

Dementia, Museums and Wellbeing Conference

Dates Tuesday 14 October 2025
Times 10.00–16.30 BST
Location At the museum (Theatre) and online (Zoom)



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Event Description

Join us to explore how heritage and the arts can support people living with dementia. Conference sessions will showcase projects from museums and charitable partners across the UK, highlighting how cultural institutions are fostering connection, creativity and wellbeing through co-creation, digital innovation and inclusive practice. Together, our speakers will demonstrate the growing role of heritage in shaping dementia-friendly environments and expanding access to culture.

This conference is kindly sponsored by The Belvedere Trust.

Programme

10.15–10.30 **Welcome and Introduction**

10.30–11.00 ***Nothing About Us Without Us: User Focused Practice***
Seiwa Cunningham, Freelance Educator

The phrase 'Nothing about us without us' has become both a rallying cry for some service user groups and a tick box phrase for other organisations. Explore how co-creating workshops with people living with dementia answers that call to action, and learn how Seiwa Cunningham co-creates meaningful creative programming for people living with dementia, producing authentic and successful outcomes – some brought about by design, and others by happy accident.

11.00–11.15 **Refreshment break**

11.15–11.45 ***Using Archival Sound to Engage People Living with Dementia***
Emma Tutton and Emma Brinkhurst, The British Library

The British Library is home to the National Sound Archive which has over 7 million recorded sounds in its collection ranging from spoken word, world and traditional music to wildlife and environmental sounds. Hear about the different ways the library uses the Archive to engage people living with dementia through creative workshops and curated listening sessions, and see examples of how sound recordings can stimulate discussions, transport listeners to different times and places, and promote social connections and wellbeing.

11.45–12.30 ***Rethinking Heritage: Revisiting and Reviewing Dementia-Friendly Practice***
Kim Klug and Sarah Fairbairn, Historic Royal Palaces

'Rethinking heritage: A guide to help make your site dementia friendly' was written by a collection of heritage professionals in 2017. The guide aimed to be a 'call to action' that would inspire and support more heritage sites to be dementia-friendly, enabling people affected by dementia to access and enjoy heritage. Kim and Sarah will reflect on the guide eight years on, exploring the process of reviewing and refreshing the toolkit with the support of the Dementia Friendly Heritage Network. Hear how the experience of programme delivery, audience engagement and co-creation has led to the need to update this vital document.

12.30–12.45 **Q&A with morning contributors**

12.45–13.45 **Lunch (not provided)**

13.45–14.15 ***Thinking Outside the Box: The Importance of Using Objects in an Inclusive Way***

Dr Pamela Franklin, the Caribbean Social Forum

The Caribbean Dementia Memory Project, developed by the Caribbean Social Forum in partnership with the National Maritime Museum is a groundbreaking initiative using Caribbean artefacts, oral histories, and sensory storytelling to support people living with dementia, particularly those from the African-Caribbean community. By drawing on cultural memory and lived experience, the project fosters inclusion, connection, and dignity, making heritage a powerful tool for wellbeing. Dr Pamela Franklin will share her experience of co-creating these resources and the positive impact they have had on service users.

14.15–14.45 ***House of Memories: Connecting Through Memories of our Ageing Communities with the Power of Digital Resources***

Lizzie Ward, National Museums Liverpool

House of Memories is an international dementia awareness programme based within National Museums Liverpool. Since 2014, it has pioneered methods for museums to co-create digital museum resources with the dementia community, reaching into the homes of those affected. The *My House of Memories* app has been an anchor for this work through creating opportunities of connection and stimulating memories through digital collections and displays of everyday objects. Hear the key learning points from work completed within international dementia communities, and the impact of such resources.

14.45–15.00 **Refreshment break**

15.00–15.30 ***Putting the Dementia Voice at the Heart of What We Do***
Gareth Rees, Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales

Museums Inspiring Memories, Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales and Alzheimer's Society's 3-year partnership project, sought to utilise Wales's seven national museums to improve the wellbeing of those affected by dementia. Find out how the team worked with the community to make Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales more dementia-friendly and improve services for those living with dementia.

15.30–16.15 ***Working in Partnership: Resonate Arts, V&A Museum and the Memory Service***

Zoe Gilmour, Resonate Arts, Holly Power, V&A museum, and Dr Emma Reames, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Memory Service

Explore a unique Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) project developed collaboratively between Resonate Arts, the V&A South Kensington and Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Memory Service. Discussion will reveal key learnings, including ways in which museum-based CST can enhance wellbeing for people living with dementia and the benefits of fostering sustainable, cross-sector relationships.

Contributors

Emma Brinkhurst is Access and Outreach Assistant at the British Library, supporting activities for people with additional needs. Prior to this she worked on the British Library's *Unlocking Our Sound Heritage* project, delivering activities that engaged community groups with recordings from the British Library Sound Archive. Emma has a PhD in Ethnomusicology and her doctoral research was carried out in collaboration with the British Library Sound Archive, focusing on music, memory and belonging within the Somali community that neighbours the library.

