

## Portals to the World at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

An art appreciation course at the Fitzwilliam Museum designed for people with a dementia and their care partners. Each week we gather in one of the galleries for a short talk by a museum staff member, followed by a handling session or practical art activity. Research suggests that individuals with a limiting disability and/or illness have significantly lower rates of participation than those with no disability/illness. Through *Portals to the World* and its wider outreach and access programmes, the Fitzwilliam Museum seeks to redress such inequality.

This nine week cultural journey is a partnership project with dementiaCOMPASS. The programme is delivered by the education and curatorial teams with support from trained volunteers from the museum and local community. Each weekly workshop lasts for two hours and consist of an introductory talk in the museum galleries, focusing on one area of the collection (e.g. fan collection, Japanese prints, bronze sculptures, Impressionist paintings). This is followed by refreshments in the learning studio and then a practical art workshop, inspired by the talk and including a wide range of activities (e.g. silk painting, soap carving, clay modelling). Every session includes a range of learning activities (i.e. auditory, visual, tactile and kinaesthetic) tailored to participant needs, providing inclusive opportunities for gaining new skills, knowledge and experience. Participants leave with their completed artworks to display at home and/or share with families and friends.

### Planned programme objectives

#### For the participants

- Enhanced wellbeing
- Decreased social isolation
- Increased social capital
- Increased access to resources
- New connections and networks
- Offer of non-traditional respite
- Opportunity for informal learning
- Engagement with peers
- Access to museum collections
- Growing sense of ownership of museum spaces

#### For the museum

- Building a sustainable strategic external partnership
- A new partnership model promoting cross-department collaboration and enhanced public engagement
- Workforce learning and skill development through dementia training, awareness and mentoring
- Responsive to growing numbers of people with a dementia and to the needs of this specific audience
- Developing a sustainable programme for museum non-users with dementia
- Working across the Cambridge University Museums when and where possible
- Sharing learning outcomes to enable better understanding of dementia, nationally and internationally

### Planned programme outputs (for Rayne Foundation Research period)\*

- Developing two courses each lasting nine weeks, beginning September 2012 and January 2013
- Sessions will last 2 hours
- Courses will involve both care partners and focus on ability rather than disability
- Courses will be free and accessed independently.
- Participants will:
  - experience a routine environment
  - access public and private spaces
  - engage with trained speakers and peer volunteers
  - take home a quality artefact following the creative session
- Creating additional informal 'alumni' sessions to aid the development of legacy pathways and a sense of ownership of the museum for participants
- Conducting an impact evaluation research study, designed and implemented by an external and independent evaluator and dissemination of these findings

*\* Please note that outputs for these two courses have been highlighted here as these were the courses used for the external evaluation and research study. Pilot courses took place before these courses and, due to the successful outcomes, we continue to run Portals to the World courses. Current courses use the same programme objectives as listed above.*

## Portals to the World: Research Study 2012/13

The research study covered two specific courses of nine weekly meetings, starting in September 2012 and January 2013. Pilot courses were run prior to these courses and we continue to internally evaluate subsequent *Portals to the World* courses. Detail in this summary document is taken from the external evaluation completed by Susan Potter.

### Summary of inputs and outputs

- 30 individual sessions (including course sessions, training sessions and alumni sessions)
- 174 adults (including participants with dementia, care partners, museum staff and volunteers)
- 18 research participants (including 9 male and 9 female; 9 with dementia and 9 care partners)
- 18 individuals completed both baseline and endline research questionnaires, with no missing data

### Key quantitative findings

With regard to individual scores for Wellbeing (WEMWBS):

- ten participants (56%) reported an increase in wellbeing
- two participants (11%) reported a decrease
- six participants (33%) reported no change

With regard to individual scores for Social Inclusion (SI):

- nine participants (50%) reported an increase in social inclusion
- five participants (28%) meanwhile reported a decrease in social inclusion
- four participants (22%) reported no change

An increase in wellbeing coincided with an increase in social inclusion for six individuals (33%) across the duration of the programme. Increased levels of wellbeing only were reported for four individuals (22%), while three individuals (17%) reported increased levels of social inclusion only. The majority of participants (72%) therefore reported a positive change between T1 and T2, either through an increase in levels of social inclusion and/or wellbeing.

Participant ratings of *Portals to the World* were as follows:

Statement	N	1 Low	2	3	4 High	5
We have enjoyed the <i>Portals to the World</i> programme	18	0	0	0	6	12
We would recommend <i>Portals to the World</i> to a friend	18	0	0	0	4	14
Our art skills have developed through <i>Portals to the World</i>	18	0	0	8	6	4
Our confidence has increased through <i>Portals to the World</i>	18	0	0	4	10	4
Our motivation has increased through <i>Portals to the World</i>	18	0	0	4	10	4
We feel more positive about ourselves through <i>Portals to the World</i>	18	0	0	4	10	4

5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

### Key qualitative findings

*Portals to the World* trained 92 staff and volunteers from across all departments within the museum in order to deliver the programme (i.e. collections, conservation, visitor services, education). Sessions included contributions from other University of Cambridge Museums (e.g. Kettle's Yard, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology).

The most significant outcomes for participants with dementia/care partners included:

- Increased levels of social engagement
- Enhanced skills, knowledge and experience
- Improved mental health and wellbeing

The most significant outcomes for staff and volunteers included:

- Continued professional development
- Increased awareness and understanding of dementia
- A shared ambition for access and inclusion

The most significant outcomes for the Fitzwilliam Museum included:

- Developing new and diverse audiences
- Increasing access to the museum and its collections
- Fostering social inclusion and community cohesion

Programme related learning outcomes included:

- A notable change in mood and behaviour for both adults with dementia and care partners (e.g. increased smiling and laughing, touching, hugging and holding hands)
- Participants greatly enjoyed sensory elements to each session (e.g. feeling Japanese watercolour paper, holding gold coins, stroking feathers on fans)
- The pairing of one museum educator (or volunteer) with one adult with dementia ensured care partners were given an opportunity to relax, at least for the duration of the *Portals to the World* session
- Participants valued deliverers who were responsive to individual needs (e.g. positive reinforcement, body language, careful listening, eye contact, humour and thought about physical positioning)

Project learning outcomes and recommendations included:

- Devote sufficient planning and preparation time, ensuring attention to detail
- Ensure creative sessions are thoughtfully aligned to speaker presentations
- Further explore working with other University of Cambridge Museums
- Future phases might increase sensory content of each session
- Ensure the impacts for people with dementia and their care partners are widely shared
- Expand and develop alumni sessions
- Development of a toolkit to share this learning model would be welcome

**Note:** *Pilot sessions were delivered prior to these courses. Due to the successful outcomes, courses have continued after the January 2013 course. The two courses have been highlighted here, as only these participants took part in the external evaluation and research study.*