



CELEBRATING HISTORY OF PLACE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



HISTORY
OF PLACE





Contents

Introduction	2
Project Aims	6
Why This Work Matters	8
Our Eight Places	10
What We Did	16
How We Did It	24
The Challenges	28
The Results	32
A Call To Action	38

Introduction

We are delighted with the success of History of Place. When we were in the early development stages of this project we felt the time was right to devise a highly ambitious project that would bring deaf and disabled people's history into the spotlight. Our extremely hard working, passionate and committed project team and volunteers have delivered a project that far exceeded those early expectations. We have shown that disability history is not a niche interest, but one that appeals to disabled and non-disabled audiences alike. We have also demonstrated that by engaging with deaf and disabled people in the design and creation of exhibitions, films and digital games it is possible to deliver accessible experiences that authentically describe their histories from their perspective.

History of Place could not have been delivered without our impressive partners. In particular M Shed and WECIL in Bristol, The Museum of Liverpool and DaDa Fest in Liverpool, The Victoria and Albert Museum and Chiswick House in London and Maison Dieu in Faversham, Kent. By working with over 100 organisations, from Museums, Galleries and Archives to Disabled People's Organisations and Universities, we have brought these previously hidden histories to national notice. The appetite is there to do more and we have only just started the process.



We believe deaf and disabled people have a right to access culture and much more needs to be done to ensure these rights are met.



The end of this document outlines our vision for the future and is endorsed by many other specialist and knowledgeable organisations from across the sector. So let us pull together and create an ongoing momentum to continue the work that History of Place started.

Esther Fox
Head of Accentuate Programme



A volunteer dressed as a medieval lady plays 'The Story of Helen' on an ipad

Introduction

It has been a real privilege for Screen South to manage the delivery of the groundbreaking national project History of Place, as part of our Accentuate Programme. Screen South firmly believes that access and diversity is at the heart of great culture for all and that accessible design is design for all.



The story deaf and disabled people's heritage is an important part of all our stories and does have resonance with everyone.



Our Head of the Accentuate Programme, Esther Fox, has been a leading light in ensuring that all activities undertaken as part of History of Place were exemplars of access and inclusion across all areas. This was seen in exhibition design, interpretation and engagement. We have been very impressed with the quality and commitment of our volunteers, partners and History of Place team, who have reflected the diversity and scope of the wonderful stories uncovered.

We are very grateful to our funders, in particular the Heritage Lottery Fund and their team who have been very supportive throughout this three year programme. This innovative work just cannot be achieved without their involvement and guidance. Of course the success of History of Place relied upon a number of excellent partners coming together to collaborate for a change of approach in this important area of our heritage and seeking new ways of presenting it. A huge thank you must go to each one of them for supporting our vision and realising it so well with us. We hope this innovative work will continue and that lessons learnt will have a significant impact.

Jo Nolan

Managing Director, Screen South



Project Aims

History of Place was a landmark project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund that revealed the presence and place of disabled people in relation to the built environment. These stories were told through the authentic voices of deaf and disabled people who founded, attended, visited and influenced building design and use from the Middle Ages to the present day.

The History of Place project has been delivered by the national programme Accentuate, which creates ground breaking opportunities for deaf and disabled people to participate and lead within the cultural sector. The Accentuate programme is based within the Cultural Development Agency, Screen South.

History of Place is now recognised as a nationally significant social history programme. Described as ‘inspiring’, ‘stimulating’ ‘relevant’ and ‘necessary’ by those who have taken part during the past three years, History of Place is accepted to be the first project of its kind, bringing this unknown heritage to the attention of numerous individuals and organisations across the UK and beyond.



Visitors at The Blind School: Pioneering People and Places Exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool

However, the legacy from the project needs to go beyond celebrating what we've achieved so far. That legacy has to be about changing how people think about the history of disabled people, how institutions present this history and ensuring deaf and disabled people play an active role in influencing the sector.



We know there are thousands of stories out there



We selected just eight places from across the country spanning 800 years of history to tell the stories of the deaf and disabled people who designed, inhabited or used these buildings. To tell these stories it was essential that the project was run by, consulted with and employed disabled people. Too frequently throughout history disabled people's needs and views have been ignored or they have been told what is good for them. History of Place wanted to ensure disabled people were telling their own stories. That disabled people could guide the project, conduct the research and deliver the outputs. We know there are thousands of stories out there. Stories that deserve to be told.

We set ourselves ambitious targets at the start of the project because we wanted to create a sea change in the way deaf and disability history was presented and prioritised. As you read this document, you will see we have accomplished all that we set out to, in some cases over achieving by 500%. In particular we have worked with over 100 volunteers, delivered four digital experiences, made five films with deaf and disabled people, worked with 57 galleries, museums and archives and recorded 31 oral histories. We also produced three flagship exhibitions and displays with our museum partners, M Shed Bristol, the Museum of Liverpool and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. These exhibitions set out to be fully accessible and placed deaf and disabled people's heritage front and centre within museum programming. The project has been a huge success and we're really proud of what has been achieved, but we are not resting on our laurels. We are now asking museums, policy makers, organisations and individuals to pick up the baton and work with us to continue this momentum.



The project has been a huge success and we're really pleased with what we achieved, but we are not resting on our laurels



Why This Work Matters

It is estimated that today there are one billion disabled people in the world. Despite the rights of deaf and disabled people being protected under the Equality Act 2010, the history of deaf and disabled people continues to be overlooked, marginalised and ignored, even though their stories are intrinsic to the environments we live in every day.

History of Place aimed to change attitudes in the cultural sector by shining a light on deaf and disabled people's heritage. We wanted to open up this crucial history, not just to the wider disabled community; but to the general public. History of Place needed to get inside mainstream institutions to reach as many people as possible. We aimed to bring together multiple histories to show how this heritage is intertwined with the recognised history of the nation. There had historically been no large-scale investment in celebrating the national social heritage of deaf and disabled people. The time was now right for a project of this scale and scope and at the same time another large scale Disability Arts and Heritage project The National Disability Arts Collection & Archive from Shape, was also supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



There had historically been no large-scale investment in celebrating the national social heritage of deaf and disabled people



Our history is frequently defined by buildings and places, and we are rightly proud of our rich architectural heritage. For centuries deaf and disabled people have not only been living, working and using these buildings; they have changed these buildings. By carefully selecting eight places our project has used the convention of history through architecture to show the importance of disabled people in our collective history. From medieval hospitals and almshouses to specialist schools for disabled children right through to the emergence of design solutions for independent living led by disabled people. It was not difficult to find the places, indeed the difficulty came in limiting the number to eight places.

