MUSEUM FEVER and *REPRESENT:*

Lessons for working with young people in museums

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1.0 Introduction

This publication provides a comparison of two projects that have been successful in working with young people and attempts to highlight the key issues and lessons learned. By looking at the key ingredients of the two projects, what worked well and what didn't, it is hoped that this publication will encourage and help other museums to work with young people.

Both projects exceeded all expectations. They managed to engage young people in the work of museums and the idea of learning as enjoyable rather than boring. The activities carried out during the projects helped the young people to build their self confidence, supported them in acquiring new skills and, by the end, changed the way they felt about museums and themselves.

These projects are *Museum Fever* and *Represent.*

1.1 *Museum Fever:*
- Received £27,000 through the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) Museum and Gallery Lifelong Learning Initiative
- Involved young people and staff from Salford Foyer and staff from Salford Museum and Art Gallery
- Aimed to encourage young people to get actively involved in their local museum and gallery, breaking down barriers and changing attitudes and perceptions - to learning, to museums and to young people.
- A core group of approximately 12 young people visited museums, took part in photography and IT workshops, developed a web-site, chose the name *Museum Fever,* designed a logo and put on an exhibition at the Museum.

1.2 *Represent:*
- Received £30,000 through the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)/Resource Education Challenge Fund
- Involved young people from inner city areas in Birmingham such as Handsworth, Aston and Newtown and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Aston Hall in Aston and Soho House in Handsworth.
- Aimed to attract young people to the museums, improve their skills and employed a young person, through the "New Deal[1]", to co-ordinate the project
- The group grew from 4 members to 40. They took part in a training course on communication skills, visited other museums, took photographs, created scrap-books, attended Dj-ing and graffiti workshops, contributed to an exhibition and a Museum Policy Working Group.

Both these projects were externally evaluated. *Represent* was evaluated by Kate Pontin and can be downloaded from the West Midlands Regional Museum Council website at www.wm-museums.co.uk *Museum Fever* was evaluated by Arts About Manchester and the report can be down loaded from ?

Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries funded the research for this publication as part of their work on evaluating the impact projects such as these have on users.

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[1] New Deal is a government scheme to provide opportunities for work and training for those out of work for more than 6 months.

2.0 Critical success factors for *Museum Fever* and *Represent*

Below are some key elements which made these projects work:

A good project co-ordinator with experience of working with young people

- Both projects were run by Co-ordinators focussing exclusively on making these projects work. Dan Packe was the Co-ordinator for *Represent* in Birmingham and Debbie Goldsmith was the Co-ordinator for *Museum Fever* in Salford.
- Both Dan and Debbie had experience of working with young people outside of formal education, undertaking voluntary work with Foyers, Community Centres and NACRO. They were familiar with the challenges of working with young people who are struggling to stay in formal education or keep their lives on track. Dan and Debbie were also both in their early to mid-twenties, which undoubtedly made it easier for the young people to relate to them, and their skills and personalities were critical in the development and success of the projects.

Going out to the young people to explain the project

- Dan used his contacts with Newtown Community Centre and Focus Foyer in Birmingham to meet up with young people, tell them about the project and then keep in touch with them via their mobile 'phones.
- Initially the young people from Salford Foyer were invited to go to the museum. After they failed to turn up on a couple of occasions, Debbie arranged an informal open evening in the Foyer with pizza and drinks.

An emphasis on fun and socialising

- All the young people invited to join *Represent* were offered a free trip to Bristol Carnival if they attended a few sessions of the "Walk Tall" communication skills course in the museum. The young people described this as a major incentive for getting involved in *Represent*.
- Debbie described food and drink as the key to ensuring a good turn out at project meetings! Trips to museums such as the Manchester United Football Club Museum also added a sense of fun and excitement.

A stimulating range of activities and opportunities were offered

Both projects recognised that if young people are being asked to give up their free time and get involved with the museum the young people need to feel that they too are getting something from the project.
- The young people of Salford Foyer were offered opportunities to learn new skills in market research, IT, video production, web-design and photography. Accreditation was sought for this work which proved to be very important to the young people. In addition, their involvement in museum activities such as creating an exhibition provided them with a deeper understanding of the museum and its function.

- In Birmingham the young people realised that the project was providing them with opportunities to explore issues of identity, culture, religion, racism and the legacy of slavery. They felt that school had provided little or no opportunity to learn about and debate these issues. The "Walk Tall" courses offered by Dr. Roy Paget challenged them to re-evaluate their lives and encouraged them to think critically and express their opinions.

Both Co-ordinators found that presenting the young people with a 'blank sheet' at the beginning and asking them what they would like to do was too daunting. The Co-ordinators found it worked well to offer the young people a number of ideas that could be developed depending on the their interests. This enabled the young people to make decisions and developed a sense of ownership of the project.

The use of other facilitators and expertise

Both projects were keen to make links with other organisations and people working in the local community.
- In Birmingham it was felt that Dr Paget's communication skills and confidence building sessions, "Walk Tall", were critical to the success of the programme, initiating a spark. In addition, the use of a local graffiti artist and DJs linked the museum to a broader notion of culture, making it seem more relevant to the young people involved.
- In Salford people with different skills, such as photography and web design, were brought in to assist with different elements of the project. This helped to broaden the young people's horizons introducing them to different people working in a variety of careers.

