



THE
HOLBURNE
MUSEUM

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museums: changing lives through art

Evaluation of a
partnership project
May 2016 to April 2019



PATHWAYS TO WELLBEING
CHANGING LIVES THROUGH ART

Contents

- 3 Director's Foreword
- 4 The Pathways to Wellbeing Programme
- 6 Executive Summary from our Independent Evaluation
- 8 Participant Profile
- 11 Arts and Creativity Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing
- 13 Museums and Wellbeing
- 20 Case Study – Anna's Story
- 22 Key Achievements and Outcomes
- 32 Case Study – Andrew's Story
- 34 Key Learnings
- 36 Conclusions from our Independent Evaluation
- 38 Appendices
- 40 Case Study – A Fresh Art@ Story
- 42 Acknowledgments

Director's Foreword

I am delighted to present this report on the Pathways to Wellbeing project, a partnership between the Holburne Museum, Bath Preservation Trust and the American Museum & Gardens. Pathways is at the very heart of what I believe the Museum should be. Our vision – 'Changing Lives through Art' – underpins everything we do but nowhere is it more powerfully demonstrated than in the extraordinary achievements of this programme. Increasingly museums are an essential part of the social health infrastructure as well as the cultural and we are very proud to play a leading part in that development. Since joining the Holburne probably the most affecting thing for me has been to see the profound impact the museum can have on individual lives. The delicate balance between reaching large audiences in some ways and smaller audiences with deeper levels of engagement is so important. While an increasingly challenging environment is forcing institutions like the Holburne to focus on reaching the largest number of people possible, it is essential that we remember the importance of engaging with individuals in deeper and more transformative ways.

I have been moved by the passion and commitment of everyone involved in Pathways. Each of the participants has an extraordinary story to tell. Many have expressed their appreciation of the opportunities the

programme has offered but I want to turn that around and express how much we at the Holburne are indebted to them. Their engagement with the museum and our collection transforms how we see ourselves, how we understand the objects we have the privilege to care for, and how we stand in our community. I want the Holburne to maintain its status as a national, if not international, museum but that is worthless if we do not engage directly with our local community. I would therefore like to add my thanks to everybody involved in Pathways to Wellbeing: the National Lottery Community Fund for recognising the need and value of the work and for making it possible; all of the staff involved at all three partner museums but especially my colleague Louise Campion who has gone above and beyond what was expected; the many artists and volunteers who have offered support; and, most of all, the participants who have so brilliantly enriched the Holburne, and its partners, and allowed us to share their journeys.

Chris Stephens,
Director of The Holburne Museum

The Pathways to Wellbeing Programme

Pathways to Wellbeing Phase 1 (2016-19) is a museum-based community engagement programme with art at its heart. It supports people with lived experience of mental health issues, social isolation and homelessness to engage with local heritage and creative art activities, delivering measurable improvements in mental health and wellbeing. The 3 year project (now in its final year), has been generously funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, and was originally supported by Arts Council England. The programme has delivered positive outcomes for participants:

- 80% of participants report an improvement in wellbeing as a result of the sessions
- 90% of participants who identified loneliness as a reason for attending the groups report feeling less lonely and isolated as a result of the programme

The programme is made up of four key projects, all of which are **free** to participants:

- **Gardener's Lodge Art Group (GLAG)**, a supported museum-based art group working on creative projects with professional artists.
- **Peer-led Museums Group (IMAGE)**, progression group for GLAG participants but open to others.
- **Fresh Art@**, entry level creative group for local people in the first stages of recovery supported by a mental health worker.
- **Discover Museums: Pathways to Volunteering** course for vulnerable adults (particularly long-term unemployed) to experience volunteering and ways of engaging the general public with museum collections, supported by trained museum mentors.

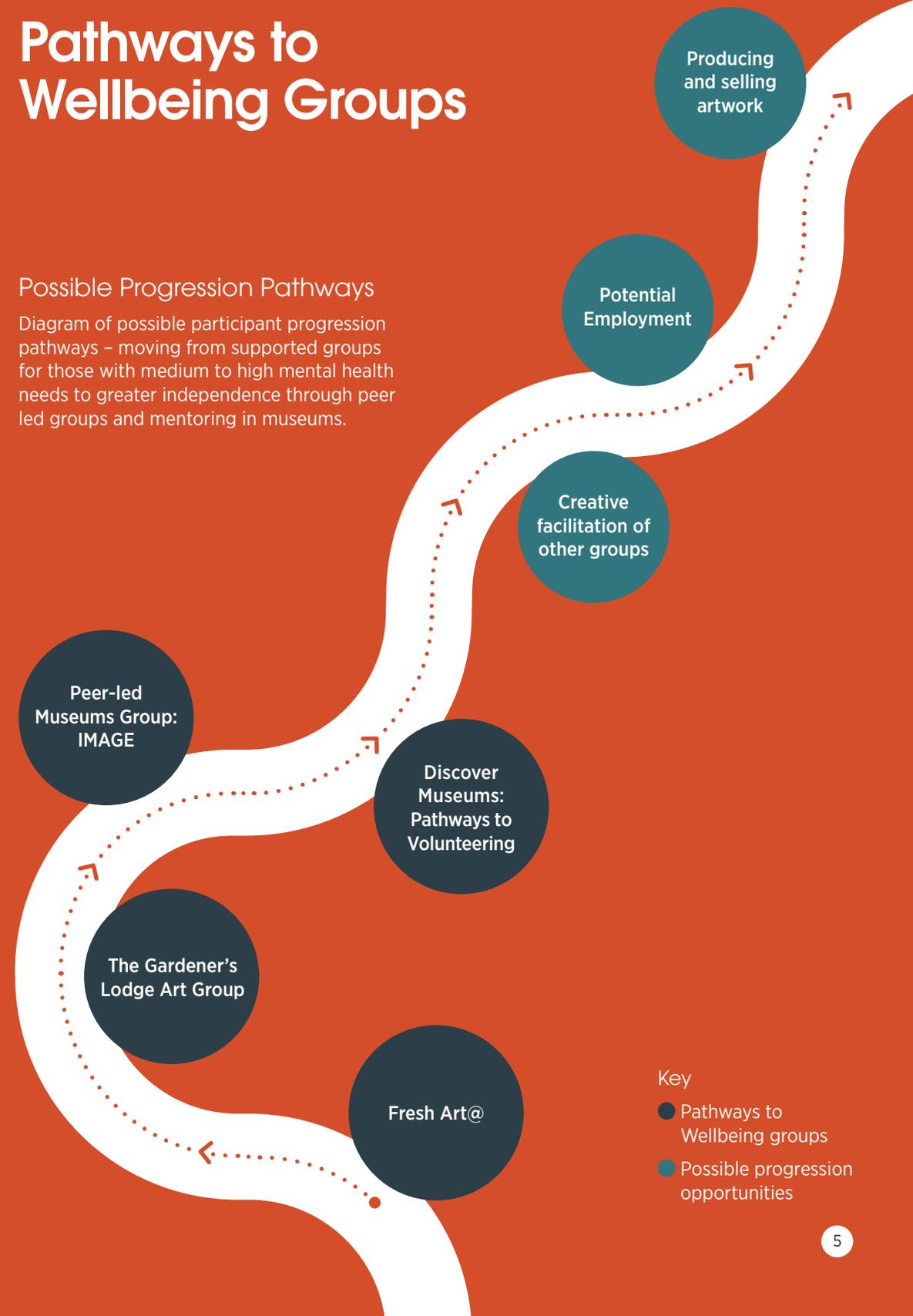
Through the four Pathways to Wellbeing the programme supports participants to:

