

The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation Access and Education Programme: Phase II First Year Report: April 2017 – March 2018 Submitted April 2018

Summary

The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation has generously supported access and education programmes at the British Museum since 2014. In September 2016 the Foundation awarded the Museum a grant of £90,000 over three years to support Phase II of the Access and Education Programme from 2017 to 2020. This grant allows the British Museum to develop an ongoing offer of activities and workshops for children and adults with Learning Disability and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (LD/ASD).



The Museum and Me: Students present their introduction to the British Museum digital story

This first annual report on these activities focuses on the initial consolidation of learnings from Phase I and the pilot activities achieved across two strands:

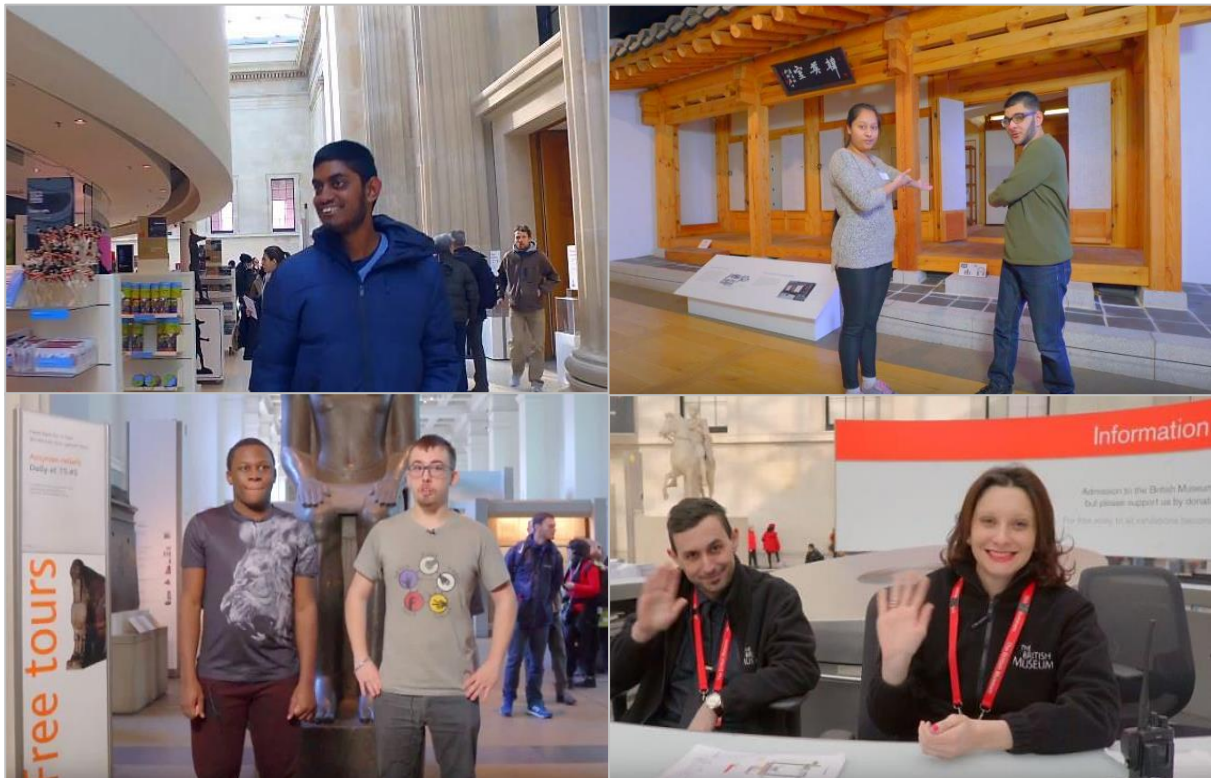
- **Explore More**, following the Phase I Explore strand for adults with access needs, considers how best to embed these creative activities into the Museum's core activity. Year One focused on consolidating learnings and trialling relaxed talks, workshops and discussion sessions with the Museum's partner organisations.
- **The Museum and Me**, which responds to the success of the Sensory Journey project in Phase I to develop a longer-term core offer for Special Educational Needs (SEN) school participants. In Year One the Museum collaborated with secondary-age students to create a digital story of their experience in the galleries.

