

# DISCOVER AND SHARE

Ways to promote positive values  
in arts and cultural settings



Common Cause  
FOUNDATION

MANCHESTER MUSEUM

MANCHESTER  
1824  
The University of Manchester  
Manchester Museum

the happy  
museum



# Introduction

Some key questions for those of us working in arts and cultural organisations include: What is our role in society? How should we be engaging with the world around us, and bringing people together? What is our role in promoting social justice, in encouraging action on climate change, in building more compassionate and caring communities, in inspiring volunteering and civic participation? And how can we ensure that we are places and spaces that reach out to, and attract people from, all parts of our communities?

One way we can do this is to embrace and work with widely shared values. Not values as espoused in organisational mission statements, but values as understood by social psychologists: Those deeply held guiding principles that help to shape our attitudes and behaviours, and which are in turn shaped by the world around us and our interactions with each other.

Most of us (74 per cent in the UK) attach greater importance to ‘compassionate’ values such as ‘broadmindedness’, ‘social justice’, ‘helpfulness’ and ‘honesty’ than we do to ‘self-interest’ values such as ‘wealth’ and ‘social status’. But we underestimate each other. 77 per cent of us misjudge the importance that our fellow citizens place on ‘self-interest’ values.

Those of us who misjudge others in this way – the large majority of us, in other words – feel less connected to our communities and less concerned about social or environmental issues. We are also more likely to experience social alienation and we are less likely to be engaged in community activities, volunteering or voting.

By championing ‘compassionate’ values and providing opportunities for visitors to hear and see what matters most to fellow citizens, arts and cultural organisations can play a role in reflecting our shared values. In so doing arts and cultural organisations can better support ambitions for learning, tolerance, broadmindedness and the protection of the natural world.

Fortunately, the aspirations of most citizens are well aligned with those of most arts and cultural organisations. Yet relative to the importance most of us place on ‘compassionate’ values, citizens report that arts and cultural organisations could go further in modelling and encouraging these values. This document will, we hope, help in this process.

This Discover and share guide draws on learning from a year-long collaboration between Manchester Museum and Common Cause Foundation, inspired by the work of the Happy Museum project. Over the course of this project, we developed new approaches to modelling ‘compassionate’ values in interactions with visitors, volunteers and staff; and found new ways to facilitate visitors in exploring one another’s values.

**We hope you find the following pages useful in helping you to think about how to model the values that will promote social justice, equality and care for our natural environment in whatever arts or cultural setting you occupy. We’d love to hear from you if you have experiences to share, or questions that this guide leaves unanswered.**

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*'We have an opportunity to convey to people the simple truth that most citizens care deeply for other people and the places that we live – much more than we currently imagine. Cultural organisations can show the way in beginning to communicate this truth – and Manchester Museum has begun to work in this way. But this is a good-news story that can and must be told by many other organisations.'*

**Dr Nick Merriman, Director Manchester Museum**

*'The Happy Museum project encourages museums and cultural organisations to become Stewards of people, place and planet. As places and agents for change they can nurture resilience amongst their staff, volunteers, communities and in wider society. Understanding values plays a key role in this, illuminating and modelling shared qualities of empathy and compassion helps build communities of active and engaged citizens.'*

**Hilary Jennings, Project Director The Happy Museum**

This work was funded by:

# A brief introduction to

# values

In the everyday use of the word, 'values' are assumed to be inherently good. But psychologists use the term slightly differently. In psychology, values are 'standards' that shape our attitudes and behaviour. Some values, for example, motivate our concern for others, while others motivate self-interested behaviour.

It is the psychologist's understanding of 'values' we use. This allows us to explore the relationship between different values, and to understand how the promotion of some values undermines the importance we place on others.

The values map on the [next page](#) is one of the most widely used models of values, tested in thousands of studies across dozens of countries.

It is important to remember that almost *all* of us hold all the values on this map to be important at *some* level. It is the *priority* that we attach to each of these values that varies. This priority is influenced by the world around us, and what we read, see and hear.