- create and exhibit pieces of artwork inspired by museum collections and exhibitions
- develop their skills and confidence through a mentored volunteer induction programme
- work with museums to develop interpretation tools, public engagement activities and events
- have a 'voice' within museums.

Pathways to Wellbeing Groups

Possible Progression Pathways

Diagram of possible participant progression pathways – moving from supported groups for those with medium to high mental health needs to greater independence through peer led groups and mentoring in museums.



- Key
- Pathways to Wellbeing groups
 - Possible progression opportunities

Executive Summary from our Independent Evaluation

Pathways to Wellbeing is a successful project and has achieved all the outcomes it set itself and those set by funders; it is regularly oversubscribed. Participants are overwhelmingly positive about its benefits and partners enthusiastic about working together. The unique partnership brings together a group of Bath museums with health, community and voluntary sector organisations to improve mental health and wellbeing for people with lived experience of mental health issues, homelessness, unemployment, loneliness and isolation.

Through museum-based art and creative activities which use collections as inspiration, people learn about and make art, expressing themselves and gaining satisfaction. New people are engaging with museums, becoming volunteers and passionate advocates for museums. At the same time people's wellbeing improves: they make friends, learn new skills, gain confidence and develop new social networks. Many participants would not have visited a museum before or had the opportunity to try creative activities yet are now making art in response to museum collections, co-producing exhibitions and learning about their local heritage.

Good mental health and wellbeing help people manage the ups and downs of life. Loneliness and social isolation have become more common especially for people experiencing challenging life circumstances. It is estimated that a fifth of GP visits would benefit from a social (rather than a medical) solution, and with mental health an issue for many people (with 1 in 4 adults experiencing a mental illness at some point each year in

the UK¹) it is time to explore the potential of arts and creative activity for wellbeing. Participating in art and creative activity is recognised as having benefits for health and wellbeing and is supported by research showing measurable improvements for some conditions.

Pathways to Wellbeing shows how museums and the heritage sector can be agents for change and support people to improve wellbeing and transform lives. People participating in Pathways to Wellbeing report improved mental wellbeing: feeling more confident, doing more, having places to go and new interests, and feeling included. Pathways to Wellbeing has developed a successful formula that mirrors findings about how to use visual arts effectively to promote wellbeing. There is less research about the benefits of museums for health and wellbeing but it is emerging; Pathways to Wellbeing has important learning to share about how to do this work well.

The 'active ingredient' in Pathways to Wellbeing is its ability to nurture people's connection and engagement with museums and local heritage, this reflects recent evaluation findings about how arts interventions work in social and health contexts.² Museums have collections that spark curiosity and wonder, offering opportunities to learn and be creatively inspired. The programme shows that museums can be inclusive and that offering supported pathways to connect to the past through these well-established and respected institutions can produce positive outcomes for health and wellbeing. Pathways to Wellbeing participants found being welcomed and included in the museum community made them feel part of something bigger, exhibiting art work and co-producing events and

exhibitions enhanced their lives and meant they could give something back. It could be argued that Pathways to Wellbeing is changing views about what museums can contribute to the communities they are located within, and even challenging what museums are for in 21st century Britain. Pathways to Wellbeing is certainly showing that museums can and do change lives through art.

Mary Ryan, Independent Consultant

- 1 McManus, S., Meltzer, H., Brugha, T. S., Bebbington, P. E., & Jenkins, R. (2009). Adult psychiatric morbidity in England, 2007: results of a household survey. The NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care
- 2 Aesop (2018) Active Ingredients: The Aesop planning and evaluation model for arts with a social purpose. Aesop: London. <http://www.lahf.org.uk/resources/aesopbop-active-ingredients-report> (Accessed March 2019)



Above: Gardener's Lodge Art Group, 2018

Participant Profile

Pathways to Wellbeing groups are open to people in Bath and North East Somerset and Wiltshire who are experiencing (or have experienced) mental health issues, homelessness, unemployment, social isolation and loneliness. People are referred by GPs, mental health and other support workers, community organisations supporting homeless people and people in recovery; sometimes people refer themselves or participants recommend the groups to friends. Apart from Fresh Art@ which has a mental health worker supporting people with a higher level of need, people must be able to attend without a support worker (after the first session). There are very often more referrals than places for all groups.

The majority of participants are aged between 25 and 64 years (over 80% in years one and

two). Nearly half are men (45% in year one and 41% in year two) which is unusual as men are less likely than women to engage in psychological therapies (often called talking therapies and used to treat anxiety and depression). It is thought that men may under-report mental health issues, and take longer to seek help than women and have less access to supportive emotional networks. More than half of participants identify themselves as having a disability. This is not surprising when we consider that having a physical disability is known to affect mental health and wellbeing.³

Almost all participants identify themselves as white (English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or other white heritage). This broadly reflects the demographic of Bath where 94.6% of the population is white according to the 2011 census.

