

case study

Wordz Out and
Way In Way Way Out
at Nottingham City
Museums and
Galleries (NCMG)



partner organisations:

Nottingham Youth Service and Apt, a participatory arts programme working with at risk young people

location:

Nottingham

context:

Nottingham's en-vision project builds on the N'Clusions Project (1998-2001) at the Castle Museum and Art Gallery – which aimed to engage young people in arts activities across Nottingham City – and ongoing work by Angel Row Gallery with Apt. This work has been project based rather than being fully embedded into the wider programme and has not incorporated other sites within the Museums Service. This project aimed to address the imbalance and to see if experience and knowledge of young people gained at Angel Row Gallery could be translated to other sites. Nottingham's en-vision is two projects – one based at Angel Row Gallery and one at Nottingham Castle. We took this opportunity to experiment with different ways of working and each project developed very differently.

en-vision research question:

How can galleries embed a youth friendly culture and expertise through the practice of the whole organisation?

overall project proposal:

aims

- Explore with young people the barriers that prevent them engaging with museums, galleries and contemporary art
- Develop good practice in including young people in aspects of museums & galleries' policy and programming in a sustainable way
- Create good working relationships between the partner organisations objectives
- Offer creative learning experiences which demystify galleries and visual art for young people and youth agencies (and visa versa), and which support young people's personal, educational and vocational development
- Create structures and support which empower young people to become creative decision-makers within the service, and input into gallery programmes
- Implement a training programme to build awareness, confidence and skills amongst staff to embed this work within all aspects of operation
- Establish connections with local youth providers and explore the connection between the youth curriculum to ensure that future provision is embedded within local youth arts
- Identify how best to develop a 'Youth Panel' scheme to sustain young people's input into future practices

summary of outcomes:

- Way in Way Out – a successful project which resulted in a DVD & booklet guide, created by young people as a result of gallery visits, meeting different staff and lots of discussion on contemporary art and galleries
- Wordz Out – a successful project with resulted in 8 short films about being young and African-Caribbean in Nottingham, made by young people, inspired by the photography of Horace Ove
- Apt provided 'Working with Young People' training for museums Front of House staff and the take-up and success rate of these was high
- 'Beyond Marketing', a seminar for regional and national youth / arts professionals sharing the experiences of these pilot projects

changes form original proposal:

- Original plan to run 3 projects at our three different gallery sites was reduced to 2, as the plan was felt to be too ambitious in the timescale and budget
- For both projects we narrowed the age range from the original 13-21 to 16-21. This decision was made when the projects were worked up in more detail and we decided that an older age range was more appropriate for the type of work we would be doing, and would potentially be of a more manageable age. With both projects this was the right decision to make
- The way in which we worked with our partners on this project, Apt and the Youth Service, changed from the original intention. The link with Apt became less relevant as 16 years is the top end of their remit and it was the bottom end of our revised age range. As we recruited young people through a range of agencies and contacts, the role of the youth service became almost redundant

success factors / recommendations:

- Shared control or negotiated control- design your project to allow the young people to take over responsibility of specific areas of the project
- Information – Make sure that you have consent for all images and project footage. Allow the young people the opportunity to write or help you write project descriptions, information about participants and any publicity information. Make sure that the young people are included in any press images if appropriate
- Communication – young people communicate mostly by text messaging and mobile phones. Agree with the young people how you will contact them throughout the project and how they will contact you. Young people generally do not think in the 9-5 time-scale
- Be aware of the different dynamics an established versus a new group can have on project activity and time
- If individuals are recruited to form a new group be aware that you may need to take on the role of group leader, which may bring a complex set of roles – mediator, negotiator, co ordinator etc. all of which need to be budgeted in as time
- Allow time for a group to form, gain trust and function as a collective

- Location, Location, Location! Perhaps on their terms – in their environment. Be innovative with the idea of utilising new non-arts spaces
- Programme your project to include leisure time (e.g., trip / visit, sports, music event)
- Select artists who are respected within the community you are targeting
- Use professionals, the aspiration, value, impact and credibility is higher

challenges:

- The projects succeeded at the expense of the partnerships. As the partners' involvement became less relevant to the projects, it became easier for the museum & gallery service to continue alone in order to complete the project – but the potential value of working in a shared partnership was lost
- The Museums Service (with Apt) has developed a Partnership Policy, to improve the way in which it works with partners in future

See also individual project templates for Way in Way Out and Wordz Out

outcomes for young people:

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outcomes for partner organisation's:

- The role of partners became slightly confused at times and essentially the projects were led by NCMG. Apt and the youth service were not included in planning the details of the 2 pilots and as plans were formulated their roles became diminished and unclear (e.g. reducing age group of the participants, and targeting groups other than those which the youth service suggested in the early stages of the project)
- All partners feel that this could have been clarified by shared planning earlier in the process, with partners suggesting there needed to be a working agreement identifying specific contributions from each organisation, and more frank discussions about the partnership and about recruiting and supporting more challenging groups
- Staff changes at Apt part way through the

project also impacted on their ability to support the project in an advisory capacity

outcomes for the venue/s:

See individual project templates for Way in Way Out and Wordz Out

what next?

- The en-vision project has given Nottingham Museums and Galleries the opportunity to embark on exciting projects with young people and to prove that it has the capacity and ability to do so
- We wish to establish a consultative group of young people who can support us in museum and gallery developments (such as CCAN, the Centre for Contemporary Art Nottingham) from their perspective. We intend to draw upon the skills of the young people involved in these pilot projects in the first instance
- Although the partnerships did not turn out to be as fruitful as anticipated for all parties, we are aware of the issues to be rectified. As a result of these projects, we understand better the ways in which our partners work and how we can better engage and involve them in future
- We will continue our volunteer placement programme across the museums service and encourage applications from young people (over 18's), particularly those not already attending a museum / heritage related course

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