

SOUTH WEST YORKSHIRE PARTNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION TRUST

MENTAL HEALTH MUSEUM  
FIELDHEAD HOSPITAL, WAKEFIELD

EMPOWERING HERITAGE  
EVALUATION REPORT

WAFER HADLEY  
January 2021

WAFER HADLEY

CULTURAL INSIGHT

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Empowering Heritage* project was ambitious. It set out to develop and share more widely the collections of the Mental Health Museum (MHM) in Wakefield and deliver community engagement activity that made a measurable difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the area.

In the timeframe of the project, we have faced unprecedented challenges nationally due to the pandemic, which has placed even greater pressures on individuals, with lockdowns and closure of normal services and support structures. Despite this, the project has delivered substantially against its original objectives, as well as addressing these new demands, offering a crucial lifeline to those who needed it.

Central to the success of the project has been the appointment of the Project Co-ordinator who brought not only capacity to the organisation, but expertise, contacts and skills that have helped to develop the museum's co-production work.

Community groups have visited the museum on a number of occasions, creating new work in response. The outputs from the project have included an exhibition co-produced with five community groups and displayed in the public arena of Wakefield One and additional 'mini museums' and displays in key locations. Partnerships formed with local arts and community organisations have led to further public presentations and performances of work by project participants, connecting MHM to the wider infrastructure locally and regionally.

The collection itself has been opened up and explored in more depth and enhanced with new testimony of those with lived experience of mental illness today.

For the project participants there have been personal development opportunities, but also opportunities to be seen, heard and valued. This is part of a long-term ambition to challenge the stigma of mental illness in our society. Beyond the core benefits of creativity and activity to provide distraction and social engagement, this project has also allowed for deeper reflection and understanding to emerge from those who have been involved.

The connection to the collection and history has given the project greater weight and validation. There is a great deal more that can be done to continue to engage service users and the public in this evolving conversation and MHM is well-placed to lead this with the right level of capacity and resources. The project has shown the potential to work in partnership with other museums to help them to explore the history of mental health.

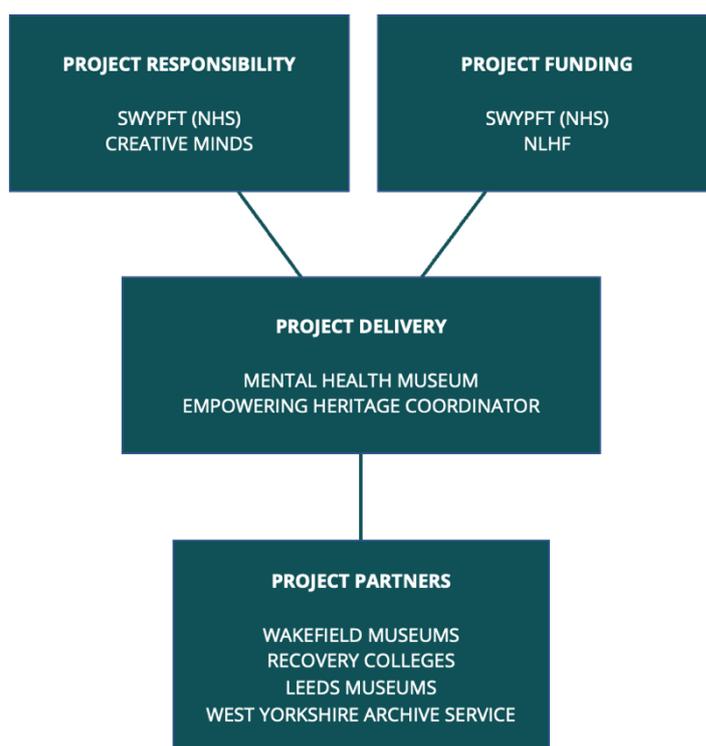
Covid certainly challenged the project, but it also highlighted the value of an agile small resource in adapting to circumstances. Extending the project timescale has also showed the benefits of a longer-term approach. MHM is now in a better position to understand its future and potential.

## 2. ABOUT THE PROJECT

*Empowering Heritage* was a project delivered by the Mental Health Museum in Wakefield, focusing on the collections of the West Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum/Stanley Royd Hospital alongside items from High Royds, Storthes Hall and Menston asylums. The collection reflects the last 200 years of mental health care and is a rare survivor of this part of our social history.