It was important to underline the social and community value of each of the sites, thereby elevating these buildings from a few photographs and brief descriptions to a more comprehensive personalised history involving the testimony of the people that used them. This ensured that local groups and the wider public were able to identify with their own heritage and that a bigger national story could be told. The buildings are synonymous with the lives and aspirations of real people with real faces, amplifying all our understanding of this remarkable heritage.

We have been delighted by the reaction to telling these stories, proving that there is a real appetite to learn more about this history.



It was not difficult
to find the places,
indeed the difficulty
came in limiting
the number to
eight places



Our Eight Places

During the development of History of Place we had detailed discussions with Historic England, who had created a wonderful website resource entitled Disability in Time and Place. This listed hundreds of buildings of significance for deaf and disabled people and our biggest challenge was just selecting a few in order to undertake more detailed research and community activities. From this long list we chose eight places that hint at the range of the geographical spread, architectural style, historic period and use by deaf and disabled people that our built environment reflects. We also aimed to select buildings that had clearly been influenced by deaf and disabled people, either as designers, commissioners or those who inhabited them.





1. Maison Dieu, Kent

Maison Dieu is a hospital, monastery, hostel, retirement home and Royal Lodge commissioned by Henry III in 1234. The timber framed building is located near Faversham, Kent and is now a small museum. We created a digital experience called 'The Story of Helen', based on archive material relating to a blind nurse from the 1200s.

Visit: historyof.place/location/maison-dieu



2. The Liverpool School for the Indigent Blind

The Royal School for the Indigent Blind is the oldest specialist school of its kind in the UK, having been founded in 1791, by the groundbreaking abolitionist Edward Rushton. Rushton, who was apprenticed to a slave ship, opposed the brutal treatment of enslaved Africans and was accused of mutiny. He contracted ophthalmia which blinded him, from the enslaved people on board. Realising the lack of opportunities for less wealthy blind people he founded the first blind school in the UK, the second in the world, to offer training and education.

Visit: historyof.place/location/liverpool-school-for-the-indigent-blind

Our Eight Places (contd.)

3. The Royal School for Deaf Children, Margate

The Royal School for Deaf Children was founded in 1792, the first public institution to provide a free education for this group. It opened a site in Margate in 1876 and moved from London to Margate in 1905, for pupils to benefit from the sea air. Sadly the school closed just as History of Place launched, so our project team focused on helping the school to find safe repositories for their archive collections, to preserve this important heritage.



Visit: historyof.place/location/the-royal-school-for-deaf-children

4. Chiswick House, London

Built by the third Earl of Burlington in 1729 and inspired by 16th century Italian art and architecture, Chiswick House became a private asylum in the 20th century for those individuals experiencing conditions such as addiction and epilepsy. The asylum was known for its humane treatment of patients, in complete contrast to other institutions of the time such as Bethlem. We created a digital experience 'Dear Drennan' from the perspective of resident G B Bartlet.



Visit: historyof.place/location/chiswick-house



5. Langdon Down Museum of Learning Disability, Middlesex

Normansfield Hospital was founded by Dr John Langdon Down in 1868 as a home for people with learning disabilities and a place where they might be educated. Down's Syndrome is named after him. The elaborate Victorian Theatre that Langdon Down commissioned for the residents to enjoy music and the arts, still exists today. Other buildings within the complex provide the headquarters of the Downs Syndrome Association and house the Langdon Down Museum of Learning Disability.

Visit: historyof.place/location/langdon-down-museum-of-learning-disability



6. St Saviours Deaf Church, Acton

Opened in 1925, St Saviours Deaf Church was the first church specifically designed by Deaf people, with unique architectural features including two pulpits, no pillars and raked seating. It was long regarded as symbolic of equality between deaf people, the church and wider society.

Visit: historyof.place/location/st-saviours-deaf-church

Our Eight Places (contd.)

7. Guild of the Brave Poor Things, Bristol

The Bristol branch of The Guild of the Brave Poor Things opened in 1896 as a social club for disabled people. Guild members received a bright red membership card emblazoned with the logo (a crutch crossed with a sword) and the motto “Laetus Sorte Mea” translated from Latin as “happy in my lot”. Although the language of the time is problematic The Guild was groundbreaking, commissioning the first purpose built space for disabled people to come together and learn new skills, including apprenticeship opportunities.



Visit: historyof.place/location/guild-of-the-brave-poor-things

8. Grove Road Housing Scheme, Sutton-in-Ashfield

In 1976, Maggie and Ken Davis were the first disabled couple to commission an architect to design and build an accessible housing scheme for disabled people to live independently outside of Institutions. Their story is critical to the history of the disability rights movement.



Visit: historyof.place/location/grove-road-housing-scheme



Chiswick House, London



Exhibitions

Our highest profile public work were the exhibitions and display we held in 2017 and 2018 at three major museums; the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, M Shed in Bristol and the Museum of Liverpool.

In Bristol we explored the activities of the Guild of Brave Poor Things and Ada Vachell who founded the Bristol Guild. In Liverpool we told the story of founder Edward Rushton, as well as what life was like at the school. At the Victoria & Albert Museum we looked at how disabled people had played an active role in designing buildings, including examples from blind architect Chris Downey and from Maggie Davis who designed her own house in the 1970s.

We were delighted to have such a strong, positive reaction from visitors to these exhibitions, all of which had visitor number over 140,000 people.

“It’s really important to capture this history, firstly because it has been forgotten and then of course, disabled people play a part in history along with everyone else. I really believe that the stories we tell ourselves about previous societies affect how we see society now. Part of the reason people see disabled people sometimes negatively or maybe pitiable, is because positive stories about us don’t really exist. It has been kind of ‘washed out’ of history, despite the fact that there have always been disabled people... This exhibition is sharing and showing those stories. For disabled people to look back and know that there are people like you that have stories to tell, also for non-disabled people, to get how our lives have been and maybe changed over time, that’s very important. The more stories that we tell, the better we will be understood and treated by society.”

