



China in Yorkshire Community Programme

Evaluation report
December 2008

Hayton Associates
on behalf of
Renaissance Yorkshire



Contents



Executive summary	3.
1.0 Introduction	6.
2.0 Programme outcomes	8.
2.1 <i>Impact on the community</i>	8.
2.2 <i>Impact on visitors</i>	13.
2.3 <i>Impact on museums and museum staff</i>	16.
2.4 <i>Outcomes related to the GSOs</i>	18.
3.0 The regional role	20.
4.0 Success factors	21.
5.0 Recommendations	24.
6.0 Conclusion	26.

Executive summary



Hayton Associates was contracted by Renaissance Yorkshire in August 2007 to undertake the evaluation of the community engagement aspect of the China in Yorkshire programme. The evaluation was carried out between August 2007 and September 2008. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered from visitors, participants, partners and museum staff using a combination of assisted questionnaires, interviews, group discussion, observations and desk research. This report is a summary of the findings.

Impact on the community

Each museum service has reached out to the community and included them in museum activity in a culturally sensitive way.

Some of the community participants interviewed for the evaluation have changed their perceptions of museums. They have been surprised by the interest shown in their culture and in their personal stories. They feel that their contribution has been valued and that they have had an opportunity to share their personal histories and cultural heritage with a broader audience.

Some community members felt that they had learned about their own culture through these projects. They also suggested that others have learned or should learn from the exhibitions.

Older community members were keen that through this programme they were able to share their knowledge with their children and with the younger Chinese generation, this they felt they had achieved. Young people were surprised at what the older generation knew and were able to learn from them.

There is a great deal of enthusiasm from the community for continuing the work started in the China in Yorkshire projects. Organisations need to plan in and express early on in the projects how they will build on that work in the future

Impact on visitors

The visitors who were interviewed provided very positive feedback on the exhibitions. They enjoyed the community work displayed and its juxtaposition with traditional and contemporary objects and interpretations.

Up to 85% of visitors said that they had learned something new about Chinese people and Chinese culture as a direct result of attending an exhibition. They were particularly interested in the family histories and the contribution that the British-based community has made to society. The differences between the cultures were remarked upon as were specific historical aspects of the exhibitions.

Approximately half of those who responded felt that their visit to the exhibition had made them feel differently about museums and galleries and over 97% would make a return visit.

Impact on museums and museum staff

Participation in the project has encouraged change in curatorial work practice and shown the value of community input. It has shown that museums can represent diverse cultures in an accessible and interesting way.

It has engendered a better understanding of Chinese culture that will have a positive effect on attitudes to engaging with other cultural groups.

The regional role

The regional approach has added value to the programme. It has played a significant role in encouraging the sharing of knowledge and resources between partners. By meeting together partners were able to share knowledge and to start to build new working relationships. They became more aware of what was going on in the region. A good basis for future Hub-wide projects has been established.

Success factors

Through this evaluation we are starting to see a number of key elements that need to be considered to ensure a successful community engagement project. These include:

- Effective brokerage between community members and museum staff.
- The investment of time in the development of trust and understanding.
- Trust in the process and building an environment where the community can lead the process.
- Commitment to quality, in the expertise of outreach workers and artists and the high production values of exhibition design.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations are proposed below that relate to future community engagement projects developed locally and/or regionally.

- There is a need to plan in a legacy for community engagement projects as consideration needs to be given to what will be offered to the community once the project is complete. It is recommended that at least one member of the museum staff team works directly with the community to ensure learning is retained by the organisation.
- Invest time at the start of the process to establish a shared understanding of the project objectives with the community. Project artists should also be involved in the planning process.

- Set up opportunities for dialogue with the community so they can shape projects and thus build ownership for them.
- Broaden the range of communities to work with, it may be more interesting to work with a range of different communities encouraging broader interpretations.
- Continue to invest in quality in order to show the value that museums place on their work with communities.
- Add layers of interpretation so that objects and collections are seen from a range of different viewpoints.
- Promote learning with visitors by exploring ways to ensure that future exhibitions with community involvement have a high profile within venues.
- Build on the regional approach, future projects can continue to be managed regionally and future regional projects could include more time and resources for knowledge transfer between partners.

Conclusion

China in Yorkshire has been very successful in engaging members of the Chinese communities of Yorkshire in the development of exhibitions.

