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**Museum Development Yorkshire**

**Visitor Experience Consortium 2018**

**Welcome to this year’s programme**

The following information will help you understand what’s involved and why it’s useful for you and your organisation to take part.

**What is the Visitor Experience Consortium?**

This programme, administered through Museum Development Yorkshire and funded by ACE, is now in its 7th year and is made up of museums across Yorkshire and the Humber who make ‘mystery’ visits to each other’s sites using a questionnaire to assess the visitor offer resulting in objective and constructive feedback. Taking part is a great opportunity to experience other sites and learn more about your own organisation by analysing another.

Each participating museum agrees to send its staff or volunteers to **three** other sites between **4 June** and **14 September 2018.** We encourage you to send representatives from the visitor services and volunteer teams, but participants can be drawn from any part of the organisation. People may visit on their own or may choose to take friends or family. It also works well if staff or volunteers go in pairs. Participants are asked as part of the visit preparation to undertake some pre-visit assessment and the completed questionnaire must be submitted online by the deadline of **Friday 28 September.**

**By taking part all organisations are agreeing to:**

* **make the three visits during the given timescale and**
* **submit the fully completed questionnaires on time so that each**
* **act on the visit feedback which may inform staff development, site improvements and future funding bids.**

**What are the benefits?**

**Feedback from previous years has indicated that:**

Staff and volunteers taking part:

* Have an interesting and enjoyable day out as part of their staff development programme
* Return with new ideas and enthusiasm for their own sites

The museums being visited:

* Use the feedback to consider service improvement
* Are stimulated to act on recommendations
* Feel that the reports can be used to influence management decisions
* Can use the reports as evidence for funding bids, previously from MDY and HLF.

**What does it cost?**

Museum Development Yorkshire facilitates and coordinates the Consortium. There is no charge to participate and it is open to all Accredited museums in Yorkshire and the Humber (or those recognised by Arts Council England as ‘Working Towards Accreditation’).

If you are sending paid staff, we expect your museum to give them the time to take part in the visit and to complete the survey online as well as pay their travel and expenses. We expect your museum to reimburse any volunteers who are taking part. Volunteers may be able to use the Northern Museums Volunteer Pass (Pink Pass) should there be an entry fee at any sites.

Organisations will be asked to feedback on the experience of taking part, either through an online survey or at a regional meeting. This will help MDY analyse the effectiveness of the programme and make any appropriate changes for the following year.

**Information for the ‘Mystery Visitors’**

Taking part in the programme should be enjoyable and part of your organisations staff development programme. We hope that it stimulates some new ideas for your own museum!

**Please read the following carefully; advanced preparation is key and will result in a successful and well-informed visit:**

**Pre-visit:** Now your site visits have been allocated here are the links to the information video and to the questionnaire. <http://bit.ly/MDYVEC18>

Watch the video and read the survey questions carefully. The video has a commentary for which there is a transcript. You will need PowerPoint to watch it. Download it first and then start the slideshow.

You will see that the questionnaire has a pre–visit section. You are required to complete this section in advance of your actual visit so please plan well in advance. It is often a virtual visit which influences visitors when deciding where to spend their time and money

**Site visit:** Complete your full visit of the museum by the deadline of **14 September.** Take a print out of the questionnaire with you – this can be used to record your responses and for note taking. Remember – you are ‘mystery visitors’ and it is important to be discreet and remain anonymous. Staff at the museum may know about the programme but will not be aware on which day the visit will take place.

**Completing the survey:** Fill out the survey as fully as you can and try to visit the whole site. If for any reason you are unable to access any areas, please make a note of this on the form. There will be a rating of Very Good – Poor on most of the questions, as well as a summary section for things you particularly liked and areas for improvement. Comments are very valuable, so please be as detailed and constructive as you can. Good quality, standardised reports will be generated for each site visited, but remember, this is entirely dependent on how well the survey is completed.

The completed survey must be e mailed to Janet Simmonds, [janet@janetsimmonds.com](mailto:janet@janetsimmonds.com) by **28 September**.

**Thank you!**  For being part of the Visitor Experience Consortium 2018, you will be sent a certificate to acknowledge your participation and as a record of your professional development.

**Timetable 2018**

The table below summarises the **absolute deadlines** so that the programme can be completed within the allocated timescale:

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| **25 May** | **Expressions of interest to Janet Simmonds** |
| **4 June** | **Notification of museum visits with Information Video and the Visitor Experience Survey Questionnaire** |
| **14 September** | **Visits completed** |
| **28 September** | **Complete and return online survey** |
| **19 October** | **Reports sent out to sites** |
| **31 October** | **Feedback survey** |
| **December** | **Regional event – programme summary** |
| **January 2019** | **Final summary report circulated** |

**Contact**

Should you require further information or have any questions please contact Janet Simmonds, who is coordinating the programme on behalf of Museum Development Yorkshire at: [janet@janetsimmonds.com](mailto:janet@janetsimmonds.com).

