



Bringing together Museums and Music Therapy to support Health and Wellbeing

The National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing and the British Association for Music Therapy have come together to produce this brief how-to-guide for music therapists on collaborating with museums to support health and wellbeing.



Museums, Health & Wellbeing – key areas of focus

There are currently several key areas of focus for museums that are useful for music therapists to be aware of. They are:

- **Dementia** – the single largest area of work for museums. *e.g. Evergreen Gardeners, Geffrye Museum; Sensory Palaces, Historic Royal Palaces; House of Memories, National Museums Liverpool.*
(NB: there is a move away from reminiscence-based work towards cognitive stimulation therapy-based programmes).
- **Mental health** – a wide range of work in this area, including programmes aimed specifically at ex-servicemen/women diagnosed with PTSD, as well as more general programmes for people with mild to severe anxiety and depression, psychosis and other conditions. *e.g. Once a warrior, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery.*
- **Cancer** *e.g. MacMillan@Glasgow Life.*
- **Autism** *e.g. Open Doors, Manchester Art Gallery; Creative Bridges, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum*
- **Stroke recovery** *e.g. Stroke Cafés at The Whitworth; V&As planned work with choir singing and stroke recovery.*
- **Addiction recovery** *e.g. Recovering Identities through Culture and Heritage, Tyne & Wear Museums & Archives.*
- **Speech therapy** *e.g. Conversation Makers, Luton Culture and Wardown Park Museum.*
- **General wellbeing** *e.g. Tai Chi sessions, Roman Baths, Bath; Yoga sessions; The Happy Museum project.*
- **Active ageing** *e.g. Cultural Champions programme, Manchester museums.*
- **Creating spaces for wellbeing**
(a new area of work, where museums act as consultants on creating new healthcare settings/spaces) *e.g. Memory Walls in NHS Stobhill Hospital's Elderly Mental Health Unit & Glenwood Day Care Centre, with the Open Museum - Glasgow Museums.*

Collaborating with museums: getting started

Before approaching your local museum with an offer, here are some useful suggestions on what to consider when planning:

1) Space

Museums often have large rooms and spaces, which they may use to generate income through venue hire, or these may be dedicated community spaces / workshops for schools and other groups.

Consider how your offer to deliver a music therapy group in a museum's space will link in with their mission, strategic aims, collections and target audiences.

For example, if the museum is a member of the autism friendly museum network, are you able to offer a music therapy group that could support their strategic aims around being an autism friendly museum?

2) Sell yourself

What makes you the best person to deliver a particular programme? What is there in your background and experience that would capture the museum's attention? Is it previous experience in running these projects? Do you have a personal interest in working with a particular group? What is your area of expertise? If you currently work, or have worked for the NHS, you may have very valuable contacts for the museum, which may be looking to build closer links with its local NHS Trust.

3) Read and visit

Know your museum; read their Mission and Vision statements, Annual Reports and Strategic Plans etc., where available – and visit!

This will give you a good sense of activities and programmes the museum is already running, the audiences they are already working with as well as any major development and other plans. Doing background research will be essential if you are to approach the museum with proposal for a project that fits with the museum's:

- * Mission
- * Strategic aims
- * Collections
- * Target audiences



4) Start a conversation with the Museum and build links

A good place to start is the Museum's Community Learning / Learning & Access / Outreach team – each museum has a slightly different name for their team but you should be able to find the contact details on the museum's website.

5) Local Authority Health Priorities

Find out what the Museums' Local Authority health priorities are, and tailor your offer to those. Find out what the local health care agenda is and map how music therapy can help to meet the priorities. Each Local Authority has a Health & Wellbeing Board (H&WB), so that's a good place to start.

More information about these H&WBs can be found here:

http://www.local.gov.uk/health/-/journal_content/56/10180/3510973/ARTICLE

<http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/hwb-guide/>

<http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/new-nhs/health-and-wellbeing-boards>

For example, in Islington, London, the health priorities are around obesity/diabetes, mental health and addiction recovery, so health & wellbeing programmes addressing those priorities may have more chance of attracting LA funding.

6) Language, culture and need

Be aware of the museum's audiences and target audiences. Be sensitive to local needs when planning an offer. What other support might be needed? For instance, would it be helpful to have an interpreter attend the group? If so, is the museum or local authority able to support the funding for one?

7) Find the fit, meet the need

The key message is that the health and wellbeing activity proposed by the music therapist needs to both fit in with the Museum's collections/mission/audiences, and the Local Authority's identified health priorities. Think about where the fit is with music therapy.

For example, if a mission is for the museum to help reduce isolation, think about how a group that you are offering can help to support that mission through working with people with dementia and their carers. Are you able to partner up with a local dementia charity or organisation to help provide transport, provide information etc.?

We, the Alliance and BAMT, are keen to hear about your experiences of working with museums and welcome feedback about how we can support you further in this area of work.

For further information and support on collaborating with your local museum, please contact:

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The National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing

The National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing is a new consortium led by UCL Public and Cultural Engagement and includes partners such as the National Museums Liverpool, the British Museum, the UK Medical Collections Group represented by the Thackray Medical Museum, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, Manchester Museums and Galleries Partnership, the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester's School of Museum Studies, the Museums Association and the National Alliance for Arts, Health & Wellbeing.

Funded by Arts Council England, the consortium was awarded a grant to develop the Alliance in the first round of the Arts Council's Museum Resilience Fund 2015-2018, which has been set up to help museums become more sustainable.





Aims of the Alliance

The Alliance will support:

- Museum sector's work around health and wellbeing through the sharing of information;
- Improving best practice;
- Disseminating relevant resources;
- Practitioners working in this area of activity;
- Partnership working;
- Linking to wider cultural networks;
- Provide guidance and information on partnership working with arts, community, health and social care organisations, to build resilience across the sector through health-commissioning partnership opportunities with local authorities.

Resources

The website <https://museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com/> provides a number of resources:

- Case studies;
- Articles;
- Books and other publications;
- Toolkits on museum activities, working in partnership, and evaluation;
- Cultural commissioning information;
- Inspiration section with examples of best practice from the arts in health sector, and abroad.

We hope these resources will be useful for those working in the museums sector, as well as those interested in arts, culture and health, including health and social care workers, third sector workers, artists and arts-therapies practitioners.

We will continue adding to these pages and resources, so it's worth checking the website for new material regularly.

You can keep up to date with the latest news from the Alliance by following us on Twitter:

[@museumwellbeing](https://twitter.com/museumwellbeing)

The British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT)

BAMT is the professional body for music therapy in the UK, providing both practitioners and non-practitioners with information, professional support, and training opportunities. It is also a charity committed to promoting and raising awareness of music therapy, and providing information to the general public.

To help promote the use and development of music therapy for children and adults with a wide range of needs, partnership working within the community with a cultural partner, not only does this, but also enables local needs to be met through the sharing of skills, resources, and funding; increasing the opportunities for provision.

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