

Creative Health Evaluation Report to Public Health, April 2025

Pilot Project Overview – Salford Museum & Art Gallery (SMAG)

Venue/Service:	Salford Museum & Art Gallery, The Crescent
ICP Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project sits within the ICP’s system priority for prevention: to support good mental health and emotional wellbeing with a focus on creative health activities; and to undertake work to inform all-age approaches in relation to loneliness.
Timescale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2023 to March 2024
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore how museums can be part of an all-system approach to supporting the wellbeing of local people and to actively address issues such as social isolation. • To respond to a Salford Time to Act prompt (in a meeting led by Dr Abdel Aziz, Director of Public Health) where Chris Dabbs from Unlimited Potential challenged city venues to consider how their <i>environments</i> tackle loneliness – rather than always thinking about <i>activities</i>. • To explore the above by working with local community groups to develop a new exhibition about Colour at Salford Museum & Art Gallery (SMAG) – opening in May 2025.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x community groups from Langworthy Cornerstone health and community centre. Both groups have an arts & wellbeing focus. • This community centre was chosen as the new exhibition will take place in SMAG’s Langworthy Gallery - reflecting the shared heritage of the 2 organisations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Talk about It Mate: peer-support men’s mental health group who also run creative sessions. ○ Women into Visual Arts: creative workshops for women with a focus on building confidence and skills
Theory of Change planning	<p>Proposed outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participants from the community groups feel better as a result of being part of the project, and they have a positive experience of working with SMAG. 2. SMAG connects with more local communities, learns about their interests and concerns, and continues to develop its community engagement practice. 3. The new Colours exhibition at SMAG provides increased opportunities for social connection, relaxation and creative participation in the gallery space. 4. Visitors to the Colours exhibition feel better as a result of their visit – and share insights with the museum as to why and how this happens. 5. SMAG uses this learning and evidence gathered as a transformation project to change how they work on exhibitions in the future. (As per Public Health advice: this is not a ‘business as usual’ project, but helps SMAG develop new ways of working in the longer term.)

Pilot Project Activity & Participants – Salford Museum & Art Gallery (SMAG)

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants attended 3 workshops between Jan and March covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project overview, introductions, exploring colour and emotional responses to artworks and objects in the collection. Testing out relaxation techniques together in the galleries such as slow looking and discussing exhibition ideas together. Trying out creative activities along with further group discussion and feedback. A film has been created which showcases this engagement process. Please see the exhibition website - Colour: Exploring the Collection - to watch this. The new exhibition Colour: Exploring the Collection will open in May 2025.
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 participants engaged with the exhibition development project – 11 from each community group. Only 19 completed monitoring forms. See SMAG PH Project Monitoring Information.xls for more details. The community engagement part of this project was not around quantity of participants – but collaborating with 2 specific groups to test how museums can have a greater wellbeing focus to their work. When the Colour exhibition opens, visitor participation will be collated from the exhibition. This will be collated between May and November 2025 and we will report back to Public Health in December 2025.

Demographics	SMAG exhibition project *	Salford area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please note that when this document is shared online (in the context of the community film) we will redact personal / monitoring data. 		
Gender		
Male		50%
Female		50%
Non-Binary		not known
Prefer not to say / did not answer		n/a
Ethnicity		
Asian, Asian British		6%
Black, Black British, African		6%
Mixed or multiple ethnic heritage		3%
Other ethnic group		3%
White British / White English / White Other		82%
Prefer not to say / did not answer		n/a
Disability		

Yes		19%
No		82%
Prefer not to say		n/a
Neurodiversity		
No		Not known for Salford but estimated that population as a whole is 15% neurodiverse.
Yes		
Prefer not to say / did not answer		
Carer		
Yes		Not known
No		Not known
Prefer not to say / did not answer		Not known
Comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is one of the first times that SMAG has collected monitoring information for a community engagement project. The aim is to continue this work in the future – so SMAG know who engages with its programme. There are sensitivities around asking personal information – as to whether this is appropriate/intrusive or a tick-box exercise. But in attempting to bring a greater health focus to SMAG’s work it’s recognised that knowing who engages is key.• Although we connected with the groups from Langworthy Cornerstone for their interest in creativity – the project has benefited from the experience of those with a health need. See SMAG PH Project Monitoring Information.xls for more details.		