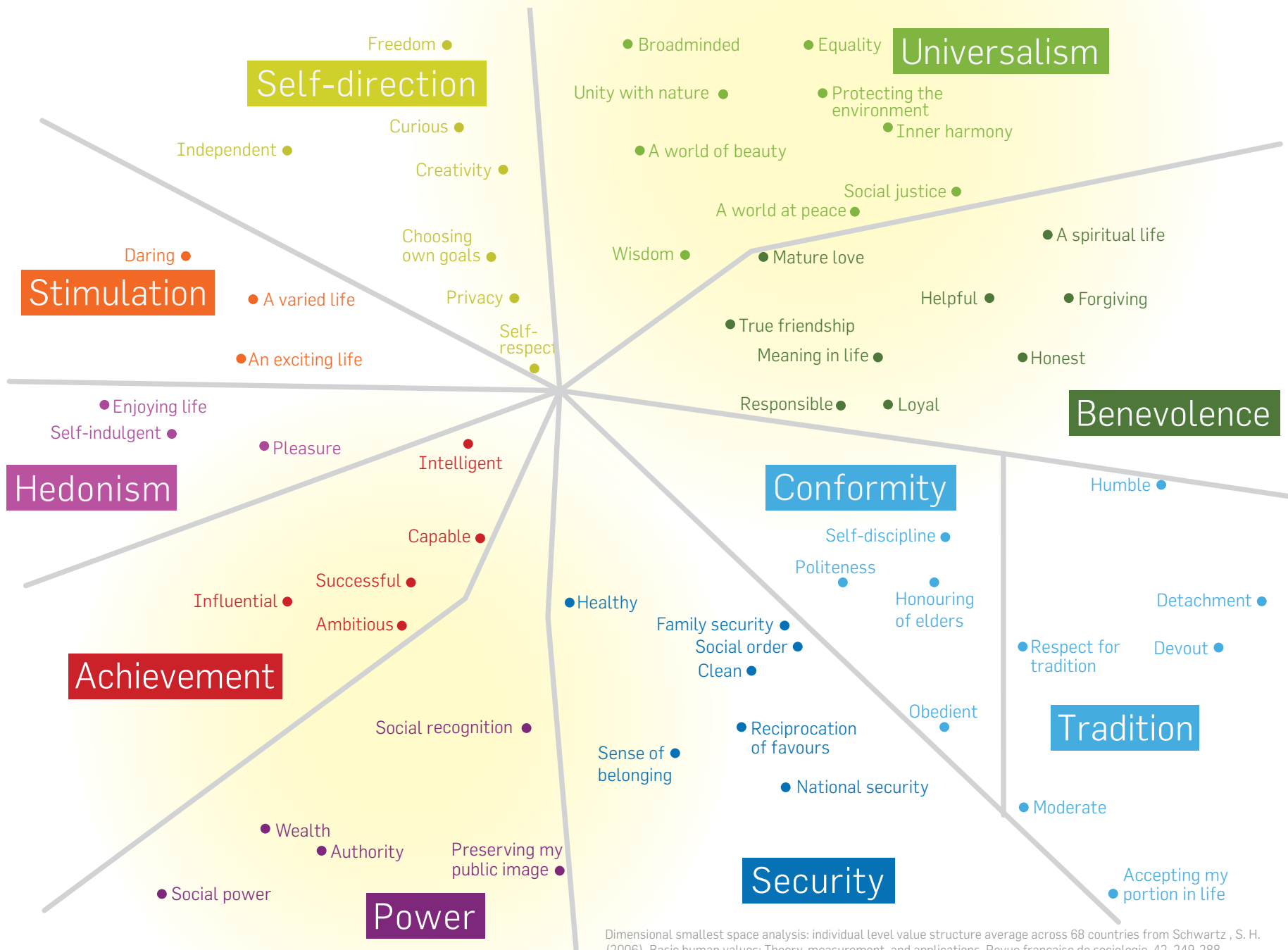
**'Compassionate'** values are those in the Benevolence and Universalism groups, shading into Self-direction.

**'Self-interest'** values are those in the Achievement and Power groups, shading into Security.

Those for whom 'compassionate' values are more important are also more likely to:

- Care about other people and other living things
- Be supportive of policies and practices that support social justice or the environment
- Be connected to, and feel more responsible for, their communities
- Be tolerant of diversity
- Vote or volunteer
- Report high well-being.

The opposite is true for people for whom 'self-interest' values are more important.



Dimensional smallest space analysis: individual level value structure average across 68 countries from Schwartz, S. H. (2006). Basic human values: Theory, measurement, and applications. *Revue française de sociologie*, 42, 249-288.

# Four simple insights about values

When working with values it is important to remember:

## How values work

### THE BLEED-OVER EFFECT

When we attach particular importance to one value we are likely to attach importance to other values that are nearby on the values map. Having our attention drawn (even subtly) to a value is likely to temporarily *increase* the importance that we place on these neighbouring values.

### THE SEE-SAW EFFECT

When we attach particular importance to one value we are unlikely to simultaneously attach particular importance to values that are on the other side of the values map. Having our attention drawn (even subtly) to one value is likely to temporarily *decrease* the importance that we place on these distant values.

### THE WORK-OUT EFFECT

Values are like muscles. Working in a caring and compassionate environment will, over time, strengthen the importance we place on values such as 'helpfulness'. And, because of the bleed-over effect, our concern for 'social justice' and 'equality' are also likely to strengthen. At the same time, because of the see-saw effect, this daily experience is also likely to weaken the importance we place on the 'opposing' values of 'wealth', 'social recognition' or 'preserving my public image'.

