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Precious Cargo Young Consultants Visits

During the summer of 2010 groups of young people engaged with Precious Cargo projects to deliver a consultancy programme (observations, interpretation, advice and recommendations) to a range of partner museums across Yorkshire. Their consultancy advice was focused on exploring opportunities for developing youth engagement, exhibitions and events and world collections through Precious Cargo.

Precious Cargo is a project led by young people, inspired by Yorkshire's world collections. It is part of Stories of the World, one of the projects at the heart of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

Examples of what the Young Consultants did with the participating museums:

- Tours of whole museum/sites
- Handling world collections objects for potential display
- Visiting collections stores
- Structured Question and Answer sessions about how to engage young people; which objects were interesting to them; what the Young Consultants thought about ideas for Precious Cargo exhibitions and events

Target Audience

Young people involved in Precious Cargo activity.

Project officers from participating Precious Cargo partnership museums.

Aim

The project was for young people and museums, involved with Precious Cargo.

The aim was to increase communication and collaboration between the two groups and to start to create strong working relationships that could be built upon for not only the duration of the Precious Cargo projects, but for the future.

To develop young peoples voice and influence in museums through group consultancy visits to Precious Cargo partner museums.

The Young Consultants would gain experience of providing consultancy for Precious Cargo programme development; new knowledge of partner museums and the part they play in Precious Cargo and young peoples peer-to-peer networking would be strengthened

The Museums taking part in the project had experienced difficulties in engaging with young people. Often struggling to get them 'through the door', which made engagement, which could lead to consultations on finding out what they wanted, very difficult. Most of the museums visited felt that young people were under-represented and wanted to gain an understanding into what a 'young person' would want and for that to be clearly visible in their Precious Cargo exhibition.

Process

Through group consultancy visits to participating Precious Cargo partner museums the young people were given the opportunity to speak directly with curators, gain a glimpse into the workings of a museum and the proposed collection for their Precious Cargo exhibitions. For the participating museums it was an opportunity to gain access to the thoughts and opinions of young people who actively engage themselves with museums. A clear set of aims was created by the co-ordinators and each of the nominated staff members from each of the museums taking part.

Each participating museum developed detailed objectives for the Young Consultants' visits. All visits were structured the same: each participating Precious Cargo museum was given half a day with the young people – this included an introduction to key staff, a tour of the museum, a look at the collection, handling, and informal presentation on the ideas thus far, then questions and feedback. An open discussion would then take place between everyone with the objective of finding out what the young people felt about the proposed ideas, how they felt they could be improved upon, what they found interesting, what they wanted to know more about, and ways to take it further. For example, one of the suggestions was to link historical objects with current day trends, such as juxtaposing a 200 year old African bracelet with a contemporary dress from a popular retailer to show the similarities/influence.

Evaluation by the young people would take place on the return journey home, through the completion of formal evaluation forms and flip video interview recordings.

Number of participants

20 young people took part over 7 visits – each visit had between 6 – 12 young people visiting.

7 participating museums

Impact and outcome

The participating young people enjoyed being part of the project and felt that overall their opinions were needed and wanted. They felt confident that they had, for the most part, played an active role in helping the museums to gain an understanding of what young people found engaging, interesting and exciting. The groups of young people were from a number of cities, backgrounds and cultures which meant that opinions did differ and each of the participants was able to bring a unique viewpoint to the table.

The museum staff enjoyed talking with the young people, they found their views to be interesting and often surprising; a different opinion from what they had

imagined. As well as discussing the Precious Cargo exhibitions, the museums took the opportunity to ask what their thoughts were on other aspects of the museum, from the permanent and current exhibitions, through to the layout, lighting, entrance, cafe, general visitor experience and overall thoughts.

The impact of the project has been the legacy of collaborative work between the young people and the museums.

20 young people were actively involved in providing a consultation service to Precious Cargo museums.

7 Precious Cargo museums benefitted from the advice of the Young Consultants

4 of the young people involved have subsequently become involved with Museums Sheffield Precious Cargo project

Some Young Consultants attended the Stories of the World national partners' seminar on 15 October and contributed to the launch workshop for Precious Cargo – What's Changing: A young people's voice and influence evaluation programme.

Evaluation

The young people as well as some of the participating museums staff commented that young people feel misrepresented or not represented in the collections and exhibitions of museums, feeling that certain museums are 'not for them' and as a result are reluctant to visit or engage.

The advice provided by the young consultants has been taken on board by the museums and they intend to make changes and use suggestions given. Evidence of this will be demonstrated in the finished exhibits.

Good team work, organisation and communication helped in achieving our goals, amongst the members of Renaissance Yorkshire staff, with most of the museums and with the young people. Evaluation after every session, i.e. quick review meeting between staff.

We worked with a great group of young people who we felt benefitted from the project as much as the museums. They really got into their consultancy roles and it was great to see less confident ones becoming more vocal.

Some of the most-interested Young Consultants have progressed to involvement in the Precious Cargo – What's Changing programme.

Tips

If the project were to be repeated, the following (retrospective!) advice is offered:

Communication - ensure the aims of the project are fully understood by all participating members – young people and participating museums. The co-ordinators felt that some museums benefitted more than others because the original invitation about the consultancy visits had been read and understood by them.

Objectives for the visit that are set out in advance need to be met in full, the project will only work when this happens.

Ensure as far as possible that the young people involved are there because of a genuine interest in museums, have something to say and want to input.
If time is not an issue, asking the young people to apply for the job/role of Young Consultant would be a benefit as this would enable you to find out more about the young person and why they would be interested in the

Future development

Through Precious Cargo – What's Changing. A young people's voice and influence evaluation programme led by young people.

"We are following up the Consultancy Visits young people from across the Precious Cargo partnership enjoyed during the summer with a new programme that will give you opportunity to meet together, visit Yorkshire museums and make a difference. Precious Cargo – What's Changing is a young people's voice and influence evaluation programme led by young people. We want to support a small team of young people who can commit to leading the programme." (from information circulated to Precious Cargo young people)

Project website :

http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/setting_pace/stories%20of%20the%20world/sotw_case_studies

<http://www.london2012.com/get-involved/cultural-olympiad/museums-and-galleries/stories-of-the-world/get-involved.php#yorkshire>

Case study record created on:

23/11/2010

MLA funded:

Yes

Institution:

Renaissance Yorkshire

Key partners:

Bradford Museums and Galleries
Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery
North Lincolnshire Museum
Scarborough Museums Trust
Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society
York Museums Trust
Museums Sheffield

Team members:

Jon Bradley (Renaissance Programme Manager)
Lisa Parkes and Emma-Jayne Russell (Freelance co-ordinators)

Start date:

28th July 2010

End date:

15th October 2010

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Museums Sheffield

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Work packages:

Cultural Olympiad

Programmes:

Renaissance in the Regions

Domains:

Museums

Sector developing role:

Partnerships

Advice

Social groups:

Children and young people

Social outcomes:

Raising participation

Learning & skills

Geographical Coverage:

Yorkshire and the Humber

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