

## How museums and galleries can enhance health and wellbeing



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**“Arts and health is not a new, untested or fringe activity. It has long been delivering robust improvements to our health services.”**

– Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England, 2007: *A Prospectus for Arts and Health.*

More people than ever visit Britain’s museums and galleries. Record numbers flocked to Greater Manchester’s award-winning and richly diverse museums and galleries in 2011, and with good reason. These are, after all, enjoyable and thought-provoking places to visit. Museums and galleries make a distinctive and well documented contribution to visitors’ health and wellbeing, and recent research even suggests that those who regularly visit actually live longer.

But the vital contribution made by museums and galleries to Greater Manchester’s health is not simply about experiencing those things that make us feel better. Confrontation with, say, a disturbing work of art at Manchester Art Gallery, or shared memories of hardship

at the People’s History Museum, generate complex emotional responses, and it is thanks to the in-house expertise within such institutions that people are able to work through those emotions, leading to an enhanced sense of wellbeing.

Museums and galleries in Greater Manchester have long worked in close partnership with health professionals – often with impressive results, whether for patients or healthcare professionals themselves. We tell some of those stories here.

We hope that you enjoy finding out just how culture works this magic, and we also hope that you will feel inspired to develop new and beneficial partnerships between museums and health professionals.

**Maria Balshaw**  
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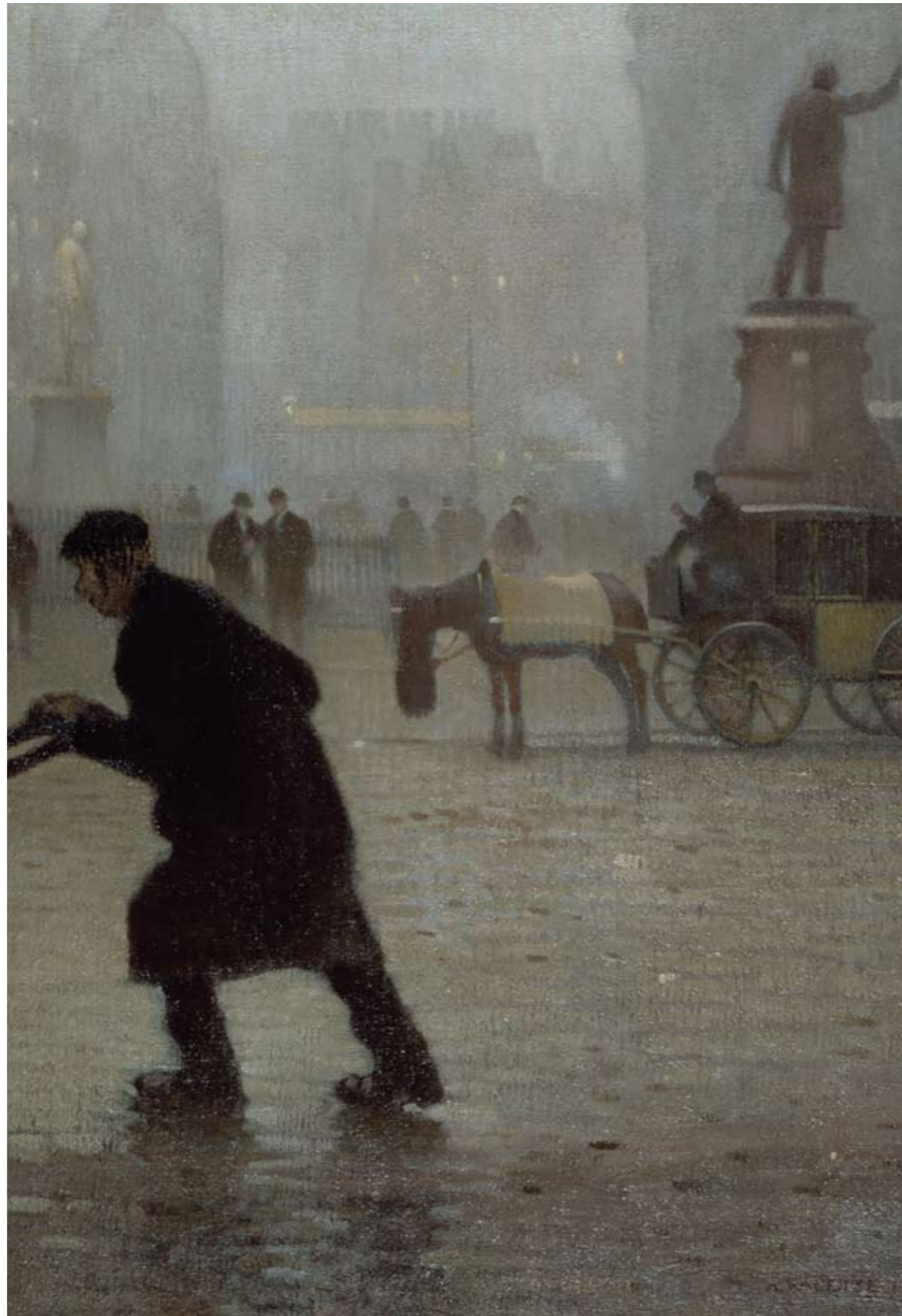
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# Introduction