Working daily in an environment characterised by self-interest, hierarchy and competition is likely to have the opposite effect.

Having these four insights in mind when considering how best to model values in any setting is crucial. This Discover and share guide outlines how we can apply these insights to create a virtuous circle of 'compassionate' values.

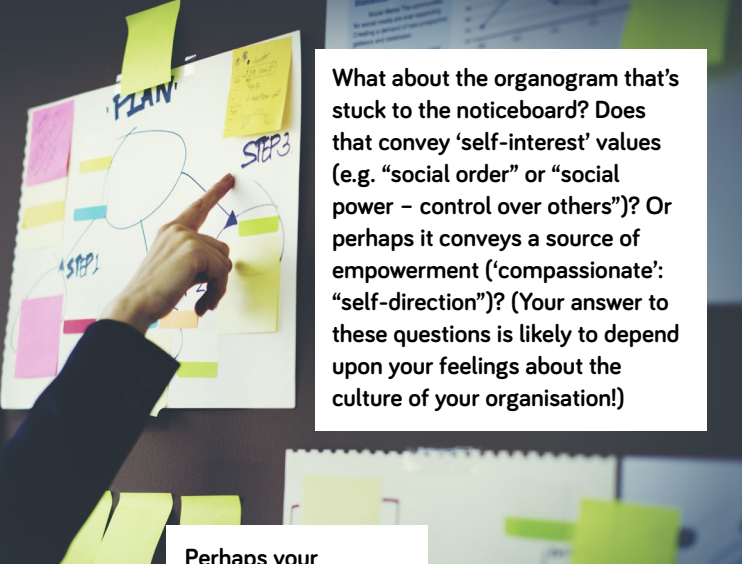
### THE PERCEPTION GAP

*Across the UK nearly three quarters of us hold 'compassionate' values to be more important than 'self-interest' values. However, 77 per cent of us underestimate the importance that a typical fellow citizen attaches to 'compassionate' values, and overestimate the importance a typical citizen attaches to 'self-interest' values.*

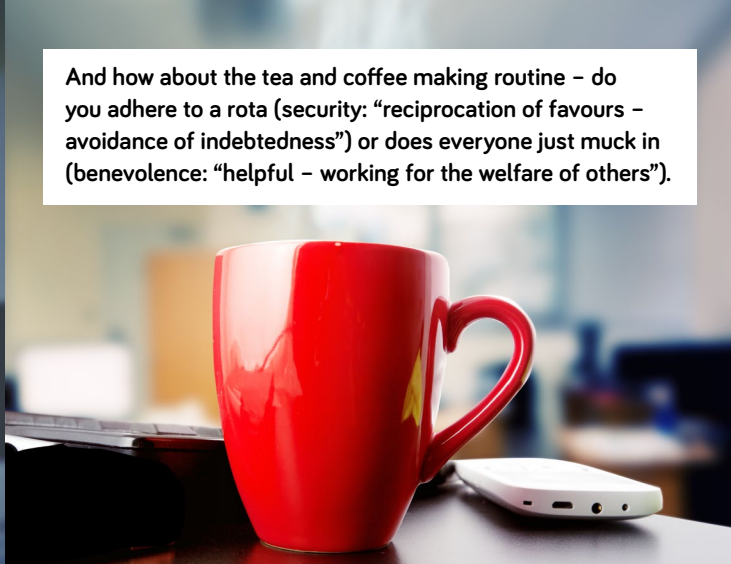
*This is the 'perception gap'. When we know others well, this gap is small. But across a town or city, the gap becomes of great importance. The more we underestimate the importance a typical fellow citizen places on 'compassionate' values, the less likely we are to act in line with our own 'compassionate' values. This can become self-perpetuating: if we don't see others acting in line with our 'compassionate' values, then we understandably underestimate the importance that others place on these. This leaves us even less likely to act in line with them ourselves.*

*For more on perceptions of others' values and why they matter, go [here](#).*





What about the organogram that's stuck to the noticeboard? Does that convey 'self-interest' values (e.g. "social order" or "social power – control over others")? Or perhaps it conveys a source of empowerment ('compassionate': "self-direction")? (Your answer to these questions is likely to depend upon your feelings about the culture of your organisation!)



And how about the tea and coffee making routine – do you adhere to a rota (security: "reciprocation of favours – avoidance of indebtedness") or does everyone just muck in (benevolence: "helpful – working for the welfare of others").



Perhaps there's a sticky note on the edge of your screen reminding you to renegotiate your phone contract ('self-interest': "wealth – material possessions, money").



Perhaps your workspace is adorned with pictures of your best friends ('compassionate': "true friendship").



# Getting to know your values

How are different values invoked and exercised in your day-to-day experience? Become familiar with the values map on page 5, and read more on the subject [here](#).