A flexible approach to the timetable and direction of the project

Both Co-ordinators emphasised the need for flexibility and the value of being allowed to abandon ideas that failed and try different approaches. They stressed the importance of treating the young people as adults and allowing the young people to influence the programme, being willing to listen to the young people and treating them with respect.

A flexible timetable that suited the young people's schedules was essential.

Good communication between the museum, project partners and young people

In order to integrate the project into the work of all partners and to enable the project partners and participants to learn about each other, good communication was vital. Both projects incorporated some of the following ingredients:
- In Birmingham, Dan and other staff were willing to act upon the young peoples' ideas and reported their recommendations to the management team.
- Informal discussion took place with front of house staff to keep them up to date with the progress of the project.
- In Salford, *Museum Fever* provided awareness raising meetings for staff at the museum and the Foyer to find out more about the project and the young people

involved. Staff at the Salford Museum and Art Gallery are now more able to understand the needs of young people.

Clear aims, which are discussed by all members of the team

- Both projects drew up a series of aims which were stated in their applications for funding. For *Museum Fever* which worked in direct partnership with the Foyer, it was essential that both partners had an understanding of each others objectives. Many of the aims were over-ambitious and some aims became more important than others, however both projects delivered the essence of the proposals.

- Through *Represent* and *Museum Fever* it was felt that physical outcomes such as an exhibition should not be seen as the most important outcome. The effect that the project has on the young people and the museum culture should be seen as equally important and this balance between "hard" and "soft" outcomes should discussed and agreed at the beginning.

Some element of working in partnership with outside organisations

Both projects worked with external partners to differing extents.
- In Salford, the equal partnership between the Foyer and the Museum was extremely beneficial to the project. A sense of trust and openness was fostered between the partners who both had similar aims for project and could support each other in achieving them. The partnership also resulted in the sharing of staff, skills and resources.   Debbie also valued the support she received from the North West Museum Service which dealt with the administration and finance for the project, enabling Debbie to focus on the project and supporting the young people.
- *Represent* set out to create a group of people who volunteered to join a museum-based project. The museum turned down offers from organisations, such as NACRO which works with young offenders, to "supply" a group of their young people for the project. The benefits to this was that the group forged its own identity and the young people felt valued for their individual strengths rather than feeling that they were only in the group because of their collective failings or problems. The down side to this was that the museum staff had to 'go it alone' and the pressure was on Dan to recruit the young people single-handedly. Once the project was underway outside organisations such as the Newtown Community Centre became involved and Dan valued the support he received from these staff.

Additional funding

- Both these projects were kick-started by external funding. This funding enabled the museums to employ Co-ordinator's, bring in external expertise such as graffiti artists and web designers and put on trips and social events.

- The funding, which did not require match-funds from the museums, allowed risks to be taken in the approaches, activities and people the museum worked with.

3.0 The young people involved in *Museum Fever* and *Represent*

3.1 Profile of the young people

The table below shows how, in broad terms, the young people's backgrounds are similar. The only striking differences are cultural background and the relationship with their families. Although these differences are important and will affect their lives and attitudes they are both groups of young people who would benefit from a project which develops confidence, skills and cultural awareness.

Museum Fever, Salford	*Represent*, Birmingham
Aged 16-25	Aged 16-25
Excluded group	Excluded group
Estranged from families Live in poor deprived area	Live in poor area of City (Newtown, Handsworth)
Mostly white	Mostly black
Many with low qualifications	Many with low or no formal qualifications
Low self esteem	Low self esteem
Interested in fashion, branded possessions, socialising and music	Interested in music (often black origin), fashion, weapons, slavery and socialising
Live in flats in Foyer - cheap safe, commitment to training and employability	Diverse career development

Evidence from information from the key workers and the young people themselves.

3.2 Perceptions of museums and galleries

Both groups of young people had poor opinions of museums initially. Some had visited with school but museum visiting was not something they perceived as part of their leisure experience. They thought museums were boring, irrelevant, and of no interest to them.

Some of the young people expressed an indifference to museums at the end as well as at the beginning of the project. However, many had warmed a little to museums while a significant minority[2] were much more positive. They perceived museums as possible places for a visit. Some had visited on their own, especially their local museum which they felt a stronger community identity with. To some though[3] the project and the development of an exhibition was "separate" from their perception of museums.

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[2] discussions with the young people in focus groups
[3] discussion with project co-ordinator of *Museum Fever*

3.3 Reasons for attending the project

Below, is a list of factors influencing the young people's decision to join the two projects:
- bored
- something to do
- no money needed
- might be interesting
- friends doing it
- get out a bit
- interest in going to the Bristol Carnival (*Represent*)

Both groups gave the same sorts of reasons for attending the project. The young people showed a basic curiosity and a need to fill their time, rather than a positive desire to learn about museums. This is confirmed by their early attitude to museums which was one of dislike, boredom and "not for me".

3.4 Activities undertaken

The table below shows the variety of activities that each of the projects offered to the young people.