Pilot Project Outcomes – Salford Museum & Art Gallery (SMAG)

Theory of Change Outcomes	Results
1. Participants from the community groups feel better as a result of participating in the project, and they have a positive experience of working with SMAG.	<p>Please see SMAG PH Project Collated Participant Feedback.xls for more detail. Excerpted detail below with example quotes.</p> <p>80% agreed that the project had improved their wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Loved the interaction with others in the group and sharing out thoughts and often differing opinions.” <p>20% were unsure if the project had improved their wellbeing. Example quote below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I can't tell yet. There's a lot of other stuff going on but when I am here I'm mostly happy."
2. The new Colours exhibition at SMAG provides increased opportunities for social connection, relaxation, participation and creative activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMAG carried out a benchmarking exercise to identify what current provision there was in the gallery for social connection, relaxation and creativity before this project began (e.g. in the previous Langworthy Gallery exhibition 2023-24). Please see SMAG PH Project Visitor Engagement Audit on the Harold Riley exhibition April 2025.doc

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although a popular & well-attended exhibition, observations include: moderate engagement with creative activities, with some visitors unsure what to do; limited social interaction amongst visitors, beyond their own social group; seating was used for short periods (unless watching the film). And in the use of bench seating, visitors often sat with their backs to each other. No evaluative questions asked beyond standard Comments Cards – which just ask ‘Any comments?’ As a result of this engagement project, the Colours exhibition will ensure there is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more social seating (with more comfortable back support to support e.g. elderly or nursing carers); more creative activities for all ages, including prompts so people are confident to join in; more opportunities for visitors to comment/feedback/participate in a shared discussion e.g. share a memory or idea; more evaluative prompts in future exhibitions to capture if project outcomes achieved.
3. SMAG connects with more local communities, learns about their interests and concerns, and continues to develop their community engagement practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The funding for this project enabled SMAG to employ a part-time Community Engagement Facilitator who worked alongside the exhibitions team to work with the groups to develop the exhibition. Funding has been separately secured to ensure that this role continues to support the next exhibition in the Langworthy Gallery at SMAG (which will celebrate Salford’s centenary as a city in 2026). There were three particular learning opportunities as a result of this project. Firstly, SMAG staff recognise the need to get to know community group first to understand their interests and concerns, before talking too much about the museum or a project. SMAG also recognise that some artworks might be trigger big emotions in participants – and that it can be hard to identify these artworks as it might be different for each individual. Finally, it was recognised that in working with community groups and talking about issues linked to emotions and mental health that this can be tricky for SMAG staff members too – who might not feel confident navigating these conversations. The team at SMAG have previously benefited from PH training including Making Every Contact Count and this needs to be continued.
4. Visitors to the Colours exhibition feel better as a result of their visit – and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Colours exhibition opens on 25 May 2025 – during Creativity and Wellbeing Week.

<p>share insights with the museum as to why and how this happens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the exhibition, SMAG are planning an individual ‘colour wheel’ visitor feedback form where visitors can respond more personally about how the exhibition has made them feel. There will also be an ‘ideas wall’ where visitors can respond more generally to how museums can support public wellbeing. • Visitor feedback will be collated over 6 months between May and November 2025. This will include a mixture of tangible statistics and quotes/insights. A further Evaluation Report around participant/visitor experience will be produced in December 2025.
<p>6. SMAG uses this learning and evidence gathered as a transformation project to change how they work on exhibitions in the future. (Not a business as usual project but to change how we work in the future.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim is to increase visitor numbers; increase exhibition dwell time; increase evidence of visitor engagement; increase the types of feedback we get from visitors – and use the Colours exhibition as a learning opportunity around museums and wellbeing. • We hope that the learning from this will develop into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SMAG Exhibition Wellbeing Toolkit which can be used in future exhibitions. E.g. even if an exhibition is about a subject totally unrelated to wellbeing – are there certain exhibition design elements – such as social seating and creative opportunities – which will ensure that any exhibition can meet visitor wellbeing needs (irrespective of the subject matter). ○ SMAG Community Engagement Wellbeing Toolkit – an ongoing document which we can add learning. ○ SMAG Staff Wellbeing Toolkit – to recognise that in creating a culture of care at SMAG this must include staff alongside visitors and community groups. •

Pilot Project Case Studies – Salford Museum & Art Gallery (SMAG)

Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Creative Profiles have kindly been written with 4 of the participants from the project. Please see SMAG PH Project Creative Profiles 1-4 for more details. • We have changed the traditional Public Health Case Study format (e.g. overview of individual; presenting problem; action/intervention; outcome) to a more person-centred approach. This recognises that participants were involved project because of their interest in creativity and to act as advisors in the development of the exhibition. • Excerpted quotes from the case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘I felt valued to be part of the project’. • ‘Doing this with friends has been incredibly positive for my wellbeing.’ • ‘Being asked what I thought brought forth ideas that I didn’t realise I had.’ • ‘Creativity isn’t indulgence but rather is a form of personal care. Being asked to get involved felt special.’ <p>From a thematic analysis from the Creative Profiles and other participant feedback key themes that emerge are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The power of creativity in supporting people’s wellbeing – enabling them to express themselves (or get a break from over thinking things). • The social connection that creative groups provide – and the way that the art/activity provides a focus for discussion which makes other conversations and connections easier. • Being involved in something concrete (whether making art or helping with an exhibition) feels productive and tangible when other things feel hard. • Being asked to be involved in a project – and being asked for your ideas feels special. A consistent theme in the feedback was the sense of privilege and pride that people felt in being asked to get involved in their local museum. • This is an important asset that SMAG holds – their power as an cultural institution in the city to ask local people to be part of their work.
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