A good place to start exploring how your own values are evoked is in your own workplace. What values are exercised as you look up from your desk at work? Even subtle cues can have significant effects.

Overall, what values do you feel are exercised most strongly by the time you spend at work – perhaps a significant part of your waking life?

# Three principles for working with values:

## PRINCIPLE 1:

### Show

Showing 'compassionate' values in action is likely to create two social benefits. First it invokes these values for visitors, exercising their own 'compassionate' values. Second, it conveys an understanding that others, such as colleagues or volunteers, care deeply about these values, contributing to closing the perception gap.

Be aware of the see-saw relationship between 'compassionate' and 'self-interest' values mentioned on [page 6](#). It's as important to *avoid* showing 'self-interest' values in action as it is to show 'compassionate' values in action.



## PRINCIPLE 2:

### Assume

Assume 'compassionate' values are most important to others, and interact with those you don't know on this basis. This might feel like a bold assumption, but we are on safe ground: most of us place particular importances on 'compassionate' values and assuming this of others will help close the perception gap.

Consider this invitation to donate: *'Help us keep your visit to the museum free - please donate generously'*. This invitation makes the subtle assumption that most visitors prioritise 'self-interest' values.

Here's an alternative invitation: *'Help us keep the museum free for everyone to enjoy - please donate generously'*. This invitation makes the correct assumption that 'compassionate' values are most important to most people. In subtly communicating this simple truth, it also helps to close the perception gap.

To see more on how Manchester Museum used this approach see [page 15](#).



## PRINCIPLE 3:

### Facilitate

Facilitating explorations of others' values helps build our appreciation of the importance that others, including complete strangers, attach to 'compassionate' values. Arts and cultural organisations have many opportunities to facilitate these explorations. Doing so builds awareness that most of us – not just our immediate friends and family – place particular importance on 'compassionate' values.



In developing our work using these three principles, we will be aligning with the 'compassionate' values that our visitors, volunteers and colleagues typically prioritise.

These icons will be used within case studies on pages 14-21 to illustrate when these principles are being applied.



# Getting started

Any organisation with social purpose needs to understand values: both the values that its work promotes, and the contribution it makes to shaping people's perceptions of others' values.

A good place to start is by running a workshop for colleagues, exploring the values map and the principles that underlie this.

Ideally, this workshop will bring together a cross-section of colleagues representing a range of roles and seniority. Think about how to connect this enquiry with important processes in your organisation. Are there already moves to better understand the social impact of your organisation's work? Perhaps the contribution that your organisation makes to visitors' well-being? Or does your organisation want to engage with a wider demographic?

For example, in our work at Manchester Museum, this enquiry drew momentum from the aspiration to become a 'museum for life' – a concept which was central to a major capital development.

Having familiarised colleagues with these values and how they work, begin to apply these insights in your organisation. This work can begin at an introductory workshop, and be sustained through regular follow-up meetings (a 'community of practice').

**Get in touch** if you would like help in running the workshop, or would like to use some of the resources we have developed for this.



The following pages outline four exercises that we have found particularly helpful in a workshop setting.

## EXERCISE 1

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# BOILING IT DOWN – WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO WORK AT THE MUSEUM?

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### Objective:

Encourage volunteers and/or staff to reflect deeply on what motivates them to work with your organisation, and to deepen their understanding of what motivates colleagues..

### What to do:

Look at the list of values items and their definitions (it's important to consider these value items *alongside their definitions*). You can download sheets for use in workshops [here](#).

Working alone, spend 15 minutes choosing **12** value items (from the full set of 58) that you feel most closely reflect the values that you seek to express through your work in your organisation. This may seem like a long time, but it's important not to rush this first stage because it takes time to become familiar with different value items.

Working in pairs, spend 10 minutes agreeing on the **six** items that you feel best reflect your shared understanding of the values that you and your partner are both trying to express through your work.

Now working in groups of four, spend five minutes deciding on the **four** values that best characterise your group's collective understanding of the values that participants are trying to express through their work. With larger groups, this process could be continued for another iteration before inviting participants to speak and share the values on which they agree.

In an alternative version of this exercise, we have encouraged groups of volunteers to produce collages using pictures cut from old magazines, depicting the values that motivate them to give their time to the organisation.

## EXERCISE 2

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# BENCHMARKING

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### Objective:

Establish a benchmark from which progress can be measured.

### What to do:

You might want to measure the impact of the changes that you make. To do this well takes some time and an investment of staff or volunteer capacity.

We have developed a rigorous approach to this, using a standardised values survey that allows you to explore the values that visitors feel are engaged over the course of time spent in a public building like a museum, and to track this over time. [Get in touch](#) if you would like more information on this.

