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| Project name | Museum Pathways |
| Location | Goole, Humberside |
| Partner organisations | Yorkshire Waterways Museum |
| Contact details | |
| Funded by | YMLAC |

Introduction

The Yorkshire Waterways Museum, (The Sobriety Project) uses the Museum Collection and the waterways as a resource for learning and regeneration. It is a fully accessible resource and positively encourages participation from typically excluded target groups.

The need for the project was identified through our visitor and trainee information which highlighted certain groups who were under represented. Museum Pathways fits well with the organisations vision and core activity outlined in the five year Business Plan.

The Aims and Objectives of this project were to widen participation in Museum activities and experience through informal learning by people who would not normally access museum collections. The aim was to promote this especially to resettling prisoners and long term unemployed young people. The objectives were to encourage further museum visits from the typical non visitor and to increase enjoyment and understanding of Museums through eroding barriers and changing preconceptions.

Outcomes

- Proficiency in introducing and interpreting the Collection
- Guiding visitors and meeting their expectations
- Increased confidence through exposure to handling the public
- Improved literacy and numeric skills through monitoring and collating visitor records
- Improved IT skills through using interactive displays and helping young visitors maximise their learning through these
- Understanding the basic care of a collection
- Understanding the Risk Assessments and Health and Safety requirements

Outcomes

Two full time staff (20% of project staff) They managed the project, recruited the participants and supported the learning and portfolio building for moderation. This was evaluated through the measuring of learner involvement, attendance and accreditation that would not have been achieved if good support and effective team work were not in place.

GLOs re: staff benefits

Knowledge and Understanding

Increased understanding of other peoples perceptions of museums
Having a greater knowledge of the Collection as a learning resource
Improved knowledge of introducing new learners to work in diverse ways to make achievements and different learning styles used
A greater understanding of the relationship between the general public and the volunteer/learner and how they can meet each others needs and expectations

Skills

Learning how to communicate effectively with different user groups
Using different methods of helping people learn and internally moderating portfolios to external moderation standards

Attitudes and Values

Gaining an empathy with disadvantaged or excluded groups of people
Greater motivation in using the Collection as a valuable learning resource
Inspiring a positive attitude in others through having positive feedback from enthusiastic participants
Breaking down misconceptions about non typical user groups and what they have to offer to the Museum

Enjoyment, Inspiration and Creativity

Staff inspired by the enthusiasm that was witnesses by participants
Staff enjoyed the experience of a social inclusion project using the Collection
Surprise at individual successes
Innovative process will encourage further similarly inclusive work

Activity, Behaviour and Progression

Further activity has evolved from the Museum Pathways Project and the Collection is used more inclusively

Public and Learner Evaluation.

21 beneficiaries accessed the opportunity to gain skills and learning opportunities through the Museum Pathways Project and an even greater number of the general public had an enhanced visiting experience through the intervention from trainees (approx 5,000)

GLOs re: Learners and Public

The learners were evaluated through attendance, attitude, accreditation and learning journals. The public were evaluated through verbal feedback and longer visits.

Knowledge and Understanding

13 of the participants gained qualifications in Emergency First Aid, Basic Health and Safety, or Open College Network credits. These skills increased their understanding of the Collection and its care and also increased their understanding of the needs and care of the visiting public.

Skills

21 participants improved their skill levels through IT development in the displays and through presenting leaflets and materials for use by schools.

21 also increased their ability to communicate with others and work as a team.

20% (approx) of the visitors in the project period (1,000) people were guided and assisted in their museum visit by the participants who would have not been typical Museum guides.

Social skills were also gained

Attitudes and Values

The attitudes of the learners changed as they discovered individual potential and also that Museums are not boring and old fashioned. They changed their perceptions and broke down perceived barriers. The attitudes of the visiting public will have been changed when being shown round the Museum by people from BME origins in a community consisting of mainly White British. Many of the public will have been aware that they were guided by serving prisoners and this will have helped change attitudes.

Enjoyment, Inspiration and Creativity

21 (100%) enjoyed the experience and fed this back through their student portfolios and through punctual and regular attendance.

Most participants were creative in both work and presentation of their OCN folders and experimented with new ways of doing things.

The visiting public were offered an enhanced experience through guided tours and better Museum Quizzes and learning materials.

Activity, Behaviour and Progression

Having enjoyed the programme of experience and training, many participants (20%) have continued to develop their interest and continued volunteering at the Museum

The team work inspired intergenerational communication and cross pollination of ideas.

Conclusion

The project was an innovative scheme that tackled preconceptions and broke down perceived barriers to accessing a museum and gaining learning opportunities that would not have been available elsewhere.

All participants and many of the visiting public benefited from the experience through learning, enjoyment and experience. 13 participants who were either serving a custodial sentence or had been unemployed for some time gained qualifications whilst the others gained work experience and increased their confidence and self esteem.

The lessons learnt were that many of these people are hard to reach but once engaged flourished in a different environment. This applied particularly to the BME's and the younger participants who tend to view Museums as a place for older and traditionally educated people.