

**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 groups<sup>1</sup> 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 & Archive Case Study**



**Brent**  
Museum & Archives

<b>Project Title:</b>	Windrush 70 Pioneers: Making a home
<b>Project Timescales:</b>	October 2018 – March 2019
<b>Project Budget:</b>	£1000

<sup>1</sup> 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><b>Area of diversity practice:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Reaching diverse audiences to ensure its audience is more representative of its respective local community</li> <li>• Recruited and retained a diverse workforce which is more representative of its respective local community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Protected characteristic group museum worked with:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Race</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contact details for further information:</b></p>	<p>Camilla Churchill, Heritage Collections Manager: Camilla.churchill@brent.gov.uk</p>



*Photograph of participants at touring exhibition display*

**What were the project's aims?**

The project had the following aims:

- To create and deliver a handling collection developed with local community groups. It will be loaned for use in schools and to local dementia cafes.
- To develop schools workshops using the handling collection

- To undertake a contemporary collecting scheme with local residents to increase the collection from the Caribbean community.
- To gather oral histories to support the collection.
- To support engagement with targeted audiences – BAME over 50's and intergenerational work with young people through schools.

### **Who did the museum work with?**

Brent Museum and Archives engaged with established local community groups, at the Bridge Park community centre, to reminisce on the topic of the West Indian Front Room with the aim of helping to reveal an under represented part of Brent's heritage. The participants displayed protected characteristics of age and race. They targeted people attending established group meetings as well as advertising and promoting via Brent's Libraries and through community contacts who had engaged with the development of the exhibition 'Windrush 70: Brent's Pioneering Windrush Generation' but who sit outside their usual museum visitor.

### **What did the project entail?**

The museum ran development sessions to help identify key items to include in the handling collection. Using items and photographs from the West Indian Front Room Installation, participants were encouraged to have conversations about their experiences of arriving in Britain. This included how essential the Front Room has been to the community in Brent and how they have built their homes and communities here. The identified key items were included in the handling collections to help tell the story of the Caribbean diaspora.

They gathered quotes and photographs to support the objects and have integrated them in the collection to support knowledge sharing.

In addition to the creation of the workshop certain participants have also attended sessions in school to discuss their experiences.

### **What did the project achieve?**

Outputs included:

- A handling collection based on the history of the Caribbean community.
- Contemporary collection of oral histories, donated items and images
- A handling workshop based around heritage of local BAME communities for schools and dementia cafes.

Outcomes included:

Museum

- Better connection with the elder Caribbean community in the local area with feedback showing a satisfaction with the event.
- Improved collections and archives from the Caribbean community.

Audiences

- General visitors were made aware of the project via signage in the exhibition space during October. The school workshop and loan box has been marketed directly to schools through established channels and is also advertised via the website.

## What impact did the project have?

### Museum:

- The project has allowed the staff to invest time in increasing engagement with the Caribbean community in the borough and explore their contribution to the rich culture of Britain. They were able to go to them and engage in a location where they are already gathering and feel at ease.
- Increased participation and engagement with local schools who are representative of the diversity of Brent. They have created a handling collection and schools workshop that will become a permanent part of our public programme. A resource such as this is particularly requested during October but they have already run sessions with these resources in 2019.
- By developing the handling session to be adapted between school groups and dementia sufferers they are able to reach a wide variety of visitors from different backgrounds and a variety of ages. Elements of the traditional West Indian Front Room have resonated with a wide variety of visitors and promote conversations about recent history and people's childhood.

### Content creators/ participants:

- The groups engaged were pleased to see that the Museum were able to move outside the walls of the museum to gather knowledge. It gave the Museum the opportunity to demonstrate the value of their heritage and how important their contribution has been to shaping the Borough.
- Participants were surprised to be asked about their experiences as they didn't feel that there was much they could offer. Once objects and images had prompted conversation they enjoyed discussing common themes this covered talking about similarities and differences in the Caribbean and how these transferred to the UK.
- The Museum had further engagement with many participants by loaning elements of the Windrush 70 exhibition to Conway Hall where many participants will be able to attend the private view and see the legacy of working on this project.
- Elements of the project have been requested to support celebrations for Windrush Day (22<sup>nd</sup> of June) by Brent's Mayor and The Brent Hub. Participants are able to see the legacy of their engagement in their own community.

### Visitors:

- The engagement at Bridge Park has encourage visiting to the Windrush 70 exhibition and the museum's permanent collection and our programmed events. A wider variety of visitors have seen at the Museum by staff.
- Visitors can see that the legacy of engaging with the Caribbean community as elements have become part of the permanent museum collection. The hope is to increase people's belief in the Museum's representation of the local community of Brent.
- School groups have a tool with which they can learn about the diaspora of Brent residents and many have already gained a deeper understanding of the society we live in today through looking at the past.
- The handling collection has been used to engage with a local Dementia Cafes, providing objects that can trigger memories and encourage discussions which can support communities and individuals, this initial session has been further developed and will be available to more users.
- By stimulating children and the elderly with these objects that have meaning to their heritage, the Museum are encouraging visits to the museum and gallery by demonstrating to BAME residents that they are represented.

## What lessons did the museum learn from the project?

### Staff:

- The project has given staff much more confidence to engage with people from different backgrounds.
- Providing refreshments encourages these participants to stay and engage.
- The museum was surprised by how small the community in the area is and that many people know each other already or know someone who knows them.

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

- If possible ensure the same member of the team is working on all elements of the project from the engagement sessions to the development of the workshop and handling collection. Or if not possible set up regular knowledge sharing meetings between the team members – give yourself the time to do these.
- Identify suitable activities or groups to target where you can go to them, give yourselves the time and availability to go – don't rush this it will be noticed. Visit their meetings/groups for a couple of weeks before you want to run an engagement session – make yourself known and trusted.
- Look into the demographics for schools to help with targeted marketing and thus uptake.
- When engaging with school groups remember to plan a term in advance – most schools have a clear set of plans for their current term. Use 'moments' to push your project – the highest uptake was in October (Black History Month).
- Create an ambassador – someone who can develop personal contacts and build trust so that participants are at ease when sharing personal information.
- Have strong reasons for engaging and requesting information from people and be confident and clear in telling them how their information will be used.

## Other photographs



*Photograph of project group session*

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