Exhibition Visitor, History of Place 2016

Above and Right:

The Blind School: Pioneering People and Places Exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool

1932 Extending Hardman Street

By the 1930s, the School at Hardman Street needed more space for workrooms, gymnasium and a new shop to sell items made by students. Architects Anthony Minoprio and Hugh Greville Spence were commissioned to design a new extension in a neo-Classical style.

The relief sculptures on the exterior show activities at the School, including basket weaving, knitting, brush making and reading Braille. The original bronze doors featured relief carvings, symbolising the life and work of the School.

(Image to the right)
The Royal School for the Blind on Hardman Street, 1932.
Courtesy of Seewert Bole Collection, National Museums Liverpool.



**'[It is] strong and good and fresh
and modern with interesting details—
indeed with all the things one wants
and so rarely finds.'**

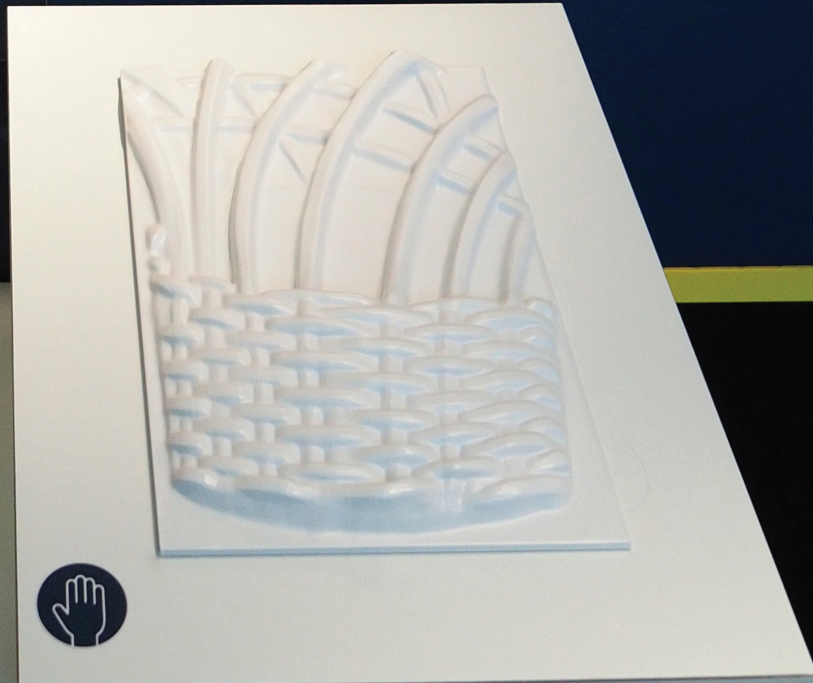
Charles Reilly in a letter to Minoprio,
10 December 1931



(Image for above)
Relief sculpture by John Skeaping
showing hands reading Braille,
on the exterior of Hardman Street site.
Courtesy of Anna Farley Hutton

(Image above)
The Royal School for the Blind
on Hardman Street, 1932.
Seewert Bole Collection, courtesy National Museums Liverpool

(Image above to the right)
Relief sculpture by John Skeaping
showing basket making,
on the exterior of Hardman Street site.
Courtesy of Anna Farley Hutton



What We Did (contd.)

Oral Histories

These were a key part of our project with 31 oral histories recorded. We wanted to hear first-hand experiences of deaf and disabled people who had influenced and experienced life within our buildings. We also wanted to capture these histories with people telling their stories in their own voices. Amongst the oral histories we recorded included pioneering disability campaigner Maggie Davies, Christine Payne, daughter of the last warden of the Guild of Poor Brave Things and Frank McFarlane a pupil at the Royal School for the Blind in Liverpool. These histories have now been saved in local archives, to ensure full access for all.



We wanted to hear first-hand experiences of deaf and disabled people who had influenced and experienced life within our buildings



Digital Experiences

As Screen South is an organisation specialising in digital and film, we chose to create four Digital Experiences. These were built from 28 workshops – 20 more than the target – with a variety of participants. All of the digital experiences were based on original archive material uncovered by our volunteers. We worked with Surface Impression to build games about Edward Rushton and life for disabled people in Bristol. We worked with Circa 69 to build games based on Maison Dieu and Chiswick House. The games created by Circa69 included audio description, subtitles and British Sign Language (BSL), to enable equal access for all players.



Top: Launching the 'Story of Helen' game at Canterbury Medieval Pageant
Middle: 'Dear Drennan' digital game. Bottom: 'The Story of Helen' digital game



Films

We also made a series of films to explore different perspectives, tell historic stories and enable access for deaf audiences. In particular four films were developed through 29 filmmaking workshops with deaf and disabled people to ensure they could actually make the films they wanted to make. The films told the stories of life at The Guild of the Brave Poor Things, Maggie Davis, The Liverpool Blind School and St Saviours Deaf Church, Acton.



128 Volunteers formed the backbone of the project, over 78% more people than our original target



Volunteers

Across our four activity hubs in Bristol, Liverpool, London and Kent we developed Volunteer Archive and Research Groups. At the start of the project we had of target of working with 72 volunteers, we actually worked with 128 volunteers, 78% above target. Some volunteers were deaf or disabled people. The rare chance to find out about disabled and deaf people from the past and share these hidden stories was no doubt a significant motivating factor.

They took part in workshops, researched archive material, recorded oral histories, tested video games and spoke at symposia amongst other things. They were instrumental in helping to create the narrative for the exhibitions in Liverpool and Bristol, their research helped to identify key objects for consideration. In total they contributed the equivalent of £363,440 through their time spent on the project.



Top: Filmmaking participants exploring the Guild of the Brave Poor Things building, Bristol
Bottom: Volunteers at the 'Story of Helen' launch, Canterbury Medieval Pageant

What We Did (contd.)

Website

Our website www.historyof.place is our project hub. Here you will find our digital experiences, detailed information about our eight places, the films we have made and our toolkits. There are also numerous blogs written by our volunteers sharing their archive research.