Image (right)  
Albert Square,  
Manchester,  
painting by  
Adolphe  
Valette from  
Manchester  
Art Gallery.



## Health+Culture: a potent mix?

Good health stems from much more than a healthy body. We know that the health services cannot simply wave a magic wand and bring health and wellbeing to us all.

We also know that within Greater Manchester's museums and galleries there are untold treasures that can connect people to those things in life that are truly valuable: beauty, landscape, language, expression, history and science. These are the things that provide hope and meaning in our lives.

It is for this reason, then, that health professionals often join forces with museums and galleries – and, in so doing bring greater benefits to the patients and residents of Manchester.

Hippocrates said that he would rather know the person who has the disease than know the disease that the person has. We think that the partnerships between health and culture can improve on Hippocrates' aphorism. The stories you read here demonstrate that culture can help us know both the person's 'disease' and the person themselves.

How so? Cultural experiences enable people to express their individuality; it is as if they bring their whole self into the consulting room. And cultural experiences can allow a person to connect with others, both living and those long dead. It is this combination of the individual and the social, the living and the dead, which makes the cultural experience such a powerful one.

## Health+Culture: proven results

These are not simply grand claims. This combination of health and culture is particularly potent – and well proven. [Arts in health](#), a report by Dr R Staricoff, published by the Arts Council in 2004, provided evidence that the arts “can help reduce heart-rate, blood pressure and requests for analgesic medication”, while a recent scientific survey by Glasgow Life, called [Cultural attendance and public mental health](#), noted that “cultural attendance provides a distinct stimulus to human beings that has an impact on their wellbeing to such a degree that it prolongs their lives.”

Elsewhere, the high quality of health-related projects delivered by museums and galleries has attracted its own recognition. In 2011, for example, the Royal Society for Public Health awarded the [Who Cares? Museums, Health and Wellbeing](#) programme (a partnership between healthcare professionals and six museums in the North West) both its [Arts & Health Practice](#) and [Arts & Health Research](#) awards.

## Introduction (continued)



Image (left)  
Painting of  
clasped hand  
by artist Lucy  
Burscough.

### Health+Culture: take action

This publication is not solely designed to raise awareness of the value of culture within healthcare. It is also a call to action. We want to inspire you, the reader, to start talking and thinking about culture in a new way.

We'd like you to read the stories on the following pages so that you have a concrete understanding of how cultural partnerships make a difference in Greater Manchester today.

We'd like you to tell someone else about the potency of the partnerships between health and cultural professionals.

And we would like you to get in touch with your local museum or gallery to find out how they can help you improve the health and wellbeing of the patients in your care. Use the directory on page 22 to find out more.

**“Creative arts can help people develop emotional resilience. I would encourage more clinicians to explore partnerships as a way of benefitting patients’ mental wellbeing.”**

—  
Simon Barber, Chief Executive, 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

## Stories:

# Bolton Museum and Archive Service Museum Collections & You

### Image

In the woodland surrounding Smithills Hall the group made clay sculptures.



Museum Collections & You was a therapeutic project that encouraged 'free play', and focused on participants with mild-to-moderate mental health problems to explore quite personal material in a pressure-free way. Those who took part in this 20-week project were referred by their GP through Active Health, a public-health funded service within Bolton Council.

One session saw the group visit Smithills Hall (a Grade I listed building not far from Bolton town centre). The Hall is surrounded by woodland, and the Museum's Natural History Curator described how the Hall has been used since the 19th century to collect flower and plant specimens. She showed the group some of these specimens and told the stories of the people who collected them. This was followed by a walk in the woodland where the group did blindfold trust exercises over uneven ground. Each person was then given a lump of clay to sculpt - some sculpted the animals and fungi they had seen during their walk. Some took their sculptures home; others left them on a tree stump for dog walkers to puzzle over.

Back at Smithills Hall, the group had a warming cup of tea and discussed the day. They were particularly fascinated by the stories of collectors who had died long ago but lived on through their collections. One participant was prompted to recall her childhood, stressing that Museum Collections & You gave her the freedom to experiment denied to her as a child.