Museum Fever, Salford	*Represent*, Birmingham
Developed an exhibition	Worked with a graffiti artist exhibiting at Art Gallery
Training in IT	Training in IT
Skills development in: - web design - video making - editing - photography - exhibition design - writing exhibition texts	Skills development in: - creating a web site - photography - object handling - creating scrapbooks - writing a newsletter - personal development
Participated in: - Exhibition opening - social events - trips to museums	Participated in: - social events - trips to a wide range of museums
- putting on an exhibition in the museum	- development of a display
- advised gallery staff e.g. at Imperial War Museum of the North	- some members now in Outreach Strategy working group

Evidence from interviews with co-ordinators and focus groups held with young people

4.0 Impact on the young people involved

This section evaluates the impact that the two projects have had on the participants and illustrates the range of benefits that the young people felt they had experienced.

Evaluation was carried out using the following methods:
- interviews with Museum staff and Foyer staff
- interviews with Co-ordinators, Debbie Goldsmith and Dan Packe
- focus groups with the young people involved
- analysis of the Evaluation Diary kept by Dan Packe
- observations of visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum in London during *Represent* project.

4.1 *Museum Fever*

4.1.1 A sense of achievement and pleasure
It was very clear that the main response to "What did you get out of the project?" was a sense of achievement and pleasure. The young people had enjoyed:
- the variety of activities provided for them
- the opportunity to direct the project themselves
- a sense of pride as a result of putting on the exhibition

They expressed a desire for the project to continue and were also keen that other Foyers become involved in such projects.

4.1.2 Increased confidence
Staff reported that the young people's confidence had grown. The young people were able to:
- Talk about the project to museum staff at national seminars
- Express themselves during the evaluation focus group
- Feel confident about the quality of their work on display for friends and family during the opening of the exhibition.

Feelings of confidence had come from learning new skills, producing quality results and being given control of their own work.

> *The project is rebuilding their confidence*
> **Teresa Logan** Key-worker, Salford Foyer

Liz Dance, the Foyer Manager described the impact that the project has had on the young people:

Their interview skills have improved.

… others they come into contact with at social services and at the museum now see them as individuals

… they are more successful at getting their rights

they have demonstrated that they can learn and have shown a remarkable commitment

there has been enthusiasm amongst all Foyer residents … we hope to be able to continue it.

Interview with Liz Dance

4.1.3 Opportunities for interaction and socialising
The social element was an important aspect of the project and one which the young people enjoyed. They had the opportunity to:
- develop relationships and work as part of a team on a specific project
- experience a feeling of camaraderie and being at ease with each other
- participate in trips to museums such as the Football Museum in Manchester
- work as individuals, taking on specific aspects of the project. Each person had a "job title" which provided an added focus to their work. This aspect developed a sense of independence which the Foyer Manager felt to be an important goal.

4.4 Skills development
The young people developed skills in a number of areas such as:
- Market research – with other young people about their views of museums
- Exhibition design – the young people developed an understanding of how to plan, prepare and mount an exhibition. This provided an insight to the types of work that museum staff do.
- Web design – the team attended workshops with a web designer and have created their own web site
- Communication skills - a number of the young people worked in specific areas of the museum shadowing and learning from specialist staff which helped them to improve their communication skills.

The young people also have proof of skills development through their portfolios which provided evidence for the accreditation which has been given to the work they have carried out during the project.

One young woman felt that she had developed skills which had been useful in the development of her career and one young man stated that he was keen to continue developing the web-site and associated skills, but expressed frustration at the limited equipment at the Foyer[4].

> "When I started I couldn't use a camera or a computer properly. I have learnt a lot of things I can use in the future. Meeting new people and having the guts to talk to people like you -I wouldn't have done that before". Foyer resident

The Foyer Manager confirmed that many of the young people involved in *Museum Fever* felt that they were gaining valuable skills for the future.

4.1.5 A sense ownership
The group made a number of visits to Salford Museum and Art Gallery. The group liked the Victorian street scene and came up with the idea of creating a public event dressing up in Victorian costume.

The young people made the following comments about *Museum Fever*:

it changed my ideas about museums

I got to know people better

I enjoyed all of it

it was cool (trip to Manchester Football Museum)

I liked the variety

I am more confident now

get to go places

it was a laugh

enjoyed the exhibition party

I enjoyed taking photographs and the editing

there ought to be a museum for young people

I feel listened to

Evaluation focus group

The young people now feel more welcome at Salford Museum and Art Gallery. They feel that staff have listened to their ideas about potential future changes in the museum to improve the experience for other young people[5]. These proposals included a space for themselves and more exhibitions of interest to young people.

They feel comfortable visiting the Museum on their own and have been in to see exhibits and speak to staff[6]. This has certainly developed the community identity of the Museum. Motivation to visit their own and other museums has certainly increased.

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[4] Evidence from focus group
[5] Evidence from focus group
[6] Evidence from interview with Jo Clarke, Museum Key Worker

4.1.6 Negative aspects

The young people had very little criticism of the project. Their only comments suggested that the freedom to choose the direction of the project was a little daunting to start with, until they felt more confident. They wanted more visits to museums and more opportunities. Some felt they might take on voluntary work in the sector or jobs with venues such as the Lowry Centre[7]. Other problems arose from personality clashes between members, and a lack of time for the project once members found jobs[8].

4.2 *Represent*

4.1.1 Enjoyment

Firstly, all those in the Evaluation focus group said how much they had enjoyed themselves. This is most important, as without this, not much else is possible. The commitment of the young people to the *Represent* project was exciting.

