



# Front of House Cohort

## Alumni Case Studies

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# Front of House Cohort

35



**Museums have  
participated in the  
cohort**

- Museum Development Yorkshire has been running the Front of House Cohort for the last five years, providing essential training and professional development for Front of House staff across the region.
- The cohort offers not only access to high quality training and mentoring, but an opportunity to network with colleagues.
- This document illustrates some of the work that the Front of House alumni have achieved since 2016.



# York Museums Trust

## Customer Care Training 2019/2020

Inspired by 'The Visitor Journey' training workshop by Katy Moussaada, York Art Gallery and the Yorkshire Museum worked together on creating their own customer care training for the visitor experience teams across the sites.

Cohort members Jo and Chloe created a presentation on customer care focusing on areas including:

- Valuing your visitor
- Visitor expectations
- Visitor 'Heaven' & Visitor 'Hell'
- Delivering service excellence
- Communication skills
- Understanding your visitor
- Complaint handling & empowerment

They led a training session for staff using tasks and the presentation to focus on the visitor's experience.

During lockdown, Jo and Chloe worked with MDY to research and produce a Covid safe reopening guide for museums.

Visitor Experience Management used the training for return to work and general staff training.

Boosted morale and supported the visitor experience teams.

They developed the training, following Covid guidelines to ensure staff are fully trained

Staff felt confident in their customer service.



# Leeds University Library Galleries

## From Visitor Promises to Visitor Attraction Accreditation

Inspired by the workshop from Laura Malpas and a bespoke training session, staff received training on working proactively with visitors, understanding their needs and developing storytelling skills.

Laura Malpas delivered a training workshop to the Front of House team with the following objectives:

- Recognise what visitors are looking for when they visit, and tailor interactions to suit those requirements
- Demonstrate a warm and welcoming attitude towards visitors
- Learn what makes a great story, then turn that story into an engaging interaction with visitors using specific techniques
- Deliver a short talk to the group. This became 'Quick Picks'
- Review existing customer care best practices, and revisit the 'Visitor promise'



Visitors in the Treasures of the Brotherton Gallery  
Credit: Leeds University Library Galleries



We achieved VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Accreditation in January 2020 with an excellent overall score of 81%. Our highest scoring section was 'staff', which looks at customer care and staff knowledge, for which we got 88%.

We refreshed our Visitor Promise which was shared with our audience via our e-newsletter and is displayed in both Galleries. The FoH team were directly involved in writing it.

In 2018-19, 99% of visitors to both Galleries marked their overall experience as either good or very good, 75% of which were very good.

Regular 'Quick Picks' - short talks given by staff in the Galleries. All of the FoH team have taken part and the work has continued online during lockdown with our Two Minute Treasures  
<https://bit.ly/TwoMinuteTreasurePlaylist>



Quick Pick in the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery  
Credit: Leeds University Library Galleries



# Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

## Revealed Roots Concealed Connections

Three of the Front of House team co-produced a contemporary art exhibition at Clifton Park Museum that shared their personal stories, their connections to the collections and to Rotherham. They also used the tour guide training while carrying out tours.

- Three staff members were chosen to be part of the project and met with artist Pippa Hale. They were introduced to contemporary art through zoom sessions with national artists who shared their best practice.
- Pippa worked with them individually and collectively to explore who they were, their passions and how they connected to Rotherham's stories and communities. The staff members accessed the collections with the help of the collections team and with Pippa, they created individual exhibitions with contemporary art to interpret the stories.
- They have also developed connections within communities and worked with the learning and engagement team on targeted engagement programmes, tours and events to develop the themes they created for the exhibition.



Credit: Clifton Park Museum

The Front of House team developed their understanding of the collections and exhibitions programme by taking centre stage

Staff are more confident when initiating conversation with visitors, and are sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues

The Front of House team are more visible within the museum service and celebrated for the individual skills and knowledge they bring



Angie in the exhibition  
Credit: Clifton Park Museum



# Malton Museum

## Refreshing Front of House: A better welcome in a post Covid, more digitally orientated world

Malton Museum used the Cohort learning to retrain FoH volunteers, as well as developing a new series of outdoor activities and workshops based on the Roman fort.