"It was an opportunity to play," she said. "I didn't play much as a child. Having [the artist and project manager] here made it a safe place. I find that if I can play it frees me; somehow it made me lose my inhibitions. For me, it's been a wonderful opportunity."

Museum Collections & You deliberately set out to generate this sense of free play. The artworks created as a result of the sessions, for example, were never intended to be displayed in the museum. It was an approach that was vital for those who suffered from extreme anxiety, or were so ill that producing a work of 'museum quality' would prove too daunting. By taking the pressure off, this project "resulted in deep personal reflection that may have been unachievable if the work had been destined for exhibition."

### Image

An image from Pauly's War, the performance the Healthy Living Walking Group watched at the People's History Museum.



Fallowfield Healthy Living Walking Group meets every week to take walks around the city. As its name suggests, it uses physical and social activities to enhance the health and wellbeing of its members, many of whom would otherwise be isolated and lonely. The group is mainly made up of women aged between 60 and 80 years old. On one occasion the group attended Pauly's War at the People's History Museum, a performance that tells the story of a young girl named Pauly as she grows up in war-torn Manchester.

Watching a film of Manchester during the Blitz, and seeing a young Pauly leave the city behind to the song Farewell Manchester, gave the group the opportunity to collectively reminisce. One member of the group was moved to say, "As children went away to escape the bombing, I remember singing Farewell Manchester with my school friends - we were on the train going to Lytham."

Following the performance, members of the group were invited to look more closely at historic objects such as ration books and knitted slippers - some lively conversations followed, with one woman remarking that, "the play opened my eyes about the 1930s and 1940s".

# People's History Museum Pauly's War

Thanks to both its historic, industrial building and the objects displayed within, the People's History Museum lends itself well to such events, creating a welcoming place where people can reminisce about the past and connect with today through dramatic performances such as Pauly's War. Watching as a group gives people a chance to share their memories, and helps combat the feelings of isolation and loneliness so often experienced by older generations.

"There was lots of laughter, joking and friendly banter," said the group organiser. "When I asked the group if this bonding happened because they were in the People's History Museum as opposed to somewhere else, one person felt it could have taken place anywhere. More of the group, though, said there was something about the Museum which is about 'people like me' and Manchester's history, and this helped connections to be made."

## Stories:

### Manchester Art Gallery Capture It



#### Image

Ophelia, painting by Arthur Hughes from Manchester Art Gallery, chosen by the participants.

Capture It was a year-long project designed to enhance recovery and build self-esteem in young people with a history of self-harm and eating disorders. It was delivered by Wigan Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Manchester Art Gallery, who between them ran monthly groups for fifteen young people who came to the gallery accompanied by two psychiatrists.

The project was divided into sessions spent with works in the gallery - exploring themes such as relationships, identity or bullying - and studio time where participants were guided through creative activities such as painting, photography, collage and poetry.

In one session, the young people were asked to collectively choose a work in the historic galleries that they were drawn to. They chose Ophelia by Arthur Hughes (1852). The tragic story of Ophelia - love, madness and death - clearly struck a chord, and the group went on to work with an artist to produce a graphic strip of their responses to the painting.

It was a deliberately challenging activity. "I am not a particularly creative person and am not good at art so I felt under a lot of pressure when we had to do the sketchbook task," said one participant. "This made me want to go home, although I didn't go home and everyone was really nice."

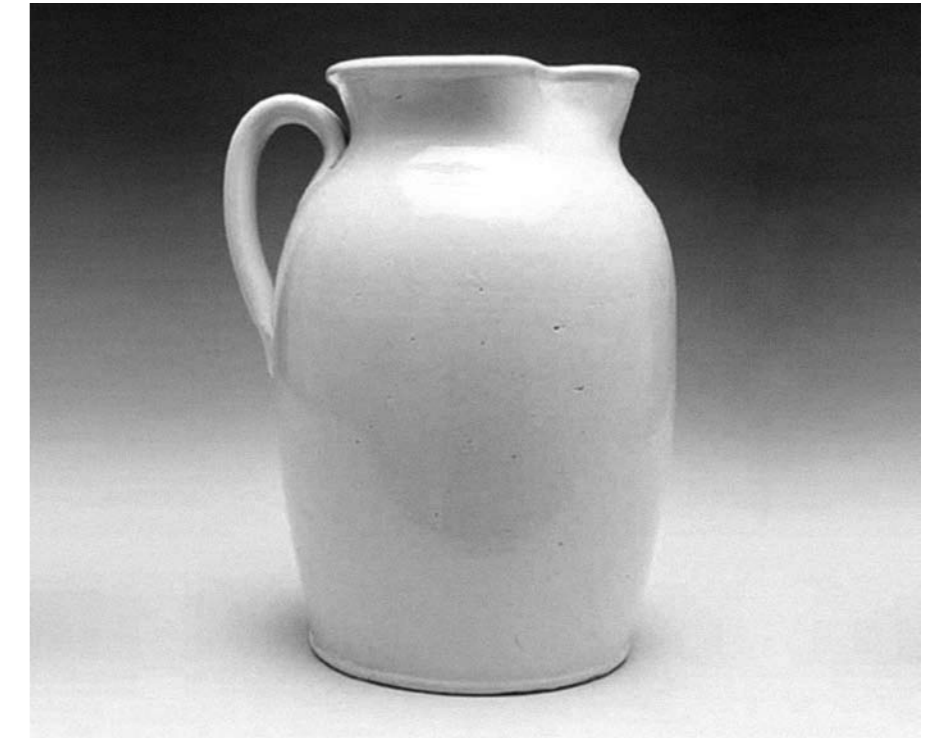
Despite the challenges, the project was a success. Evaluation that was both qualitative (feedback from the young people, parents and carers) and quantitative (using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale), clearly demonstrated a consistent increase in WEMWBS scores, and thus an improved sense of wellbeing, across the group.

