Bristol Culture
Four case studies that evaluate the work of the Participation team
February 2017
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bristol Museums is part of Bristol Culture team which exists to deliver, facilitate and support cultural activity in Bristol. Bristol Museums comprises of five accredited museums with wide-ranging world-class collections from art to archaeology, history to industry, the natural and the wider world. It also includes exhibitions, events and festivals, learning opportunities, community engagement and volunteering and support for the cultural ecology of the city.

The Participation team develops and delivers community engagement opportunities in collaboration with different partners across the city, as well as a host of volunteering opportunities and co-ordinates the work of over 700 volunteers per year.

The team’s work is guided by the organisation’s Equality Action Plan, Audience Development Plan, and the guiding principles behind the Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded national ‘Our Museum’ programme which the team participated in between 2012-15.


The case studies cover the work of four programmes that have run during 2016, including:

**Gallery tours for ESOL learners.** Black and minority ethnic groups are one of the main priorities through the service’s Equality Action Plan. Working with ESOL learners through City of Bristol College and the Learning Communities team provided a good route into working with members of those communities. 60% of those learners have never visited a museum before and feedback was overwhelmingly positive from learners and staff. Tours have enabled learners to develop their language skills outside of the college setting and to feel an increased sense of citizenship and belonging in the city they have made their home.

**Shine at M Shed.** Disabled people, including people with long term mental health issues is another key organisational priority. Shine is a programme of art sessions aimed at people with low level mental health issues. It is a progression from Arts on Prescription courses across the city. Evaluation of health befits by the University of the West of England indicates the sessions impacted significantly on participants’ mood.

**Culture Vultures** was a young people’s radio training and broadcast programme run in partnership with Ujima radio. The young people focused on cultural events and activities taking place in Bristol. Young people created the content for the shows and were responsible for all aspects of production. Participants gained Arts Awards and the shows enabled Bristol Culture to reach out to new audiences who were not traditional museum visitors. Several young people can continued to produce regular arts based shows with Ujima radio called ‘Artycul’.

**25 Below** was a young people’s takeover of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. Over 100 young people attended free workshops and events, delivered in partnership with 12 artists/organisations including Young Bristol and Creative Youth Network during August 2016. Participation by Black and minority ethnic young people was 30% and evaluation showed that young people’s views of the museum’s appeal shifted considerably through participating in the programme.

The programmes were evaluated and produced as case studies by Jenie Macindoe; heritage consultant specialising in evaluation and audience research.

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ESOL TOURS CASE STUDY

December 2016
ESOL Tours Case Study

Summary
What happened and highlights of what it achieved

Bristol Culture’s tours for ESOL learners have introduced hundreds of new BME visitors to M Shed, helping them learn about their city and making them feel a connection with both Bristol and the museum. With high levels of take-up and satisfaction amongst ESOL teachers, the delivery of the tours is excellent and very effective at reaching a new and diverse audience. Some of the learners have stayed connected to the museum and progressed on to other opportunities and the Participation Team has built relationships with local organisations which will allow them to serve these communities even better in future.

Background
Why did they do it? Objectives, intended outcomes

As part of Bristol Culture’s Equality Action Plan, the service has made a plan to actively engage three target groups, one of which being BME people. The primary motivation for developing and delivering tours to ESOL students was to increase the involvement of the BME audience and to make links with communities that were currently under-represented at the city’s museums. 60% of the students who come on a tour at M Shed have never been to any museum before.

A second objective for the project has been about supporting the development of the students – not only in their English language ability but also in their sense of citizenship and changing identity as a Bristolian.
Who was involved

More than 250 learners came on a tour to M Shed between December 2015 and December 2016. Approximately a third of the groups are in the 16-19 age range with the remainder being comprised of adults or adult and child mixed groups. Groups tend to have around 10-15 participants. Participants come from 53 countries, Somalia, Syria and Poland being the most common. Some have been living in Bristol for a number of years and others are recent immigrants, many are refugees and asylum seekers.

What happened

Outputs, practical stuff, approach, obstacles and challenges

The tours, typically lasting between one and one and a half hours, are delivered at M Shed, which tells the story of the city and its unique place in the world. Content broadly focuses on the geography of Bristol, trade history, stories of slavery and protest, manufacturing and are tailored to suit the English ability level of participants. The museum’s Engagement Officer - Communities, who designs and leads the tours, describes them as more like a language classroom than a traditional tour, encouraging two-way communications and including some free exploration time.

Recognising that to target BME ESOL learners individually would probably result in a low take-up, the museum visited local colleges initially to promote the offer, sharing materials they had produced which were graded to different levels and based on exam materials that all ESOL courses use. This helped overcome the initial challenge of winning the trust of the teachers and convinced them that the museum could provide something relevant.

Another challenge was that students are often at very different levels, some may not be able to read and write in their own language, some may have missed their entire primary education. For example, some students may have no idea that slavery even occurred or that the British Empire existed. Having been an ESOL teacher himself, the Engagement Officer was aware of these potential variables in planning the content and approach of the tours.

Achievements

Benefits, impact

Evaluation of the project has been carried out at various stages, with feedback collected from museum staff, participants, teachers and group leaders to explore the impact of the tours on all involved.

Findings from visit data, interviews, surveys and work produced by the students has been analysed, outcomes from the project fall broadly into four areas:

1. Student learning

All learners recognised that the tour was about history, specifically Bristol’s history. In the letters that they wrote to the museum for their homework, learners often made reference to the manufacturing history of the city and stories of protest. Bristol’s association with the slave trade was the most talked about topic in the letters and during a follow-up interview with a group who had recently been on a tour. Learners demonstrated a greater understanding of world history in general, for example learning during the tour for the first time that black people in Jamaica were originally from Africa. One young person said that it had made him feel differently about his home country of Afghanistan.

‘I didn’t know about the Bristol past, but now I got some knews (sic) about it.’

‘You must see the history of bus boycott story. You have to see the history of slavery and also sugars.’

Some wrote very detailed accounts of what they had learned, and were able to recall specific dates, places and people. Students in the interview talked a lot about the protests and boycotts and had clearly been inspired by how people had stood up for issues they believed in.

‘I know it’s really upset, you know, make you angry and make you upset, but we need to learn this is part of history, so if it’s good or if it’s bad, we need to learn about it and learn lessons from the past.’
Most learners chose to describe objects they had seen, the objects that they enjoyed were diverse but most popular were the photos of old Bristol, pictures of famous people, things that people from Bristol had made and transportation artefacts. These parts of the collection could provide a focus for future work with these audiences.

‘I was very surprised when I saw interesting and old photos of Bristol.’

Teachers and group leaders spoke very highly of the tours. 100% strongly agreed that the language was appropriately pitched and there were plenty of positive comments about the welcome received and the relevance of the tour content to the learners. Teachers liked the structure of the tour, the level of interaction and engagement that the Engagement Officer had with the learners, the mini-tasks and questioning.

There was evidence from the teacher follow-up survey that the visit was embedded in their teaching with consideration given to how it could best support the students and fit into their curriculum. One teacher said that the visit linked into their topic of transport and city life. A refugee charity said their goal was to show their students what free things there are to do in Bristol, to encourage them to explore their environment.

Many teachers used the pre-visit materials, either as a general introduction to the topic or by adapting them to suit their particular needs. One teacher used the planning of the trip as an opportunity to teach grammar for future plans and arrangements, vocabulary for directions, discussions about suitable travel times etc. All the teachers who responded to the survey said that they had continued to refer to the experience back in the classroom, with students discussing and creating written responses to the content of the tour.
2. Development of citizenship

The value of learning about Bristol’s history seems to be appreciated and learners understand how it is helpful to them.

‘If someone asks, where are you living, I’m gonna say I’m living in Bristol. If someone asks, can you tell me about Bristol, I can’t say anything. It’s so good for us, to know about Bristol. I’m two and a half years in Bristol, I do know nothing, when I see this thing, now I remember.’

‘Thank you for the tour on Monday. We enjoyed that tour. it was good for my studies. I thought it was boring but that was not like that.’

The museum helped us to learn many things. Like Bristol history, important of the river, slaves life style, Banksy art, nature photography and Bristol heroes it was so important for us because we just came here now.’

There were a number of comments in the homework letters which suggested that learners had gained not only a deeper understanding of their city but also an appreciation and connection to it.

‘The most interesting thing is, I didn’t know the name of the river in Bristol before, but I got it now. Avon, what a beautiful name it is!

‘The last trip to M Shed was for me very interesting. I was there before but with you, like a teacher, many things has become clear! I am very impressed with the history of Bristol. That is amazing place to live!’

3. New audiences for the museum

Being ESOL learners, all the people who have come on a tour have been BME so the project has been extremely effective in reaching this audience. Bristol Culture collects the postcodes of all tour participants and analyses them using a demographic analysis tool called Acorn. From this it can be seen that learners live largely in the museum service’s three target communities of the city – those described as ‘young hardship’, ‘struggling estates’ and ‘striving families’. Demand for the tours is consistently high as is the satisfaction rate amongst teachers and group leaders - 100% are very satisfied. A third of the teachers who visited with a group between December and June came for a subsequent visit before the end of 2016. One teacher brought a group of students on a tour four times in 2016.