³ Mental Health Foundation (2016) *Fundamental facts about mental health 2016* Mental Health Foundation: London (pp46) <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/fundamental-facts-about-mental-health-2016> (Accessed February 2019)



Left: A Pathways to Wellbeing participant enjoys a Creativity and Wellbeing coffee morning, 2017

Over the life of the project May 2016 to Feb 2019

60 people participated in Gardener's Lodge Art Group

88 people participated in Fresh Art@ community and on ward hospital sessions

20 people participated in IMAGE

18 mentor/mentee pairs participated in Discover Museums with 17 mentees completing the course

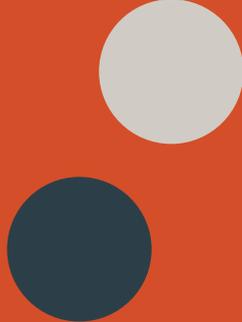
77% of all Pathways participants attended consecutively for over two months

43% of participants are men

16 artists led projects teaching specialist art skills

35 people progressed to a less supported Pathways group

10 people became committed volunteers after taking part in Pathways to Wellbeing groups


90%

of people who gave loneliness as a reason for joining a group reported they felt less lonely

80%

of people completing feedback forms said their wellbeing had improved as a result of attending

32,780

members of the public viewed artwork created by Pathways to Wellbeing participants

9

museum-based exhibitions and events, co-produced by Pathways participants and museums

8

community arts events and festivals where Pathways groups showcased specially created artwork/installations

120

Fresh Art@ participant artworks on display in NHS settings



Arts and Creativity Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing

There is good and growing evidence that engagement in the arts and creativity improves mental health and wellbeing and reduces social isolation and loneliness. The 2017 All Party Parliamentary Group report *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*⁴ documents much of this evidence and has three messages:

- The arts can help keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives better lived
- The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health
- The arts can help save money in the health service and social care

The Social Prescribing Network notes up to a fifth of patients see GPs for a problem requiring a social solution. Increasingly GPs 'prescribe' a social activity to promote health and wellbeing, sometimes instead of medical treatment and/or alongside it. Research has shown that arts on prescription reduces GP visits and hospital admissions. The Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, in 2018 called for more social prescribing of arts and social activities which he said '*can harness the incredible power of the arts and social activities to improve the nation's health and wellbeing.*'⁵ However commentators were quick to point out that such activities are not free as Mr Hancock suggested and arts funding is vital if such work is to continue.

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing, part of the government What Works Network, looked at available evidence for the impact of visual arts projects on the wellbeing of adults with mental health issues.⁶ They found evidence to show that visual arts activities can reduce depression and anxiety and increase confidence

and self-esteem. While noting there is limited good quality evidence (because most studies are small scale) they did find good quality evidence indicating participation in visual arts can create conditions in which wellbeing can be enhanced:

- **Social enrichment and relationship building** – strong evidence
- **Achievement and appreciation** from completing or attending an art project – promising evidence
- **Using the intervention as a stepping stone** to taking part in other activities – promising evidence
- **A distraction and escape from stigma** or trials of day to day life – promising evidence
- **Improved confidence** – promising evidence.

The most effective interventions were found to be those which provided safe spaces where people felt accepted and practitioners and facilitators were empathetic. Furthermore supportive and sustained partnerships and collaboration underpinned these effective interventions. It is interesting to note that Pathways to Wellbeing mirrors these factors and has found they are key to achieving positive outcomes for participants.

⁴ http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/Publications/Creative_Health_Inquiry_Report_2017.pdf (Accessed February 2019)

⁵ <https://collegeofmedicine.org.uk/the-arts-are-an-indispensable-tool-in-helping-the-nhs-matt-hancock-tells-the-kings-fund/> (Accessed February 2019)

⁶ <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/product/visual-arts-and-mental-health-briefing/> (Accessed February 2019)



Above:
Gardener's
Lodge Art Group,
creating fans
inspired by the
collection, 2017

Right: A Discover
Museums mentee
shares his
knowledge of the
collection, 2016



Museums and Wellbeing

Museums and the heritage sector can help to transform health and wellbeing and strengthen communities. University College London's Museums on Prescription research project (2014-17), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, shows visiting museums for facilitated sessions improved psychological wellbeing and reduced isolation for older people.^{7,8} The Happy Museum focuses on the contribution museums make to wellbeing with an emphasis on the environment and sustainability.⁹ The National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing, formed in 2015, (now the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance) published two reports on the contribution of museums and the heritage sector to health and wellbeing. The first report mapped projects and work in museums across the country, and the second '*Museums as Spaces for Wellbeing*' 2018¹⁰ explored the contribution projects made; it referred to the Gardener's Lodge Art Group at the Holburne Museum.

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England said in the foreword to *Museums as Spaces for Wellbeing*:

'Museums and heritage venues bring people together at the heart of their communities, which helps both their physical and mental health at every stage of their life.'

'As many other examples in this report show, museums' doors are open to people of all ages, backgrounds and social statuses and they reach out to them through targeted activities. By doing this, they foster an environment of social inclusion – a key driver for supporting a healthier population.'

Museums offer calm and beautiful spaces to meet, explore, learn and 'just be'. Visiting a museum is generally considered a positive activity, museums carry no stigma because they are for everyone (although they can also be seen as 'posh' and intimidating). Museums have interesting collections linking us to the past and sometimes the specific past of places. Museums are anchored in their locations, often housed in iconic buildings that are local landmarks and valued by local communities. They provide a rich and varied treasure of collections and objects which can inspire art and creativity.

7 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1757913917737563>

8 <https://culturehealthresearch.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/mopguide.pdf> (Accessed February 2019)

9 <http://happymuseumproject.org/> (Accessed February 2019)

10 <https://museumsandwellbeingalliance.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/museums-as-spaces-for-wellbeing-a-second-report.pdf> (Accessed February 2019)

“

The project helps participants develop empathy because they make a connection with someone else. They learn about an artist or historical figure and then imaginatively step into other lives and periods of time. It's stimulating and helps people to be more connected to their cultural heritage. It's a richly rewarding outcome: connecting a participant, an artist and a museum with an inspiring museum object as the starting point.

”

Polly Andrews, Learning and Engagement Officer, Bath Preservation Trust, 2018

Below: Discover Museums: Pathways to Volunteering mentee with her artwork, 2018



Left: Inspired by the collection – an installation made by a Pathways to Wellbeing participant in the Holburne Museum café, 2017

Below: One of the Holburne's popular 'drop-in' Creativity and Wellbeing Coffee mornings, 2018



Having a museum in a community is often seen as a cultural asset and an economic asset (jobs, supply chains, supporting tourism); the partner museums in Pathways to Wellbeing have shown how this can be extended into a social and health asset, one that nurtures and promotes the wellbeing of the local community too.

'Firstly although I've lived in Bath for 19 years this is my first time in the museum. I didn't know what I was missing. The whole creative process was a mystery to me and I'm now learning and feeling a lot less isolated.'
Participant, Gardener's Lodge Art Group, 2018

It is not surprising that museums and heritage can promote and positively affect health and wellbeing but what is lacking is robust and good quality evidence to show why and how it makes a difference. Pathways to Wellbeing is making an important contribution to understanding the role of museums and the heritage sector in promoting wellbeing and social inclusion, which is why it is important to record and share learning about the project.

The following two figures present analysis of how Pathways to Wellbeing is delivering change:

Table 1 presents how the Pathways to Wellbeing programme contributes to the five steps to mental wellbeing. These five steps are a framework used to understand and map change for positive wellbeing. It was originally drawn from an analysis of multiple studies about what contributes to wellbeing for the Government's Foresight programme¹¹. It is used by the NHS¹² to advise people on steps that can promote personal mental wellbeing and has the benefit of being simple and easy to understand, practical and easy to remember.