Creative Workshops

The various workshops took what we had learned from the research and re-interpreted this through creative methods, producing elements that we would use in our exhibitions, films and digital experiences. We held workshops in Bristol, Liverpool, Chiswick, Acton, Canterbury and Folkestone. Where possible we recruited deaf and disabled people to lead the workshops, as it was essential that they were actively involved in the delivery of the project. The workshops were hugely successful. We had a target of 388 participants, we actually reached 1,908 participants. This is a massive over achievement of almost 500%.



We had a target of 388 participants, we actually reached 1,908 participants. This is a massive over achievement of almost 500%



Training for the heritage sector

It was not only important for the project to share the relatively unknown histories relating to the eight built heritage sites, we also wanted to tackle some of the barriers deaf and disabled face when engaging with heritage. A crucial part of this was to provide training to heritage sites, event organisers and museums. This training helped people to recognise the barriers deaf and disabled people face as well as consider how best to address these.

The things participants in the training found particularly valuable were:



Left: Christopher Sacre, Deaf artist, leading a workshop at Canterbury Medieval Pageant

What We Did (contd.)

Symposia

We held three symposia in Bristol, Liverpool and London to engage with academics, industry, museum and design specialists. Each symposium took on a separate topic. In Bristol we explored how academics and community organisations could work more closely to give disabled people's voices greater equity. In Liverpool we looked at how cultural organisations could do more to engage with disabled people, both as visitors and as curators and museum staff. In London, at the Victoria and Albert Museum we discussed how disabled people had influenced building design and why good design should be inherently accessible.



Through all this work we have we have reached over 175,000 people and created content that is now archived for future generations. Collectively this work has come together to give a new perspective on this history of deaf and disabled people. We have challenged the museum and heritage sector to work harder to engage with deaf and disabled people and we have shared many wonderful stories. We have also begun to change perceptions around disability and left a lasting interest in this heritage.



Through our work we have
reached over 175,000 people



Above: Delegates discussing via “telepresence” at Bristol Symposium, Brave, Poor and Invisible
Right: Delegates at the Bristol Symposium



How We Did It

Working with deaf and disabled people

Many of the volunteers we worked with were deaf and disabled people. This ensured a more nuanced reflection on some of the archive material. It was important to set up a flexible structure of engagement, so that volunteers could dip in and out of the project to suit their individual needs. It was also essential to provide additional support, for example covering travel costs or additional costs associated with BSL interpretation or PA support.

We also recruited deaf and disabled people to deliver a range of our activities. From the 59 people we recruited to different paid roles, 29 of these defined as deaf or disabled. This is 49% compared to 19% in the general working population. Ensuring deaf and disabled people were an integral part of the delivery team encouraged others to challenge their perceptions of what they might assume deaf and disabled people could do.



Of the 59 of the people we recruited to paid roles, 29 defined themselves as deaf or disabled. This is 49% compared to 19% in the general working population



It was very good for us that the artist was deaf. In the beginning, I didn't understand that he was deaf, then it was so nice to see that we could all connect and communicate with him without words. It broke down the stereotype that we might not be able to communicate with a deaf person. I think it's also good for the children because we are all so closed in our little worlds.

Project Participant, History of Place 2016

Primary research

For some of the locations there were easily accessible materials, such as the Wellcome Archive which holds letters and patient records from the Tukes Brothers at Chiswick House. Other locations were much harder to find information for, such as Maison Dieu. With a 12th Century property much information had been lost through the years. Luckily, as Maison Dieu was an important station on the road from London to Canterbury; it was featured in the closed rolls of the time. The closed rolls are medieval records of important correspondence and decrees. It was through the closed rolls that we found Helen, a blind nurse who was employed at Maison Dieu in the 13th Century. This would have been unusual at the time. We felt it was a story we wanted to celebrate.



Community groups

It was essential in order for the project to be a success that we engaged thoroughly with the communities in which our places were located. We focused on working with disabled people's groups, along side history groups and cultural groups. Our work in Bristol and Liverpool was particularly successful in these areas. Our Project Co-ordinators in those locations ensured that the community groups they worked with didn't just have a consultative role, but rather an active, critical and influencing role. The community groups pointed us in the right direction, ensured we understood their perspective on what we were proposing to do and took part in many of the activities.

Left: Workshop participants

How We Did It (contd.)

Heritage Hub

We had a further stratum of consultation across the whole of the project with our Heritage Hub. The Heritage Hub members were Deaf and disabled people drawn from the wider cultural sector, including arts, heritage and community organisations. The Heritage Hub had an overview across the whole project. Whilst the community groups gave a local scrutiny, the Heritage Hub acted as a critical friend. They were a source of great support, advice and professionalism. They queried our thinking, encouraged best practice and particularly advised on key elements of the project such as, the exhibitions, symposia and digital experiences.

Specialist professional support



Another important group of people that supported the project were specialist professionals. Their experience included museum experts, games designers, graphic designers, evaluators, heritage professionals, historians, academics, filmmakers, designers, curators, BSL interpreters, and workshop leaders.

This group enabled us to fine tune our ideas and they produced much of the physical and virtual outputs of the project, including digital experiences, exhibition materials, films, and audio recordings.

Whilst some of the professionals were paid directly by History of Place, others gave their time through their organisation, such as staff at the Museum of Liverpool, M Shed and the Victoria and Albert Museum. In total we had professional in-kind support equivalent to £235,240.



In total we had professional in-kind support equivalent to £235,240



Above: Installing the exhibition at M-Shed, Bristol
Right: Sharon Heal, Director of the Museums Association, at the Rethinking Disability Symposium, Liverpool



The Challenges

The nature of this project was, innately, going to throw up a number of challenges. Not least that disabled people's cultural history has rarely been told, and never before on the scale we wanted to do so. In addition, we had to factor in alternative communication in order to tell the stories properly. Broadly the barriers fell into three categories; forgotten history, communication and societal prejudice.

Forgotten heritage

Unfortunately, the nature of archives, collections and records relating to the history of deaf and disabled people means there are rarely any documents from the perspective of those with lived experience. The majority of the records have been created by gatekeepers and decision makers, such as teachers and doctors. However, the whole purpose of the project was to discover and highlight stories and people from our heritage whose importance is not adequately recognised. It was known from the beginning that this would be challenging. The above section on primary research discusses how we managed to find these stories.