4.1.2 Increased self-confidence

The introductory sessions, called "Walk Tall, which were lead by Dr Roy Paget, a neuroscientist, may appear unrelated to the museum. However, these sessions explored the skills needed for using museum spaces - the need for a broadened knowledge, thinking skills, an open mind and the confidence to express an opinion.

These sessions:
- helped the young people focus on what they wanted to achieve and made them believe they could achieve it.
- involved activities that the young people found entertaining and inspiring.
- helped them to re-evaluate their own lives, explore how people thought in the past and feel more confident about expressing their own opinion.

One young person felt that the sessions had helped her at college as she felt more confident in herself[9].

4.1.3 Opportunities for interaction and socialising

The young people also found that the programme had an important social element. They enjoyed meeting new people and making new friends. They also felt it had been beneficial working as a team[10].

> The young people made the following comments about *Represent*:
>
> *I've made new friends*
>
> *it feels like a family*
>
> *more confidence - secure in a team*
>
> *I look at things differently*
>
> *… didn't think about interpretation before*
>
> *I feel more confident and ... able to express my self more freely*
>
> *enjoyed the time at the museums*
>
> *definitely recommend it to others*
>
> *definitely do it again*
>
> Evaluation focus group

4.1.4 Skills development

Represent also aimed to develop basic skills. Although this area was not as fully developed as initially intended in the programme, improvements in skills were seen. These included writing labels, expressing themselves, and developing personal

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[7] some had already done reception work and similar at the Lowry
[8] Evidence from focus group
[9] Evidence from focus group
[10] Evidence from focus group

elements through Dr Paget's sessions. These have lead the young people to think more about what they want, reflect on what they have done, be more creative, and broaden their horizons. There was a greater sense of confidence and self belief.

Several of the young women said they had learnt about their own culture and that of others. They particularly enjoyed looking at the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade galleries at Liverpool Maritime Museum and expressed a desire to know more. They also found the paintings more interesting than they originally thought, and learnt how to deconstruct and discuss their content. They disliked many of the paintings but learned to express their opinions. Initially they thought that they were supposed to like everything.

> *We've learnt about different aspects of history and culture*
>
> *I've got more understanding of art*
>
> Young people with *Represent*

4.4 Opportunities to visit museums

Those attending the Evaluation focus group said that they enjoyed the museum trips. Observation notes of the trips, written by the evaluator, also reveal:
- a high degree of enjoyment and fascination with the museums visited.
- a great interest in the displays at the Victoria and Albert Museum, especially the costume, armour, weapons and jewellery, which they found stunning.
- a willingness to spend time interpreting, discussing and understanding what they saw. A group of young women spent much time deconstructing a religious piece of art work. Their knowledge and interpretation was highly skilled and committed.
- a desire to return as they felt frustrated that they had not seen everything.
- a greater sense of commitment to visiting museums.

Comments about museums from those attending *Represent* were generally positive. Some members of the group had since visited museums independently and some had taken family members.

Being part of *Represent* has:
- made them feel more able to use museums
- increased their knowledge of what is likely to be inside a museum
- helped them to feel more confident about going into a museum.
- Given them the skills to comment on what they see and express an opinion about what they like and dislike and why.

They also had ideas about how museums could improve:

> Kate Pontin, Evaluator observed the group during the trip to the V&A:
>
> *They worked out who Mary, Jesus and the three Kings were first. The young women then guessed that Joseph must be the other one with the halo on. They then had much discussion as to why Jesus had a big head. Then they read the label.*
> *All in all they spent much time discussing the painting.*
>
> *They made many links to their own lives - the city they lived in, their personal situations, work and family issues*
>
> *They enjoyed it … made clear decisions about likes and dislikes*
>
> *Beginning to trust their own judgements and increase in confidence*
>
> K Pontin Observation notes

- more information on what is inside a museum before they visit to help them decide whether the content would be of interest to them[11].
- a guide (audio or human) would be helpful.
- they felt that museums could only go so far to attract new users as people needed to want to go to them, and thus there is a need to alter people's perception about museums in general.
- they were unhappy that security staff followed them at the Victoria and Albert Museum, however they reported that they had felt welcome in most of the museums they had visited.
- They also felt that museums should tell people more about what is inside the museum. As one young person commented:

> *If I don't know what is in there, then I don't know if I want to go in*

4.5 A sense of ownership
The young people felt that their input had been taken on board by staff at the museum and they felt a certain amount of ownership of Birmingham's museums. During the visit to the V&A they made many positive references to similar collections they had seen at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

During the Evaluation focus group they discussed ideas about the museum extending its opening hours so that they could visit in the evenings and providing a space them to use inside the museum.

The original aims also stated that the programme should inspire the young people to visit independently and bring their family which they have done. One young women took her sister to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for a day out which they both enjoyed.

> *I've visited "Coming to our Senses"*
> young person about a temporary exhibition at BM&AG

5.8 Negative aspects
Although the young people were very positive about *Represent* and the museum they did highlight a number of problems.

The major comment about *Represent* was that many of them had since enrolled at College and had less time to commit to the programme. They still wished to attend but whatever time and day was chosen would be inconvenient for some.