Figure 1 presents our Theory of Change model which has been co-produced with our participants and partners, facilitated by Mary Ryan, Independent Consultant.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-ways-to-mental-wellbeing> (Accessed February 2019)

¹² <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/> (Accessed February 2019)

TABLE 1:
How Pathways to Wellbeing Contributes to Wellbeing

Five Ways to Wellbeing	Pathways to Wellbeing Experience	What Happens* – changes, benefits, learning for participants and museums	Outcomes
1. Connect with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups are social • Safe and welcoming spaces • Supported and gentle introductions • Stepped opportunities match individuals' needs and interests • Introduced to art networks and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make friends and meet socially • Social skills and self-confidence improve • Feel included and part of the community • Museums become more inclusive and welcoming • People feel less isolated 	Changing Lives Through Art The mental health of beneficiaries is improved.
2. Be Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somewhere to go and something interesting to do • Travel to different Bath museums and art exhibitions • Access public spaces and events, often with new Pathways to Wellbeing friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend regularly and enjoy it, progress to other groups • Get to know Bath's museums and art sector • People develop social networks and visit places together 	+ Social Isolation and loneliness is reduced for vulnerable adults.
3. Take Notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm, beautiful museum surroundings to explore • Art encourages close observation • Explore, handle and learn about museum collections • Museum collections and art inspires creative responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become curious and interested • People able to focus and take their mind off worries • Creative activity is relaxing and satisfying • People feel better and more positive 	+ Beneficiaries develop skills and self-confidence.
4. Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and use new creative and artistic skills • High quality art teaching in a supportive environment • Use skills to produce art work • Gain knowledge of museums and local heritage • Meet with curators and learn about collections • Work on collaborative projects and learn to work in groups • Different learning opportunities across Pathways to Wellbeing groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain knowledge about art, museums and heritage • Learn and practice art and social skills • Learn life skills – organisation, planning, presentation • Increased self-confidence and pride in achievements • People inspired to continue their own art practice • Creative activities help with relaxation, managing stress • People learn that what they do can make a difference 	+ Increased community cohesion between beneficiaries, museums and wider arts community.
5. Give Back	People in groups – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support each other • Contribute to collaborative projects and museum events • Exhibit art work, share skills and ideas • Re-interpret and respond to museum collections • Donate artwork to NHS settings • Become museum volunteers and art group volunteers • Take part in other community arts and cultural events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People feel proud when their work is exhibited • New, passionate advocates and supporters of museums • New voices heard in museums • Museums become more inclusive • Museums exhibit art work from Pathways to Wellbeing participants • Arts and cultural sector becomes more inclusive • Some people become volunteers • Some people develop their art work, exhibit and sell it 	

* Orange = Reflects Pathways to Wellbeing Aims

**FIGURE 1:
Pathways to Wellbeing
Theory of Change Model**

People with experience of mental health issues, social isolation and homelessness are less likely to visit local museums, engage with heritage or access creative opportunities due to a range of psychological, financial and physical barriers.

The Challenge

Local adults with lived experience of:

- Mental health issues (mild to severe)
- Social isolation or
- Homelessness

People who do not currently access creative opportunities in museums – and need support to do so

People referred by the local Mental Health Trust, GPs and local support organisations

Local arts organisations and festivals

We work with

We invest

Museums' staff and volunteer time and expertise
A Programme Manager
A total of £97k (over 3 years) from the National Lottery Community Fund

Creative spaces, on-costs, free museum passes, art materials, tuition from specialist artists and opportunities to exhibit artwork

Mental health and safeguarding training for museum staff, artists and volunteers

We offer

Over 50 Pathways places a year, delivering museum-based creative activities and learning across 4 groups:

- Fresh Art@
- Gardener's Lodge Art Group
- IMAGE
- Mentored Volunteering

Safe, calm, inspiring, informative and welcoming spaces

Specialist artists teach art skills and facilitate groups

Access to museum collections to inspire groups

We believe

Museums promote wellbeing by creating opportunities for people to:

- Connect with others
- Become active
- Take notice
- Learn
- Give back

High quality arts experiences stimulate engagement, learning and self-worth

Change happens over time in safe, supportive and welcoming spaces

Museums are enriched by working with a greater diversity of local people

Outcomes

Improved mental health and sense of wellbeing through:

- Better focus and concentration
- Creative self-expression
- Improved social skills
- Feeling valued and connected
- Making friends

Regular attendance and engagement with museums and groups leads to:

- New experiences that awaken curiosity
- People enjoying creativity, making and exhibiting artwork
- People having a reason to attend that is not therapy
- People learning new skills
- People making friends and looking forward to groups

People new to heritage engage with arts, heritage and museums:

- People are involved in new opportunities
- Free passes encourage more museum visits
- Museum audiences become more inclusive

Collaboration strengthens museums and relationships:

- Staff and volunteers learn to support people with a range of needs
- Museums support the local community and are more inclusive
- Builds partnerships between museums and health sector

Impact

Improved mental health and wellbeing as people experience:

- Better mental health
- Less social isolation and loneliness
- Better engagement with services
- Workplace experience

Increased enjoyment & interest in the arts

- People less likely to engage with the arts experience joy and meaning through new creative experiences
- People gain an enduring interest in the arts, heritage and creativity

Wider participation in arts/heritage communities

- People take part in local cultural activities as audiences, volunteers, artists and producers

Stronger partnerships

- New/ non-traditional audiences trust and value museums
- Heritage, health and arts organisations work together in creative and innovative ways
- Museums become an integral part of a wider and more diverse cultural community and arts scene

Our Vision

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH ART

Anna's Pathways to Wellbeing Journey

Anna has experienced mental health problems for many years. For the last two years she has been taking part in a form of cognitive behaviour therapy and for the last four years has taken part in Pathways to Wellbeing.

Anna was first referred to the programme by a mental health worker in 2015, joining Fresh Art@ a creative, museums-based group supported by an innovative health and heritage partnership. She described it as life changing – *'Nothing motivated me in the same way. I met others, it was a start and I found I could express some feelings. Others had mental health problems so I wasn't the odd one out.'* Anna didn't miss a single session, and found the mental health worker very supportive which she needed at the time. Anna said it was

good to do 'something' and began to feel something good had come into her life.

She then progressed to IMAGE a less supported peer-led group based at the Holburne Museum, working with Bath museums exploring and learning about museum collections and creating art in response. She is still part of this group which meets every two weeks and says there is something to aim for all the time. As well as learning about museums and art techniques the group manages itself and learnt about setting boundaries and making the

group safe for everyone. Artists work with the group for short periods but mostly the group manages itself.