Feedback from participants, alongside an external evaluation, helped to assess both projects' suitability for inclusion in the Museum's core programming. This report will provide a summary of achievements and learnings in Year One, as well as considering the impact of the Sensory Journey SEN legacy workshops, and results from the Phase I audience survey.

The Museum and Me

Programme Aims and Objectives

Positive participant feedback and Phase I's evaluation emphasised the importance of embedding a multi-sensory approach into the Museum's core school provision. Key learnings suggested that The Museum and Me should focus on diversifying the activities and resources on offer, to build the confidence of SEN school students and encourage repeat independent and family visits to the Museum.



Stills from the digital story co-produced and presented by students on The Museum and Me project

The Museum and Me core objective in the first year was to create a digital story with a partner secondary school that explored their experiences at the Museum. This visual approach to museum learning stemmed from positive participant feedback in Phase I of the Access and Education Programme. Key learnings in Phase I suggested that The Museum and Me should focus on diversifying the activities and resources on offer, to build the confidence of SEN school students and encourage repeat independent and family visits to the Museum.

Over five sessions, The Museum and Me incorporated sensory experiences through digital technology to introduce young people and teachers to the Museum's environment, and to encourage engagement with collections connected to the National Curriculum. Student's creative responses to the collections – encouraged by staff and then on a self-guided basis – resulted in a co-produced film that will be shared online to promote future SEN learning visits. This first year aimed to understand how effectively the Museum is as an accessible and inclusive space to empower the confidence of SEN students.

Project Delivery: Digital Story

The British Museum partnered with Shaftesbury High School students in Harrow to produce the digital story over three months. The ten students (aged 15 to 17) had diverse learning and communicative needs, including diagnoses on the autistic spectrum, Down's Syndrome and nuanced difficulties with social interaction and emotional health. These affected each student's cognitive skills, impacting on their ability to engage with the curriculum in a classroom setting. The students were selected to take part in the project as part of a Year 11 Life Skills module, 'Accessing Public Spaces', which builds confidence before college in Autumn 2018.

The students, along with three teachers, collaborated with professional content producers from Chocolate Films. This production company are experienced in working with SEN audiences in museums; their stated purpose, 'to engage children, young people and vulnerable adults in the process of making video', displayed a close fit with the aims of The Museum and Me. The brief, to produce a dynamic six minute introduction to the Museum as seen through the eyes of students, included a wide range of innovative shots:

'Along the journey, the film will be continuously evolving as it collates the range of exciting sensory experiences going on around the museum, and highlights the changes in light and sound as a visitor travels around... We will be sure not to include any loud or rapidly moving media which some viewers may find overwhelming or stressful. We will also add subtitles to the film to ensure that the film is accessible,'

Chocolate Films' digital story proposal to the British Museum, September 2017

The project was divided into five sessions between January and June 2018:

- **Session 1 (15 January 2018):** Colleagues from the British Museum visited Shaftesbury High School to introduce themselves to the students and teachers taking part. They outlined the Museum's collection and the project aims and answered initial questions.
- **Session 2 (5 February 2018):** 10 students and their teachers visited the British Museum for an introduction; the group was familiarised with central public spaces, the Visitor Service team and selected galleries. Students then attended a workshop built around themes in their Life Skills module, in particular gaining access and feeling secure in public spaces. A core objective for this session was for students and teachers to feel comfortable interacting in the busy museum environment prior to filming.
- **Session 3 (21 February 2018):** To highlight the importance of collaboration in this process, Chocolate Films visited Shaftesbury High School to create a storyboard narrative (using images from their visit to the museum) and draft a script with participating students. The producers also ran a short film-making workshop in the classroom, so that students could select the camera angles and shots that they felt were an appropriate fit for each scene.
- **Session 4 (26 February 2018):** Filming took place over a day at the Museum. A clear visual timetable of events was provided to students before filming started to ensure expectations were met throughout the day. All students were given the opportunity to work in front of or behind the camera, depending on their personal preference.

