



# CATCH YOUR BREATH LONDON EXHIBITION EVALUATION REPORT

Compiled by Sarah McLusky, Life of Breath Project Manager

## SUMMARY

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### In numbers

- The exhibition had 990 confirmed visitors, but the true figure will be considerably higher due to unquantified conference guests and building tour attendees
- There were 13 associated events with 1003 attendees in total
- Collectively, the London pages and posts on [www.catchyourbreath.org](http://www.catchyourbreath.org) were visited 1127 times and the exhibition highlights video watched 273 times

### What worked well

- Being in a London venue raised our profile considerably and it was much easier to get attention from the media, journals and medical professionals
- Breathe Easy co-curated case was a fantastic addition
- Some excellent, well attended events, particularly 'The Singing Hospital' performance
- RCP produced some excellent quality additional resources, including an exhibition video, plant trail and booklet written by 2 RCP fellows
- Working with Life of Breath encouraged RCP to step out of their comfort zone and include more arts, literature and patient perspectives than they ever have before

### What could be improved

- The Durham exhibition's dedicated space had a much greater visual and sensory impact
- Sharing the space with the conference team was difficult at times, especially for events
- The collaboration was a challenge at times, especially over exhibition content

## INTRODUCTION

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Catch Your Breath London was the second iteration of an interpretive exhibition based on the work of the Life of Breath research project. It occupied the first-floor balcony at the Royal College of Physicians' iconic modernist building on St Andrew's Place in Regents Park, London. The exhibition ran from Tuesday 2 April 2019 to Saturday 21 September 2019.

Alongside the exhibition, we collaborated with RCP on an events programme, aimed at deepening visitor engagement with the exhibition's content and themes.

Feedback was collected in the following ways

- Metrics from RCP building footfall monitoring and event bookings/attendees
- Comments from exhibition postcards and post-event surveys
- Staff and contributor reflections

Catch Your Breath London Exhibition objectives

- Help visitors appreciate how our relationship with and understanding of breath has developed over time in a range of contexts and through technology and art
- To communicate how it feels to be breathless and address the stigma associated with related conditions
- Encourage reflection on what breath means to physicians and their patients
- Consider the limits of conventional medicine in the treatment of breathlessness and what other approaches, specifically singing therapy, might have to offer
- Highlight technological innovations in the measurement and treatment of breath and respiratory disease
- Engage the public with the work of the RCP on issues related to respiratory health including smoking and air pollution
- Share and get feedback on findings from the Life of Breath research project
- Develop a dynamic public engagement programme which encourages audiences to think about breath and respiratory health in new ways

## WORKING WITH THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

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Life of Breath has always aspired to reach out to health professionals, to engage them in dialogue about the potential benefits of thinking about breathing and breathlessness in different, less biomedical, ways. Catch Your Breath Durham was installed at Palace Green Library, a venue which attracts a broad 'general public' audience, but notably tourists and day trippers visiting the Cathedral and World Heritage Site. By contrast, the Royal College of Physicians, although housing a museum and archive collection, is largely a members' resource and medical conference venue. Thus, it provided an ideal location to attempt to reach a more medically oriented audience.

We approached RCP in 2015, initially liaising with curator Emma Shepley, and in 2016 secured agreement to host it there. When we moved into more detailed planning in 2018, we liaised with curator Kristin Hussey, exhibitions officer Matthew Wood and public programmes officer Natalie

Craven. Kristin and Matthew worked on developing the exhibition to suit the London space, including additional object choices, revising the text content and design, and installation. Natalie led on marketing and the events programme. This collaboration was challenging at times due both to geography and to the fact that much of the development work was happening when Durham staff were very busy managing the Durham exhibition events programme. However, the success of the London exhibition and events programme are largely due to the RCP team's considerable efforts.

