



Learning Revolution: Festival of Learning

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council regional festival programmes evaluation

Key findings and impact of museum, library and archive led learning activities

February 2010

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Learning Revolution: Festival of Learning October 2009

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council regional festival programmes evaluation

A summary of the impact of museum, library and archive led activities on informal adult learning

Background

In March 2009 the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (now Business, Innovation and Skills) published the Learning Revolution White Paper, which set out government's ambition to develop a new informal adult learning movement, suitable for the 21st century. This new movement would increase the range and extent of learning opportunities available for adults by supporting new alliances between the public, third and private sector. The White Paper recognises that informal learning opportunities make a huge contribution to the well-being of communities and supports cohesion.

There is a specific focus on the need to create more learning opportunities for older learners in response to the increasingly ageing demographic. An additional 30 million pounds has been made available during 2009-2010 to kick start the new movement and strengthen the 'wiring' of new integrated partnerships. The Learning Revolution Festival, October 2009, was intended as a 'burst of activity' that would encourage wider participation and engage more adults in informal learning activities.

1. Aims of the Festival and evaluation

The Learning Revolution's Festival of Learning aimed to:

- 1) Ensure more people learn about and have access to informal adult learning opportunities;
- 2) Encourage more, and a wider range of people to get involved in informal adult learning;
- 3) Showcase the creativity, diversity and positive effects of learning for personal, family and community development; and
- 4) Build wider partnerships and the capacity to support informal adult learning.

As part of the Festival activities, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA at www.mla.org.uk) supported a Festival Programme across all English regions, partnerships led by museums, libraries and archives, to demonstrate the contribution the sector makes to informal adult learning. The programme was funded through a grant of £500,000 from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills and was match funded by an additional £500,000 from MLA.

The 16 different Festival Programmes were intended to act as exemplars of the types of informal adult learning opportunities offered by museums, libraries and archives, and were intended to provide:

1. An extension and improvement of informal adult learning opportunities;
2. Greater public participation and a more diverse audience;
3. Development of staff and volunteer knowledge and skills;
4. New or stronger partnerships and networks across the informal adult learning sector.

An evaluation of the Festival Programme aimed to assess the impact of the programme on partners and informal adult learners, and to inform the development of a core informal adult learning offer from museums, libraries and archives that will be launched in 2010. The headline findings of this evaluation are given below. A summary of the programme activities is given in Appendix One.

2. Summary of evaluation findings

2.1 Activities and partnerships

Participation

Over 77000 people attended a wide variety of events, activities, exhibitions and festivals as a result of the programme – this excludes the larger open-air events where numbers could not be monitored.

Museums, libraries and archives organised nearly 800 events and activities through October and November that directly engaged over 34000 individuals in active informal adult learning activities. An additional 200 activities continued beyond November, bringing the total up to over 1000 events by January 2010. This number is set to rise as the success of many of the programmes has led them to sustain their engagement activities through to March 2010.

Many of the more tailored, small scale events engaged informal adult learners for the first time and inspired and motivated them to consider further learning opportunities. For example, in Milton Keynes, out of a survey of 361 participants in their Festival Programme, 88% said that they wanted to learn more as a result of attending the event.

A wide range of activities were organised across the English regions as part of the Festival Programme. Aiming to attract as diverse an audience as possible, activities included talks and lectures; workshops; touring exhibitions; events for community groups; family learning events; intergenerational events; oral history projects; reading groups; writing workshops; story telling and performance events; on line taster sessions and information and advice sessions, for example on health issues and finance.

The October Festival consisted of at least one opportunity for informal adult learning being offered to people in Nottingham on every day in October. This was done in partnership between Nottingham City Museums and Galleries and Nottingham City Library Service. (*October Festival*, Nottingham City Council)

The Festival of Learning allowed us to engage with a new audience and build relationships (*Aim for Change*, Hull City Museum)

Some projects also experimented with the 'Share' model, using expert volunteers to share their expertise or experiences with local people in order to develop new skills or interests. This has led to new, more sustained volunteering opportunities based on the model being considered in some areas such as London. *"With this project, we worked for the first time with volunteers: experienced learners sharing their skills with new learners"* (Camden Library).