The Mental Health Museum is a linked charity hosted by South West Yorkshire Partnership Foundation Trust (SWYPFT) and managed by a dedicated Curator supported by the *Empowering Heritage* Project Co-ordinator. The charity reports to the Charitable Funds committee of the Trust in terms of governance and the project budget is held by SWYPFT's finance team.

SWYPFT also hosts the charity Creative Minds, which funds and delivers creative activities in the community to support improved healthcare. The *Empowering Heritage* project was closely linked to Creative Minds who had oversight.



The original objectives of the project were to:

- Increase the capacity of the museum to continue its co-production work by employing a Project Co-ordinator who could also enhance the skills, experience and expertise of the museum
- To recruit new volunteers to support the museum
- Open up more of the collection at the MHM for exploration by local communities, NHS staff, Recovery College students, people who access services, and their carers, family and friends
- To create a flagship public engagement programme that reached beyond the confines of the museum location and sparked interest from other heritage collections
- To add the voices of those with lived experience of mental illness and the asylums to the stories the collection can tell
- To explore how the complex heritage of mental health can impact on personal and community wellbeing
- To explore how heritage services and resources can support service user wellbeing
- To challenge and combat mental health stigma and open up contemporary debates about mental health and mental health care
- To raise the profile of MHM with the public and in the sector
- To help the museum to better understand its future and potential

There were four main workstreams within the project:

1. an exhibition in the Wakefield One/Wakefield Museum building
2. a partnership with Recovery Colleges in Wakefield, Kirklees, and Calderdale
3. other partnership development in the sector and community
4. new activity adapting to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Associated with these workstreams were personal development outcomes for participants, organisational and partnership outcomes for the partners and the MHM itself, and outcomes that relate to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) priorities and South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYPFT).

### 3. PROJECT TIMELINE

The project was timed to take place between May 2019 and June 2020 as shown in the programme schedule below:

ACTIVITY	DATE	TARGET AUDIENCE
Community Workshop Programme leading to WF1 exhibition	June – Oct 2019	Service users & local community groups, through Creative Minds networks
WF1 exhibition	Nov 2019 – May 2020	WF1 visitors, Wakefield Museum visitors
Recovery College course development with participants	Oct – Dec 2019	Recovery College students and local community
Recovery College course delivery with participants	Feb – Mar 2020	Recovery College enrolled students
Mental Health Awareness week	May 2020	Participants, Trust staff and service users, partners, local community

Restrictions around the Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on the final quarter of the project (March – June). All the activities planned for this quarter had to be cancelled or rescheduled. After discussion with NLHF it was agreed to continue the project but to adapt activities, where possible, to be delivered online, maintaining the co-production element as much as was practicable. The project end date was moved to December 2020.

The evaluation of the project has also had to adapt accordingly. Originally, Wafer Hadley was commissioned to create an evaluation framework for the project, to advise on data collection, to review and analyse the data received and write a final report. The approach was revised to focus on the delivery of primary telephone interviews with project participants, partners and stakeholders. This was ideal methodology given the lockdown restrictions and also allowed participants to tell their stories in their own ways. Seven participants took part in individual telephone interviews and three in a group video conference. Five staff, partners and stakeholders were also interviewed for the evaluation. Elements of their testimonies and feedback are included in the Outcomes section of the report.

## 4. ACTIVITIES & OUTPUTS

Many of the service users involved in the project face significant health challenges. These include conditions such as schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder, which can introduce extreme stress and difficulty into the lives of people suffering from associated symptoms.

Participants with these illnesses require enhanced support in order to contribute fully to co-production, and high levels of trust need to be in place for a successful project.

### 4.1. WF1 public exhibition and associated programme

Five local groups co-produced the exhibition with the museum: some of these identify as service user groups, while others are general community groups including users and their family members.

The community workshop programme began in June 2019. Groups made individual visits to the Museum and following discussions, decided on the themes for their creative work inspired by the museum collection. The artforms involved included needlework, painting, photography, creative writing and drama.

31 people took part in the workshops and contributed work.

The *Empowering Heritage* exhibition was opened in Wakefield One in November 2019, by the Chief Executive of the Mental Health Trust. It was closed when the Covid-19 national restrictions began in March 2020.

The project set out to deliver a six-month exhibition/events programme alongside the exhibition. Sessions were held as part of Wakefield Museum's Learning Programme, and its Family Activity Programme, using themes and objects from the *Empowering Heritage* exhibition. These plans were curtailed in March 2020 but at that point 136 people (adults and children) had taken part in the exhibition event programme at WF1.

