



the happy  
museum

## Case Study – real practice, real impact

The Cinema Museum –  
growing partnerships  
for wellbeing

**The Cinema Museum, London**

A small independent museum, funded through screenings, events, admissions, donations and wellbeing programmes.

# The Cinema Museum – growing partnerships for wellbeing

**This case study is about how The Cinema Museum used a small project focused on community wellbeing to reimagine itself as a provider of wellbeing programmes to local residents, service providers, schools, universities, GPs and other local charities and organisations.**

**This case study is relevant to:**

- Senior management team
- Learning and community engagement teams

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# Highlights

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*“Our partnership project with the museum exposes LCC students to a unique approach to the arts; the museum’s emphasis on ‘art for wellbeing’s sake’ is shaping the thinking of our future arts professionals and entrepreneurs.”*

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**Jo Hodges**  
Creative Practice Director  
Communications Programme  
London College of Communication

- The museum has trebled the number of volunteers
- Recognised for outstanding achievement at the London Volunteer Awards in 2012
- The museum has developed a wide range of strong, local partnerships
- It now has a powerful support network to help it buy the building it currently occupies



# Museum profile

The Cinema Museum in Lambeth, London, is a small independent museum founded in 1986. In 1998, the collection moved into its current home, the former Lambeth Workhouse where Charlie Chaplin

spent part of his childhood. The museum is funded through events, admissions, wellbeing programmes, a shop and donations; it is a registered charity.

*“The museum’s work, particularly, with older residents and other vulnerable groups has sought to improve wellbeing and social relationships, which has in turn delivered wider health benefits. The Cinema Museum is a fantastic community asset for Lambeth and Southwark.”*

**Dr. Ruth Wallis**  
**Director of Public Health**  
**Lambeth and Southwark Public Health**

## Happy Museum funded activities

The Happy Museum Project was the first funding that The Cinema Museum had applied for. The Museum used the funding to recruit and support a project manager, researcher and an assistant (student placements); the project manager took a wellbeing training course with mental health specialists South London and Maudsley Hospital (SLaM) and the project assistant attended leadership training at the NCVO conference. A group of eight community curators (including one mental health trust referral) were recruited onto the programme and the team worked together to

explore the museum’s international collection of cinema memorabilia and to interpret the collection.

The Happy Museum focus on wellbeing informed the museum’s strategy and led to the creation of its 12 individual wellbeing offers for local residents, service providers, schools, universities, GPs and other local charities and organisations. Happy Museum events and being part of the community of practice resulted in the museum establishing a number of positive partnerships with other museums and healthcare providers.



# What happened?

*“The Cinema Museum is an exemplar of an arts organisation that both understands the concept of wellbeing, and delivers it in practice. Our relationship has helped them understand more about public health and it has helped us understand more about the potential of Happy Museums and the significant impact museums can have on wellbeing.”*

**Lucy Smith**  
Public Health Manager  
Lambeth and Southwark Public Health

“When we saw the Happy Museum offering,” says Katharine Ford of The Cinema Museum. “It didn’t feel as if this was a marvellous new idea – it was a light bulb flash of recognition and joy that here was a funder who wanted to do some of the stuff we needed to do.”

“Before we got involved, we had already defined strategic aims, which were focused on the New Economic Foundation’s ‘5 ways to wellbeing’. The Happy Museum project allowed us to develop our framework of thinking and helped us to disseminate what we do more coherently to other people.”

“Now we look at every event, product or service that The Cinema Museum is considering through the lenses of the ‘5 ways’ and the Happy Museum principles. The result has been that we are doing more, in terms of wellbeing, and we are doing it in a more focused way. Operationally, we are a lot

more efficient. We spend less time talking, more time doing. We have formalised our work around wellbeing, which has allowed us to be more creative in practice. We have created clarity, so now we can get stuck in with the execution.”

“If you were to visit us now you would see a lot more activity going on in the museum. We have trebled the number of our volunteers, which is not entirely down to the Happy Museum work, but it is down to initiatives that have been developed as a result of our on-going participation in the Happy Museum Programme. I’d like to think that there is more satisfaction among our volunteers; we know more about their ambition and their skills and we have organised them into teams that use those skills.”

“Even though it has been some years since we completed our Happy Museum project it has remained hugely influential. It’s changed the way that other people perceive us. We have created wellbeing partnerships and our 12 wellbeing offers have positioned us as a deliverer of wellbeing for the local community.”

“We learnt a lot and gained a lot from being involved in the Happy Museum community of practice. The Happy Museum was our first funded project and gave us access to networks of contacts, to ideas and to frameworks. We are now part of a network of like-minded organisations and people, many of whom have helped and worked



*“We work in strategic and delivery partnership with The Cinema Museum because they understand and share our values. The Cinema Museum’s focus on mental health and wellbeing and the practical help they have given us has created a mutually supportive partnership.”*

**Victoria Northwood**  
Head of Archives and Museum  
Museum of the Mind: Bethlem

with us. We had help developing our business plan and turning it into an action plan. We have ended up with an enviable list of partner support organisations who we can work with on projects and in joint funding applications.”

