

National Museums Scotland works with museums across Scotland to share collections, knowledge and skills and provide support, advice and training to the wider sector.

The guidance below has been produced in response to the impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on museums across the country. We will be regularly adding to and updating the advice we offer to our colleagues in other museums on our [webpage](#) and Twitter ([@NMSPartnerships](#)).

Description

The role of museums in formal learning will change over the next few months, while the country is in lockdown, schools are closed, and the emphasis shifts to home learning, led by parents and carers. These guidelines suggest practical ways in which museums can continue to develop their schools learning offer - either through online delivery or in preparation for when schools reopen later in the year.

Guidance

Factors to consider

Museums have three key factors to consider about their work with schools at this time:

- Even if the wider lockdown restrictions are lifted before the summer, it is unlikely any face-to-face work with schools will resume before September/October 2020, meaning the gap in schools visiting museums could be at least six months.
- The demand for online learning opportunities for teachers, families and pupils has rapidly increased and museums are amongst a crowded marketplace, featuring big players like the BBC and Joe Wicks.
- The operation of hub schools, the work schedule of teachers, and the use of online learning is different across schools, Local Authorities and age groups. This is likely to change over time as the wider situation develops and might lead to further changes to how schools engage with museums.

Ongoing consultation with teachers, parents and pupils (where appropriate), as well as seeking support from other museum professionals, will therefore be vital in the months ahead.

Review what you do for schools already

You could use this time to undertake some of the following tasks:

- Review your booking statistics, schools evaluation systems and methods, as well as how you market to and communicate with schools.
- Map out your current school reach and your potential school reach – as well as what other places nearby (eg other museums, science centres, libraries, etc) are offering to schools.
- Use the [Scottish Government's statistical reports](#) (plus more recent reports [here](#)) to become an expert on your local schools. You can update your mailing list and know every detail about your local school including class sizes, numbers of pupils with Additional Support Needs, and levels of social deprivation so you can ensure your programmes align with their requirements.
- Review your work with schools in relation to the Curriculum for Excellence and read the [refreshed narrative on Scotland's curriculum](#) (released by Education Scotland in September 2019)
- Make your school sessions and suppliers more environmentally friendly and sustainable.
- Consider the accessibility of your sessions and ways in which this could be improved. There are a variety of online training courses and resources that you could use to assist with this.
- Take advantage of the huge increase in online learning provision to research what others are providing around your topics, particularly on popular websites which usually charge a fee for access (see useful sources section below for suggestions).

Online learning provision

The main points to consider around providing online learning resources are:

- Can you continue supporting the teachers you usually work with or have visited you this year? Teachers could continue post-visit work whilst their classes are at home, and for many pupils it will have been their last museum visit for many months.
- Think about the long-term value of any digital resources you create or share online. Could they be used to further enhance an in-person visit once schools return?
- Consider the audience for your resources. Is your online content for teachers to put into context for their pupils, for parents/carers to work on with their children, or for pupils to use themselves? This will help you use appropriate language, including any key curriculum terminology or instructions, and market to the intended audience.
- Do what you can, with the digital ability and expertise you have. There are so many resources available already. One option might be to re-use digital resources provided by someone else and create a new narrative around it to link to your museum and collections. For example, our 'Build a story at the museum' resource, which can be used with any museum objects, including digital versions (or objects at home), and is available in [English](#) and [Gaelic](#). Or, point your audience to resources already available online through other museums.
- Think about how online learning resources could link to your local area. Many people now have the time to explore somewhere or something on their doorstep, so can your resources link to that?
- Consider the accessibility of your resources, including poverty proofing your online learning – some families may not have access to a printer, a laptop or PC, or high levels of data (although Government directives may change this last point).
- Schools and families need to be considered as different audiences, although they may use and enjoy the same content. Schools content can be directed to teachers who will be looking for links to the curriculum and resources they can adapt to suit their classes. Families may be looking for learning outcomes or particular topics, as well as fun!
- Before you start, look at your baseline figures for engagement online and then review these regularly as you begin to promote your resources. Use this, along with other qualitative methods, to evaluate the success of your online learning provision.
- Avoid content fatigue by focusing on quality over quantity of content.

Create a return to work plan

Whilst it's still fresh in your head, make a list of what you would need to do to be able to deliver your usual schools programme again, including:

- Re-training of staff/volunteers
- In depth cleaning of spaces/resources
- Ordering of supplies that will need replacement after not being used in 6+ months
- Consider if any of your sessions or content will reference the lockdown and wider impacts of coronavirus, and how this will be approached in a suitable manner for the audience
- Plan your marketing to ensure your re-opening messages reach teachers/schools, including those who will be engaging with you online over the coming months

Business continuity

You may be the sole person responsible for schools in your organisation, so ensure knowledge and contacts are shared with your wider team:

- Make a list of all your usual suppliers, freelancers and other external contacts you use and save it in a central secure place, compliant with GDPR practices
- Write a list of your current provision for schools, how this will be affected by closure/reopening, and include a timescale of what needs to be actioned when in order to re-open and re-start sessions
- Ensure there are a number of ways schools/teachers can contact your museum should they have questions during the closure. Make this clear online, in communications to schools, and via your email signature
- Make sure colleagues or managers can access the information above, as well as your return to work plan, and are aware of how to provide a basic level of service in your absence if necessary.

Reach out

In such unprecedented times, the above guidelines are intended to act as a framework around which you can base your work with schools, if you have the time and focus to do so. Remember to take care of yourself and reach out to others across the museum sector for advice and support. Get in touch if you would like to discuss any ideas or questions that arise from reading these guidelines.

Other useful sources

The Group for Education in Museums (GEM) website has a range of resources, training sessions and advice including:

This #MuseumHour summary on responses from museum professionals across the world on Covid-19 has useful points, particularly around staff wellbeing - <https://gem.org.uk/resource/museumhour-on-covid-19/>

Group for Education in Museum's COVID-19 Guidance for Museum Educators pulls together further guidance documents, including to use with children around the topic of coronavirus <https://gem.org.uk/gem-covid-19-guidance-for-educators/>

Museums Galleries Scotland Coronavirus Guidance for Museums, including details of available funding - <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/stories/museums-galleries-scotland-response-on-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisation's page on 'New Service Delivery Models' provides practical steps for considering how you might change your offer to digital - <https://scvo.org.uk/support/coronavirus/services/new-service-delivery-models>

Education Scotland has a growing section on their website including online learning provision and 'what can I do as a parent?' - <https://education.gov.scot/>

Parent Club allows you to keep up to date with relevant news and guidance for parents from the Scottish Government - <https://www.parentclub.scot/>

Established learning provision websites to explore

BBC Bitesize <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

Sparklebox - <https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/>

Times Educational Supplement Home Learning resources - <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/teacher-essentials/home-learning>

Topmarks <https://www.topmarks.co.uk/>

Twinkl - <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

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