- **Session 5 (28 February 2018):** Chocolate Films and The Museum and Me Programme Manager visited Shaftesbury School to discuss the outcomes of the filming. This was also an opportunity for students who had nominated themselves to record the digital story's accompanying voice over using their co-created script.



Shaftesbury High School students presenting their digital story in the Museum's Korean Gallery

Each session was structured to achieve the Programme's objectives, with surveys circulated to participants and carers, and meetings between Museum staff to share outcomes after sessions.

Project achievements

The British Museum's partnership with Shaftesbury High School in Year One of The Museum and Me strand has succeeded in encouraging a group of young people and their teachers to develop a new relationship with the Museum. The digital story, which was subtitled to allow greater accessibility for those hard of hearing, was completed in March 2018. The Museum will screen the completed digital story to students and teachers at Shaftesbury High School in summer 2018, when students will receive certificates for project participation. The film will then be shared on social media to encourage other SEN schools to engage with the Museum. To ensure free public distribution it will be uploaded to the Museum website, as well as its popular YouTube page (with 1.7 million followers) and Facebook (with 1.3 followers).

Impact for participants

The programme has been highly successful in engaging this new SEN audience with the British Museum. Students, some of whom had never visited the Museum, responded well to the staggered workshop approach, which allowed participants to slowly familiarise themselves with the busy galleries and enjoy creative learning with the collections. Feedback showed that participants' confidence in their abilities grew throughout the digital story process, as it allowed students to have central agency in designing the film's content and production:

'On our first visit to Shaftesbury High School, students were relatively shy and hesitant to take part. This was such a contrast to the filming day when students took charge of the space and presented their work with pride,'

Feedback from *The Museum and Me* Programme Manager, Orlagh Muldoon

Students were able to develop the digital and producing areas that felt most comfortable to their skill-set: some focussed on camera work whilst others co-wrote the script, presented or recorded voice-overs. Feedback from Shaftesbury High School teachers was positive:

'You can really see how much the students have increased their confidence... Some have stepped forward to be mentors at school and are more vocally expressive in class,'

Feedback from a teacher at Shaftesbury High School

'A longer project over three months allowed the students to be fully involved throughout the whole development of the Digital Story and they learnt many different skills about filming, public speaking and gained knowledge about the objects,'

Feedback from a teacher at Shaftesbury High School

Teachers involved emphasised how significant the growth in student's communication levels had been, and how positively this had impacted on their relationships in school.

The Museum and Me: Plans for Years Two

A key objective for Year Two of *The Museum and Me* is to draw on the learnings of Year One through continued assessment and piloting of new sensory activities. Working with a second SEN school, the team will draw upon the Museum's current material offer for schools to create a self-led sensory map and series of audio clips. These will indicate how different parts of the Museum sound to improve provision for autistic students and those with hearing needs. This resource will again be accessible to all SEN schools visiting the Museum beyond the completion of the project, maximising the quality of learning for all SEN students.

If possible, the programme will also engage with other SEN schools to test the sensory map, and there may be potential to develop the resource for use by families. The outcomes of this second year project would be shared with students, teachers and their families in a celebration event to raise awareness of the British Museum's rich learning environment.

Explore More

Programme Aims and Objectives

The Explore strand in Phase I aimed to heighten the learning and wellbeing of adults with access needs through creative engagement with the Museum's collection. Explore More seeks to broaden this impact through a sustainable public offer, piloting programmes which offer adults with LD/ASD the opportunity to build confidence in this environment.

The key objectives of Explore More in this first year were to identify partners to steer the Programme, to discuss how core activities could be adapted and to consider how best to share this process with broader LD/ASD audiences in Years Two and Three. Following an advisory workshop with representatives from LD/ASD organisations, creative approaches - adapted gallery tours, relaxed performances and visit resources - were trialled and evaluated.



