

**if**

**Volunteering  
for wellbeing**

**Year 1 Executive Summary Report 2013-2014**

**Social Return On Investment evaluation**

**[www.volunteeringforwellbeing.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringforwellbeing.org.uk)**



**A Heritage Lottery Fund Project delivered by  
IWM North and Manchester Museum 2013 - 2016**



In partnership with the **Museum of Science and Industry**, **People's History Museum**, **National Trust: Dunham Massey**, **Manchester City Galleries**, **Ordsall Hall**, **Manchester Jewish Museum** and **Whitworth Art Gallery**.



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## Executive Summary

**Inspiring Futures: Volunteering for wellbeing 2013-2016 (if) is in its first year and is achieving dramatic improvements in participants' state of mental and emotional wellbeing, across a diverse range of abilities and challenging personal circumstances.** Further outcomes for many participants are emerging, around continued volunteering, entering further education, employability and gaining work, as well as positive attitudinal change towards opportunities for socialising and project participation in heritage. **This project is preventing and breaking vicious cycles of low self-belief, isolation, exclusion, demotivation, depression and rejection for many participants.**

***Inspiring Futures'* success is underpinned by:**

- **Supporting improvements in wellbeing and positive emotional functioning for individuals**
- **Developing strong learning partnerships / collaboration amongst a range of local venues and volunteer co-ordinators**
- **Fostering connections to people and the human experience across time, through heritage volunteering**

*if* aims to be a life-changing social learning programme within museums and galleries. It will support 225 participants in the Greater Manchester area (75 per year) into heritage volunteering and learning, and away from social and economic isolation. It is one of the first ever projects of its kind in Manchester. It draws together multiple venues to collectively achieve further improvement, consistency and quality, in volunteering practice as a key route to transforming people's wellbeing. The impact of heritage and cultural environments on individual wellbeing is of great significance - not just by supporting sector specific skills and employability - but also by helping to build mental and emotional capital such as increased confidence, self worth, reflective practice, creativity, aspiration, life satisfaction and stress reduction.

***"I'm far more outgoing now, I'm more prepared to grab an opportunity more than I would have before, I have a real sense of direction and focus – I'm really excited, for the first time a lot of things are making sense about what path to follow. I will carry on volunteering and take those skills with me where I go next."***

