Between Spaces: Museums & Mental Wellbeing in Young People

Adolescent Lives: Challenges and Opportunities Workshop
11th October 2018
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Child mental health referrals up 26% in five years, says report

By Oliver Newlan
BBC 5 live Investigates

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The number of referrals to CAMHS has increased by over a quarter in five years, according to a report.

The number of referrals to child and adolescent mental health services in England has increased by 26% over the past five years, Education Policy Institute (EPI) research suggests.

World Mental Health Day: PM appoints suicide prevention minister
Tier 1 – early intervention and prevention, provided by schools, children’s centres, health visitors, school nurses, GPs, etc

Tier 2 – early help and targeted services

Tier 3 – specialised CAMHS, including eating disorder services

Tier 4 – inpatient provision
Broadly: How can we foster a sense of belonging in young people with mental health needs a) to wider society (connection to outside world) b) within the unit as a space of wellbeing?

Exploratory: Can museum based practices facilitate discussions with adolescents experiencing mental health difficulties with issues relating to identity, memory, belonging and wellbeing?
What do you mean by adolescence?

- Identity formation
- Transitions
- Belonging
- Mental Health
How would you explain your research project to a young person?

Can museum activities help create discussions with young people experiencing mental health difficulties around topics like identity, memory, belonging and wellbeing?

UCL Grant Museum of Zoology (68,000 specimens)
Museum based practice (Dean Veall):
• 3 Workshops (2 in inpatient unit, 1 at the Museum
• Interviews with museum staff, theatre groups
• Detailed review of the research done before
The Workshops

• Young people as co-researchers: ‘Cultural Engagement- what it means, how we can improve it’

• Museum based practice used: **object handling & art appreciation**

- Activities: *Building a gorilla, The Collectors, Cabinet of Curiosities, Museum Visit, The Dinosaur bone* (70million year old)
Museum based practice workshops

- Connection to outside world and wider society
- Handling ‘precious’ objects
- Discussions around objects and relating to self & place in society
- Tackling boredom
- Safe space for friend making, connection, talking
- Discussions being externalised (based on object, art)
- Discussions on race and class, struggle, wellbeing
What are the Policy implications of your research findings?

‘Adolescent mental health crisis’

Service cuts in CAHMS

Non-therapeutic Interventions can work—seen as ‘safer’ to attend; open space to talk, (Colbert et al. 2013)

Scaffolding positive identity formation, diminishing the stigmatising effects of inpatient admission (link to the outside), promoting accrual of cultural capital and wellbeing in young ‘service users’ across social class, encouraging friendship (Parnell & Rooney, forthcoming)

Museum Outreach- Support for cultural practitioners; wider outreach? ; measurement