

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 10 October 2019

**Subject:** Manchester Art Gallery’s Update

**Report of:** Director of Manchester Art Gallery and the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods

**Summary**

This report details Manchester Art Gallery’s programme, reach and social impact during 2018/19 and 2019/20 within the context of our strategic plan.

**Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to approve the contents of the report.

**Wards Affected:** All

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	We provide support for the creative economy through our public programme, training and development opportunities for young people, and contribute to economic growth and prosperity of Manchester by championing creativity, supporting creative industries, and through cultural tourism.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city’s economic success	We develop and nurture skills within our workforce and support the development of skills and creativity of Manchester residents through our programme of events, workshops, activities and exhibitions.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The gallery aims to support individuals, families and communities achieve best outcomes through a programme that brings people together, encourages creative decision-making, and delivers public projects that generate social capital.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	We will continue to make Manchester Art Gallery (including Platt Hall and Queen’s Park) a green and sustainable organisation, and attract a diverse population to our public programme from within and outside the city to promote and celebrate Manchester as a city with a strong, healthy culture and environment.

A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	We deliver world-class exhibitions, education, arts and health, and community development through national and international partnerships.
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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

None

## **1.0 Introduction**

Manchester Art Gallery sits within Manchester City Council's Neighbourhoods Service, in the Growth and Neighbourhoods Directorate and plays a key role in the cultural and civic life of Manchester. We are also part of the Manchester Museums Partnership (with the Whitworth - with whom we share a Director - and The Manchester Museum). We receive MPM/NPO funding from Arts Council England (ACE) to work together, across governance structures, to deliver the city's objectives and promote Manchester as a centre of knowledge, creativity and culture.

## **2.0 Vision**

Our work is driven by the needs of the people of the city and the strategic priorities of Manchester City Council and Art Council England.

Manchester Art Gallery's new vision, as part of a wider new mission and vision for the Manchester Museums Partnership, prioritises the role of culture in shaping social change, and builds on our origins as the original 'useful museum' that's been at the centre of the cultural life of the city for almost 200 years. From its origin as the Royal Manchester Institution for the Promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts, the gallery has been proudly part of Manchester City Council since 1882.

By revisiting our founding principles as an educational institution, founded by artists and the business community, we will ensure that the city and all of its people grow with creativity, imagination, health and productivity.

Manchester Art Gallery will remain for and of the people of Manchester. The gallery is free and open to all people as a place of civic thinking and public imagination, promoting art as a tool to achieve social change. Through the City's collections, displays and public programmes we work with all our constituents to ensure creativity, care and consideration infect all aspects of the way we live.

We deliver this vision through the following objectives:

### **1. Social Impact.**

Delivering social impact and a societal health by developing a holistic and purposeful artistic programme of art and education. This includes exhibitions, education, community programmes, events, arts and health programmes and the promotion of social capital and 'artful living'. Priorities include: the development of a new Clore Learning Space for families and pre-school children; increasing access to art, health and social change programmes with a wider range of communities, expanding programmes specifically for South Asian communities and residents in less engaged wards (cold spots); and increased use of collections for social educational and social purpose.

### **2. Good Housekeeping**

Ensuring we manage our public assets well: making best use of our resources by reconfiguring our buildings and gallery spaces to make better use of the collections;

reviewing and developing our policies, people, and our ways of working to improve the way we use our spaces to deliver a holistic artistic programme. Priorities include: delivering a balanced budget and increasing earned and fundraised income, reducing our carbon footprint to support Manchester's aim to be carbon neutral by 2038 and addressing the Climate Crisis, reviewing our staffing roles and structure to make us fit for purpose for the long-term, developing our collections (and the way we house and use them) at Platt Hall, Queens Park and Manchester Art Gallery, and beginning the development of Platt Hall as a radical new sector-leading model of international standing, created with and for the communities around it.

