



Kirklees Museums & Galleries

Health and Wellbeing Evaluation of Volunteer Programme

Year one
summary report



Contents

Introduction	2
Five Ways to Wellbeing	3
CONNECT	4
BE ACTIVE	7
TAKE NOTICE	8
KEEP LEARNING	10
GIVE	11
Unique attributes of volunteering with Kirklees Museums & Galleries ..	12
Key motivations for volunteering with Kirklees Museums & Galleries ...	18
Recommendations	20

Kirklees Museums & Galleries would like to thank all the volunteers who participated in this Health and Wellbeing Evaluation Report.

Introduction

This report presents a summary of key findings from the first year of an evaluation programme exploring the potential health and wellbeing impacts of volunteering at Kirklees Museums and Galleries (KMAG). This two year evaluation programme is being delivered by the Audience Agency and has been funded by Arts Council England as part of a Museum Resilience project called Sustainable Collections.

In 2016 KMAG managed three museums, two historic houses, an art gallery and a country park along with a huge collection of objects, and fine and decorative art held in trust for the people of Kirklees. Specifically this evaluation has focussed on the following volunteer roles and sites:

- Oakwell Country Park Volunteers
- Friends of Oakwell Hall and Country Park Volunteers
- Friends of Tolson and Ravensknowle Park Volunteers
- Friends of Red House Volunteers

This report presents a summary of key findings of a survey of the existing KMAG volunteer programme, alongside qualitative data collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews with existing volunteers to discuss their experience of volunteering and any impact it has had on them in more detail. Of the 46 regular volunteers 43% (20) took part in the survey and seven participated in the interviews.

Underpinning this evaluation is the New Economics Foundation (NEF) Five Ways to Wellbeing, a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing. More information about the Five Ways to Wellbeing can be found here: neweconomics.org

The five pathways of the Five Ways to Wellbeing are:

CONNECT



BE ACTIVE



TAKE NOTICE



KEEP LEARNING



GIVE



With the people around you. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Go for a walk or run. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Be curious. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Try something new. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

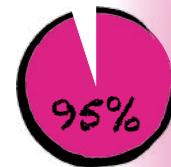
Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

The NEF Five Ways to Wellbeing framework aligns with the Kirklees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Involving Communities Framework and the Active for Life outcomes.

Throughout the evaluation, evidence emerged of the positive health and wellbeing impacts that the KMAG volunteering programme has on volunteers, spanning all the Five Ways to Wellbeing pathways.

Of the 20 volunteers participating in the study, 12 access **all five Ways to Wellbeing** through their volunteering activities with KMAG. All volunteers access **at least two of the Five Ways to Wellbeing** through their volunteering activities.

CONNECT



Almost all volunteers (95%) strongly agree or agree that they **enjoy the company of other people** when they volunteer with KMAG.



84% strongly agree or agree that volunteering with KMAG has **increased their opportunity to spend time with other people**.



Almost all (94%) strongly agree or agree that through volunteering with KMAG they **feel part of their community**.

Volunteers are able to spend time with a wide range of different people through their roles including other volunteers, staff and members of the public. Volunteers told us that connections with each of these groups are important. They also value the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds and people who they would not otherwise encounter if it were not for volunteering with KMAG.

Working as part of a team with people with whom meaningful connections have been formed creates a feeling of belonging and of purpose. It is also possible for volunteers to find quiet moments alone and for some the flexibility to connect with others on their own terms is valued.

Some have developed meaningful friendships with others through volunteering, which may have helped them through difficult times or replaced a social network lost when they retired.





BE ACTIVE



Almost two thirds (63%) of volunteers have **increased the amount of physical activity they do** through their volunteering role with KMAG.



Gardening is the activity most commonly engaged in: almost two thirds of volunteers (63%) do some form of gardening through their role. Walking is also common with approximately half (53%) increasing the amount of walking they do through their volunteering activities. A significant proportion also undertake conservation, painting and building/construction tasks.

Qualitative information collected from volunteers highlights clear links between physical activity outdoors, stress reduction, mindfulness and wellbeing.

It's a bit cheaper than going to the gym, really, isn't it? And out in the fresh air room. Yes, and it's just nice to be outside really, isn't it?

