

**GEM**

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learn together

# Case Studies

**Young People**

Vol.28 2022



Can we tweak this to 'young people in museums, heritage sites and cultural organisations' please? v

## Editorial

Welcome to the 28th edition of the GEM Case Studies, on the theme of young people in cultural organisations. We are so pleased to share such an eclectic range of case studies showcasing best practice from around the UK and beyond, with contributions from museums, galleries, heritage sites and more. We're especially delighted that some of the articles included in this edition have been written by young participants themselves.

Thank you to Kids in Museums for their guest editorial on this publication, and their ongoing commitment to developing a sector that is welcoming to children, teenagers and families.

GEM hopes that this publication offers inspiration, motivation, and important lessons for any individual or organisation seeking to expand their engagement with young people.

**Jessica England**

GEM Communications Manager

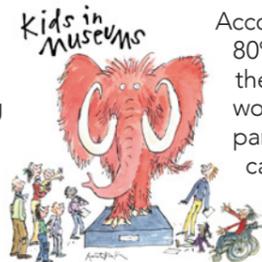
This edition of GEM Case Studies focuses on how museums worked with young people during the pandemic and how they can now build on this to engage them in a post-pandemic world.

In Spring 2021, the Children's Commissioner for England received over half a million responses from children and young people aged 4-17 to a survey about their post-pandemic future. In many respects, the picture painted is unsurprising. Children and young people said they wanted happy families, better support for mental health, access to good education and training, and paths into fulfilling careers.

However, what's more striking is how outwardly focused the young people were. They were keen to see strong local communities with great facilities and activities. Moreover, they wanted to work together to create a greener, fairer more equal world for themselves and future generations.

Looking at these case studies, it's clear museums are starting to address these priorities, particularly around training and careers. Through paid opportunities, work experience and co-creation, organisations such as Norfolk Museums Service and Oxford University Museum of Natural History are offering young people training and support to develop valuable skills for employment, not just for careers in museums, but in any field.

Although there is a necessary focus on diversifying the museum workforce, broader skills development for employability for all young people is currently essential. While youth unemployment rates have recently started to drop, young people – especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are autistic or have a learning disability – still need more support to find and stay in good quality jobs.



According to Young Minds, 80% of young people say their mental health became worse during the pandemic. While museums cannot be expected to fill gaps in NHS services, they can play a valuable role as part of a range of community support.

Programmes like Living Museums at Perth and Kinross Museum can reduce isolation and give young people space to reflect creatively on their experiences, and more of this type of work is needed.

What's clear from these case studies is that museums are spending more time listening to young people. This is leading to approaches that engage them in popular and familiar formats such as the Escape Room at Headstone Manor, which change young people's perceptions of museums.

These conversations also offer a shared space where young people and museum staff can come together and develop goals for positive change, giving young people the outward focus and stake in the future they want. They also address one of the key barriers to encouraging more young people to visit museums – relevance. According to 2020 research into DCMS sponsored museums in London, only 12% of 16-24 year olds felt they told stories that were relevant to them.

As an increasing number of museums collaborate with young people, Kids in Museums hopes to see more of them perceiving museums as important and accessible community organisations. We also hope to see more museums working alongside young people to address challenges such as the climate emergency and social and racial justice, moving closer to being the relevant organisations young people want and need.

**Alison Bowyer,**  
Kids in Museums

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# Working With Young People as a School Holiday Provision



## Summary

Bolton Museum provided a four week Holiday Club with arts and culture based activities for 20 young people, with assistance from the Holiday Activity Fund Offer. The purpose was to enhance cultural provision for young people aged 11-16 in an area of relatively high deprivation.

## Background

Bolton Museum has a strong learning and programmes offer. However, the Holiday Activity Fund, provided us with an opportunity to work with young people in a targeted and different way.

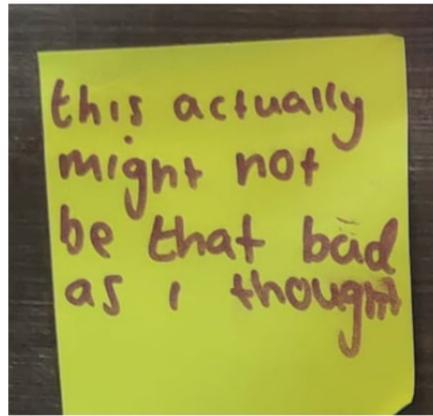
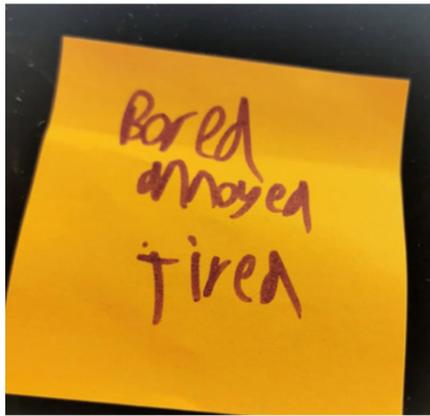
We recruited 60% young people on Free School Meals (FSM), the other places were filled by other young people who their school felt would benefit from a place including young people with physical and learning disabilities and children in care.