### **3. Art School for Life**

Campaigning for the role of art and artists in broader society in a full spectrum approach that includes talent and skills development, problem solving, and learning through making and doing. We want Manchester to be a city where everyone can see themselves as an artist - and where the gallery as the touchstone for this in every stage of residents' lives. Priorities include the Esmee Fairbairn Collection Fund project to develop the use of Platt and its associated collections; initiating a rehang of all collections with a more socio-political focus, developing and rationalising spaces at the gallery for educational purposes, and increasing access and use of the collections.

### **4. Civic Think Tank**

Establish Manchester Art Gallery as a 'Civic Think Tank'; creating a convening space for voices across the city, nurturing diversity and valuing nuance and complexity across all constituencies, with artistic and social programmes offering an antidote to polarised debates, promoting intergenerational and intercultural working, embedding democratisation and decolonisation across the institution, developing co-curation models with 'social making', piloting new forms of philanthropy based on the renewed public value of the institution. Priorities include: increased programmes to address key issues of the day; developing more strategic partnerships with the Higher Education sector, developing the work around the Manchester Together Archive, establishing a research centre around the role of artists in the city.

## **3.0 Performance**

### **3.1 Reach**

Manchester Art Gallery welcomed 731,002 visitors last year, making us the most visited museum or gallery in Manchester. This represents a continuation of the upward trend in visiting we have seen at MAG in recent years: visitor numbers are 14% up on the previous year and almost double (94% increase) on visitor number in 2010. To put the scale of the Gallery's reach into some context, visits to Manchester Art Gallery now account for 15% of all visits to cultural organisations in the city. Put another way, 1 in 7 visits to cultural institutions in Manchester, happen at Manchester Art Gallery. This statistic responds to the reported 4.4 million visits to Manchester cultural organisations recorded in the MCC 2017/18 Cultural Impact survey.

Of particular note this year, is the sharp growth in participation rates. Over 91,000

people engaged as participants in our programmes.

This breaks down as follows:

- Over 18,000 participants in the schools programmes (up 22% on 17/18)
- Over 21,000 participants in the adult programmes (up 15% on 17/18)
- Over 52,000 participants in the family programmes (up 14% on 17/18)

Almost 65,000 engagements were delivered through Manchester Art Gallery's informal programme which includes gallery tours, Lates events, family and early years workshops and activities for adults such as Philosophy Café and mindfulness sessions. This engagement represents an increase of 58% on 2017/18.

### **3.2 Equality and Diversity**

In addition to strong overall growth in visiting and participation, our research data evidences strong progress on increasing the diversity of our audiences.

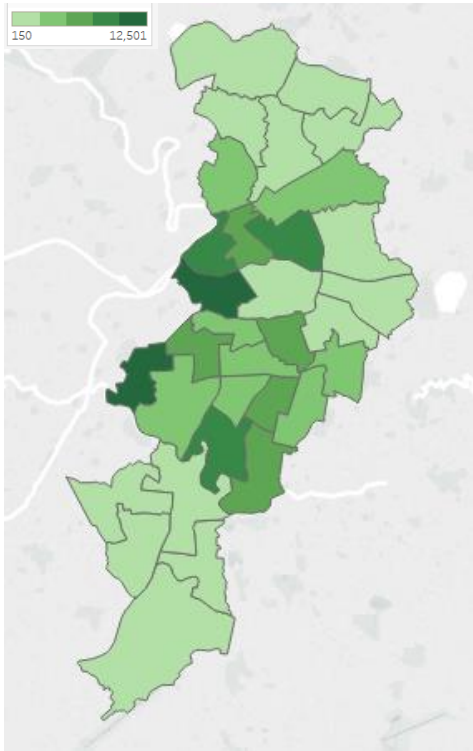
In 2018/19, 19% of all visits to the gallery were made by people from a minority ethnic background. This proportion has increased from 9% in 2016/17. This increase is partly a reflection of better data collection practices at the gallery, but, more importantly, provides tangible evidence of the impact of ongoing work at the gallery to diversify the public and exhibitions programme and provide new platforms for artists from diverse backgrounds. Examples of this include New North and South, a large scale programme of exhibitions and activities focussed on South Asian contemporary art, and our recent major exhibition Speech Acts: Reflection-Imagination-Repetition.

