

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 11 November 2021

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Wellcome Trust Asylums project

Recommendation(s)

1. That the committee notes the update on the Wellcome Trust funded 'A Case for the Ordinary' Asylums project.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

Summary

2. The 'A Case for the Ordinary' is an externally funded project which will be complete by 30 November 2021. The funders are the Wellcome Trust, a major medical research charity who are extending their reach beyond clinical medical research to embrace health and wellbeing.

3. Funded by a £196,469 grant from the Wellcome Trust's Research Resources Fund, the project began in January 2019 and the end date was extended by Wellcome to 30 Nov 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19. Wellcome also awarded a 3-month COVID-19 supplement to extend staff contracts.

4. The project staff completed at the end of April and the exhibition work will be completed this month.

5. The final report to Wellcome will be submitted in early December 2021 and the exhibition launch will be at Museum of Cannock Chase in January 2022.

Background

5. This project grew out of an aim to improve access to the Staffordshire Asylums collections. Working with Keele and Birmingham Universities we devised a project and identified a funding stream, Wellcome's 'Research Resources Grant', which supported heritage organisations to create resources to aid academic research into the history of health.

6. The project aimed to:

- Create a dataset of historic patient information for academic research about Staffordshire's Asylum patients using our Asylums collections;

- To engage with the public, including volunteers, about the history of mental health in the County through a blog and exhibition;
- To build upon our academic partnerships and engage with academic researchers;
- To secure match funding for the Staffordshire History Centre Project.

7. The project staff (Jan 2019-Apr 2021) extracted data from Staffordshire's asylum patient records, exceeding the project target of 38,000 records, and created a dataset containing: 7869 patients for Stafford Asylum, 1818-191; 17,906 patients for Burntwood Asylum, 1864-1948; 14,296 patients for Cheddleton Asylum, 1899-1948.

8. An online name index for pre-1920 open records (c25,000 names) has been prepared and will go online later this year. The redacted dataset (up to 1948) has been trialled by academics and will be advertised alongside the exhibition launch

9. The Staffordshire Asylums blog engaged with the public on the history of mental health throughout the project and will continue to be active until the end of 2022. Since April 2020 the blog site has had 11,831 visitors and 15,845 page views.

10. A 'pop-up' exhibition was launched in September to promote the project. It has visited Burntwood Library and Stafford library so far.

11. The large touring exhibition will open at Museum of Cannock Chase in January 2022. It will then visit the Brampton Museum in Newcastle-under-Lyme. Two further venues are to be confirmed.

12. In addition to the core tasks the project has:

- Built upon our partnership with Keele University through a successful application for a collaborative doctoral award student, enabling us to extend the scope and length of the project (to end 2022), including a continuation of the blog and a new volunteer project;
- Engaged with volunteers, onsite and remotely, to research the project blog, and enabled community engagement through the blog;
- Contributed to the salaries of 2 staff members seconded to the project from within the Archive Service for 28 months.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The project promotes a greater understanding of attitudes to mental health and well-being through an understanding of the historical context.

Legal implications:

An agreement is in place between the University of Keele and Staffordshire County Council for the delivery of the collaborative doctoral award student placement.

Resource and Value for money implications:

External funding was received from the Wellcome Trust.

Risk implications:

None applicable

Climate Change implications:

None applicable

Health Impact Assessment screening:

None applicable

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers

Contact/Directorate/ext number

Asylum Project progress updates and files

Project blog statistics

Staffordshire County Council and University of Keele Studentship Agreement