They wanted more activities out side Birmingham to experience new places. Subsequent to the Evaluation focus group a trip was made to Bradford to visit the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television. Some events were not of interest to various individuals but they understood the need to offer a variety[12]. Overall the programme has certainly provided a greater cultural diversity to their lives.

Some young people also commented on the embarrassing nature of some of the behaviour of other members of the group during trips.

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[11] Evidence from focus group
[12] Evidence from focus group

4.2 Summary of benefits for the young people

- increase in communication skills and confidence to use them
- increase in technical skills such as computer work and photography
- an understanding of what museums can provide
- basic skills development
- accreditation for work
- enjoyment
- greater motivation to visit museums
- increased confidence

4.3 Summary of young people's needs

- to feel welcome
- to know what is in each museum before they go in
- a social element to museum visiting
- topics of interest to young people like themselves such as fashion, jewellery, slavery etc
- appropriate opening times

5.0 Impact on the museums

This section evaluates the impact that these two projects have had on the museums involved.

5.1 Salford Museum and Art Gallery

5.1.1 Staff awareness
There has been an improved awareness of the needs of young people by all staff – an awareness raising session about the project was arranged for staff, who are now keen to continue this type of work. The museum staff have improved their understanding of young people and ways in which to work with them, namely flexibility, working on their terms and ensuring relevant subject matter.

Both staff at the Foyer and the museum have gained an understanding of each others service, with the benefit of knowing how they can work with each other in the future.

5.2.1 Use of the museum by young people
There has been an increased use of the museum by young people (there are no significant changes to visitor figures). Those involved with *Museum Fever* have visited Salford Museum, independently, on a number of occasions. There is now a potential to attract larger number of young people in the future if the museum continues to target young people and allocate resources to do this. The project has helped the museum to extend its role in the community.

A temporary exhibition about the young people and their work was included in the museum programme and provided an attraction for young people as well as giving other visitors a new insight into the work of the museum and the lives of young people.

5.3.2 New networks for the museum
Wider networks have developed and the museum is now known within these networks for its work with young people. There is, for example, considerable potential for further work to be done with the Foyer.

5.2 Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery

5.2.1 Use of the museum by young people
Larger numbers than originally expected[13] and planned for attended the project. This made it more difficult for the providers although it shows the enormous success of *Represent*. There was less time to provide individual support. However it does show the enthusiasm of the young people for such a diverse programme which supports and focuses on them rather than the museum. It takes a long time to develop a more museum focus for project work when the participants lack not only an understanding but any prior enthusiasm or interest in museums.

> *helping people to feel comfortable about being in a museum or gallery and belonging … that their opinion and ideas are just as valid ... is so worthwhile*
> Sarah Riddell, student on placement at the museum

5.2.2 Change in the culture of the Museum Service
Early on in the project some staff felt that the project did not sit easily within prevailing culture at the Museum[14]. It felt like an add on rather than central to museum policy. This made it difficult to encourage young people in the project while not being entirely convinced that the museum would support and take on board any conclusions.

> *There is a lack of flexibility and imagination …lack of ability to take risks*
> Dan commenting on the museum early on in the project

It also felt difficult to encourage the young people when the programme was not fully thought out. This lack of clarity sometimes made it difficult to remain motivated. Many of these feelings lessened as the project continued and the focus became clearer and more refined. Senior museum staff also became more interested in the work and began to take on board some of the issues highlighted by the project.

During an interview with Jane Arthur, a member of the Management Team, it became clear that the project has had a major impact on the museums service, altering staff perceptions and future priorities. *Represent* has acted as one of the main driving forces behind the new Social Inclusion strategy.

Jane Arthur feels that the strategy will impact on the museum and make inclusion work more central to its work. In the future the museum service hopes to develop the *Represent* project and funding is now being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a sustained approach to audience development.

The museum has also created two "positive action trainee-ships" for people from black and Asian backgrounds in order to diversify the profile of the work-force.

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[13] 40 people joined *Represent* - twice as many as had planned for
[14] A member of staff at Birmingham felt that the current museum's policy and image did not fit with new programmes for socially excluded people.

5.2.3 Networks outside the Museum Service

The *Represent* project helped Birmingham Museum Service to demonstrate, to potential partners and agencies working with young people, that it could run a programme that would be relevant to this audience and, more importantly, sustain their interest over an 18 month period.

The project also brought the museum into contact with staff from organisations such as the Newtown Community staff as well as artists and musicians working in the local community.

Finally, the project gave the museum service the opportunity to take a lead role in the region, testing out an innovative approach to reaching   young people and recruiting a young person through the New Deal employment programme, disseminating the lessons learned to other museums in the region.

> *Networks are much better now … people know who to contact if they want to be involved*
> Simon Redgrave
>
> *Aston Hall is now seen as a venue for launches etc. by other organisations*
> Rachel Hunter Rowe

6.0 Evaluating 'inclusion' projects - key issues

Evaluation is a central aspect of this report. It is important that appropriate techniques are used to assess how successful different strategies are for developing new audiences.   This section will:
- Look at how evaluation was approached during *Represent* and *Museum Fever*
- Look at linking aims with data collection
- Provide an analysis of qualitative data

6.1 Evaluating *Represent* and *Museum Fever*

As *Museum Fever* and *Represent* were both pilot projects, funded from national sources, there was a strong emphasis on evaluation. In the case of *Represent*, 10% of the budget was spent on evaluation. It was important to explore the effectiveness of the strategies employed during the projects in order for the museums involved and museums nationally to engage with the process of learning about and developing a hard to reach audience such as young "socially excluded" young people.