### **3.3 Volunteering**

Volunteering continues to thrive at MAG. We are currently working with 100 volunteers across a variety of roles including working with collections, supporting engagement programmes and audience research and evaluation. In total, these volunteers gave 4,417 hours of their time. Volunteers are engaged across a range of age groups including 15 young volunteers aged under 19 and 31 older volunteers aged 50 and over. 1 in 7 (15%) of volunteers are from a minority ethnic background. Residents of the following wards volunteer with MAG this year: Baguley; Fallowfield; Moss Side; Longsight; Chorlton; Hulme; Old Moat; Rusholme; Didsbury West; City Centre; Whalley Range; Woodhouse Park. In 2018, MAG completed the third year of our Volunteering for Wellbeing programme, delivered in partnership with Start (NHS Mental Health Recovery Pathways). This programme builds on the IF Volunteering Programme (<http://volunteeringforwellbeing.org.uk/>) and continues to deliver social and societal health impact.

*"The gallery is a place I feel safe and no-one is judging me"*  
course participant, Volunteering for Wellbeing

### 3.4 Reach in Manchester Wards



This map shows the number of engagements made with Manchester Art Gallery by residents of each Manchester ward in 2018/19. This map draws on data on engagements from across the programme including our work with Manchester schools (discussed in more detail below). An interactive version of this map can also be accessed here:

<http://bit.ly/MAGWardReach201819>

The analysis shows that in 2018/19 MAG engaged with residents in every ward in Manchester.

MAG recorded the largest number of engagements in Hulme (12,501), Chorlton (12,335), Deansgate (8,672), Didsbury West (8,660) and Ancoats and Beswick (8,476).

We are working in all 'cold spot' wards identified by MCC in the Manchester's Cultural Impact Research seeing good year on year increases in engagements.

Ward	Number of MAG engagements 18/19	Areas of low engagement (MCC Cultural Impact Survey)
Old Moat	3,587	Low participation
Woodhouse Park	2,575	Low attendance and participation
Brooklands	2,539	Low attendance and participation
Northenden	1,841	Low attendance and participation
Moston	1,573	Low participation
Harpurhey	1,244	Low attendance and participation
Sharston	266	Low schools engagement

### 3.5 Schools

The schools programme at MAG is now exclusively focussed on Manchester schools and colleges. In 2018, saw the highest number of schools engagements in the following wards:

- **Piccadilly** (2,399). This represents work with Manchester College via the Future Creatives strand, a programme that connects young people with the city's creative network and provides a platform to develop and share talent.
- **Chorlton** (1,265). Including work with pupils and staff of St John's RC Primary School, Oswald Road Primary, Brookburn Primary, Chorlton CE Primary

- **Clayton & Openshaw** (1,034). These engagements all relate to intensive work with work with pupils and staff at our partner school St Willibrords RC primary.
- **Brooklands** (651). These engagements all relate to intensive work with work with pupils and staff at our partner school Button Lane Primary.
- **Crumpsall** (615). These engagements all relate to intensive work with work with pupils and staff at our partner school Cravenwood Primary Academy.
- **Fallowfield** (4,774) Partnership work with diverse families at St. Wilbraham's Primary School to improve and make relevant on-site family facilities and activities at the gallery.

### 3.6 Targeted engagement and outreach in cold spot wards

In 2018/19, MAG delivered early years and family learning initiatives with Clayton Sure Start Centre designed to support health visitors in the delivery of child development reviews. These sessions engaged babies, toddlers, parents and carers from the area surrounding ward Miles Platting and Newton Heath.

MAG are working on a long term project with the Great Places Housing Group and Olivia House in Clayton and Openshaw, Projects with the families and staff from Olivia Lodge will help inform the MAG family programme and Clore re-development. The project will also see us redeveloping spaces and programmes in-house at Olivia Lodge.

MAG continues to deliver art-based English Language sessions (ESOL) with to adult groups from Abraham Moss Adult Learning Centre (Crumpsall). A new initiative is underway to work with Manchester Carers at Duncan Edwards Court (Miles Platting and Newton Heath), Rose Court (Levenshulme) and Cardinal Court (Moss Side).

