



London Museum Development

Diversity Matters Programme

2018-2022

London Museum Development's (LMD's) Diversity Matters Programme encourages London's non-national museums to embrace Arts Council England's [Creative Case for Diversity](#) and engage a more diverse range of visitors with the collections they hold, as well as support them with long standing issues about the diversity of their boards and workforce. Over the four years London's non-national museums will be encouraged to make diversity a key issue in relation to the programming, audience development, leadership and workforce of museums. The national agenda focuses on increasing opportunities for people from protected characteristic groups¹ and overcoming the challenges and the barriers to participation and engagement across socio-economic barriers and across geographic location.

As part of the wider programme, LMD asked museums to share their experiences of developing responsive and diverse programmes, exhibitions, collections, audience initiatives, workforce and trustee boards. The following case study is showcased on the website as it addresses one of the four key areas of diversity practice:

- How museums have worked with its diverse visitors to diversify its public programmes, events, exhibitions and collections to ensure it is more responsive to its respective local community
- How museums have reached more diverse audiences and ensured its audience is more representative of its respective local community
- How museums have developed a more diverse board of trustees that is more representative of its respective local community.
- How museums have recruited and retained a diverse workforce which is more representative of its respective local community.

Hackney Museum Case Study



Project Title:	Sharing our Stories – Exploring Jewish Stamford Hill 1930-1960
Project Timescales:	December 2015 – December 2016

¹ Diversity is defined by Arts Council England through protected characteristic groups, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Duty 2011. These protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation as well as class and socio-economic status.

<p>Project Budget:</p>	<p>£11,200 <i>This project was funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and Teen Action.</i></p>
<p>Area of diversity practice:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with diverse visitors to produce, present and distribute its public programmes, events, exhibitions and collections to ensure it is more responsive to its respective local community • Reaching diverse audiences to ensure its audience is more representative of its respective local community
<p>Protected characteristic group museum worked with:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion and belief • Sex
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Photograph of participants taking part in the project

What were the project's aims?

Hackney Museum's working ethos since it was set-up in 1986 is to collaborate closely with local communities. This is to ensure that feel a sense of ownership over the way they are represented and enables them, and other users, to locate their place in Hackney's rich histories.

For the Museum, the project had the following aims:

- To support the participants and the group in the aims and outcomes of the heritage project
- To better understand the needs of various aspects of the community and how the Museum could support them
- To develop Hackney Museum's collections to reflect Charedi experiences in the borough

For the partner organisation, Teen Action, the project had the following aims:

- To engage the young women of Teen Action in the history of their local area and community.
- To support the young women to connect with the older generation in the area and learn from their experiences.
- Support the development of the participants' communication and inter-personal skills as well as ensuring they feel a sense of ownership in making decisions for the project.

Who did the museum work with?

Hackney Museum worked with 52 members of Teen Action, a Charedi Orthodox Jewish teenage girls group based in Stamford Hill, and UK Jewish Film. Teen Action's aim is to provide learning and developmental opportunities to young Jewish women in the community. The intergenerational project was designed with the aim to connect the younger generation with their elders and learn about the local area through this process.

The largest Charedi Orthodox Jewish community in Europe (around 30,000 people) lives in the north of the borough in Stamford Hill and is expected to grow. Half of the community is under the age of 16 and make-up about a fifth of Hackney's child population. Hackney Museum has been developing relationships with the borough's Charedi community over the past 15 years. In general, this community was a non-user of the museum and its services, however specific elements of our programme were taken up by a small section of the community.

Awareness within the community, and the trust built up with the museum over a period of time through engaging with Rabbis and community leaders, led to Teen Action being sign-posted to the Museum when they started thinking about a heritage project, and conversations with Museum staff helped shape a project that was rooted in the learning outcomes desired for the participants and local history. The Museum wanted to work with this group to build on the previous work we had been doing and this partnership presented an opportunity to develop relationships in a structured manner with shared values, outcomes and outputs with a demographic of the community we have never worked with before, or had access to – the women and teenage girls.

The Museum worked closely with Teen Action staff to develop a HLF funding application over 12-18 months. This process resulted in the project parameters and skills development being discussed and identified in advance and allowed Teen Action to be guided by the interests of the young women in the group. This collaboration resulted in Teen Action staff becoming more confident using 'heritage' language to express the heritage outcomes they desired and for Museum staff to have a better understanding of how to support the project. It also enabled Teen Action staff to build a relationship with Museum staff and for both to understand the value of the partnership to each other.

What did the project entail?

Over a series of workshops at Hackney Museum and at Teen Action, the participants:

- Explored Hackney's long history of migration and settlement and the Jewish experiences within this, alongside those of other communities
- Learnt about Hackney Museum's collections and how we develop them
- Learnt how to interview people using audio and film equipment
- Learnt how to develop an exhibition and created key messages and outline for their exhibition
- These workshops were usually 2-3 hours long and booked in advance. The frequency varied depending on the availability of the group and staff at Teen Action and the Museum.

In addition to this, Teen Action built the project into their teaching curriculum and supported the participants to:

- Identify individuals in the community to interview and to interview them
- Take photographs of the individuals interviewed
- Transcribe all the interviews
- Identify objects from many of the interviewees which could be used in a display
- The fact that the project was integrated in to Teen Action's curriculum was very valuable as it meant that workshops were during the school day, which enabled all the young women to participate. The museum also had to take into consideration school holidays, Jewish holidays and rest days as part of the planning process. The museum had to work flexibly and push back deadlines to meet the needs of all the partners.

What did the project achieve?