## EXERCISE 3

# YOUR ORGANISATION AS AN ECOSYSTEM

### Objective:

Deepen volunteer/staff appreciation of the complex web of interactions that characterise the community of visitors, volunteers and staff that is nurtured by your organisation. Identify some of the multiple channels through which the three principles for working with values in a cultural context (see [page 8](#)) can be developed.

### What to do:

Working in groups, think about the ecosystem of interactions supported by your organisation. Together these interactions co-produce the experiences of visitors, volunteers and staff. Some of these are shown in the illustration on the next page, and you can download a larger version of this for use in workshops [here](#).





## YOUR ORGANISATION AS AN ECOSYSTEM (continued)

### STEP 1

Working together, ask groups of volunteers or staff to think about examples of interactions for each of the arrows in the illustration to the right. Some may be more obvious than others.

You may already have given a great deal of thought to how staff interact with volunteers. But have you thought about how the organisation facilitates visitors to engage with one another – especially visitors who don't know one another?

Participants might ask: How does the organisation encourage conversations between strangers? How does it use visitor-generated material to engage subsequent visitors?

### STEP 2

Groups can now review some of the interactions that they have listed, and think carefully about how these could be used to work through each of the three principles for working with values (see [page 8](#)).



Mapping interactions in this way helps to deepen awareness of new opportunities for conversations. Think particularly about the interactions within groups (the red arrows outside the spheres). The facilitation of conversations between visitors, for example, is a particular opportunity for museums, with many ways of revealing that fellow citizens are kinder, more compassionate and more concerned for the well-being of people and planet than is perceived to be the case.

The arts and cultural organisation as ecosystem

## EXERCISE 4

# VALUES MAPPING



Template for values mapping

This is another tool that can be used to explore new ways to work through the three principles explored on [page 8](#). It's a tool that we have adapted from [Derby Museum's empathy mapping tool](#).

### Objective:

Deepen volunteer/staff appreciation of the opportunities to develop the three principles for working with values in a cultural context, and to identify problem areas where 'self-interest' values may be promoted.

### What to do:

Imagine yourself into the mind of a person who is spending time in your building – perhaps a visitor or a volunteer. How old is she? What's her background? What is she interested in? What are her anxieties?

Now walk through the building. (You could imagine this walk, but it's better to actually take it). Populate a sheet like the one shown left, recording where there are experiences that may engage visitors' values, and think how they may work in terms of the principles below.



**Show** 'compassionate' values in action (and **avoid showing** 'self-interest', values in action).



**Assume** 'compassionate' values are the most important for people (and **avoid assuming** as though 'self-interest' are the most important).



**Facilitate exploration** of others' values.

We used the template for mapping values (left) for our work in Manchester Museum - and you'll find a clean version of this template [here](#).

# The values-literate arts or cultural organisation

Preparatory workshops using resources such as those outlined on previous pages will, we hope, leave you with:

- A group of volunteers and staff equipped with a new understanding of values and their importance to your work, and excited to begin applying this.
- A preliminary understanding of where there are opportunities to pursue the three principles for a values-literate arts or cultural organisation, and to improve current practice.

You will now need to reflect on these opportunities in the light of:

- The level of enthusiasm and commitment of relevant staff.
- Resources that might be needed to create change.
- Any existing or scheduled changes with which you can work.

We were fortunate in being able to pursue such changes at Manchester Museum over the course of a year, and with the help of a programme manager recruited specifically to lead this work.

**On the following pages we provide case-studies of some of the changes we were able to effect.**

## CASE STUDY 1

### GENERATING SUPPORT

#### The opportunity

There are challenges that arise in relation to money. Numerous studies find that even subtle reminders of money tend to lead people to place more importance, temporarily, on 'self-interest' values. We also know that simply viewing desirable consumer items has a similar effect, leading people to care less for others and the natural world.