### 3.7 Our programme

#### 3.7.1 Exhibitions

The quality and popularity of our artistic programme continues to attract large audiences. Exhibitions and displays over the last 2 years have included:

- **Sonia Boyce** - The first retrospective of leading British artist Sonia Boyce OBE reflected her move from earlier drawing and collage exploring her own position as a black British woman, towards more improvised, collaborative ways of working. As well as photography, film and wallpaper, we commissioned Boyce to make a new collaborative live work and film for the exhibition called *Six Acts* which the Contemporary Art Society have bought for our collection. This exhibition was part of RA250, as Boyce is a Royal Academician and was awarded an Arts Council grant for the arts.
- **Martin Parr** - The award winning documentary photographer Martin Parr presented *Return to Manchester*, a selection of works he has taken in and around Manchester over his 45 year career. He has also created a new body of work looking

at a diverse selection of people living in our city today. The accompanying catalogue had to be reprinted after selling out and the exhibition was very popular with visitors due to its local subject matter.

- **Speech Acts** was an exhibition which asked the question what do we mean by the term 'British' in our public collections of modern and contemporary British art. This is a two-year programme of research, exhibitions, displays, commissions and acquisitions anchored in art works by British artists of African and Asian descent. The art works on display were from public collections in Manchester and Bradford. The works were in dialogue with works by other 20th century artists to interrogate the concept of Britishness.
- **Nordic Craft and Design** – This exhibition highlights the superb quality and creativity inherent in design from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Showcasing furniture, fashion, lighting, ceramics, glass, metalwork and jewellery, the exhibition features pieces from our collection complemented by loans of iconic works from 1930 to the present day. Designers and crafts people from the four countries are represented, as well as other makers who are inspired by Nordic design which promotes that good design enhances the quality of life.
- **And Breathe** - An exhibition of artworks from Manchester Art Gallery's collection that has been co-curated with a community mental health group and a primary school class to explore the relationship between art, positive mental health and wellbeing. The exhibition was designed to encourage people to slow down, connect with art and themselves to enhance their wellbeing. It is part of the gallery's wider Mindful Museum campaign that aims to raise awareness and promote understanding of how mindfulness can be used within museums and galleries to improve good mental health and wellbeing.
- **Reframe** - Caroline Broadhead and Maisie Broadhead's Reframe was an exhibition which interrogated historic representations of women and the portrayal of women's work. The mother and daughter artists have made new works in photography and craft in response to historic paintings of women by male artists in our collection.
- **Leonardo: A life in drawing** - On the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death we took part in a national celebration of the artist's work with the Royal Collection Trust and 11 other galleries across the nation. Each venue exhibited 12 original drawings by Leonardo. Alongside the exhibition, we showed a selection of rarely seen works on paper from our collection looking at depictions of the body in art. The exhibition was hugely popular and attracted 254,345 in just 3 months.
- **Halima Cassell** - This exhibition showcases one of the UK's most distinctive and dynamic sculptors and ceramicists. Inspired by geometry, architecture, natural forms and foreign travel, she creates deeply carved forms in unglazed ceramic, bronze, stone, wood and cast glass. Cassell was born in Kashmir, grew up in the North West of England and her sculpture reflects her dual international and local heritage. This is her largest show to date, in the city where she first dreamt of becoming an artist.



- **Get Together and Get Things Done** - This exhibition is part of a city-wide programme in 2019 to commemorate the bicentenary of the Peterloo Massacre and explores with people the wider theme of the crowd through international historic and contemporary art and group activity. It demonstrates how an exhibition and an art gallery can be shaped by the crowds that use them.
- **Louise Giovanelli** - Contemporary painter Louise Giovanelli investigates the languages and histories of painting. For this exhibition she focused on the Medieval to the Renaissance period, exploring how the development of new techniques and styles influenced the course of European painting.
- **MIF 2019 - School of Integration** was a new commission with leading Cuban artist and activist Tania Bruguera for Manchester International Festival 2019. Within the current national context of polarisation, it reimagined the gallery as a place for integration of all people and acknowledged the city's cosmopolitanism as one of our greatest strengths. We worked with 104 immigrants originally from 53 countries who've made Manchester their home to provide lessons in a wide-range of subjects including languages, culture, politics, history and many other forms of knowledge. These were not only instructional lessons, but something more personal and vivid. Every teacher passed on their own knowledge to anyone interested in developing new skills – resulting in a new kind of shared learning experience.

