



Sense of Place 2025-2026: Programme Information

This new programme explores how museums can form a crucial part of a place's identity and wellbeing, and how creative practice can support audiences to enhance their sense of wellbeing by focusing on the community they are part of. The programme is centred around the theme of place and place making. It will support museums to identify place-based approaches to community engagement.

We will support museums to identify the benefits of engaging in this type of work and explore opportunities to develop sense of place work within their programming.

Year 1 took place over 2024/25 and involved a programme launch at Aurora Wellbeing in Worksop. This was followed by two online sessions facilitated by Culture Leicestershire.

Year 2 will involve an intensive support programme for up to 6 museums in the Midlands, and a programme of 5 training workshops primarily delivered by Culture Leicestershire and partners in 2025/26.

<https://aurorawellbeing.org.uk>

<https://www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/>

It is not mandatory for museums to have participated in the Year 1 activity.

This activity sits within the Museum Development Midlands (MDM) Inclusivity and Relevance programme and supports Arts Council England's [Let's Create](#) strategy.

The programme will be delivered from April 2025 to April 2026.

As an outcome of participating in the programme museums will:

- Develop understanding of sense of place work, and how they can approach and develop models to embed it within their organisation
- Create a plan to enable change and implement sense of place work in their museum
- Identify challenges and/ or barriers to embracing models and approaches within their organisation and work through ways to overcome these issues
- Develop new networks of contacts and expand their knowledge of good practice
- Understand better where they can seek further support and external funding, including how their plans relate to funder's priorities and requirements
- Be supported to apply for strategic grant funding through Museum Development Midlands



- Have access to a peer network of museums for advice, support and collaboration
- Be encouraged to access other MDM training, funding and resources related to their specific plans and objectives.

About the Trainers

The programme will be primarily delivered by Culture Leicestershire- Leicestershire County Council's Library, Collections and Learning, Heritage and Cultural Participation services.

Culture Leicestershire's shared vision is to **Create space to spark imagination, celebrate communities and enhance wellbeing**. The team have led on the delivery of the Sense of Place pilot workshops in 2024/2025.

Programme participants will be supported by Rebecca-Morris Buck, Laura Crossley and Rachel Crossley a team of consultants who are working with MDM on this programme. They will develop a network of peer support for cohort museums to support and learn from one to one another. They will also provide one to one support for cohort museums, and support delivery of the first programme workshop.

Rebecca, Laura and Rachel are a team of consultants with over four decades of wide-ranging heritage, arts, and museums experience between them, both in-house and freelance.

Laura has a PhD in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester, with a specialism in community engagement practice. Her freelance experience includes researching and developing a national community engagement toolkit for museums on behalf of Art Fund, an Engagement and Activity Plan for Exmoor National Park, a successful NLHF Activity Plan Tullie House Museums and Art Gallery, and working as a Visitor Experience Consultant for the National Trust, as well as being an experienced and qualified coach and mentor, and trustee of the Association of Independent Museums. Her most recent in-house role was part of the strategic leadership team at the National Football Museum.

Rachel has worked with national museums and grassroots charities, as well as in funding, policymaking and local authority contexts. She currently works with the Greater London Authority to support local authorities develop their year as the Mayor's London Borough of Culture, advising on creative programming, partnerships, governance, communications and more. She was previously a consultant with an Arts Council England placemaking project, and held in-house roles in museums including leading Learning and Engagement programming for adult audiences across the Historic Royal Palaces, and being the first Director of the East End Women's Museum.

Rebecca has worked at every level in museums, from front of house visitor services to senior leadership, with a focus on project management, audiences, communications, and community engagement, with roles including Community Participation Officer at the National Justice Museum and Engagement and Programmes Manager at Creswell Crags. She now undertakes freelance project work across the sector. She also currently works part time as a project manager for Writing East Midlands, developing creative writing networks and opportunities across the region, and recently spent a year as the Creative Community Builder as part of a Derbyshire-based Arts Council England Creative People and Places

programme. She is a co-founder of the Safer Museums Network, which holds space for museums looking to support survivors of domestic abuse, and a former Chair of Nottinghamshire Heritage Forum.