Images of the exhibition in place are reproduced on the following page.





The exhibition led to several other strands of work which built on the Wakefield One exhibition:

- The exhibition was promoted to staff and inpatients on the Fieldhead site. For National Curry Week, the catering team recreated a curry from a nineteenth-century recipe to serve in the restaurant at Fieldhead ('rice and currie' featured on the asylum menu in the 1840s). A "mini-museum" was set up in the restaurant including objects and photographs from the museum collection.
- A second 'mini-museum' toured to Newton Lodge (the medium secure unit at Fieldhead) as part of a Health and Wellbeing Day for inpatients. This was considered such a success that the museum was due to repeat it in April 2020.
- *Empowering Heritage* co-curated an exhibition with the Research Involvement Group (RIG), service users who volunteer at the NHS Trust, working alongside the Research and Development department. The group were working with PhD student Jane Stockdale whose thesis is concerned with museums and wellbeing. The group curated an exhibition case to be sited in the Learning and Development Centre at Fieldhead Hospital and were due to unveil it at a staff induction event in March 2020.

One of the purposes of the project was to develop a showcase of work created by Mary Heaton, a patient at the Victorian asylum. *Empowering Heritage* made links with Stitched-Up Theatre Company who had developed an opera about Mary Heaton, and the company planned to premiere the opera at the MHM. The tour of the opera has been rescheduled for 2021.

The local group *Forgotten Women of Wakefield* have recently unveiled a blue plaque celebrating Mary's story which has been featured in national media.

The samplers produced by Mary Heaton have never been properly displayed at the MHM and this remains a priority for the museum, and is the focus for the co-ordinator's work during the remainder of the project.

#### **4.2. Recovery College Courses**

Co-production sessions with Recovery Colleges in Kirklees and Wakefield were carried out and a project plan agreed for each college. Both groups chose oral history as the focus for the course to be developed by *Empowering Heritage*.

The Kirklees offer was ready for inclusion in the prospectus for the spring term (to start in April 2020) but was cancelled due to Coronavirus. However, the group continued to meet online during lockdown and changed the focus of the project to record people's experiences of the pandemic. Edits of some of their interviews have been made available online. The group

continues to meet and develop this work. There are plans to create a page for the project on the Recovery College website as an ongoing activity.

Wakefield Recovery College group had just begun the oral history training when the sessions were cancelled in March 2020, as part of the Coronavirus response. The *Empowering Heritage* co-ordinator continued to support one of the volunteers to complete a piece of work that can be added to the 'pandemic archive' created by the Kirklees Recovery College.

10 volunteers took part in the original co-production sessions, and 4 remained actively involved. The necessity to move all the work online delayed the project and inevitably led to some people not being able to take part. The Colleges themselves have had to change the way they work with students and this also had an impact on *Empowering Heritage*.

### 4.3. Other Partnerships

As well as the partnership with Wakefield Museum, *Empowering Heritage* has opened doors to new partnerships with other culture and heritage organisations.

- The Mental Health Museum was invited to take part in an event to open the Sculpture Garden at the **Hepworth Gallery** in September 2019, where *Empowering Heritage* gave a presentation about the museum and the Wakefield One exhibition, followed by a workshop.
- One group of participants created a performance piece for the Wakefield One exhibition launch, and this was subsequently shared with **Coactive**, an arts charity for people with learning difficulties. Each group performed a piece for the other.
- The drama group were also invited to perform their piece – '*Scenes from the Asylum*' – on the Art Walk in January 2020 as part of **Wakefield Theatre's** Winter Festival.
- **West Yorkshire Archive Service** ran two training days for *Empowering Heritage*, attended by staff and project participants. The sessions included a general introduction to archives and the archive building, followed by a training day on the Stanley Royd Archive specifically. Fifteen people attended.
- *Empowering Heritage* has made links with a group of young co-curators from **Leeds City Museum**, who were working on an exhibition about mental health due to open in May 2020. *Empowering Heritage* participants have shared their mental health experiences with young people on the project, and there are plans to carry out further work together when public health conditions allow.

#### 4.4. Adapting to the challenges of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has extended the project timetable and required *Empowering Heritage* to find new ways to engage its participants and retain the benefits of the project. These adapted activities include the following:

**Online Museum.** This was suggested by one of the groups, who were involved in choosing the objects to display. The display can be seen at <https://www.artscafeevents.org/events>

**Object Stories.** This was another suggestion from a group of participants, using objects from the museum collection as a prompt for creative writing.