Outputs included:

- 6,268 visited the temporary exhibition (Sept 2016 – Feb 2017)
- 7 interviews were added to Hackney Museum's collection
- A web resource via UK Jewish Film: <http://hackneyroots.org.uk/ourhackney/stamfordhill.php>
- A learning resource based on the experiences of one of the interviewees was developed and it is now part of the schools teaching programme
- A further 350 pupils from 12 Orthodox Jewish schools engaged with the display.

Outcomes for the young participants included:

- They were given an opportunity to broaden their horizons and increase their social interactions by working with people from other cultures and backgrounds
- Strengthened inter-generational ties as they became acquainted with and interviewed elderly people in the community
- Increased their confidence as engaged in things they hadn't done before, with success, and some even had a chance to speak publicly at the launch event which saw a turnout of around 80 people
- Better connected with their heritage and people as a result of the project. They were amazed to discover and learn about post-WW2 Judaism through interviews and research
- Learnt valuable skills such as transcribing, videoing, interviewing and display designs which are skills that can be used in the workforce or voluntary sector
- Learnt how to work effectively in groups and take leadership throughout the project
- Gained a better understanding of who they are and where they fit in within the wider Jewish community as well as within Hackney's communities.

Outcomes for Teen Action included:

- Promoted social cohesion as the general public also gained a more positive impression of the Charedi community by seeing how the young people interacted with others, and realising that the community is not as isolated as some people may believe
- Secured a Silver Quality Mark from London Youth, accrediting their work
- Wider awareness in the Charedi community of the organisation
- Teaching staff reflected on their practice and a) considered how to incorporate autonomous learning and skills development within their sessions and b) identified new ways to engage the young women in the teaching of history.

Outcomes for Hackney Museum included:

- Strengthened the Museum's relationship with the Charedi community in the borough, including many of the interviewees
- The display led to an increase in visitors from the Charedi community to the Museum and they enjoyed exploring the permanent displays too
- Greater awareness of the Museum within the Charedi community across a range of ages.

What impact did the project have?

- Hackney Museum has since supported Teen Action on another HLF-funded bid and project, building on this one and working with a different cohort of young women
- Teen Action is currently working with the Museum's sister service Hackney Archives to explore photographs of members of Hackney's Jewish from the 1950-1970s, improving knowledge of the Archives' collections
- Teen Action staff have presented case studies about the project to Jewish organisations and strategic policy makers in the borough has raised the Museum's profile
- According to the Teen Action Manager "By making the Jewish heritage available for the wider public stereotypes and barriers have been shifted in a more positive direction. I was at a cultural awareness training for policy makers and funders in Hackney, with a role to talk about Teen Action. As part of the talk, I mentioned the exhibition that Teen Action young people had been involved in and encouraged them to visit the exhibition. There was a very positive reaction and an obvious turn in the atmosphere in the room from the previous uncertainty and incongruity towards the [Orthodox Jewish] community. This is one of the most valuable outcomes of the project, even though this was not our main aim or intention, but nevertheless immeasurable in terms of future positive interactions between the wider community and our group."
- The Museum has had an increase in Jewish schools in the borough bookings session from our core learning programme. Some of the interviewees at times attend to share their story with the pupils. Between 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 the total number of Jewish schools visiting the museum has increased from 8 to 11 and the number of classes has doubled from 11 to 21
- Staff have continued to build relationships with the interviewees. Some of them revealed their WW2 experiences for the first time during this project, including to family members
- Hesitant at first, the reaction to their stories and the sensitive public platform the Museum could provide, encouraged them to share their stories and objects
- The Museum is currently in the process of developing a collections review methodology to better understand how different communities, including the Charedi Jewish community, are represented in their collections. The experiences of this project will support this work.

What lessons did the museum learn from the project?

Hackney Museum staff have a track record of working collaboratively with local communities and were able to use this same approach for this project. Though the staff have prior knowledge of working with Charedi Jewish communities in the borough, this is the first time that it was on a project led by an organisation rooted within the community rather than the Museum, and the first time that an exhibition was created as an output. The museum felt it learnt the following lessons:

- The Museum from working with the young women and are now aware of some conversations to have early on when working with Charedi Jewish communities on exhibitions, such as male and female elders wishing to have their stories displayed apart for cultural reasons (though the young women in the group were keen to have them together to help shape the narrative they wanted). There was a recognition to respect the wishes of the interviewees and in turn there was also mutual respect from Teen Action, the participants, interviewees and all of their friends and families of accepting Hackney Museum as a shared public space that is accessible all members of the local community
- Other considerations (regardless of the group you are working with) were the use and role of social media in sharing the exhibition. As Museum staff who regularly use social media platform to engage our audiences, we had to work closely with Teen Action to identify what interviewees and participants were comfortable sharing. As a group who do not use social media themselves, they were delighted with the feedback we were able to offer from online engagement. Our usual practice of documenting the process and partnership through photographs and film for reference and stakeholder reports also had to be rethought to take on board cultural sensitivities.

What tips does the museum have for other museums undertaking a similar project?

The Museum would offer the following tips:

- Be patient – though this project was built into Teen Action’s curriculum, it was only one aspect of their work. They have other priorities too so things take time to happen. A public programme deadline for a Museum does not carry the same importance to those outside the organisation so be prepared to be flexible
- Show consideration – every group has different needs and works in different ways. Show consideration and empathy and tailor your approach and expectations accordingly
- Ask questions – don’t be afraid to ask questions about something you don’t understand or are unsure of but be respectful
- Value tiny changes rather than massive impact – some relationships take time to build



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