



**AMGUEDDFA
CYMRU**

**Museums Inspiring
Memories**

Consultations report

amgueddfa.cymru
museum.wales

Introduction

Museums Inspiring Memories is a three-year project led by Amgueddfa Cymru in partnership with Alzheimer's Society Cymru and is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Starting in April 2022 and building on our existing programme of dementia-friendly museum activities, the project is **working with people living with dementia, unpaid carers, carer sector staff, heritage sector colleagues, and communities and organisations across Wales**, to develop and deliver practical ways to engage with and improve the quality of life of people affected by dementia.



To achieve this, the project has:

- established a **Dementia Voices in Heritage Group** to help steer and shape the project
- developed and delivered **dementia awareness training sessions for staff** working within the heritage sector: currently in pilot phase

and is currently:

- developing and deliver a **supportive package for unpaid carers/care sector staff** in using museum resources with those they care for
- **creating a programme of activities** across our museums and communities for those affected by dementia

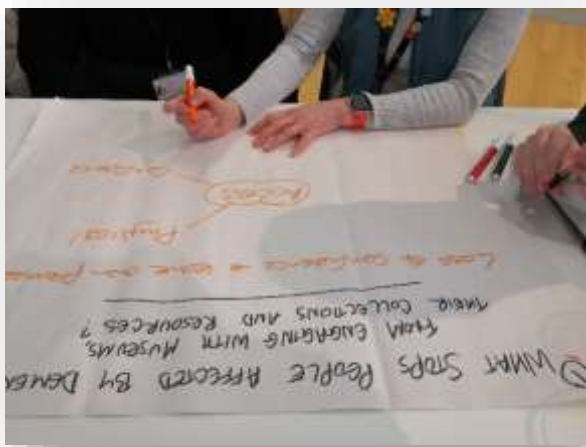
To enable the project to develop these pieces of work, it has been vital to discuss the barriers and needs of those affected by dementia, using that lived experience to shape what our Dementia Voices in Heritage Group and Training and Support packages look like. It has also been vital to hold discussions with those who work in the heritage sector in development of this work.

Between December 2022 and March 2023, we held 11 consultation events at our museums and in community venues, with a further 20 conversations taking place at group and care settings across the country. In total, 270 people participated, including 56 people living with dementia, 67 unpaid carers, 32 care staff, 71 colleagues from the heritage sector and 44 representatives from supportive organisations.

The information in this report is a summary of how participants responded to the three questions we asked during the consultations:

1. What stops people affected by dementia from engaging with museums, their collections and online resources?
2. What care and support needs might there be at our sites? How could we improve access for people affected by dementia?
3. What training needs are there for both carers/care staff and heritage sector staff/volunteers?

In addition to these questions, participants were also asked who they thought should be a member of our Dementia Voices in Heritage Group.



What we were told in response to the first two questions can be broadly gathered under 5 main themes:

1. Physical environment
2. Access to information
3. Museum staff
4. Sessions/Activities
5. Partnership/Community

While most information fits within this framework, we have also included the contributions which fell outside of these broader themes, but which are also important pieces of information to consider, as we begin to develop the project.

The information gathered in this report will help us and our established Dementia Voices in Heritage Group as we develop, test and launch our training and supportive packages, as well as our sustainable programme of activities that will contribute towards making Amgueddfa Cymru more dementia-friendly.

We hope this report provides interesting reading and is felt to capture the viewpoints of all those who joined us at events, and those who contributed during our visits to group and care settings across the country.

The Museums Inspiring Memories team would like to thank each and every person who contributed. Without your feedback, thoughts and experiences, it would be impossible to develop the work and, ultimately, offer accessible, suitable and supportive opportunities for people affected by dementia to engage with our collections and the stories we tell, both at our museums and in communities.

“There’re feelings and emotions I get from seeing things in museums, like the terraced houses here at St. Fagans. There is an overwhelming feeling you only get when you can physically touch or see real life things – like the memories of my grandparents that come back. Museums are so important for people with dementia. They are wonderful places and overwhelming at the same time.”

Person living with dementia



1. What stops people affected by dementia from engaging with museums, their collections and online resources?

Physical environment

A lack of public and independent transport was a recurring barrier to people affected by dementia engaging with museums. Where there is provision, cost and parking facilities were of concern.

Once at the museum, physical spaces were noted as a barrier for those affected by dementia, particularly due to:

- lighting being too bright or too dark
- uneven or dark flooring and décor
- noise levels
- lack of seating
- difficulty in accessing historic buildings
- difficulty in parking/using the parking machines or app
- a high number of visitors during busy times
- the distances between facilities, such as toilets

“Before we take any residents out, we need to make sure that where we are going they have disabled toilets and if we go to a place such as St Fagan’s we need to think about how far the walk is from one toilet to the next.”

