

The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge, Canterbury

What are the benefits of museums and heritage for health and wellbeing?

Contemporary research indicates that visiting a museum is good for you and evidences the fact that museums and their collections have restorative and therapeutic qualities. The Beaney's award winning health and wellbeing programme uses the unique Beaney building and collections as the key ingredients to enhance people's health and wellbeing.

Dementia Care

Canterbury district has the highest number of residents living with dementia in Kent at 2,145 and this number is expected to increase. Research has shown that people with dementia and caregivers derive wellbeing-related benefits from viewing art in a group, and that facilitated museum object handling is effective in increasing subjective wellbeing for people with a range of health conditions.

Working in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University and the NHS, The Beaney developed a programme of evidence based social prescribing for people with early onset dementia and their carers. The collections were actively used in a study to determine whether workshops engaging with visual art and handling objects improved well-being in patients with early on set dementia patients and their carers. The study quantitatively compared the impact of two museum-based activities and a social activity on the subjective wellbeing of people with dementia and their caregivers. As a result a joint paper entitled *Museum activities in dementia care: Using visual analog scales to measure subjective wellbeing* was published by the partners who participated in the study.

During the programme visual analog scales were used to rate subjective wellbeing pre and post each activity. Wellbeing significantly increased during the session, irrespective of the order in which the activities were presented. In addition, wellbeing significantly increased from object handling and art viewing for those with dementia and caregivers across pooled orders, but did not in the social activity of a refreshment break. An end-of-intervention questionnaire indicated that experiences of the session were positive. These results provide a rationale for considering museum programmes and partnership working between museums and healthcare professionals in the development of nonclinical, community-based dementia care programmes.

The Beaney has created a film 'The Power of the Object' about its dementia care programme which can be seen at:

<http://www.canterbury.co.uk/Beaney/explore/The-Front-Room.aspx>

The Paper Apothecary, 2013

Funded by the Happy Museum this unique project involved community groups and members of The Beaney team. These *Happiness Investigators* explored and investigated the collections and building to answer one very important question "What makes you happy at The Beaney?" and to use their findings to develop cultural treatments.

The Front Gallery, a community hub at The Beaney, housed The *Paper Apothecary*; a life-size and fully-functioning apothecary shop created by Animate Arts Company and made entirely out of paper and card. It was fully-stocked with cultural treatments inspired by the collections and building. Each of the specially formulated concoctions was designed to make recipients happy. All of these cultural treatments were then "prescribed" from the *Paper Apothecary* to visitors by a resident 'Chemist for the duration of the project.

Over the exhibition period approximately 6,729 people visited the gallery. The Chemist encouraged the recipients of each prescription to feedback any 'side-effects, comments and reactions' via a tear-off section on their prescription, and post it in the feedback box. A total of 297 written comments responded to the simple question 'How did the cultural treatment make you feel?' with 96% of these responses showing increased happiness. The *Paper Apothecary* won the inaugural Collections Trust award for best Participatory Practice in 2013.

A film of the Paper Apothecary can be viewed at:

<http://www.canterbury.co.uk/Beaney/The-Paper-Apothecary.aspx>

What are the challenges in making more good work happen?

The main challenges are resources; money and time. Of key importance is being able to effectively measure the benefits of museums and heritage upon health and wellbeing. The Beaney has been fortunate in working with university and NHS partners to gather evidence of the impact of its health and wellbeing programmes. This evidence can then be used to advocate and to secure funds to continue and extend the benefits of this work.

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