Each project employed an external evaluator so that an objective view could be developed and to allow the practitioners to focus their energies on delivering the project.

6.1.1 *Represent*

Represent employed an evaluator from early on in the project which enabled the evaluator to be involved in discussions about aims and objectives and methods of data collection. The evaluator was also able to observe the responses of the young people attending events and workshops at the beginning of the programme as well as at the end of the project.[15]

During *Represent*, data was collected from diaries written by museum staff written through out the project. This supported the evidence that the evaluator collected

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[15] The researcher for this report was also the evaluator for *Represent* and may, therefore, have a certain bias towards the approach used to evaluate the project. A critique of the evaluation for *Represent* is provided in the appendix

through observations, informal interviews and watching video recordings. A number of evaluation and task forms were also used to gather data from the young people. Summative evaluation used focus groups to establish how people felt towards the end of the initial phase of the project.

6.1.2 *Museum Fever*
Here the evaluator was not employed until the end of the project, when focus groups and interviews were used to gather data.[16] Materials generated through out the project, such as monthly reports and assessments of outcomes made by the staff, and the work and exhibition produced by the young people also formed part of the evaluation.

The main constraint with using the evaluator at the end of a project is that they have had no control over what data is collected and how it is recorded.

The evaluation of *Museum Fever* would have been strengthened if interviews with staff and young people had been held at the beginning and during the project. This would have given a more accurate picture of how people felt at the time rather than relying on "what they remember thinking". In addition a diversity of sources of data would have increased the validity of the findings.[17]

6.2 Linking aims with data collection
Through out this report an attempt has been made to provide the sources of evidence behind the comments and conclusions made. This is to highlight that conclusions are drawn from the data collected. The table below shows the variety of tools (types of data collection) used and how they can, together, provide a detailed picture of the project, which in turn can be used to assess how effectively the project has been in achieving its aims.

6.3 Qualitative data
In this evaluation the accent has been on collecting qualitative data. Qualitative data is concerned with the meaning and function of social action and is defined as:

- the use of everyday contexts rather than experimental conditions
- a range of sources of data collections
- no prior hypothesis for testing
- concerned with everyday life
- seeing through the eyes of ....
- favouring open and *relatively* unstructured research design[18]

It is a way of trying to gain an in-depth picture of the world and is useful when we wish to know about why things happen. Data is often collected from a number of sources in an attempt to gain a number of "angles" on the context.

Both projects have used qualitative evaluation to provide evidence for what happened, what was successful (predicted and unpredicted areas) and what problems arose.

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[16] Some front end evaluation was done by staff before the project started
[17] The researcher also did a brief summative evaluation of *Museum Fever* for this report. It will also have the limitations discussed here.
[18] Silverman, D; Interpreting Qualitative Data, SAGE publications, Rep 1995, page 24 -25

The types of data that were used included:

- an understanding of the young people's commitment to the projects in terms of time and effort
- the range of skills developed and the relevance to their lives
- the amount of enthusiasm from users about the project through talking to them
- evaluator's perceptions from their conversations with all those involved
- the testimony on the social element and the creation of a wider cultural experience
- perceptions from those that know the young people such as Foyer workers, key worker
- evidence of the young people visiting on their own or with other friends independent of project
- intentions to visit museums again in future[19]
- a wish to develop further cultural experiences and skills
- evidence of impact on museum policy

7.0 Towards a methodology for evaluating 'inclusion' projects

In this section a methodology will be suggested which uses a number of different tools in order to provide as full a "picture" as possible of the project. As a result of such evaluation appropriate decisions can be made for more long term policy within the museum.

The Flow Chart on page **?** shows the process of evaluation starting with the establishment of aims for the project and the evaluation. Appropriate tools then need to be chosen to gather data that will provide the types of evidence required to asses whether the aims have been fulfilled.

This data will often include:

- interviews with all those involved
- focus groups of participants
- observations of the project/situation, including video, tapes, photographs
- observation of outcomes such as displays, completed activity sheets etc
- diaries and "testimony" written by those involved in the project
- informal discussion (recorded)

A review of all the data and evidence collected is then undertaken relating the data to each of the aims. As with the projects here evidence can be provided through direct quotes from those involved. Agreement between sources can confirm emerging ideas and patterns. Further validity can be gained by asking those involved to comment on conclusions and findings. Comparison with other reports can also be useful. In a detailed survey of qualitative data unexpected outcomes are possible, as is evidence for feelings, attitudes and personal development.

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[19] the intention to do something is deemed by many psychologists to be an important step and is known as connative learning. It represents a change in attitude rather than a change in behaviour

Quantitative data can complement these conclusions, but if we are seeking to contribute to social inclusion by empowering and educating those involved, and by developing museums to become more responsive to their communities then figures alone will not provide evidence for this happening. The change in the role for museums has resulted in the need for a change in the way we evaluate our work.

