiarisation needs to be more in depth and over a longer period of time.
- Session instructions, packing and unpacking processes and clear object information help students in their facilitation role.

3 Top Tips...

for developing an 'Intergenerational-Friendly' project

- **Build the right partnerships** so that you can successfully engage and recruit young people.
- **Reach out to support organisations**, such as South West Museum Development, for advice, guidance and contacts.
- **Support from staff at residential homes, or care staff in the community** is crucial throughout the process.
- **Take time to build a relationship** with care home staff and communicate clearly what you need to deliver a session, and what people can expect from your session.
- **Involve and consult young people** on the shape of their volunteer experience.
- **High-quality information packs for volunteers** will help them in their role. Packs might include the structure of the session, a list of objects with photos and additional information, along with procedures for object packing and repacking.
- **Be adaptable and flexible**, both in terms of the formula of your pop-up museum and your approach to delivering it.
- **A range of objects** will help all participants to discover something they enjoy. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' response and objects that engage several senses can be particularly successful.



- **Train and prepare your staff and volunteers.** Make sure that those involved in your project are comfortable, confident and know what to expect before they start delivering sessions. Extra training or advice for young volunteers and the museum team on dementia may be advisable.
- **Keep trying!** Even if you think you have enough volunteers, keep talking to partners and recruiting, as volunteers will move on.

4 Top Tips...

for creating a handling collection

- **Choose your objects carefully.** Select objects that are in a good condition and robust enough to be handled. Some items, such as Lead and other metalwork, or damaged items, may not be suitable for direct handling.
- **Transport and store the items safely.** Make sure that they are placed in an acid-free/archive box, or in a rigid-sided suitcase that is well-lined with acid-free tissue or bubble wrap, along with plasterzote cut to size to house each object individually within the box or case.
- **Wrap your objects individually** in acid-free tissue or bubble wrap for extra protection.
- **Avoid the transference of bacteria between participants** by gently wiping each item with an alcohol wipe, and/or changing the wrapping after each session, if you can, and if part of your session is to get participants to unwrap items themselves.
- **Train your volunteers** in the correct procedures for opening and unwrapping your objects at the start of each session, and then for repacking them at the end.
- **Create a checklist** of all your objects so that you know exactly what is in your handling collection, making it easier to 'check' items back in at the end of a session. If you can, include photographs and any relevant information that may be necessary for your volunteers to be aware of.

Don't forget to **evaluate** what you are doing! It is important to evaluate all your museum activity so that you can make changes and improve. You can ask for feedback from anyone involved in your Age Friendly activity, but make sure that you use what they say to help you grow and develop your offers for your audiences and volunteers.



5 Involving young people as volunteers... to take part in activities with or for older people

Young volunteers will benefit greatly from well-planned volunteering opportunities with other age groups.

Museums benefit significantly from the involvement and input of young people, not just through the project, but by bringing a different and fresh perspective to all areas of the museum's operations.

Projects involving people of different ages are an important part of a young person's development. They promote knowledge and cohesion between generations and can produce innovative and original outcomes.

The young people involved in this Age Friendly project were students over the age of 18. These guidelines apply to working with this age group and may also be helpful when working with 16-18 year old volunteers. Different safeguarding criteria apply to working with under 16s.

Good practice principles to keep in mind

Plan in advance

Find out about the experience and expectations of all the people involved, including the young people, partner organisations and activity participants.

Some young people will have limited experience of working with people of different ages and others will be very experienced. Try finding out what experience they have and in which settings they have gained this experience.

Young people may have different ideas to your own. Acceptance and tolerance are crucial for positive working relationships.

Try not to assume the knowledge of young people, or others involved. Young people

are likely to have knowledge of IT and modern cultural references, but they may not have.

Give young people an opportunity to share in the planning of their volunteering.

Recruit with care

Volunteers can be doing the role for many reasons. Make sure that they are fully aware of their role and that it complements their own goals or aims.