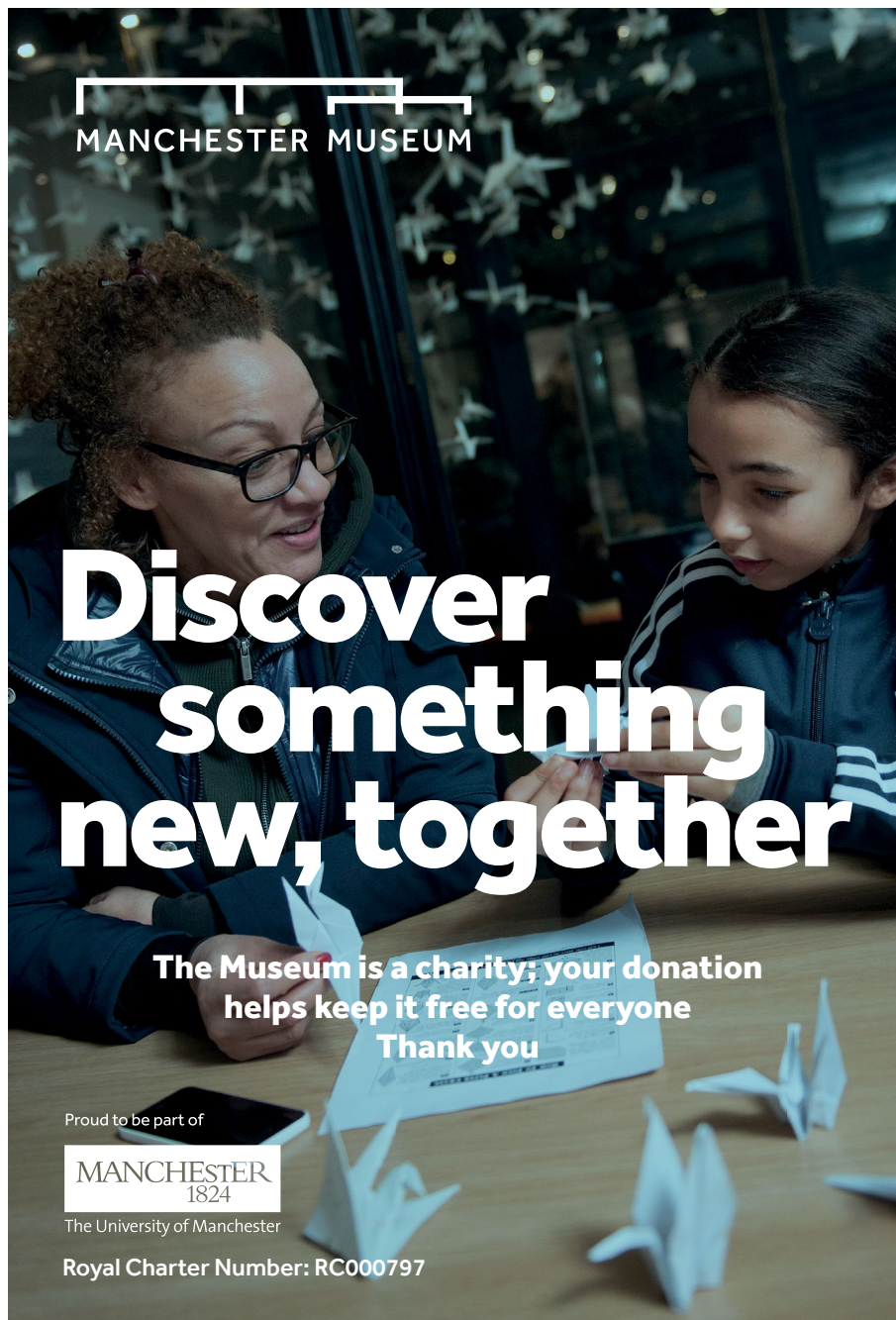
In comparison to a commercial organisation, a museum has particular opportunities to encourage visitors to relate to the collection and the people encountered while in the museum in a way that is unassociated with money or the acquisition of things.

But, at the same time, there is increasing pressure for museums to generate revenue, through shop sales and either an entrance fee or donation. In this context, tensions will inevitably arise. We were interested to explore ways of minimizing these.

#### Our aim

To develop approaches that generate revenue from shop sales and visitor donations, while avoiding some of the psychologically problematic aspects of commercial transactions.





## What we did

### The shop

- The shop at Manchester Museum sells a range of ethically sourced products. It is already communicating the social and environmental benefits of these products to customers, something we encouraged. 🧐
- It also relies upon the sale of higher volumes of lower value products that are less sustainably produced. This creates a dilemma. Dropping these lines was not an option, and yet staff recognized the tension when some other items were marketed on the grounds of high social and environmental standards.
- We suggested that this dilemma could be shared with visitors, thereby connecting with 'compassionate' values (in this case, "honesty"). In particular we saw opportunities to explore the parallels between this dilemma as it confronts museum staff, and the daily dilemma we each face when wanting to shop responsibly whilst doing so within a tight budget.
- This dialogue has still to be developed, but sharing a dilemma in this way encourages reflection on responsible shopping, and normalizes our shared ethical concerns. 🧐 🗣️

### Donation boxes

- Several studies have found that invoking 'compassionate' values increases our inclination to donate to charities. We have explored this in depth elsewhere.

## What we achieved

Building on these insights, we developed and trialed new signage for donation boxes that connected with 'compassionate' values. We also engaged visitors in conversations about how donations support everyone to experience the wonder, curiosity, quality time and opportunity to learn together offered by museums. Happily, these changes resulted in a 40 per cent increase in donations over the course of our trial period, relative to the same period in the previous year. 🗣️

## CASE STUDY 2

# WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

### The opportunity

Manchester Museum draws on the help of around 200 enthusiastic volunteers. Volunteers are crucial both behind the scenes, supporting curatorial staff, and on the gallery floors, engaging visitors with objects from the museum's collection at 'handling tables'.