- Malton plans to devise two training sessions for all Front of House volunteers and those dealing with outside activities. Each will consist of a 45-minute presentation and Q&A and will be linked to other activities in the museum. Groups are also planning the reopening of our exhibition area.
- Following training from Laura Malpas, a group of six FoH volunteers devised and delivered 11 tours on four different trails, including a Roman tour for families and an associated workshop the following day on the Roman Fort. Three of the tours were presented to privately booked history/social groups.
- Malton have fully developed four different tours. Each tour guide leaders with 1 or 2 support volunteers.



Family workshop at the Roman Fort

Credit: Malton Museum



Credit: Malton Museum

Tours were  
delivered to  
**144**  
individuals

The museum has reopened and  
volunteers are happy coping with  
different layouts and procedures

Training was delivered to 25  
Front of House volunteers

Excellent  
feedback  
following all  
four main  
tours





Bronte Parsonage Museum  
Credit: Bronte Society

# Bronte Parsonage Museum

## Covid Safe Reopening in July 2020

Using the training and scenarios received during the Cohort, in particular the session on gaining feedback and complaint handling, Bronte Parsonage Museum used regular FoH staff training sessions to discuss and reflect on the way they do things. There was a particular focus during the pandemic.

As a team we worked together on the following points:

- Reassessing the visitor journey, thinking of the best place to thank visitors, and possibly a quieter area to talk through any issues.
- Should we only approach 'smiley visitors' for feedback, or should we ask everyone, including potentially unhappy looking visitors?
- If we asked, "How was your visit today?" what responses might we receive?
- To respond to negative feedback, would a "Thank you for taking the time to talk to me", an apology and "I will pass on your feedback" sometimes be sufficient? In situations where it wasn't enough, what else could we do?
- If we overheard visitors talking who seemed unhappy, or heard something we thought we could help with, what could we do and how?

### Feedback from the team after putting the training into action

Try to remember that all feedback is useful – don't take it personally! However, there are times we might need a break from the floor to talk through an experience and take time to reflect

After reopening we often had to put a 'hold' on visitor movements within the building. This was an ideal time to engage and ask how the visit was going, offering us invaluable insights into the public's experiences, and allowing us to quickly adjust from one day to the next

Raise and share experiences at morning briefing – or talk to a manager if preferred

Show that you are actively listening and always say thank you. If there is something that you can do, then do it whilst the visitor is still on site

"Thank you for visiting us, have you enjoyed your visit?" is a nice thing to say. Most visitors do enjoy their experience!

Develop a Complaints Log to be reviewed, investigate any trends and take action

Don't over promise! Be realistic. "This is something I will pass on to my Manager" could be a useful phrase



# Epworth Old Rectory

## Covid Safe Reopening in July 2020

Inspired by the training session about talks and methods of storytelling, Epworth Old Rectory worked on producing Covid safe tours for reopening in July 2020. Improvements were made to the visitor experience through group and individual training and changes made to tours.

- Epworth Old Rectory ran training for staff that focused on customer service, both in groups and one-to-one. They encouraged staff to use the Northern Museums Volunteer Pass to see what other museums were doing well.
- When planning for Covid safe reopening in July 2020, Gillian worked on designing covid safe tours, in consultation with staff from scripts to text panels.
- Alongside this, the site booking system was changed and staff and volunteers were consulted to see who was comfortable with returning to work.
- A Covid secure risk assessment was created, a new route around the site and "how to" guides produced. All of this was then road tested and amended. One to one training was held for all those returning to work and opening was delayed a day for staff to refresh themselves of the site and new tours.

Very high customer satisfaction scores and reporting on the Audience Finder survey

Further engagement with the Rectory via our social media feeds

Information boards in the window for garden visitors to get a flavour of the house stories

The revised interpretation and route around the house were tested and were found successful