### 3.7.2 Web and digital

In 2018 our web visit figures were significantly affected by the international attention on the gallery in February during the temporary removal of Waterhouse's painting *Hylas and the Nymphs*. Total number of visitor sessions for the year was 510,670, with a unique spike of 14,181 users on 1 Feb 2018. During the year, there's been a noticeable change in demographics: female audience up from 56% to 61% and a growth from 26% to 30% in the 25-34 age range.

During the year, we worked with developers ARTiMARC to produce a bespoke mobile web-application to support our exhibition *And Breathe...* The application is accessed via mobile in the exhibition space by a 'touch to play' RFID or QR code and provides a series guided meditations for visitors. Take-up has been positive, with 6,620 user sessions between March-December 2018 and a 5\* average user rating. Using previously unpublished archive material from Martin Parr, we produced an online version of the artist's 1986 *Point of Sale Diary* (which is in the collection of Manchester Central Library). The diary is presented as an interactive in the exhibition resource area and is available online.

(<http://manchesterartgallery.org/microsites/parr>)

As part of the UK-wide *Objects of Obsession* programme, we worked with The Space, Royal Academy artistic director Tim Marlow and artist Sonia Boyce to produce a live-streamed in-conversation from the gallery. Live-streamed over Facebook on Thursday 8th March there were 3,804 views over the evening. Our 3 main channels continue to grow slowly but consistently. Total audience reach for the year across Facebook and Twitter was 3,748,126.

### 3.7.3 Learning and Engagement

Over the last year, learning and engagement continued to embrace Our Manchester, working with residents and listening to local needs and priorities to provide a service for Manchester residents at all stages of life.

**Early Years programme** - Through redevelopment of the Clore Art Studio (the gallery's main early years art space) we are creating a unique immersive experience for families. Working closely with Manchester Health Visitors Team, staff from Clayton and Martenscroft Sure Start and the company Tiddlywinks, we are testing new types of activities for babies, toddlers, children and parent / carers that focuses on health outcomes. Baby Stay and Play is a weekly art/health check session for new parents and their infants and for Manchester Health Visiting team carry out baby health checks. Both health visitors and parents report that they find the art gallery to be an effective and welcoming environment, and baby and parents enjoy the art activities and feel more relaxed about the health checks. The sessions have a positive impact on the mother's stress levels, leading to better maternal mental health. Health visitors emphasise that the sessions make it easier for them to spot and address issues, or refer parents and baby on to other services. Over the year, Baby Stay and Play attracts nearly 900 new parents and babies to the gallery. The gallery has also delivered these sessions at Clayton Sure Start Centre and Olivia House, a charity for very young mothers.

We are partners with Manchester Metropolitan University on a PhD programme investigating how early years art gallery activities contribute to the health agenda.

**Families** – We are working with Wilbraham Primary School in Fallowfield to improve the quality and appeal of gallery activities for a more diverse range of families. The gallery continues to run its monthly Open Doors programme for autistic children and their families and the family holiday programme has grown with stronger links to partnerships and national initiatives (eg. Costume Factory linked to World Book day in February in partnership with Central Library). As a result, we now have the highest level of engagement with Manchester families, peaking at over 50,000 this year and becoming the fastest growing part of the gallery's programme.

**Schools and Colleges** – The gallery have developed new partnerships with four schools – Abraham Moss Community School (Primary and Secondary), The Communications Academy in Harpurhey, Our Lady's RC Primary School in Whalley Range, and Burnage Academy for Boys. The programme involves both activity at the gallery and in the schools, accompanied by continual professional development for teachers. The schools are also a testbed for the emerging Manchester Cultural Education Partnership. The gallery is also trialling an immersive 'school in residence' model with Abraham Moss's year 6, building confidence and resilience as they prepare for transition into secondary school. Abraham Moss are using this model to secure Arts Mark status. The gallery is continuing its theme weeks and broker school relationships with Central Library, the Royal Exchange and Bridgwater Hall, helping to build the cultural capital of Manchester's school children.