Our public exhibitions were our most successful medium for reaching people, with over 141,000 visiting our displays. We were very fortunate to have great partners with M Shed Bristol, the Museum of Liverpool and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Special thanks go to Karen McDonald at M-Shed, Kay Jones and Catherine Johnson at the Museum of Liverpool and Olivia Horsfall Turner and Whitney Kerr-Lewis at the V&A Museum. These curators recognised that this history had not been adequately told by museums. They also recognised that not only was there a duty to tell such stories, but that the stories we were uncovering were deep, rich and interesting and so deserved to be told.

As Screen South is a specialist film and digital organisation we very much wanted to use modern techniques to bring these stories to a wide public. Therefore, we utilised online digital experiences, films, gallery digital experiences, 360 degree capture of the exhibitions and the website as a variety of ways to reach new audiences for these forgotten histories.

Right: Protesters at a disability rights rally

DISABILITY RIGHTS THE FINAL FRONTIER



*To boldly go
where all others
have gone before*



The Challenges (contd.)



Curators recognised that this history had not been adequately told by museums



Alternative communication methods

We wanted to ensure all audiences and participants could engage with our project and therefore we needed to consider a range of communication methods. This included ensuring that the outputs we produced were fully accessible, such as the digital experiences having a BSL and audio description options. It also meant ensuring that all events such as workshops and symposia had BSL interpreters and palantypists. For the symposia we also engaged Visual Minute takers, creating a brilliant visual record of the event and a great way to pull out the most important points from the day in an easy to read format. Our exhibitions also ensured material was presented in a number of ways including filmed BSL introductions, audio description and tactile models.



At the start of the project we allowed sufficient and reasonable budget for these elements. Our accessible approach has been so successful that we created two toolkits based on our experiences to share learning with museums and cultural organisations. These toolkits act as a guide to co-designing exhibitions with disabled people and working with young, deaf and disabled people. The intention was to not only ensure that exhibitions are accessible, but also to help organisations put engagement with disabled people at the heart of their organisation. They encourage cultural organisations to involve disabled people in their exhibition conception and public programming, enabling disabled people to reinterpret their collections and tell their stories alongside others with equal importance.

Societal prejudice

This brings us to perhaps the largest challenge. This challenge was not only difficult for this project and our partners, but more pertinently, it runs through the lives of disabled people every day. That is the dominant view of society towards disabled people. The project had to challenge these prejudices, and yet do so with charm, intelligence and dignity. The project had to show why these prejudices are flawed, but also how deep and prevalent they are. Often such prejudices are deep and hidden. They are as likely to be found in institutions as in individuals. Our evaluation suggests that we have started to meet this challenge. We surveyed almost 600 people across our many events. Of these 81% were more interested in disability history as a result of the event. 65% had learned more about disability. 61% had gained ideas they could use in their work and 65% had gained new skills and learning as a result of interacting with the project. 35% had changed their perceptions of deaf and disabled people as a result of our work.



We surveyed almost 600 people across our many events. Of these 81% were more interested in disability history as a result of the event



Above: Materials from a Bristol workshop

The Results

Over the three years of History of Place we have reached in excess of 175,000 people through exhibitions, digital experiences, blogs, workshops and symposium.



The people we have reached have learned more about disability history. Their opinions about disability have been changed as a result of our work.

Intellectually, it has been a really interesting experience for me. It has broadened my horizons, it has broadened my experience and it not an exaggeration to say that I now look at the world differently... That is entirely due to what I have learned through working with History of Place.

Project Partner, History of Place 2018

Deaf and disabled people have played a crucial role in the project as researchers, facilitators and advisors.

I think it helps to give a message about disabled people and their capabilities. We're often seen as the recipients of services or projects, so things that are done for us rather than by us. We are quite capable of being project deliverers and also, all of the disabled facilitators here are artists in their own right. It seems like a very positive policy from the perspective of the project, without being heavy handed about it... Everyone benefits when you work in this way!

Project Partner, History of Place 2018

Above: 'Without Walls: Disability and Innovation in Building Design Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum' Image ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London



People have gained skills
and developed connections
to communities

It was also brilliant for me to meet with other Deaf people during the project. It has all been such a great experience and a really good project! Just the quality of the work and the support given to us as Volunteers. That has been really noticeable, as compared with other disability focused projects.
*Project Volunteer,
History of Place 2018*

History of Place has helped us make new contacts, including individuals, community groups, disabled artists and performers.
*Project Partner,
History of Place 2018*



Top: Jason Wilsher-Mills leading Friday Late workshop at the V&A
Bottom: Workshop participants

The Results

Partner organisations have reflected on their working practises to improve access

It also made us look afresh at our own practices in exhibition design and interpretation, acknowledging their shortcomings in terms of accessibility. It has given us new ideas for ways to address these issues. Finally, it has uncovered stories about a significant Bristol building and its users...

Project Partner, History of Place 2018



History of Place has inspired volunteers, participants and the public through the stories we have told of pioneering deaf and disabled people.

As a Volunteer, I wrote blogs for the project. I worked on one of the videos as well. That was all about a Deaf Church here in London, it was really interesting. We looked at the architecture of that space, it was fascinating. I've since used the research in my own art practice.

Project Partner, History of Place 2018



Top: Maggie Davis in her kitchen at Grove Road

Bottom: Visitors at Brave Poor Things: Reclaiming Bristol's Disability History. M Shed

In numbers¹

The project has:

30

Delivered 30
creative workshops
with over 1,500
participants

6

Delivered six access
training workshops with
90 museum, gallery and
heritage professionals

3

Delivered three high
profile symposia at
M Shed Bristol, Museum
of Liverpool and
the Victoria & Albert
Museum London

6

Delivered six
Heritage Open
Day networking
events

128

Recruited 128
volunteers

145k

Created 3 nationally
significant exhibitions
and displays with
over 145,000 visitors

2

Launched 2 Toolkits to
share learning across
the sector, distributed
to over 500 Museum
professionals

111

Worked with
111 partner
organisations

¹ See A History of Place Evaluation Report for full statistical analysis of the project

The Results

As a result of this collaboration, we are looking at our museum differently now. So interpretation, we can see where we have gone wrong and where we could do better. We are starting to roll out this new learning in our other displays. There is a group of staff, all of whom are very interested in how we can effect change, while addressing those issues of access and inclusion.
Project Partner, History of Place 2018



A vital conclusion of the project is that deaf and disability heritage now has an important place on our cultural agenda. The project has more than met its aims and ambitions. We now want to ensure others will continue this work alongside us. History of Place has paved the way for other cultural organisations to follow. We have shown others how to engage deaf and disabled people in their work, how to bring in deaf and disabled audiences and how to tell their stories. It's now up to other organisations to rise to the challenge.