# Wakefield Museums & Castles

## Bringing Back Dungeon Tours at Pontefract Castle

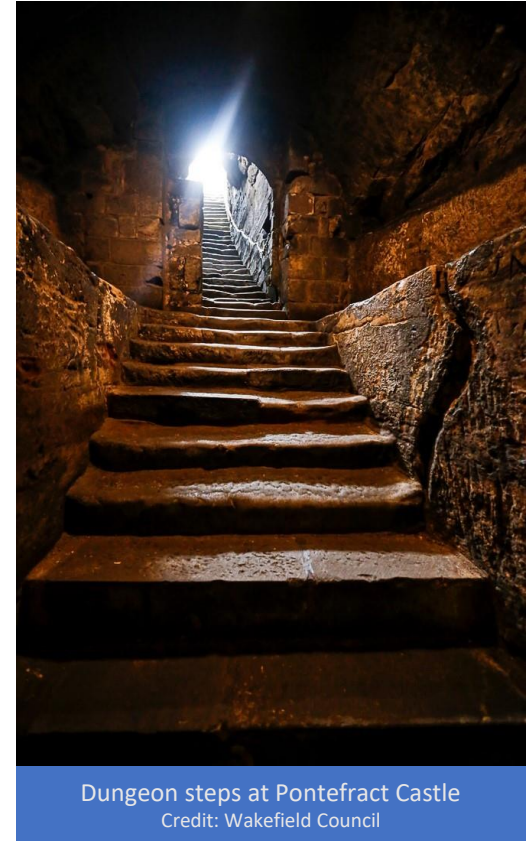
Visitor Experience Assistants at Wakefield Museums & Castles used the skills they learned in the Tour Training session to adapt the dungeon tour at Pontefract Castle so it could be reintroduced in a Covid safe way. The tour had stopped running for 18 months during the pandemic.

- Using the skills learnt through the tour guide workshop, they wanted to be able to deliver a fantastic dungeon tour safely and set a goal to get them up and running for Heritage Open Day.
- Stacey played a 'visitor' and the team practiced delivering the tour using the skills that they had learnt through the training session. This included thinking about body language and tone of voice. They focused on stories that would grab the visitor's attention and entertain them.
- The use of props was an important part of the pre-covid tour. Items such as smelly cubes (containing historic themed odours), belt buckles and candles were used but were sadly no longer allowed. It was up to the Visitor Experience Assistants to keep the tour engaging.
- They practiced the tour and held feedback sessions. This built confidence within the team and made progress, towards the goal of delivering a successful tour.

Pontefract Castle has introduced bookable tours with reduced capacity, and are looking forward to delivering them on a weekly basis

The training inspired the team to consider developing other tours at Pontefract Castle

Received excellent feedback from visitors who attended the Heritage Open Weekend



# Kiplin Hall

## Welcome Gazebo

Inspired by the visitor journey and welcome aspect of the cohort training, Kiplin Hall recognised the need to be adaptable. When planning to reopen after Covid closure in 2020 they introduced a new Welcome Gazebo to guide visitors through the changes.

- It was clear that with social distancing, track & trace, and changes being made to visitor routes and facilities, we needed to make sure that visitors (new and regulars), were made aware of the enhanced measures we had decided to take and the changes to site routes and facilities. We decided we needed to introduce a new role to do this.
- We created a 'welcome point', by the car park and used an existing gazebo. We produced new signage, maps and COVID codes and printed and displayed them on A-boards. A new recruitment drive was also launched within our current team as well as publicly to make sure the position was manned by volunteers at all times.

Visitors felt safe and well informed when returning to Kiplin Hall after the closure

Expectations for each visit were set on arrival

The Front of House service at Kiplin Hall became more efficient



Credit: Kiplin Hall



# Sheffield Museums

## Family Trails

Following the cohort, Matt Neale (Site Manager) and Chris Ellis (Assistant Site Manager) were keen to take what they had learned and implement it into day to day working at Sheffield Museums. Some of the ideas included increasing interaction points, improving our welcome, adding to our existing offer, improving access to participation, and in turn increasing donations and visitor giving.

- Starting with our 'Bee Trail' we ran a series of family trails which looked to integrate ideas from our training. The bee trail was an example of all the work coming together to improve visitor experience and add value to a visit.
- A simple trail with few barriers to participation, the project integrated many areas of the museum allowing us to encourage people to visit the whole of the site. It involved collecting small bees, hidden round the museum and adding them to the flowers on the trail sheet, whilst learning a little bit about bees along the way.
- It allowed us to welcome people to the museum with a positive message, whilst also speaking to them during and at the end of their visit (upon collection of their "bee attracting" wildflower seed packet prize!). The project was educational, had a positive environmental message, and linked to honey sales in the shop.