**Creative opportunities for the city's college students** - Future Creatives, the gallery's programme for Manchester College's students, introduces college students

to the world of art, craft and design, linking them to professionals working in the creative industries. Last year, 60 Future Creatives took inspiration from the South Asian Design exhibition in our New North and South programme, and 12 were selected and their prototypes developed. This resulted in the production of clothes, art work and jewellery; the clothes and art work were displayed in the gallery and the jewellery was sold in the gallery shop. One of the young people was shortlisted as a young creative of the year at the inaugural Manchester Cultural Awards. This year's intake took inspiration from the gallery's mindful *And Breathe* and Nordic Design exhibitions, worked closely with the gallery's Commercial Lead, and designed products for the shop. These were very popular with the shop customers, with the zine publication selling out in a few days.

**Social and creative opportunities for the city's young people** - The gallery's Creative Consultant initiative attracts young people outside formal education, providing art sessions and projects for young people as they begin to exercise their own choices and decisions. Last year, 25 young people focused their energies on the first Festival of Manchester in Platt Fields. They ran activities questioning the future use and scope of Platt Hall, formerly the Gallery of Costume. The creative consultants used the festival to share their ideas about the future of the hall and canvas the opinions of other festival goers and users of Platt Fields. We also partnered with Contact Theatre's young people (Contact Young Contemporaries) who wrote and produced an interactive play entitled *Old Tools*. Five productions took place to an enthusiastic audience, who were invited to re-examine the gallery's displays through the eyes of the young people.

**Communities** – We have extended the relationship with Burnage Buddies, a Pakistani older women's group, encouraging its members to take part in gallery sessions and explore the opportunity to become gallery volunteers. We have also embedded adult access with the gallery's Making Conversations sessions (for vulnerable adults) and BSL and Audio described tours.

**English Language Provision** – The gallery is extending its relationship with the Council's Talk English programme. The gallery was chosen as the location for the announcement by Lord Bourne of a further year's funding for this national initiative. To enhance on site provision, the gallery is hosting a MAES English language tutor in residence.

**Extending volunteering opportunities** - Volunteering at Manchester Art Gallery continues to grow in numbers and in scope. Alongside the vibrant volunteering programme, the gallery runs an annual Volunteering for Well Being programme. 10-15 adults suffering from social isolation are recruited via a mental health charity. During a two week course at the gallery, art and creative processes are used to build their confidence and self-esteem. Following the intensive course, the volunteers are placed in partner galleries, museums and other cultural organisations, further enhancing their well-being and sense of self-worth.

**Age Friendly** – The gallery is working with the artist Suzanne Lacy on a participatory project that will involve BAME women reaching retirement age. The approach will be to explore the situation of marginalised women before they become entitled to a state pension. The gallery's Age Friendly Collective continue to programme events and

activities at the gallery.

**Addressing Homelessness** - MAG has developed an enduring relationship with Streetwise Opera and With One Voice. Streetwise Opera hold weekly performances in the gallery and collaborated with us to deliver four public events, showcasing the talents of homeless people. In addition to this, we partnered with Museum of the Homelessness to deliver the pop up exhibition / performance, *Objectified*. This interpreted the lives of homeless people through their objects and stories and involved local people and stakeholders in debates and discussions about homelessness. One visitor stated:

*A very powerful experience indeed. We are still talking about it. We need more museum experiences like this - that resonate deeply with contemporary issues.*

Gallery staff also received training and we've have increased contact with other council services, for example the Rough Sleepers Team, and the police in an effort to provide a city-wide, cohesive solution.

*"It is true: art has the power to transform the world. It has transformed mine."*  
Member of Streetwise Opera.

*"Our group love to spend time in the gallery, and I receive countless reminders of what a nice place it is to learn and be creative in. Confidence within entering the space has led to members of the group begging to access other events within the gallery"*  
Gareth Smith Streetwise Opera, Manchester Co-ordinator.