Explore More participants in the Museum's Enlightenment Gallery during the Advisory Panel session

Project Delivery: *Explore More*

Explore More included a newly formed advisory panel made up of 15 adults with LD/ASD and representatives from London-based LD/ASD organisations. These were:

- *Coral*, exploring the unique creativity and expression of people with learning disabilities;
- *Heart n Soul*, a creative arts company focused on learning disability culture;
- *Action Space*, supporting the development of artists with learning disabilities;
- *The Tower Project*, a community provider for young people with learning difficulties;
- *RIX Research and Media*, exploring new technologies for people with learning disabilities.
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These organisations brought different perspectives to the group as some, such as Coral and Heart n Soul, had previously engaged with the Access and Education Programme whilst others were new partners. The group was provided with clear objectives for the day ahead of time, firstly getting to know each other, then exploring galleries with programme facilitators and finally discussing the challenges encountered by disabled people at the Museum.

Key insights included a desire for touch trails connecting cultural themes across the Museum's collections; storytelling to reveal how objects related to the lives of everyday people; interactive audio guides and easy-to-read information in gallery spaces. Participants and their carers also discussed transportation to the Museum and best times of day to visit central London. Creative solutions were then piloted and evaluated based on these findings. For each trial element, the Museum worked with the London-based partners who attended the advisory panel. The project was divided into seven sessions from September 2017 to February 2018:

- **Advisory Panel (7 September 2017):** 15 representatives from LS/ASD organisations were invited to discuss accessible programming for Adults with Learning Disabilities. As noted above, the session was spread across four hours, including lunch and sensory gallery activities, and concluded with a discussion around access challenges and opportunities for future engagement with the collection.



Adults and representatives from LD/ASD partner organisations at the 'Explore More' Advisory Panel session: (left) discussing access challenges; (right) attending a sensory tour in the Parthenon Galleries

- **'Talking Textiles' gallery talk series (16th, 23rd and 30th January 2018):** these three 45 minute talks adapted the Museum's current adult programme to offer sessions that were sensitive to audiences who would benefit from a relaxed gallery environment. Freelance artists led the sessions to around 20 adults per talk, focussed around the theme 'Talking Textiles' in the Africa Galleries. Participants were encouraged to interact with different types of textiles and their cultural heritage – such as Kente Cloth from Ghana - before responding to textiles with their own creative output, from music to art.
- **Ancient Egypt touch tour (7th February 2018):** ten participants and their carers took part in this one hour session in the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery, exploring the histories of objects through touch. The tour was adapted from a touch tour for visually impaired visitors and was designed to be flexible to specific learning needs. Artist facilitators introduced objects such as papyrus and reed pens and following the session participants met with the Programme Manager to reflect on their experiences.
- **Relaxed music performance (16th February 2018):** scheduled to coincide with Chinese New Year, this participatory performance and workshop was led by musician Luke Crookes and focused on the Chinese instruments the erhu (two-stringed fiddle) and pipa (four-stringed lute). The 60 minute performance took place in the Korea Galleries at the British Museum and was open, meaning that whilst specific Explore More guests were invited, members of the public could also participate.

Each session was advertised through the Museum's networks with partner organisations and publically via the website and 'What's On' printed brochures. Opportunities to discuss the sessions and surveys were available for participants, and Museum staff shared experiences and outcomes. Explore More also piloted training for Museum staff and volunteers to encourage longer-term conversations around access challenges, included an 'Autism Awareness' training session on 12th March 2018, delivered to ten staff by the National Autism Society.



Explore More activities: (left) exploring the history of African fabric in the 'Talking Textiles' session; (right) partner organisations and the public enjoy a relaxed performance of Chinese music in the galleries

Explore More participant breakdown, by session:

Museum Visits	
Session	Number of attendees (participants and carers)
Advisory Panel	16
Talking Textiles: storytelling around fabric (Room 24)	20
Talking Textiles: meet a textile artist and try techniques (Room 25)	25
Talking Textiles: meet a textile curator to learn about patterns (Room 25)	26
Ancient Egypt touch tour	12
Relaxed music performance	35
Total	134

Project Achievements

The British Museum was successful in encouraging individuals with LD/ASD and their carers to interact with the Museum's collection and with digital platforms through these trial activities. The current adult programme of talks and performances adapted very successfully to the needs of audience members preferring a calmer environment, including those with autistic spectrum conditions, sensory and communication disorders and learning difficulties. Opportunities to interact with artists ranged from exploring tapestry production in Western Mexico to fabric making in Ghana and Kenya and traditional music in celebration of Chinese New Year. As hoped, participants responded creatively, including a layered music composition in reaction to the Chinese relaxed performance which was recorded and played back to the audience.