**Virus Times.** The *Virus Times* newsletter adapted the oral history strand of work to the situation around Coronavirus. The newsletter aimed to provide an informal mechanism for people to share their experiences of lockdown and a means of support and keeping in touch. It remains open for Service users, families, carers and staff for contributions.

The image shows a newsletter titled "Virus Times" from the Mental Health Museum. The cover includes the logo, the title "Virus Times", the tagline "when the going gets tough, the tough get creative", and the issue information "Issue 2 May 2020". The main text welcomes readers to the second issue and provides details about the project's purpose and how to contribute. The newsletter is divided into several sections: "Silver Linings" with a question about lockdown changes, "Goodies on the doorstep" about a nurse's nephew, "A weekend in isolation" with daily entries for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, "Cupboard Archaeology" about cleaning out cupboards, "...and gardens" about unearthing old glasses, and "...and garages" about a car wash. There are also two callout boxes: one titled "I may be on my own in isolation but I am not alone" and another titled "When this is all over... I'm going for a curry".

**Mental Health Museum**  
**Virus Times**  
*'when the going gets tough, the tough get creative'*  
Issue 2 May 2020

Welcome to the second issue of the **Virus Times**. We hope it finds you well.

The *Virus Times* is being put together by people who have been taking part in a history project at the Mental Health Museum at Fieldhead in Wakefield. We've spent the last few months studying the past, now we find ourselves living through history in the making! We're creating a record of it by collecting our everyday experiences of life during lockdown and putting them together in a newsletter. It's also our way of keeping in touch and supporting each other.

You can join in - details of how you can contribute on page 3.  
Stay safe, with all good wishes from the Empowering Heritage Group

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**Silver Linings**

Have you noticed any changes during lockdown that you think are for the better? Here are a couple of ours.

**Goodies on the doorstep**

My nephew is a nurse in London. He was left a pack of 4 toilet rolls and a 4 pack of beer on the doorstep.

**A weekend in isolation**

Friday: an invitation to a free Sunday lunch with a choice of meats to be delivered at a time I'd like to my doorstep. I rang back with acceptance and thanks. To neighbours in the village who I didn't know. Friends delivered my grocery order with a knock on the door and a cheery wave. No cash changed hands, I've an account to settle with them whenever.

Saturday: a phone call, expect a surprise on your step by a nomination from a friend. A couple of hours later a strange car stopped at my gate, a girl ran down the drive and with a knock on the door was away. A small square polystyrene container with a selection of home baked cakes with a note on the top. From (a name I didn't know), love, enjoy. I really did. My coffee has never tasted so good.

Sunday: lunch, all and more than I expected, it even had a separate container of gravy. The chocolate fudge cake afters sent me into raptures. I felt, feel as if I've had and have a community hug. I may be on my own in isolation but I am not alone.  
JH

**Cupboard Archaeology**

Last issue we talked about the fact that everyone seems to be cleaning out cupboards and finding long lost 'treasures'. Turns out it's not just cupboards... It's whole rooms...

Well spring has sprung & I have decided to tackle my spare room. I have chucked lots of stuff out. I also found lots of cross stitch kits I had forgotten I had - and floristry wire. I have not done floristry for over 10 years!  
KD

**...and gardens**

Looking for things to do, my son decided to 'tidy up' the garden. In doing so he unearthed a pair of glasses I lost 3 years ago. The glasses were still perfect, my eyesight is not.  
MI

**...and garages**

My neighbour found some 'no water car wash', a puzzling present from a Christmas past, and decided to give it a go. When I asked if it worked, I was told I was missing the point; he was out in the sun and he was busy. I had the impression if he had to clean his car again, this time with water, he wouldn't be too bothered.  
MI

**When this is all over...  
...I'm going for a curry**

'I want to go for a curry with my closest friend to Six Chimneys in Wakefield because we are both missing a curry from Weatherspoons.'  
HM

**What treat are you planning for yourself when this is all over?**

**Postal packs.** A number of people in the *Empowering Heritage* network do not use smartphones or computers so cannot access the online activities. The project co-ordinator posted packs to these participants with the newsletter (the *Virus Times* is in a print design format as it was originally intended for this group) together with craft and other distraction activities. People can respond via phone calls or text messages, and a couple of people have learned to use email and are now contacting the co-ordinator in this way. Within this group there are people who live alone so the co-ordinator has also kept in touch with them via 'social' phone calls/text messages in addition to the activity packs. Sixteen people receive postal packs.

