



Public Body Award

Name of organisation nominated

National Museums Liverpool

1. What objectives did you share with the community? (Maximum 200 words) What were you trying to change, how did you identify the problem?

In 2003, the government realised there was a need to provide additional services for the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in key cities. In response to this the Engaging Refugees and Asylum Seekers project was set up by four museum services to support refugee community agencies and local authorities in tackling the serious issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers in Liverpool, Salford, Newcastle and Leicester.

The shared objectives of the project were to:

- research the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and develop appropriate activities to support community cohesion and integration of communities;
- develop learning activities appropriate to both refugees and British participants to tackle sensitive issues including isolation, racism, bullying and intolerance;
- work in partnership to support refugees who have arrived in the UK and are looking to integrate into the British community;
- share best practice with other cultural professionals and agency workers.

Following consultation with refugee community organisations, the following key themes emerged which were used to shape the project activities:

- creating schools and learning partnerships;
- developing volunteering;
- staff development and training;
- family learning;
- evaluation and dissemination of best practice.

2. How did you work with the community? (Maximum 200 words) Explain how you communicated, worked together and included people

The main ethos of this project is to develop activities based on the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and the wider communities through real engagement with refugees and asylum seekers and their support workers.

Each partner museum has built relationships with local refugee agencies to ensure we respond to refugee communities' needs and wishes. National Museums Liverpool works in partnership with Refugee Action, Liverpool Community College, Liverpool Children's Services, Stop the Traffik, Merseyside Refugee Support

Network, Asylum Link and the British Red Cross. We work with these organisations to offer unique and enjoyable experiences for refugees and asylum seekers.

We have consulted with refugees from many diverse communities including Somalia, Pakistan, China, Tibet, Zimbabwe, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, and the Congo on the delivery of our activities. This ensures the museum programmes are of relevance and interest to individuals and groups, giving participants a sense of ownership of the project. Activities vary across the project to ensure everybody's views are heard. For the more traumatised refugees one to one sessions are held, whereas more confident individuals participate in group activities. We also hold a variety of same-sex and mixed activities to ensure everyone feels able to partake in the project.

3. How did you meet the need? (maximum 200 words)

Explain what you actually did - resources used, people worked with etc.

Many refugees and asylum seekers find it difficult to integrate within their communities due to the negative misconceptions surrounding them. To overcome this, we sought to encourage community cohesion and an increased level of understanding, through a number of activities.

Working with Zimbabwean sculptor, Hilary Manuhwa, we delivered a programme around the theme of 'Freedom'. Hilary worked closely with a group of young ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) learners from a local community college, teaching them traditional shona sculpture techniques, and helping them to create their own freedom sculpture which was exhibited at the museum.

We worked with Refugee Action to deliver awareness-raising training to front of house staff at the museum. The training helped address misunderstandings and lack of knowledge about refugees and asylum seekers.

We worked with local schools during Refugee Week, using the universal subject of bullying as a starting point for discussion and challenging common myths about refugees and asylum seekers.

Additional activities included visits to the museum, outreach sessions to community venues, family learning activities and fun days, informative exhibitions and volunteering opportunities.

Through these activities, the project has helped to bridge the gap between British and refugee communities.

(Words 196)

4. What improvements did you make to the quality of peoples' lives? (Maximum 200 words) What happened as a result of your work, and what were the wider changes that this brought about?

The project has benefited individuals not only in the refugee community but also in the host British community and as a result has improved community cohesion locally.

For the refugee and asylum seekers, social improvements included:

- opportunities to meet and socialise within their own community, and with people of other diverse backgrounds;

- opportunities to share their cultural heritage and learn about British culture;
- improving participants' sense of well-being, reducing isolation, and boosting self-esteem;
- opportunities to increase skills through volunteering.

For the host community benefits have included:

- opportunities to meet and socialise with other cultural groups and learn about diverse heritages;
- opportunities to do something positive and enjoyable;
- networking between community and arts organisations;
- secure environments in which people can learn, play and relax.

External evaluation has evidenced that this is a highly successful project and has shown that participants have enjoyed quality learning experiences through feedback:

'I practise my English at the museum'

'It's good for refugees and asylum seekers to see this in the gallery, but it's good for white communities too'

'I learnt how to respect refugees'