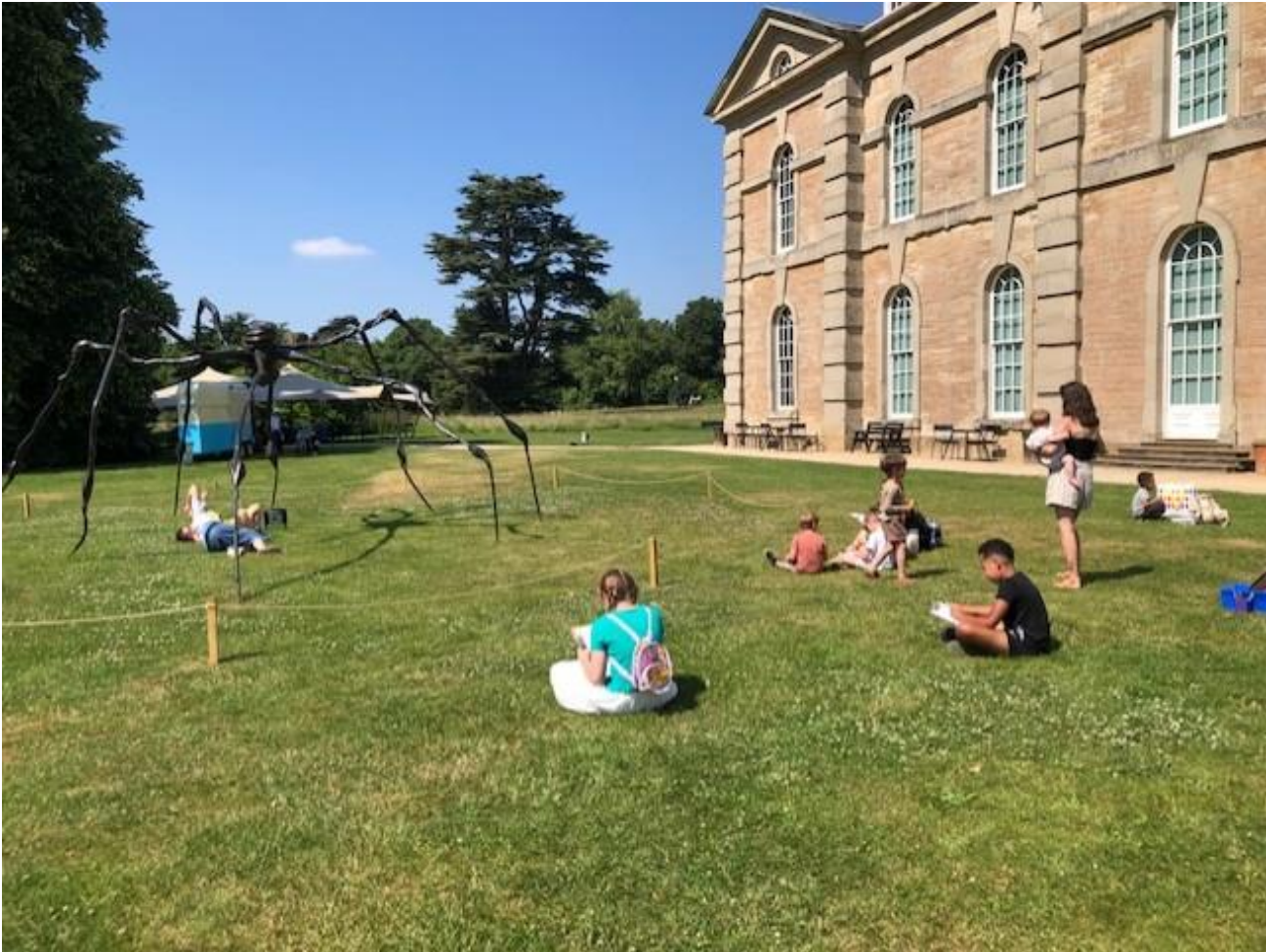


Working with Home Educated and Non-school Attending Children in the Museum and Gallery Sector



Summary & next steps

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Introduction

Children learning outside of a school setting are a growing audience. As well as families who are Electively Home Educating, there are thousands of children who are not accessing school full time for a variety of reasons. I am researching how museums and galleries currently support these audiences, what might be needed by the sector to further this work and how my practice as a museum consultant can contribute to this.