It's really important to have a mix of disabled and non-disabled people at an event like this. Something that is led by disabled people, includes their voices - front and centre - tries to do everything on their terms, that's the best way to be for such an event. The way to respond to that is to make everything about disability come from the voice of the disabled community, so 'nothing about us without us'. That's exactly what has been done here today and it has been brilliant!
Project Partner, History of Place 2018

Right: Participant at Friday Late workshop at the V&A
Photography (c) Olawunmi Onibudo www.wunmio.com



You cannot possibly have policies and practice regarding disability access and/or customer facing issues, if you are not consulting with people who are affected by those issues. We need those people represented on Boards of Trustees, in Senior Management positions, as part of the ongoing processes of thinking where an organisation is going. History of Place has begun the dialogue to take us all forward.

Symposium Delegate, History of Place 2018

Accentuate aims to question current thinking around continuing issues relating to disability, while stimulating critical debate across the sector. These ambitions have been realised both through History of Place's model of delivery (i.e. consultation with deaf and disabled communities; recruitment of deaf and disabled facilitators; advice sought from deaf and disabled advocacy or support organisations) and also, through more specific project activities (e.g. high-profile public events, national exhibitions and symposia). However, there is still a great deal to do.

During each of the History of Place symposia, delegates were encouraged to make one suggestion to pass on to policymakers and funders. Several of those resulting recommendations might provide an interesting starting point for supporting further, strategic developments across the sector, including:

- A need for arts, cultural and heritage organisations to include the 'hidden histories' of deaf and disabled communities in their displays, exhibitions and events programmes
- A need for arts, cultural and heritage organisations to challenge disability discrimination in any and all of its manifestations
- Improved awareness training across the sector regarding disability and/or access needs
- Arts, cultural and heritage programmes to be designed and delivered in consultation with disabled communities and professionals from across the sector
- A promotion of diversity within and across the sectors of arts, culture and heritage, with increased opportunities for employment, participation and volunteering
- A need for policymakers and funders to acknowledge the importance of arts, cultural and heritage activity for all, supporting the development of a happy and healthy society.

Right: Workshop participant

Targeted opportunities for deaf and disabled people

There is a clear need to tackle the issue of the under representation of deaf and disabled people working in the museum and heritage sector. This has become apparent through our extensive conversations with our Museum and Heritage partners across the country including; M Shed Bristol, The Museum of Liverpool, The Victoria and Albert Museum London, The National Railway Museum York and the Thackray Museum Leeds. This is also backed up in “Making A Shift” a report by Arts Council England, where they identify only 2.6% of the Museum workforce comprised disabled people, compared to 19% in the general population.

There are significant differences between the arts (Galleries) and the heritage sector. The under representation of disabled people in galleries is starting to be tackled through programmes such as Unlimited and Dash Arts Curatorial Commissions. This now needs to be urgently addressed by museums and heritage attractions. The arts have a long history of politicised engagement with disabled people. This level of engagement has just not happened in museums.



The arts have a long history of politicised engagement with disabled people. This level of engagement has just not happened in museums



A Call to Action



In order to tackle this problem of under representation we believe there needs to be a twinned approach. Firstly an in-depth consultation across the heritage sector to find out what is working, an assessment of how many disabled people are in curatorial roles and detailed conversations with those disabled people who work in the heritage sector but in different roles. Our experience indicated that there is little representation across the heritage sector - but we need an objective review.

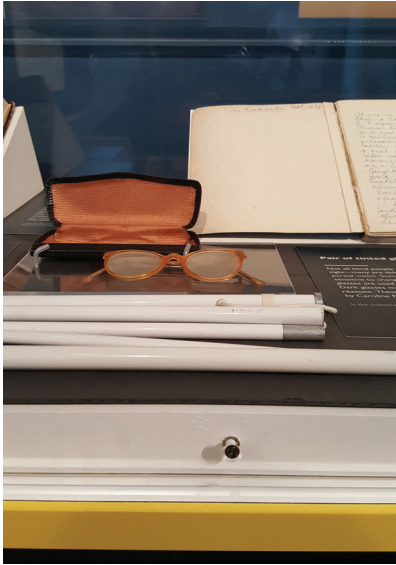
Secondly creating paid opportunities with specialist support for disabled people in our museums and heritage attractions; because sustainable change happens from within institutions. We believe it is particularly important to have deaf and disabled people in decision making roles in our cultural institutions. Specifically, we are intending to develop a programme to encourage and nurture deaf and disabled curators. We believe this will mean histories will be better interpreted or explored, not only for disabled people but for the wider public. Deaf or disabled curators will bring new insights and ways to interpret material that will help to develop audiences who may not normally engage with heritage and museums.

📍📍 **We believe it is particularly important to have deaf and disabled people in decision making roles in our cultural institutions.** 📍📍

Re-interpreting existing collections and making new acquisitions

A museum's collection helps to illuminate histories of people, places and key moments in time. Objects themselves often have their own stories to tell. In order for deaf and disabled people's history to be integral to the stories told within our museums and heritage attractions our curators need to examine their existing collections.

Right: Artefacts from the Blind School: Pioneering People & Places Exhibition, Liverpool



There may well be objects and materials hidden within storage or the archives that are waiting to be brought into the spotlight. These rich materials are ripe for interpretation and often offer fascinating perspectives which have not previously been heard.

In deciding how to tell stories, it is important to ensure that the voices of people involved and affected by the history are accurately represented. We believe in curating content that relates to deaf and disabled people's histories, it is essential to work with deaf and disabled people in the creation of copy, object selection and interpretation of content.

If a museum only has a small number of artefacts relating to deaf and disabled people's history we would suggest they consider making new acquisitions, to provide a more well-rounded reflection of the communities they represent. When making these acquisitions discuss with deaf and disabled people the sorts of objects they would like to see represented in collections. Their insights may well put greater value on items non-disabled people may overlook.