A number of learners expressed emotions that they had felt during their visit, all were positive, suggesting that they now feel favourably about the museum.

‘I think the photography is the best thing in that place, it make me happy to feel something inside.

‘M Shed is a museum all about Bristol and the people who live in Bristol. Guide told group rich history about Bristol and people’s lives. I was very happy.’

‘At the first time I went in to M Shed I just feel happy inside. When someone talking about the past I open to it my heart and my brain.’

‘Visit M Shed you will see a lot of things you have never seen before… wow it was a big day for my life’

A few students had noticed themes or artefacts that had relevance to their own lives and this had helped them feel a greater affinity towards the museum.

‘My favourite part in the museum it was the picture of king died witch is I know in my religion, and I like all the picture of the world.’

Interestingly, one student in the interview said she hadn’t wanted to go to M Shed for the tour, because she didn’t like to go to new places for the first time. The group agreed that to go together was helpful and they felt more comfortable visiting the museum with a group of friends. All of the students in the group interview said they wanted to return to M Shed, however they still felt more comfortable visiting as a group rather than alone. None said they had plans to return with friends or family. So in order to ensure that these new audiences return to visit the museum as ordinary visitors, and importantly, bring other new visitors with them, there may need to be an additional offer e.g. a second tour or facilitated activity.
Throughout the teacher comments, the learner feedback and interviews a strong theme has been the welcoming approach and appropriate pitch of the Engagement Officer. Humour was seen to be important in the delivery of the tours, as was using props and pictures. By having a member of staff with ESOL teaching experience to lead the tours, the museum has managed to predict learners’ needs effectively which has meant that tours have been consistently well-received.

‘Overall the whole experience was great. Students were very pleased with the tour and they all said that Finn, who was our tour guide, spoke clearly and slowly. Pictures and props were very helpful.’

Most of the students who have been on a tour have moved on to other classes with different teachers, so it was unfortunately not possible to reach them to ask if they have returned to M Shed since the tour. One teacher from the Beacon Centre did still have contact with five students and of those five, three have been back to M Shed with their families. The other two have since been to Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. All teachers or group leaders reported that they had received positive feedback from their learners and several said they would return to M Shed, especially those with children. One learner had been to M Shed previously and told her teacher:

‘I went twice before and it was a waste of time because I didn’t understand anything, but on this visit with the tour guide it was amazing and now I can understand it all.’

4. Organisational benefits

Benefits for the museum service are largely to do with the new relationship developed with the city’s learning providers and individual tutors or group leaders. To date, eight different organisations have taken part in the ESOL tours, ranging from FE colleges to women’s refugee groups to housing associations.
The service’s Senior Officer for Participation talked about the effectiveness of working with an organisation which already has a dedicated cohort of learners in place, and about how the museum can continue communications with ESOL learners through the tutors, e.g. offers of half-price exhibition tickets, invitations to free events.

“We now have good ways into those audiences that we didn’t have 18 months ago.”

Senior Participation Officer, Bristol Culture

Taking it further - legacy, next steps

Since the start of the tours being offered, feedback from teachers has informed the development of the content of the tours and the structure of the visit. In order to continue to engage ESOL learners who have been on a tour, further tours have been developed, one at M Shed looking behind the scenes in the stores and one at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery using the art collection to generate language. Two volunteers are being trained to deliver tours to cope with the high demand and there are plans to recruit further volunteers such as newly qualified ESOL teachers who want to gain experience.

When asked what other things they wanted to do at the museum, learners said they wanted to learn about something new, about ‘things we don’t know about’. One student from Eritrea, inspired by stories of protest and boycotts, said he wanted to hear stories about people who had helped to build the city, who had changed things and made things better for other people. Another student from Poland wanted to know about what the future might be for Bristol e.g. what cars might look like. This desire for bringing the narrative up to date and into the future might be a way to involve students further – opportunities for workshops or creative writing for example.

After the group interview had finished, learners were very keen to ask more about the other museums in the city, what could they see there etc. One person commented that everything in M Shed was very expensive and they couldn’t afford to buy anything there. The affordability of souvenir items and special exhibitions entry for these audiences might be a consideration for the Participation team in future.

When asked the same question, many teachers said they would appreciate some graded, self-led resources for their learners to use independently. Several teachers commented that their students found it difficult to read the museum text. Some alternative interpretation, perhaps combined with an activity, could be an effective approach here. One teacher suggested that her students would relate to an activity following the life of an immigrant from slave trade time and one from modern times, including difficulties and successes.

“It would be great if you could produce a ‘treasure hunt’ style worksheet which students could complete independently by walking around the museum and finding information.”

The needs of non-college organisations might be quite different however. One group leader from a refugee charity said that they aren’t able to do pre or post work for example and their students come to class on a drop-in basis.

At the end of the tour, participants are invited to engage with other opportunities at the museum and this has resulted in several participants progressing to other opportunities. Two ESOL students have become regular volunteers at three of Bristol Culture’s heritage sites, assisting with family learning activities and seasonal events. A further two participants have helped with one-off events.

Although this represents only a small percentage of the total number of participants, it is a considerable step to go from tour participant and possibly first-time museum visitor to volunteer. This demonstrates how much the tours were able to both excite and inspire young ESOL learners and also put them at ease in a short space of time.

One of these volunteers described how the customer service skills he had developed through working with the public at these events had helped him in his new job. Another said she enjoyed working with children at the family craft sessions. A further two said that having access to native English speakers and understanding visitors’ different accents had helped improve their English ability. Friendly staff
were highlighted as a reason for their continuing involvement. As young people, the two volunteers were able to get involved with another of the Participation Team’s projects – 25 Below – which gave them additional responsibilities and experience within the museum. Commitment of both volunteers to supporting the museum remains high, however work and study commitments have meant that their future involvement is uncertain. The nature of young volunteers is that their circumstances often change and consideration could be given to how the museum service could respond to that.

‘Before I was really shy to talk with people in public, to ask them do you need help or something, but since I started working in museum, I feel like I can do easy, talk to people in the public.’

Young volunteer recruited at an ESOL tour

By comparison, the number of ESOL learners who have progressed on to other activities or projects is much higher. Perhaps this is a more realistic expectation of an outcome from the tours.

• four or five students turned up to 25 Below events
• A group of 10 students recorded alternative interpretation for an exhibition of contemporary art at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and Arnolfini
• four students are currently making a film with Bristol Culture that will be screened at M Shed
Recommendations

1. The relationship with colleges is already very strong, with more organisations such as housing organisations and charities taking up the offer, there are some key questions for the Participation team to consider:

   - How can the relationship with them be developed?
   - Does Bristol Culture understand their particular objectives and how they can align themselves with those?
   - What further provision should they be developing through these organisations?
   - What are the opportunities to extend their involvement in the way that some of the college students have?

2. Learners who come on a tour clearly feel an association with the museum, and sometimes this is strong enough to make them want to return. However, some learners need additional support and interaction in order to convince them that a solo visit is for them. The development of further tours is underway, is there scope for also creating:

   - Appropriately-pitched interpretative text
   - Linked activities, using the objects and themes identified by learners in this case study
   - opportunities to continue the conversation with learners e.g. they create or produce something inspired by their tour, which is displayed at M Shed and they invite their friends and family to come and see it?

3. Teachers rate the tours very highly and the visit supports their teaching. To extend the experience, they would like resources for students to use independently during a visit.

For further information contact: museum.community@bristol.gov.uk
‘SHINE’ at M SHED CASE STUDY

JANUARY 2017
‘Shine’ Case Study

Summary
What happened and highlights of what it achieved

Shine is programme of arts sessions, led by an arts and well-being facilitator, aimed at people with low-level mental health issues. Hosted at M Shed, and supported by Bristol Culture staff, the project has been running since February 2016 as a progression from Arts on Prescription courses in the city. Participants are free to explore a range of different art forms and enjoy simply being creative.

Research data shows that the project has made a significant contribution to the well-being of those who attend. The impressive venue, social interaction and deliberately informal structure are all key to the enjoyment and value that people derive from the project. Over time the sessions have developed to incorporate more links to the collections and exhibitions at M Shed and staff are committed to embed this further and expand provision for this audience.

Background
Why did they do it? Objectives, intended outcomes

An arts project for local people with mental health issues was previously held at M Shed and was well-received at the time. In recent years there has been a movement within the cultural and heritage sector towards supporting well-being, spurred on by The Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s white paper on culture (March 2016), which highlights how cultural interventions can affect health and care outcomes, in both mental and physical health. Combined with this, a growing trend in social prescribing – where health professionals use
preventative measures and non-drug alternatives to treat mental illness - has opened lines of communication between health and cultural sectors. As a result, it became clear that there was a role for Bristol Culture in supporting this health issue locally and it was decided to re-establish provision at M Shed with a view to learning more about this audience and developing the offer around well-being.

