



**the happy
museum**

Case Study – real practice, real impact

The Silk Mill, Derby
Museums – participation,
making and well-being

Derby Museums is run by a charitable trust. It employs 44 FTE staff and attracts some 97,000 visitors a year to its three sites.

The Silk Mill, Derby Museums – participation, making and well-being

This case study is about how Derby Museums put community participation and co-production at the heart of its project to refurbish and re-open The Silk Mill. Innovative forms of evaluation were used to demonstrate the positive impact of making on the participants involved.

This case study is relevant to:

- Senior management team
- Learning and community engagement teams

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Highlights

“The skills and knowledge which we have developed as an organisation as a result of this project is phenomenal, and aspirations have been raised for what can be achieved in the future.”

Andrea Mercer, Senior Manager of Audiences and Communities, Derby Museums

- **The museum was open throughout its refurbishment**
- **Audiences became co-designers, co-curators and makers, supported by ‘makers in residence’**
- **Engaging the head, heart and hands is now at the heart of Derby Museums’ work**
- **Evaluation by the University of Derby showed stress levels lowered by activity of making**
- **A co-production approach to development is now being embedded within the culture of working in the organisation**



Museum profile

The Silk Mill Museum is one of three Derby Museums run by a charitable trust. The Silk Mill stands on the site of the world's first factory and is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The former industrial museum was mothballed in 2011 and has been under renovation since 2012. Derby Museums is keen to conserve the most valuable aspects of the site,

while modernising the building and evolving the entire space into a museum and environment that best serves the needs of the people of Derby. Re:Make the Museum is the first phase of a larger project which has enabled Derby Museums to secure major grant funding of £9.4m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to create a Museum of Making.

“Life Changing’ is a phrase that is easily said, but hard to live up to. Remake was ‘Life Changing’ for me and many, many others. Skills were shared, learned and honed. Friendships were made and cemented, and a community was bought together.”

Participant, Re:Make the Museum

Happy Museum funded activities

The Re:Make project invited audiences to become co-producers and makers, co-designing and building the refurbished museum's fixtures and fittings – a radical break with the usual sector approach of employing a designer and retaining control. The Silk Mill recruited 'makers-in-residence' and commissioned them to facilitate co-design and co-making workshops for the public and members of staff. Since 2012, more than 200 local people were involved in designing and making furniture, object displays and fittings. Participants learnt new skills, met new people and shaped the future of the Silk Mill. Making is now at the heart of the museum, which has three workshops offering creative and practical activities for visitors. The

museum runs short sessions and weekend courses – and also hosts larger 'Maker Faires'. Through a partnership with the University of Derby, the physiological impact of the activity of making was measured – revealing a small but significant drop in the level of stress hormone cortisol in those taking part in making activities. The learning from the project has informed the restructuring of the Derby Museums staff team and the project's approach to co-production has been disseminated to other museums. Following Re:Make this co-production approach also underpins the development of a new nature gallery at the Museum and Art Gallery, which is being co-created by local people.

What happened?

"I have always loved the Silk Mill building and I am proud to be involved with its future."

Participant, Re:Make the Museum



"The Happy Museum Project has enabled us to think about wellbeing and happiness on a much broader scale," says Andrea Mercer, Senior Manager of Audiences and Communities at Derby Museums.

Andrea was Programme and Participation Manager at the Silk Mill when the Re:Make project got underway. "It has been very exciting seeing people's attitudes change in terms of what they think a museum is and what it can be – for our audiences, staff and volunteers."

The ground floor of the Silk Mill now has three different workshops, as well as a working mobile kitchen and a maker bar to programme activities around. The museum's tables, chairs and object display hexpods were built by local people in co-production with museum staff and the makers in residence. A range of audio-visual equipment has also been installed in the space including smartboards, screens and whiteboards for display, interpretation and making purposes.

Improving wellbeing for participants had been an important driver for the project – and the museum gathered convincing evidence that it had. "The qualitative evaluations we did showed that people felt their wellbeing improved as a result of being involved in making. To test this empirically we teamed up with the University of Derby's Biology department on a research project

to measure the impact of making on some of the participants."

During the study, researchers measured participants' blood pressure and heart rate over a period of three weeks. They also collected saliva samples to measure levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

"When the data came back, the researchers found the activities did cause an immune boost in participants as cortisol levels dropped. The University published a paper on these findings and are planning further research."

The Re:Make project also had a positive impact on staff and the makers in residence, Andrea said: "The staff were given the opportunity to really get involved, and it enabled them to experience what the participants felt as makers. A lot of personal staff time has been devoted to this project through a desire to make this project a success. This has allowed us to develop deeper, more meaningful and responsive relationships with community volunteers and has also led to further thinking about resilience and well-being by both individual staff members and the organisation as a whole."

"Both participants and staff said they felt more confident in terms of their skills, knowledge and abilities developed throughout the project. They have also developed a deeper understanding of the objects in the collections and their specific conservation requirements

for display, consequently developing new and innovative design solutions.”