Feedback was collected following each session from participants and carers at all five partner organisations. These were both positive and constructive:

'The benefits of introducing a museum object in a creative, sensory way and then creating a comfortable space in the gallery is evidenced in the experience of one Advisory Group member. She had been wary of visiting the Enlightenment Gallery, describing it as big and scary initially, but was won over by the pre-gallery workshop session and enjoyed her visit,' Explore More Evaluator



Musician Luke Crookes with Explore More participants during a 'Talking Textiles' session

Feedback from staff on the 'Autism Awareness' course indicated how relevant this training was to their role and the importance of LD/ASD awareness across the Museum's functions:

'As a departmental volunteer coordinator it will help me to adapt my own management skills, to educate colleagues, and to adapt the physical surroundings so that we are better equipped to take on people who are autistic for volunteer placements,'
Anonymous British Museum staff member, Autism Awareness training

The success of this trial training course means that in Year Two of *Explore More*, the Programme Manager will work alongside HR to develop a comprehensive training offer, directly relevant to the museum's unique environment and audiences, for front-of-house staff.

Impact for participants

At the end of Year One the *Explore More* strand has successfully integrated new Relaxed Gallery Talks into the Museum's Adult Programme and introduced the collaborative Advisory Panel group format. Feedback from participants was positive; for example, at the performance of traditional Chinese music:

'I sometimes find it difficult to relate to music from other cultures because I don't know the story. But today has given me a way that I can relate, to any piece of music by just listening to the way it makes me feel,'

Anonymous participant feedback after the Relaxed Music Performance in February 2018

From this collaboration with partner organisations, the Programme has succeeded in encouraging a diverse group of adults to develop a new relationship with the British Museum. Trialling a variety of creative solutions in different galleries proved effective, as the participants were introduced to spaces they stated they would otherwise avoid. Feedback showed they would now feel more confident returning to the Museum independently, and that the creative sessions inspired adults to look at the collections in a new light. Within the Museum, the process of devising and delivering the sessions was undertaken enthusiastically by staff, who reported that they now feel more confident working with these types of groups in the future.

Explore More: Plans for Years Two

At the culmination of Year One, trial sessions from Explore More have completed, and learnings will be analysed both by the external evaluator and the Programme Manager. A second Advisory Panel met in April 2018 to reflect on learnings from the initial pilot sessions; the Museum will then take forward the most successful trials to embed into wider Museum practice.

Year Two will focus on widening public interaction, with participants encouraged to invite friends, family and carers to enjoy and benefit from Explore More programming. Participants and carers will be introduced to the Museum's wider exhibition programme, such as early morning quiet viewings of the Museum's popular larger temporary exhibitions before they open to the public. Additionally, the Programme will pilot a voluntary placement for an adult with LD/ASD within a curatorial department. Further Autism Awareness training for Museum staff – particularly Visitor Services, Security and the Volunteer team - will also be trialled, targeting around 15 staff over three sessions.

External Project Evaluation: The Museum and Me and Explore More

The Museum has commissioned an external evaluation of the Programme, with the Year One report due to be delivered in July 2018. The report will focus on long term outcomes across the two strands, such as the wellbeing and inclusion of participants, organisational growth and change, and greater inter-team working at the British Museum. The learnings of this external evaluation in Year One will inform and shape the delivery of Year Two activities, and the evaluation will have the flexibility to change its focus as the project adapts to trial sessions.

The Legacy of Phase I: Sensory Journey workshops

As the Museum reported in Year Three of Phase I, the Sensory Journey programme concluded with a small underspend of £4,377. The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation kindly agreed to allocate this towards building on the legacy of the 'Sensory Journey' project into the Museum's core programming. Groups of PMLD and SLD students (Key Stage 2-4) were invited into the Museum to explore its spaces and collection through ten sensory workshops tailored to their specific needs between January and April 2018.