In 2014, the Happy Museum community of practice provided the inspiration for a new wellbeing pilot – The Cinema Museum Prescriptions. This project is based on ‘The Paper Apothecary’, a Happy Museum funded initiative at the Beane House of Art and

Knowledge in Canterbury. It builds on earlier wellbeing work done in partnership with the South London and Maudsley Hospital Trust (SLaM). The new Cinema Museum pilot project has connected us up to local GPs and health providers who we will be providing with illustrated pads allowing them to prescribe free entry to museum events to the elderly, the unwell, their carers and others in need of a dose of cultural cherishing. Read our [case study on Beane House](#) here.

## What’s changed?



**Tools:** The museum uses the Happy Museum principles to guide practice and inform decisions; the Story of Change tool was used to define a vision for the project.

**Network:** The museum has benefitted from being part of the Happy Museum community of practice in terms of advice, input and partnerships.

**Partnerships:** The focus on wellbeing has enabled the museum to build a formidable wellbeing offer and build its partnerships with local schools, service providers, GP surgeries, and community groups. The museum has joined Operation Green Museums and is working towards a Green Tourism Silver Award.

**Recognition:** The museum received an ‘Award for outstanding achievement’ at the London Volunteers in Museums Award in 2012. The museum won a “special award to recognise a museum that has shown excellence in supporting and encouraging volunteers, where volunteers have shown outstanding achievement across the board.”

**Support:** The museum’s increased focus on wellbeing has helped be seen as relevant to the local community and local economy, and as a centre for wellbeing and social care in the area. This has enabled the museum to build up strong local support for a bid to buy the historic building it currently rents and to secure its future.

# Happy Museum success factors

Since 2008, The Happy Museum project has been testing a set of working principles through commissioned projects. These 'action research' projects have helped us identify critical success factors of how, what and why museums might re-imagine

themselves in the light of these principles. The table below is a summary of our 'Story of Change' tool (More information here: [www.happymuseumproject.org](http://www.happymuseumproject.org)). This case study best demonstrates the aspects of practice highlighted in red.

Principles	How? Drivers	What? Delivery	Why? Difference we make
Measure what matters	Share a wellbeing vision Share a Story of Change	Use time, resources and scope creatively Measure what matters to people	To re-think what matters
Be an active citizen	Encourage active engagement Anticipate challenge and change	Work experimentally Use everyone's potential	To create happy, resilient people
Pursue mutual relationships	Share ownership Ensure mutual benefit	Work across hierarchies and teams	To create happy, resilient teams
All of which help re-imagine museums for better community LIFE*			
Create the conditions for wellbeing Learn for resilience	Consider playfulness, creativity, activity and aesthetics	Be a good host Broker relationships	Communities are: • Learning • Interacting • Feeling happy, satisfied and worthwhile • Environmentally aware
Value the environment and be a steward of the future as well as the past	Consider the social and financial benefits of being green	Use the museum's unique resources. Lead by example: care of people, place and planet	

\* The Happy Museum Project is conducting a national LIFE survey, where LIFE = Learning, Interactions with others, Feelings and emotions, and Environmental awareness. More: [www.happymuseumproject.org](http://www.happymuseumproject.org)

## Tools used

*“The long-term relationship between South London and Maudsley’s Hospital Trust (SLaM) and The Cinema Museum illustrates what can be achieved if organisations work together strategically, practically and consistently. The Happy Museum project emboldened the museum to reach out to SLaM and in doing so they triggered a series of co-produced projects with us (Journey of Appreciation, Power of Story, Carers Social Events, and ‘Prescriptions’). The projects were a great success and made a significant contribution to SLaM’s Arts Strategy (2013-2018).”*

**Helen Shearn**  
Head of SLaM Arts Strategy  
South London and Maudsley  
Hospital Trust (SLaM)

The Cinema Museum team used the ‘story of change’ to define their vision for the project and to plan the route to achieve that vision. The purpose of this tool (which is similar to theory of change, or logic modelling) is to make sure we start by focusing on the difference we want to make rather than on the activities we may use to achieve those ends.

Using a story of change challenges ‘business as usual’ thinking by

starting with the overall purpose and working backwards. The process of ‘measuring what matters’ can then start at the planning stage – by defining the success factors for a project, a strategy or a change of direction. The tool is also valuable for helping to communicate a vision to staff, volunteers and all stakeholders, as well as the thinking that underpins it.

More on using a Story of Change can be found here:  
[www.happymuseumproject.org](http://www.happymuseumproject.org)



## Online resources

Museum website: [www.cinemamuseum.org.uk](http://www.cinemamuseum.org.uk)

Cinema Museum’s Wellbeing offer:  
[www.cinemamuseum.org.uk/topics/join/wellbeing](http://www.cinemamuseum.org.uk/topics/join/wellbeing)

South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust’s ‘Wheel of Wellbeing’:  
[www.wheelofwellbeing.org](http://www.wheelofwellbeing.org)