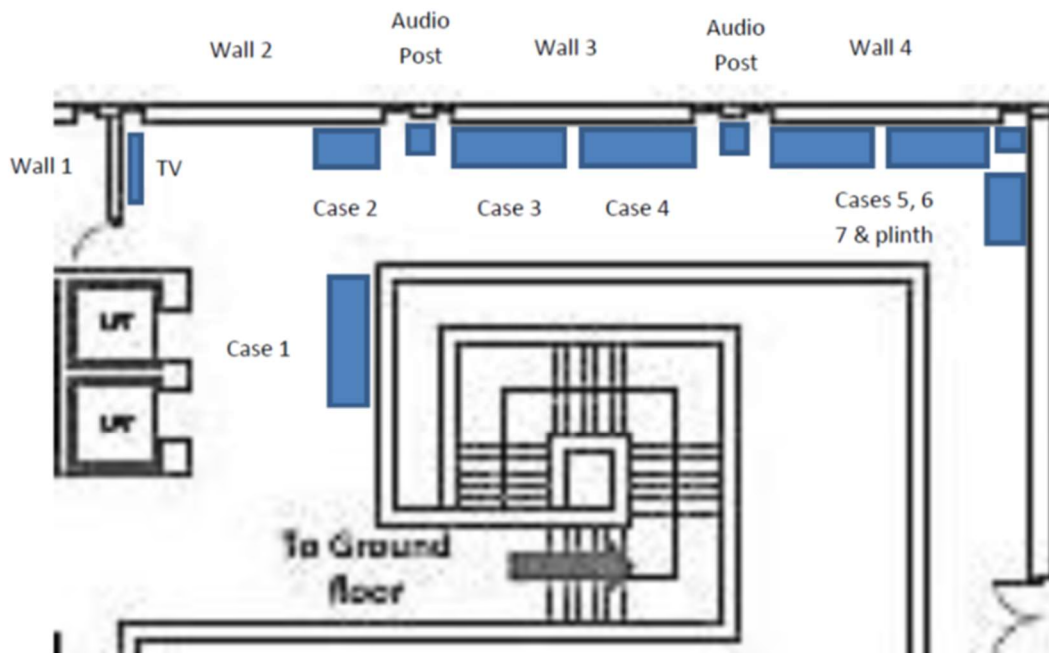
## THE EXHIBITION

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Catch Your Breath London was installed along one side of the first-floor balcony as can be seen in the image below. It retained the same overall concept and design, plus many of the same objects as the Durham exhibition. However, the exhibition was reorganised to suit their space and audience, and supplemented with items from their own collections.



Their own vast archive of books, art, objects and other items are particularly related to the history of medicine. Thus, the London exhibition had more of a medical history slant, particularly in relation to the ways respiratory illness has been described, diagnosed and treated. As air pollution is such a topical issue in London and an area of focus for RCP, that featured more strongly. The final significant difference was a case co-curated with Breathe Easy Westminster support group.



#### Exhibition layout

- TV: video reel including Still/Breathing and Johanna Under the Ice
- Case 1: Experience of breathlessness (co-curated with Breathe Easy Westminster)
- Case 2: Breath made visual (artworks)
- Case 3: Breath in literature
- Case 4: Diagnosing breathlessness
- Case 5: Treating breathlessness
- Case 6: Public Health (smoking and air pollution)
- Case 7: The romantic disease (tuberculosis)

More details about the content of the London exhibition can be found in these blog posts

- Catch Your Breath Moves to London (<https://catchyourbreath.org/catch-your-breath-moves-to-london/>)
- RCP's Catch Your Breath (<https://catchyourbreath.org/rcps-catch-your-breath/>)
- Strive and Labour More Vehemently (<https://catchyourbreath.org/strive-and-labour-more-vehemently/>)

And this video ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1RWVj\\_vdZg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1RWVj_vdZg)) presented by Exhibitions Officer Matthew Wood.



## ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

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The exhibition was complemented with a series of 13 events aimed at deepening engagement with the content and themes.

**Museum Lates:** RCP has a well-established model of participating in the Museum Lates movement, staying open after hours on the first Thursday of each month. On these evenings during the exhibition run, the Late was themed around Catch Your Breath. The evening included a tour, usually led by Matthew Wood, and then a workshop, talk or performance led by someone associated with Life of Breath as follows;

- April - [dance movement with Sian Williams & Krzysztof Bierski/breathing exercises with Kate Binnie](#)
- May - [dance movement with Sian Williams/breath and data with Miriam Quick](#)
- (June – reserved for a pre-existing architecture event)
- July – [creative writing workshop with Christy Ducker](#)
- August – [history of tobacco talk with Andrew Russell](#)
- September – [The Book of Jo reading with Viv Gordon](#)

**The Singing Hospital (Tue 30 Apr 2019):** Inspired by their collaboration with Breathe Easy Westminster, RCP Museum partnered with the Singing for Breathing groups at Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust to host a celebration marking 10 years of the longest continually running singing group for people with chronic respiratory conditions. The event premiered a new

participatory composition *'The Singing Hospital'* by composer Victoria Hume, commissioned by rb&hArts, Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals' Arts Programme and supported by Arts Council England. There is a review and video of the event here <https://catchyourbreath.org/we-come-here-for-fun/> and the music is now available online for other groups to learn and perform.



**Singing for lung health: balancing the biomedical with the musical workshop (Wed 12 Jun 2019):**

To complement the Singing Hospital performance, RCP also [organised a workshop](#) aimed at those interested in learning more of the theory behind singing for lung health, including the techniques for breathing control and posture. It was led by Phoené Cave who delivered the first Singing for Breathing workshops in 2008 at the Royal Brompton Hospital, London and now trains others. The event was timed to coincide with ['Creativity and Wellbeing Week'](#).