**Health and Well Being** - Alongside the regular Take Notice and Mindful Marks sessions, the gallery now has an established mindful exhibition, *And Breathe....* where art was selected by Charlestown Primary School (Cheetham) and an adult mental health charity and is enhanced by comfortable chairs and sofas. A mindful app can be downloaded for free to guide the listener through relaxation techniques. The exhibition has been refreshed recently, working with the Depaul charity to examine homelessness, coping strategies and mental well-being. Dwell time in this space has increased and visitor feedback is very positive.

*"I spent two months in a psychiatric unit earlier this year due to major depression and psychosis. I am actively looking after my mental health; being in this room has helped me. Thank you"*

*And Breathe....* was shortlisted for the inaugural Manchester Cultural Awards

### **3.8 Platt Hall**

Work has now begun in earnest on the redevelopment of Platt Hall. With the planned relocation of the costume collection to MAG (with a new gallery of fashion and dress opening in 2020) and Queens Park Conservation Studios (collection and archive resource), Platt Hall has the potential to become a unique cultural space. We are working with local communities to transform this important historic landmark into a vibrant, welcoming and inspirational creative space, making best use of the city's

diverse art and design collections to serve the needs and interests of this equally diverse neighbourhood. This is a long term project, but we have made a start in securing phase one research and development funding from both the Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund (EFCF) and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF).

This research and development phase comprises three interdependent strands:

- The identification and development of collections and archives relevant to the Hall and its communities
- Building key partnerships within local communities and evidencing local need
- Developing a longer-term strategy for the site which will lever further funding to support the ultimate aim of re-opening fully as a sustainable and embedded local service

We are currently identifying and documenting areas of the collection associated with Platt Hall and/or of potential relevance to its constituent audiences. This includes little-known and previously under-used material such as the Mary Greg Collection of handicrafts and children's toys, the Lewis Day Collection of folk textiles, and the Charles Rutherston Collection of early 20<sup>th</sup> century painting and drawing, but may include other material as research and consultation develops over the next twelve months. The archives at both Platt Hall and MAG are being audited in order to identify relevant supporting material, and this is already yielding results as we build up, for the first time, a more detailed picture of the diverse history of the Hall and its standing in the local area over the past 250 years.

Alongside this, the immediate neighbourhoods of Rusholme, Moss Side and Fallowfield form the focus for developing key local partnerships. This year's Festival of Manchester in Platt Fields enabled us to showcase quirkier objects from the wider collections, reveal little-known aspects of the Hall's history, and solicit ideas for its future with a wide range of potential visitors. Contacts have also been made with local groups and organisations including the Friends of Platt Fields, Urban Diggers, Trinity House, Robert Darbyshire GP Practice, Rusholme and Fallowfield Civic Society, the Terrace Square Artists Project, and the Manchester Maya Project. Initial findings indicate that Platt Hall is held in great affection locally, and that there is a clear appetite for developing it as a community resource. Ideas already forthcoming include a community café/social drop-in space; facilities for local groups to meet, run workshops, share skills; making/creative spaces where local and emergent artists and makers can develop, share and sell work; a space to display, celebrate and discuss local culture and history.

However, the impact of two years' public closure has also caused widespread disillusionment and scepticism regarding MCC commitment longer term. Encouraging public participation and investment in the Hall, while also managing expectation of what can be achieved in the short term, is thus key to this phase of the project. With this in mind, we are inviting local communities and residents to see for themselves both the opportunities and challenges the Hall represents. Throughout autumn 2019, we will host six exploration and discussion events in the Hall, intended to re-acquaint people with the unique qualities of the site, demonstrate the work that is ongoing to secure it as a usable space, provide hands-on encounters with the wider collections, generate discussion about local need, and inform priorities for

developmental activity over the next 18 months. In partnership with Dr Abigail Gilmore (University of Manchester), lead researcher on the AHRC Valuing Parks and their Communities project, we are also working to strengthen ties between the Hall, the Park and its users. From this initial exploratory work we will develop a programme of more targeted work responding to key local issues, tapping into and supporting existing cultural activity and developing a more informed sense of the unique contribution Platt Hall can make to the local neighbourhood. This will form the basis of a longer term strategy for which we will be seeking further external funding.

