

MUSEUMS
ASSOCIATION

CULTURE CHANGE, DYNAMISM AND DIVERSITY

A museum manager's
guide to working smarter
in difficult times

Written by Maurice Davies and Helen Wilkinson

based on the programmes
Smarter Museums
Support & Challenge

MLA Renaissance
Museums for
changing lives



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FOREWORD

This helpful guide comes at a crucial time for museums. It aims to be the museum manager's guide to working smarter in difficult times. Well times are certainly difficult and we really do need to work smarter in order to survive.

This publication is inspirational, practical and realistic, and is not above recommending simple, low cost steps that can contribute to major changes. It is based on the experiences of museums participating in two Museums Association (MA) projects, both funded as part of Renaissance by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

The first programme, Smarter Museums, aimed to help ten museums to change their internal culture by improving the way people work together. Museums introduced more efficient and effective working practices that led to better services for audiences. These changes have also made them into stronger organisations, better placed to face difficulties that might lie ahead.

Community engagement has been a top priority for most museums for at least 20 years. Our audiences are now reasonably representative of the population at large thanks to targeted programmes and the commitment of staff to share the life enhancing experiences of museums at their best. But diversification of our workforce is still very much a work in progress.

The second MA programme discussed here, called Support & Challenge, helped Renaissance hub museums take forward their workforce diversification plans. It enabled museums to take giant leaps forward in their understanding and implementation of workplace diversification. As director of a participating museum, I welcomed the opportunity to spend some quality time thinking about why our workforce was not drawing on all the skills and experience that should be available to it. As a result we made changes to our recruitment practices that will encourage a much wider range of people to think that a career in museums might be for them. I hope many more museums will also feel inspired by this publication so that our sector can truly reflect the wealth of experiences and cultures that make the United Kingdom such a great place to live.

Vanessa Trevelyan, president, MA, and director,
Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Over the last 15 years, museums have been transformed. Most museums recognise their responsibilities to reach wider audiences. They have used external funding to bring in different staff for projects or new areas of work. New staff – and new types of staff – have brought fresh energy and ideas. They have helped to reinvigorate organisations and change ways of working. Many museums have begun to embrace diversity and equality in the broadest sense. As well as broadening audiences, museums have been actively trying to give everyone who wants to the opportunity to contribute to the work they do. They have been enriched with paid and voluntary staff from diverse backgrounds with diverse skills.

But museums are now facing difficult times. Publicly funded museums are being directly affected by public sector spending cuts and independent museums may find their income squeezed by the indirect effects of cuts. The temptation, when times are hard and resources are reduced, may be to hunker down and retreat to conventional ways of doing things. But real change happens when the status quo is no longer an option.

Funding cuts offer an opportunity to take a step back and think about what changes you want to make in your organisation. A commitment to diversity and equality should be one of the values that will guide you through change. Equality and diversity are not optional extras, to be abandoned as a luxury when times are hard. In fact, embedding greater diversity in your working practices may be a way to help your museum survive, and even prosper, through the difficult times ahead.

As museums face reduced funding, they will of course recruit new staff less frequently. This guide sets out ways in which museum managers can continue to reinvigorate and diversify the workforce, even when faced with shrinking resources.



1 | INTRODUCTION

Areas covered include: how to get the best out of existing staff, particularly front of house staff; using schemes designed to help people into work; and working with volunteers. The examples here are not comprehensive or even representative; rather they are intended to inspire museum managers with practical examples, many of which could be relatively low cost.

Another theme explored in this guide is how to encourage staff to communicate and work better together across departmental boundaries, towards common organisational aims. This draws on the MA's Smarter Museums programme, which worked with ten museums to help them introduce more inclusive working practices and create a less hierarchical organisational culture, more open to diversity. Museums in the programme found many ways of working more efficiently and effectively to improve services for audiences. The museums are becoming better places to work and stronger organisations, making them better able to deal with difficulties that might lie ahead.

The guide also draws on learning from the MA's Support & Challenge Programme, which helped Renaissance hub museums to take forward their workforce diversification plans and embed workforce diversity. Both programmes offer good examples of how to use the people working for you differently, and how to get different types of people working for you. More details on the programmes, both of which were funded as part of Renaissance by the MLA, are available in the final section of the guide.

The past decade has seen significant progress in professional development and workforce development, with improved skills and knowledge of museum staff. However, there is still more to do. According to Lucy Shaw, coordinator of both programmes:

"There is [now] more of a commitment to staff development... but often, particularly in smaller museums, people have never had any line management responsibility or any opportunity to develop themselves further than their job description outlines."

She notes:

"It is important to encourage people to understand that development isn't just about going on training courses but that it can come from informal learning."

This guide also considers aspects of organisational development and change. Most individual museum professionals who are facing a difficult future would see continuing professional development as a way to make themselves more adaptable and employable. However, relatively few museums see organisational development as essential. Museums that do not invest in organisational development are missing out on an important way of making their organisations more resilient. This guide sets out ideas for how museums can use inclusive working and diversity as a key component of wide-ranging organisational development.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Lucy Shaw thinks that larger museums, especially Renaissance-funded museums, increasingly appreciate the need for organisational change, but that is not the case for many smaller museums. She says:

"I would like to see museums, big or small, seeing change as something exciting, rather than something to fear."

"I think that's very difficult at the moment because there's a lot of uncomfortable change... and people have to restructure their organisations to get rid of people to save money, rather than restructuring primarily to do things differently to be a more exciting organisation."

She thinks changing ways of working can be valuable.

"By thinking a bit more critically and creatively about what you are doing, you can make your organisation run more effectively and motivate staff in different ways. This also gives leaders confidence in dealing with challenge."

Helen MacKintosh, a Smarter Museums adviser, also believes in the benefits of concerted organisational change. "Change can be a really optimistic thing. Most organisations know there are aspects of what they do that aren't great. I don't think the cuts are going to be easy for anyone, but I think that since they are inevitable, they are best treated as an opportunity. Salami-slicing will not work. That doesn't create change – it just makes everyone miserable. We need to be creative, stay visitor-focused and work out how to do the best with and for our collections. And that may mean some radical change. People need to put extra energy into thinking, 'where do we want to be in five years?' and, 'if we assume we're going to have to make these cuts, how are we going to get there?'"

Gaby Porter, who also worked as an adviser in the Smarter Museums programme, observes that this is starting to happen.

"There's been a really significant shift in the last year, linked to the financial realities. People have realised 'this is it', and they have to be really creative and resourceful, to look at all of what they do, what really matters to them and how they can use all the resources that they've got."

Some of the material in this guide may give some useful ideas. It may also offer some reasons for optimism. As Gaby Porter found in her Smarter Museums advisory work, "people were hungry for change and several have worked very swiftly to take steps forwards".

Claire McDade, director of Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, tells other museum managers:

"If there are people thinking 'we must be able to improve but I'm a bit scared because it's difficult and change is hard', sometimes you just have to rise to the challenge. If there are any issues you've wanted to unpick, just do it. But do it in as thoughtful, constructive and structured a way as possible. I'm so glad we've embarked on it. You can't expect it to be an easy process; it can be painful and you've got to be brave."

2 | DIVERSITY IN THE WORKFORCE: REFLECTIONS ON CURRENT BEST PRACTICE

If we think about diversity and equality as just a legal responsibility, then all it leads us to do is the minimum. If we believe in our organisations as places of public engagement with culture and we believe that we have a job to reach out to wider audiences, then we clearly see it as much more than just a legal responsibility. It becomes an ethical responsibility. It also becomes something to do with the moral purpose of the institution.

Michael Day, Historic Royal Palaces, quoted in Making it Happen: Leading on Good Diversity Practice in the Heritage Sector, a publication from the V&A

Diversity in museums: a brief history

The lack of diversity in the museum workforce first came to be taken seriously in the 1990s. For a number of years, efforts to improve the situation focused on encouraging more people from diverse backgrounds to train for employment in museums. In 1999, the MA launched its Diversify programme of positive action training for people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Funding from Renaissance through the MLA enabled a huge expansion of the scheme and in total over 100 people have been directly supported on the MA's training programmes. Moreover, Diversify has kick-started a culture of active workforce diversification across the museum sector, by raising the profile of the issue and encouraging museum leaders to take the problem seriously.

In 2007, the MA began to extend its positive action training to disabled people. In 2010, with support from Renaissance, it ran a new programme of entry-level training for people from less affluent backgrounds drawn from all sections of the community. This was in response to research that suggested that some of the most significant barriers preventing people taking up careers in museums related to social class and economic status, a situation made worse by the common requirement to volunteer before securing paid work in a museum.

Lucy Shaw, coordinator of the Diversify programme, says that attitudes to workforce diversification have changed. "I think that's down to the work that the MA has done with Diversify in raising the profile of the issue. It was also helped by having David Lammy as the culture minister from 2005-7 - that got more people to take it seriously. And then the MLA encouraged the hubs to produce workforce diversity action plans. Although they weren't an ideal template, they've really made people think about it and begin to take it more seriously and to think about how they can change the types of people that are coming to work in museums."

Encouragingly, the hub workforce diversification plans include a vast range of initiatives aimed at changing the kinds of people working in museums, and the opportunities they are given. The hub museums are working on changing governance, enhancing career progression, extending volunteering opportunities and improving work/life balance, as well as changing the way they recruit new staff. There has also been some progress with workforce diversification.

Karen Perkins, director of Luton Museums, believes strongly in the benefit of having a diverse range of staff. "The diversity of the team that we have running the museum helps to open our eyes to new opportunities in terms of things like contemporary collecting.

2 | DIVERSITY IN THE WORKFORCE: REFLECTIONS ON CURRENT BEST PRACTICE

"It informs our exhibitions and our programmes because the more we reflect the audiences we're there to serve the better placed we are to deliver something that we think they're going to enjoy."

Lucy Shaw says that some museums have begun to take a broad view of diversity. "In terms of class and background, some particularly forward-looking museums are trying not to recruit the usual suspects, not to just take the easy option, but to look at what skills are actually needed for the job and not necessarily expect people to have PhDs or Masters in museum studies - but that's still probably unusual."

The 'how' as well as the 'who'

Any push for diversity that refuses to challenge [the existing] power structure is really not worthy of the name. We don't need institutions that look different and behave the same. To create them is to mistake equal opportunities for photo opportunities.

Gary Younge, keynote address to From the Margins to the Core conference, March 2010

Changing *who* works in museums is not enough if we want museums to be truly diverse institutions. We also need to change how museums work. To become more diverse may mean changing the make-up of your workforce, but it also means changing the way your museum operates. As Lucy Shaw says: "There are really good examples of museums that link workforce development and diversity to organisational change and broader strategic aims than just 'we need to have a more diverse workforce'."

At its most fundamental, diversity means making sure that every person has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. The museums that took part in the Smarter Museums programme concentrated on developing more inclusive working practices. Simply put, this meant trying to give more people more opportunities to contribute – by changing meetings so that more people have the chance to speak, for example, or by taking more seriously suggestions made by people who do not usually make decisions. This was a challenging process, but the museums where it worked best were able to start improving the service they offered, as well as making people's working lives happier and more fulfilling. Some of the museums even found that members of staff who had almost been written off as problematic or demotivated blossomed through the process and started making a positive contribution.

One of the museums that took part in Smarter Museums was starting from a low point, with staff morale severely dented by a recent merger within the local authority. Reflecting on the changes that a commitment to diversity brought about, the programme adviser said: "The benefits of this change? A feeling that everyone is in this together and that they are a team... An honesty and openness which were absent before and a positive feeling about the future, despite the coming financial stresses. An understanding that they can discuss problems amongst themselves, create solutions and then implement them, not wait to be asked."

We look at some practical suggestions as to what this might mean for your museum in section 3 of this guide.

2 | DIVERSITY IN THE WORKFORCE: REFLECTIONS ON CURRENT BEST PRACTICE

The new legal context: the Equality Act 2010

Parliament passed the Equality Act 2010 just before the May 2010 general election. It has changed the context for museums' work on diversity and equality, although, at the time of writing in early 2011, the full impact of the legislation is still somewhat unclear.

Once major legislation like the Equality Act is passed into law, the government of the day needs to take further steps to bring the legislation into force. Because there has been a change of government since the legislation was passed, government priorities have inevitably changed. The government has announced it will repeal some provisions and has consulted about the implementation of others. Some key provisions have already been implemented.

The main aim of the legislation was to replace a confusing array of earlier legislation with one simple act. Broadly speaking, this means that all forms of difference that might give rise to discrimination are given the same protection. Previously, people were protected from discrimination on grounds of gender by one law and on grounds of race by another law with slightly different provisions, resulting in somewhat piecemeal protection.

The Equality Act protects against discrimination on the grounds of nine characteristics in total. Six of these are sometimes known as the 'equality strands': gender, race, faith, sexuality, age and disability. The other three were previously covered in part by the Sex Discrimination Act and are: pregnancy and maternity; gender reassignment; and marriage and civil partnership. These provisions came into force on 1 October 2010.

As well as aiming to prevent discrimination, the Equality Act aimed to encourage organisations to promote equality more actively. Some of these more ambitious provisions will be scrapped - for example, a new duty for public bodies to try to reduce the inequalities between rich and poor - and others will be made less onerous.

The act included a new duty to promote equality across all six of the equality strands and the government has consulted on how this will be implemented. It is likely that the final version of the duty will focus on requiring organisations to provide access to information about how they make decisions. This will apply to a defined list of public bodies, which includes all government departments, local government and further- and higher-education bodies. The government believes that this will enable people to hold them to account and ensure that decisions are taken fairly.

Under previous legislation, public bodies were required to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to look at the implications of their work for different sections of the community, and to ensure that already disadvantaged groups are not further disadvantaged or excluded by particular initiatives. Public bodies will no longer have to complete this form of assessment, but the principle can be useful. The Horniman Museum and Gardens, for example, has used a simple toolkit to undertake an EIA of all its existing policies - from HR policy to acquisitions and disposal policy. Kirsten Walker, head of collections (management) and special projects at the museum, led the project and says, "some sort of systematic way of thinking about the equality implications of your work is very useful, regardless of the tool you choose to use".

It is too soon to say exactly how the Equality Act will change the legal landscape for museums working towards greater diversity and equality. But the fact that it was passed into law does indicate how much the public debate around diversity and equality has moved on, and that should give greater impetus to the work of museums in this area.

Further information

Advice on the implications of the Equality Act:
http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/equality_act_2010_what_do_i_n.aspx

Diversify Toolkit from the MA: advice on positive action schemes and creating a diverse workforce: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=98529>

3 | INCLUSIVE WORKING AND DECISION-MAKING

Inclusive working means getting the most possible from the workforce through encouraging people to have a voice, including people who perhaps haven't always had one or felt they've had one.

Helen MacKintosh, adviser on the Smarter Museums programme

Inclusive working and decision-making involves encouraging all members of staff, from every level of the organisation, to contribute their insights to improve the museum's work. At the heart of inclusive working is a simple idea. As Smarter Museums adviser Gaby Porter explains, great benefits flow from "making the time for people to come together and talk together about the really important things... to probe and challenge and support and plan together". Claire McDade, director of Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, observes that her staff "love Norton Priory", but adds, "it's not enough to depend on people's love of a place to bind them together. You need to create the mechanisms and infrastructure to make it a consistent thing for people to come together and understand each other better".

Why focus on inclusive working and decision-making?

Genuinely inclusive working and decision-making is new territory for most museums. As the examples below show, it's well worth museum managers having the courage and taking the time to try it out. It can change an organisation for the better. Benefits include:

- The museum can draw on the ideas, observations and talents of all its staff, which leads to new thinking and improved working practices, based on practical experience
- Staff understand the 'bigger picture' so are able to work towards common goals
- Motivation, confidence and internal communication improve
- People focus their attention on positives and constructive change
- Quality of service improves
- The organisation is strengthened and better able to deal with difficulties such as vacant posts or unexpected changes
- Staff learn and develop at low cost

Approaches to take: some ideas from museums

Norton Priory Museum and Gardens: planning and reflecting together

Norton Priory has introduced an inclusive approach to decision-making. Director Claire McDade explains: "After a failed Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid we realised we needed a very clear forward plan; previously we'd planned annually but we've now developed a five-year strategic plan that has clarified our aims and objectives."

3 | INCLUSIVE WORKING AND DECISION-MAKING

At the same time, Norton Priory joined the Smarter Museums programme with the initial aim of introducing a new appraisal scheme. To lead on the work, the museum was encouraged to create a 'diagonal slice' group of staff from different teams and different levels of seniority. Claire McDade explains that the group allowed the museum to discuss its role and plan properly. "We had lots of conversations to clarify why we're doing what we're doing. It's been really important for the organisation; it's given us a shake up. A lot of it is just saying we're going to take time here, we're going to stop whatever else we're doing and sit down and talk and do more planning."

Helen MacKintosh, who advised Norton Priory, thinks that taking time to think is valuable.

"You're on a treadmill, constantly trying to get things done. Making yourself step back is hard to do... Everyone knows it's a good thing, it's just that you can get very carried away with trying to achieve and deliver."

Involving people from different teams and levels (the 'diagonal slice') is good for helping staff get a bigger picture. "In museums, people are very stretched and they're often facing in different directions; by having people from different teams involved... all communication doesn't have to be top down and you're creating an environment in which teamwork becomes the norm." And people from throughout the organisation have useful ideas. "You find, for example, that front of house staff have an enormous amount to bring. They have the most involvement with visitors so bringing that knowledge into the decision-making or recommending group is incredibly valuable."

Norton Priory staff liked this way of working and set up several more 'diagonal slice' groups to improve other aspects of their work, such as fundraising, exhibitions, site management and marketing. Claire McDade says the latter group helped the museum work better in an area where it doesn't have specialist staff. By creating a cross-organisational group where it could be discussed and planned, marketing was prevented from "falling down the cracks". Other areas, such as site management, can become the overlapping responsibility of staff from different teams. Having an inclusive group helps people work together. "It's about people understanding that they can have a wider impact and not work in silos. It's amazing how even in a small organisation silo-working can build up." Inclusive working helps with "breaking down any internal divisions and smoothing over any cracks".

Curator Ruth Darling concurs:

"The new working groups encourage greater participation and sharing of ideas, and improve working relationships."

Every member of staff is on at least one group. Norton Priory also has reintroduced regular 'all staff' meetings, which had lapsed, and is holding six-monthly 'evaluation' meetings in which all members of staff can reflect on what has been achieved and plan ahead. In addition, Claire McDade says, "we've also agreed that we're going to have a couple of weeks' closure in January. This is going to be a big thing for us. We're going to take time to meet and do some planning and thinking about where we want to go... and quite a lot of in-house training."

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Alan Westron, Norton Priory's ranger, says that the meetings have already "brought staff together and boosted morale". He also points to the benefit of involving all staff in setting out the organisation's values. "It acts as a guide and reminder as to how we should work and act." Claire McDade explains: "We looked at our core values and we refer back to them quite a lot. That's been built into the appraisal system." Helen Mackintosh says, "In an appraisal you can select two or three of the values and ask people 'how are you going to contribute to them?' That's a way of keeping everyone focused on moving forward together – it's also a way of dealing with difficult behaviours."

Claire McDade recommends others start working more inclusively. "If there are any issues you've been wanting to unpick, just do it. But do it in as thoughtful, constructive and structured a way as possible. Don't just jump into it... Take some time out and talk to other people. Planning and thinking are required."

Gallery Oldham: communicating more and doing less, better

Dion Etheridge, visitor services manager at Gallery Oldham, recalls the early stages of his gallery's move to more inclusive working. In discussions about how to improve the service to visitors, he says: "We stopped and we spoke and we listened to different people's views; people got more confident to give some quite candid views and candid opinions. This wasn't just the management team. We involved the front of house team as well and we got representatives from the Saturday team, the Sunday team, the part-timers. The first meeting set the scene and made people start to think, but the second meeting was where people had confidence to say exactly what they thought."

"Pandora's Box was opened and all the evils of the world came out, a lot of frustration came out, passion for doing the job properly came out, but as with Pandora's Box, the last thing that came out was hope. After those passions and frustrations – and anger in some cases – had cleared, it was in the open, it needed rectifying."

There were specific problems that staff felt needed addressing. "Communication was becoming a bit of an issue and vital information wasn't getting passed on. People weren't getting a full picture and were beginning to work very much in silos. My technical team didn't have sufficient time to do a proper job; there were too many conflicting priorities... We had back-to-back changeover of exhibitions. We have four galleries, all of which have temporary exhibitions."

This led to a decision to reduce the number of exhibitions and to reintroduce regular staff meetings, which had ceased. "No one can really remember why we stopped doing them. That was one of the reasons we started to lose communication – no one got together round the table." Now, staff meetings take place every two weeks, on different days so that part-time members of staff don't miss them all. Different teams of staff take it in turns to lead a meeting – and each meeting begins with an invitation to everybody present to ask questions or share something of importance.

Gallery Oldham has had great success using 'positive meeting' techniques. As Gaby Porter, Gallery Oldham's Smarter Museums adviser, explains, in a positive meeting, you "start and end with something positive, so people are reminded of the positives". It's important to give every person a turn to speak in the first few minutes of the meeting, otherwise it is likely that they won't say anything at all during the whole meeting. Dion Etheridge describes the process: "Go to the left and don't speak until the person before you has finished speaking, so everyone has a chance to speak but you don't just jump in. I'm not saying that it works every time but it has been beneficial." He likes to use the technique if meetings are stuck. "Everyone shut up, let's go round the table and let's have a listen."

3 INCLUSIVE WORKING AND DECISION-MAKING

Careful listening is a key part of working inclusively, as is asking open questions. Gaby Porter advises against making statements and instead suggests using “questions which open up thinking rather than which invite an already rehearsed response”. Carefully phrased questions can make people think differently. “People are so quick to make assumptions about themselves and others which are very limiting; they can do so much more than they assume they can do. It’s about encouraging people to open up their thinking.”

People need time and encouragement “to explore questions and not rush to solutions, but at the same time within the meeting there needs to be a structure that will enable people to move towards the solution”. She says: “We want to get the best possible results and we’ll allow them to come out of the best possible thinking and working together, and that depends on how we behave with each other and how well we come together and think together.” This comes from the ideas of Nancy Kline (see further reading on page 14).

Positive, inclusive meetings can be very powerful. “It’s looking forwards and looking at opportunities, building on what’s going well rather than focusing on the negatives. It is about breathing out and allowing new breath to come in, which is the inspiration. It’s pausing, allowing that there are lots more possibilities, new thoughts and new ways of approaching this. If we just give ourselves a few minutes and a little bit of really good quality time with the right kind of structure to support it, then out of that will come really great things that we didn’t even know were possibilities when we started the meeting. It’s slowing down, but it’s very dynamic as well...It’s space and structure – as in the behaviours – and stimulus through the questions.”

For successful inclusive working, Dion Etheridge thinks it is also important to consider how people feel about their work. He asked his staff to have a discussion without him there and afterwards, “feed back what your feelings are, not just what you observe, but what your feelings are”. This attention to people’s feelings is borne out in recent research by the Work Foundation that characterises outstanding leaders as people who recognise people’s emotional investment in their job (see further information below).

Lucy Shaw, the Smarter Museums coordinator, says:

“Some organisations may not look at it as inclusive working, they might look at it as ensuring staff wellbeing and taking some sort of moral responsibility for whether people enjoy working for your organisation and whether people feel there are opportunities for continued development and thinking and ideas.”

Dion Etheridge says that as well as changing the working culture, Gallery Oldham’s inclusive working has generated new ideas for improving the visitor experience. Reflecting back, he says:

“In all honesty I can’t say that everything has changed and it all suddenly is roses but I believe that we have moved an awful long way.”

3 INCLUSIVE WORKING AND DECISION-MAKING

Making the change

- Changing the organisational culture needs confident leadership, either from the very top of the organisation, or from someone respected and trusted by the person at the top
- Don't try to lead change alone. Norton Priory and Gallery Oldham used external consultants, who had both specialist skills and the ability to stand back. They were also perceived as neutral and were able to make objective recommendations and to question and challenge senior staff
- If external consultancy is not possible, consider getting support from a suitably experienced person in another organisation or joining or creating an action learning set. Also, draw on the support of appropriate colleagues within the organisation
- Create the space for people to stand back and think openly. Encourage people to be honest, to listen to each other and to challenge each other constructively
- Resist going in too quickly with preconceived ideas. Allow solutions to emerge from the process of questioning, listening and thinking
- Start by working with varied groups of staff who can all see the benefits of change and will support it. Work with them closely and consistently and their enthusiasm will begin to influence other staff
- When the majority of staff are playing an active part in supporting change, most 'doubters' are likely to follow suit (some experts advise that an organisation needs 75% of staff on side before change can take place effectively)
- Once decisions have been made to change things, implement easy things quickly so that people can

see that it isn't just talk and ideas – that things are actually going to be different and improve

- Quick wins are important, but accept that deep, lasting change takes time to happen, needs time to gather momentum and needs consistent attention. A good way to do this is to have a group of people drawn from throughout the organisation that consistently leads the process
- Communicate constantly. Make sure all members of staff know what is happening and give people regular opportunities to contribute their ideas and views. Use varied communication techniques – different types of meetings, written briefings, noticeboards
- Celebrate success and thank people
- Make communication a shared responsibility so it is not all top down
- Accept that some individuals will resist change to their ways of working and may need firm individual attention if their reluctance to change is disruptive
- Be ready for the fact that people can confuse inclusive decision-making with democracy, wrongly assume that normal rules of line management no longer apply, and may misunderstand how much freedom they have
- Accept that it probably isn't realistic for everyone to have a say about everything
- Remember some people will find it hard to delegate properly – and others will find it hard to take on responsibility fully
- Listening is crucial, but balance a willingness to listen with a willingness to lead
- Change can be difficult and can take time to do properly, but it is worth it to get a happier, stronger, more effective organisation

Hints and tips

Small things can make a difference:

- Brief all staff about each forthcoming exhibition or major event
- Get everyone to say something early in a meeting
- Time staff meetings so that part-time members of staff, or those that work on a rota, don't miss them all; set meeting dates well in advance and make it clear that everybody is expected to attend
- Don't hold staff meetings on a day you are closed to visitors if that happens to be a day when most front of house staff aren't in
- Have a staff suggestions box and respond to every idea submitted to it. If something isn't feasible, explain why
- To help people stand back, have some meetings off-site
- Anonymous staff surveys can be a good way to assess how people's attitudes are changing

Further information

Nancy Kline and the thinking environment:
<http://www.timetothink.com/uk/>

Work Foundation, *The Principles of Outstanding Leadership*, 2010. Available at: <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/research/publications/publicationdetail.aspx?oltemId=233&parentPageID=102&PubType=>

4 | MAKING MORE OF FRONT OF HOUSE STAFF

We have to break down the barrier between front of house and back of house staff. It's sad that the barrier is still there at all.

Hilary McGowan, adviser on Smarter Museums programme

It is in everybody's interests to draw on all of the talents of all of the people who work in your museum. This is especially true in difficult times, when funds are tight and museums may be cutting staff. In many museums, front of house or visitor services teams are never given opportunities to contribute to collections care, exhibitions or programming. But many people working in visitor services are interested in their museum's collections and are well placed to know about audiences. This section begins by offering some suggestions about how you might enable your front of house staff to help shape the content of your exhibitions and programming. It also looks at good practice in recruiting front of house staff.

Why focus on front of house staff?

Making more of front of house staff brings benefits to museums because front of house staff can:

- Bring a different perspective to programming and exhibition-making
- Help museums engage with visitors in new ways
- Improve other departments' understanding of audiences
- Give a better experience to visitors if they know more about the rest of the museum's work

In addition, for museums keen to diversify their workforce and employ people from a wider cross-section of society, it makes sense to think carefully about how front of house staff are recruited. At a time of funding cuts, visitor services may be the only area where museums continue to recruit.

Approaches to take: some ideas from museums

Manchester City Galleries: expanding opportunities

Manchester City Galleries has changed the way its visitor services team works, to try to bridge the gap that often exists between front of house and the rest of a museum. John Mouncey, visitor services manager, joined two years ago and part of his vision for the role was an ambition to get visitor services staff involved in other departments in the galleries. He hoped to combat a 'them and us' culture, which sometimes separated visitor services staff from others in the museum, and to help individual staff feel more motivated and engaged.

Having persuaded senior management to trial the idea, the programme started with an audit – to ascertain which members of staff were interested and to try to match people who wanted to take part with suitable opportunities. In the end, about half of those who work in visitor services are now taking part.

They spend a day a week working alongside colleagues in one of Manchester City Galleries' other departments. As the scheme has progressed, more departments have joined in and members of the visitor services team now work with a range of other departments, including exhibitions and education. The benefits to the participating departments are clear. Visitor services employees often have the best insight into how visitors use the galleries and can help shape services and programmes using this knowledge. The participating members of staff also pass information from the departments they are working in back to their colleagues through the visitor services team's daily briefing meetings. John Mouncey says: "We are such a big organisation that previously people simply didn't understand what other people did."

4 | MAKING MORE OF FRONT OF HOUSE STAFF

Spin-off benefits include the fact that department heads are now keener to do briefings for visitor services staff – they appreciate the need to give them better information and are more aware of their potential contribution.

John Mouncey thinks that the project is likely to survive difficult times because it makes economic sense. “When you think about it, it’s obvious that visitor services staff are an untapped resource.”

St Albans Museums: front of house favourites

Several of the museums in the Smarter Museums programme made a concerted effort to involve front of house staff in their efforts to change the way the museum worked. While the Manchester project is ambitious and large-scale, some of these approaches are much more doable, even for small museums.

One Smarter Museums participant, St Albans Museums, wanted to improve communication between staff on different sites and in different departments. As a first step, the museum made sure that a member of the front of house team was part of the group working on changing working practices.

A small project called Our Museums involved asking the front of house team across the service to write labels for their favourite object at the Museum of St Albans, simply explaining why that particular object was their favourite. Elanor Cowland, keeper of community history at the Museum of St Albans, says: “It was a simple question of ‘what is your favourite and why?’ I learned a lot of lessons during the process, and it wasn’t all plain sailing.

“Many people who wanted to contribute needed a lot of encouragement and reassurance that they weren’t going to say the wrong thing, but this only highlights the problems that we are hoping to resolve. What we have ended up with is a lovely set of labels which highlight certain objects, ten in total, some of which I would never have predicted as anyone’s favourite. Some of the labels give historic information, some speculate on who would have used the object and some speak of inspired reminiscences. We haven’t yet asked for any visitor feedback but I feel that they improve our permanent display, adding a really personal feel, and another level of interpretation and insight.”

The Ashmolean Museum: diversifying visitor services recruitment

Reopening after a major refurbishment in 2009, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford was in the unusual position of recruiting a large, new team of visitor services assistants. The museum agreed that it wanted a team who were representative of Oxford’s diverse communities. The posts were advertised on the university website, at the job centre and in the Oxford Mail. Gillian Morris, the museum’s head of HR, explains:

“Oxford is an immensely diverse place and we wanted to attract applicants from all parts of the city and county. We were recruiting for a role that didn’t require very specific, complex skills or experience, other than perhaps experience of a customer service, security or safety environment. Given that, we felt that placing the job with the job centre would be ideal.”

The advertisement and selection criteria deliberately avoided giving the impression that previous museum experience was necessary, and also emphasised the advantages of speaking another language in addition to having a good command of English, explaining, “English does not have to be your first language; we are proud of the number of languages spoken by our staff”.

Over 150 applications were received; of these, 66 were then interviewed over the phone by trained HR staff. Gillian Morris says: “I would like to think that the blind nature of the telephone interview allowed there to be zero prejudice in the selection process, just a focus on ‘can this person demonstrate the skills and experience that we require for this post?’” Some candidates were rejected at this stage; the majority were invited to face-to-face interviews, after which 49 were appointed to a mixture of full-time, part-time and casual roles. Anonymous equal opportunities monitoring data shows that 24% of appointees describe themselves as minority-ethnic and several appointees have learning difficulties or disabilities.

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Gillian Morris is delighted with the museum's "enthusiastic and diverse group of staff". She says: "Given that a) we are a museum with very diverse collections; b) we are in a very diverse city; and c) we continue to work on our outreach to try to get people within the local area and the local community to come to the museum to understand what it is that we're displaying and participate in our activities, I think it can only help if you walk through the door and you see somebody that you perhaps identify with, or can engage with – or you know that somebody from the part of Oxford where you live works at the museum. People who you perhaps wouldn't expect through the doors of the Ashmolean, certainly not in previous years, are now making more use of the museum."

The museum includes visitor services representatives on its change management team. This, and being open to changes to allow for an individual's needs, such as time for prayers during the working day, has helped to raise awareness of diversity more widely among museum staff.

Smaller changes can also make a difference to recruitment. For example, Leicester museum service renamed its visitor services staff 'customer service representatives' for the purposes of recruitment, rather than 'museum assistants', and found that this led to an increase in applications from people from minority-ethnic backgrounds. The museum service appointed three new minority-ethnic front of house staff as a result.

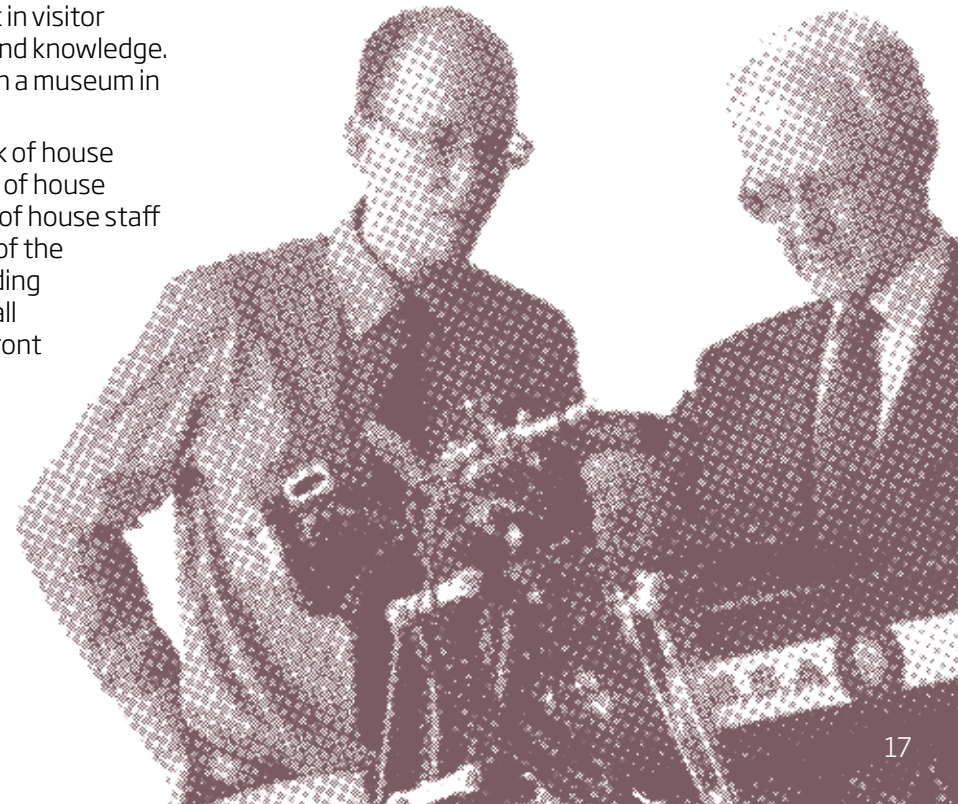
Making the change

- Accept that not everyone who works in visitor services will want the opportunity to contribute in this way. Pilot new ways of working with people who are keen. Encourage people who would like to contribute more but lack confidence
- Make sure senior management are committed to the idea and remember that involving visitor services staff in programming can represent a significant cultural shift for the organisation
- Do not make limiting assumptions about the nature of the contribution visitor services staff can make. Remember that some people who work in visitor services have specialist qualifications and knowledge. That is often what drew them to work in a museum in the first place
- Consider asking curators and other back of house staff to spend some time working front of house staff to help cover rota gaps caused by front of house staff working in other departments. As part of the Smarter Museums programme, East Riding Museum Service has started requiring all curators to spend some time working front of house and anticipates that this will increase their understanding of the demands of the job

Further information

While there is a lot of discussion and advice on sending your management 'back to the floor', little has been written about the opposite approach. This Civil Service College publication, *Involving the front line in policy making*, has some interesting insights: http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/policyhub/docs/Front_line-staff2.pdf

Also see section 3 on inclusive working



5 | VOLUNTEERING

Separate programmes for diverse volunteers are missing the point. The thing that made the biggest difference for us was ensuring that there was a transparent application process for every potential volunteer so that it was no longer only the most determined who made it through.

Jayne Williams, Horniman Museum

Volunteers are the backbone of some museums and essential to the running of many more. The challenges of the current funding climate make it even more important for museums to ensure that they make the best possible use of volunteers. In practice, this means two things: encouraging new and different kinds of volunteers, and giving existing volunteers new and better opportunities.

Why focus on volunteers?

Offering more opportunities to volunteers could help your museum to:

- Refresh the workforce with new insights, new ideas and new energy at a time when you may have very limited recruitment of paid roles
- Improve your links to diverse audiences
- Introduce new programmes and services
- Demonstrate to funders and grant-makers that your local community values you highly. A strong volunteer base shows that a lot of people care enough about your museum to want to give their time for free.
- Help people who are looking for work improve their skills

Volunteers should never be used directly to substitute for or replace paid staff, even when cuts have to be made. You may find it helpful to look at the Volunteer Charter for strengthening relations between paid staff and volunteers produced by Volunteering England and the Trades Union Congress (TUC), which explores how to balance the responsibilities of volunteers and paid staff. It states: "The involvement of volunteers should complement and supplement the work of paid staff, and should not be used to displace paid staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service."

Approaches to take: some ideas from museums

Horniman Museum and Gardens: building and diversifying the volunteer team

The Horniman Museum and Gardens has a substantial programme to recruit more volunteers and expand their work into new areas. The museum has long had a small number of volunteers. In 2007, the museum appointed Jayne Williams as volunteer coordinator with a brief to increase their numbers. Her appointment was part of an initiative across the London hub to promote volunteering.

When she started work, she looked at the kinds of volunteers working in the museum and found that most volunteers came from similar backgrounds and were undertaking similar work. They were mostly older people who were well educated and had a specialist interest in the collections.

For some museums, diversifying their volunteer base goes hand in hand with diversifying their audience. But the Horniman Museum already had strong community links and a diverse audience. So in order for them to offer opportunities to a wider range of people, the museum needed to rethink what a volunteer was and what volunteers could do. Before Jayne Williams started work, the museum tended to wait for people to ask for placements, and then try to accommodate them. The museum now does things the other way round: it identifies areas where volunteers could contribute and then looks for people to fill those roles.

One of the biggest changes has been standardising the application procedure so that all potential volunteers fill in the same form and go through the same process. This makes access to volunteering opportunities much fairer and more transparent.

5 | VOLUNTEERING

Last year the Horniman had 178 volunteers, who worked in nearly every department. Placements can range from a week for a school work-experience project to many years. A typical placement for someone seeking to use the experience to help them find paid work is three to four months.

The Horniman works with a range of partner organisations to offer placements to disabled people and to long-term unemployed people or young people who are not in education, employment or training. Some agencies, such as Mencap, will approach the museum on behalf of a client in need of a placement and will help that individual with the application process. Occasionally the museum advertises specific vacancies with agencies who work to help people into employment.

Jayne Williams says that volunteers who are more diverse help to diversify the museum audience and are a crucial part of its community engagement.

"It's great if disabled visitors, for example, come to the museum and see disabled people as part of the team. Volunteers can act as advocates to their friends and networks – people who might become part of the museum's audience or go on to volunteer themselves."

She suggests that for museums wanting to diversify their volunteers, the most important first step is to get the basic processes right. "Separate programmes for diverse volunteers are missing the point. The thing that made the biggest difference for us was ensuring that there was a transparent application process for every potential volunteer so that it was no longer only the most determined who made it through."

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery: new kinds of volunteers

In 2009, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery launched a new volunteering project, First Hand, using volunteers to staff desks with handling collections in some of the galleries. The project was inspired by the British Museum's Hands On project, which is well established, with hundreds of volunteers participating. Alison Cooper, assistant keeper of art at Plymouth, says the museum had two aims in launching the project. "We hoped to add an extra dimension to the educational experience on offer in the museum's galleries, and also to expand the kinds of people who worked in the museum as volunteers. Before, most volunteers were students or retired people. We've got many more volunteers now – and we've got a diverse mix of people who work together, not on separate projects."

The museum recruited the volunteers through an open application process, with advertisements, open days and interviews. Alison Cooper says: "The project costs were initially very low, although we have now used some Renaissance funding to buy special tables and cloths. And one of our volunteers who wanted to get more involved now comes in half a day each week to do the project's admin, so that means it's taking up less staff time." Feedback from the volunteers suggests that the main benefit for them so far has been increased confidence, though some younger volunteers are hoping it will help them in finding employment.

The project has also had another unanticipated benefit. The museum already worked with the Highbury Trust, a local organisation for adults with learning difficulties. One of the Trust's clients wanted to take his involvement with the museum to another level and applied to become a volunteer on the First Hand programme. The museum interviewed him but felt that he would not be able to talk to visitors about the collections effectively. Instead, they created a new role for him. He works as a greeter in the entrance hall and tells visitors about the handling sessions taking place that day. His work would not be possible without the Highbury Trust staff that transport him to the museum and are there to offer support, but Alison Cooper is enthusiastic about the opportunity. "He's grown in confidence massively and just loves the museum."

5 | VOLUNTEERING

Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery: planning for a new volunteer force

Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery participated in the Smarter Museums programme with the aim of finding more creative ways of working without additional resources. As part of this, the staff decided to work towards developing a new volunteer force.

The museum decided to appoint Matt Johnson, the museum outreach officer, as 'diversity champion', with responsibility for managing the new volunteer programme. He hopes that better use of volunteers will deliver benefits for the museum on several fronts. "We aim to improve diversity, build capacity and increase our community engagement at the same time. This should serve us well in our social and economic context by demonstrating that we are providing a high quality, good value service with an audience reflective of our local community." The museum also aims to offer people who might never have visited the opportunity to extend their skills through volunteering.

The programme is still at development stage. Matt Johnson and his colleagues have developed a draft Volunteer Policy, which aims to crystallise what the museum hopes to achieve by working with volunteers, what the museum will do to support them and how they will work alongside paid staff. The museum is developing volunteer role descriptions to enable potential volunteers to see more easily how they might contribute, so that it can actively recruit for specific vacancies.

Making the change

- Expanding volunteering could mean an organisation-wide drive to include volunteers in many different projects or departments. Or it could mean a single, focused programme
- Whatever the scale of your volunteering initiative, make it the responsibility of a named individual
- Recruit openly and select transparently and consistently. Advertise vacancies where possible
- Borrow ideas from organisations that already use volunteers successfully. Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery, for example, used National Trust role descriptions as templates for theirs. Plymouth City Museum and Gallery found the British Museum a generous source of support and advice in their programme and have now shared their own experience with colleagues in the region through a South West Federation training day
- Look for partner organisations. Agencies that work with adults with learning disabilities, or with long-term unemployed people, for example, are often looking for placements for their clients. They may be able to offer you support and specialist advice in return
- Remember that supporting and supervising volunteers needs staff time. You need to be realistic about this, and use your volunteers as a way of helping you achieve something new that will improve your service
- Expanding volunteering at a time of cuts can look like an attempt to make savings by replacing paid staff with people who work for free. You must not do this – or appear to be doing this. The Volunteer Charter produced by the TUC and Volunteering England (see link below) has ideas about how to ensure that the relationship between paid staff and volunteers is harmonious and productive

- If your current volunteer force is made up of older, well-educated people who are confident and self-sufficient, bear in mind that different kinds of volunteers may require more support

Further information

Museum Practice guide to volunteering: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/volunteers>

A charter for strengthening relations between paid staff and volunteers, Volunteering England and the TUC: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-17329-f0.pdf>

Volunteering is an important element of the government's Big Society agenda. For more on how your work might fit within this approach, see an MLA briefing paper on the Big Society: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/mla-briefing-paper-big-society.doc>

This MLA discussion paper provides some useful background on the state of volunteering in the sector, as well as some discussion of possible problems and pitfalls: <http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/documents/discussion-volunteering-in-the-mla-sector-2010.pdf>

Internships are a particular kind of volunteering opportunity, where the intern is using the experience to help with their job hunt and expects a structured learning opportunity. For more advice on running internships, see the Best Practice Guidelines developed by Renaissance London and the Mayor of London: http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance/regions/london/News_and_Resources/~media/London/Files/2010/pdf/Publications/Internship_Best%20Practice_Standard_Guidelines.ashx

6 | HELPING PEOPLE INTO WORK: APPRENTICESHIPS, TRAINEESHIPS AND PLACEMENTS

We spend a lot of time at work seeing the same old faces, so having new faces in the door to interact with gives a different perspective.

Ingrid Wilkes, performance and development manager, Luton Museums

Museums have a long tradition of bringing new people into their workforce by using job-creation schemes and traineeships, most recently the now-closed Future Jobs Fund. In the past few years, museums have also made increasing use of apprenticeships, particularly creative apprenticeships and traineeships, such as Diversify positive-action traineeships. Another way of getting fresh voices into the organisation is by offering shorter-term work experience for people from schoolchildren upwards.

Why focus on schemes to help people into work?

Schemes helping people into work help museums to diversify their workforce. The individuals on the schemes also bring a wide range of benefits to the museum:

- They bring new ideas into the museum, especially if their backgrounds differ from those of existing museum staff

- They are usually members of the local community and so can help the museum understand and connect with local people
- They are often younger than existing staff and so can help with engaging young people in the museum
- They may have skills not otherwise available to the museum; for example they may speak a particular community language, which can help the museum communicate with local people from that community for whom English is a second language
- They give the museum extra capacity, often in front-line delivery posts, supporting and, to an extent, freeing up existing staff to have time to do other work such as evaluation and planning
- They give existing staff experience of line management and an opportunity to work differently



6 | HELPING PEOPLE INTO WORK: APPRENTICESHIPS, TRAINEESHIPS AND PLACEMENTS

Approaches to take: some ideas from museums

Luton Museums: seeing things afresh

"Luton Museums does not miss a trick in terms of providing placements and hosting people at different stages of development, thus embedding a sense of change and diversity," observes Vicki Wood, Luton's workforce diversity adviser under the MA's Support & Challenge programme. Karen Perkins, director of Luton Museums, is convinced of the benefits of a constant flow of people on different types of work experience and training. As she explains, "it challenges people to view their job in a different way because when you start having to explain what you do to new people who know nothing about it, it makes you think differently about the work you do". New people coming in can energise keen staff and rejuvenate staff that might be a little jaded.

They also open the museum's eyes to what audiences want. "People from different backgrounds coming into the sector bring so much with them, so much of a different perspective on everything. They are in some ways better placed to inform what we should be delivering because they come directly from communities. It's one method of having a conversation with communities," says Karen Perkins. She also points out that having lots of people involved is in itself a good thing, as everyone who undertakes work experience helps raise awareness of the museum in the local community, potentially increasing audiences.

Luton Museums has been part of the Renaissance East of England Stepping Stones project, which was one of the first programmes in any sector of the economy funded by the Future Jobs Fund. That particular fund is now closed to new applications, but many of the features of Stepping Stones remain relevant. Museums set out to provide unemployed people with experience of the working world, develop their skills and build confidence. The programme created 32 extra jobs for unemployed young people across 24 museums in areas as varied as events, collections care, catering, retail, and learning and outreach. Most placements were for six months but some were 12- or 18-month apprenticeships.

Luton had four people from Stepping Stones. Ingrid Wilkes, performance and development manager at Luton Museums, explains that the rules and timetable of the scheme meant "we had to get them in very quickly". She had to work with Jobcentre Plus and also bypass normal rigorous recruitment processes. This proved something of an advantage, as they were able to offer one place to "someone who was probably the least likely candidate," who lacked qualifications and experience but seemed to have enthusiasm and aptitude, and had the most potential to benefit from the opportunity. The gamble paid off - he is now a member of the staff and is taking further training.

In any placement scheme, Ingrid Wilkes stresses the importance of matching the work experience and training to each individual's interests and motives. It is also good to encourage them to experience a range of roles and take up varied training and development opportunities as they arise.

Karen Perkins says a number of things are important organisationally for successful placements and traineeships. It is important to integrate trainees properly in the teams they are working for and not see them as extras. If they are part of a wider scheme run from outside the museum, ensure that they are linked properly into the museum's structures as well. It is important to make sure members of staff understand why the museum is offering training places and why it wants more diverse people working for it. It helps to include supervising or working with trainees and volunteers in staff job descriptions so that people see it as a core part of their job and don't regard it as an onerous extra task.

Formal schemes like apprenticeships tend to rely on external funding but, says Ingrid Wilkes, "you can do quite a lot for not a lot of cost". For example, some levels of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) can be obtained free. If funding is tight in future, it may be possible to create an informal low-cost hybrid of volunteering and an apprenticeship in which the volunteer gains a qualification such as an NVQ. As it would be unpaid, it is not ideal - but it is arguably better than attending college because it would give extensive work experience as well as a qualification.

6 | HELPING PEOPLE INTO WORK: APPRENTICESHIPS, TRAINEESHIPS AND PLACEMENTS

Lincolnshire: creative apprenticeships and widening participation

Lincolnshire Heritage Services offers a range of work experience and training opportunities. The service hosted Rebecca Storr, the first museum-based creative apprentice to complete in England, who said at the end of her year at the Collection in Lincoln, "I have taken away with me a huge variety of different skills that will effectively serve me". She is now employed in the museum sector.

Creative apprenticeships offer a route into the sector that enables museums to recruit people for their ability and potential rather than their qualifications and experience. The apprentices are paid for up to two years, they gain on-the-job work experience in a cultural organisation and train at a nearby college. Ron Frayne, workforce development manager for Lincolnshire culture and adult education, explains: "It is a mix of on-the-job and off-the-job training where young people have the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge and gain qualifications while doing so. Apprenticeships fill current skills gaps and ensure we have the expertise we need for the future. Taking on an apprentice is cost effective because your people can learn while they're on the job and the government contributes to the costs of learning."

For museums, the most relevant creative apprenticeship is in the area of Cultural and Heritage Venue Operations. Creative and Cultural Skills, the organisation that oversees creative apprenticeships, says apprentices tend to be highly motivated and eager to learn. As well as contributing directly to the museum's work they bring in new ideas from their college, and existing staff develop by mentoring apprentices. Mike Benson, director of Ryedale Folk Museum, says of his museum's apprentice, "he is changing the dynamics of this place – asking the right questions that make us stop and think".

Apprenticeships appear to be a potential growth area: in the October 2010 spending review, the government announced its intention to double the number of apprenticeships in England, providing an extra 75,000 places a year from 2014/15.

Wendy Moore, regional workforce development officer at Renaissance East Midlands, sees creative apprenticeships as part of a range of work to diversify the museum workforce, which also includes positive-action traineeships and work with secondary-school pupils. In addition, museums in the East Midlands collaborate with Nottingham Trent University in its work to widen participation in higher education. Young people who might not otherwise attend university, particularly from lower socio-economic backgrounds, have their course fees paid and receive bursaries of £200 a term to study for a professional certificate or diploma in heritage tourism that can lead to employment or build up credits towards a degree. The standard entry requirement is A-levels, but to encourage a wide range of applicants there is flexibility to offer places to people without qualifications who have the desire and interest to develop a career in museums.

The programme is promoted to potential participants as providing the skills needed "to get your first step on the career ladder". At its core is an assessed work placement at a museum or heritage site. Of the 15 people in the first October 2010 intake, almost half are from a minority-ethnic group or have a disability, increasing the diversity of people with knowledge and experience to work in museums.

In addition to diversifying the workforce, Ron Frayne identifies other reasons for museums to offer work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships.

"It introduces into the sector people with new skills and ideas by offering an alternative route to harness fresh talent. If you have trained staff with the right skills for the job, they can do a wider range of tasks and take on new responsibilities. This can help to reduce skills shortages, minimise staff turnover and workplace accidents and increase productivity."

6 | HELPING PEOPLE INTO WORK: APPRENTICESHIPS, TRAINEESHIPS AND PLACEMENTS

Hints and tips

- Properly integrate trainees into the teams they are working for
- Ensure that trainees are linked properly into the museum's structures, especially if they are part of a wider scheme run from outside the museum
- Ensure you fully understand the requirements of those offering the funding for trainees
- Make sure staff understand why the museum is offering training places
- Have a small budget to pay trainees' extra expenses
- Allocate enough time to supervise and support trainees
- Include supervising or working with trainees and volunteers in staff job descriptions
- Share out responsibility for overseeing short-term work experience placements between different staff
- Weekly debriefs with trainees are useful to help the trainee – but also so the museum can learn from the trainee's knowledge and experience

Further information

Creative apprenticeships:
www.creative-choices.co.uk/knowledge/creative-apprenticeships

and

www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Types-of-Apprenticeships/Arts-Media-and-Publishing/Creative.aspx

Apprentices at Brighton and Hove Museums blog at:
culturalapprentices.blogspot.com

Studies in Partnership: Stepping Stones, Renaissance East of England, 2010 available at: www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance/regions/east_of_england/news/publications



7 | ABOUT THE PROGRAMMES SMARTER MUSEUMS AND SUPPORT & CHALLENGE

The guidance and case studies in this guide are mainly drawn from two MA programmes. Between them **Support & Challenge** and **Smarter Museums** explored how to get different types of people working for you and how to use people working for you differently. They both dealt with organisational change and working inclusively with a diverse range of people. This final section outlines the two programmes, both of which were funded as part of Renaissance by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

Support & Challenge

Aims and process

In the Support & Challenge programme, the MA worked with Renaissance hub museums to help them take forward their existing Workforce Diversity Action Plans. The aims were that the museums should commit to workforce diversity as a priority area of work and embed it in every area of operation, and actively progress workforce diversification. As part of this, it was intended that the museums should learn from each other and the MLA should receive a nuanced picture of the museums' progress.

In summer 2009, the MA recruited eight workforce diversity advisers to work with the nine regional groups of hub museums. The advisers acted as a 'critical friend'. They assessed each museum's action plan and provided support, advice, training and networking for senior staff with responsibility for workforce diversification.

The advisers submitted final reports on the approach to workforce diversification in each region and at each individual museum in May 2010.

The MA also ran a series of events for the museums to learn from experts and from each other. These were Creating a Diverse Workforce (London, November 2009; Manchester, 2009); and the Single Equalities Bill (London and York, February 2010).

Results

The advisers reported that in many of the museums diversity is a core part of organisational activity and gave many examples of excellent practice, some of which are described earlier in this guide. In general, Renaissance support was felt to have helped speed up the pace of change and enabled many museums to achieve notable change.

However, the advisers warned against complacency as some museums were finding it hard to prioritise workforce diversity in the face of competing demands on staff time. In addition, they noted that museums cannot change the makeup of the workforce overnight or even over a few years and stressed it needed a long-term approach. Some museums were still failing to collect adequate data on the diversity of their workforce and others had decided to abandon targets. Rather than tracking measurable changes in workforce diversification, Support & Challenge kept workforce diversity on each museum's agenda.

7 ABOUT THE PROGRAMMES SMARTER MUSEUMS AND SUPPORT & CHALLENGE

Smarter Museums

Aims and process

In the Smarter Museums programme, the MA worked with ten museums to help them with organisational change in areas such as vision, values, behaviours, attitudes, processes, practices and structures. A key aim of the programme was that the museums should develop an organisational culture more open to diversity. Museums in England were invited to apply, encouraged by the offer of £5,000 for staff development. (Renaissance hub museums were not eligible to apply.) The MA also appointed, in open competition, five advisers to work with the museums. The selection and appointment of museums and advisers was completed in September 2009.

Each museum was to have a tailored programme of development and training, guided by one of the advisers, which would lead to changes in organisational culture. To support the bespoke approach, the MA worked with the advisers to agree the key principles and approaches that would be encouraged in the programme:

- a coaching style of leadership
- inclusive working and decision-making, especially through the use of 'diagonal slice' groups of staff
- creative and positive meetings
- conversations and listening
- delegation and empowerment

Two particular methodologies adopted were:

- the Kotter model of change
- the Thinking Environment (based on the work of Nancy Kline)

In October 2009, all the museums and advisers came together. The advisers then had initial meetings with individual museums. Approaches varied, but typically after an initial meeting with senior staff, a session was held for all staff, or a 'diagonal slice' group of staff. In January 2010, all the museums and advisers came together again to explore learning styles, facilitating creative meetings, coaching and how inclusive working can help achieve the organisation's vision. The all-museum meetings were designed so that participants could learn from each other's experience and build a peer group for support. A highlight of the programme was a two-day residential meeting in March 2010, which was attended by 25 participants from the museums.

The advisers continued with tailored support for individual museums until autumn 2010; a final meeting of museums and advisers was held in September 2010.

Results

At first, some of the participant museums were perhaps reluctant to embrace the need for organisational change and had applied to join the programme primarily to gain £5,000 for staff development and training. As Lucy Shaw, the overall coordinator of Smarter Museums, puts it, "the first time the museums got together you could see the looks of horror and eyes to the ceiling. Some people found it hard to understand why they needed to change. They kind of knew that things in their museums weren't great, but there wasn't the desire or urgency to change. It was only after working with their advisers that people began to see why their organisation needed to change."

Most of the museums were quickly won round, in part because, as one museum manager says, "the advisers genuinely looked at and asked what the individual organisation needed, rather than it being a pre-planned, externally imposed programme". Many of the museums started from a relatively low point with, for example, hierarchical structures, reluctance to delegate decisions and poor internal communication. Furthermore, the programme was quite short in duration - under 12 months, whereas deep organisational change can take a few years. In general, the advisers felt that they wanted more time to spend with each museum, something Lucy Shaw agrees with in retrospect. She also thinks in any future programme it would be better if museums could play a part in selecting their own adviser, rather than having one allocated to them.

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Nevertheless, there was a marked change in most of the museums. There were many improvements to internal communication and decision-making, in some cases leading directly to improved services for visitors. Gaby Porter, one of the advisers, says the external stimulus and support of Smarter Museums “gave people the opportunity to tackle things they knew were a problem, but hadn’t previously done anything about”. Lucy Shaw says: “People participating in Smarter Museums got more confident, re-motivated, more interested in the organisation, more inspired. Those are the sorts of values we wanted to instil in the museums, and to make them the kinds of places people want to work in.” Some of the relatively small, low-cost elements of Smarter Museums made a marked change to organisational culture.

When the programme was designed, the intention was to devise benchmarks for assessing organisational performance in areas such as behaviours, attitudes and practices. However, the advisers concluded that this would be inappropriate as each organisation was so different, with specific operational practice and history. Therefore, generic benchmarks were not prepared.

Overall, most museum managers found the Smarter Museums programme valuable and effective and hope to continue to build on it. One manager says: “For a small and short-term project with a small pot of money it’s had an amazing impact.” Another says: “Looking back on my career I believe that Smarter Museums has been one of the best things that I’ve been associated with.”



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