"Capture It gave the young people who took part a valuable opportunity to use art to explore their sense of identity and express difficult emotions outside of a clinical setting. As such, it is a good example of how creative arts can help people develop emotional resilience. I would encourage more clinicians to explore partnerships as a way of benefitting patients' mental wellbeing." Simon Barber, Chief Executive, 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

#### Image

The large stoneware acid jug, made by Doulton and Company Ltd from Manchester Art Gallery, chosen by one of the participants.

### Manchester Art Gallery with Higher Blackley Children's Sure Start Centre Becoming a New Parent



Becoming a New Parent was designed to address the low rate of breastfeeding in North Manchester: a lack of breastfeeding is associated with a number of chronic childhood disorders. It is an issue that has been identified by Manchester City Council as a means of attaining better health for its residents.

But simply telling people about the advantages of breastfeeding isn't particularly effective. Instead, an alternative means of encouraging mothers to breastfeed was needed, with Becoming a New Parent the end result. This was a project that used Manchester Art Gallery's objects and spaces to create easy conversation between mothers, enabling them to ask about breastfeeding in a non-pressurised environment and thus make better informed choices about their own and their babies' health.

Three mothers came to the Gallery for six morning sessions. Each artist-led session used some of the artworks on display as a starting point for conversation, and these conversations were followed up by creative art-making activities. The emphasis was on the informal: the mothers sat round a table with tea and cake and chatted while they got on with the craft activity. Interestingly,

on a number of occasions the conversation spontaneously moved to breastfeeding. Typically, one participant would ask an experienced breastfeeder, how do you do it?

In one session, participants were asked to choose an object they felt represented them in some way. One chose a large industrial acid jug. It demonstrated the way, she said, she felt as a mother, always being filled up and then emptied out. "Everybody pours their stuff into the jug and I get fuller and fuller."

These gentle conversations encouraged greater self-esteem and lessened the sense that the women were alone with their difficulties. One mother felt (accurately or not) that she was under scrutiny at the Sure Start Centre, whilst the Gallery, free of associations, was a place where she felt more able to be herself without being judged.

"This is good because it's different," said one participant. "Everything is [usually] about you and your child together, which is nice but this is really good 'cause it's just for us, the mums. It's like having time to yourself."

## Stories:

### The Manchester Museum Memories of Manchester



#### Image

Manchester residents at Bridges Day Unit, part of Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust.

Memories of Manchester is a heritage, health and wellbeing project developed by The Manchester Museum and linked to Manchester City Council's Valuing Older People initiative, which is in turn designed to improve the quality of life for older people in Manchester.

The project focused on people's memories of Belle Vue Zoological Gardens (which closed in 1981). To prompt participants, objects from the museum were taken in specially-designed 'handling boxes' into hospital wards and care settings for older people, including the Complex Health Needs Ward at Manchester Royal Infirmary, Bridges Day Unit and Shore Green Residential Home.

Patients, carers and staff reminisced about their experiences at Belle Vue, which, from the middle of the 19th century, was the place to go in Manchester to have fun. Artists joined some sessions, creating an opportunity for participants to share their stories in new and visual ways, while other visits were accompanied by the music and songs that would have played during dance nights at Belle Vue.

For older people, being able to reminisce in this way can enhance both the inner self and social skills. It involves exchanging memories with friends and relatives, with caregivers and professionals, passing on information, wisdom and skills. It can give lonely people a sense of value and belonging.