Anna says the IMAGE group feels like a lovely place to be and has led her to explore the collections of four museums and all felt welcoming.

In 2017 she completed the 'Discover Museums: Pathways to Volunteering' course and received one-to-one weekly support from a trained museum volunteer mentor. She is intrigued by architecture and chose to work with a volunteer from the Museum of Bath Architecture. She focused

“
I used to be stuck in my head all the time. Now I look at things, and I think “how would I do that?” It takes me outside of myself.
”

on creating a model of The Circus in Bath, an iconic circle of Georgian townhouses. Anna researched the architecture and discovered how one of the builders died in the construction, she became interested in stories of the ordinary people who built Bath. She gave a presentation on her project and invited family and friends as well as museum staff. *'It was quite a big thing to do and went really well. People understood that at the beginning I didn't know anything about The Circus and had only six weeks to do it.'* This is now on permanent display in the museum.

Anna has become part of the museum community and says she feels valued by the museums; she knows people there, it gives her a sense of self-worth and she wants to give something back to the museums. Recently she volunteered at No.1 Royal Crescent and was enthused by museum celebrations for the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. She worked with a local school making banners and sashes and helped organise a parade for the school children around The Crescent.

Anna says life has changed – she has more friends and finds she can make friends more easily and enjoys chatting. A neighbour commented recently that Anna talks more now and can stand up for herself. She notices she is more motivated and confident, she has started sewing again – an old interest and she is going out more taking her dogs out walking daily. Anna says therapy helped too but the opportunity to engage with museums and creativity feels like where it began and rekindled her love of architecture and art.

Key Achievements and Outcomes

With the support of the Independent Consultant, Mary Ryan, the Pathways to Wellbeing programme has identified several key achievements from the programme:

Below: Discover Museums course – a mentee and mentor with a museum trail designed by the mentee, 2017



1. Engagement with museums is special

When people engage with museums and take part in participative art activities (where people are creators or co-producers of art) their sense of their own wellbeing improves and they recognise their engagement as contributing positively to managing/maintaining their mental health. There are also benefits to the organisation including audience development and participants going on to become supporters, advocates and volunteers.

'Having to research the museum's art collection has helped with my memory problems and the one-to-one mentoring process has been a very nurturing and encouraging experience for me. I love people and my interest in history and art has contributed to what I can offer as a volunteer'. Participant of Discover Museums: Pathways to Volunteering, 2016

2. Taking an asset-based approach

Pathways was developed in consultation with people in the local community and based on the existing assets of the museum partnership e.g. staff-expertise, spaces, events programme and infrastructure. This meant that it used what was already there to build upon existing strengths rather than starting from scratch.

3. Pathways are inclusive, flexible and encourage gradual progression

Pathways to Wellbeing staff and volunteers provide continuity of care and support, seeing each person through their transition journey from one group to another

'There are museum staff and volunteers who build long lasting and trusting relationships with participants who then feel 'known'. We tend to work with people for over a year and have worked with some people for over four years. No quick fixes!' Louise Campion, Programme Manager, Pathways to Wellbeing, 2019

4. Unique partnerships forged across sectors

The success of Pathways to Wellbeing is largely due to a well-established partnership between the 3 partner museums, Creativity Works and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. A wider network of partners exists beyond this including Julian House and GP surgeries for referrals and local arts organisations including Fringe Arts Bath who support participants with arts opportunities in the wider community. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing found that supportive and sustained partnerships are a key facilitating factor for successful visual arts activities that positively influence wellbeing and this mirrors Pathways to Wellbeing's experience and the importance of building and maintaining the partnership.

'We really value the working relationship and partnership of working closely with the museums. It has opened up so many more opportunities to the people we work with. It has also meant joint problem-solving around wider community health and wellbeing issues. This is so important; the cultural sector has so much to offer in partnership, and together we can achieve greater benefits for the people we work with.' Philippa Forsey, Creative Wellbeing Manager, Creativity Works, 2018



5. Improved wellbeing and mental health

In year two of the programme, Pathways to Wellbeing participants self-reported on their wellbeing with the following results:

- 80% of participants reported an improvement in wellbeing as a result of the sessions
- 90% of participants who identified loneliness as a reason for attending the groups reported feeling less lonely and isolated as a result of the programme

'Every time I come to the group I feel so much better, my whole mood and feelings are uplifted/shifted for the better.' Participant, Gardener's Lodge Art Group, 2017

The Community Services Manager and Pathways Lead for Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Services identified some of the preventative outcomes for a number of people who have attended groups:

'In numerous instances, serious pathology or worsening of existing mental health conditions has been prevented.'

'We are in discussions about the best ways of measuring success but it is clear that hospitalisations have been prevented, mental distress alleviated and considerable resources saved.'

'Care episodes in secondary services have been shortened and associated institutionalisation and stigma prevented.'
Letter of support for Pathways to Wellbeing Project, October 2018

Above left: A Creativity and Wellbeing event organised in partnership with Creativity Works, MIND and other support organisations, 2017

Above centre: Gardener's Lodge Art Group, oil painting from life, 2017

Above right: Gardener's Lodge Art Group, ceramic made by a participant, 2016

6. Therapeutic impact, but it's not therapy

The focus of Pathways to Wellbeing sessions is on creativity not mental health and the groups are always described as museum-based art groups. Whilst they are nurturing and supportive, it is understood that art is at the heart of what's on offer. Louise Campion, Programme Manager for Pathways to Wellbeing observes:

'This seems to be very important to people – there is no stigma in attending an art group, people have told me that they just tell their friends, family they are going to 'art group'. We don't encourage disclosures/we don't really even encourage sharing of trauma or personal distress. We say things like, "leave all your troubles at the door, this is special time to just make and create." We always bring the conversation back to the here and now: art making.'

7. Creative expression

Participants articulate joy and satisfaction at finding and using different art forms and mediums to express themselves. Artist facilitators also note growing confidence and skills of participants in expressing themselves artistically.

'One time I broke down in tears because while doing the art I began to have feelings in my body again.' [Described as a positive experience after feeling numb for a long time] Participant, Fresh Art@, 2016



8. Expert tuition/facilitation leads to a high quality artistic experience

The artists recruited to teach Pathways' groups are skilled in both their craft and facilitation, and participants comment on the quality and structure of the art teaching which is highly valued.

9. Groups are social, safe and welcoming

The museums offer safe, calm and beautiful spaces to meet and make creative work. People are encouraged to get to know and be supportive of each other sometimes working on collaborative projects (such as lantern making) and this encourages social skills.