Who was involved

Everyone attending the course has a diagnosed mental health issue, commonly depression or anxiety. Participant ages range from young adults to retired people. Participants are referred to Shine by facilitators of seven or eight public health-funded Arts on Prescription courses that take place at well-being centres around the Bristol area. Typically these prescribed courses last about 12 weeks so Shine is offered as a progression from this initial course.

‘The importance of what we do is to be that next step.’
Engagement Officer – Communities, Bristol Culture

Attendance and ‘membership’ of the group is very fluid, reflecting the flexible structure of the sessions and the nature of participants’ conditions. Since the project began a year ago, approximately 40 adults have accessed the course. Usually around 10-15 people are present at a session, with the artist facilitator, Bristol Culture’s Community Engagement Officer and two volunteers. A core of 8-10 people attend regularly. Some people have attended since the project started in February 2016, others have joined more recently.

What happened

Outputs, practical stuff, approach, obstacles and challenges

Following referrals to the course, participants are invited to attend a two hour session at M Shed every other week. The session takes place in one of the studios, with tables and chairs set up in an informal classroom style. Various art materials are available to use during the session and sometimes to borrow afterwards.

The structure of the sessions is deliberately loose, in order to create a non-pressurised environment and allow individuals to pursue their own artistic interests. Following feedback after the first six months however, it was decided to incorporate more instruction within the sessions and now there is always a structured activity on offer which participants can choose to engage with or not. In this way the museum aims also to link the sessions with its collections, for example a tin can crafting activity inspired by metal artefacts such the Staffordshire hoard exhibition at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and industrial machinery in the stores at M Shed. Curatorial support for the project is strong, with curators giving short talks or bringing out artefacts, in some cases for participants to create with, such as the Victorian printing press.

Although none of the delivery team have formal qualifications in working with mental health issues, the artist facilitator has a great deal of experience in working with this audience. Volunteers are carefully selected to ensure they have the right approach and aptitudes. Front of house staff are briefed so as to be sensitive to the needs of the audience. The programme is aimed at people with low level mental health issues and because attendance is by referral only, the museum is able to ensure that the programme is accessed by people for whom it is most appropriate. There is also a link back to the referring organisation in case people become upset or have difficulties whilst on the Shine project. Due to these procedures the incidence of issues arising during sessions is low.

The nature of mental health issues means that participants can be quite transient, which can be a challenge in getting to know participants and in anticipating the needs of the group. In some cases for example, participants have come for a while, left the group for a period of months and then rejoined.

‘What can be quite tricky is finding out what happens to people when they leave, and we’re very aware of that because at the moment there’s no real mechanism to follow people up.’
Artist facilitator for Shine

There is currently no limit on the length of time participants can attend Shine. Little is known about why people choose to leave or rejoin. Anecdotally, facilitators report that some recover enough to return
to work, others may progress on to a formal art class. Some participants have rebuilt their confidence to the extent that they are able to explore other interests such as creative writing or drama.

Whilst the openness of the course can be a challenge in terms of meeting individual needs, facilitators feel that the flexibility is also a benefit.

’Soo there is a structure, but there isn’t a start and finish and that’s a rare privilege actually.’

Artist facilitator for Shine

Another challenge has been in acknowledging what people have achieved through the project. Securing space for an exhibition space at M Shed has proved difficult, although an alternative space was found in Paper Arts in Broadmead shopping quarter and some participants displayed their work there for a period.

Achievements

Benefits, impact

Participants at a Shine session were interviewed individually about their experiences of Shine, as were museum staff and the session facilitator. Feedback from the other people connected to the project – session volunteers, health professionals referring participants – was also collected.

Early in the project, a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of the West of England became interested in Shine and the potential impact of creativity on well-being. Together with her students, she is engaged in an on-going programme of data collection and analysis to assess the impact of the project as an intervention in well-being.

1. Improved well-being of participants

From January to July 2016, participants completed a simple mood scale at the start and end of every
session. Analysis of the data by UWE students showed that participants’ mood had increased during the workshop, both in terms of feeling less negative and more positive and in feeling less calm and more energetic. On a six point scale, the average mood increase was 2.4 points for positivity and one point for energy levels, indicating that the art sessions impacted significantly on mood, particularly on feelings of happiness or positivity.

Participants also completed a Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) at the start and end of a term of sessions. This scale is used commonly by health professionals and researchers to monitor well-being and evaluate projects which aim to improve well-being. Analysis of this data concluded that there had been a significant increase in overall well-being after attending Shine for a period of time. Whilst it’s not possible to attribute this increase solely to participation in Shine, further analysis found a link between increase in mood at individual sessions and overall increase in well-being. Participants reporting of being in a more positive mood appeared to directly predict increases in overall well-being, suggesting that Shine makes an important contribution to overall well-being.

Participant interviews in July and January reinforced the finding that Shine had improved people’s well-being. Everyone said that they enjoyed coming and it had made them feel better than before. Most people said they would attend every week if more sessions were available. Many people said they had managed to attend, even when they didn’t feel well, so their enjoyment of Shine and the value they place on it was sufficient for them to overcome those feelings and make the effort to get there.

'I enjoy coming out, you know sometimes I have a couple of bad days and just can’t face it but then when I do come along I’m glad I did.’

‘Even when I’m feeling low I still want to get here and to do these things cos I know it’s going to help me. And it does perk me up at the end of the day. Sometimes when I come out of here I go straight home and I’ll start doing things again, at home. It sets it off, it’s alike a ball rolling.’

Reasons why people had found it helpful were varied. Common features or elements mentioned were:

- Development of their own creative abilities – many participants had a background in arts and enjoyed becoming creative again and exploring different interests. Others were discovering art for the first time.

  ‘I just want to explore really.’

- Building confidence, renewed sense of belief in their ability to produce something and not being self-critical, being brave and trying new things.

  ‘I think its impacted me on the fact that I’ve taken the print-making really seriously and I feel like I’m now at a stage where I’m changing direction with my work, I want to take it to the next level.’

- ‘No pressure’ – the flexible nature of the sessions means people can drop in and drop out.

  ‘Well it’s been an outlet to socialise and to get some confidence in my art skills, I didn’t feel pressured.’

- Space – many people said they had no physical space or time at home for art. They described the building as ‘uplifting’, ‘lovely surroundings’, ‘beautiful views’.

  ‘M Shed is a lovely atmosphere to be in cause we’re in a museum plus you got the art room here so there’s a lot going on around us so it’s like full of culture, full of inspiration in there.’

- People – being around other creative people but also people from different backgrounds, ‘feeding off the atmosphere’, ‘feeling part of something’, being in a supportive environment where people understood each others’ difficulties.

  ‘You feel kind of connected to the center of Bristol. You know you’ve got a connection whereas it can feel very isolated with depression. You’re in the real world where everything is going on.’

  ‘I don’t necessarily know the issues that the other members have but its been nice to be in a space where it been a supportive space, meeting like-minded people in a creative setting if that makes sense?’
‘It feels like it’s a really safe space to me. I find that when you’re in general mixed groups socialising, you have to be quite careful of where you go in terms of your direction of conversation. There’s a lot of compassion within this room.’

For participants who had exhibited work in the Broadmead exhibition, this had had a very positive impact on their confidence and feelings of self-worth. People reported feeling pride in seeing their work on display, a validation of the time they had invested in producing it.

‘And then I spotted it, and came out into Broadmead like a five year old and rang my son to tell him I’d had two paintings exhibited. It really did do me good.’

One participant said she now recognised the importance of art-making to her well-being and had set up an art studio in her house. She had invited other members of the group over to continue creating outside of the Shine sessions.

Only two negative comments were made about the course. The close group dynamic was perceived as a barrier by one person when rejoining the group after a period away. The apparent great artistic talent of some members of the group was initially a cause of anxiety for one participant who struggled with feelings of inadequacy. Effective facilitation and individual encouragement have helped individuals to overcome both issues.

2. Collections used as a therapeutic tool

The group meets on Mondays, when the galleries are closed, which initially was thought to be not ideal as the building would seem very quiet. However, this has turned into a positive aspect of the programme; many participants feel a sense of privilege at being given a private viewing of the exhibitions and being able to visit for free. There was also an appreciation for curators who spent time with them to show them particular things.
'I feel part of something that I normally wouldn't have a connection with. Yes I can come in as a visitor but anyone can do that. I actually feel I've got a connection with the building and it's like a privilege pass kind of thing.'

'Being able to go behind the scenes and have it all explained to you without acres of Joe Public. I find that really lovely.'

Participants were asked about their experience of working with the museum collections. Most were able to describe memorable interactions – mainly with specific exhibitions that they had been shown. Many people named exhibitions that they had been to and were aware of what was currently showing. Comments were mainly around their enjoyment of the images or artworks that they had seen, a few people also talked about how they had directly inspired the work they had produced as part of Shine.

'When we looked at the first exhibition you had which was the wildlife one upstairs. Cause we looked round at that and that kind of that set the seed of producing something for me, not necessarily personal experience, it was from looking at something.'

Although people were generally pleased to be in the museum environment, it was clear that doing art and being creative was the primary focus. In the last few months that there has been more emphasis placed on using the collections within the sessions, so in time the link between the two aspects will become more embedded. No participants said that they did not want to explore artefacts or exhibitions as part of Shine so there is an openness to include more collections-based stimulus within sessions.

'I like the idea of going to something and not just looking at it but doing something from it.'

3. New audiences for the museum

Interest in heritage varied amongst the group, some people had been to M Shed prior to joining Shine, on the whole however, most were not frequent visitors to heritage sites. Everyone said they were now more interested in the museum, many indicated they would come back but also said they wouldn’t come alone. Some people described how it had changed the way they now visited a museum or gallery.

'I mean I always have [visited museums] but more with more feeling that I know what I’m doing. I just I like to wander around, if anything has an impact on me then fine I’ll stop and sit with it whereas I go with friends who take bloody ages looking at things and I just can’t be doing with that pretentiousness, but it has given me the feeling it’s ok to just wander round, sort of given me permission to be me if you like in terms of how I view art.'

Because of the positive experiences that participants have encountered and the supportive environment of Shine, people were perhaps more willing to try things that they wouldn’t normally. On one occasion the usual room was booked for another event so it was decided to hold the session at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, with a tour and talk by a curator. For most participants, this is not the way they usually spend their time, however the fact that several chose to come to this event indicates an affiliation with the museum and in particular, a trust for the facilitators.

'It’s quite welcoming and I think that’s the main thing, because having mental illness, so many places you go to just seem threatening and you feel out of your depth. Whereas I don’t feel that in this environment, it’s been very welcoming, coming to see the exhibition.'

There is a swell of good feeling amongst participants towards the museum, comments suggested that people feel grateful for the provision and want it to continue. So rather than the expectation being of participants to become just visitors, there is potential for them to become more involved in the work of the museum. Two participants said they had signed up to become volunteers at museum events. One person felt they wanted to share their skills with others and maybe run a session. There could be scope for further harnessing this goodwill, perhaps by involving participants in making artwork for a particular event at the museum, or to meet a particular need e.g. something to be used in a schools’ workshop.

Very few men access Shine, which is largely a reflection of the lack of men accessing the feeder art programmes and mental health services in general. Little can be done about what happens prior to people accessing Shine, however, the museum is considering...
how to make the marketing less feminine and whether there is a demand for a group or sessions exclusively for men.

4. Organisational benefits

More organisations are becoming aware of the Shine project and getting in touch to refer their participants.

For Bristol Culture this means more potential partners and contacts to talk to plus further sources of help in understanding the needs of this audience.

Taking it further - legacy, next steps

1. Raising the profile and making the case

‘While many commissioners in Clinical Commissioning Groups and local authorities are receptive to the role culture can play in improving health and care outcomes, we want to move to a position where the evidence and practice of successful outcomes is much better known in both communities and where the relationship between commissioners and the cultural sectors is much more collaborative.’

The Culture White Paper, March 2016

Bristol Culture is one of few museum services in the UK currently developing provision to support individuals with mental health needs. A next step of this important work should be to share the benefits and impact of the Shine project with other cultural organisations to encourage them to follow.
It might also be helpful to link with other museums who are working in this field to share best practice – Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums for example operates a specialised outreach programme for people with mental health issues.

Awareness of the project is growing – new organisations are coming forward to refer participants and key stakeholders within the city and region are showing interest in the project. Opportunities to further promote the work the museum is doing with this audience will be important, especially as future funding possibilities are considered.

'I think it’s something we need to look to raise the profile of more, particularly now we’ve got the UWE evaluation evidence. It’s not just us saying it makes a difference, we can show very solidly the evidence that it makes a difference as well.’

Senior Participation Officer, Bristol Culture

The partnership with University of the West of England is ongoing; students are now using a more in-depth mood scale and continue to collect data from every session. Currently there is a lack of robust research around arts intervention programmes so in this respect the museum service is directly contributing to the development of social prescribing and decreasing reliance on medicine.

'Lots of people who run these are artists, that’s why we try to get involved to help with the evidence-based. More evidence is needed to convince policy-makers and NHS Commissioners that this is actually effective.’

Nicola Holt, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, UWE

2. Expanding provision and using the collections

Due to the success of Shine at M Shed, there is a desire within the museum service to expand the Shine provision to another of its sites – Blaise Castle House Museum – specifically chosen to serve people living in the North West of the city. There is potential for current participants to be involved in this development, either by acting as consultants in the planning stage or by possibly by volunteering. More staff and volunteers will need awareness training and it would be mutually rewarding for participants to be involved in designing this.

Linking the art sessions with the museum’s collections and exhibitions continues to be a priority and there is scope for exploring this further as interactions so far have been positive. This does require a gentle approach however, participants do not want to feel like they are in a lesson so the informal atmosphere and freedom to engage or not are important elements to maintain. This presents opportunities to experiment with using the collections in innovative ways, some of which may filter into other areas of the museum’s work.

Many participants in the group were not very familiar with M Shed or museums in general, so questions about what else they would like to do with the collections were difficult to answer. Although several people said they had enjoyed being invited to visit the stores, there was quite low awareness of the type of objects the museum held and of the possibilities in working with them in future. People don’t know what they don’t know – in order to develop the use of the collections within this group it will first be necessary to raise awareness of what is there and gauge interest. A period of informal consultation may be useful - could participants be asked to select a theme from a short list or give preferences for types of artefact or image they would like to work with?

When asked about what they would like to do next with Shine, opinions were divided. Some participants wanted to continue exploring different media by themselves, to ‘do something regardless of the outcome’. Others felt they wanted to produce something and for their item to be displayed or used would give them satisfaction.

'It would be great to have a project that went beyond this room. A collaborative project – I would be prepared to put lots of work into that.’

Previous attempts to sell work that had been produced by participants met with difficulties, so an alternative suggestion by the artist facilitator was to produce a collaborative piece, with participation optional. This could tie in with a cultural festival or event taking place.
Recommendations

1. The project has clearly been successful, the format and structure of the sessions offers variety, choice and meets people’s needs well. To continue developing the significance of the museum and collections within the programme, some suggestions are:

- Experiment with using artefacts in different ways
- Consult informally with participants to find areas of interest for further views, store tours, curator talks
- Would examples of how other artists have been inspired by artefacts be helpful?
- Consider testing responses to using artefacts to create other forms of art e.g. music, creative writing

2. The opportunity to exhibit their work is something that many participants relish. Combined with this, people feel a connection with the museum and a will to contribute and be ‘part of something’. If an exhibition is difficult, could there be more light-touch ways to involve participants e.g.

- Displaying their artwork alongside the piece that inspired it for a short period of time
- Participants writing an interpretation label about their favourite piece in an exhibition
- An open house session for participants to invite family and friends to
- Collaborative project to make something of use to the museum

3. Encourage a deepened involvement of regular Shine members e.g. through volunteering, sharing skills, supporting roll out at other sites. Recruiting more male participants could encourage greater take up by other men and male members may have particular value in helping to develop further provision.

4. The continuing partnership with The University of the West of England will help to further demonstrate the social value of this project. The Participation Team should undertake some promotional activities to raise the profile of the project within the museum sector and the city.

For further information contact: museum.community@bristol.gov.uk
CULTURE VULTURES CASE STUDY
Culture Vultures Case Study

Summary
What happened and highlights of what it achieved

Culture Vultures was a youth radio training and broadcast project, a partnership between Ujima radio and Bristol Culture taking place over a six month period in 2016. The young people were in charge – creating the content for seven shows and being responsible for all aspects of production. Their shows covered events and activities taking place at Bristol's museums and other cultural venues, bringing them into contact with museum staff and visitors and expanding their understanding of what culture means to them.

Although many of the young people involved had an interest in journalism, none of the 16 young people who took part had any experience in broadcasting. This project gave them the skills and confidence to create and deliver something of their own design. Several participants achieved an Arts Award and most have continued to be involved with radio broadcasting. Young people became more aware of Bristol's museums and now value them highly, by sharing their experiences on air they have drawn in a wider potential new audience for the museum service.
Background
Why did they do it? Objectives, intended outcomes

Part of Bristol Culture’s Equality Action Plan focuses on engaging more Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people with the collections and buildings, in particular young people. Ujima Radio is a Community Interest Company which celebrates African and Caribbean cultures through music and informative talk. Ujima had had previous success in training people as ‘citizen journalists’ and Bristol Culture were keen to work with the organisation because of their ‘reach’ into audiences under-represented at their sites, which included white working-class as well as BME people. An idea developed for a project to train a small group of young people as radio journalists and by doing so increase their involvement and interest in the events and collections at the Bristol Culture’s sites.

‘The project was about finding a creative way to get BME young people to basically engage with culture and make it more meaningful but also to act as advocates, to amplify that across their networks.’

External Relationship Manager, Ujima 98fm

The project also aimed to support young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) as there was a large training element to the project and it was thought that the focus on skills development and aspiration raising would benefit this audience.

What happened
Outputs, practical stuff, approach, obstacles and challenges

The young people met once a week for two to three hours, most of the sessions were held at the radio station with training and mentoring provided by Ujima staff and volunteers. The group also went out in the field to research and record content for the shows at Bristol Culture’s sites as well as other cultural venues around the city. The young people were responsible for all of the production associated with delivering a live show so had to quickly learn many new skills: recording, producing, interviewing, editing, presenting, researching. Seven shows were created highlighting the best of Bristol’s cultural offerings.

A substantial recruitment campaign took place involving:

- Widespread distribution of flyers and posters via youth clubs, sports centres, arcades, shops, bars, schools and colleges, as well as face to face distribution
- Digital and social media, in particular email, webpage, Facebook and Twitter
- Outreach visits to present to potential young participants through colleges and youth organisations
- A 40 second radio ad, live reads by radio presenters

Face to face conversations were considered to be the most effective method of recruiting young people to the project, being able to hand out a flyer helped to reinforce the message. The radio campaign also produced a good response. Everyone who attended the taster evening signed up to take part in the project. Several people who were above the age limit applied and roles were found for these participants as volunteers, either with Culture Vultures or Ujima’s other projects.

The initial cohort of young people included relatively low numbers of BME and NEET young people, so a rolling programme of recruitment followed. Outreach visits to organisations that work closely with these groups and peer to peer advocacy proved crucial to increasing the representation of these target groups.

Who was involved

Culture Vultures was aimed at 15-25 year old BME or NEET young people in Bristol who had an interest in culture, creativity and media. Participants had previously had minimal contact with Bristol Culture’s museums and galleries.
16 young people took part in the programme overall, although not all completed the course; the core membership was around nine or ten. Reasons for drop off included work or study commitments, relocation and housing issues and a bereavement. Largely the reasons for leaving were linked to the fact that the particular young people were not within the target NEET audience - the amount of work required of participants in order to put together the shows was considerable so was a lot for someone working or studying to take on.

The shows featured content exclusively recorded, curated and produced by the Culture Vultures. The young people reviewed exhibitions, promoted forthcoming events and interviewed staff and visitors. Members of the team debated issues arising from the exhibitions e.g. assisted dying covered by the Death Fair at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. The focus of the content was on happenings at Bristol Culture’s sites – approximately two thirds of features - but was complemented by events across Bristol’s wider cultural offer. The enthusiasm of the young people and the commitment of the facilitators meant that the original target of four shows was almost doubled.

Communications with young people is often cited as a challenge within projects such as this and the team were aware of this, although contacting participants and pastoral care still took longer than anticipated. The group incorporated two participants with English as a second language and a young person with learning difficulties so additional time was needed to support these young people. In addition to the regular training sessions, and ad hoc production time, a Facebook page was set up to improve communications across the whole group. As well as a platform to share online tutorials, the page was used to update the group on interview and pathway opportunities, programming, scheduling and Arts Award updates, as well as acting as a central hub for communication between participants.

Keeping up the momentum, getting young people to attend consistently was sometimes a challenge
and attendance at sessions that were held outside the studios was typically quite low. For the young people taking part, their primary interest was broadcasting and going to the venues to research and record content perhaps did not appeal as much. The project was aimed at young people with low awareness of museums and culture, so perceptions of what museums and galleries were about and how interesting they might be were naturally low. There were also logistical issues in availability of participants during museum opening hours as many were at college or work. The live broadcast was considered to be more successful in ensuring member attendance.

‘The live broadcast brought everyone back together and was also a visible presence for visitors. It really gelled everyone, it was a good moment and having that to work towards helped overcome those issues.’

Engagement Officer – Young People, Bristol Culture

Achievements

Benefits, impact

1. Development of young people

A methodology was developed to track the development of each participant, based on a combination of pre and post attitudinal surveys and one-to-one reviews with Ujima facilitators. From these, a personalised development plan for each participant was produced with a mix of areas to improve on, new challenges to address, trainer observations as well as supportive advice on progression routes.

The attitudinal surveys showed that the overall knowledge and skill level of the group had increased across all intended areas:

- Radio skills – up by 74%
- Interview skills – up by 54%
- Knowledge of media careers – up by 43%
- Teamwork skills – up by 32%
- Verbal skills – up by 27%
- Job/life aspirations – up by 13%

This statistic was mirrored in individual results with radio skills, interview skills and knowledge of media careers being the three areas where most people reported they had improved. All but one or two participants said their skill or knowledge in these areas had increased, in some cases quite significantly – up two points on a five point scale.

Comments from participants highlighted the confidence that developing these new skills had given them.

‘It was all new and I loved all of it. It really helped my confidence a lot, I feel like a different person. I don’t know if it was just the project or where I was in my life at the time but I ended up pushing myself a lot and it really helped for sure.’

‘(Before Culture Vultures) I could never have imagined going up to strangers to ask them questions or working as part of a team.’

One NEET participant said that he suffered in social situations but that the project had given him a lot more confidence to speak out and make friends. Another NEET participant said that the ‘get up and go’ attitude of reporting is something he now has and will use as a life skill.

Job/life aspirations was the area with the least progression, however still with a positive half of the core participants saying they had progressed in this area. Both museums and radio broadcasting are quite specialised sectors so it was not anticipated that all participants would want to pursue a career in these areas after taking part in the project. Several of the group were already on a career or study path so if the group had included more of the original NEET target, this figure may have been higher.

One participant had come to the project self-conscious and apprehensive about team situations. During the project he said he was enjoying the positive work environment and was more confident and able to manage competing opinions within the group. He said his aspiration was to be in radio full time and that since joining Culture Vultures a career seemed viable.

All participants were offered the opportunity to pursue an Arts Award Bronze and Ujima facilitators supported the young people to put together their portfolios. One of the oldest members of the group showed strong
leadership skills so was encouraged to develop these and to apply for Arts Award Silver. Five out of the core ten participants had their portfolio moderated and received their award, all participants received a certificate of participation.

2. Engagement with the museum and culture

The attitudinal surveys also asked participants questions about ‘culture’ and again, scores increased across all areas:

- Awareness of Bristol’s culture – up by 41%
- How well does Bristol cater for young people – up by 27%
- Does Bristol have a good cultural scene – up by 25%
- Do you value culture – up by 13%

It is worth noting that although the increase in valuing culture was considerably less than the others, the baseline for this question was very high, with participants giving themselves an average initial score of four out of five. Therefore the potential for growth of this aspect throughout the project was more limited. In fact, the outcome of valuing culture scored more highly overall at the end of the project than all the others so it can be surmised that Culture Vultures has achieved its aim of creating a group of advocates for culture who value it highly.

‘The project was pretty much how I discovered Bristol as a city. It was really good to have a behind the scenes view on stuff, and I found that I discovered a lot about the city pretty quickly.’

‘I took myself out of my comfort zone, I found myself at a museum!’

Culture Vulture
In terms of their engagement with cultural issues, definitely, it has broadened their awareness of cultural issues, their engagement with places in Bristol that represent culture.

Engagement Officer – Young People, Bristol Culture

In addition to being in museum environments and experiencing a variety of exhibitions and activities, an important part of the project was interaction with curatorial staff as Culture Vultures interviewed them for various features. This benefited participants as they had insider access to the collections and workings of the museums which informed their on-air debates. It also benefited museum staff as they were exposed to young people’s projects and became aware of how they are being involved in the museum. Several young people said it had changed their expectations of what a museum could be about and they had realised how much they could get out of a visit.

‘It’s kind of like opening Pandora’s box, as soon as you realise how much there is out there it’s hard not to research it and find out more.’

Content was largely selected for the young people and they often commented during shows that they were surprised by what they had seen and how much it had interested them. In one particular feature, a Culture Vulture talked about her visit to review the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition. She introduced the feature by saying:

‘I thought personally it was going to be your typical go in, see pictures of animals that you’d find on a calendar but it really wasn’t. There was so much nature, there was proper detailed content, there was dolphins jumping out of the water, and you could really see the detail of the dolphins, their flippers and the water dripping of their fins. The way these photographers captured the details, it was actually beautiful, it really started to interest me.’

The artworks had clearly ignited her interest when she hadn’t expected them to and this was enhanced by her meeting with a curator who told her about the background to some of the photos and the competition itself. Talking on-air with others in the group after the visit, she became very animated in sharing what she had learnt and about how the photos had made her feel. Her response showed that the experience had clearly had a significant impact on her perception of museums and galleries and enjoyment of exhibitions.

‘Overall it was a great day, it was way better than I expected, I thought it was going to be boring. The pictures really told a story.’

In the case of one BME 19 year old, although his day job prevented him from attending most of the museum events, he was able to come to the museum for the Art from Elsewhere private view at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. He said on air that it was his cultural highlight for that month’s show, despite clear competition from other events such as a Break Dance Convention.

‘I stepped out of my cultural comfort zone, and getting to go after closing time felt pretty cool, it was exclusive!’

The openness of the young people in their broadcasts about their interactions with culture as part of the project is exciting to hear and potentially powerful for listeners who may be inspired by their peers to explore for themselves. In a feature called ‘how has culture changed you?’ one interviewee talked about how he had come from a difficult background, with issues of homelessness. Getting involved with music and tattoo art had given him a direction and helped him out of that situation.