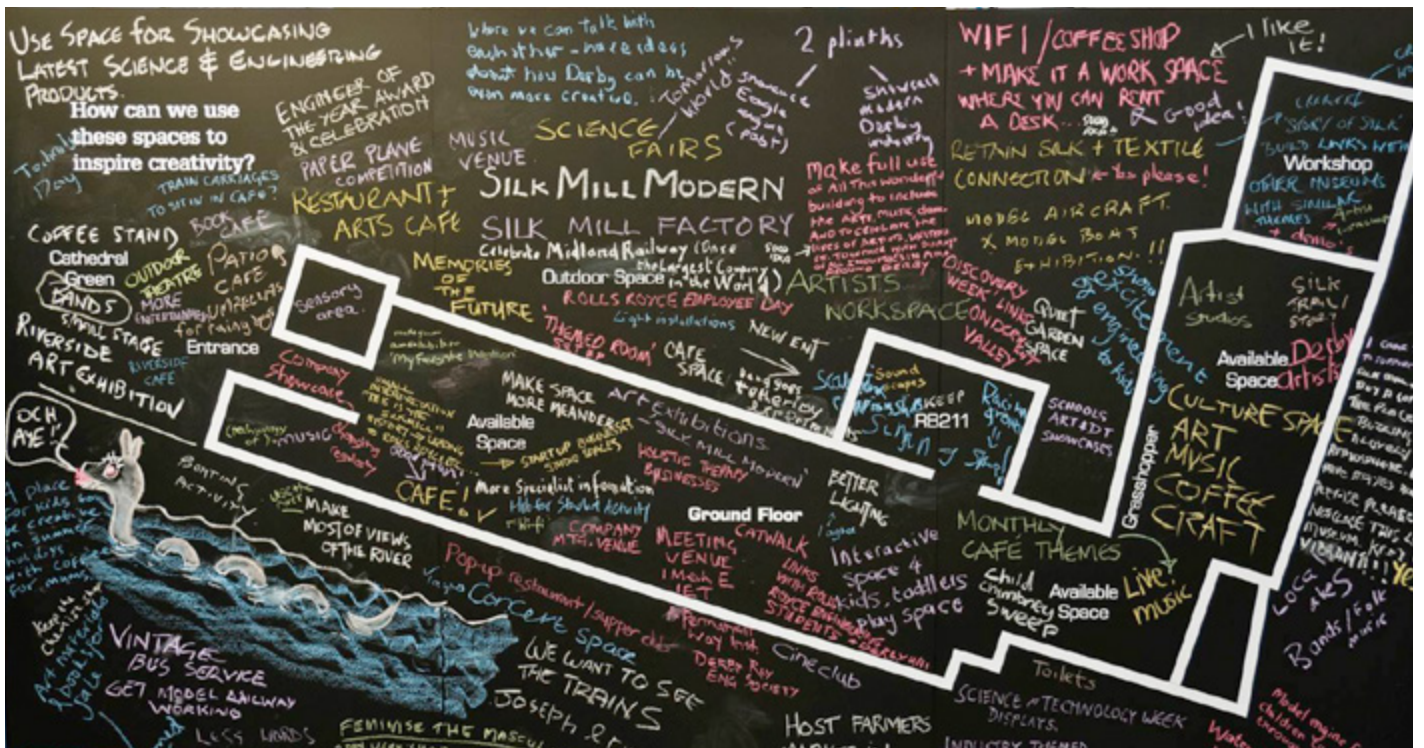
The co-production approach of Re:Make is now being used across all three Derby Museums. The focus on wellbeing continues with efforts being made to engage with new audiences.

“We are now working more on visitor experience, on programming, on our audience development strategy, as well as looking for new funding. One aspect of our approach will be to target specific audiences – including disabled communities, low income workers, black and minority ethnic communities, and people on benefits.”

“We also want to engage families, schools, and our existing audiences and to develop young people as co-producers to enable them to participate more, bringing projects to us and supporting them to develop their skills.”

“The skills and knowledge which we have developed as an organisation as a result of this project is phenomenal, and we are beginning to use these to work on other projects in more resourceful way. There has been a sense that aspirations have been raised in terms of what can be achieved in the future.”

“We are looking to work further on the model of developing the museum through developing our community volunteers. The creation of the workshop spaces also enables us to become more resilient with the ability to create and manufacture other elements to be used at across all our museum sites. We are now embarking on the creation of a new nature gallery in the Museum and Art Gallery, encouraging people to get involved in co-designing displays, fixtures and co-curation and interpretation.”



What's changed?

"Made me think more about what makes a museum great."

Participant, Re:Make the Museum (asked 'What difference did this project make to you personally?')

Participation and visitor profile:

The Re:Make project created durable links with the people involved and the social media activity around the project has helped to engage a new audiences with the museum.

Wellbeing: The immersive and social aspects of making had a demonstrable impact on wellbeing. The clinical tests carried out along with qualitative and quantitative analysis of makers' data, found that the participants gave evidence of their mood having changed and the experience increasing their well-being. The clinical test gave evidence of an immune boost detected in participants' cortisol levels and so gives empirical evidence of a direct relationship to improved health and wellbeing.

Development of co-production approach:

Derby Museums have now developed a proven community participation model, using a Human Centred Design Methodology which will be embedded in the organisation and used to develop all three museums, build audiences and create conditions for wellbeing.

Perceptions: The project has helped to change perceptions about what a museum is and what it can be.

Evaluation techniques: The project placed importance on measuring the impact of the making activities, through clinical tests.



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). 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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



Tools used

Story of change

The Derby Museums 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



Reports

University of Derby research report
<http://www.happymuseumproject.org>

Online resources

Museum website: <http://www.derbymuseums.org>

Re:Make project blog: <http://remakemuseum.tumblr.com>

Re:Make film: <https://vimeo.com/93511330>

Human-Centred Design Handbook: <http://www.derbymuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/Derby-Museums-HCD-Handbook.pdf>

The Museum of the Future:
<http://themuseumofthefuture.com/2014/07/21/the-convincing-transformation-process-of-the-derby-silk-mill>

Museum 2.0: <http://museumtwo.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/new-approach-historic-mission-remaking.html>

Cultural value and making: Methods and analysis report for the Happy Museum, C.White, A. Oddey, H.Sowter 2014.
<http://www.happymuseumproject.org>