Opening up spaces

All the Festival Programmes utilised a number of different spaces for their activities, in many cases extending the use of their existing community spaces, as well as opening up new spaces for informal adult learning. Most museums, libraries and archives used the Festival to expand into a number of different local spaces through partnership working across the sector with more and different partners, for example organising events in the high street and shops, arts centres, local schools, religious buildings, homeless and community centres. This helped to draw in more diverse learners that may not consider visiting museum, library or archive facilities regularly, or participating in informal learning activities.

For this project we used a local school in a different community to attract different learners - parents and children and particularly single parents. (J3 Fired Up, Bristol Libraries and Adult Learning Service)

Local learning partnerships

Many organisations used the Festival to integrate and embed themselves further into the core local learning infrastructure. As a result they have been able to broaden their offer to different types of users, as well as enabling them to set the short-term work of the Festival within the wider context of sustainable partnership development. In Suffolk, for example, the library service has been invited to join the new local informal adult learning partnership. In Lancashire the Festival programme has developed into a combined response to the economic downturn:

In response to local demand and the economic conditions, Lancashire Adult Learning ran job clubs at Chorley, Lancaster, Ormskirk, Burnley, Leyland... this potentially improves the overall economy of the area and people's individual contributions to public life. Through the joint working that the library service, record office, Lancashire Adult Learning and museum service have undertaken, we've provided added value for users and have established an infrastructure that will help inform future informal learning. (Live Learning in Lancashire, Lancashire Libraries)

Production of new resources and innovation in programming

All the Festival Programmes produced new learning resources for the Festival, with most demonstrating that were taking a targeted approach within their standard universal offer in order to reach a specific interest group, or to broaden the general appeal of informal adult learning activities.

The grant enabled us to offer a far more comprehensive range of events that reached out to a more diverse and representative client base that included areas of deprivation within Lancashire, older people, ethnic minorities, clients with learning difficulties and prisoners. In more deprived areas such as Fleetwood, which was hit by the fishing industry cuts, it enabled people access to new learning experiences. (Live Learning Lancashire, Lancashire Libraries)

Two thirds of the programmes produced new online content and digital media products, whilst visual art, family and oral history resources also featured strongly.

Many programme organisers, such as Milton Keynes, Suffolk and Nottingham were clear that the new sessions they had piloted during the Festival would be developed and integrated into future informal adult learning programmes.

Overall impact of programme support

Overall the evaluation demonstrated that the financial support provided by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and BIS had a positive and evidenced impact on the range and quality of activities organisations were able to offer.

The grant has allowed us to make a serious commitment to some of our adult learner groups and how they can gain extra skills and how those skills can become part of what we do and offer to others. (*Learning in the Limelight*, York Museums Trust)

The benefits included enabling the organisations to:

- Work more extensively with new and established partners;
- Offer a greater quantity of activities including more taster sessions;
- Extend and widen their offer for new audiences;
- Offer a broader and more diverse range of activities;
- Offer a higher quality of activities and purchase equipment that will have a lasting value for sustaining future activity.

The Active Allerdale project enabled new exciting and diverse activities/workshops that has encouraged people who would not normally have come to the libraries. (*Active Allerdale Learn, Fest, Allerdale Libraries and partners*)

2.2 Widening participation and diversity in informal adult learning

Widening participation

All the Festival Programmes were targeting general adult learners aged 19+. Many also developed specific informal adult learning activities to appeal to older adults (over 65) and local target groups from defined areas of social or economic deprivation.

The success of museums, libraries and archives in widening participation in informal adult learning can be demonstrated by many of the Festival Programmes. When systematic monitoring took place, results indicated that many new audiences were reached, with nine of the regional programmes reporting a change in audience profile, with more young adults (19-25); older adults (over 65); families and people from an area of deprivation recorded.

The engagement of families and young adults was greater than expected. Post Code evidence indicates that attendance from those living in re-assurance plus neighbourhoods was greater than expected. (*Wordpool*, Blackpool Council)

The % of BME audience members in the targeted workshops increased greatly to 28% - well above the national average. (*October Festival*, Nottingham City Council)

As well as widening participation, the Programmes reported success in motivating individuals to want to continue learning. Allerdale Borough Council, for example, set out to assess the impact of activities on the motivation and interest of individuals:

When workshop attendees were asked if they had taken part in informal adult learning activities in the past, 72% stated that they had had little or no involvement so there was a high proportion of first time participants. (82 out of 117 respondees).

