

**LONDON
MUSEUM
DEVELOPMENT**

London Museum Development Diversity Matters Programme 2018-2022

London Museum Development'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, London Museum Development asked museums to share their experiences of developing responsive and diverse programmes, exhibitions, collections, audience initiatives, workforce and trustee boards for all its visitors. 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.

Brent Museum and Archives Case Study



Brent
Museum & Archives

Project Title:	All Roads Lead to Brent
Timescales:	September 2019-March 2020
Budget:	£5,500 (£1,000 from 2019-2020 Diversity Matters Programme Grant)

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.

Overall area of diversity practice covered as part of project:		Yes
	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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Reaching diverse audiences to ensure its audience is more representative of its respective local community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Recruited and retained a diverse workforce which is more representative of its respective local community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity evidence area covered as part of project:		Yes
	Integrating diversity in the museum's programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Engaging a diverse range of people in developing/delivering programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Collections are viewed from diverse perspectives & tell untold stories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Protected characteristic group museum worked with as part of project:		Yes
	Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Photograph of group at launch event

What were the project's aims?

This project aimed to meet Brent Museum's Forward Plan objective to become a central part of Brent's cultural life by engaging the community. The project's aims were to:

- Engage more young people with Brent Museum and Archives, ensuring their users represent the diverse population of Brent
- Undertake a contemporary collecting project by bringing in objects and records which represent Brent as it is today chosen by members of the community
- Learn how to better engage young people with their service, and applying this knowledge to future programming and collecting decisions
- Work closely with the London Borough of Culture team to embed their work with young people into the long-term plans for Brent's heritage services.

Who did the museum work with?

The museum initially approached the Young Ambassadors participating in Brent's London Borough of Culture to take part. However, no one from this group were able to take part. As such the museum utilised social media and posters and invited young people who lived, worked or studied in Brent to take part (aged 16-30). 5 young people were originally recruited. However, one participant unfortunately had to drop out due to health reasons. A number of other young people expressed an interest, but unfortunately never came to any of the sessions.

What did the project entail?

Museum staff met with the group fortnightly, and then weekly over a six-month period on Thursday evenings. The museum provided the group with food at every meeting, which, it became clear to staff, was crucial to the participants' ability to continue to engage with the project, as they all either worked or studied full-time, and came to the evening meetings directly.

The group immediately decided they wanted to hold an exhibition with the museum (rather than programme an event as staff had originally thought) and were able to gain practical experience in planning an exhibition from start to finish. This included sourcing objects to be accessioned and displayed, as well as cataloguing, photographing and labelling these objects. Alongside this, participants took photographs on location around Brent, researched and wrote exhibition panels and labels. They also created exhibition evaluation forms, worked directly with the exhibition designer to design the final exhibition and wrote content throughout for social media to encourage more residents to come along to the exhibition.

The museum consulted the group at every stage of the process, for example the participants:

- Chose which training they wanted to undertake
- Developed the concept and themes for the exhibition
- Researched and wrote the exhibition text
- Sourced objects from both the museum and archive collections and through contemporary collecting and wrote their object labels
- Created an evaluation form for exhibition visitors to complete as well as develop and design an interactive map for visitors to add to as part of the exhibition experience
- Worked directly with the designer to design the exhibition
- Wrote social media posts advertising the exhibition and introducing themselves as co-curators.

As part of the sessions museum staff provided formal training opportunities for participants, which they expressed would be useful to develop their skills, understanding and knowledge in order to undertake the project. This training programme included:

- Event programming
- Interpretation text writing
- Marketing for cultural events
- Photography
- Exhibition design, display and curation of cases
- Object Handling, cataloguing and object marking
- Developing project partnerships
- Audience evaluation

The final exhibition *All Roads lead to Brent* was ultimately planned, written and installed by young people. The exhibition opened to the public at the end of February 2020. Between opening and when the museum closed in mid-March due to the global coronavirus pandemic, 2,000 visitors had seen the exhibition.

The museum successfully engaged a group of young people with the work of the museum and archives service. The project has supported the museum’s desire for users to represent the diverse population of Brent, with young people rarely visiting the museum to engage with its collections in this way beforehand. The young people who participated in the project had such a positive experience that two of them decided they wanted to join the museum’s Volunteer Team to continue to work with and support the museum going forward.

What did the project achieve?

Outputs included:

Total number of participants worked with:	5
Total number of sessions with participants:	18
Total number of co-curated events for general visitors:	2
Total number of general visitors who attended the co-curated events:	56
Total number of days the co-curated exhibition was open:	124
Total number of general visitors who attended the co-curated exhibition:	2,000*
Number of objects and photographs permanently accessioned into the collection:	91

** Up until the museum closed due to lockdown*

Outcomes included:

- The project enabled the museum to redisplay a permanent area of the museum to more accurately reflect the more recent changes and developments in the borough, showcasing some of the contemporary collecting undertaken by participants during the project. The museum has also been able to recognise and discuss what future young people are interested in seeing and attending at the museum going forward
- With the guidance of the young people, the museum collected 31 new objects (as well as around 60 digital photographs) within the categories of transport, industry, theatre and music, that reflect the past 20 years of changes in the borough and speak better to a younger audience
- As part of the project, the group wrote a number of social media posts to coincide with the opening of the exhibition. The exhibition includes a display on BTS, a popular K-prop group.

The tweet participants wrote about this display received thousands of likes and retweets on Twitter, more than the museum has ever received.

What impact did the project have?

On the organisation:

- This was the museum's first time working with a group of local young people. The success of the project means that the museum is planning to run similar projects in the future, with visitors of all backgrounds
- The contemporary collecting element of the project has enabled the museum to accession items into the collection which represent Brent today, and which better speak to a younger audience
- The museum collected 31 objects and created more than 91 records (including the 60 digital photographs captured) that represent Brent over the last 20 years across four key borough history themes: transport, industry, music and theatre
- As a result of the project, two out of five participants joined the museum's Volunteer Team.

On the participants:

- The project empowered the young people to co-curate a public exhibition
- The project provided participants with the training and experience in museum work that they can use in future job applications
- It gave them a chance to see their work displayed in a museum, and feel that their voice has been heard
- It also gave participants a chance to find out more about their local area and better connect to its culture.

What lessons did the museum learn from the project?

Key lessons staff learnt included:

- To work with young people, you need to meet at a time that works with their schedules as well as providing food was crucial for continued engagement
- Staff also developed key skills from this project, including how to apply for funding, working with a designer and how to manage a project, volunteers and budget
- The project had initially planned to attract BAME young people, however the only BAME participant dropped out half way through due to ill health. Staff felt if they were to do the project again, they would seek advice on how to better attract a more varied group of young people, that better reflect the whole demographics of the community.

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

1. Don't underestimate how hard it is to find, engage and retain a group of young people. Staff would therefore advise others to put in a lot of time into recruitment, putting out as many adverts in as many places where young people would see them as possible
2. Build in time to consult with the users and plan and install the exhibition on time. Initially, the group were only meeting once a fortnight for training sessions and then as the exhibition planning kicked in, the group met weekly. As such, staff would advise weekly meetings from the beginning to ensure the exhibition planning can start right away
3. Ensure that everyone in the group feels able to come to you and tell you if they needed more support

4. Finding funding and seeking out advice by undertaking training as well as speaking to colleagues in other museums who have developed such projects is also invaluable and greatly helps and gives staff the skills and confidence to plan, develop and deliver such a project.

Other photographs



Photograph of participants accessioning the objects they had collected as part of the project



Photograph of the participants discussing ideas with the exhibition designer



Photograph of participant researching objects in the museum's collection and archives

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