

Joint Response to the Digital Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Inquiry on the Social Impact of Participation in Culture and Sport

1. The Museums Association (MA) is a membership organisation representing and supporting museums and people who work for them, throughout the UK. Our membership of over 8000 includes all types of museums, from small volunteer-run local museums to large national institutions and people working in all types of roles from directors to trainees. Founded in 1889, the MA was the world's first professional body for museums. We lead thinking in UK museums with initiatives such as Collections for the Future, Museums 2020 and, most recently, Museums Change Lives. We receive no regular public funding, and we do not wish to do so. For more information about the Museums Association, see our website:
www.museumsassociation.org/home
2. The National Museum Directors' Council represents the leaders of the UK's national collections and major regional museums. Our members are the national and major regional museums in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the National Archives and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. NMDC acts as an advocate on behalf of members and their collective priorities and provides them with a valuable forum for discussion and debate and an opportunity to share information and work collaboratively. While our members are funded by government, the NMDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation. For more information about NMDC and our activity see our website:
www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

Museums and Social Impact

3. Museums are perhaps not widely perceived as agents of social change. However, museums in the UK are playing an increasingly active role in providing support, care, training and lifelong learning in the communities they serve. Museums use their collections, spaces and expertise to enhance people's wellbeing and life chances by engaging with visitors and users at the personal and community level. They are increasing their social impact by developing new ways of working with audiences and communities: growing public participation, co-production of museum work and events, and sharing collections and knowledge in ways that can change people's perspectives and wellbeing.
4. Museums of all sizes, with collections ranging from fine art to social history, are taking up this challenge – often in partnership with community groups, charities and public sector

organisations. This type of work helps museums to be more sustainable, and the public benefits it generates underline the continuing importance of museums as a public service.

5. A recent survey¹ by the Museums Association confirms more museums than ever are targeting engagement work towards specific groups and communities to increase their social impact.
6. The survey found that a large proportion (74%) of museums in the UK work directly with local community groups. More than half work regularly with museum friends or supporters associations (59%) and youth groups (55%). Large percentages of museums work with health and wellbeing providers (46%) and disability groups (47%). Smaller but significant proportions of respondents said they had worked with black, Asian and ethnic minority communities (23%), environmental groups or campaigns (18%), LGBTQ+ groups (19%), refugees or asylum seekers (15%) and gender equality groups (12%). The percentage of museums saying they work with many of these groups has increased significantly since the Museums Survey 2017.
7. The Museums Association has highlighted the social impact of museums through its Museums Change Lives campaign², and NMDC set out many of the benefits of museums to communities and to health and wellbeing in its 2015 Museums Matter publication³. Both documents have a number of useful case studies which may be of further interest to the work of the Committee. We have highlighted a number of key examples below with recommendations for future government support.

Health and Wellbeing Partnerships

8. Partnerships between museums and health and wellbeing organisations have grown rapidly in recent years and have led to positive outcomes for patients, communities, museums and health organisations. For example, many museums now operate programmes for people with dementia and their carers. One of the highest profile programmes is the House of Memories at National Museums Liverpool, which supports carers and caring organisations through a range of events and object handling sessions (case study below). It is funded by local Health Trusts and Care Commissioning Groups⁴. The National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing has been set up to advance these partnerships and encourage other museums to pursue opportunities in the health and wellbeing field⁵.

Case Study: House of Memories at National Museums Liverpool

House of Memories provides health, social care and housing professionals and family carers with a training programme to increase dementia awareness and understanding based on the

¹ <https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1244881>

² <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-change-lives>

³ <https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/museums-matter/>

⁴ <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/learning/projects/house-of-memories/>

⁵ <https://museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com/>

museum's collection and role at the heart of the city's life. To date more than 11,000 people have undertaken the training.

The ambition to make this service available in every care setting across the country is already beginning to be realised with roll out across the UK. National Museums Liverpool is now generating international interest, with the first development in the USA in 2016 with the Minnesota Historical Society and interest from Singapore, Japan and Taiwan.

As the only cultural organisation to be cited in the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia 2020, the House of Memories programme has grown to become an important example of the added value that cultural organisations can bring to public services. Following external evaluation, NML estimates that a total of £12.6m social value was created in the year following the training programme. More information is available here: <http://houseofmemories.co.uk/>

Case Study: Playful Portraits at the National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery has been working in partnership with children's hospitals in London for over 15 years, sharing inspirational stories of men and women in the Collection and providing access to free, high quality arts activities. Playful Portraits is the new iteration of a programme developed to provide creative arts activity for young people in children's hospitals. Partnering with Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, Evelina London Children's Hospital at St Thomas', The Royal London Hospital at Whitechapel and Newham University Hospital the Gallery provides much needed arts activity during school holidays when the hospital school is shut and activity for young people is limited. These programmes deliver physical, cognitive, social and emotional benefits to patients, a positive creative experience for families and a motivating opportunity for hospital staff to collaborate with the Gallery team to deliver benefits to patients. More information is available here: <https://www.npg.org.uk/learning/access/hospital-schools/>

9. Museums take a broad view of wellbeing and many have also engaged with training and support for young and unemployed people. Museums have delivered apprenticeships – both formal and informal – in order to help people into training and work. A notable success story is the Scottish Maritime Museum's Boatbuilding School (case study below).