All of the projects have applied curatorial expertise effectively and sensitively and the exhibitions all show a balance between community and professional input. The handling activities in particular, with the involvement of curators, seemed to be successful in building bridges between the museum staff and members of the community. However there needs to be further consideration of integrating the community in the development and design of the exhibitions overall.

The regional focus of the project has been successful and added value to the programme. Key challenges now are how to build on the contacts already made through this project and, what themes for future regional projects will prompt the same level of enthusiasm and commitment from partners.

1.0 Introduction



Hayton Associates was contracted by Renaissance Yorkshire in August 2007 to undertake the evaluation of the community engagement aspect of the China in Yorkshire programme. The evaluation was carried out between August 2007 and September 2008. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered from visitors, participants, partners and museum staff using a combination of assisted questionnaires, interviews, observations, group discussion and desk research. This report is a summary of the findings.

1.1 Background and context

Designed to address the call for the forthcoming Cultural Olympiad, China in Yorkshire was delivered by the Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield and York museum services, culminating in five China themed exhibitions during 2008. One of the key activities was a major community engagement programme with local Black and Minority Ethnic groups (predominately of Chinese origin). They have had opportunities to explore their cultural heritage and their sense of identity through undertaking a community history project, oral history and participating in creative workshops. This is the main focus of this evaluation.

In addition as part of the project, British Born Chinese artists were commissioned to provide contemporary responses to the exhibitions taking place in Sheffield and Bradford.

Running alongside each exhibition there has been a programme of activities and events to provide an awareness of Chinese arts and culture in the region.

China in Yorkshire was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Arts Council England Yorkshire and Renaissance Yorkshire.

1.2 Aim of the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to examine the impact of China in Yorkshire on:

- Yorkshire's Black and Minority Ethnic communities (predominately Chinese)
- Participating museums
- Visitors to the China in Yorkshire exhibitions

The purpose is:

- To demonstrate the value of the programme to funders
- To inform the Hub's future plans for work with diverse communities
- To understand how museums can better support wider social agendas, in particular cultural diversity and identity.

Scope of the research

The research explored the community engagement work that took place in all the participating partner services including:

- Exhibitions at Cliffe Castle (Keighley), Lotherton Hall (Leeds) and Leeds City Library, Graves Art Gallery and Weston Park Museum (Sheffield) and the Castle Museum (York).
- Community engagement programmes by all four partners. These were with Chinese communities in Sheffield, Leeds and York and the young Asian community in Bradford.

The questions explored include:

- Has China in Yorkshire changed the perception of museums for those community groups that have been directly involved with the programme? Has it changed their attitudes and values, including perceptions of their own culture and heritage?
- What have the participating museums learned about engaging with culturally diverse communities? How can this inform future practice?
- Have the exhibitions improved the knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture with general visitors?
- What has been the impact of the partnership delivery model for China in Yorkshire? Has working together added value to the work of the individual services?

1.3 Reporting outcomes

The focus of this report is to provide a clear and concise summary of the outcomes of the community engagement programme of China in Yorkshire across all four services. In addition the key factors that contributed to its success will be drawn out so that lessons learned can feed into the development of any future planned work.

Section 2.0 will cover the impact the programme has had on the community, visitors and museums and their staff. Section 3.0 will examine the added value of a regional approach. The key success factors are covered in section 4.0, with recommendations in section 5.0 and the conclusion, section 6.0.

The projects in Leeds, Sheffield and York share a common approach where community members have made an input into the final exhibition. Bradford's approach was different in that a museum family trail was put in place and the community have been invited to participate in related activities. A Young Ambassador's scheme was established in late Summer 2008. The programme is currently in its infancy and consequently activity will increase in

the future. The outcomes described in this report therefore relate predominantly to activities delivered by York, Sheffield and Leeds.

2.0 Programme outcomes



2.1 Impact on the community

The China in Yorkshire programme has been very successful in engaging members of the community in the creation of exhibitions focused on China.

Extent of participation

At the point of data collection for the evaluation a total of 177 community participants were recorded as being actively involved in the projects with museums. They have ranged in age from five to 65 plus and the majority have been Chinese or British Born Chinese (82%) drawn from the communities in Leeds, Sheffield and York. Approximately 16% were British born Asian resident in Keighley.

Other members of the Chinese community have also participated or attended performances and events or visited exhibitions across the region. For example in Leeds this amounted to an estimated 686 people engaged in these activities.

Nature of participation

Through creative workshops, handling sessions, oral history interviews, filming and photography members of the community have been enabled and supported by artists, outreach workers and curators to make a direct input into the China in Yorkshire exhibitions. For example their photographs and family histories were exhibited on a timeline at the Castle Museum, York. In Leeds, at Lotherton Hall and the Central Library, young people's precious things, community photographs and loaned items were exhibited. In the Graves Art Gallery the Sheffield Chinese Community's Memory Book and eight original pieces of digital art produced by young people were exhibited alongside pieces from the Grice Ivories collection. At Cliffe Castle the Young Ambassador's are working with the museum to explore ways of making the museum more accessible to young people and enhancing the China in Yorkshire museum trail, a development which has been made possible through the China in Yorkshire project.

Methods of engagement

Each museum service has reached out to the community and included them in museum activity in a culturally sensitive way. The museums took the

initiative and invited members of the community to collaborate with them. Each service had a real commitment to working with the community and was keen to find ways in which people, new to museums, could make a contribution to shaping the exhibitions.

There was a desire from museum curators to learn from the community about their Chinese collections and to add to them. Where this was prioritised within museums, staff were able to invest time in building effective working relationships with members of the community and community workers.

The Chinese artists and outreach workers employed to act as brokers between the community and the museum have played an important role. They added to the capacity of the participating museums to work alongside the community. They provided translation in terms of language and concepts between the community and the museums. They were able to effectively negotiate and facilitate levels and type of participation. Artists also brought their own practice and expertise to the projects which impacted on the quality and appearance of some of the work exhibited.

Changing attitudes towards museums

Some of the community participants interviewed for the evaluation have changed their perceptions of museums. They have been surprised by the interest shown in their culture and in their personal stories. They feel that their contribution has been valued and that they have had an opportunity to share their personal histories and cultural heritage with a broader audience. They also feel that exhibitions represent the whole of the Chinese community, not just one aspect.

I'm surprised that museums...would take such an interest in other cultures, that's why I wanted...this opportunity to become a part of it.

Community participant

It has encouraged members of the community to visit museums who would not have done so before and it has generated a desire to do more work with them.

I had never seen the traditional stuff. In Hong Kong people don't go to museums, like if you live in Leeds you never go to Leeds museum. I learned about my own culture and saw the modern Chinese alongside the very old. I was surprised that you can find this in England.

Community participant

Observation suggests that members of the community feel comfortable in 'their' exhibition spaces and that they have invited friends and family to see their work.

However, while it is true that people have visited museums as part of this project it is unlikely that they will continue to do so in significant numbers as the barriers of transport, time and custom will remain once the resources of the project have gone.

Promoting social inclusion

People enjoyed their involvement in the projects. They were actively engaged and their contributions were respected. The high production values for all the exhibitions underpinned this feeling and showed the value the museums placed on the community members' work.

The exhibitions raised the profile of local Chinese communities at a time when China was in the public eye. Participants were proud of the work they had produced. Ownership and commitment grew when people could bring their own ideas, memories and experiences to the work.

Originally the participants were shy and cool, now they are eager. Its fabulous, much better than I expected. The involvement and sharing, I didn't think it would happen, but I wanted to try ... and this is stunning.

Community worker

The projects provided opportunities for people to work together, meet new people, make new friends and go to different places.

The programme has provided a link between Chinese communities and mainstream culture

From my observation the community members all have positive views about the project. It can really help to bridge the cultures, increase a sense of belonging and understanding.

Project artist

Increasing learning about Chinese culture

Older community members were keen that through this programme they were able to share their knowledge with their children and with the younger Chinese generation, this they felt they had achieved.

Young people were surprised at what the older generation knew and were able to learn from them.

I thought that the group had never touched on these areas before [what they knew about the figures in the ivory carvings] but I got that wrong. They know more stories than me, actually they are very educated but don't know how to express it.

Community worker

Some community members felt that they had learned about their own culture through these projects. They were also keen to suggest that others have learned or should learn from the exhibitions. It was felt important for children and families to have these experiences.

People are more aware of Chinese histories ... Also kids learn about their own culture. It is rare for Chinese families to go to museums. To look at the Chinese and the other stuff there broadened their knowledge.

Community participant

Developing a legacy

There is a great deal of enthusiasm for continuing the work started in the China in Yorkshire projects. Almost all of those interviewed expressed a desire to participate in future projects. Some of the museums have planned how to extend their work with these communities. For example, Sheffield is working towards linking individual participants and groups into other museum-based initiatives. One young person has completed a two-week work placement and has joined the museum's Youth Forum. Members of the Evergreen Agewell Group have participated in the Get Knitted exhibition in Sheffield.

Leeds has ensured that some of the resources developed through the community projects remain with the community. For example copies of photographs were given to participants after the elders' portrait sessions and many of the larger, framed photographs selected for display will be given to the Leeds Chinese Community Association at the end of the project. Resources such as a DVD player and a scanner/printer will remain with the Association so that they can show their DVD to the wider Chinese community.

Projects such as these build up expectations within the community. Organisations therefore have a responsibility to manage those expectations. If there is a genuine commitment to community engagement, a strategy for extending the work with the people who have participated is vital in order to build on the work carried out, all of which takes a great deal of investment in time and resources. Where there are no plans in place to continue working with the community, it is likely that people will feel let down. Contacts made will be lost and it will be more difficult to build relationships in the future.

Involvement in interpretation

The projects have engaged people in the interpretation of objects in the collections to varying degrees of success.

There appear to be a number of reasons for this all of which have been reported by Chinese participants, community workers or artists:

- First generation Chinese people are unfamiliar with museums and their purpose
- It was difficult to explain the concept of social history because of language barriers or the perceived lack of time spent by the museum in communicating ideas

My Mum did not understand what the museum was doing. I don't think its been properly explained. Although objectives have been shown, there was nothing that she really related to. I think that went for the other older members of the community too.

Community participant

- translation from English to Cantonese was sometimes through a Mandarin speaker, or through someone with less developed language skills

I have the language level of a five year old, I can't get across ideas of social history and volunteering, quite big concepts. Its lost in translation, there are some things that just cannot be said in Chinese.

Community participant

- Chinese people are not necessarily interested in Chinese things, particularly those who have chosen to live in the West
- Arts and crafts is seen as either an elitist (fine art) or a childish (play) thing to do and elders could not always see the relevance of the creative activities.

However it must be emphasised that all the projects have applied their curatorial expertise effectively and sensitively and the exhibitions all show a balance between community and professional input. The handling activities in particular, with the involvement of curators, seemed to be successful in building bridges between the community members and the museum staff.

Engaging with other communities

It is interesting that Bradford Museums, from the outset, made the decision to work with young people in Keighley, rather than trying to engage with the small and dispersed Chinese community in Bradford District. There is no reason to suppose that there should be a direct cultural relationship between the exhibition theme and the cultural background of the communities engaged. More important are the opportunities set up for dialogue with the community who, if given the chance, will articulate very clearly their responses to particular subjects. It is then up to the skill of the education and curatorial team to impart layers of interpretation on the exhibition that reflect a range of different stories, reactions and knowledge. Initial response from the work in Bradford indicates that this has been a particularly rewarding aspect of the project for the project manager.

2.2 Impact on visitors

This section is based on information gathered from 142 visitors to the exhibitions at the Castle Museum, Lotherton Hall, Graves Arts Gallery, Leeds Central Library and Cliffe Castle. The assisted questionnaires were carried out at events related to the exhibitions to ensure there would be a critical mass of visitors prepared to participate. All the events were designed for a family audience and for this reason there may be more emphasis placed by these visitors on engaging children. Also adult visitors may have had less of their own time to spend on the exhibitions.

Enjoyment

All the exhibitions received positive feedback from visitors. Generally 97% to 100% of visitors felt the exhibitions were excellent, very good or good. Only two respondents thought the exhibition they attended was average or poor.

The aspects of the exhibitions that most people particularly liked were:

- The family histories and the pieces produced by the community. As well as of interest to adult visitors, these were felt to be good for children to see, it was something they could easily relate to.
- Museum or gallery-based activities, which again were seen to be good for children, including gallery interactives e.g. dressing up or participating in artist-led workshops.
- The juxtaposition of contemporary, community and traditional work in the exhibitions.

The quality of the exhibits was amazing, the interpretation was very good, there was a nice balance of information. I liked the community interaction on display. Peach blossom [contemporary piece] was an interesting contrast with the older work.

Community worker

- Two Chinese visitors enjoyed the incongruity of Chinese designed knives and forks.

We like the knives and forks because we do not use them, its not genuine Chinese design, its really good because of the combination of cultures.

Visitors, The Castle Museum

- People mentioned specific objects from the collections on display. The ivories at the Graves Gallery were particularly well-liked. People mentioned the intricacy of the carving and its links with Sheffield.
- Some enjoyed the entire exhibition and how it was designed (at the Castle Museum and the Graves Art Gallery) or how it represented different aspects of Chinese culture e.g. at Lotherton Hall.

Learning about Chinese people and Chinese culture

Between 33% (Castle Museum) and 85% (Graves Art Gallery) of the visitors interviewed felt that they had learned something new about Chinese people and Chinese culture as a result of the exhibition they had attended. People were more likely to have learned from exhibitions where the China in Yorkshire exhibition was the main focus in the venue e.g. at the Graves Art Gallery or Leeds Central Library.

- Visitors described learning about the British-based Chinese communities, how well-established they are and what they have contributed to English society e.g. serving in WWII.
- They highlighted the differences between cultures they had observed e.g. foot binding, festivals, religion, dress and mythology.
- They also talked about specific historical aspects of the exhibitions e.g. the silk route or the role of the ivories in the cutlery industry in Sheffield.

Didn't realise the intricacies of carvings used to teach people in Sheffield how to carve, I come from a steel and silver working family, for 400 hundred years, so I'm really interested in this aspect

Visitor, Graves Art Gallery

Those that said that they had not learned anything new tended to be already familiar with Chinese culture or they didn't have the time or the inclination to look in detail because they were with children. Only two people said that they were not interested in China or Chinese people.

Changing attitudes towards museums

25% to 30% of visitors to York, Bradford and Leeds were new visitors (15% Graves Art Gallery) and 91% to 100% of visitors asked said they would visit the museum again.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the exhibition and activities in Cliffe Castle have encouraged many repeat visits.

A significant number, approximately half (within the range of 48% to 64%), of the visitors who responded said that they felt differently about museums and galleries as a result of attending the China in Yorkshire exhibition. Those whose attitudes did not change said it was because they were already familiar with the museum/gallery they were visiting and it lived up to their expectations.

New visitors were surprised at what there was to do

I didn't realise there was so much going on. It's not just a crusty old building, it's done to encourage people to come in.

Visitor, Bradford

People who had visited before commented that museums were improved or better than they thought, more diverse, more interactive and more interesting than they remembered. They appreciated that exhibitions change and liked the fact that different cultures were represented and that China in Yorkshire had introduced a global perspective.

What visitors did not like

Visitors were invited to feedback on what they did not like about the exhibitions. A relatively small number of negative comments related to the overall design or the environment. For example, it was felt that exhibitions were too dark or objects were dotted about with no focus at Lotherton Hall. At The Graves Gallery, interactives were disliked or seen as inappropriate in a museum. Other comments related to a dislike of the objects themselves e.g. people felt uncomfortable with exhibits made from ivory.

2.3 Impact on museums and museum staff

Participation in the project has encouraged change in curatorial work practice and shown the value of community input. It has shown that museums can represent diverse cultures in an accessible and interesting way.

It has engendered a better understanding of Chinese culture that will have a positive effect on attitudes to engaging with other cultural groups. Individual staff have become more confident and enjoyed Chinese culture and are making personal visits to Chinese restaurants and supermarkets.

It has developed a better understanding of current Chinese collections which may have an impact in future collections policies.

The China in Yorkshire trail in Bradford has enabled the introduction of a global dimension to a local museum by showing the role of China and Chinese objects in the general collection.

Working across teams

The China in Yorkshire projects have provided opportunities for teams within museums to work together. For example community/learning teams working closely with curators. This is a way of working which some people are keen to repeat. It was felt that the engagement of the community in the development of exhibitions provided learning opportunities for curators and that the exhibitions were of a better quality because of it. Exhibitions were seen to be 'brought to life' by the stories of the local Chinese community.

I would hope that we work in this way again. We can work with the community even if there is not an obvious link. I would think differently about it in future from a curatorial point of view, it can give another aspect, can speak to the audience. It brings a positive element and it is important to make it an integral part of the exhibition. It can feed positively into your work and it doesn't need to be education just working separately.

Curator

Front of house staff

The regional training for front of house (FOH) staff was well received and has had an impact back into museums. FOH staff have developed an understanding of the purpose of the projects and their significance for audience development. Because they have enjoyed the activities they participated in they have encouraged visitors to participate too.

Our trip to York Castle Museum at the beginning of China in Yorkshire was really worthwhile. It helped us feel part of the project and explain things about Chinese culture to family visitors over the summer.

Front of House Team member

Retaining learning

Where capacity for these projects was built through the employment of freelance or temporary staff there is a danger that the learning that took place about community engagement may be lost. It is important that at least one member of the museum's permanent staff is closely involved directly with the community so that the learning and contacts made are retained by the museum.

Resources

The projects have developed new resources that can be used by the museums in the future. For example, there are plans to archive the oral history recordings and films and make them available through the Mylearning website. In Leeds, costumes, puppets and masks will be used with other exhibitions and the Chinese Treasures booklet which accompanied the Lotherton Hall exhibition will be published on the Leeds collections website.

Each museum and gallery has added to or enhanced their collections and each has made contact with new partners in the community.

Two of the museums have seen the potential of dedicating new spaces to temporary exhibitions (the Castle Museum and Cliffe Castle).

2.4 Outcomes related to generic social outcomes (GSOs)

The programme outcomes have been plotted against the GSOs in order to describe the ways in which the China in Yorkshire community programme may have had a positive impact on social outcomes for participants and museum visitors.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) devised the GSO framework as a means of identifying ways in which museums, libraries and archives build social capital and contribute to broader social policy objectives such as community cohesion, cultural diversity and cultural identity.

MLA developed a social outcomes framework which identifies three key social outcomes and breaks them down further into specific 'second tier' outcome themes¹. As the outcomes that have been identified from this evaluation appear to match closely some of the GSOs it seemed valuable to apply them here. In this way outcomes could be identified and categorised so that the potential social impact of the community engagement aspect of China in Yorkshire could be assessed.

The key focus of the China in Yorkshire community programme has been social inclusion, particularly related to cultural diversity and identity. Through the application of the GSOs it can be seen that the impact may be broader ranging than anticipated. It is important to consider however, when reading the table overleaf, that the GSOs describe potential rather than an actual, objective measure of impact.

¹ For further information see www.mla.gov.uk/website/policy/communities/gso_overview/

GSOs related to the China in Yorkshire Community Programme

GSO	China in Yorkshire Community programme - tier 2 outcomes
STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES	Improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Project participants</i> - have had opportunities to work together, share personal histories with one another and have forged new friendships. <i>Visitors</i> - gained a better understanding of the Chinese communities in the areas in which they live
	Supporting cultural diversity and identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Project participants</i> - learned about their own historical culture; creatively explored their culture in the context of Britain in the 21st Century; some felt they had gained a better understanding of their own personal histories. <i>Visitors</i> - learned about Chinese people and culture, have become aware that the community is well-established and has made a significant contribution to society.
	Encouraging familial ties and relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Project participants</i> - shared stories and knowledge of Chinese culture across generations. Young participants and community workers assumptions about the older generation were challenged and a new respect for their knowledge was engendered. Older participants felt that a mark of success for the project for themselves would be that they would be able to share their stories with the younger generation, this they felt they had achieved.
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Encouraging healthy lifestyles and contributing to mental and physical well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Project participants</i> - elders were able to forge new relationships, meet new people and go to new places, all of which contributed to overcoming isolation and engendered a sense of well-being and could contribute positively to mental health.
	Helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Project participants</i> - young participants were keen to share their culture in new and interesting ways, this they achieved through the creative activities of the project. They enjoyed the work they did and were proud of what they produced.
STRENGTHENING PUBLIC LIFE	Providing safe, inclusive and trusted public spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Project participants</i> - Felt comfortable within 'their' exhibitions, have developed relationships with members of the museums' staff and are keen to work on similar projects in the future. <i>Visitors</i> - are more aware of the diversity of museum collections
	Enabling community empowerment through the awareness of rights, benefits and external services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Project participants</i> - have become more aware of museums, their services and collections. <i>Visitors</i> - are more aware of the commitment museums have to social inclusion
	Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Museum staff</i> - have learned how to engage with different communities more effectively, are keen to find ways to integrate this way of working into future practice and have seen the benefits to the community, themselves

	and the services they offer of working with the community.
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3.0 The regional role



The regional management model for the China in Yorkshire programme has been effective and robust and the regional approach has added value to the programme

The Co-ordinating role was effective in that it provided a point of focus for the project and helped to drive it forward. Project partners valued the Co-ordinators contacts and language skills. The Hub team has contributed to the success of the project through its overall project management and in supporting key regional activities.

All partners have benefited from the regional marketing strategy, local, regional and national press coverage and the China in Yorkshire website. The regional launch event in York provided a context for all the exhibitions and a point of celebration for members of the community.

As with any project of this size and complexity there have been some communication problems, most of which have been overcome with time. China in Yorkshire was very well received and supported by all partners, all of whom were involved in planning the project at an early stage. It was timely in that it was able to take advantage of the public interest in China during the Beijing Olympics and the funding bid allowed for differences of delivery between sites.

Participation in China in Yorkshire has widened to other non-Hub museums who have also benefited from the regional marketing approach. This has had a positive impact on the Hub's reputation and made China in Yorkshire a genuinely regional initiative.

The regional approach played a significant role in encouraging the sharing of knowledge and resources between partners. By meeting together during the steering group meetings and on the China visit, partners were able to share knowledge and to start to build new working relationships. They became more aware of what was going on in the region. This has built a good basis for future Hub-wide projects.

4.0 Success factors



Through this evaluation we are starting to see what key elements need to be considered to ensure a successful community engagement project. These include:

- effective brokerage and catalyst for change
- investing time
- trusting the process
- commitment to quality

Brokerage and investing time

The employment of Chinese artists and outreach workers has worked well. They have been able to broker relationships between community groups and the museums. They have provided an interesting and stimulating programme of activities which have, on the whole, engaged members of the community in creative activities.

Their language skills have been invaluable in providing a means of communication with people whose first language is not English. However the communication of unfamiliar concepts has not always been successful. It may be useful to consider a minimum level of language skills needed and ensure that this is in place at least some of the time in all of the different project settings.

The development of relationships between community members and museum staff was very successful when a member of the museum service was working closely alongside the artist. This happened in Leeds where the curator is now very well-known and respected by members of the community. It is vital that museums make this a priority and invest core staff time in this activity.

The artists were very motivated to work on this project as its ambitions matched their own. They were keen to work with the Chinese community, to develop their community arts practice and to give a voice to British Born Chinese people. Because of their central role they need to be involved in the early planning stages of projects. In this way they will be able to gain a clear understanding of what the museum wants, what their role will be and how they can develop the work effectively with the community. Their creative expertise can also enhance the project proposals and may increase opportunities for funding.

The development of relationships with the community is far easier when there are established groups who can be approached. Often the community worker leading these groups will be a key point of contact who can provide advice, support and assistance in developing the work with their community. This is particularly successful where the aims of the group match or complement the aims of the museum project. For example, the community worker for the Evergreen Agewell Group was very keen that friendship groups and joint work should develop as a means of promoting health and well-being, this is something she felt was achieved, in such a way that it exceeded her expectations.

Community members need to see the relevance of the activities that they are invited to participate in, only at that point are they likely to become fully engaged.

Trusting the process - flexibility and project development

It is important that community members have an opportunity to shape the projects they are involved in. The China in Yorkshire projects had the resources that allowed them to respond to what community members wanted to do. For example in Sheffield there was initial frustration from the community as they could not see the relevance of the art and craft activities in which they were asked to participate.. After negotiation with the participants, the community worker, artist and project manager, it was decided to re-frame the project and to produce a 'memory book' which included personal stories and had high production values. Once participants could see the context in which they were working they were willing to produce creative pieces that would sit alongside their stories and photographs.

Community engagement projects often develop organically, starting with an outline or objectives which over time are modified or built upon with the community. The results are often surprising and better than the original vision. It is important to allow that process to take place and to trust it and not be too fixed on achieving pre-selected outcomes. This may mean enduring periods of uncertainty but if experienced artists and project workers are contracted this will be a creative process with excellent outcomes for all involved.

However planning is vital to ensure success. The starting point may be an outline of what is to be achieved which has been developed with project partners, members of the community and artists. Communicate this effectively and negotiate with the participants what they want to contribute. Then structure sessions around their aims, build in regular reviews for all partners, including participants, reframe as necessary within the overall objectives or modify, then restructure sessions. This is an iterative process which takes time and commitment to ensure the genuine involvement of community members.

Commitment to quality

The quality and type of collection will have an impact on the level of engagement in interpretation possible with the community. The ivories and the Leeds collections led to extensive handling sessions and prompted a lot of

feedback, ideas and stories from the community. The York Chinoiserie collection appeared of less interest to members of the community, pieces seemed to be unfamiliar and unrelated to personal experiences, but here personal stories and memories came to the fore.

The resources available to design the exhibitions and to produce the community work were substantial. The resulting quality of the exhibitions helped to provide status to the community input. It built pride in what had been achieved and showed the work on an equal footing with the professional curation.

5.0 Recommendations



A number of recommendations are proposed below that relate to future community engagement projects developed locally and/or regionally.

5.1 Plan for a legacy

At an early stage in project planning consider why the museum wishes to engage with a particular community. How this work integrates into the organisation's overall audience development strategy. How to extend and build on the work with this community once the project has finished.

To ensure contacts and learning are retained and built upon, at least one member of the museum's core staff should work directly with the community.

5.2 Invest more time in establishing a shared understanding

More time may need to be invested in developing a shared understanding of the work with communities whose first language is not English. Ensure that a minimum level of skill in translation is available to every group at some point in the project.

Involve artists in the early stages of planning projects. This will help them to communicate the aims of projects effectively with the community. They may also enhance project proposals and may provide new funding opportunities.

5.3 Set up opportunities for dialogue with the community

Be prepared to have assumptions challenged about what a community may want from, or bring to, a project. Set up opportunities for dialogue and community members will express clearly what they want to do.

Plan a process where community members can shape projects. This is an iterative process which needs regular review and time to develop.

5.4 Broaden the communities you work with

There does not need to be a direct link between the subject or theme of an exhibition and the community i.e. Chinese exhibition, Chinese artist and Chinese community. In fact it may be more interesting to work with a range of different communities encouraging broader interpretations.

5.5 Continue to invest in quality

The high production values of the exhibitions and the skills and expertise of the artists and community outreach workers showed the value that museums place on their work with communities. It also ensures an excellent response from visitors.

5.6 Add layers of interpretation

Explore ways to cross over interpretation of objects, making more explicit the input of community members. This could be achieved by introducing different layers of interpretation so that objects and collections are seen from a range of different viewpoints. There is a successful example of this in the Eastern Museum at Keddleston Hall, Derbyshire.

5.7 Promote learning with visitors

More visitor learning appeared to take place where the China in Yorkshire exhibitions were a significant focus of the venue. Explore ways to ensure that future exhibitions with a community involvement have a high profile within venues.

5.8 Build on the regional approach

China in Yorkshire has established a firm basis for other Hub-wide projects. It successfully added value through the role of the co-ordinator, shared marketing and opportunities to share practice. The management structure, through the Hub team, was effective and robust and future projects could continue to be managed in this way.

Project partners appreciated the opportunities they had through this project to come together, make contact and build new working relationships. Joint working between artists, educationalists and curators strengthened the regional approach. Future regional projects could plan in more time and resources for knowledge transfer between partners.

6.0 Conclusion



China in Yorkshire has been very successful in engaging members of the Chinese communities of Yorkshire in the development of exhibitions.

Participants interviewed have been keen to share their knowledge and their personal stories and have been very pleased with the resulting exhibitions. They are proud of their work and keen to work with museums again.

The projects have promoted learning with the community and visitors. Community participants have had a chance to work together, to make new friends and visit places they had not been to before.

Visitors have learned about Chinese culture and Chinese people and changed their perceptions of museums as a result.

Museum staff have developed their skills and knowledge and have had the opportunity to work across teams within their services. They have gained a regional perspective through the time they have shared, planning and monitoring the project. Where members of the museum's core team have been involved directly with the community, relationships have been established that can be built on in the future.

Less successful has been the integration of the community in the development and design of the exhibitions overall. A future programme could encourage more direct input from community members. Also, the input that community members did make into developing knowledge about the collections has not always been made explicit.

The regional focus of the project has been successful and added value to the programme overall. Key challenges now are how to build on the contacts already made through this project and finding themes for future regional projects that prompt the same level of enthusiasm and commitment from partners.