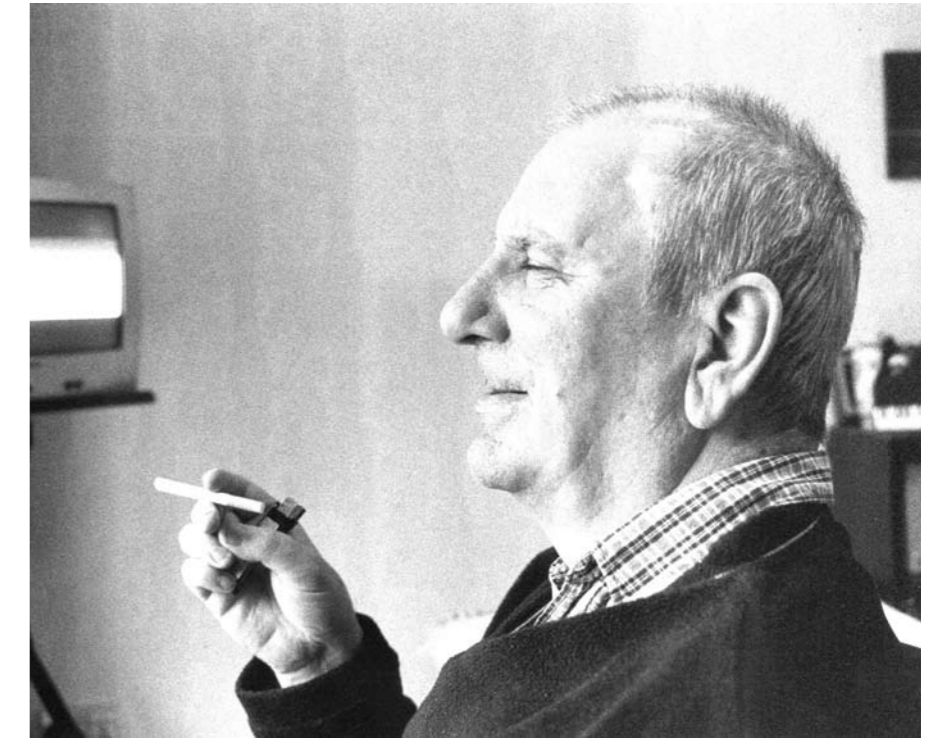
Memories of Manchester was also helpful for staff, as it offered new ways of interacting with patients. "My view of the patient has changed holistically," said one care worker. "Seeing the patient before ill health, or in many cases before dementia, has allowed me to experience the happy times."

"Patient care has been improved by providing more dignity for patients, social opportunities and the creation of a relaxed environment," said another member of staff, while a colleague noted that previously aggressive patients had appeared friendlier and happier after the workshops.

#### Image

John, one of the ten people suffering long-term ill-health documented by GP and artist Lucy Campbell-Maguire.

### Portland Basin Museum, Ashton under Lyne Fit for Life



Encouraging people to improve their diet and lifestyle is one of the major challenges facing the NHS. Yet adopting a 'preachy' tone, and hectoring people about what they should and shouldn't do, rarely works. To tackle this, the Portland Basin Museum worked with Tameside and Glossop Primary Care Trust and Tameside Council's Health Improvement Team to develop an innovative way of getting the public to consider their health.

They developed Fit for Life, an exhibition that examined ordinary people's health over the last 200 years. Rather than lecture visitors, the exhibition looked at health from a historical viewpoint - with current-day health tips and information stealthily woven in.

The historical angle also meant that the exhibition could cover a wide range of topics. Visitors saw original dentistry tools, an old hearing aid, sports equipment and 'quack' medicines - as well as some rather gruesome objects such as an amputation saw, a pot for storing leeches and a set of cups used to draw blood. Fit for Life also looked at some of the diseases and poor conditions that plagued the 19th and early 20th century working classes: illnesses such as typhoid and cholera, as well as slum housing and poor diets.

Alongside the exhibition, the GP and artist Lucy Campbell-Maguire documented through words and photography ten local people's experience of ill-health. All had experienced major illness or disease. For some it lasted a few years, and for others most of their adult lives, yet the resulting portraits were uplifting and gave real insight into both the hardship and bravery of her ten subjects. "The people I worked with for this project are defined by being musicians, artists, mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, leaders, inventors, writers, teachers, gardeners and friends," said Lucy. "These are the things that characterise them. The stories they have to tell are poignant and life affirming."

The exhibition was a huge success, with over 53,000 visitors. A Healthy Schools workshop that accompanied the exhibition saw 1,600 pupils take part, while a programme of family learning activities was available during the school holidays.



## Stories:

### Salford Museum & Art Gallery Memories Matter Reminiscence Project



#### Image

Participants with one of the objects that it was hoped would trigger memories.