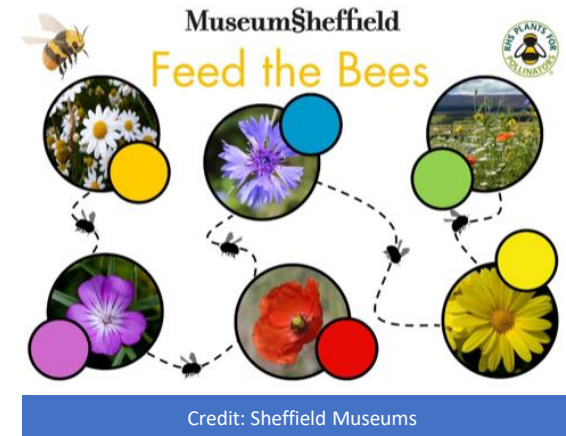
The trail attracted attention on social media as people posted pictures of their visit, and even the wildflowers that eventually bloomed in their gardens!

1150 trails were handed out and monthly donations increased by almost 200%

Building on the bee trail model, Sheffield plan to deliver other tours themed around Easter and Halloween. An October half term and Christmas tour are also being developed.



Credit: Sheffield Museums



Credit: Sheffield Museums





# Hull Museums

## Accessible Reopening

The team at Hull Museums had been inspired by training from Phil Chambers and were working on initiatives to improve access including Easy Read documents and Visual stories, with partners who had identified this as a gap in their provision. When the museums closed during the lockdown, all of this was put on hold. They decided to make the reopening as accessible as possible, as the information that needed to be shared to meet Health & Safety regulations was lengthy and complex, which meant it wasn't always accessible.

- We approached a range of partners to look through the information we needed to get across. They helped us create an Easy Read format and visual stories using widget symbols and photographs.
- We sent a script to Elephant in the Room and Concrete Youth, which they adapted and interpreted into British Sign Language and Makaton for reopening films.
- The films were uploaded to YouTube, promoted via social media, and embedded into the website alongside the Easy Read document, visual stories and floor plans of each site.



They are open  
Monday to Saturday 10.00am-3.00pm  
Sunday 11.00am-2.30pm.

You will need to book a ticket before you come.

It is free to book.

Visual Story  
Credit: Hull Museums

**ONE-WAY MUSEUM ROUTE**  
FERENS ART GALLERY



1. Renaissance to Baroque  
2. Neoclassicism  
3. Eighteenth Century Europe  
4. Victorian  
5. Early 20th Century British  
6. Modern and Contemporary

**FIRST FLOOR OF GALLERY IS CLOSED**

Ferens Art Gallery Map  
Credit: Hull Museums

The two films combined were viewed 256 times on YouTube

Partnership working was key to ensuring the resources would be used. Further opportunities also arose from the partnerships

“This is fabulous! Well done for being so actively inclusive”

“Excellent start but it needs to explain the no touching rule and that all the interactive exhibitions are closed”

- Useful feedback via Facebook



and healthy. One set of toilets, including accessible toilets, is open at Feren's Art Gallery,

Dan, Concrete Youth – Still From Video  
Credit: Hull Museums





# Kirklees Museums

## Meeting Visitors' Expectations

Inspired by the training on Valuing your Visitor, Kirklees Museums have been inspired to be more passionate about their welcome and delivering the best service they can. Cohort member Mick Hall delivered training to all public facing staff about understanding and meeting visitor expectations.

- At a morning meeting of public facing staff from all of the Kirklees museums, I gave a talk about meeting and greeting, communication skills, and making the visitor feel welcome and valued.
- Based on the content I had learned in the cohort, I split the group into teams according to their museum. Using flip charts and stands I asked them to list their thoughts on:
  - ☐ What do our visitors expect from us? What are their expectations and needs?
  - ☐ Define service excellence?
  - ☐ Where do we deliver or fall short of achieving customer excellence?
  - ☐ What defines a bad experience for our visitors?

The groups bounced ideas to each other. A member from each team was the spokesperson and went through the findings.