10. People make friends leading to wider social contact

Participants have commented that they enjoyed meeting others, meet up with people outside of the group and have someone to share an interest with.

'There's a lovely lady that lives near me and we often speak on the phone and meet for coffee.' Participant, Gardener's Lodge Art Group, 2018

11. Satisfaction and pride

Participants expressed enormous pride and satisfaction from seeing their artwork exhibited, and seeing others' work exhibited too. It made a difference to see it framed and professionally hung. People feel validated and that they have achieved something worthwhile. In 2016 and 2017 exhibitions of Pathways to Wellbeing participants' art work was viewed by 32,780 museum visitors.

“

Having my art included in this exhibition has made me feel happy and proud. It has given me confidence. The private view night was a rare opportunity to attend a social event – it was amazing! I loved the effort that was put into the framing of my work which really made me feel valued.

”

Gardener's Lodge Art Group participant, 2019

Far left: The Gardener's Lodge Art Group working with ceramic artist, Jo Taylor

Left: Discover Museums course, mentor and mentee, 2016

Above: Fresh Art@, participant choosing which of his artwork to donate to the project, American Museum & Gardens, 2017



12. People feel part of the community

Participants felt they were welcome in the museums and part of the museums' community, people say 'hello' to them and know them. This extends to being involved in wider arts networks across Bath, as people get to know new places, take an interest in arts events and get involved with other arts activities and organisations.

13. Free museum passes are popular

Participation in all Pathways to Wellbeing groups is free in order to address financial barriers which may deter some people from 'having a go' at creative activities. All participants who regularly attend groups receive a free museums pass, entitling them (and a companion) to visit all the partner museums for free for a year. This is popular, well used, and highly valued by participants.

14. Groups are well attended by men

Pathways to Wellbeing successfully attracts and retains men including older men aged over 50. In year one 45% of participants were male, and in year two 41%, and year three is on track to be similar. This is an unexpected outcome as men, especially older men, are less likely to get involved in activities that may improve health, including visiting the GP, and they are less likely to access 'talking therapies' for mental health issues.¹³

'Museum partners have reflected that museums are perhaps considered more 'gender-neutral' than other organisations - and that focusing on learning specific skills (rather than 'self-expression') may be more appealing to older men.'
Louise Campion, Programme Manager of Pathways to Wellbeing, 2019

¹³ Men's Health Forum (2017) Key Data: Mental Health <https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/key-data-mental-health> (Accessed February 2019)



Opposite: Gardener's Lodge Art Group carrying a giant lantern they made for Fringe Art Bath's annual Lantern Procession, 2017

Top: Pathways participant with an exhibition of his artwork at the Holburne Museum

Above: Why Museums Matter *to me...* Exhibition of Pathways participants artwork, Holburne, 2019

15. Better engagement with other health services

Mental health partners describe access to Pathways to Wellbeing and associated cultural activities as preventing worsening mental health conditions for some people. They say people identify involvement in Pathways to Wellbeing as a significant factor in their recovery, and they often engage better with talking therapies once they have been part of Pathways to Wellbeing:

'This extra support in the arts and cultural community, which for many runs alongside treatment, enables individuals to make more effective use of therapy and mental health services, and ultimately aids their recovery.' Community Services Manager and Pathway Lead, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, October 2018

16. Groups are well attended by those with disabilities

Over half of participants recorded they have a disability. Participants say that the 'leave your worries at the door' approach is refreshing and that they see the groups as art and museums groups rather than support groups for mental or physical health.

“*This mood analysis found that participating in the art workshops appeared to significantly improve the state of wellbeing of participants, across different dimensions of mood.*”

17. Monitoring data is important, but it isn't easy to measure impact on wellbeing

Pathways to Wellbeing participants complete a qualitative feedback form every six months, or at the end of shorter projects such as Fresh Art@ and Discover Museums: Mentored Volunteering. People complete forms themselves or, if they prefer, staff scribe for them. This has provided a rich vein of qualitative data with people describing in their own words what they think about groups and what they get out of them.

Quantitative data collection provides good data about demographics and attendance. For example, attendance data showed that 77% of participants attended regularly (attending for consecutive sessions for more than two months).

However, measuring the programme's impact on participants' mental health and wellbeing has been challenging. Early attempts to adopt the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)¹⁴ to measure wellbeing (pre and post engagement) ran into difficulties as participants were uncomfortable completing it; it felt intrusive and too much like a mental health service. Also staff did not have the capacity or expertise to analyse the data.

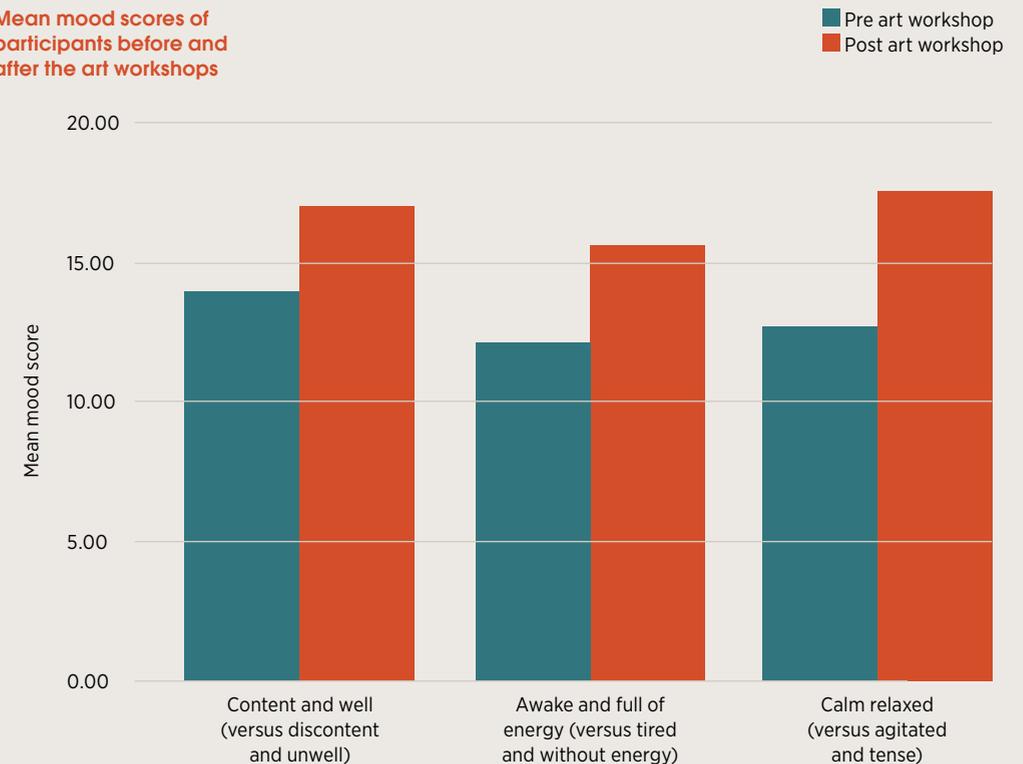
In response, the Gardener's Lodge Art Group were involved in a larger research project led by Dr Nicola Holt from the University of the West of England. This involved participants filling out wellbeing mood scales at the beginning and end of each session. These were seen to be less invasive and clinical and could be quickly completed without disrupting the group's creative time. This mood analysis found that participating in the art workshops appeared to significantly improve the state of wellbeing of participants, across different dimensions of mood. Not only did the workshops appear to decrease anxiety and tension, but they appeared to promote positive moods and an attentive engaged state. However, it was not clear how