Yes, I can do a lot of physical activity. I feel a lot fitter and a lot stronger than what I was before, coming here has given me a better purpose.

TAKE NOTICE



80% of volunteers strongly agree or agree that they **enjoy spending time outside** when they volunteer with KMAG.



80% of volunteers strongly agree or agree that they **enjoy engaging with local heritage** when they volunteer with KMAG.



80% of volunteers agree that they **enjoy being creative** when they volunteer.

Volunteers working at Oakwell Hall and Country Park take active pleasure in spending time outside in the park and grounds, with several commenting that spending time outdoors is relaxing and good for their overall sense of wellbeing.

The site offers the scope for volunteers to work on a range of heavy, skilled, manual projects that it would not be possible for them to do anywhere else. Work including laying paths, coppicing trees, gardening in large beds and building new structures, such as the Roundhouse, are enjoyably challenging. These substantial outdoor projects give volunteers the opportunity to practice and to learn new skills.

The opportunity to engage with history and heritage is valuable to some volunteers and, for them, forms an important part of what makes volunteering in this setting unique. The chance to give back to the

community by helping to maintain and improve a valuable heritage site for the enjoyment and benefit of the public is a source of pride, a motivation and ultimately a contributing factor in feelings of purpose, pride and job satisfaction.

Volunteers enjoy different types of creativity in their role, including the opportunity to be creative in the way they carry out their tasks. Many perceive these activities as innately creative e.g. gardening or building new structures.



KEEP LEARNING



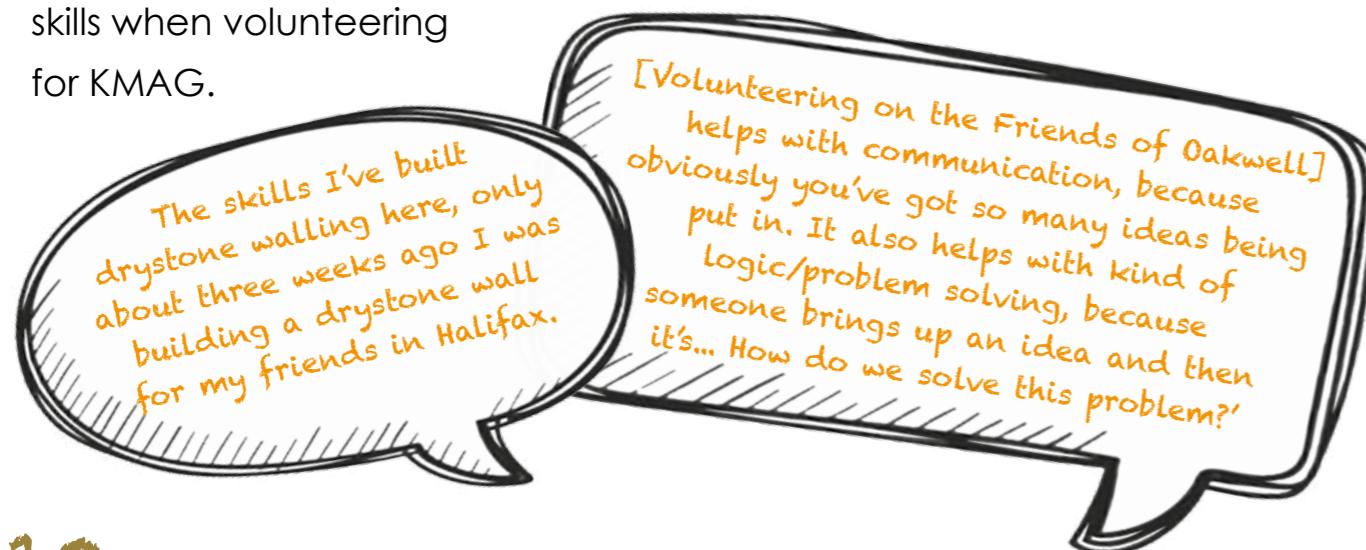
The vast majority (90%) of existing volunteers agree that they have **learnt new things** through their role.

Specific learning areas include conservation and land management skills, knowledge about history and heritage, creative skills, heritage management and organisational skills.



The majority of volunteers have also been able to **develop existing skills and knowledge**, with 73% saying that they have become better at some things through volunteering.

Volunteers describe feeling more confident to use existing skills. Some specified that their social and communications skills have improved through volunteering. In some cases, new skills learned through volunteering have been reapplied in other parts of volunteers' lives. Volunteers also feedback that they feel well supported to learn new skills when volunteering for KMAG.



The skills I've built dry-stone walling here, only about three weeks ago I was building a dry-stone wall for my friends in Halifax.

[Volunteering on the Friends of Oakwell] helps with communication, because obviously you've got so many ideas being put in. It also helps with kind of logic/problem solving, because someone brings up an idea and then it's... How do we solve this problem?

GIVE

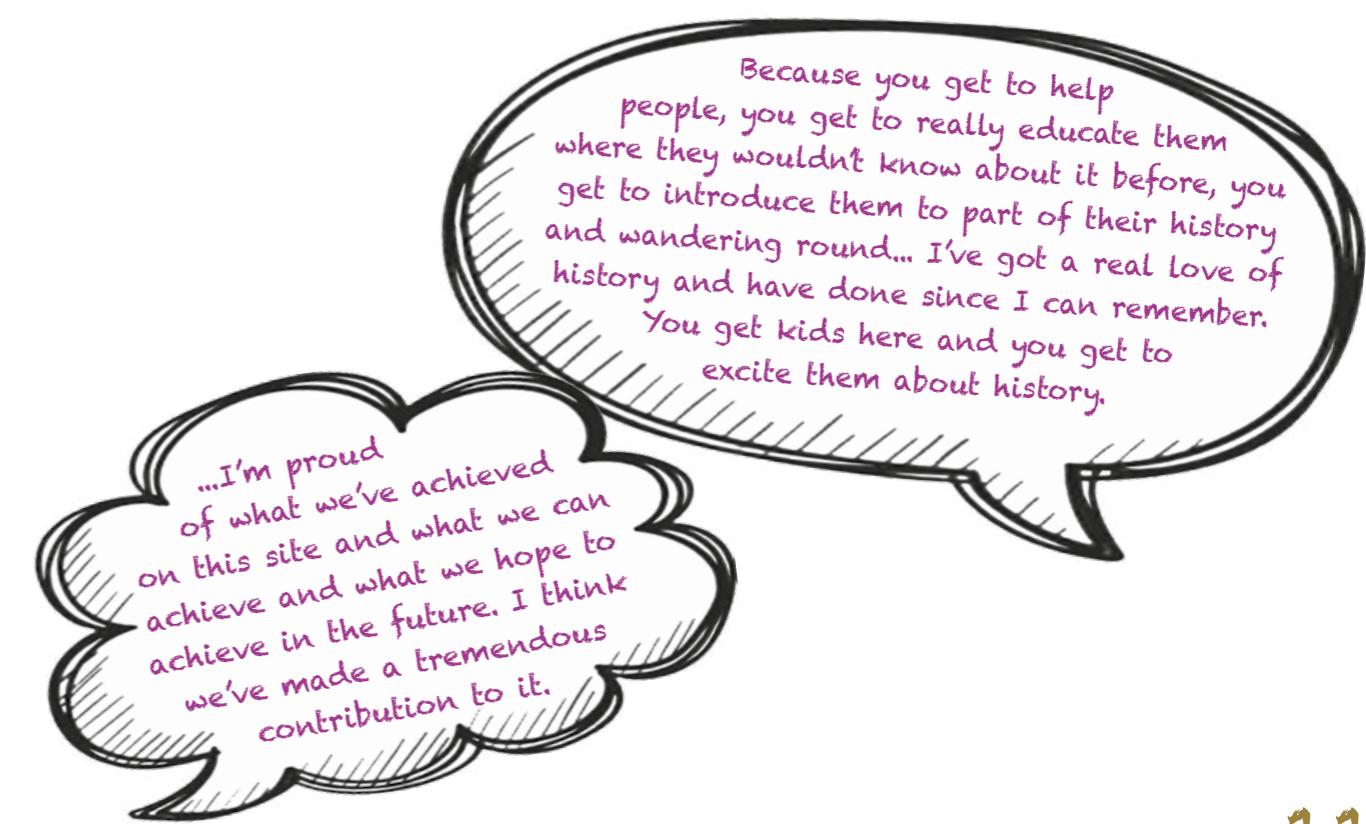


100% strongly agree or agree that they believe they **make a worthwhile contribution to society** through their volunteering work.



95% strongly agree or agree that they are **proud of being a volunteer**.

Over the 12 months, KMAG volunteers delivered an estimated **8247 hours of activity**. The economic value of these hours is estimated to be worth **over £89,000**. Altruistic motivations to give back to society are important for many volunteers. Some feel pride in being able to do high quality and meaningful work that contributes to the sustainability of the site they volunteer at in important ways. Opportunities to help visitors learn about the heritage of the sites is a source of pride for some and receiving positive feedback from the public is also important.



Because you get to help people, you get to really educate them where they wouldn't know about it before, you get to introduce them to part of their history and wandering round... I've got a real love of history and have done since I can remember. You get kids here and you get to excite them about history.

...I'm proud of what we've achieved on this site and what we can achieve and what we hope to achieve in the future. I think we've made a tremendous contribution to it.

Unique attributes of volunteering with Kirklees Museums & Galleries

KMAG is a unique setting for volunteering and its combination of museums, heritage and parks offers a variety of environments that influence wellbeing benefits for volunteers.



Heritage is important for many volunteers. Helping to preserve a culturally important community space, sharing a love of heritage with visitors and learning new information and stories about heritage all emerged as significant benefits.

"It kind of feels like by being a volunteer here you're actually being a part of history... we're having a 17th century day which means I actually get to dress up in the clothing which I have not done before and I am thrilled..."

For many the outdoor space is key. Few museum and gallery services have outdoor spaces like KMAG's and the benefits for wellbeing, such as connection with the outdoors and physical exercise, were referenced frequently by volunteers.

"... it enables me to be outside and enjoy the surroundings and all that. I mean I could enjoy, working in a shop, I'd be bored though. Whereas here, I never get bored, always find something different to do."

Another unique attribute, in particular for Oakwell Hall and County Park as a place to volunteer, is that the scale of the site offers the scope for volunteers to work on a range of heavy, skilled, manual projects that it would not be possible for them to do anywhere else. These substantial outdoor projects give volunteers the opportunity to practice and to learn new skills.



The male-friendly nature of the volunteering opportunities are of immense value. Oakwell can engage with great success older men who are often vulnerable (social isolation, poor mental and physical health) who indoor based sites may struggle to engage. Many older male volunteers commented that they could not see themselves volunteering in any indoor setting.



"Yes, it's manual labour. I spent my life in an office, designing, sitting at a desk and stuff, so you want something different."

The evaluation highlights the value of the volunteer management delivered by KMAG. Volunteers trust the staff they work with and they are treated kindly and with respect. There is flexibility and staff understand if volunteers are not feeling well or not up to doing something.

Even though many volunteers would like to have a greater level of input in terms of directing their role, the feedback suggests that volunteer managers do a great job at giving volunteers clear goals and expectations in terms of quality, with enough scope for volunteers to be creative and put their own stamp on projects. Volunteers are also given needed and meaningful work to do (rather than token projects) which is a source of job satisfaction, pride and value. Feedback suggests that the volunteer management practice at KMAG may be partly responsible for the wellbeing impacts achieved.

KMAG has attracted a number of volunteers who began volunteering in anticipation of direct benefits to their mental or physical health. Through the evaluation, stories from volunteers have emerged of the ways in which volunteering has aided their recovery from physical and mental illness, enabled by the activities undertaken and the supportive environment.

"... one of the reasons why I still do it is it's just been so beneficial for my mental health. Because obviously the doctors could just kind of go "Here's these painkillers, here's these drugs" for everything else I was feeling, but especially on top of all of the drugs that they'd given me for the physical stuff they couldn't really do that much for the psychological, and here has really helped... because you're engaged, you're doing stuff, the people are nice if you're struggling, like anyone who works here will help you."



"It was getting me out of the house, it was getting my brain engaged as well... I was too sick to actually do anything, but I was at that stage where I wasn't sick enough that my brain... just switched off."

"The thing with having a stroke is, it can leave you quite tired by the middle afternoon, but I don't get that now. ...Because I'm interacting with people and there are quite a variety of things so I don't get bored. It gives me exercise, and another thing, it keeps my brain active because having a stroke it does affect the brain in a big way, a lot more than most people might imagine."

"I had to finish work because I had a couple of breakdowns in a space of a couple of years, and I couldn't really work and I was just sitting in the house and slowly going daft, really, and it was getting out, just something to do, give me a purpose in life when sometimes there doesn't seem to be a purpose."



The evaluation has revealed high levels of loyalty to volunteering for KMAG amongst existing volunteers, with over half volunteering for at least three years. This is very likely to be due to the high level of satisfaction with both the work and the infrastructure reflected in responses, and influenced in part by the fact that most volunteers are of retirement age with spare time available. A longer term commitment allows volunteers to experience the valuable benefits highlighted in this report consistently over a longer period of time, as an integral part of their retirement.



Key motivations for volunteering with KMAG

I enjoy the countryside and green spaces.
I like to think my modest contributions enhance the experience and enjoyment of others who visit Oakwell Country Park.
I get a sense of achievement in undertaking tasks and activities and learning new skills.
Keeps me fit - mentally & physically.

The evaluation identified a wide variety of motivations attracting people to volunteer with KMAG, which include:

- Altruistic reasons, giving back to society and helping to maintain KMAG sites to enhance visitors' enjoyment.
- The sense of achievement from undertaking volunteering tasks.
- Opportunities to learn, to use existing skills and to develop new skills.
- Opportunities for social interaction and meeting new people.
- Anticipated direct physical or mental health benefits.

1. I think it is tremendously important that our heritage is not lost.
2. I hope that I am helping to preserve that heritage.
3. I enjoy meeting with other volunteers and meeting new people.
4. I feel we should all help the younger generations to experience "living" history.



Recommendations

Key recommendations emerging from the evaluation are set out here.

- KMAG's ability to appeal to a wide range of motivations in its volunteering programme has ensured a skilled and committed volunteer base, who experience significant personal benefits from volunteering. Retaining this unique volunteering offer across museums, heritage and parks should be a priority to benefit both KMAG and volunteers themselves.
- The valuable wellbeing benefits of KMAG's volunteering programme have much to offer early intervention and prevention initiatives. Through developing collaborations, KMAG can ensure contribution to these initiatives and increase wellbeing outcomes for Kirklees residents.



- Continuing the excellent volunteer management practice at KMAG will help to ensure the future success of the volunteering programme and continued positive impacts for both KMAG and volunteers. By sharing this good practice within Kirklees and across the museums and heritage sector at national level, KMAG can enable other organisations and initiatives to learn from their experiences.

- Some volunteers expressed that they would like a greater level of input in terms of directing their role, so building this in where possible and appropriate is recommended.

- The existing volunteer scheme has been particularly successful in attracting older, retired volunteers who are able to commit to longer term volunteering. This provides stability for both KMAG and volunteers, therefore retaining this type of volunteering opportunity is important.



- Alongside this, new volunteering roles are starting to provide shorter term opportunities which are particularly suitable for younger volunteers. Maintaining a mix of both types of role over the longer term will enable KMAG to benefit from the skills and expertise of both older and younger volunteers, as well as allowing a wider range of volunteers to experience the wellbeing benefits of volunteering.
- A wellbeing focus should be embedded in future volunteering recruitment, ensuring that potential wellbeing impacts for individual volunteers are considered and continue to be measured.

Bagshaw Museum
Wilton Park, Batley WF17 0AS



Oakwell Hall & Country Park
Nutter Lane, Birstall, Batley WF17 9LG



Tolson Museum
Ravensknowle Park, Wakefield Road, Huddersfield HD5 8DJ



Huddersfield Art Gallery
Princess Alexandra Walk, Huddersfield HD1 2SU



**London Office**

2nd Floor, Rich Mix
35-47 Bethnal Green Road
London E1 6LA
Tel: 020 7407 4625

Manchester Office

Green Fish Resource Centre
46–50 Oldham Street
Northern Quarter
Manchester M4 1LE
Tel: 0161 234 2955

hello@theaudienceagency.org
www.theaudienceagency.org

Registered in England & Wales 8117915
Registered Charity No. 1149979

Kirklees Museums & Galleries

Tel: 01484 223210

www.kirklees.gov.uk/museums

museumsandgalleries@kirklees.gov.uk

 Kirklees Museums & Galleries

 @KirkleesMuseums



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