**A Matter of Life and Breath (Tue 11 Jul 2019):** Taking the opportunity to showcase the work of Life of Breath for a London audience, researchers from both Durham University and University of Bristol came together to share a variety of perspectives on breathlessness, including the lived experience of breathlessness, patient perceptions of healthcare, concepts of 'normal', and historical ideas about the connections between mind and body. There is a video of the event here <https://catchyourbreath.org/a-matter-of-life-and-breath/>

**Open House London (21 Sept 2019):** As part of the Open House London architecture festival, RCP opened its doors on a Saturday. As part of the day, exhibition-featured artist Jayne Wilton led workshops and tours explaining her work and giving visitors a chance to try out some of her techniques. There are photos of the event here <https://catchyourbreath.org/catching-our-breath/>



**Other tours:** There were also 3 other tours of/related to the exhibition – [one as part MED+ festival](#) (Fri 10 May 2019), a private tour for [Knowledge Quarter London](#) and a [garden tour](#) (Fri 28 June 2019), exploring breath-related medicinal plants (more below).

**Fellows Engagement:** One of the most gratifying elements of working with RCP is the enthusiastic response from some of their fellows. Two respiratory physicians and fellows Nigel Cooke and Noel Snell independently created a booklet called '*Breath and Breathing*' to accompany the exhibition. This booklet was formatted and printed by RCP using the Catch Your Breath design. The booklet included a section on medicinal plants which could be found in the RCP physic garden. This section was extracted and turned into a garden trail which will continue to be marked and available long after the exhibition. The garden trail can be found here <https://catchyourbreath.org/plants-and-the-lungs-trail/> and the booklet here <https://catchyourbreath.org/breath-and-breathing-booklet/>



## DATA ANALYSIS

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**Exhibition Confirmed Visitors: 990** (excluding event participants) but true figure will be higher

The true number of exhibition visitors will be considerably higher than this, as many conference delegates will have looked at the exhibition, at least briefly. During the exhibition run, the building also hosted 3047 architectural tour guests, many of whom will have taken the opportunity to visit the exhibition afterwards but were not formally recorded as such.

RCP reported the sense that, in addition to their usual audience, the exhibition attracted a lot of ‘arts in health’ professionals and a significant number of visitors who had personal experience of breathing problems. However, this is based on ad-hoc conversations with visitors and they don’t have any supporting data.

### Event Attendees: 1003

Apart from large high-profile events like The Singing Hospital, event attendance improved over the course of the exhibition run. The same pattern was seen in Durham and suggests people were hearing about the exhibition by word of mouth, rather than a reflection of the quality or value of the earlier events.

Event	Date	Attendees
Opening event	Tue 2 Apr 2019	87
April Late: breath/body	Thu 4 April 2019	18
The Singing Hospital	Tue 30 Apr 2019	140
May Late: dance/data	Thu 2 May 2019	19
MED+ Festival Tour	Fri 10 May 2019	20
Knowledge Quarter breakfast tour	Wed 29 May 2019	19
Singing for Lung Health workshop	Wed 12 Jun 2019	36
Medicinal plants garden tour	Fri 28 Jun 2019	25
July Late: poetry	Thu 4 July 2019	27
A Matter of Life and Breath	Thu 11 Jul 2019	86
August Late: tobacco	Thu 1 Aug 2019	91
September Late: Book of Jo	Thu 5 Sep 2019	56
Open House	Sat 21 Sep 2019	379
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1003</b>

### Media/Online Coverage

The exhibition website received 7312 views from 2621 users during the time of the London exhibition. However, it is worth noting that many of these users were accessing archive content from the Durham exhibition. At the time of writing, the London exhibition information page had received 706 hits (compared to 565 for Durham and 544 for Bristol). Blog posts specifically related to the London exhibition collectively received over 421 views, with the most popular being a post featuring ‘A Matter of Life and Breath’ event videos with 177 views. The most popular blog post on the site is ‘Breathing Like the Iceman’ about Wim Hof and the Durham exhibition with 1033 views.



A notable success of the London exhibition was the attention it received from the media. The exhibition was featured in [The Lancet](#), [The Lancet Respiratory Medicine](#), and [The British Medical Journal \(BMJ\)](#). The BMJ article [Altimetrics](#) indicate that it's in the top 10% of all outputs they track. The exhibition was also featured on London Live TV (29 April 2019) when composer [Victoria Hume was interviewed about The Singing Hospital](#)

In addition, Sarah McLusky was invited to write a 2-page article for '[Commentary](#)' the RCP's members bi-monthly magazine which is sent to all 36,000 RCP fellows and members worldwide. A [digital version of the magazine is available here](#). The article can be on p22-23.