Memories Matter provides reminiscence resources and activities for older people throughout Salford. One of its series of workshops focused on weddings, Whit Walks and holidays. In these workshops, museum staff brought historic objects and photographs into four day centres for older people. The idea was that these objects, such as a 1939 wedding dress or vintage Punch and Judy puppets, would trigger people's memories and get them talking.

Care workers, occupational therapists and centre managers worked closely with museum staff throughout the project to develop and deliver workshops. By making sure that the specific needs and interests of participants were addressed, participants were more engaged in the project than they might otherwise have been and the end result – the stories that emerged – were both powerful and moving.

These stories were recorded and displayed as part of a three month-long exhibition at the Museum, High Days and Holidays, along with the photographs and objects that had inspired them. 15,000 people came to see the exhibition, which in turn had an impact on those who had taken part in it. They felt that their stories were valued and respected by their local community and that, in turn, they mattered.

The evaluation of Memories Matter showed that it was this combination of handling objects and the sense that their personal stories were valued that made a difference to participants. They felt proud of their lives and this in turn supported the development of relationships between their peers and their carers.

"I can only say that it gave us the greatest pleasure to be involved in such a wonderful project. I could not have envisaged the absolute pleasure it would give to all concerned, and our service users were delighted to have their stories included in the Museum exhibition." Day Centre Manager, Salford.

#### Image

Beth, Hidden by Lucy Burscough seeks to address how individuals and society can tend toward defining the mentally ill by their problems alone, and forget the many positive aspects to their personalities.

### Whitworth Art Gallery Who Cares? If you only see the illness, you miss the person



The Whitworth Art Gallery has a long and successful history of working with local communities, such as users of community centres in surrounding wards, older people in residential and care homes, and adults with mental health problems. A logical progression of this work was to turn to the healthcare community on its doorstep, and the Gallery did so by developing a new partnership with Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

This partnership was designed to examine the needs of the local hospital community, and in particular its access to the extensive collections and resources offered by this University Gallery and its highly specialised staff.

Who Cares? If you only see the illness, you miss the person, was one of the partnership's recent projects, and resulted in an exhibition that displayed portraits from the Whitworth's collection alongside newly-commissioned portraits of children from Galaxy House, the residential psychiatric unit at Manchester Children's Hospital. The exhibition transformed the gallery into a therapeutic space. Who Cares? provided a stimulus for curiosity and exploration, reflection and meditation.

"Thank you for all the work you did with the young people of Galaxy House during Beth's stay, but most importantly for highlighting children's mental health and for bringing it into the public eye," said a parent of one of the children at Galaxy House. "It is definitely something, that, as a parent, I feel is pushed under a carpet and hidden away. We are living proof, so are all the other children in places like Galaxy House, that it can happen to any family at any time and I really do thank you for recognising that they are beautiful children behind the illnesses they are experiencing."

The exhibition attracted new audiences from the health sector and associated service providers through the provision of a wide range of informal, social and creative activities. It provided opportunities for consultation and collaboration.

"A visit to the Gallery can broaden one's awareness of the value of art in enriching the understanding of the world in which we live," said one consultant psychiatrist. "The visit helps to demystify the gallery, offers a space for reflection and contemplation, and affirms the potential for art to intersect with the medical world."

# Museum Medicine - How do we know it works?

We are all under pressure to prove that what we do 'works'. Before we tell you about the evidence that shows how culture can transform lives, think about what difference culture makes to your life. Perhaps cultural activity puts you in touch with your loves and hates, good times and bad times, or regrets for things long-since passed. Perhaps you find it offers an escape from the difficulties of everyday life, or is a release from work or home life. Or perhaps you use culture to connect - to your family, your friends or just to your own emotions.

## The evidence base

It is not only our own experience that tells us that doing creative things is good for our health - research backs it up. Just one example, Dr R Staricoff's [Arts in Health](#) review of nearly 400 papers, demonstrates the beneficial impact of the arts on people's health. As the joint publication from the Department of Health and Arts Council England, [A Prospectus for Arts and Health](#) (2007), puts it: "Arts and health is not a new, untested or fringe activity. It has long been delivering robust improvements to our health services."

## What do museums and galleries offer in particular?

A research programme, [Heritage in Hospitals](#), at University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust found that taking museum objects to patients' bedsides increased positive emotions, wellbeing and happiness. Patients were distracted from their hospital surroundings by the handling sessions. The researchers used PANAS (Positive Affect Negative Affect) and Visual Analogue Scales to assess psychological wellbeing.