**Lockdown Stories** – oral history interviews that were carried out by Kirklees Recovery College have been made available online. The work can be accessed at [www.artscafeevents.org](http://www.artscafeevents.org)

## 5. OUTCOMES

### 5.1. Outcomes for participants

The Project Co-ordinator, Maria Ineson, has been working in the area for many years with mental health groups in creative settings. This experience, combined with her extensive network of contacts and the trust she has built up, were very material to the outcomes of the project. A sense of safety was already in place for many of the participants and this was crucial to their willingness to engage. It has also meant she was able to pivot the project quickly and find new ways of delivering activities when faced with the unprecedented circumstances around Covid.

*"Qualified, experienced, open-minded and passionate. Maria is really treasure. So welcoming and not patronising"*

(RIG participant)

*"She's a lovely lady and a bloody asset. She's amazing"*

(Portobello Group participant)

#### 5.1.1. Mental and physical benefits from participating in creative activities

The mental and physical benefits of participating in creative activities are well documented (as evidenced by the existence of Creative Minds within the NHS Trust). This project worked well in extending the participants' creative experiences and providing them with new opportunities.

*"It's taken you out of yourself. It helped my recovery, free from side effects!"*

(RIG Group participant)

*"I've always been an advocate of creativity to help with mental health. There's some kind of magic. It calms down the confusion."*

(Drama Group participant)

The creative activities go hand-in-hand with social engagement, and it was clear from the participants' testimonies how important this is to continuing to live well.

*"I think by opening up and having discussions...it isn't just about medication, is it? It's about quality of life. Recovery isn't about getting back to work and doing something, it's about having a life worth living. That's what you learn from these stories, you learn how people have coped, their resilience, where they are on their journey."*

(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

*"Being able to talk about it helps that person, but it helps others. The project as a whole enabled us to talk about what had helped us when we were in difficulty."*

(Portobello Group participant)

*"The project as well has kept us in touch. As well as our regular meeting with the Recovery College online, this is another get together during the week. Mentally, that's good for us."*  
(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

Participating in the project also importantly offered distraction, which became even more crucial with the closure of regular groups and activities during periods of lockdown.

*"We were interested in the crafts that the in-patients had done, and we decided to do rag dolls. We were thinking what sort of things could people have been making from recycled materials. We started to do them at The Arts Café, but we ended up finishing them at home during lockdown. It was something for us to do. Since lockdown all the classes I used to go to have all been cancelled so it's a question of keeping occupied at home really."*  
(Pontefract Group participant)

*"Distraction from your issues and you see something at the end of it, like. It's therapeutic."*  
(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

### **5.1.2. Personal interests and self-expression**

Beyond the fundamental benefits of creative and social activity articulated above, *Empowering Heritage* has allowed participants time to talk about and explore their own experiences, thinking about and expressing themselves in new ways using a wide variety of media. The context of the project allowed for historical perspectives, personal perspectives and creative ones.

*"We were inspired by the samplers [by Mary Heaton]. We all made samplers about how we felt. I did a big house, with buses and trees and did emojis peeking out from behind things, to show how I feel invisible."*  
(Pontefract Group participant)

*"This is one of the best projects that we've ever done with the group in ten years. It's the first that has brought together the interests of the artists, the historians and those with personal stories they want to share."*  
(Youth Engagement Officer, Leeds City Museum Mental Health Project)

*"We had some lovely conversations. Some people did a project on their own. One person did embroidery samplers with a modern twist, some were doing a project together and they did a keyboard in felt. I did a painting. Music was something that came out as quite important for people's mental health, no matter who you are. Music was quite a thing with a few of us."*  
(Portobello Group participant)

*"It was an amazing experience. Outstanding. It was the first time in my life I have science, logic and creativity together... It was about psychology and mental health, but it was enjoyable. It was outside pain, problems, tablets"*

(RIG Group participant)

### **5.1.3. Deep engagement with the heritage**

A number of the participants had experience of being hospitalised or visiting mental health hospitals, so there was some trepidation about visiting the museum at the Fieldhead facility.