Care sector member of staff

Access to Information

A lack of information and publicity (in multiple formats) about museums was highlighted, particularly around current and upcoming opportunities, awareness of collections and exhibitions.

“If support staff don’t know...they can’t promote or encourage visits.”

Person affected by dementia

Participants spoke of a lack of information about the support available when visiting a museum, e.g. who and where to go to should support be needed.

Other areas that were felt to be in need of greater publicity included:

- Levels of accessibility across all spaces
- Where to access ‘Accessibility’ information
- What facilities (toilets, wheelchairs, buggies etc.) were available

“A few of our residents have mobility issues which means we can only take 1 resident in a wheelchair out at any time”.

Care sector member of staff

At museums, suitable signage was a common point of discussion. In essence, there was a feeling that signage needed simplifying, with too much information making it difficult for people affected by dementia. With a lack of confidence in finding your way around being identified, the lack of supportive signage could have great consequences. DEEP (Dementia Engagement and Empowerment Project) resources around signage were highlighted as useful guides.

Museum Staff

Whilst many people reported positive experiences of being supported by staff in museums, some participants shared negative sector-wide experiences of staff being unhelpful. The ability of staff to be aware and understanding, as well as have the ability to provide support where/when needed is crucial in – as our participants noted – feeling welcome and confident when visiting.

Sessions/Activities

Digital exclusion and a lack of digital confidence were discussed as barriers to engaging with online resources.

Other barriers

Whilst many in our consultations were interested in going to museums, a few respondents admitted that **they did not feel museums were interested or relevant to their lives**, with comments such as: ‘too boring’, ‘too modern’, or ‘Not for me’.

One participant felt that **museums are not always BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic)-friendly**.

Many people acknowledged that the **challenges of living with dementia** can make going out, in its widest sense, more difficult. Comments here included difficulties in reading written information, short-term memory loss, communication, vision impairment and hearing loss.

Fear and a lack of confidence were identified as barriers to people accessing and engaging with museums, particularly post-Covid. For instance, a loss of confidence to leave their own premises, fear of an unfamiliar environment and finding your way around, fear of trying something new, of peoples’ perceptions, being judged, intimidated and feeling unsafe. Some participants reported that they sometimes fear that the person living with dementia might do something wrong at a museum, such as touching or

breaking something. There was also a fear that museums could trigger unwanted and negative memories.

A reliance on the **carer** to be available or able (in terms of access to transport) to support a person living with dementia to visit the museum was noted. The ability for those carers to also visit a museum independently may be limited due to the need to back-fill the care that they would normally provide.



2. What care and support needs might there be at our sites? How could we improve access for people affected by dementia?

Physical environment

Recommendations on how we could make the physical environment at our museums more supportive included:

- Using contrasting colours in toilets to help visitors identify facilities against the colour of the walls; to consider the colour of flooring (e.g. black mats being a significant barrier), door frames and also in the café through using items such as coloured plates
- Addressing uneven and gravelly paths, providing warnings for steps and ramps and making routes wheelchair-friendly
- Changing / adjusting lighting
- Establishing wheelchair stores at various locations across museums
- Providing more seating in and outside of museums
- Providing more accessible toilets, including the availability of toilets on each floor; and clearly labelling doors, locks and taps
- To develop 'Sensory' / quiet rooms at all museums
- Providing access to water fountains
- Availability of a buggy at all museums

Access to information

Ideas and suggestions as to how we could make information easier to access and understand can be broken down into 'Planning a visit' and 'At the museum':

Planning a visit:

- Making clearer the ability to borrow wheelchairs and the availability (where relevant) of a bookable buggy
- Providing information on the public transport options available
- Identifying where disabled parking bays are in relation to the main entrance
- Create a list and map of facilities available
- Creating a video tour, identifying trip and noise hazards
- Making clear the busier and quieter times
- Providing information in different formats and across multiple channels. For instance, information about current and upcoming opportunities, awareness of our collections and exhibitions, and our status as 'working to become dementia-friendly'
- Developing an information pack, in which there is information on how to book a visit, a map of the museum, facilities and what support is available for people affected by dementia at the museum, using both text and pictures

- Questions around access needs to be included in all booking processes
- For a reminder to be sent to all groups who have booked a visit of their upcoming visit
- Information to be available in different formats, including text, pictures, printed materials, audio and video

At the museum:

- Making clearer the ability to pay for parking at the front desk
- Simple and visible signage with large print, images and contrasting colours (including between languages), with a consideration of introducing coloured 'routes' through the museums. The use of signage within bathrooms was particularly highlighted
- The introduction of an interactive map and tablets for use around the museum
- Including seating locations and identifying 'noisy' spaces on maps provided to visitors
- Information to be displayed at a suitable height, available in different formats (text, pictures, printed materials, handling items, audio and video, braille), in a suitably-sized font, short in length and for hearing loops to be available

"The only thing I find difficult is the amount of text with some pieces in the museum. I'd prefer something like an audio guide or headphones with concentrated information. Then I don't have to do the two things of reading and processing at the same time. I've seen QR codes used which make it easy for people with dementia to access information. Headphones which give directions are good as finding your way can be a problem for people with dementia. I like numbers which direct you to the next place. These are so helpful and make me feel in control."

Person living with dementia

- The availability of a 'buddy' scheme where a volunteer can accompany the visitor during their visit
- Photos/videos of inaccessible spaces (due to lighting, stairs etc.) to share with visitors

Museum Staff

The role that our staff can play in supporting people affected by dementia was a big point of discussion. Ideas on how this could be developed included:

- The importance of a warm welcome, reassurance, patience and a relationship with an on-site point of contact
- For 'Dementia-Friendly' staff/volunteers or staff members/volunteers who are able to support to be recognizable

through wearing brightly coloured uniform, a badge or by displaying their image and name at the museum

- Introducing see-through masks
- A knowledge/understanding of BSL (British Sign Language)
- To be visible, approachable and available to discuss an exhibit/gallery/point of interest with visitors
- To be at hand if support is needed in using car parking ticket machines (where suitable)

Sessions/Activities

In looking to host accessible and suitable sessions and activities for people affected by dementia, there are a number of things that we need to consider that were highlighted during our conversations:

- The importance of tailoring opportunities to the interests of individual and groups
- A need to develop a range of options to suit those at different stages of dementia
- For a variety of methods to be used to suit need, including tactile and sensory experiences (in the community and in our buildings and galleries), using all areas of our museums and the use of audio and video

"It's lovely that we can see a lot of things online, but actually seeing it physically where you can imagine somebody wearing – that's much better, isn't it?"

Family member of person living with dementia

- To develop and host opportunities for lifelong learning as part of our offer
- Not to make assumptions on which items will appeal to those affected by dementia – for all areas of our collections to be available
- To have 'comfort aides' at hand for any participants in need
- For opportunities to be available in the community for those unable to visit a museum, or for resources/items to be loaned to groups, homes and health settings. A suggestion was also made for these opportunities to be reflective of new and existing exhibitions
- Creating digital opportunities, including live and recorded sessions/activities and exploring existing supportive platforms such as RITA (Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activities) devices and Magic Tables
- Understand and introduce methods used in care and health settings

“Perhaps resources to support groups to create their own memory boxes would be helpful. This way groups could keep items in house but could still share with us which objects they have collected and why they were chosen and the stories that their groups share around these.”

Day Centre member of staff

- To designate ‘Dementia-Friendly’ times/days when lighting and sound could be adjusted
- To consider carers through providing free parking and hosting sessions/activities at suitable times

Partnership/Community

Working in partnership with communities, settings and organisations will help us both identify and address barriers that stop people affected by dementia from engaging with our museums and collections.

Ideas on what this might mean included:

- Welcoming health/care staff to our museums to encourage involvement and raise awareness of the opportunities available
- Linking with volunteers/community connectors
- Re-visiting and re-hosting dementia-friendly audits
- Establishing exhibitions in community spaces through partner connections
- Enabling feedback of our spaces and events at all times
- To use and adapt existing shared resources such as “Get there together”
- Embedding the voice of those affected by dementia in all decision-making processes across Amgueddfa Cymru

“As a museum we need to promote the sense of familiarity that can encourage communities to see museums as ‘things to do’”

Heritage sector member of staff

Other suggestions

Dedicating one day a month for people affected by dementia

3. What training needs are there for both carers/care staff and heritage sector staff/volunteers?

In looking to develop training/supportive packages, we asked participants in paid and unpaid caring roles and heritage sector volunteers and members of staff what their needs are and what should be included in those packages.

To support the use of heritage in everyday care and to build confidence in using museum resources, **unpaid carers and care sector staff** told us to:

- offer 'training' on what is available at our museums, how to hold an independent 'tour' of the museum for those they care for, 'storytelling' and reminiscence skills and how to use our digital resources
- establish a point of contact at each museum for care staff and unpaid carers
- host 'open days'/'drop-in' sessions with activities and sharing information
- develop resources such as '10 Top Tips for using museums'
- develop videos/online resources of what to expect when visiting one of our museums

To create a welcoming and supportive environment at our museums, we were told that it would be useful if our training offer for **heritage sector volunteers and members of staff** included:

- lived experience, possibly through delivery by a person living with dementia/a carer
- regular in-person and digital dementia awareness sessions (tailored to the heritage sector)
- reminiscence skills
- a greater understanding of what causes dementia, the variations of, how it impacts ability and current research
- a challenge of the assumptions around dementia
- the importance of communication, empathy and a knowledge of the supportive facilities available
- an awareness of items worn to indicate that they are living with dementia, such as lanyards and bracelets

"Unless you spend more than 10 minutes with us, you may not pick up that she has Alzheimer's. It is a difficult skill to try and identify someone who does have Alzheimer's. My mum wears a bracelet."

Family member of person living with dementia

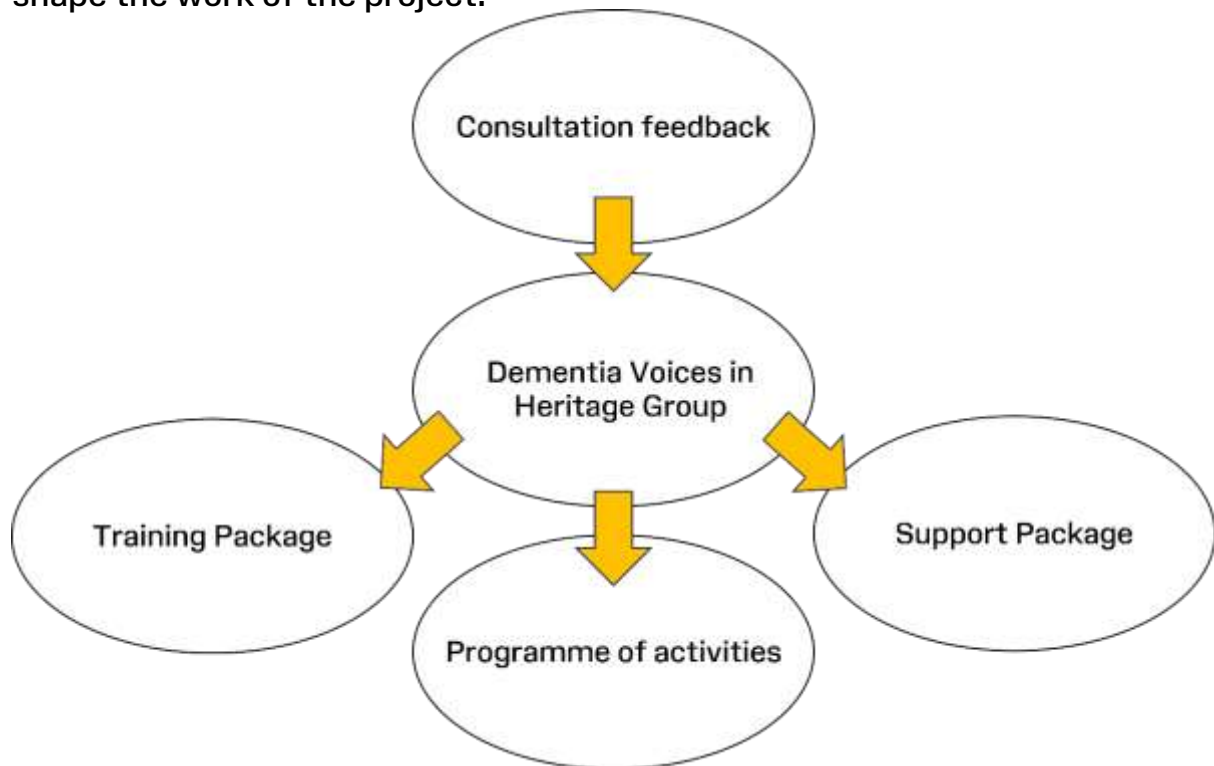
- awareness of the difficult situations that may occur and how to resolve them

- how to help and the need of sensitivity when offering support and to maintain the person's agency
- the importance of accompanying a person to a location, if needed
- good practice videos and case studies of the difficulties faced by people affected by dementia
- a consideration of further training opportunities, including the Dementia Bus, Unconscious Bias, Dignity at Work, Bereavement training and Safeguarding



Next steps

With this information, the project team will have established the Dementia Voices in Heritage Group, using those individuals and organizations who were put forward as suggested members who could contribute to and shape the work of the project.



The Group will begin formulating what our Support and Training packages look like, using the consultation information as a framework (as shown above).

The team look forward to continuing the work begun, not only with the Dementia Voices in Heritage Group, but also with any individuals, groups and various settings who have an interest and would like to be involved in the work.





**AMGUEDDFA
CYMRU**