A report about this, called [Museopathy: Exploring the Healing Potential of Handling Museum Objects](#), describes how the experience of handling and talking about museum objects in hospitals can help patients work through issues of illness, mourning and death. They can help to restore dignity and a sense of identity by providing a springboard for reminiscence and speaking about oneself, and can also help healthcare professionals develop better, closer relationships with their patients.

Evidence in [Precarious Flight: An evaluation of the arts program running in UCLH](#) shows that within healthcare settings the arts can help reduce heart rates, blood pressure and requests for analgesic medication. On top of this, the arts produce aesthetic and reflective responses which reach into our very being and can help to give meaning to our lives when we desperately need something to hold onto.

Six museums in the North West of England, from Manchester to Carlisle, ran projects with health professionals including psychiatrists, nurses, care workers and community workers as part of the award-winning [Who Cares? Museums, Health and Wellbeing](#) programme. Research about this programme by the University of Central Lancashire shows the effectiveness of using museum and gallery objects to help patients express difficult emotions. Telling stories about one's life is the basis of many psychological therapies, and it is clear that museum objects often act as catalysts for people who need extra help in starting to tell their story.



Image (left)  
A mask from  
The Manchester  
Museum, The  
University of  
Manchester.



## Museum Medicine - How do we know it works? (continued)

### Museums and galleries reconnect the isolated

We believe that the fact that museum objects are in the public domain, that they belong to all of us, is critical for understanding how they can help us. People form symbolic relationships with objects. If someone can form an attachment to a museum object, and can make connections between themselves and the precious, untouchable things inside museums, they can feel more included in wider society - vital for those feeling isolated or alienated by ill health, and in particular those suffering from mental ill-health.

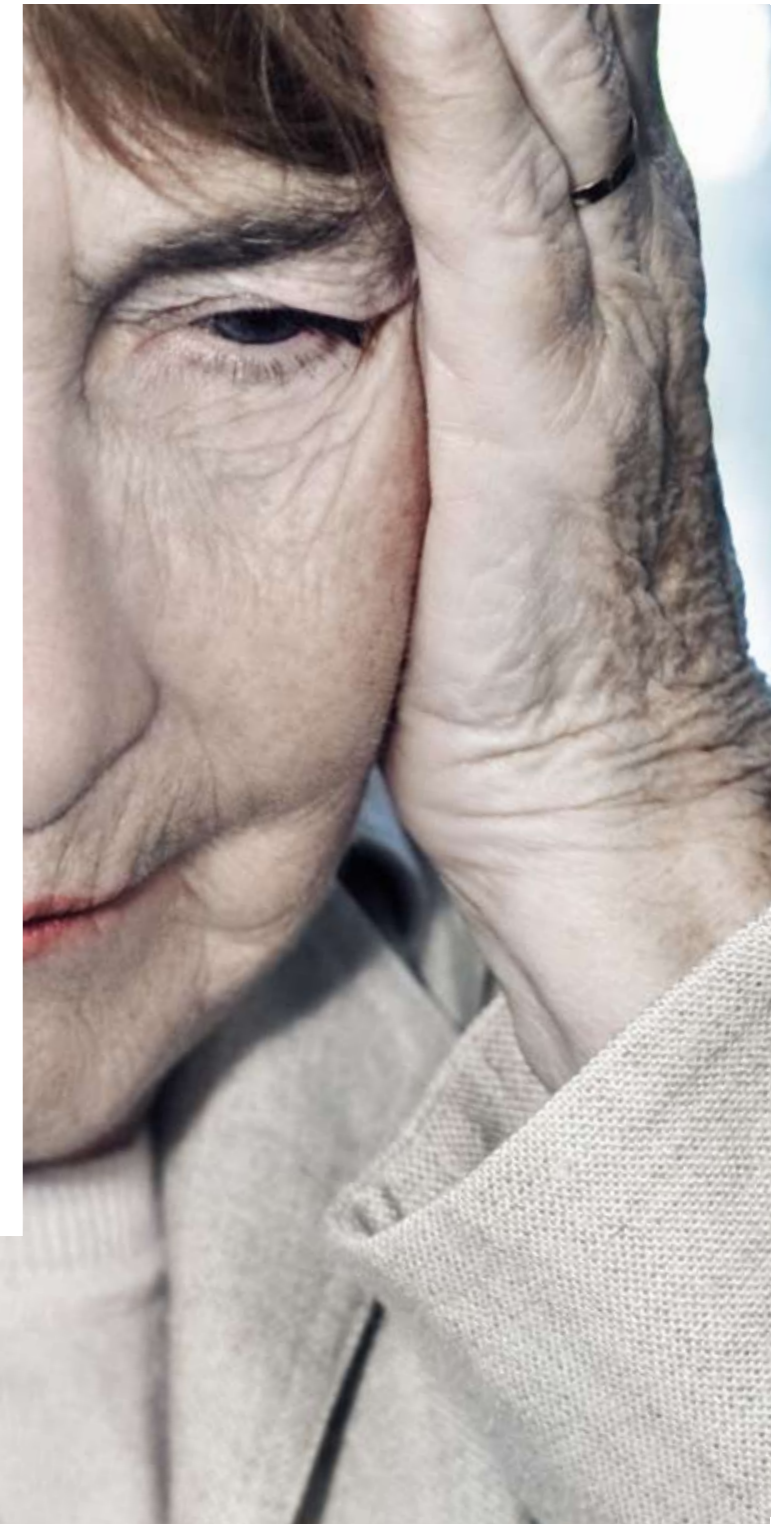
As the [Who Cares? Museums, Health and Wellbeing](#) programme notes:

"By making a personally distinctive use of an object, I retain my uniqueness and individuality... but I bring that individuality into relation with what the object stands for in the wider cultural field. I therefore begin to dissolve the separation I may feel from the cultural field of which others appear to be a part."

### Museums and galleries enrich and even prolong life

The [Cultural Attendance and Public Mental Health report](#), that surveyed the scientific evidence, reached the following powerful conclusion: "...taken together this body of research amounts to convincing evidence by medical and public health researchers that cultural attendance provides a distinct stimulus to human beings that has an impact on their wellbeing to such a degree that it prolongs their lives."

It is, therefore, not just intense engagement in specially designed activities that makes a difference to people's health. By simply visiting museums and galleries on a regular basis, a person can expect to see a profound and positive impact on their health. Put simply, cultural experiences offer complete immersion and this in turn makes us feel good. Culture as experienced in museums and galleries gives meaning and hope to our lives.



# Directory

Find out more about the museums and galleries represented in this publication, or if you would like to discuss in detail how culture can help you and your patients, contact Wendy Gallagher, Arts and Health Coordinator, Whitworth Art Gallery, telephone 0161 275 8454, email [wendy.gallagher@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:wendy.gallagher@manchester.ac.uk).

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## Portland Basin Museum

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## People's History Museum

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## Manchester Art Gallery

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## Whitworth Art Gallery

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W: [www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth)

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<http://tinyurl.com/heritageinhospitals>

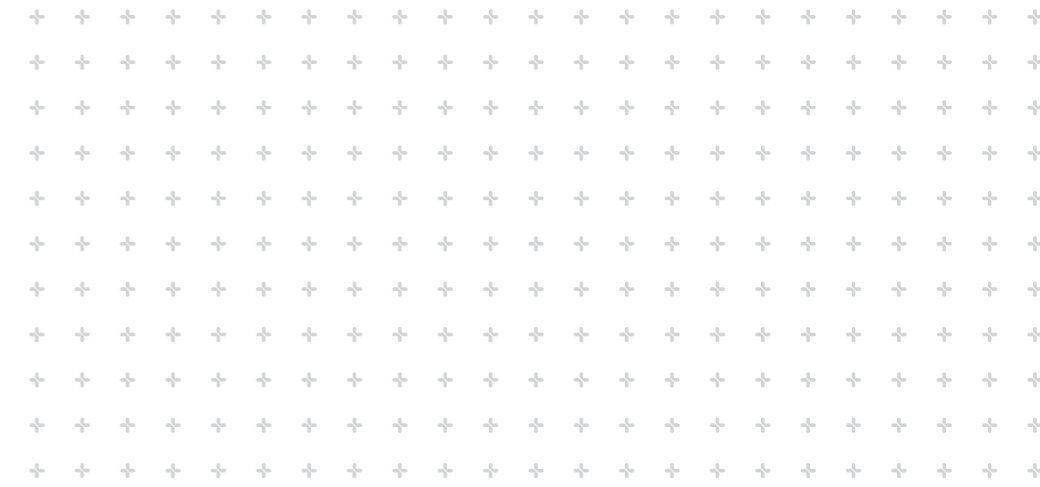
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**Who Cares? Museums, health and wellbeing**  
<http://tinyurl.com/whocaresmuseums>

**Precarious Flight: An evaluation of the arts program running in UCLH**  
<http://tinyurl.com/precariousflight>

**A prospectus for arts and health**  
<http://tinyurl.com/prospectusfor>



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Cover photography by Jan Chlebig



A partnership between

**Manchester  
Art Gallery**

**MANCHESTER**  
1824  
The University of Manchester  
The Manchester Museum

**MANCHESTER**  
1824  
The University of Manchester  
The Whitworth Art Gallery



Central Manchester University Hospitals **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust