

THERAPEUTIC MUSEUMS AND MENTAL HEALTH: WHY, WHERE, WHAT, AND HOW?

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Why Therapeutic Museums? BACKGROUND

Both the Heritage and Mental Health sectors have been emphasising the importance of tackling exclusion and promoting inclusion for the last decade.

“Museums and galleries acting as ‘agents of social change’, through partnerships and projects focusing on socially excluded people. DCMS, 2001d:8)”

(Renaissance in the Regions: a new vision for England’s museums; p43, 2001)



SOCIAL INCLUSION IN MENTAL HEALTH

- Mental Health Services perpetuate stigma through segregation.
- Reduction in traditional mental health day centres and an increase in Recovery orientated bridge building services.
- **Therefore, for museums to promote inclusion seems to be a simple access issue?**

But.....

- Inclusion in what type of service and what activities?



‘WHAT’ CAN MUSEUMS DO?

- **Facilitate Visits**
- **Advisory groups**
- **Employment related**
(including volunteering, staff training, workforce well-being)
- **Giving physical space**
- **Themed Heritage Projects**



‘WHERE?’: IN OR OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM?

Inclusion?

- Outreach – going **out** to services (e.g. CIMS’ Museum to Go) to tackle the exclusion of ‘hard to reach’ audiences.

or

- Bring people **in** to museum buildings (i.e. in to the mainstream community).
- Therefore, a possible conflict between inclusion agendas.



HOW DO MUSEUMS BEST UTILISE THERAPEUTIC IMPACT?

- **Not just about how to measure what we already do.**

Issues to consider:

- What heritage subjects?
- What about working with participants' own personal issues and problems?
- What methods of teaching or facilitating?
- Underlying philosophy of learning?
- Who will facilitate?
- Participants' individual learning styles?
- How to evaluate?



THERAPEUTIC IMPACT ON WHAT?

Can museums help with any of the following consequences of experiencing mental health problems?

Detrimental impact on:

- *sense of self and values*
- *power, including agency, choice and responsibility*
- *meaning, such as through loss of valued social roles*
- *hope, leading to giving up and withdrawal*

(adapted from Mike Slade: Personal Recovery and Mental Illness; 2009)



IMPACT ON SENSE OF SELF AND VALUES

Museums, through their interpretations, offer stories that relate to personal identity. They can address and help us explore our common humanity and universal concerns.

For example:

- *What do we care about?*
- *What are our values?*
- *What are we striving for?*
- *How to explore important human issues? (family, relationships, politics, spirituality, creativity, etc)*

Through exploring these issues a sense of self can emerge and be developed.



IMPACT ON POWER, INCLUDING AGENCY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- Engaging in projects can bring about confidence through achievements.
- Creating one's own personal interpretations of heritage can help us get in contact with our freedom and responsibility.
- Encouraging active engagement rather than passive learning can empower.



IMPACT ON MEANING, SUCH AS THROUGH LOSS OF VALUED SOCIAL ROLES

- Museums are full of meaningful stories, some inspirational.
- Museums can help with issues of disconnection (from self and others) and engender a sense of belonging.
- Museum objects can act as powerful healing and inspiration symbols (including the power of touch and associated meanings).



IMPACT ON HOPE, LEADING TO GIVING UP AND WITHDRAWAL

- Museums, at least implicitly, state that things change, generating the ‘possibility’ and hope of personal and societal change for all.
- Successful projects should impact on hope for the future and increase motivation.



RESEARCH

“this is a contested, confused and confusing topic!”

(on mental health outcomes)

*(Professor Jenny Secker, Anglia Ruskin University,
personal correspondence, April 2011)*

- How should measures be validated?

What outcomes should be measured and how?

- Generic and Social Learning Outcomes.
- Clinical measures used in IAPT services.
- CORE-OM (used in counselling and psychotherapy research).
- Tools based on recovery, inclusion and wellbeing agendas.



MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATION TOOLS

- WARWICK EDINBURGH MENTAL WELLBEING SCALE
- SOCIAL INCLUSION MEASURE
- ABOUT EMPOWERMENT
- END OF COURSE QUESTIONS

Used on South Essex Open Arts evaluation
(Open Arts: promoting well-being and social inclusion through art. Secker J., Heydinrych K.; 2009)



WARWICK EDINBURGH MENTAL WELLBEING SCALE

- 14 statements with 5 possible answers (none of the time, rarely, some of the time, all of the time) describing experiences over the last two weeks:

Example statements:

- I've been feeling optimistic about the future
- I've been feeling close to other people
- I've been able to make up my own mind about things
- I've been interested in new things
- I've been dealing with problems well



SOCIAL INCLUSION MEASURE

- 12 statements with 4 possible answers (not at all, not particularly, yes a bit, yes definitely) describing experiences over the last month

Example statements:

- I have been to new places
- I have been out socially with friends
- I have done some cultural activities (e.g. Gone to a library, museum, gallery, theatre, concert)



ABOUT EMPOWERMENT

- 17 statements with 4 possible answers (not at all, not particularly, yes a bit, yes definitely) relating to how participants feel about themselves and the control they have over their life today.

Example statements:

- I feel good about the way I am developing as a person
- There are better things ahead for me
- I am able to learn new things and skills
- I see myself as a capable person



END OF COURSE QUESTIONS

Asking participants about what they have ‘gained from participation’; 4 possible statements – yes a lot, yes a little, no not much, not at all.

Example statements:

As a result of the Open Arts course

‘Has your confidence increased?’

‘Has your motivation increased?’

‘Do you feel more positive about things?’

‘Have your relationships with other people improved?’



References for Evaluation tools

Empowerment:

*Secker J., Hacking S., Spandler H., Kent M. & Shelton J. (2007) Mental Health, social inclusion and arts: developing the evidence base. Final Report. Available at:
<http://www.socialinclusion.org.uk/resources/index.php?subid=71>*

Social inclusion:

Secker J., Hacking S., Kent L., Shenton J., Spandler H. (2007) Development of a measure of Social inclusion for arts and mental health project participants. Journal of Mental Health 18: 1: 65-72

Mental Wellbeing:

*(Tennant R., Hiller L., Fishwick R., Platt S., Joseph S., Weich S., Parkinson J., Secker J. and Stewart-Brown S. (2007) The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): development and UK validation. Health and Quality of Life Outcomes 5: 63
<http://www.hqlo.com/content/5/1/63>*



THERAPEUTIC MUSEUMS: 'HOW?'

- Funding.
- Partnership; forge links with mental health world.
- Encourage interest, and involvement, in mental health.
- Demystify working with mental health and working therapeutically.
- Making time and giving up space (tackling exclusion) – make sacrifices.
- Encourage service user focus/led initiatives.
- Foster Co-Creation as a principle.
- Explore how the therapeutic impact of heritage can relate to everyone.