Case Study: Scottish Maritime Museum – Scottish Boat Building School

The Scottish Boat Building School teaches trainees – some of whom are young offenders, long-term unemployed or facing other personal challenges – basic woodworking skills that are not only transferable to the wider workplace but are also used to return older vessels to the water or improve displays in the museum. Repairs carried out on private boats also boost the museum's commercial arm, helping the project to become self-sustainable. Working in tandem with local agencies, the project markedly improves the self-confidence of the trainees, the vast majority of whom have gone into further employment. More information here: www.scottishmaritimemuseum.org/scot-boat-building-school

10. Strategic funds to support partnership working across government agencies and local authorities to deliver on specific policy goals (such as the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia) are an effective and targeted use of public investment which allow museums to develop creative and participative responses to health and social challenges, often in partnership with the NHS, social care providers or charities. This sort of funding is particularly valuable to museums whose fixed costs (maintaining buildings, caring for and providing public access to collections) can make it difficult to find space in budgets to begin this sort of work.
11. We believe that it is important that museums and the wider culture sector should be given due consideration in health and wellbeing planning, including through local authorities' Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. There is still scope for greater information sharing amongst services about how the cultural sector can work effectively with NHS and local authority services.

Place-Making

12. The contribution that museums make to place-making was recognised in DCMS's recent Mendoza Review of museums in England. Museums are rooted locally and provide a sense of place through their activities both within and outside the museum building. They foster curiosity and creativity and create a local environment which helps attract and retain workers, and are a significant contributor to what makes a place attractive to live in, work in, visit or invest in.

Case Study: Manchester Museums at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse

Manchester's cultural sector, including Manchester City Galleries, Manchester Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry and The Whitworth, are central to the national and international reputation of the city as a vibrant, creative and exciting place. Culture has been central to the development of the Northern Powerhouse, and the collaborative way in which museums already work across Greater Manchester ensures that the benefits of inward investment are felt beyond the central Manchester postcodes.

13. We believe that museums should be fully represented in Local Enterprise Partnerships and culture should be fully integrated into town or regional economic plans – such as the newly devolved city regions in England – to enable museums to play an important role in local development and place-making.
14. Museums also play a key role in developing people's sense of place and pride in where they live. Museums help foster a strong sense of community – understanding difference and sharing commonalities – by participation in civil society to celebrate, commemorate or help in times of crisis. Few other civic institutions have the public trust, collections or national network to mastermind large scale acts of remembrance, like the Centenary of the First World War, led by Imperial War Museums. Museums are also a safe, inclusive and egalitarian space for all

members of the communities they serve and have a key part to play in promoting a tolerant, diverse and cohesive society. Luton's Museum Makers project is an excellent example of how museums can be a driving force in changing the way people perceive where they live (case study below).

Case Study: Wardown Park Museum – Luton Change Makers

Ranging from retirees to students, and schoolchildren to young professionals, the Museum Makers are a volunteer team working with Luton Culture to help transform Wardown Park Museum into a brand new cultural attraction while making new friends and learning new skills along the way. The Museum Makers programme was announced to the town through a viral video Luton-based version of the song 'Happy' by Pharrell Williams, which was designed to make people in the town feel a sense of pride in where they lived and to engage positively with the town's culture and history. The video, which has over 160,000 views on YouTube, can be seen here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKcU-iZFsRg

Museums Inspiring Debate and Reflection

15. Museums are well placed to promote debate and reflection amongst audiences on some of the key issues and challenges that we face in the modern world. Museum collections – and expert interpretation of them – allow issues that are relevant to modern audiences to be raised in a safe space, supported by accurate information. Expertise on a subject often comes from audiences and partner groups, as well as from museum curatorial staff, and museums are increasingly co-producing or co-curating exhibitions and events with members of the communities they serve. This allows them to develop exhibitions and events that are relevant to different audiences and to increase engagement in communities with low levels of cultural participation. The case studies here offer good examples of this in practice.
16. More evidence of museums' benefit to health and wellbeing are outlined in the NMDC response to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry⁶ and the NMDC response to the DCMS Museums Review Call for Evidence⁷.

6

https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/responses_position_statements/nmdc_arts_health_wellbeing_inquiry_aug2016.pdf

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https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/responses_position_statements/museums_review_call_for_evidence.pdf