You might want to consider the good practice principles from youth social action campaigns, such as the [#iwill](#) campaign as you plan to involve young people **whose link can be found in the resources section on page 13-14.**

Have the right policies and procedures in place

Depending where your intergenerational activity takes place, there will be different policies that may apply. You should always be aware of your own policies and practice even if you are applying someone else's policies for a project. Ensure that you have an up to date safeguarding policy, and that everyone within the organisation has knowledge of the policy.

Forge strong partnerships

If you want to join forces to deliver an activity you need to agree respective responsibilities for risk assessments, insurance, supervision of volunteers and for ensuring safeguarding procedures are in place and adhered to.

In practice, this means that the organisation responsible for the space in which an activity takes place will be responsible for the health, safety and safeguarding of everyone on site and should have appropriate insurance.

The museum will need to make sure its own volunteers are covered by their insurance policy for their volunteering, wherever this takes place. It will also need to make volunteers aware of supervision and safeguarding procedures of the sites they are visiting, who to ask for guidance whilst on site and how the procedures affect them.



Discussions in advance

These can help to avoid misunderstandings about roles, good practice and safeguarding. Remember that volunteers should not be carrying out regulated activity. This means, among other things, that they should not be made responsible for the personal care of project participants, or supporting participants to move around to access the activity. Young people doing museum activities should not be lone working with vulnerable adults or solely responsible for vulnerable adults.

For more information on what constitutes regulated activity and about DBS checking, visit the **Further Guidance about DBS and Regulated activity in the Resources section on page 13-14.**

Take responsibility

Write a risk assessment for the volunteer role; consider all the risks that the volunteer might face and ensure that the young person is aware and understands them – just as you would with any other volunteer. In advance of this, you should find out whether the young person has any specific needs or whether they may need additional support in their role and consider how you may be able to facilitate them.

If you wish to take photographs of young volunteers on behalf of your organisation – or indeed of any care home residents participating in an Age Friendly activity – then make sure that you discuss this with partner organisations first. You will need to have the appropriate permissions for people to sign, and you will need to be clear about how and where you are going to process, store and utilise any photographs you do take.

Welcoming the volunteer effectively into the museum team

This is a really important step to take, and the best way to do this is by providing a comprehensive induction before they begin their role. This should cover museum policies, health and safety procedures, fire procedures and safeguarding as well as a general introduction to the museum, its collections and its organisational vision, and simple things such as where they can leave their bags or where they can make a cup of tea.

Inductions for an Age Friendly project should also include awareness-raising about the needs of any vulnerable adults or older people that they might be volunteering with, and pointing them in the direction of other helpful resources or additional training that they can access.

Volunteer expenses

Relevant procedures will also need to be shared with the young person in their induction. As such, you will need to ensure that an expenses payments system is in place before they start their volunteering role (this should be put in place in line with your general volunteer policy). Be aware that young people may need expenses to be repaid promptly.

Good communication is important

Make sure that you are communicating with the young person through formal channels. This will include identifying a suitable person from within your team to act as the named contact for the young person. This person should be trained in safeguarding and it is best practice to contact the young person via the museum's official email addresses, rather than through personal email accounts.

You will also need to collect an emergency contact for the young person as well, in case an emergency with them arises and you need to get in contact with someone on their behalf.

Support the young person

Help them to think carefully about the timing and length of planned activities with vulnerable adults or older people. Let them know that they should take regular breaks and plan these in line with the needs of the activity they are supporting.

Ensure that they know how to respond if things do not go according to plan when they are delivering an activity. Make sure that they are aware of any problem-solving procedures or techniques to deal with unexpected situations. You may also need to make them aware of any whistleblowing procedures, both at the museum and in other places they may volunteer with the museum.

It is advisable to plan regular catch-ups or 'check-ins' with young volunteers so that you are aware of how they are getting on, of any issues concerning them and can make sure that they are aware that they have someone to talk to if they are facing any particular challenges or problems within their role. An opportunity to simply 'debrief' after reminiscence sessions can be good for volunteers' wellbeing.