Programme Workshop Timetable

March 2025- April 2025

Programme information release and expressions of interest accepted.

Cohort museums recruited and welcomed to the programme.

Thursday 15 May 2025 in person- Museum of Making Derby

All day, times TBC

Place and identity Our first session to launch the programme and reintroduce the theme of sense of place. This workshop will support museums to explore the themes of place, identity, and local pride. We will explore sense of place, community engagement, and what that looks like for museum visitors from further afield.

Delivered by Rebecca Morris Buck, Laura Crossley and Rachel Crossley and supported by Museum Development Midlands.

In the afternoon participants will take part in a fully facilitated workshop. Participants will be guided in the process of crafting a textiles-based artwork outlining the participants response to a series of questions aimed to help them consider and explore future community-based collections work they would like to undertake.

Delivered by Laura Burrill, Community Arts Practitioner, and Sally Hawley, Museum Development Collections Officer.

Monday 16 June AM

Destination This workshop will explore how sense of place supports the visitor economy, supporting great places to live, work and visit. It will help museums to navigate local and wider perceptions of place.

We will explore the wider advocacy opportunity of sense of place, looking at the contribution to economic growth.

The session will also support museums wanting to work with independent and local businesses and the high street.

Delivered online by Culture Leicestershire. Catherine Rogers, Economic Growth Manager – Strategic Tourism Lead. Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Thursday 26 June 2025

Creative and interpretive expression through the use of creative practitioners. Building on the themes and learning from Year 1 of the programme, this workshop will explore working with creative practitioners, the process of using artistic methods to strengthen and develop the feelings of ownership, and place making in community engagement.

Ruth Singer. Independent artist, creative practitioner and consultant www.ruthsinger.com

In person, venue TBC.

Wednesday 17 September 2025 AM

People and stories. Exploring the value of museum collections to embed a sense of place for your community. This session will also consider how to work with collections that don't have a strong relevance to the local community.

Delivered online by Culture Leicestershire. Philip Warren, Collections and Learning Manger. Alison Clague Senior Curator-Leicestershire County Council
<https://leicestershirecollections.org.uk/>

Thursday 4 December 2025 AM

Wellbeing This workshop will explore how museums can use sense of place work to support mental and physical wellbeing. We will look at the work of social prescribers within the community, and the increasing focus on supporting those at risk of loneliness or social isolation.

Delivered online by Culture Leicestershire.

February 2026

Programme celebration event for cohort museums- **date to be confirmed.**
In person.



During the year we will be offering four additional cohort networking events (online) which will support museums to share knowledge, experience and good practice. The networking events will also support museums to overcome challenges and barriers to sense of place working.

Each museum will be offered 1:1 online support session with Rebecca, Laura or Rachel to help you to develop your plans for sense of place work.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for this programme you must be an Accredited museum or Working Towards Accreditation in the Midlands. Priority will be given to non-NPO and non-National museums. Please note: Up to two individuals from each organisation may sign up to the programme.

How to apply:

Read the Programme Information Sheet and Expression of Interest form.

Complete the form and submit to enquiries@mdmidlands.org.uk

Deadline for Expression of Interest submissions: 5pm, Friday 11 April 2025

We will confirm receipt of your application within two working days. If you do not hear from us, please contact us again.

If you would like to arrange an informal chat about the programme before applying, please contact Helen Sharp by emailing helen.z.sharp@leics.gov.uk.

This is a competitive application process. MDM will shortlist applications based on evidence of need within your organisation.

Accessibility

MDM will facilitate or book accessibility services or adjustments for delegates where requested. Please see [MDM Training Accessibility Statement](#).