3. New audiences for the museum

Over the life of the project a total of 16 young people were involved. Of this, BME’s made-up 37.5% of the group; the usual proportion of BME visitors at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery is 15%, so the project did reach a more diverse audience than the museum’s current one. The proportion of NEET’s was much lower than anticipated with just 12.5% (two people) of the make-up of the total group. One of the NEET young people left the group as he got a job and relocated so this was in fact a positive outcome.

Ujima has a listenership base of over 30,000 listeners a week. As a small radio station it was not possible to ascertain precise listener figures for the Culture Vulture shows, however the show that was made available via soundcloud.com has so far been downloaded 254 times. So it can be assumed that the shows were accessed by a significant audience.
- Ujima’s focus is on black music and lifestyle so it is likely that many of the people listening to the shows were BME. Much of the show content had an inspirational tone, reporters sharing their experiences of trying new cultural activities and challenging listeners to ‘take themselves out of their comfort zone’. In this way the project has contributed to Bristol Culture’s goal of reaching more BME audiences and encouraging them to access their local heritage sites.

‘It’s given us a really rich pipeline of content, it’s given us access to stuff that we didn’t have. Our listeners always refer to Ujima as a window, so whatever we put in that window people will see. So to actually have all this new stuff in the window display that wasn’t there before, which was different, curious, exciting, it definitely enriches our listeners.’

External Relationship Manager, Ujima 98fm

4. Organisational benefits

Most of the management of the project was devolved to Ujima. Although the team there were experienced in delivering training projects, they felt they learnt a lot from Culture Vultures about working with young people. In particular in the challenges around recruitment of target audiences, logistics and communication with participants, managing dynamics within the group and managing internal capacity had given them valuable experience. Going forward, Ujima has a new bank of presenters and volunteers from the project and feel the project has helped them reach new audiences.

For the museum, the highlights of the project were seeing the young people’s responses to the collections and artwork on display, as well as having a better vehicle for reaching new audiences. Despite the challenges in getting participants to attend sessions, whilst they were at the museum, staff reported that they always appeared positively engaged and this was rewarding for the Participation Team and also
the curatorial staff being interviewed by the Culture Vultures. The Engagement Officer organised an evening opening of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery so that Culture Vultures could record audio responses to some art work, which were used within one of the shows but also within the exhibition itself.

Taking it further - legacy, next steps

It is clear that the combination of radio journalism and culture is an attractive offer for young people and one with lasting appeal. Of the nine or ten core members of the group, eight chose to continue their involvement with broadcasting after the project finished and some of the young people have made significant progress on the ladder to a broadcasting career since taking part in Culture Vultures. Several of the group present on two spin-off shows which air weekly on Ujima. The young volunteer who supported Culture Vultures has also gone on to co-host a weekly culture based show.

One young person had an interest in developing a career in broadcasting and music but found he could not access work placements and the city’s cultural offerings during the day as he needed to work. He attended a lot of evening events for Culture Vultures that he felt took him out of his own cultural comfort zone, eg a Para Orchestra concert, a panel debate about gender identity, and as an extra assignment from Ujima he also presented a live broadcast from one of the mayoral hustings that was aimed at a younger audience. He is now a presenter on the ArtyCul show and has started volunteering at Basement Studios.

Another young person found that her positive experience with Culture Vultures had inspired her to take her interest further and is also presenting on the ArtyCul show as well as another of Ujima’s shows. Since Culture Vultures she has been accepted at college to study, including an A-level in Media, and is looking into an Apprenticeship in presenting.

From our point of view we’re pleased that some of the young people have continued to be involved with Ujima and they are making the Artycul programme that’s going out regularly. It wasn’t just that we provided the funding, the programme ran and came to an end. The fact there is that sort of progression is a good thing and that’s a model that seems to be working well.’

Senior Participation Officer, Bristol Culture

One of the participants took part in Bristol Museum & Art Gallery’s young people’s takeover – 25 Below – during summer 2016. He spent three weeks working as part of a team of young people put in charge of designing, organising and running a gallery space. Several of the Culture Vultures expressed an interest in mentoring future groups who may take part in similar projects.

The shows at Ujima that have developed out of Culture Vultures remain culture-based and the young people have freedom to chose the content. They organised to return to Bristol Museum & Art Gallery to record a feature on Black History Month, interviewing curators about it. The fact that they have continued to promote museum events and feel comfortable returning to Bristol Culture’s buildings is a positive legacy of the work. Many of the young people said that they have returned to visit the museums since taking part.

‘Before, I didn’t really go to the museum or M Shed or anything like that. I didn’t really go to see exhibitions. I have been to a couple of exhibitions with my Dad, I’ve started to do a lot more stuff like that because I find that people around my age, we don’t really see a lot of advertising for events like that. So as I was introduced to it I was able to recognise it more I guess and acknowledge it.’

Participants and facilitators were asked about how to overcome the challenge of achieving consistent attendance, particularly at museum events. There was a feeling, especially amongst older members, that motivation was higher when content was driven by participants. For example, some who were less interested in museums and more in music during the project have become more involved in the spin off show now that they have more editorial control. There was a slight concern at times amongst some participants that the show could become an ‘extended
advertisement’ for the museum, rather than a piece of journalism. Culture of course is not limited to museums, so understandably participants would want to look wider.

‘If there was more variety it would make the museum stuff seem fresher anyway and people would be more switched on to the conversations.’

Culture Vulture

There was also a suggestion to include incentives or a points-based reward system to improve attendance at the museum-based sessions. The disadvantage of this is that it may detract from the aim of participants exploring and enjoying the collections for themselves. However it may be necessary where initial perceived interest is low.

Some people felt that the issue was largely one of perception and that participants needed more support or a better introduction to the museum buildings in order to motivate them at the start. In particular it was noted that older members seemed more keen than younger members.

‘Maybe a longer period to introduce the group and to allow it to grow, so we could have had more people at the beginning and if a few do drop off we’ve still got a bigger group going forward, so yeah more focus on the beginning part of actually getting people involved and committed potentially could have helped.’

Culture Vulture facilitator

Initial plans for the project included a number of fun, activity-based sessions at the museums, however some of these had to be adapted as the group included many young people who were not available during the day. Access was also difficult for some young people who had to travel from further away from the city centre. One young person commented that she needed more notice of when events were due to take place so she could try to fit them in around her studies. This highlights the need for a flexible
approach to providing access to the museums outside of normal opening hours, twilight opening times were suggested as a good time to plan events for this audience in future.

One participant suggested that integrating the work of Culture Vultures with the museum more would help them to feel more connected to the museum and hence motivated to go there. Using audio recorded by Culture Vultures in museum spaces or communications could be an idea to build on. Bristol Museum & Art Gallery is in the process of establishing a youth panel which could be a further link between future projects such as this and the museum.

This project had some success in reaching target BME and NEET audiences but this remained a key challenge in delivering the project. Making and maintaining direct contact with individual young people was found to be sometimes difficult and often time-consuming. Close partnership working with organisations to channel participants and achieve the desired participant profile will be key in future projects such as this going forward. It may be beneficial to define the target audience to just one characteristic so that recruitment can be more focussed and the logistics of delivery easier to organise.
Recommendations

1. Young people were given a great deal of responsibility in this project and they rose to the challenge, however there were times when they would have liked greater input into the selection of content. Potential solutions to explore for future similar projects might be:

- To amend the brief to focus exclusively on Bristol Culture’s sites and events
- To recruit young people who are already naturally more interested in museums than other forms of culture e.g. from the youth panel
- Expand on planned activities to excite participants about what the museums have to offer early in the project e.g. out of hours tour or sleepover, take over the museum’s twitter feed, curate an art exhibition in a day, carry out conservation work
- To collaborate with other cultural organisations in Bristol and give participants more freedom to pursue content that interests them.

3. Now that the Participation Team is well-established, in future projects it may be more effective to retain some of the management of the project within the museum service.

- Engagement Officers will have good links with partner organisations to support and streamline the recruitment process
- They will be aware of opportunities to involve participants in the work of the museums and consider how outputs from the project such as audio, images or film could be incorporated
- They can advocate and facilitate out of hours access to museum buildings and collections
- Consideration should also be given to the role of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery’s youth panel and Culture Vultures alumni in future projects.

2. Targeting NEETS for a project comes with challenges in recruitment and retention and when considering this audience in future it would be beneficial to work through partner organisations i.e. Learning Partnership West. This will enable a more effective recruitment campaign and will also help with planning the project as partner organisations will be able to advise and potentially provide access to young people to consult. Consultation questions might be:

- What are the logistical issues – when are people available, how much time could they commit, is a six month project the most appropriate format?
- What do they want to get out of it? – Arts Award or other tangible outcomes?
- What do they understand by ‘culture’ – is that the best way to frame the project?

For further information contact: museum.community@bristol.gov.uk
25 Below Case Study

Summary
What happened and highlights of what it achieved

25 Below was a young people’s takeover of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery’s (BMAG) gallery, which provided opportunities for young people who were not familiar with the museum to try new things, feel comfortable in the museum environment and use the collections for enjoyment. It put BMAG on the map as an organisation with something to offer local young people and celebrated their contribution through an impressive exhibition produced and created by young people.