The exhibition video created by RCP has been viewed 273 times on YouTube. It is the 12<sup>th</sup> most watched film (of 70) uploaded to the RCP YouTube channel in the past 12 months.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1RWWj\\_vdZg&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1RWWj_vdZg&t=1s)

Numbers relating to website visitors/views was collected using Wordpress Jetpack or YouTube view counts. Data collected on 23 April 2020.

## REFLECTIONS

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What was most remarkable from the Durham perspective was the effect of the London venue on raising our public profile. In the North East, it can be very difficult to get any media attention at all for events and activities outside of Newcastle upon Tyne (where the main newspaper and only broadcasters are based). For us the medical journal editorials are particularly impactful as they help to bring the research to the professional audience we most wanted to reach. From comments, questions and conversations, it is clear that this medical audience didn't always agree with the Life of Breath perspective, but that challenge was welcome.

There are also so many museums and universities in London which means there is an educated and culturally engaged audience seeking out exhibitions and experiences. From speaking to the RCP team, this can also cause problems as there is so much competition, but from our perspective it seemed to make for a thoughtful audience who had made a very deliberate choice to engage.

The higher profile of the exhibition in London was tempered by the fact that, due to the limitations of the space, the RCP exhibition lacked some of the visual and sensory impact of the Durham exhibition. In Durham, occupying an enclosed, dedicated space meant that through clever design, lighting and sound elements, there was a real sense of being immersed in the exhibition. However, RCP adapted the design well to suit the space and there was no question that they were two versions of the same exhibition.

*"I think the design is incredible. The designer who worked on the project did something really fantastic. It just looked sleek and professional. That's quite unusual and special so huge props should be given to the designer who was able to take such a big concept and make it visual and to communicate it."* Kristin Hussey, Curator, RCP

Another challenge with the space was sharing it with the other building users during events. The RCP building is a modernist design with a large open atrium and noise travels very easily within the

space. Also many of the rooms are only accessible via the narrow balconies, one of which housed our exhibition, around this atrium. As previously mentioned, the building functions primarily as a conference venue and there were some problematic clashes between conference events and our exhibition events. Although these were generally handled well by the RCP team, it was clear that there is some friction between the conference and museum functions. However, they are hopeful that the success of Catch Your Breath might improve things in the future.

*“RCP, which maybe previously saw us just as the keeper of the old historical things in the building, noticed us working with patients and that is really a core value of the organization. The events came to the senior management's attention through concerns about the noise and how that might affect other events in the building and the potential loss of income but actually, in the end they went really well.”* Natalie Craven, Public Programmes Officer

There was also some friction between the Durham and RCP teams, particularly around division of labour, object choice for the exhibition and some of the language used. The team at RCP were enthusiastic about the concept and design and understandably wanted to put their own stamp on the exhibition. Indeed, many of their additions really enhanced the exhibition, particularly the case on the experience of breathlessness which was co-curated with Breathe Easy Westminster. However, there were times when the Life of Breath team felt RCP were straying too far from the true spirit of the research, and at times had to be quite direct about what was and wasn't acceptable. This was notably around some of the language used to describe people with respiratory illness and their desire to include overly biomedical or anatomical content. At times, RCP interpreted this as being overly controlling, however we felt that it was essential to remain true to the research. The fact that the exhibition was organised by Durham but paid for by Bristol also caused considerable confusion. It took so long to get all 3 parties to sign the partnership agreement that it was essentially a meaningless document. On reflection, it also didn't adequately spell out the roles and responsibilities, particularly for Durham and RCP.

The most successful unique aspects of the London exhibition and engagement programme were the elements which involved collaboration with people who experience breathlessness. This is the part which was initially most unfamiliar to the RCP team but which, in the end, was the most fulfilling.

*“Getting that patient voice in there, that's not something we've really ever done before. Going out with British Lung Foundation, going out to Breathe Easy Westminster, meeting all these people that were suffering from COPD from asthma. Rather than it just being the name of a disease or a symptom, it's people with real lives, it's the way they're managing their illness, their breathlessness and how they cope on a day to day basis. For me that really stood out as something unique from this exhibition. I don't think it's something we could have done if we hadn't had that support from Life of Breath as that that was their research, their focus.”* Matthew Wood, Exhibition Officer

The 'Experiencing Breathlessness' case is a fantastic addition and something that we had hoped to do in Durham, but ran out of time and space. The fact that RCP positioned it as the first case visitors saw on arrival also really made a statement about how important this perspective is. The Singing Hospital event, with the Singing for Breathing choirs, was a real highlight and wonderfully uplifting, and again it was about putting lived experience in the spotlight.