By challenging museums to rethink disability, History of Place has encouraged museums to talk about topics so often hidden or forgotten. It has achieved more than putting on three displays, it has: raised issues of exhibition accessibility; encouraged active collection of disability related objects; as well as involving disabled audiences in the creation of the interpretation. Following the Without Walls display at the V&A, the museum has: up-dated its access guidelines adding in voices from non-traditional audiences to broaden the narrative; enrich the collection by purchasing disability related objects; and created Disability Terminology guidelines to support ongoing exhibitions. Future initiatives need to continue the good work started by History of Place.. so this should not be the end, or the job done, this should be an important step towards inclusion, as designing for disabled visitors enhances exhibitions for everyone.
Barry Ginley V&A Equality and Access Advisor

A Call to Action (contd.)

Policy makers

History of Place has proved that an ambitious cultural project of scale and scope can deliver significant benefits for individuals, communities and organisations. However, this is just the beginning and we need policy makers to continue support in the future. We ask them to:

- Prioritise funding for initiatives that seek to challenge inequalities through high quality cultural activities.
- Understand that real and lasting change takes time and continued investment.
- Support organisations with considerable knowledge and expertise to work in partnership with others to share learning.
- Be prepared to take risks and back work with ambitious ideas that could lead to significant positive changes for communities and individuals
- Value the rich and extensive contributions deaf and disabled people can make to our cultural sector.
- Realise that the barriers effecting deaf and disabled people's participation in culture are complex and nuanced. It is no good advocating for more deaf and disabled people in work if the support mechanisms are not in place to enable them to take up opportunities.

VocalEyes welcomes History of Place's excellent toolkits for co-designing exhibitions with disabled people and engaging deaf and disabled young people with heritage... These take their place among the great work that History of Place does and intends to do, to enable and support better representation of disabled people among the audiences, workforce, leaders and Boards of cultural organisations.
Matthew Cock, Chief Executive, Vocaleyes

Museum and heritage organisations

History of Place has collaborated with 111 partner organisations including Museums, Archives, Galleries and Heritage Sites. In particular our main partner museums; the Museum of Liverpool, M Shed Bristol and the V&A London gave a platform to engage audiences with previously hidden histories. We now wish to encourage others to similarly prioritise spotlighting deaf and disability history and engagement with diverse audiences. Therefore aim to:



- Look at your existing collections, can these be re-interpreted and presented at the forefront of future programming?
- Strive to work with deaf and disabled people when planning exhibitions and events. Find ways for them to actively influence decisions on content creation and interpretation.
- Understand deaf and disability history is not a “niche” topic. History of Place has proven there is great interest from the wider public as well as deaf and disabled people themselves. Our research indicates that 81% are interested to learn more about disability history.
- Consider methods to make all exhibitions and events accessible, not just those that have a disability focus. If all your activities embed accessibility you will diversify and grow your audiences.
- Uphold the rights of deaf and disabled people to access culture.



We now wish to encourage others to similarly prioritise spotlighting deaf and disability history and engagement with diverse audiences.



RETHINKING DISABILITY

What needs to
CHANGE
in Museums & Galleries?

WELCOME

Working with
PEOPLE

'If each museum
exhibited 1 object
of disability
history...'

When will
INCLUSIVE
practice be the norm?

We still have
a LONG
way to go

HOW PEOPLE ARE
REPRESENTED

Museums are
GREAT
places to
represent
DISABILITIES

HISTORY OF PLACE
is a project of
significant
QUALITY
&
SCALE

In this climate
of **Cuts**
how do we ensure
SIGNIFICANT
INVESTMENT
in disabled
people's CULTURAL
ACTIVITY?

GIVEN A
VOICE
BACK TO DISABLED
PEOPLE

We could **MAKE** a **DIFFERENCE**

DISCRIMINATION
HUMAN RIGHTS

50%
of DISABLED
PEOPLE ARE
LONELY

HATE
CRIME

RISE of
TRUMP
BREXIT

- **RETHINKING**
- **DISABILITY**
- **REPRESENTATION**

EXPERIMENTAL

INTEGRATED

THIS MACHINE

KILLS FASCISTS

CREATIVE

HOW?

Be...

BRAVE

PUSH

CHALLENGE

DIFFER

RAISE
THE
DEBATE

PASSIONATE

PERSISTENT

Seek
TRUSTEE &
GOVERNANCE
opportunities

It does matter
if your staff
doesn't represent
your local community

POWERFUL
WAY TO MAKE CHANGES

**MUSEUMS
CHANGE
LIVES**

'Since humans have
been on this earth,
no two have ever
been the same'

**UNDERSTANDING
&
AWARENESS**

the V&A
entrance is
a Great
example

VALUED
Feeling
WELCOME

The journey begins ONLINE
BARRIER
OR
GATEWAY

A Call to Action (contd.)

DASH as a Disabled led visual arts organisation has made making the mainstream accessible for Disabled visual artists and audiences our main focus for the last 10 years...Change will happen, but when you look at ACE's Diversity data it is clear that the sector is making no inroads into increasing the representation of Disabled staff in their organisations. We need Disabled Directors, CEOs and Curators in post to start to make the changes happen. Work like 'History of Place' is one part of supporting this change to happen.
Mike Layward, Artistic Director DASH

Individuals

Success or failure is often down to the commitment and vision of individuals. Individuals made a massive contribution to History of Place. Whether it was the 128 project volunteers who undertook archive research and provided other support, or if it was curators and senior managers who encouraged their organisations to think differently and try new things. As individuals aim to:

- Demonstrate commitment to ideas that enable great equality and inclusion by advocating for these aims to others.
- Always remain open to new ideas and ways of doing things although you may think you know exactly what you are doing. Just because you have always done something a certain way, this may not be the best way of doing it.
- Listen to deaf and disabled people and value their insights and experiences.
- If you are a deaf or disabled person who wants to get more involved in cultural activities, recognise you have a lot to offer and explore options to take part.

Right: More Than Minutes created at Rethinking Disability Liverpool Symposium.



The History of Place project has played a critical role in unlocking the often neglected and hidden histories of deaf and disabled people in our collections and it speaks to the Museums Association's core values of inclusivity, diversity and equality.

I hope the two toolkits sharing the learning from the project will support museums and galleries to work in partnership with deaf and disabled people and will be widely used to help make museum events and exhibitions accessible.