*“Quite a lot of the group had had contact with Fieldhead through their illnesses, but they’d not been to the museum, so they had worries about going to the institution to see it.”*

(Portobello Group participant)

*“I did know the museum existed because I had been an in-patient of Fieldhead hospital”*

(Pontefract Group participant)

*“I’ve got personal experience of the old asylum. I had an uncle who was in Menston for virtually all his life. And I’ve had experience of visiting him there so lots of what I heard and saw at the MHM chimed with things that I experienced years ago.”*

(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

In some cases assumptions about the treatment of mental health in the past were turned on their heads:

*“Because my daughter has paranoid schizophrenia, I do know a lot about mental health, and it has been really really interesting about Stanley Royd and how they did look after people. It wasn’t as if you were just put in a loony bin and forgotten about, they actually took care of people, and got them to do all sorts, to live their lives really. They were a lot kinder than people are today.”*

(Pontefract Group participant)

*“It was a place of safety. Compared to the workhouse or prison, the asylum was a lot better. There was practical help. You didn’t end up dying on the streets. It was more like a modern commune and they were self-sufficient, providing all the essentials.”*

(Drama Group participant)

*“What they were doing a hundred years ago, in some places it isn’t done now, but some of the ideas are still carried on, like occupational therapy and going out and exercising. All these ideas are still there nowadays, and they’re still being used to maintain your mental health...The whole holistic approach – there’s been a turn towards that. They had that idea when they first started the asylums, didn’t they? ”*

(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

In visiting the museum and responding creatively to the objects and archives, participants had a chance to deeply engage with the history of mental health treatment. This brought about new learning and awareness, and new perspectives on their own experiences.

*"It's the book I remember mostly – the reasons for somebody being admitted. I've never forgotten this lady was admitted because she read novels"*

(Portobello Group participant)

*"Visiting the padded cell was an amazing experience with a profound effect. It led to passionate debates about language and they [the young people] decided to dedicate a case to the language used about mental health"*

(Youth Engagement Officer, Leeds City Museum Mental Health Project)

*"Thought provoking. I'm looking at things from a different perspective. I would like to investigate the records more, and find out more about diet and nutrition [in the asylum]."*

(Drama Group participant)

The rare and unique social history preserved in the museum was acknowledged and this gave the project extra value to the participants.

*"Nationally, it's very important. I think we're lucky that some people had the forethought to keep different items that were put in the museum. Some items, like the clothing and the crafts that they made, wouldn't have survived without the museum."*

(Pontefract Group participant)

However, with the exception of the Mary Heaton samplers, the participants felt that the voices of the patients were very much missing from the museum experience and this stimulated a desire to capture the voices of those with lived experiences today, so that would become part of the history.

*"This oral history is important because when we saw how it was recorded from the past, wow, you know unbelievable. If this lasts a long, long time, this oral history, I think it will be great"*

(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

#### **5.1.4. Overcoming stigma, being seen and heard**

The participants felt that a stigma still very much exists about mental health in society, although it has improved in recent years. The project provided opportunities to address this stigma and be part of challenging it, which was empowering for the participants.

*"I don't care what people say, there is a stigma about mental health, but things are changing slowly. The stigma is still there, but anything you can do to alter that, like this [project], get on with it"*

(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

*"Mental health – I still think it's a rotten shame that people think it's ok to just put people down. I get a bit annoyed if I hear anybody. I think it's disgusting that people think they're better just because they haven't got mental illnesses, or at least think they haven't."*

(Pontefract Group participant)

*"I was bottled and labelled with paranoid schizophrenia because whenever I used to question my diagnosis they just used to push it aside, [and say] 'let's not talk about it.'"*

(Drama Group participant)

The outputs of the project that were publicly shared, such as the exhibition at Wakefield One and performances, were seen as important parts of addressing the stigma. Participants felt their experiences were acknowledged through these opportunities. There was deep pride that their work was in the public domain and that family, friends and those in a position of authority would see it.

*"I performed to some people I know and some of them were in tears. And we've done this Virus Times – it was endorsed by the boss of SWYFPT, he endorsed our magazine."*

(Drama Group participant)

*"Even my daughter can see evidence on display. My daughter has been very happy."*

(RIG Group participant)

*"I wrote some sketches based on the admissions [to Stanley Royd]. They were performed in front of the Mayor and other dignitaries."*

(Drama Group participant)

*"I was really proud of what we'd achieved and done."*

(Portobello Group participant)

### **5.1.5. Developing confidence, new skills and taking forward ambitions**

Many of the participants attested that *Empowering Heritage* offered them opportunities for personal development in a way that other community activities might not have done.