What I did

Research & consultation activity

- Online survey for the museum & gallery sector to find out about current activity (report available)
- Mini case studies about offers at four museums & galleries (report available)
- Online survey for families exploring what they value and need from museums & galleries (additional activity, report available)
- Two outreach visits to a local Home Ed group based on museum objects (additional activity, report available)
- Two consultation days at Compton Verney with families (report available)
- Three virtual workshops using museum objects and thinking routines
- Attended Home Ed day run by Coventry Transport Museum
- Contact with local authorities and third sector groups, including a consultation with Elly Costello from Square Peg
- Reading current publications, reports and advocacy about school attendance issues
- Joining consultation seminars about barriers to school attendance and new WARMTH principles organised by Spectrum Gaming

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- Five mentor sessions with Sam Bowen from Send in Museums
- Virtual attendance at the Museum Association annual conference
- 2 day course by Engage about trauma informed practice (additional activity)
- Seminar by GEM about intersectionality (additional activity)
- Three online seminars about slow looking
- Three 1-1 coaching sessions with Clare Bown from the Thinking Museum (instead of beginner's course)
- Participation in a monthly slow looking online group session
- Participation in an in-person slow looking event at the Welcome and a day visiting museums in London
- Seminar by GEM North East about the North East Museums Home Ed network

What have I learned?

- What the gaps are around museum & gallery provision for home ed/non school audiences
- Where there are examples of established and new programming and initiatives

- That museum learning professionals would like facts, evidence and further knowledge about this audience to lobby for greater resource
- That these families represent a growing audience with appetite for provision, but that they often don't know what is available to them
- They need awareness of resources and programming that considers accessibility, affordability, acceptance and agency
- An online non school audience is difficult to build, will need more work, but still a good option for 1-1 work or small group work with children who don't leave home
- About burnout and school trauma and what could help with that - museums are full of potential glimmers and sparks to encourage recovery if we can make the connections. Tiny steps are very significant.
- New facilitation techniques using slow looking and thinking routines and how to adapt these for family groups
- That I can run outreach sessions, lead sessions and organise visits as a freelancer working independently/under my own initiative (but also that income would be difficult to generate without funding or partners)

What were my highlights?

- Seeing the power of objects in action through slow looking discussions. Lively groups and big age ranges stopping to look, think and connect and also 1-1 discussions on zoom surprising me with their depth.
- A warm response to my research surveys and finding like minded professionals who want to make a change
- Being able to draw on my experience during the consultation days to help other professionals problem solve
- Home Ed group children fully embracing their day at Compton Verney and bringing new perspectives
- Seeing all shapes and sizes of families arriving for the open day at Compton Verney and nervous children joining in as suited them - no pressure and no expectation
- Morale boosting and validating sessions with my mentor that always made me think!

How has my practice changed?

- I am more reflective about my strengths and challenges
- I feel valid and empowered to use my lived experience to help others
- I am braver and better at taking risks and want to grow through trying new things (rather than worrying about getting everything perfect the first time - although that will always be a work in progress!)
- I now aim to give more control to groups I am working with, helping them to connect and discover through objects rather than being an expert giving knowledge or working to a fixed outcome

- I have new local, national and international contacts who are interested in my work
- I have a renewed appreciation of why I do what I do!
- I've progressed from feeling like a lone voice with a mad idea to being excited to share my learning

Next Steps

Short term

- Write a blog to be circulated at the GEM annual conference September 2024
- Write a blog for the Send in museums website
- Write a fact sheet for museums & galleries
- Keep in touch with local home ed groups, offer light touch activities/signposting

Medium term

- Compile a toolkit based on my learning for museums & galleries
- Approach sector partners for support with the toolkit e.g. GEM, Kids in Museums, Engage
- Circulate the toolkit via museum development teams and other networks
- Plan a new outreach workshop for my local home ed group
- Continue to practice applying thinking routines with museum objects

Long term

- Explore a Coventry & Warwickshire wide home ed cultural network or coordinated offer
- Seek project funding to develop a local coordinated programme with families and pilot joint approaches to marketing offers
- Continue to advocate within the museum & gallery sector through conference, article and seminar proposals

Report compiled August 2024

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