*Maryam August 2014*

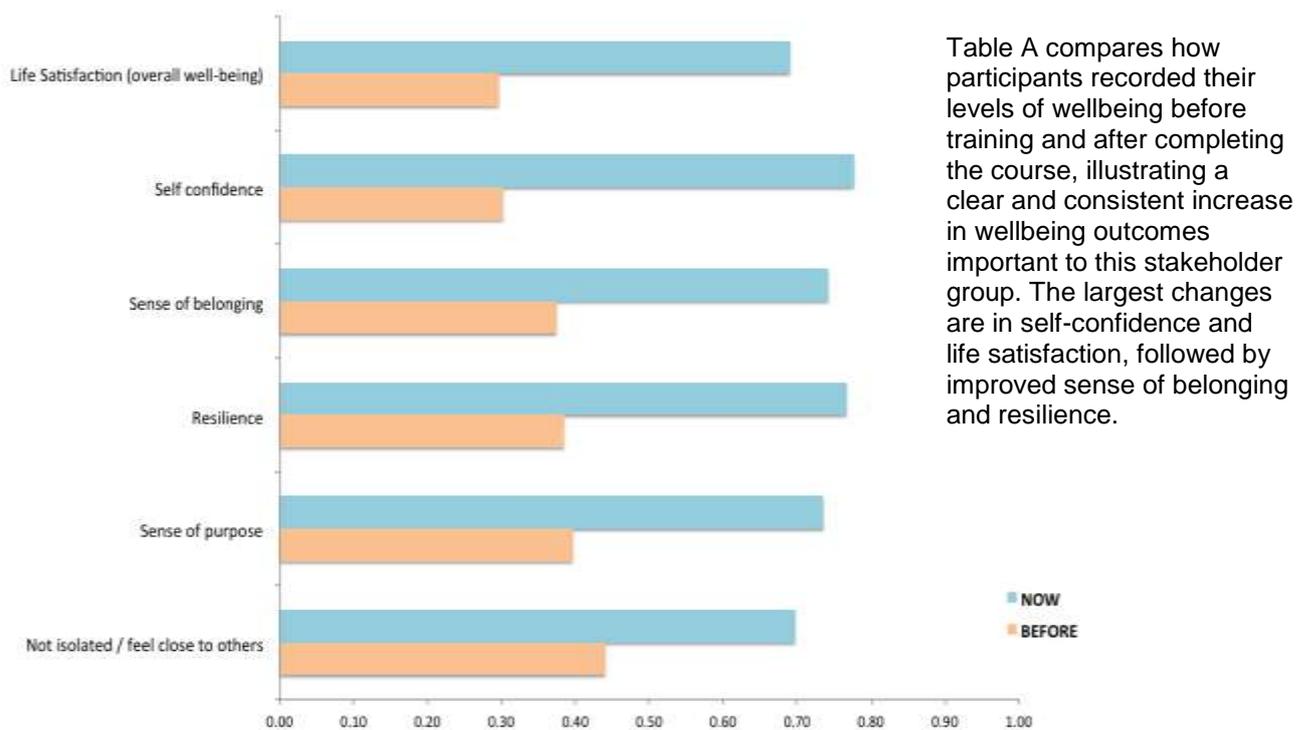


Like many of us, participants have found the heritage and gallery environments are simultaneously engaging and reflective spaces. Combined with a learning group dynamic and technical yet creative training content and delivery style, the programme in this setting is clearly having a significant impact. This transformation is noticeable in many participants when comparing their starting points before recruitment, to their placement completion (see **Table A**).

This report describes findings from the evaluation process so far, and is restricted to the first year of outcomes to date. Some outcomes may last beyond a year, and will form the longitudinal element of the evaluation going into Years 2 and 3. The evaluation process is a blended approach, combining Social Return On Investment (SROI), National Accounts of Wellbeing research, and Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) values used by national health bodies. SROI is unique in translating the measurement of social values into economic language, and helps organisations improve decision-making and performance. It has been an important factor for the programme design that Envoy Partnership combine their ability to

be both people-focused, approachable and engaging for the integrity of the technical and quantitative aspects of the SROI analysis, as well as supporting the experience of participants. **We estimate that solely within year 1, without accounting for future longitudinal benefit periods for stakeholders, the programme has already generated added social and economic value between £278,000-£310,000.**

**Table A.** Measureable change in key wellbeing outcomes amongst volunteers, after completing 10 week training plus 6 week placement (Year 1 only, pre-training compared to post-placement scores, calibrated from 5 point Likert scale to a 0-1 scale)



### Reasons for success going forward

- **Fostering a sense of connection, enrichment and contribution to and from other people and their stories** appears to be a key differentiator of heritage volunteering. Participants develop a strong connectedness to events and human experience across time.
- **Training components unlocking participants' creative and communicative capabilities of storytelling, bringing objects to life and inspiring visitors' imaginations**, thus significantly enhancing visitor experience and collection interpretation.
- **The setting of Museums and galleries as both stimulating and reflective spaces:** offers a potential pathway to enhanced mental, cognitive and emotional capital.
- **Training components that are experiential and participatory carried out specifically in the museum or gallery environment**, (not just classroom-based).
- **Dedicated Volunteer Co-ordinators** who are committed to **testing and improving** good practices and solutions in their venue, and fostering support for wellbeing in the workplace.
- **Developing a community and platform to unlock good recruitment and volunteer co-ordination practice, knowledge transfer and support** - creating a cluster effect.

We have summarised the key drivers so far as to why the project is succeeding and can continue to improve in having such a transformational impact on participant wellbeing: The value generated also **benefits partner venues, through gaining further well-trained**

**volunteers and increasing operational capacity for that venue.** This has improved access to collections for more visitors, who otherwise would not have the opportunity to interact with the collections on a more meaningful and human level. The experience is likely to have led to visitors making word of mouth recommendations to future visitors. Going forward, the *if* project will unlock further value if it broadens the range of referrers serving its target groups, for example working together with local social housing providers to reach more vulnerable and isolated residents, thus catalysing tenant and community wellbeing. This can also help to enhance diversity of the local volunteer force to further reflect local communities.

**For more information about *if: Volunteering for Wellbeing* please get in touch using the contact details below:**

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