When we asked volunteers what motivates them to give their time freely in this way, most say that they like meeting new people, helping others, or pursuing a sense of social purpose. Few say that they are looking for ways to improve their employability or bolster their CV.

This reveals a commitment to help without expectation of material reward. Volunteers were demonstrating 'compassionate' values in a way that was largely hidden from visitors. Visitors leaving the museum often had no idea about the extent of volunteering that the museum inspires, or of the volunteers' motivations.

### Our aim

We set out to encourage volunteers to convey to each other, and to visitors, the normality of volunteering, and to deepen visitors' appreciation of what motivates most volunteers to give their time and skills freely.



**MANCHESTER MUSEUM**

**"SHARING STORIES IS THE BEST PART OF VOLUNTEERING FOR ME, MAKING PEOPLE FEEL COMFORTABLE AND HAPPY"**

Diana is one of 200 volunteers who give their time to support Manchester Museum. Make a volunteer's day by asking them what they love about volunteering or tweet them a thank you

**SHARE THE LOVE**  
#peopleofmcr



**MANCHESTER**  
1824  
The University of Manchester  
Manchester Museum



## CASE STUDY 2 (continued)



*'With our volunteers, we do not just deliver to our visitors: we now openly wear our heart on our sleeve. We demonstrate, communicate and share why we care about what we do.'*

**Karen - Volunteer Assistant, Manchester Museum**

### What we did

- We ran a series of workshop sessions with volunteers to explore values and how these linked to the work of the museum, and to deepen volunteers' own reflections on their motivations to volunteer. These included the 'Boiling it down' exercise (see [page 10](#)) and working in groups to produce collages showing why they volunteered.
- Following this, we organised an entire day to celebrate the work of volunteers during National Volunteer Week. This gave an opportunity to raise the profile of volunteering in the museum, and to explore volunteers' own ideas about how to better showcase this to visitors. Together, we decided that an important part of volunteers' role in conversation with visitors was to provide living testimony to our urge to help one another. 
- We worked with volunteers to encourage them to open up in conversations with visitors about the number of volunteers in the museum, and their individual motivations for volunteering, including how it made them feel. 
- We designed and placed posters in prominent places around the museum, showcasing the motivations and numbers of those volunteering in the museum. As well as highlighting 'compassionate' values in action,

these posters contributed to strengthening volunteers' sense of the value that the museum places on volunteering and also encouraged visitors to ask volunteers why they gave their time freely in this way.  

- We experimented with re-naming the handling tables as "Wonder Stops", with posters asking "Wonder why we volunteer? Ask us why we do it". We experimented with a puzzle for families to complete whilst visiting the museum. This puzzle prompted families to find volunteers in each gallery and ask questions about their motivations for volunteering. 
- We supported an already-planned re-write of the museum's Volunteer Handbook, changing the content and tone to show that most volunteers gave their time because they wanted to be helpful, reaffirming how widely shared 'compassionate' values are. 

### What we achieved

As a result of our work, volunteers at the museum are now more ready to talk to visitors about why they volunteer - and visitors are more likely to initiate such conversations. These are, we hope, changes which have now been embedded in the practices of the museum - partly through changes in the volunteer handbook and induction process, but most importantly because we have built our work built on the enthusiasm of the museum's volunteer co-ordinator.

*'It's lovely to come into a building where the emphasis is on friendliness, kindness and sharing - it's refreshing to come into a positive environment basically.'*

**Volunteer, Manchester Museum**



## CASE STUDY 3

# EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMMING

### The opportunity

Many of the exhibitions, and much of the programming at Manchester Museum already connected with 'compassionate' values. Indeed the museum's 'brand values' (which included the aspiration to be authentic, caring, imaginative and open to all), seem closely aligned with 'compassionate' values. But we saw opportunities to go further.

We also identified opportunities to facilitate some of the museum's 450,000 annual visitors in sharing their values with their fellow visitors. There were opportunities to do this in the context of programmed activities, during family days and outreach events. But we also developed ways to do this on a more day-to-day basis.