*"It changed me. That project made me stronger, more confident. Sometimes people don't take you seriously. At the Museum the atmosphere was so beautiful, a more safe, natural environment. In 7 years of experience with the Trust [SWYFPT], this was a very different experience."*

(RIG Group participant)

Inspired by the collection, the participants were given significant freedom to pursue their own interests through the project, but with substantial support to do so and this seems to have made the biggest impact.

*"I've learned a lot personally. I'm not computer skilled at all. I've learned a lot about how to interview and stuff. How to interview, what questions to ask. Maria has been great for that."*

(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

*“From my point of view I've enjoyed learning the technology of editing and the various aspects of that.”*  
(Kirklees Recovery College participant)

*“At school, we did a bit of acting, but actually the teachers didn't think I'd ever amount to anything. So I wasn't put forward to doing any acting...[In this project] I played a patient who was sectioned in the 1930s and then I also played a doctor where I wore a tie. I'm ambitious. I really enjoyed the acting because I have aspirations around acting...When we did it at Wakefield 1, I think that's the best performance that I've done.”*  
(Drama Group participant)

### **5.1.6. Summary of outcomes for participant**

Many of the outcomes described above are interconnected. The word cloud below pulls out the individual outcomes for participants .



## **5.2. Outcomes for project managers**

### **5.2.1. The Museum offers a unique perspective on Mental Health**

There are unique advantages to working with this collection. According to one external manager, a museum and its objects have "*gravitas*" and this leads to a sense of empowerment for participants working with the collection. It lends itself well to work on self-validation for service users.

A museum can lend "*a sense of permanence and importance to whatever it shines its spotlight on*". There is a sense that Heritage will "last for ever". This gives participants a heightened feeling of personal value, and indicates that the issues being discussed are taken seriously and have high validity. A museum also creates a context of trust. It is a place "where you can talk about issues in safety".

Working with a Collection in a collaborative way "*starts conversations*"; even when participants are encountering "*difficult*" objects. Several management interviewees noted that it provided an opportunity to think again about our view of the past and the present. While some of the collection highlights the stigma of mental health issues in the past, and the poor treatment of some patients, there are also examples of more positive practice. Considering the mental health heritage also "*shines a light on practice now*" and asks how we will be perceived in 200 years' time, regarding our practice in mental health.

The project highlighted the dominance within the collection of the "official point of view": a great deal of content regarding the view of asylum managers for instance, and relatively little from patients in the system. It felt right to balance this out with "the patient voice", and a narrative about lived experience of mental health issues.

Managers note that these advantages of working with a museum collection do not immediately resonate with all potential participants, and those that do take part will tend towards being "*self-selecting*". But for those among the target group for whom it signifies, it has very high value. Participants have become passionate about it and "*finding a passion is really important in recovery*". It is further noted that the museum has a strong collection that lends itself to engagement with a variety of participants, perhaps particularly at the current time, when more people are struggling with mental health issues due to Covid-19.

### **5.2.2. Co-production and wellbeing**

The partners the museum has brought together within *Empowering Heritage* have a common interest in wellbeing. At the Calderdale and Kirklees Recovery College, for example, there is a strong commitment to co-production, and it is recognised that the MHM is able to work

effectively in the same way. This sees experts working on an equal footing with service users, creating content and interpretation together.

Collaborative working/co-production has evolved organically, facilitated by the Co-ordinator at MHM. It has provided two concrete benefits: therapeutic activity, and also a developmental aspect that helps participants see themselves in different ways.

The role of the Co-ordinator is pivotal. When participants are potentially vulnerable and have particular mental health needs, a great deal of time is required to build trust and relationships, so a facilitator with existing links to the community is extremely valuable. This is recognised as the first major step to helping participants own the project.

### **5.2.3. The Covid Challenge**

Some opportunities for people suffering from poor mental health have been closed down during the Covid 19 pandemic, and a “*positive, meaningful project*” during this period has been very rare. The MHM’s ability to keep the project running in 2020 has been extremely valuable for participants.

Adaptation to new circumstances has introduced new skills to the project – such as the development of video conferencing skills among participants. Creative Minds has discovered that online provision can be successful – some of its online groups have quadrupled participant numbers during 2020. This has put a spotlight on loneliness, and suggests that online provision could be a low-risk introduction for people who may otherwise avoid joining groups. However, Creative Minds also notes that online provision works best by building on existing relationships made offline.

The project has suffered through its loss of public display and sharing opportunities. A public platform was an important part of the co-production process for *Empowering Heritage* and this has been hard to achieve in the circumstances. Some work is still scheduled to take place on extending the reach of the oral history project through a podcast, ready for sharing online for the national day of mental health awareness on 4 February 2021.