Moreover, for the young people who organised and ran the gallery space, it significantly contributed to their personal and career development, raising their awareness of roles within the museum and allowing them to develop skills in decision-making and independence. The lessons learnt through this project and the contacts made will support the museum to further develop young people’s voice within the organisation, in particular by establishing a youth panel.

Background
Why did they do it? Objectives, intended outcomes

Young People had been involved in BMAG projects in the past, however, their presence and involvement within the museum had been fairly limited, particularly for BME young people, and those from socially deprived neighbourhoods. Bristol Culture were keen to bring a younger audience into the museum and to ensure that their audiences reflected Bristol’s diverse communities.
The museum service’s Engagement Officer – Young People had recently taken up post and had been discussing with local youth-focussed organisations how to include young people in exhibitions and events at BMAG. Bristol has a strong network of creative youth organisations, and the museum service wanted to have a more prominent place within this network, highlighting what it can offer young people and developing BMAG as a place that young people want to go to.

The museum has plans to establish a youth panel, so a further objective of 25 Below was to make contact with a new cohort of young people, from which potential youth panel recruits might come.

‘There had been other examples of community engagement but having a designated space for young people to actually work in, contribute to and have ownership of for a given amount of time hadn’t been done before at the museum.’

Engagement Officer – Young People

Who was involved

Over 100 young people, aged 14-25, attended free workshops and events over a three and a half week period in August 2016. The workshops were delivered in partnership with 12 artists or organisations: Rife mag, Young Bristol, Creative Youth Network, Knowle West Media Centre, Rachel Carter [author], Solomon OB [Spoken word professional], Bristol Plays Music, Babbasa, Rising Arts Agency, HYPE Dance, Stay Hungry/Temple Records, Ujima FM.

Alongside the standalone activities, nine young people contributed to the project by setting up and running the dedicated 25 Below gallery space, volunteering throughout the life of the project. Some of these young people were already volunteering for Bristol Culture in other departments, many had an interest in either heritage or working with children and young people. Two of the volunteers had come through Bristol Culture’s connections with City of Bristol College’s ESOL class and had previously been on an ESOL tour at M Shed.

What happened

Outputs, practical stuff, approach, obstacles and challenges

A large gallery space at BMAG was given over to the project, with half the space being used for workshops and the other half set up as an exhibition. Any creative work that was made in the workshop was later displayed in the exhibition space. There were opportunities for visitors to interact with the exhibits, e.g. a paper folding activity linked to a large paper sculpture produced by a young person. There was also a video booth showing some of the museum’s digital collection, a table of handling objects and art materials were freely available.

Workshops took their inspiration from the collection and covered a broad range of arts, from digital imaging to origami to soundscape design. Visitor numbers were in line with what the museum had hoped for, some workshops were undersubscribed and others over-subscribed. Activities were aimed at the 16-25 age range, the age limit was lowered to 14 for some activities to ensure good levels of attendance.

The project was two-pronged – firstly by providing workshops which would encourage a large number of young people to visit the museum, secondly by creating an opportunity for a smaller number of young people to contribute to the work of the museum in a more substantial way. This team were responsible for setting up and maintaining the exhibition space, making decisions about the way things were displayed and managing a rota to steward the exhibition.

Members of the team also supported the delivery of the workshops and helped to promote the project through social media accounts.

Many of the young people who attended the workshops were connected to the partner organisations, so cross-promotion was a key element of the recruitment campaign. The museum also set up a Facebook page for the event and a dedicated webpage to share information on the opportunities available. Front of house staff shared information about forthcoming events with young visitors. Survey feedback from participants showed that methods for finding out about the project varied hugely, with visits to college, online and social media advertising, advertising at
the museum and direct emails all being mentioned. This indicates that a multi-faceted approach was effective in reaching different groups of young people. The most popular form of marketing was word of mouth, especially from relatives who may have seen advertising material or have a connection with the museum themselves.

This was an ambitious project for a relatively new team to deliver at the museum. With multiple partners and multiple target audiences, communication between facilitators, participants, museum departments and volunteers was a crucial, yet time-consuming, element. For example:

- Some of the workshops required intensive last minute social media promotion and direct messaging on Facebook & WhatsApp to young people the service was already in contact with, to ensure numbers were sufficient
- Many youth organisations were either running their own summer school, or had broken up for the summer holidays and were not available to signpost their young people to 25 Below
- There was a long lead-in time necessary to confirm the partner organisations and details of their activities
- Some museum policies on use of social media accounts and printed materials conflicted with what was planned and the short timescale of the project

Because the programme was only finalised shortly before the project started, there was little opportunity to promote the events through the local colleges which was felt would have been beneficial. Also, despite many young people being off school or college, many of them had summer jobs in August. Contacting the young people directly was time-consuming for museum staff and youth workers in partner organisations, however it was felt that this did allow them to more effectively target young people from BME or economically disadvantaged communities.
Achievements

Benefits, impact

Young people who attended the workshops were asked to complete a survey about it afterwards and a small number of those also completed a follow-up survey three months later to assess the lasting impact. Partner organisations provided feedback both straight after the project and three months later. The young people who were responsible for running the gallery space were interviewed about their experiences, as were members of the Participation Team and some of the museum’s curators.

1. Increasing appeal of BMAG to young people and depth of engagement

There was a clear shift in the levels of interest in the museum as a result of taking part in the workshop. The number of young people who were only ‘slightly interested’ in the museum reduced from 26% to 3% and the number of young people who were ‘very interested’ rose from 24% to 55%. A potential risk from working with external facilitators to deliver events in a museum space is that participants do not recognise the value of the museum in the activity. This is clearly not the case here and it can be said that the experience of coming to the museum for a workshop has changed young people’s perceptions favourably.

‘Today it’s been really inspirational. It’s been helpful to mess a little bit with the software, but tomorrow I hope to really get to work with the pieces. I hope that, at the end of the workshop, I’ll have at least the basic experience of creating music with a computer.’

One young person emailed the museum after attending the creative writing workshop to ask for feedback on his piece, which was given by the workshop leader. He said he was continuing to work on his piece and was due to perform it at a venue.

It was also clear from many of the comments that the museum had provoked an emotional response from young people, many talked about feeling nervous at first but were more comfortable by the end of the session. In some cases this was attributed to the venue, in other cases it was the support and encouragement of the workshop facilitators.

‘It has been lovely to have the space to just write, without distractions and with pure focus.’

‘A really positive experience. Writing is a risk area for me. I found it so cathartic and therapeutic. The guidance was really great and I’m very thankful. I’ll come back to the museum a lot more.’

Several people said that friendship was something they had gained from the experience and many also said it had helped or influenced their career choices.

‘Met some great young creatives with whom I’ve stayed in touch – plus, from a meeting at the workshop, I got an internship!’

The most significant impact seems to be on the young volunteers who formed the exhibition team – in many cases it has made a huge difference to the way they feel about themselves and their future. All of the young volunteers were able to clearly identify how the project had helped them and many felt strongly that the abilities and skills that they had developed were directly attributable to the project.

Confidence was mentioned by every volunteer. Seeing their ideas executed gave them confidence that they could come up with good ideas, successfully completing the project gave them confidence in their own abilities. Two of the volunteers suffered with anxiety yet performed tasks such as public speaking
that they felt they would not have been able to do outside of the project. Since doing 25 Below they have put themselves forward as course representatives, for committee positions and given presentations to large audiences.

Other young volunteers talked about how they had become more decisive.

‘This project allowed me to truly understand where my own leadership skills lie and to confidently make those executive decisions rather than worrying about them after I’ve made them. We’re just going to dive in, and not play cautious. And that’s something I definitely didn’t have before this project.’

Many of the volunteers were had a connection with the museum previously or an interest in the arts or heritage, although none had had experience of this kind of work within a museum setting. All the volunteers said that they were now much more aware of the type of work they could do in a museum and most now had aspirations to work in the museum sector. One volunteer went to University and actively pursued similar experiences, she recently chose to complete a module in museum studies at the Museum of English Rural Life. For those volunteers who are currently seeking work in the heritage sector it has helped them make contacts and find out about local opportunities.

‘I didn’t even know it existed (the idea of visitor engagement). 25 Below has come out so well that I know now the different roles that people might have.’

‘It’s really opened my eyes to what I could be doing.’

‘This has confirmed I want to work in heritage and be involved with the public.’

‘It’s given me a sense of how important creating a network is. Sussing out what’s available in Bristol has become a lot easier as a result of this project.’
Two volunteers had used their experience when applying for jobs. In one case the interviewer had said that by taking an active role and volunteering she had showed she was passionate about heritage. In the other case the volunteer was able to use his experience as an example of a leadership task.

Although clearly the main outcomes for the young volunteers have been to do with their future development, there was also a sense of real enjoyment when they described their experience and they said they appreciated this aspect too, perhaps a welcome break from the pressure of study and working life. Two of the volunteers have become firm friends due to their shared interests and experiences.