long such benefits may have lasted for, and longitudinal measurement of mood after art workshops would be useful. Nevertheless, this finding supports existing research suggesting that art-making in everyday life improves both mood and wellbeing (Holt, 2018)¹⁵. For further information about this study please see the full Pathways to Wellbeing Evaluation Report.

14 <https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/warwick-edinburgh-mental-wellbeing-scale/> (Accessed February 2019)

15 Holt, N. J. (2018). Using the experience-sampling method to examine the psychological mechanisms by which participatory art improves wellbeing. *Perspectives in public health*, 138(1), 55-65

Mean mood scores of participants before and after the art workshops



Andrew's Pathways to Wellbeing Journey

Andrew was homeless for many years and lived in a tent in the woods. He had experienced life-changing difficulties that affected his mental health, cut him off from his previous life and left him isolated.

Andrew was introduced to Pathways to Wellbeing by a worker at Julian House, a Bath charity supporting homeless people. He says he was *'dragged kicking and screaming and wanting to know why he should come to such a pretentious place'*. It was an open morning and despite his reluctance his interest was piqued. He began to come to the Gardener's Lodge Art Group, he had never done art before and remembered art at school negatively – being made fun

of by a teacher for his use of colour, Andrew later discovered he was colour blind. Andrew said he felt welcome and people treated him with respect, he said if anyone had looked at him 'funny' he would have walked out. He never felt looked down on and that was important. He was a group member for just over two years and left to make space for a new person to join. Andrew said it is really important the group has about 12 participants, it can't get too big or too small.

'I got to meet professional artists, wonderful people who attempted to teach me what I could do.' Andrew said he felt welcome and found that he is very creative. He became interested in digital arts and designed a Christmas card for the Holburne Museum which sold very well with a percentage of proceeds donated to the Gardener's Lodge Art Group.

Positive comments from artists and staff about Andrew's work gave him a good feeling and inspired more artistic work.

He contributed art work to an Op Art Exhibition and said it felt *'absolutely fantastic'* to see his work displayed. He began doing paintings in the local library because it was an available space, and eventually was asked to hold an exhibition there and showed 54 pieces, all of which he sold. Painting turned Andrew's life around as he was able to save enough money to buy a small house boat and is no longer homeless, and has somewhere to paint. Andrew doesn't like selling his work and has a large group of people who are 'looking after' his paintings.

Andrew moved on to become a volunteer, and then a paid support worker, with the Gardener's Lodge Art Group and feels strongly he should give something back; he works closely with other volunteers and artists in the group. He is very aware of how people attending the group feel, *'Sometimes people want to just sit and be, even eye contact can be too much at times, I try to be sensitive to when people need a smile and a chat or just be left alone.'* He describes it as a very special and safe group, that can bring fun and lightness to people's lives.

Andrew is now an artist in his own right. Currently he works in watercolours and is exploring what he sees around him in his work. Andrew says Pathways to Wellbeing led him to other arts events and networks such as Fringe Arts Bath, where he is now part of the selection team and helps put on the annual festival; he has met and made friends with other artists and people involved in arts across Bath. Andrew is a well-known figure at the Holburne Museum, he has developed connections and roots, something he never thought he would have in his life again.

“ I got to meet professional artists, wonderful people who attempted to teach me what I could do. ”

Key Learnings

“ I’ve come to realise that managing the transition process is the most important part of Pathways to Wellbeing. It’s such a big step for people and can be really hard.

”

Louise Campion, Programme Manager, Pathways to Wellbeing, 2018

With the support of the Independent Consultant, Mary Ryan, the Pathways to Wellbeing programme has identified several key learnings:

1. Safeguarding

Safeguarding policies and processes are critical to ensure participants and staff are fully supported and safe at all times.

2. Management of referrals

Clear referral criteria and processes are important to provide transparency and clarity for referral organisations and prospective participants. They also help to ensure the groups are suitable for each individual participant and can support their needs.

3. Management of transition pathways

Particularly because the groups provide such safe, welcoming environments participants can feel anxious about moving on. This transition process requires careful consideration and management to ensure it is effective.

4. Fresh Art@ referrals and participation

When working with individuals with higher levels of need, mental health can change rapidly, with some people becoming too unwell to participate. This requires careful management. Reflective practice and listening to participants’ feedback has helped to develop supportive processes to retain and maintain participants’ attendance whenever possible.

5. Travel support and parking

Providing support (financial but also help with organisational details) to participants to help them reach the groups has been important for continuity of participation. For participants with a physical disability access to disabled parking is also important.

‘They send a taxi for me, that takes away one big barrier because I get so anxious. It’s got better, now I share the taxi with another person in the group.’ Participant talking to external evaluator, Gardener’s Lodge Art Group, 2018

6. Support for participants required more staff time than was anticipated

Working with vulnerable people who have lived experience of mental health issues, homelessness, unemployment, loneliness and social isolation is emotionally and psychologically demanding. Participants have required more support than was first envisaged. This in turn required far more time and commitment from the Pathways to Wellbeing Programme Manager who has managed referrals, transitions and any issues arising in the groups. Partner museum staff have also put in more time.

7. Outreach sessions with homeless groups were not successful

Pathways to Wellbeing piloted sessions in a local night shelter for homeless people but it was very hard to engage people. The hostel had limited space for social activities and people’s minds were occupied with immediate and pressing issues around homelessness, lack of income and in some cases, addiction. It was decided that staff time could be more effectively prioritised to work with people once they moved into supported accommodation or independent living and had less chaotic everyday lives. Close links were maintained with organisations supporting people with experience of homelessness to promote referrals.

Conclusion from our Independent Evaluation

The evaluation of Pathways to Wellbeing found a successful project meeting all the outcomes set by the funders, the National Lottery Community Fund, and the project's own aims. Project participants recorded their views over three years reflecting on the impact of their involvement, often eloquently. While this is subjective data it was remarkably consistent and repeated in the evaluation workshops and by mental health partners. This suggests Pathways to Wellbeing participants are achieving improved wellbeing.