In the end, all these worthwhile, innovative, public-minded activities targeted at the young people may not work, or may not work enough for young people to justify the change. The absence of young people from museums is not in itself the "problem".... rather, it is a symptom ... of something wrong with museums as we have them today.[20]

7.1 A suggested methodology for evaluating 'inclusion' projects

A methodology must not be too prescriptive as circumstances will vary, however the following guidelines may help with thoughts about the approach to take when planning the evaluation an inclusion project such as *Represent* or *Museum Fever*.

1. Setting aims and objectives for the evaluation
When initially considering the overall aims of the project it is also important to discuss evaluation and how well the aims can actually be assessed. In doing this one can consider the types of tools (observation sheets, interview questions etc) that can be used to collect appropriate data.

Development of self-esteem and other aspects are difficult to assess. It is important for the evaluator to spend time with the young people through out the project so that a more personal view of the changes can be included.

2. Data collection methods
It is recommended that a range of data collections methods are used - interviews with both the young people and the staff running the programme, observations of sessions, viewing of project outcomes and use of evaluation forms completed through out the programme. All the data collected was used to confirm and back-up the comments made by those involved.

3 Objectivity
Evaluation of a project needs to be set up as a dedicated task. An external person will be able to take a more objective view, however, people involved in the project can gather useful results if

Types of data collection:
• interviews with participants
• interviews with staff, partners, managers and co-ordinators
• observation of activities
• ask staff to keep diaries about the project
• questionnaires
• data from planning and development sessions
• videos of sessions/activities
• observation of outcomes - exhibitions, scrapbooks
• notes on own observations and feelings

they are able to set aside chunks of time, stand back from the project and focus on the evaluation of the work undertaken so far.

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[20] Anderson, D; "The shape of Things to Come?" in Horlock, N; Testing the Water, Young people and galleries, Liverpool University Press & Tate Gallery Liverpool, 2000, page 165

4 Analysing data

When analysing all the data re-read the original aims and then read the notes, texts and other data collected. Look for examples of data which relate to the aims - positive or negative. Patterns and repetitions of responses or comments should be "collected" together. These will provide evidence that aims have been achieved (or not) but they may lead to new discoveries too.

The analysis of the *Represent* evaluation data, from conversations and focus groups, was used to confirm that attitudes towards museums had changed. One does not need to do pre and post tests as in quantitative data collection. However one needs to talk to the young people through out the programme to see how their feelings have changed.

Finally, evaluation will not provide all the answers and often throws up more questions. It is important to be aware that where changes in visitor behaviour or attitudes occur it may not be due to obvious causes, but may be based on something else more subtle. However, if qualitative data analysis is used then there will be opportunities to discover responses that had not been expected.
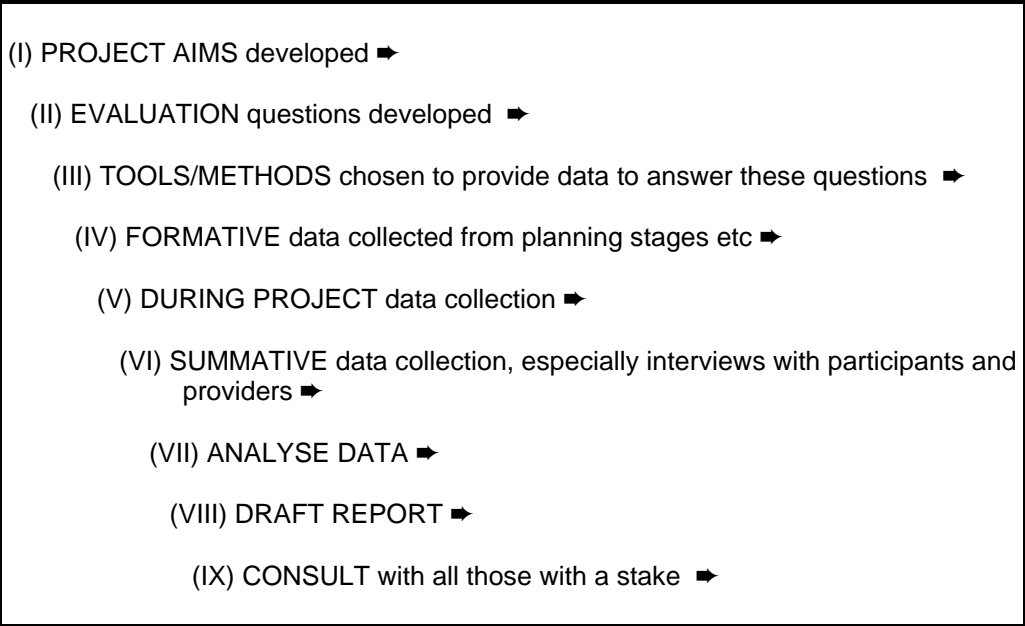
> **Analysis techniques**
> * remind yourself about the aims
> * read the notes etc several times
> * look for similar stories in different testimonies and observations
> * look for evidence to support (or not) successful completion of aims
> * provide a full and "true" picture of the programme

5 Dissemination

Much evaluation is specific to the project/institution. However, the findings are very likely to be useful to other museums and should be disseminated both to colleagues and outside organisations.

The accompanying flow diagram illustrates how these different aspects of evaluation relate to each other.