### Our aim

We set out to facilitate visitors in exploring one another's values. Our aim was to build appreciation of the importance that most of us, whatever our background, culture or life experiences, place on 'compassionate' values. We wanted to communicate these shared values to all our visitors, building awareness that it's not just our immediate friends and family that place particular importance on 'compassionate' values.



soph\_spirit • Follow  
Manchester Museum

soph\_spirit #peopleofmcr spreading some #mcr love in the museum. Noah and grandad wrote a message, and I found this beautiful pic and note left. How gorgeous is the pic?! ☐

mcrmuseum Great to see three generations sharing the love - got to love the #peopleofmcr

## CASE STUDY 3 (continued)

### What we did

- We reviewed draft text for upcoming temporary exhibitions, analysing this for the values that it engaged and suggesting changes, often small and subtle, but nevertheless important. For example, we suggested emphasising the beauty of an object, rather than its rarity; and on promoting wonder, rather than understanding. 🧐
- At times our collaboration raised more difficult questions. Manchester Museum's extensive natural history collection invites reflection on the immense diversity of life. But this diversity is represented, of course, through the exhibition of preserved specimens. These, by their very nature, make it difficult to encourage visitors to identify with other living things – something which social psychologists have repeatedly found to be an important precondition for support for conservation. It is important to highlight that we encountered challenges of this kind, though it was beyond the scope of this project to try to reconcile such tensions.
- We believe that values are best promoted through a wide range of activities rather than becoming the subject of a dedicated exhibition. Nonetheless, we developed an exhibition focussed specifically on the values of Mancunians and citizens' perceptions of others' values. Having

*'I think it's very important, especially for children nowadays. I think it's very important to try and promote things like this because it's the basic qualities we all need to have. I found this truly amazing, a wonderful way of sharing that message – and very interactive as well'*

Visitor, Manchester Museum



commissioned a survey of Greater Mancunians' values, we shared the results of the survey on a video screened in a gallery. (The results of the survey are available [here](#)). Alongside the video, we invited responses to some of the questions raised by this survey. 🤝

- We created new opportunities for visitors to share messages with other visitors. Using physical clip-frames in the museum, and encouraging their sharing on social media platforms, we invited visitors to 'leave a message for other visitors to see' or 'respond to what other visitors have shared'. In creating these opportunities, like the 'share the love' exhibition space, we felt that it was important to be explicit that this was an opportunity for visitor-to-visitor engagement to facilitate understanding of what others values, rather than an invitation to feedback to museum staff.

## CASE STUDY 3 (continued)

- We experimented with linking these invitations directly to an exhibition, for example, 'share with other visitors how you feel about...' or 'leave a heartfelt message about the beauty of nature...'. Our intention was that by using words like 'heartfelt', 'honest', 'share', we could help encourage more thoughtful reflection.
- We also developed approaches unconnected to the specific focus of a particular exhibition. For example we developed a space called Share the Love and visitors were invited to "Share what you think is wonderful about the people of Manchester. Leave your heartfelt message for other visitors to see." Visitors were encouraged to write responses on prepared cards, and to share these responses – or their favourite comments that others had left – via social media. 🤝
- We trialled other approaches during awareness raising weeks, like Refugee Week, when we organised an event at which visitors were invited to crochet panels for blankets for refugees, labelling each with some reflections on their motivations for becoming involved in this activity. These panels, and visitors' reflections, were then exhibited in the museum and shared on social media. 🤝 👁️



**Most people care deeply about one another, Manchester Museum wants to be part of celebrating this.**

Spot our speech bubbles around the museum and leave your stories of kindness or share your message of appreciation

Share your favourites at [#peopleofmcr](https://twitter.com/peopleofmcr)



## CASE STUDY 3 (continued)

- We developed a series of approaches to facilitating visitors in exploring one another's values face-to-face. While we trialled these at open days, they could be adapted for use as part of programming accompanying exhibitions, activities or performances in any setting.
- For example, adapting an activity developed by **People United**, we facilitated a 'Big Conversation'. Visitors were encouraged to sit at a coffee table opposite someone they had not previously met. Museum staff used prompt cards to initiate conversation about what these people valued most in life. The conversation was run as a relay for an entire day, with a graphic artist positioned to listen in and capture the themes visually (see illustration to the right).
- Other similar approaches could easily be adapted for similar use. Have a look, for example, at [conversation cafes](#) and [human libraries](#).

*'People often looked nervous about speaking to a stranger, but then looked so happy and relaxed once they made that connection'*

Big Conversation facilitator

### What we achieved

As a result of our work, learning and engagement staff at Manchester Museum have deepened their awareness of the importance of the values they engage through the visitor experiences that they programme. They have developed greater confidence in designing and adapting material to advance the three principles for working with values in a cultural context (see [page 8](#)). Meanwhile, curatorial staff are more aware of the values with which exhibits connect – sometimes in very subtle ways.





## Collaborators

**Common Cause Foundation** is the leading organisation working to place values that prioritise community, environment and equality at the heart of our cultural, political and civic institutions.

**Manchester Museum** is the UK's leading university museum and a proud part of the University of Manchester. It is open seven days a week, and free to all.

**Happy Museum Project** looks at how the museum sector can respond to the challenge of creating a more sustainable future. It provides a leadership framework for museums to develop a holistic approach to wellbeing and sustainability. The project re-imagines the museum's purpose as steward of people, place and planet, supporting institutional and community wellbeing and resilience in the face of global challenges.

## Acknowledgements

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## Contacting us

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