The training session generated some great comments and ideas

Staff have a good grasp of the standards expected from them when working in Front of House

Meeting and greeting and customer service forms an important part of the induction training for new staff



# Craven Museum

## Skipton Town Hall Open Day

Skipton Town Hall, home of Craven Museum, has recently reopened after a major NLHF redevelopment project. To help show local residents and visitors the changes and new facilities, they planned an open day including guided tours around the building. This was inspired by the tour training from Laura Malpas, especially the mini tour they delivered at Pontefract Castle.

- We started by discussing the best way to allow visitors to see the outcome of the redevelopment work. A tour naturally seemed the best way to show visitors around the building and we wanted to try out some of the ideas we'd had during the MDY tour workshops.
- I planned a short 20 - 30 minute tour using the template provided by Laura Malpas. To help tell the story, I created a poster for each location on the tour that showed an old photograph from the collection, of what that part of the building used to look like. This acted as a prompt for further discussion after key facts and oral history quotes had been shared with the tour groups.
- We ran eight tours between three members of staff, with 49 tour participants. Visitors were very pleased to see the building and to get more of an understanding about the outcomes of the redevelopment project. It gave them a chance to ask questions, and many went on to look around the museum and gallery on their own afterwards.



Introducing the Tour  
Credit: Skipton Town Hall

"I thought it was a fascinating building, I found out lots about the town hall I didn't know about and the museum is brilliant."

"Credit where it's due, the new Town Hall refurb looks good 👍" - via Facebook

"This is absolutely amazing, what a transformation – I sang here when I was a child in Skipton music and it's just so different, totally stunning. I'll definitely be coming back and bringing my Mum"



Exploring the Museum Collection Behind the Scenes  
Credit: Skipton Town Hall



# Pannett Art Gallery

Developing new resources to improve the visitor experience

The training helped Pannett Art Gallery to recognise that they needed to improve the visitor experience. One way they could do this was by providing new ways to encourage visitors to engage with the collection.

Through consultation with Whitby Disablement Action Group and workshops with children with hidden impairments and their families we developed a range of new gallery resources. An experienced workshop leader delivered the research workshops where the groups explored which artworks were of interest and how to help visitors to engage with them. We created a series of handling objects, including:

- A tapestry sample that replicated the technique and materials of our Burne-Jones tapestries
- Textured painted canvas and board samples to indicate what a painting would feel like
- Enlargements of details from paintings
- Four large scale, simple jigsaws

Building on this we have started to introduce other resources to encourage further engagement, including for a family audience:

- Two hexagonal spinning tops, with each segment showing a detail of the painting. Children look closely at the paintings to find the one that includes the detail.
- A series of short videos, including four performances, telling the stories and anecdotes of the Staithes Group of Artists from the perspective of a painting hanging in the gallery. They will be presented on a touch screen tablet in the Staithes Art Group gallery.



Jigsaw  
Credit: Pannett Art Gallery



A still from one of the short films  
Credit: Pannett Art Gallery





# National Coal Mining Museum England

## Hearts as Well as Heads

Inspired by the Visitor Experience Consortium, the museum decided to use funding to provide staff and volunteers with ongoing training, to help them 'see through the eyes of the visitors,' and into their hearts as well as their heads.

- The Visitor Experience Consortium allowed volunteers to be a critical friend to other organisations. We noticed the deep learning that was shared by those who took part and we decided to use this as a model.
- We used implementation funding to hire an outside trainer. One session created unity between staff and volunteers by focusing on what sort of experience they all wanted visitors to have. Then, as a team, they devised ways of making the new welcome area work effectively for the visitor.
- We have taken volunteers and staff to visit other venues, to observe their front of house offer and then share and comment in relation to their own practice.
- The Visitor Engagement Co-ordinator intends to use 'train the trainer' options for supporting visitors with special needs. She will disseminate this learning to volunteer groups in short sessions to ensure higher take-up. Because of our previous work, we know this format works and volunteers are therefore more likely to understand with their heart as well as their heads.

We have discovered the most effective ways of delivering training to volunteers

Feedback shows that that our volunteers are more confident and visitors are more likely to approach them for help

Volunteers respond to our discreet training opportunities more positively.



Visit to Newark Civil War Museum  
Credit: NCCME





## To find out more about any of the case studies, contact:

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