Fig ? Flow Chart

(I) PROJECT AIMS developed ➡

 (II) EVALUATION questions developed ➡

  (III) TOOLS/METHODS chosen to provide data to answer these questions ➡

   (IV) FORMATIVE data collected from planning stages etc ➡

    (V) DURING PROJECT data collection ➡

     (VI) SUMMATIVE data collection, especially interviews with participants and providers ➡

      (VII) ANALYSE DATA ➡

       (VIII) DRAFT REPORT ➡

        (IX) CONSULT with all those with a stake ➡

(X) FINAL REPORT

(XI) DISSEMINATION of key findings to colleagues, partners external organisations

Appendix 1: Tools used during the evaluation of the *Represent* project

Data sources collected for analysis through out the Represent project were:

- Video film of events taken by Dan Packe
- Diaries from various providers especially Dan and Sarah Riddle
- Conversation with providers and attendees as well as management (eg interviews and focus groups)
- Notes from my observations of different events and meetings
- Comments on activity sheets (art session) done by attendees part way through the programme
- Evaluations from attendees part way through programme
- Resulting resources such as scrapbooks.

Some of the above data was gathered by Dan as discussed in the evaluation section (section 3)

As always all data is confidential and kept by the evaluator. Thus names of individual attendees have not been used in this report where quotes have been used.

Analysis methods used were:
of data according to the original aims, and looking for the positive and negative evidence.

Appendix 2: Guidance for museum staff about keeping diaries (*Represent* project)

DIARIES - INFORMATION TO INCLUDE

Museum workers need to comment on:

- Their feelings about the project

- The success of events etc (the quality of them)

- Feelings about how participants are doing/their motivation and development

- Understanding of needs/wishes/starting points and goals

- Responsiveness

- Relationship with agencies

- Impact on themselves and on museum

Appendix 3: Reflecting on the evaluation of the *Represent* project

The following notes point to various aspects of the evaluation process which the evaluator feels were very good and also aspects which in some way needed improving. This does not mean that the evaluation is an inaccurate reflection on what occurred, but these comments point to a number of ways the process could have been improved. Evaluating an inclusion project has been a learning process too, just as much as actually developing the project itself. Although the evaluator is an experienced worker in the field, each type of project highlights new ways of working.

Positive aspects:

- the use of data from both providers and attendees
- data collected through out the programme
- the use of Dan, the programme Co-ordinator, to collect some of the data
- use of an outside evaluator
- the importance placed on evaluation

Areas for improvements:

- There needed to be a clearer idea earlier on in the project of the evaluation programme and how it linked in with the represent programme. Appointment of the evaluator even earlier on might have helped here.

- There needed to be clearer communication of the types of evaluation to be used, and when and why. Although an agreed programme was known to all staff this could have been discussed and developed further in the planning stage. This would have helped develop closer links between staff and the evaluator earlier on. Agreement from all providers is necessary so they are clearer about the role and its context.

- There was probably a need for one or more project update meetings for the evaluator. Some general meetings were attended and other updates were done by phone. However for this evaluation it might have proven more useful to hold a full meeting with all staff. This would have improved communication of current events and developments to the evaluator, and of the evaluator needs to the staff. It would be fair to say that initially staff felt uneasy about my task and developing trust and comfort about the process of evaluation took longer than the evaluator expected. More meetings may have helped with this.

- Evaluation should have been started by the evaluator sooner. Although she was appointed towards the beginning of the project her involvement at the start with programme ideas and planning would have been useful. This would have also provided longer to develop a relationship with the team and thus overcome initial reticence from team members. More time might have been useful to do more formative evaluation.

- Members of the team who felt they had not got time to write diaries needed to agree some form of reporting of their own personal feelings. This would have provided backup information. Elsewhere a form developed by the evaluator for users to fill in was not used by the staff with the young people. This in itself was

fine but there was a failure to collect the data in another way as requested by the evaluator.

- Video diaries would have been more useful if they had included casual conversation within the group before and after the session.

- Further training of appropriate staff would have benefited staff and the evaluation, for example Dan would have benefited from some training (he did some of the data collection for me).

- A slippage in the programme time-scale meant that less had been achieved when the final report for this phase of funding was finished. And thus there was less to report on and evaluate.

Appendix 4: Evaluating project aims

SALFORD AIMS[21]	DATA COLLECTION	BIRMINGHAM AIMS	DATA COLLECTION
Collect contemporary items	Interview museum key worker		
Work as a group and as individuals	interview co-ordinator and young people		
find out what young people want from museums	Ask young people	Impact on service as a result	Interview museum management
Young people understand benefits of museums	Interview young people, Foyer staff and Co-ordinator		
Learn about museum and work there	Interview young people and museum key worker	Enthusiasm for museums	Interview young people
Plan exhibition	View outcomes Interview young people	Evaluate outcomes produced by young people	View outcomes
Learn new skills	Interview young people and Foyer staff	Develop new skills and improve motivation and confidence	Interview young people and co-ordinator
		Change attitude to learning	Interview young people and co-ordinator
learn about evaluation			

When establishing an evaluation strategy the project aims can be used to consider the types of tool required to collect appropriate information to answer these aims/questions.

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[21] These aims relate purely to those for young people to compare with those for Birmingham and also to compare data collection techniques. They will not show changes of ideas as evaluation was summative.