



Case studies: How can the arts and creativity support people who are shielding or vulnerable during Covid-19?

Project: Memories of London

Organisation: Museum of London

Region: Greater London

'Keep up the great work, not easy to create meaningful content during the Lockdown but you have!'

Introduction

Covid-19 severely impacted our ability to run our programme and significantly affected our audiences.

Prior to Covid-19 we ran Memories of London, a programme designed to promote the wellbeing of those living with dementia. In response to Covid-19 we created a range of resources to alleviate loneliness, promote connection and stimulate creativity. These have been developed in collaboration with people affected by dementia. London Lives is a monthly, creative podcast which features the voices and stories of those affected by dementia. Partnering with an artist, and using a different object from our collection each month, the podcasts interweave history, legend and music to create an audible journey to the past. We also know that digital poverty is real so, alongside London Lives, we produced paper activity packs. Our Creative & Connected packs, developed in partnership with our dementia reference group, include a range of creative prompts using art, sensory exploration, movement and singing. These are printed and distributed to the most vulnerable working with local councils, food banks, care homes and community organisations. We have been overwhelmed with demand and so far have distributed 2000 packs. We have also produced a mixture of live and pre-recorded online sessions led by artists. Finally, we also plan to test a socially distanced arts festival in partnership with a care home later in the year.

Funders

This is part of our larger project Memories of London, funded by the GLA (Greater London Authority). It began in January 2019 but has had to completely change in response to Covid-19 since mid-March 2020.

Who is it for?

This project is specifically designed to reach those living with dementia and their carers/companions, either in a care home setting or at home.

What outcomes were/are you aiming for?

- To create connection to others and to the story of London
- To encourage creativity
- To reduce/combat loneliness
- To help slow the progression of dementia
- To some extent help to go some way in replacing the contact and community built in our face to face sessions.

Where is it happening?

London, specifically the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Islington but also Brent, Bromley, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Southwark, and Waltham Forest.

Are you working in partnership?

Memories of London has been developed in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society and throughout the programme we have built partnerships with a wide range of organisations. Through the creation of our Covid-19 resources we have developed further partnerships and are working with the community sector including health/age care commissioning teams in local authorities/boroughs, Age UK, dementia memory cafes, carers groups, care homes, community centres, and food banks. Working in partnership is vital in reaching our audiences.

How many people took/are taking part?

Approximately 1500 per month (resources were/are created and disseminated on a monthly basis)

For how long has it been happening?

It began in April 2020 with extensive consultation with the sector and, so far, is scheduled to finish in December 2020. We would like to continue the work beyond this date but it is funding dependent. We distribute(d) resources on a monthly basis, starting in May 2020.

What were/are the main outputs?

We work with those living with dementia to co-create a monthly podcast – London Lives. We are also collating memories around objects to populate a new London Lives webpage. Our paper activity packs encourage people living with dementia to share their responses with us. We also deliver online events – monthly live sessions with an artist. We are also planning a socially distanced festival with a care home later in the year.

Eventually we would like to run an intergenerational festival at the Museum of London which showcases the work that we have collated during this period.

Evaluation:

We have commissioned 509 Arts to undertake evaluation around the resources that we have developed for those shielding as part of Covid-19. This report will be available later in the year.

Feedback:

'Keep up the great work, not easy to create meaningful content during the Lockdown but you have!'

'We are encouraging people to take up your activity packs as they are brilliant and will help keep people engaged and active at home.'

'Thank you for putting this all together and leading on accessible Arts and Culture for people living with Dementia in London..., apart from Southbank Centres Art By Post I'm not sure who else has similar proactive offerings to engage shielded older people and people living with dementia during the lockdown.'

In response to our live, online sessions:

It is one of the best deliveries I have participated in. I think (name) is absolutely brilliant in engaging people!

Thank you so much, we've loved it - you should do it every week!

I thought it was a great balance of activity with lots of warmth, expression, fun and humour... all great ingredients for a session for people affected by dementia.

Luke was very expressive and the music was great! Challenging people to stretch and learn something fun and new is great for our brains and sense of achievement.

[Name] absolutely loved the singing! Another fantastic and enjoyable session.

What have been the challenges and successes for you?

The past few months have presented real challenges but have also enabled us to think more deeply about our practice and has enabled us creatively develop possible recovery models and bridges that will help us move forward in a post-Covid world.

Challenges

- Very challenging to completely pivot our work because, as for many organisations, face-to-face, sensory work is integral to our programme.
- Much less immediate feedback or responses so more challenging to measure the effectiveness and impact of our work.
- Although our resources have allowed us to reach many more people, it is hard to evaluate any changes in wellbeing in participants.
- Using 'old style' communication methods, such as print and distribution has been challenging in the time and cost that it takes to put together the resources.
- At the beginning of lockdown we simply asked freelancers to record their sessions, uploaded these to You Tube and sent them out. They were warmly received yet they lacked the quality and impact of our sessions in person.

Successes

- Lockdown has forced us to think more creatively. We re-evaluated our practice and trialled ideas that otherwise we perhaps wouldn't have necessarily developed prior to Covid-10.
- Our Covid-19 resources have enabled us to exponentially develop and expand our partnerships and networks. Prior to lockdown we could only work with a few key organisations.
- We are reaching many, many more people through our resources.
- We have genuinely been able to co-create with those living with dementia and showcase their voices through our London Lives podcasts.
- We have very much relied on the insights of our dementia reference group (they consist of individuals are affected by dementia) to build the resources, and in this way the process has felt more democratic and has placed them at the centre.

Further information

You can find examples of our packs and podcasts here:

<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london/plan-your-visit/museum-accessibility/dementia/creative-connected-2020-june>

The Museum of London exists to allow people to discover the fascinating history of our capital city, from prehistory to today. With our two museums, enormous archaeological archive and our rich, diverse collection, we inspire a passion for London. We want to explore issues which Londoners have always faced, and how these affect us and the wider world today. In recent years we have welcomed over a million visitors a year, including over 150,000 schoolchildren. We are passionate about making both our museums accessible to all – of any background, of any ability, and of any age.

The Museum of London is a charity employing appx 300 people.