The project originally aimed to share some of its outputs internally within the NHS Trust, but the Covid crisis has severely restricted this aspect.

### **5.2.4. Long term impact**

The impact of Empowering Heritage rests mainly on two aspects of the project: the high potential of the museum collection, and the partnership networks in place around MHM.

In a project like this which builds relationships with people suffering from poor mental health, it is a real advantage to tap into existing groups that have a greater chance of staying in place after the project ends. This makes it more possible to sustain relationships with vulnerable people. MHM will promote this kind of continuation through its newsletter and working with participants on routes into volunteering at the museum.

The museum is presented as a base that the participants can continue to have a relationship with, following the end of the project. *Empowering Heritage* has helped to demonstrate the kind of co-production work that MHM sees as integral to its mission and values. It has also created a good platform on which to build future heritage-based initiatives.

### 5.3. Outcomes for NLHF

#### HERITAGE

- Heritage has been identified and better explained

- More of the heritage collection has been displayed to the public.
- New public displays created at WF1.
- New interpretation produced for the heritage, including testimony by those with lived experience

#### PEOPLE

- A wider range of people have been involved in heritage
- People have developed skills
- People have greater wellbeing
- People have learned about heritage, leading to changes in ideas and actions

- Participants have been engaged to work on project, drawn from service users, local mental health/community groups and other non-traditional groups
- A larger audience has been reached through use of WF1, November 2019 to March 2020
- Exhibition development participants have developed creative skills and engaged deeply with the heritage
- Volunteers have been engaged to work on Recovery College project, drawn from existing Recovery College students and local community
- Engaging with heritage collections has shown special value in realising participants' potential and making it more likely they will live well
- Reach of the project overall is focused on most excluded and vulnerable participants

#### THE ORGANISATION AND AREA

- The local area is a better place to live
- The organisation is more resilient

- Project provided unique value to the NHS Trust
- Cultural partners benefit from partnership
- Museums and collections showed special value in promoting well-being
- Project highlights potential of MHM

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1. Trusted networks and liaison

- There is great value in working with *existing* groups in a mental health context, which are both ready to go, and able to be sustained post project
- The liaison person or facilitator in a project like this is of central importance. The right people skills are essential, and an existing relationship with established networks is also valuable.
- The agile approach within the project and the relatively small person-to-person network meant that in a challenge such as the Coronavirus pandemic, the project could adapt, and become a lifeline for participants

### 6.2. The Collection

- The MHM collection presents a rare heritage, with broad appeal and many different stories. Through this project more of the collection has been explored.
- It enables reflection on the past and also the present, in both positive and negative ways
- The collection tends to miss the patient voice, or lived experience of poor mental health. Co-production can remedy this.
- An aim of the project was to recruit new volunteers for the museum but due to Covid lockdowns and limited capacity the museum concluded that it could not manage new volunteers at this time.

### 6.3. Co-production

- Being able to personally direct work and have significant input is empowering for participants
- Significant levels of person-to-person interaction are central and requires a skilled facilitator
- Low numbers of participants and a long timescale are beneficial
- Co-production in this project has led to skills development for participants, including confidence-building and practical skills like podcast-making and display interpretation
- Intense work with people who face ongoing mental health challenges has the potential to make a major difference to their recovery or quality of life

### 6.4. Museums are trusted and respected

- For some participants museums signify trustworthiness – and participants may self-select on this basis
- Being included in the work of a museum and working with a heritage collection brings validation

- Public display is an important for validation, and unfortunately some of the opportunities for this were curtailed within *Empowering Heritage* due to Covid 19.

### **6.5. Partnership potential for a small specialist museum**

- The Collection and the co-production work lend themselves well to touring and partnership with other museums
- The MHM has shown how it can partner with museums with larger footfall and this suggests potential for the future
- The key elements MHM brings to partnerships are its collection, its expertise, and the lived experience of its community participants
- There is potential to replicate MHM's community work in other locations as part of a partnership
- This project has helped to raise the profile in the sector and there is more potential here.

### **6.6. Covid-19**

- Covid 19 had a major impact on the project, particularly in extending the timescale, limiting face to face contact, and restricting public display opportunities.
- It also had some positive impacts on the programme. The potential for online engagement was useful to explore, and because of the agility of the project, it was able to stay open in a context of widespread closures.