If a volunteer decides to leave their role

It is good practice to offer them an 'exit interview' so that you can understand how they found their volunteer experience. You can use what they tell you to better develop and grow future volunteering opportunities at your museum.

6 Useful links and other resources

Partners in this Bristol Age Friendly project:

bristolhub.org.uk
studenthubs.org/
aliveactivities.org/
glensidemuseum.org.uk/

Support from South West Museum Development:

Contact us at -
museum.development@bristol.gov.uk

Or visit our website -
southwestmuseums.org.uk

Age Friendly Museums Network:

Age Friendly Museums Network -
agefriendlymuseums.wordpress.com/
Museum Development North West's 'Age Friendly Museums Toolkit' -
museumdevelopmentnorthwest.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/mdnw_age-friendly-museums-toolkit_sept20191-1.pdf

West Midlands Age Friendly Museums Network 'Heritage and Wellbeing Sharing Day Toolkit' -
culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-12/AFMNWM%20Sharing%20Day%20Toolkit.pdf

British Museum Community Partnerships -
britishmuseum.org/learn/communities

Safeguarding:

gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance

gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-guidance-leaflets

Resources:

Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance -
culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing -
<https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

Culture and Health Research -
culturehealthresearch.wordpress.com/

Alive Activities -
aliveactivities.org/alive/en/resources/best-practice-guides/

Museums Association 'Dementia Friendly Toolkit' -
museumsassociation.org/download?id=1150803

Alzheimer's society Dementia Friendly resources -
alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities/organisations/resources-organisations

UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures -
ucl.ac.uk/culture/projects/ucl-museum-wellbeing-measures



Family Arts Campaign - familyarts.co.uk/age-friendly-standards/

The Oxford Institute of Population Ageing - ageing.ox.ac.uk/

Museums in Cambridgeshire 'Memories in the Community' project - memoriesinthecommunity.wordpress.com/about-the-project/

Evaluation of reminiscence activity provided to care settings by museums in Cambridgeshire - sharemuseumseast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Reminiscence-Study-Full-Report.pdf

The **#iwill** campaign - iwill.org.uk/about-us/youth-social-action/#what

Department of Health 'Volunteering in Care Homes' project - ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-in-care-homes

Museum of London 'Packing Objects for Storage' e-learning module - museumoflondon.org.uk/Resources/e-learning/packing-museum-objects-for-storage/index.html

7 South West Museum Development

South West Museum Development is a Sector Support Organisation and our mission is to support museums in the region to be ambitious, develop excellence and resilience, and increase audiences and community engagement. We provide specialist advice, support and development opportunities to museums and heritage organisations across the South West of England.

For more information about the advice and services we provide please get in touch:

Audience Development – Rachel Miller
Business Development – Victoria Harding
Conservation and Collection Care – Helena Jaeschke
Digital Engagement – Rachel Cartwright
Skills Development – Roz Bonnet
Volunteering and Workforce – Eleanor Moore

You can get in touch at:

southwestmuseums.org.uk/get-in-touch/
 0117 922 4653
 @swmuseums
museumdevelopmentnetwork.org

South West Museum Development is one of nine Museum Development Providers in England and receives funding from Art Council England. South West Museum Development is part of the Museum Development Network (MDN), a voluntary network of Museum Development providers that exists to support the development of a stronger and more resilient museum sector across the UK. MDN believes in creating a thriving museum sector – raising standards, driving excellence, and enabling and supporting the people who work and volunteer in museums.

This report was written by Rachel Miller and Eleanor Moore.

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Photography

Amanda Harman Photography for South West Museum Development
 James Stuart at Lightbox Films for South West Museum Development
 Jack at Glenside Hospital Museum

Documents available in other formats

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, audio tape, large print, easy English, BSL video or CD rom or plain text please contact: **0117 922 4653.**



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AGE FRIENDLY
MUSEUMS NETWORK

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