Seiwa Cunningham is an artist and dementia advocate who believes in the power of creativity to connect, heal, and inspire. She creates inclusive spaces where people feel seen, valued, and part of something bigger. Having held roles in the National Activity Providers Association and the Museum of London, her clients include Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, GLA, Horniman Museum, Kensington, Kew and Hampton Court Palaces, National Maritime Museum, Resonate Arts, Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, Royal Hospital Chelsea, Southbank Centre, The Albany, The National Trust, and Westminster Abbey. Her work bridges art and care – harnessing creativity to foster dignity, well-being, and community.

Sarah Fairbairn is a Community Partnerships Producer at Historic Royal Palaces, leading the dementia-friendly programme at Hampton Court Palace. She previously managed programmes at the Wallace Collection, Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Museum of the Home. With over 15 years of experience working in access and community participation in the cultural sector, Sarah has created, developed and delivered dementia friendly programmes, projects and events for people in a wide range of settings – from museums and galleries to hospital wards, care homes, hospices, outdoor spaces, and online. Sarah is passionate about embedding lived experience and choice into programme design and advocating for cultural spaces that are welcoming, meaningful and joyful for people living with or affected by dementia.

Dr Pamela Franklin is a visionary community leader who has transformed personal adversity into a powerful platform for collective wellbeing, cultural connection, and social change. In 1989, Pamela established her own IT training business, demonstrating early leadership and entrepreneurial drive. However, a serious spinal condition in 2011-12 forced her to step back from both professional and community life. This difficult period brought feelings of depression, isolation and loneliness, an experience that would ultimately become the catalyst for something transformative. Moved by conversations with Caribbean elders who shared similar struggles, Pamela founded the Caribbean Social Forum (CSF) in 2015 along with twelve Windrush elders. From this small beginning, the CSF has grown into a vibrant community with over 1,000 registered members across two branches. The Forum offers cultural programmes, weekly meetups, and intergenerational initiatives that celebrate Caribbean identity and promote holistic wellbeing.

Zoe Gilmour is a London-based artist, musician and trainer, specialising in participatory arts practice in health and community settings. Zoe redesigned the traditional Cognitive Stimulation Therapy sessions for the V&A in collaboration with Resonate Arts, and has been delivering the courses annually since the project was launched in Spring 2019.

Kim Klug is a community engagement specialist with over 20 years of experience working with diverse groups, including children, families, young people, non-English speakers, and adults living with disabilities, mental health challenges, and dementia. Since 2012, Kim has been a key figure at Historic Royal Palaces, where she collaborates closely with local communities to foster meaningful engagement with the palaces and their stories. She launched the *Community Access Scheme*, a sustainable programme supporting local people to develop a sense of belonging and ownership through long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships. In 2016, Kim founded the Dementia Friendly Heritage Network, bringing together over 40 organisations – including heritage bodies across the UK, the Alzheimer's Society, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and academics – to share best practices for engaging people living with dementia. This collaborative effort led to the publication of *Rethinking Heritage: A Guide to Help Make Sites More Dementia-Friendly*.

Holly Power joined the V&A museum in South Kensington in December 2023 as the Senior Producer for Audience Outreach at the V&A, where she is responsible for developing and delivering responsive outreach programmes for a wide range of audiences. Prior to joining the V&A, she worked at the Wallace Collection as Community Learning Producer, delivering programmes for a range of audiences including adults living with dementia and their carers.

Dr Emma Reames is a Clinical Psychologist working in Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster (KCW) Memory Service, specialising in neuropsychology. In the context of an often-medicalised setting, she is particularly interested in finding ways to work creatively and therapeutically with people with dementia, she has worked in collaboration with Resonate Arts and the V&A for the last two years.

Gareth Rees is the Dementia Voice Lead at Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales and leads on the *Museums Inspiring Memories* project. With experience in the heritage sector and in roles focussed on creating age- and dementia-friendly environments, Gareth is passionate about expanding the use and accessibility of our national collections for those affected by dementia.

Emma Tutton is the Access and Outreach Manager at the British Library, where she has spent the past eight years championing inclusive engagement as part of the Learning and Participation Team. Her work has focused on shaping an Access programme that opens up the Library's collections to audiences with additional needs. Passionate about accessibility and creative inclusion, Emma leads a wide-ranging programme of tours, relaxed openings, and hands-on workshops designed for audiences including people living with dementia, individuals with visual or hearing impairments, and people with learning disabilities. She works closely with artists, educators, and health organisations to co-create meaningful, innovative projects that break down barriers and foster genuine participation.

Lizzie Ward is Programme Manager for the multi-award-winning *House of Memories*, the flagship dementia awareness programme for National Museums Liverpool which has benefited more than 60,000 people have benefited from the programme, which continues to expand across the UK and globally in USA and South East Asia. Lizzie has spent the last decade involved in community programmes across an extensive national and international network of cultural, arts, museum and health and social care partnerships. Her work has been recognised for its invaluable social impact and for its creativity and the championing of collaborative processes. Lizzie has a notable career at National Museums Liverpool, working with cross-sector organisations to create dementia friendly programmes.

Joining Information and Format

Take part at the museum: The conference will take place in the Theatre, Lower Ground Floor. Morning and afternoon refreshments are included; participants should make their own arrangements for lunch.

Watch online: This conference will also be broadcast live from the museum. Online ticketholders will be emailed a link to join 24 hours in advance.

Event recording: This conference will be recorded. Within 48 hours, ticket holders will be emailed a link to view the recording, which will be available for two weeks.