The museum sector cannot be complacent, there is still much work to be done to ensure that both our workforce and our audiences are truly representative of wider society and that everyone's stories are valued and told.

Sharon Heal, Director of the Museums Association

Above: Delegates at the Liverpool Symposium

A Call to Action (contd.)

What should the future look like?

We have a vision of the future where deaf and disabled people occupy positions as decision makers and leaders of our cultural institutions and where their histories are valued and shared as a matter of course alongside all others. Deaf and disabled people will have access to exhibitions, events, buildings, creative activities and job opportunities alongside non-disabled people. Importantly people will value deaf and disabled people and seek out their involvement whether as volunteers, audiences, participants or colleagues. We are a long way away from this vision. We are asking organisations to sign up to the following principles:

- Understand and support the rights of deaf and disabled people to access and participate in culture.
- Value the unique experiences and insights deaf and disabled people offer and seek to involve them in all cultural activities.
- Look at ways to remove barriers for disabled people to be active members of the cultural workforce.
- Ensure equality in presenting and telling the histories that relate to deaf and disabled people alongside others.
- Remain open to new ideas and constantly strive to present exhibitions and events in a number of accessible ways.



Left. Delegate at Rethinking Disability Symposium Liverpool
Top Right 'Workshop Participant at Canterbury Medieval Pageant'
Bottom Right 'Participant at Friday Late workshop at the V&A' Photography (c) Olawunmi Onibudo www.wunmio.com

A Call to Action (contd.)

Inspiring, leading and resourcing the UK's heritage to deliver more inclusive projects

At HLF we are delighted to have funded Accentuate to deliver A History of Place, an impressive project that has delivered lasting and positive change. In doing so we have started to fulfil the commitment made at our Inclusive Heritage conference in 2015, to be ambitious in supporting more disabled-led heritage. We are determined to inspire and support more projects like this one, projects that create a more diverse workforce, and ensure that people who visit and benefit from heritage are reflective of UK society.

Inclusion is a key priority in our new strategic framework, launching in January 2019. Over the next five years, with over £1 billion of National Lottery players' money to invest, we will continue to drive forward our progressive agenda to ensure everyone is able to participate in heritage, regardless of their circumstances or background.

I should like to congratulate Esther Fox, Director, and all Accentuate staff and volunteers in developing A History of Place. By sharing the experiences of disabled people through high quality exhibitions and resources you have demonstrated the crucial role heritage has to play in contributing to a flourishing, more equitable society in the UK.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, Heritage Lottery Fund

History of Place has been a key project in exploring untold stories of disability, it is part of a series of initiatives laying the foundations for museums & galleries. The challenge now is for the sector to seize the moment, be courageous and to be activist in challenging thinking around disability. To move away from a model which sees disabled people as being 'other', rather to acknowledge disability is an integral part of life. To fully realise the central role museums and galleries have in challenging long established but ill-conceived views of disability. Museums should model ways of showing this new thinking, so it is tangibly evident for all visitors... Museums are powerful public places to challenge views and model behaviour.

Professor Jocelyn Dodd, Director of Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, University of Leicester

All of us have got important work to do in relation to visiting and working in museums and the heritage sector, in supporting our colleagues, collaborating to identify and understand social barriers to heritage as well as creating accessible valued spaces, representative of all of our communities. At DCN our work.. shows us that working together is the key way to support and progress positive change to embedding inclusive practice and challenging barriers to create innovation, which doesn't mean high cost but value and quality through working partnerships and strategic development.

We need to celebrate as a sector what we are already achieving...History of Place has created such important key work in identifying space used by disabled people and sharing this research with collaborative partnerships, exhibitions, events, accessible design and toolkits. Sincere congratulations on their achievements.

Becki Morris, Lead of Disability Co operative Network, Museums DCN

History of Place has started an important mission. We now want to see deaf and disability history become part of the nation's collective history. We also need to see more museums and heritage attractions giving this heritage equal prominence in their displays and exhibitions with a commitment to engaging more fully with deaf and disabled audiences. Finally, we want to enable deaf and disabled people to bring about this sea change themselves.

Right: Delegates at Liverpool Symposium



Credits

Project Delivered by

Esther Fox – Head of
Accentuate Programme
Katie Ann Smith – Project Manager
Paul Homer – Project Manager
Francesca Lashmar – Project Manager
Grace Swordy – Project Co-ordinator
Kerry Massheder-Rigby – Project
Co-ordinator
John Norton – Digital
workshop facilitator
& event co-ordinator
Charlotte Kingston –
Exhibition Curator
Kate Smith – Website Editor
& Social Media Manager
Beth Astridge - Archivist
Lai Couto – Exhibition
Designer (Graphics)
Sarah Pollard – Exhibition
Designer (3D)
Amy Bethan-Evans – Exhibitions
Audio Description Script writer
Thanks to Jo Nolan and all
the team from Screen South
Susan Potter – Evaluator

Heritage Hub Members

Di Christian, Creative Director
of Wicked Fish
Lisanne Holly, Project Coordinator
at British Deaf Association
Norma McGilp, Filmmaker and
Director of Deaf Heritage
Jason Wilsher-Mills, Painter and
Digital Artist
Liz Porter, Heritage and
Access Consultant
Jessica Starns, British Museum
Youth Volunteer Coordinator
John Wilson, Deaf Guide and Lecturer

Our Partner Organisations

Beaney House of Art and Knowledge
Bristol City Museum
Bristol Culture
Bristol Archives
Bristol Library
British Deaf Association
Canterbury Cathedral Archives
Canterbury Museums and Galleries
Chiswick House and Gardens
Churches Conservation Trust
DaDaFest
David Bonnett Associates
Disability Equality Forum
Dis/engagement, Dis/enfranchisement,
Dis/parity and Dissent (D4D)
Historic England
Grove Road Archive
Heritage Alliance
Heritage Open Days
Historic England
Langdon Down Museum of Learning
Disability
London Metropolitan Archives
London South Bank University
Maidstone Records Office
Museum of Liverpool
M Shed
Museums Association
National Trust
Outside In
Royal Association for the Deaf
Royal Institute of British Architects
Royal School for the Blind, Liverpool
Royal School for the Deaf, Margate
Screen South
Stoke Mandeville Hospital
St Vincent's School for Sensory
Impairment
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
The West of England Centre for
Inclusive Living

