



Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage

Shortlisted for Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing

Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage Service offer a range of exhibitions, events, and engagement opportunities across its main museum, Clifton Park Museum, Boston Castle, and heritage sites such as Swinton's Waterloo Kiln, Catcliffe Glass Cone, and Keppel's Column. They offer a range of creative family learning activities in school holidays, a popular under-5s programme, and high-quality collections-based workshops for schools. The outreach programme includes targeted work embedding health and wellbeing outcomes and co-producing activities with diverse communities.

Recovering from Covid

'A Curiosity of Memories' was a Rotherham Arts and Health programme funded by Adult Social Care, aimed at developing intergenerational connections in response to health and wellbeing issues caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The programme had two phases. In the first phase, Clifton Park Museum's 'Nelson's Cub Club' under-fives programme, was extended and developed through invitations from children to their grandparents. Grandparents and their grandchildren co-created a series of fun, active, and immersive activities based on the museum collections from the 1960s and 1970s. Through discussions, families chose objects reflecting the grandparent's own youth and co-produced activities based on them.

In phase two, activities were developed further into three immersive and sensory experiences named 'Seaside', 'Urban' and 'Meadow', which were delivered to care home residents in the community.

Fostering intergenerational connections to improve wellbeing; grandparents and grandchildren reconnected and enjoyed reminiscing about the past. The museum's collections were used to spark memories and stories, while immersive experiences and activities in care homes helped isolated residents. The approach encouraged learning, re-learning, remembering, practicing, moving, sharing, and connecting with others to improve mental health.



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Developing calm spaces and family connections

The programme provided opportunities for families to share experiences and create new connections, reducing isolation, boosting confidence, stimulating mental health and wellbeing, and providing opportunities to be more active. It aimed to improve the sense of wellbeing of older adults in care homes, linking to their heritage, creating new experiences and connections, and reducing loneliness. The programme encouraged further interaction with the wider family at home and connections to different generations through take-home activities.

Using methodologies learnt from the first phase staff were able to create calm and ambient spaces for care home residents. Activities were slow-paced, encouraging participation and reminiscence, and museum objects were used to make the resources relevant to the residents' lived experiences.

Wellbeing across the generations

The programme focused on three key outcomes: wellbeing, physical activity, and connecting with others. These outcomes were measured through observations and notes from staff, artist and support staff, health and wellbeing statements completed by children and families, interviews with Heritage Insider and quantitative data on the numbers attending workshops.

The sessions with grandparents and grandchildren were successful in increasing connection and confidence, incorporating more movement-based and creative activities. At the care home, residents became more active and playful, with some experiencing profound moments of interaction. The intergenerational approach will continue to be used by the Museum in the family program and further work with care homes will take place to extend the reach of the work.

The partnerships with Early Years colleagues created as a result of this programme have led to an Arts Council-funded project - the 'Sparking Wonder Making Connections' project, which will further develop Nelson's Cub Club and reach into the most diverse and deprived communities in Rotherham.