

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

Project: EACH

Organisation: University of Cambridge Museums

Region: East of England

### Introduction

The Fitzwilliam Museum and EACH collaboration is

aimed at young children with progressive life-limiting illnesses and their families, to have fun together as a family away from the demands of their daily lives and to enjoy opportunities to



experience and take part in high-quality arts, which they may not usually have access to. Previously, we have offered sibling and family days at the museum, as well as bereavement coffee mornings. The covid-19 crisis has changed how we are working with the Hospice. We are keen for families to continue to engage with the museum and what it offers. As we are unable to arrange days together at the moment, we are working with the hospice to provide the following:

1. Bespoke monthly online activities based on a theme that uses the Museum as a starting point for sensory activities and creative making. For example, this month is 'textures' based on Samuel Palmer's Magic Apple Tree.
2. The Museum sends out activity packs to families who are unable to access the online provision
3. Other relevant resources for families at the Museum', such as Look, Think, Do are advertised through the EACH family zone
4. Providing Museum staff with training for working with EACH families, to help prepare for when the Museum is able to reopen

### Funders

Arts Council England – The University of Cambridge Museums Consortium is supported by ACE as a Band 3 National Portfolio Organisation; plus residual funding from Children and the Arts Start Hospices project.

### Who is it for?

The EACH Hospice at Milton provides care and support for children, young people and their families across Cambridgeshire and Essex. Families with children referred to East Anglia Children's Hospices (EACH) have life limiting illness and subsequently have been shielding, and

“This was a lifesaver as I've run out of things to do with my two boys.”

most hope to continue to shield until a vaccine is found. The Fitzwilliam Museum is working with EACH to provide monthly creative activities for families, both online and by sending activity packs to families who are not connected online. We aim to support EACH's in their mission to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of every child and family under our care, by providing cultural and artistic inspiration.

The Museum has also been working with Child and Family Hubs in Cambridge to reach disadvantaged families who may be excluded through lack of digital access, some of whom are also shielding.

### **What outcomes were/are you aiming for?**

We are working with the EACH art therapist at the Milton Hospice to provide stimulating, targeted, creative activities, aimed at encouraging family wellbeing through:

- Reducing stress and anxiety by engagement in therapeutic creative making and learning
- Combatting loneliness and feeling connected to the Hospice and wider community at a time where physical contact is limited or unavailable. Many families have chosen to continue to shield, in the hope of a vaccine.
- Reducing boredom, providing activities created specifically with the interests and needs of this group

Through our ongoing partnership, the Fitzwilliam Museum have supported EACH families to have quality time together, where they can make memories and engage in community activities and experiences. So many of the families find it difficult to find a venue which considers the needs of palliative children and their families however through the Museum's partnership EACH have managed to bridge this gap, and it has felt important to keep this connection going during lockdown when families may be feeling even more isolated.

### **Where is it happening?**

Cambridgeshire and Essex, but online resources may be shared across Suffolk and Norfolk.

### **Are you working in partnership?**

East Anglia's Children's Hospices

Projects supporting children and families in Cambridge City

### **How many people took/are taking part?**

Altogether EACH have 786 families across 3 sites (Milton – 249, Treehouse – 220 and Nook – 317), with whom they are sharing the online resources we create. In addition, 14 activity packs from the Museum have been distributed to families supported by EACH who are shielding without good access to digital. A further 200 packs have been distributed to families experiencing disadvantage in Cambridge City, some of whom are also shielding.

### **For how long has it been happening?**

Ongoing – have been partnering with EACH since 2013, and have been working on a remote offer since April 2020.

### **What were/are the main outputs?**

Online activities, community activity packs, training for Museum staff to best prepare for when it is safe for EACH families to come back to the Museum.

### **Feedback:**

From recipients of activity packs distributed by children's centre partners:

"I received the activity pack today — and it is lovely 😊 You have chosen the pictures so well — I remember all the children being fascinated with the horse in armour at the workshops." Child and Family Worker from the local Child & Family Hub

"This was a lifesaver as I've run out of things to do with my two boys." A mother being supported by her local Child & Family Centre

### **What have been the challenges and successes for you?**

Challenges:

- Finding ways to replicate the sensory approaches we would usually take with this group in the digital realm

Successes:

- Building on a strong existing partnership to ensure our COVID response is shaped around the needs of shielding participants
- Delivering a mixture of bespoke activity created specifically for EACH, while at the same time directing families to existing resources created for general audiences
- Potential to reach families across a wider area than would necessary travel to the museum for our in-person activities – as well as reaching families connected with the Cambridgeshire (Milton) hospice, we can also reach the families EACH supports in Essex and Norfolk

### **Further information**

The University of Cambridge Museums is a consortium of the eight University Museums and the Botanic Garden. The Fitzwilliam Museum is the lead partner in the consortium.

Our collections span four and a half billion years of natural objects, artefacts and art. They are centres of discovery for everyone, and essential research collections for students and academics.

We activate the power of the University through our collections, sharing with our communities and networks to deepen understanding of our world, inspire new thinking, and address local and global challenges.

Blog about the partnership pre-lockdown:

<https://www.museums.cam.ac.uk/blog/2017/09/04/east-anglias-childrens-hospices-at-the-fitzwilliam/>

Museum resources on the EACH website: <https://www.each.org.uk/family-zone/activities-for-families/activities>