Objective measures of wellbeing, using tools such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, proved too difficult for a small project to implement and were not welcomed by participants who wanted to do art and forget about mental health issues. This is a continuing challenge. It is worth considering doing this with a small sample each year, or something similar such as mood scales.

An unexpected outcome was the success of attracting and retaining older male participants, as traditionally men are less likely to get involved in health and wellbeing projects. Also mental health partners reported participants engaged better with talking therapies and other services after taking part in Pathways to Wellbeing – another unexpected outcome.

The five steps to wellbeing provides a useful framework to map participants' progress and fits well with project aims and funders' outcomes. Developing a theory of change helped to show what the project does, how and why. It was important to include participants, partners, staff and volunteers in developing it. The theory of change will help to share how Pathways to Wellbeing is changing lives through art.

A key challenge for the future is how to provide long-term, sustainable funding for Pathways to Wellbeing so that it can continue to offer high quality and life-changing experiences whilst engaging with new and more diverse groups within local communities. The partnership underpinning Pathways to Wellbeing is unique and crosses arts and cultural sectors with health and the community and voluntary organisations. Partners are supportive of each other and found ways to develop the work consistently across the museums, and create opportunities in the Bath arts scene.

Pathways to Wellbeing removes barriers to museum participation and engagement for people often excluded not just from museums but also community activities. Programmes such as Pathways to Wellbeing provide wider access to cultural and heritage resources in Bath and at the same time makes those resources more inclusive. It could be argued that Pathways to Wellbeing is challenging traditional views and experiences of museums and it is certainly changing lives through art.

Mary Ryan,
Independent Consultant

Right: IMAGE
exhibition –
Colour Feeds
the Soul, 2018



Appendix 1: Pathways to Wellbeing Groups

Fresh Art@

A partnership project with Bath Museums, Creativity Works, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and Virgin Care.

- An annual 12 week project, sessions are 2 hours long
- 12 places available
- Sessions are facilitated by an experienced Arts and Health practitioner
- Sessions are supported by the Fresh Art@ worker, a mental health support worker, a volunteer and museum staff
- Also includes outreach sessions in hospital wards using museum handling objects to stimulate creativity

The group spends four weeks in each of the three museums: The Holburne Museum, No. 1 Royal Crescent and the American Museum & Gardens – exploring and learning about their collections and creating art in response.

At the end of the project participants are invited to donate some of the art work they have created to Fresh Art@ to enliven NHS environments. There is also a public exhibition of the art work in Bath.

Gardener's Lodge Art Group

A supported, creative art group which meets throughout the year. Based at the Holburne Museum but also working at No 1 Royal Crescent and the American Museum & Gardens.

- A rolling programme of weekly sessions, 1.5 hours long
- 12 places available
- Working in 6 week project blocks, each led by a different specialist artist teaching a particular arts skill
- Sessions are supported by the Pathways to Wellbeing Programme Manager, the project lead artist, a support worker and 2 volunteers (and partner museum staff)
- Projects take inspiration from the museum collections, buildings, sites and exhibitions

IMAGE: Peer-Led Group

A Peer-Led Museum's group for creative people who are interested in working with museums to co-produce exhibitions, engagement activities and develop their own arts skills. The group members also act as advocates for Museums and Wellbeing work by sharing the positive mental health and wellbeing benefits with museum visitors and the local community.

- Bi-weekly meetings, 3 hours long
- 10 places available
- Some (but not all) sessions are supported by a group facilitator

Discover Museums: Pathways to Volunteering

A course designed to offer 1:1 support to people who are interested in volunteering and developing their confidence, knowledge and skills in museum settings. At the end of the course participants share their learning at a celebration evening.

- An annual 10 week course, 2 hour weekly 'contact time' when museum mentor and mentee meet
- Up to 5 mentee places available at each partner museum
- Course is supported by the Volunteer Manager at the Holburne who recruits volunteers to train to become museum mentors
- The course is supported by the museum mentors, museum curators, and a dedicated project artist

Appendix 2: A Fresh Art@ Story

This extract was written by a participant in the 2017 Fresh Art@ group. This person became a volunteer for Fresh Art@ the following year, supporting people in the new group and joined the Fresh Art@ steering group advocating for participants and especially for a mental health worker to support the group.

Fresh Art@ at first all seemed overwhelming; a new environment, a whole group of new people, an array of art resources some of which I've never seen before. Initially I felt completely out of my depth. My mind was on overdrive with anxious thoughts and my body mirrored the anxiety. The first session was particularly hard. However Fresh Art@ staff, along with the artist (and lots of tea drinking) gave me the reassurance and

encouragement to stay in the session, enabling me to calm my body down and then engage in some art work.

Some weeks were more difficult than others and some weeks the instability in my mental health prevented me from attending. The beauty of the project is that this is OK. Staff understand and reassure without pressure. Although not ideal I was supported to use the time at home to be creative and prepare work and ideas for the next session when

my anxiety was more manageable. This really helped relieve the pressure and rather than feeling I had to quit, it encouraged me to stick with the project.

It took me a fair few sessions to learn to fully relax in the group. It really wasn't easy, and sitting in a room with anxiety firing off at speed was overwhelming.

During the 12 weeks I experimented with new creative techniques and built new skills. I created good stuff,

“
Being in a group of like-minded people heightened my wellbeing and allowed a sense of camaraderie and belonging
”

bad stuff, perfect (well almost!) and completely imperfect stuff...I challenged my perfectionist traits. I learnt to embrace 'interesting' and 'unique' rather than...pursuit of 'perfect'. That in itself was pretty amazing.

Being in a group of like-minded people heightened my wellbeing and allowed a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Being a participant, each week builds you, you build a portfolio of artwork but at the same time you build a portfolio of

personal confidence and self-esteem...and for me challenging my anxiety and self-critical thoughts. Being creative is now definitely in my toolbox of skills to manage my wellbeing.

Oh, and having the artwork created, donated and displayed in Avon and Wiltshire NHS buildings, as a service user, how awesome is that? It's giving back, it's improving the environment for others and there is a sense of real value, a sense of real pride.

Fresh Art@ is a collaborative win-win. It's a very powerful concept and I hope many more individuals have the opportunity I did. Thank you to the staff, the volunteers, the museums, the partner organisations and the funders.'

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This report is abbreviated from a comprehensive independent external evaluation of the Pathways to Wellbeing Programme conducted by **Mary Ryan** (Independent Consultant) between September 2018 – February 2019.

The full report is available upon request.

For further information about this project or for a copy of the full Pathways to Wellbeing evaluation report please contact:

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