2. Supporting and informing the development of youth panel

Comments about the young people’s experience of the project, both immediately afterwards and later on, show that young people value:

- The opportunity to experience new things, to have a go at doing things they wouldn’t normally get to do
- Activities that are appropriately pitched to their age and groups divided into different ages so they are learning with their close peers and not much older or younger people
- Friendly and supportive facilitators
- The opportunity to learn new skills
- An outlet for their creativity
- Exposure to a variety of sources but also the time to study one area in more depth
- Meeting like-minded people
- Hearing about other people’s experiences that might help them

Suggestions for improvement focussed mainly on timing of sessions – either too long or too short – and finding a suitable pitch. Both of these aspects are difficult when working with unknown young people for a one-off session, and should be easier to achieve as museum staff get to know the members of the youth panel.

Within the team of young volunteers who ran the exhibition, members were generally pleased with the roles that they had been allocated and the level of work they were asked to do. Some contributed more time than others and some had a more developed set of skills than others, one member was a teacher for example and very experienced in planning activities for audiences. It is a real strength of the project that there was a role for everyone to suit their interest and ability level. Although at times the difference in age and experience was quite apparent, members felt that working together and learning from each other was beneficial.

Factors that young volunteers felt had made the project a success included:

- being given responsibility, feeling trusted
  ‘I was pleasantly surprised in how much trust the museum had in us and that was really nice actually.’
- having the freedom and independence to make decisions
  ‘Having carte blanche to do anything with that space and being able to make those kind of executive decisions was a new opportunity.’
- being able to take risks and be creative but within a supportive environment – several people talked about it being a ‘safe space’
  ‘It was quite a safe space to just have a go being creative, that’s ok, we’ll just try things and see if they work.’
  ‘I felt so supported throughout all of it, I just had a genuinely good time.’
- Being able to see their achievements
  ‘Seeing everything come together at the end of the exhibition, and looking back on the photos from the start when it was a completely blank slate, and seeing what it had been filled with, was really satisfying.’
- Having a focus for the project – a fixed start and finish
  ‘A lot of the stuff produced in the workshops was going to feed into the wrap up event. We had that target in our heads the entire month.’
The new confidence found by the young volunteers came through being given the opportunity to come up with ideas and crucially, to see them through. The experience was authentic with tangible outputs. Some volunteers came with very specific areas they were interested in or knew what they liked doing, others just wanted to have a go and were up for trying anything. Although a loose structure and hierarchy was in place, to a large extent the roles developed from the volunteers themselves and the collaborative feel of the project seems to have made all the difference.

‘I think before we started, I thought I bet I’ll do it for 3 days and then I’ll get bored of sitting in a gallery space but that just didn’t happen, every day something new or different would happen.’

3. Diversifying audiences

The survey findings show that only 17% of workshop participants had never been to BMAg before, although additional anecdotal evidence suggests that their previous engagement with the museum may have been some time ago. For example, a participant who is now 19 but who last visited the museum as part of a primary school trip 10 years ago. Nearly all of those who completed the follow-up survey said they now visited BMAg more often than before, there was also evidence of workshop participants visiting other Bristol Culture sites and attending events at other museums.

The usual proportion of BME visitors at BMAg is 15%, for 25 Below the proportion was 34%, proving that the project and marketing campaign had been effective in attracting a more diverse audience. An observation from the survey findings is that many of the comments which described confidence-building or feeling more comfortable with the museum venue, seemed to come from young people who had English as a second language.
'Basically I’m not good at the beginning I felt little bit scared, but it was exciting day. I really enjoy it also, I learnt a lot but also, I met helpful people.'

'It’s been really interesting experience. At first I was kind of intimidated, but I’m glad I came for interesting skills!'

One participant, a young person from Eritrea, had come from a very difficult background and had never been to the museum before. He chose to attend nearly all of the workshops and reported that he had never done anything like that before. He has also decided to join the museum’s youth panel.

Bristol Culture regularly collects visitor postcodes and analyses them using a consumer classification tool called Acorn as a broad measure of the type of audiences it is reaching. Usually around 17% of visitors come from postcodes where residents are typically facing greater socio-economic challenges, in the case of 25 Below attendees it was 30%. The project was particularly successful in providing for young people from demographic segments described as ‘starting out’, ‘modest means’, ‘striving families’ and ‘young hardship’.

4. Organisational benefits

Working with a number of the city’s youth organisations is felt to have been beneficial for the Participation Team, particularly being a recently established department. It acted as a starting point for conversations with partner organisations and allowed relationships to build. Bristol Culture has worked with some of the organisations since 25 Below, with one partner using the venue for a performance project and another supporting volunteer placements for young people at BMAG. Organisations have been promoting each others’ activities to their audiences.

‘It’s really opened the doors to collaboration, it feels as though we’re part of that network now.’

Partners’ feedback was generally very positive, with all partners valuing the opportunity to work with the museum staff, building and collection. Where the young people were particularly engaged, the facilitators’ enjoyment of the sessions was naturally very high. Some were also pleased to meet new people and be able to share what their organisation does with the wider public.

‘It was great for Young Bristol to be involved in a partnership with the Museum to run creative workshops that reflected on the exhibits and artefacts in the space.’

‘Being able to perform inside the museum was an amazing experience. We performed to a diverse crowd and it was well received. It was amazing to look around and take in all the architecture as well. It made me feel proud to be a part of such a multicultural event.’

Young musician, Stay Hungry

There was a discrepancy between the way different facilitators considered they had been prepared for the project, some thought that the organisation and support was one of the positive aspects of the project, others thought that this was one of the weaker points. Organisations said that in future it would help them to be more aware of what other partners were doing for the project.

The presence of young people was highly visible at the museum during the project. Amongst the curators who got involved by leading store tours for young people, all said that they were now more aware of the work of the Participation Team and all were pleased to be able to support collections-based learning. One curator had appreciated the project’s objective to attract more BME young people to the museum. Although they were used to delivering public tours, this was the first time they had done so specifically for a young audience and they clearly found the experience exciting and positive, moreso than they had expected it to be.

‘Loved it – they had interesting insights into the geology collection and participated and engaged in the tour I delivered rather than simply ‘along for the ride.’

‘I was really excited because it felt like we had people from everywhere, we had maybe four different languages. It was totally refreshing.’

Their commitment to supporting future youth participation projects remains high, and several suggested ways to extend the experience, either by doing more in-depth work with the collections or being
able to offer a placement. The Engagement Officer reported that seeing the young people’s responses to the collection had been one of the highlights of the project and had in many cases been unexpected, often personal. It was felt that there was definitely scope for more consultation with curatorial staff about how the artists, facilitators and young people respond to the collections and what that could mean for the collections in the future.

Being able to consider how we can use our collections in that way, that kind of creative tool, also a therapeutic tool, was really promising to think about future possibilities.’

‘I think it was quite good for the museum in the sense that we were pushing boundaries a bit about what we could do, how we could work with our collections, taking risks.’ We need to be a bit braver and daring about the projects that we do.’

Engagement Officer – Young People

Taking it further - legacy, next steps

Through 25 Below the Participation Team have learnt about how to recruit young people, which activities appeal the most and success factors when planning young people’s participation. They have raised the profile of young visitors within the museum and whole museum service and garnered support for future projects.

As hoped, the young people who attended the workshops created a pool of potential youth panel recruits and several chose to attend a youth panel taster session some three months after the project. The feedback from 25 Below will be used as a basis on which to found the group and establish the scope of its work.
Recommendations

1. Working with young people was clearly successful on many levels and there is a desire on both sides for Bristol Culture to extend and develop this area of work. The benefits of involving young people as collaborators are significant and this should be a regular feature in programming. In going forward, some key considerations for the Participation team could be:

- What is the future for the 25 Below young volunteers? They are very keen to continue their involvement, within the limitations of their lifestyles. Traditional adult volunteering roles such as stewarding will probably not be challenging enough.
- What happens to volunteers who reach the upper age limit? Could they become mentors for the next cohort for example?
- This was quite an ambitious project - combining a co-curation project with the delivery of a programme of public workshops means two audiences of young people to deal with simultaneously, plus partners. Would it be more effective to deliver these projects separately in future?
- What are the conversations that need to be had with other staff and departments? How can developing young people’s participation become an organisation-wide strategy?

2. The areas highlighted in this report will help museum staff and the future youth panel to plan what their roles and responsibilities should be as well as the core values that the panel should have.

3. As reaching a new and large audience was key to the success of this project, for future gallery takeovers the communications process should ideally start earlier. Considerations:

- The need to secure the support and involvement of the marketing team and understand expectations and organisational policies.
- Timing – when to run the project so that links with providers such as colleges can be maximised.
- Need a marketing plan for the workshops which takes into account multiple ways of reaching people. This should include emphasis on face to face communications – raising awareness amongst museum staff, volunteers and visitors, as well as external partners. Also, generating an online campaign over a period of time is necessary to reach young people – a dedicated Facebook page, webpage and Twitter handle if possible.
- Could volunteer roles specifically dedicated to communications and marketing help and relieve some of the pressure on the Engagement Officer?

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