We were supported in our offer by Bolton Council Youth and Play Services and Curious Minds NW.

## Challenge

How would we find young people on FSM and persuade them to join?

How could we ensure young people enjoyed the project enough to return each week and how could we change their perceptions of our service?



## Approach

We designed an exciting, culturally engaging programme which had a direct link to our buildings, galleries and collections.

We linked with some exciting partners and sought to provide engaging and fun activities each day. The activities were designed with the age group in mind and we started with an attention grabbing week – creating a Horror Film in an, allegedly, haunted Historic Hall.

## Intended outcomes

- Better engagement enabling us to discover exactly what young people enjoy.
- Organising sessions that young people would continue to come back for.
- Strengthening our ability to work with and engage with young people.
- Finding new members for our Youth Forum.

## Intended outputs

Continued engagement and take up of the offer, and an improved attitude towards the service from local young people following participation in the activities.

## Obstacles and issues

Reaching young people on FSM is difficult. We targeted all the Secondary Schools in the area but only engaged with 3.

We had 6 weeks to plan, devise, and recruit. We achieved it but with difficulty.

One of our buildings is in a remote location. This caused transport problems for a number of families so taxis had to be provided.

We started with an exciting but difficult week of activity. In hindsight starting with simpler activities and getting to know everyone first would have been beneficial.

“Support from schools is essential to finding and recruiting your cohort”



Staff were challenged by participant behaviour, which was sometimes unpredictable, but this was dealt with effectively.

## Actual outcomes

Evaluation revealed that perceptions could be changed quickly – on the first morning one participant wrote that they were “bored, annoyed and tired” by the afternoon this had changed to “this might not be as bad as I thought”.

One parent shared about their son’s experience “He has surprised himself... as he is the first to admit art and creativity do not come easy to him... The sessions have helped him become more independent and sociable as he tends to be a little shy”.

When asked how they were feeling now Summer School had come to an end one participant said “sad, but happy because of the memories”.



Some initially reluctant participants have signed up to attend a second time, and one participant was seen visiting again independently, bringing their family.

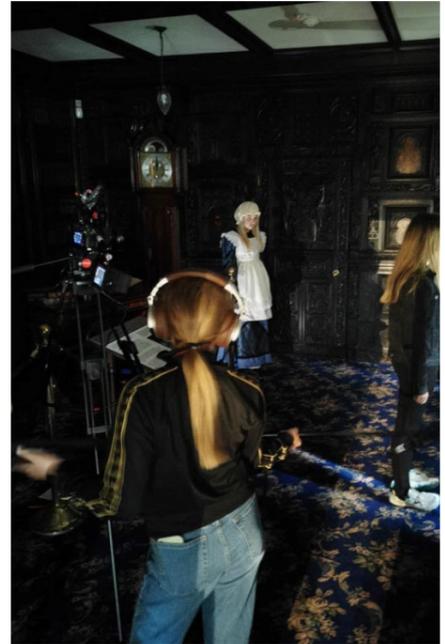
In addition, our own staff learnt a lot about working intensively with young people and the challenges and positives it brings and has ignited a new confidence.

## Actual outputs

All participants engaged and attended regularly – drop out was very low.

## Lessons learned

- Preparation is key – time is needed to plan, devise and deliver such a huge project. Although we managed to get it done, it was a lot of work and very stressful.
- Support from schools is essential to finding and recruiting your cohort, without the support from the schools we would have struggled to recruit.
- Partnerships are incredibly important. Our links with some incredible partners enabled us to devise an amazing programme. However, going forward, we would engage with Youth Services more and will, in future, have a Youth Worker as part of the project.



## Next steps

The Project will continue for another 4 days at Christmas 2021. Beyond this, we intend to use the lessons learned and the most popular aspects of the activities to feed into our other youth projects including the development of the Youth Forum..

## Find out more

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Film made by Young People during their first week of summer school – Create Your Own Horror Movie: <https://youtu.be/AYpQvBXE2oo>

Film made by Young People during final week – Create Your Own Superhero Alter Ego: <https://vimeo.com/592900149/69b2617004>

Short film detailing the first week of the project: [https://youtu.be/S\\_iO\\_0uT4b8](https://youtu.be/S_iO_0uT4b8)