Students participating in the SEN Sensory Journey legacy workshops: (left) students in the galleries; (right) visual resources used to communicate the 'touch' sense to students

External freelance educators first worked with the Museum's Education Manager to consider the outcomes of the *Sensory Journey* strand in Phase I and plan multi-sensory activities for students. These involved the exploration of objects through look, touch, hearing and smell. To prompt the students to respond creatively, facilitators used changing light levels, textures, unusual smells and sounds when introducing objects. Schools local to the Museum were then invited to participate, and given clear programme instructions to ensure their journey and experience at the Museum ran smoothly.

10 pilot workshops were delivered across a whole day, beginning with a handling session and following a lunch break, ending with facilitated time in the galleries. The Education Manager co-ordinating these workshops reported a very high level of engagement from the students. A number of teachers later contacted the Museum to request future workshop dates, and praised the tailored workshop approach which took into account individual student's learning needs:

'The children really enjoyed the sensory stories you included about the actual museum itself and having the time to explore different props and artefacts. The day was very well planned and well equipped for the needs of our children. Staff were amazing and we all had a very good day,' Teacher from a participating SEN school, March 2018

Piloting the workshops in this way allowed the Museum to reflect on their structure and content, and small adjustments will be made in the Summer term. Under the title *SEN: Museum Explorer*, the sensory workshops are due to become a core school workshop starting in September 2018, when availability will be publicised to schools on the Museum's website.

Audience Research

In the third year of Phase I, the British Museum commissioned a piece of audience research into the needs of Museum visitors with mental health problems. Led by Principal Investigator Dr Iris Elliott, the study aimed to explore facilitators and barriers to access or enjoyment of the Museum; identify what might make the Museum an attractive place to visit; understand benefits visitors feel they gained and investigate ways in which the Museum can improve its visitor experience. To achieve this, the study drew on data from Phase I of the Access and Education programme and on interviews and focus groups with British Museum staff and people with lived experience of mental health problems.

The study found that there is a strong commitment to addressing mental health across the work of the British Museum, although the tremendous diversity of visitors and the variety of ways in which they engage with the Museum can make this a challenge. A range of existing innovative and good practice across all aspects of the Museum's work was revealed, including writing and dance arts projects for people at the end of their life, and collaborations with supplementary schools who may have experienced pre-migration trauma or adversity. The study also identified a number of mental health benefits for visitors to the Museum, from contemplation and relaxation to a sense of self, purpose and structure:

'A place to get completely out of your own head,'
Staff interview

'[The collaborative art show at the British Museum] was the most amazing experience amongst everything. That gave them value in the eyes of their group – their family, their community,'
A participant from Core Arts interview

The Museum's physical environment was identified as a potential barrier for those with mental health problems, particularly in object-heavy galleries which can become busy and loud. Staff suggested a number of practical solutions to encourage visitors to avoid pressure points and guide them to calmer spaces. Recommendations included developing a mental health and wellbeing training programme for staff and visitors; developing mental health and wellbeing programming for visitors; and reviewing the current Access Guide to address the needs of people with psychosocial disabilities.

The Museum has already started to put some of these recommendations into action. On 19 March, the Museum hosted *Just Breathe: an evening of modern mindfulness and meditation*. This special gathering allowed visitors to enjoy the tranquillity of the Great Court after hours for an evening of live music, spirited discussion, and mass meditation. Designed to explore the theme of what makes us human and the common values that connect us with each other, the event was open to both beginners and advanced meditators and will lead to further wellbeing events. A wider mental health strategy is currently being devised which draws on the current work of the Access and Education Programme, which will be integrated into the UK Adult Audience Strategy groups. Overall, the Museum will continue its leadership and advocacy of mental health and wellbeing research, and seek strategic collaborations with other cultural institutions.

Financial Report

A full financial breakdown of project expenditure for Year One of the programme is provided below, acknowledging a slight overspend, which will be taken into account with Year Two spending:

Item	Year One Budget	Confirmed and Projected expenditure	Total Project Budget (2017 – 2020)
2.5 days a week staffing to manage both strands of programming (including development, documentation and evaluation)	£18,300	£18,220	£55,000
Educators for two strands	£4,000	£4,810	£12,000
Materials, digital elements and evaluation	£7,600	£8,120	£23,000
Total			90,000

The British Museum remains grateful to the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for enabling this important programme.