### **3.9 Manchester Together Archive**

The creation and development of the Manchester Together Archive – the physical and digital record of the spontaneous public response to the Arena attack of 22 May 2017 – has been a strong area of focus for the gallery over the last 2 years. Working with key partners at the University of Manchester and Archives + we have stabilised and inventoried over 10,000 tributes, and created a physical archive space in the basement of the gallery to house the material, enable people to explore and discuss the material, and to work on the on-going programme of documentation, interpretation and development.

Access to the material is currently restricted, and we support the ‘families first’ approach and recognise and respect the sensitivity of the material, and the need for the archive to be quiet contemplative space for those most impacted by the events of 22 May.

Understanding this archive within a broader global context is essential, and we have created an international network with other cities who’ve experienced similar terrorist attacks and are dealing with similar spontaneous public memorials. We held a 2-day international seminar at Manchester Art Gallery in October 2018, funded by the British Academy and organised by the University of Manchester, to share experiences with archivists, curators and conservators from Paris, Stockholm, Brussels, Nice, and Barcelona. We have now established a network mailing list and an online platform for the network to share experiences, guidelines and outcomes. This year we have developed an innovative volunteer programme, begun the process of cataloguing and digitisation, uncovered new stories about the archive, hosted visits to the archive for the families of people who died in the attack, provided opportunities for people to engage with archival material and contribute to the development of an online archive, and promoted the archive and associated research at conferences in the UK and overseas.

13 volunteers have been recruited to assist with cataloguing and digitising the material in the archive, and collectively they have contributed 274 hours to the project. The volunteers work closely with the archival material, which carries an emotional load, and so following advice from mental health professionals the volunteer programme has been structured to support emotional wellbeing. The volunteers come from a range of backgrounds and have different motivations for getting involved. One commented that the best thing about volunteering was ‘*getting to work on such an important special project.*’ Evaluation feedback from volunteers shows they have developed different skills, including working on the database, teamwork and independent working, and view these skills as useful for their own

work and careers. Many commented that they have developed knowledge of the city. One volunteer commented that volunteering has '*helped my emotional wellbeing – I felt purposeful*' and another stated that '*working on the project has helped me with my own recovery following the tragic events of 2017.*'

The families of people who died in the attack have an open invitation to visit the archive at any time. Over half the families have now visited the archive, and all visitors expressed their gratitude that the material had been collected and is being preserved. Staff shared plans for digitising and making the material accessible online with families during these visits, and took on board feedback about what should be made available to visitors and online audiences. The visits were also an opportunity for project staff to learn more about the significance and meaning of the items in the archive for different family members. Dan Hett, brother of Martyn Hett who died in the attack, tweeted about the archive after he visited on the anniversary in May 2019. He said that '*the fact that it's been captured and archived so perfectly is really something... it was amazing to see.*' Press outlets picked up on his tweets, and there was an overwhelmingly positive response from the public to the work that has been done so far.

In addition, the archive has hosted visits from other people connected to the attack, as well as key stakeholders from the Council and the heritage profession. Comments and questions during these visits demonstrate a huge interest in the archive and its potential uses. Participants found the experience both emotive and thought-provoking, with one participant commenting that they were really pleased '*to have the opportunity to be involved in archiving Manchester history*' and another saying that '*they felt really honoured to be able to have access to these items.*' As well as work with invited groups, project staff worked with the gallery's learning team to host visits to the archive for pupils from Abraham Moss School. These visits enabled the discussion of important themes and provoked interesting and engaged questions from the children. More of this work is planned over the next school year.

As the project develops new research opportunities are emerging and our understanding of the potential uses of the archive continues to develop. In recognition of the work undertaken so far, the Manchester Together Archive team are Directorate winners in the Manchester City Council Awards for Excellence 2019 in the Working Together for Manchester category, and will be going forward to the council-wide finals on 18 October.