Interestingly 93% of those asked if they would be interested in other opportunities said they would be interested a lot or some. Which suggests they might progress to other activities. The new members who signed up during October (122) will be tracked. (*Active Allerdale Learn Fest 2009*, Allerdale Borough Council Libraries)

The success of museums, libraries and archives in helping new learners to progress will be tracked by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council through 2010.

Volunteer involvement

Ten of the regional Festival Programmes involved both existing and new volunteers in organising and delivering events - 125 new volunteers were recorded during the Festival activities and a total of approximately 1,203 volunteer hours were contributed to the projects overall.

Feedback on volunteers indicate that the new volunteers included more people from local Black and Minority Ethnic communities; special interest groups and those with specific skills or expertise, who volunteered to support or lead activities. The main areas of work were equally split between volunteers helping to organise or manage events (under the direction of a project organiser) or passing on their knowledge and skills. There were also examples of new roles for volunteers, for example:

Over 50 new volunteers to date have signed up to become involved, thus proving the success of this information-giving event. (*October Festival*, Nottingham City Council: The 1936 Brough Superior Motorcar Project)

"I wanted to volunteer again and this event has made me think about it more! I will come in next week to talk to someone about it". (Suffolk)

There was also clear evidence that museums, libraries and archives enabled important opportunities for self-directed groups of volunteer learners, such as Family History Societies, reading and poetry groups, to flourish and expand their own activities as part of the Festival Programme.

2.3 Learning and Social outcomes for informal adult learners

Many of the Festival Programmes made use of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's Inspiring Learning evaluation framework www.inspiringlearning.org.uk which provides a proven and recognised methodology by which organisation's can assess the impact of their activities on individual learners through the Generic Learning Outcomes, and on communities through the Generic Social Outcomes.

In the framework, five **Generic Learning Outcomes** are identified and detailed as:



Impact on individual learning

For the evaluation, the majority of projects stated that they aimed to increase participant's 'Knowledge and Understanding' as a result of their activities, with many also using the Inspiring Learning methodology to track the impact of their programmes on learner's behaviour and progression, their attitudes and values, skills and enjoyment and inspiration.

For example, In *Our past, present and future*, the Learning Festival run by Milton Keynes Council, a poll of 361 people revealed that 91% of those taking part in the learning activities said that they had increased their **knowledge and understanding**, 97% had **enjoyed** the event and 88% wanted to **learn more (progression)**.

In *Active Allerdale Learn Fest 2009*, 137 out of 138 people, or 99% of people participating, said that they had increased their **skills** as a result of taking part in activities. The evaluation for York Museum of their learning development programme with older people, in partnership with U3A, showed that members of the group learnt new **skills** in using digital equipment and creating new resources.

More generally, some programme evaluations looked at the informal learning benefits for specific target groups such as older learners and adults with learning difficulties. At York Museum, for example Team leaders reported that the activities to engage adults with learning difficulties had resulted in greater participation and in them *"using the galleries more as a meeting place or to come and spend a little time with the guides or in the café"*.

Open questions using the GLO methodology also allowed some Festival Programmes to capture personal views and experiences, for example for the Reading Agency supported writing events in Bristol, a 76 year old female participant reported *"It gave me a unique opportunity to polish my writing skill"*.

Of 68 feedback forms, 47 reported that they had increased their confidence, developed new interests that they want to pursue further, signed up for further learning activities, and / or made new friends or social networks. Words used to describe sessions: validating, rewarding, stimulating (5), encouraging (2), freedom, surprise (3), thoughtful (2),

achievement (2), adventure, confidence (3), self-esteem, revolution, challenging, reassuring. (*My Story*, The Reading Agency).

In Blackpool, a written survey of 273 people taking part in the *Wordpool 2009* Festival, showed that 97% had had an **enjoyable** experience and that 99% of those attending would **consider accessing further arts/libraries events/activities** based on the event they had just enjoyed. Individual comments captured as part of broader evaluation exercises, such as in the Suffolk Festival Programme, illustrate the success the projects had in engaging new learners: *“Maybe it has started me on a new path. I enjoyed the session very much”*.

Social outcomes

MLA’s *Inspiring Learning* framework www.inspiringlearning.org.uk can also be used to evaluate the social outcomes of activities. It identifies three **Generic Social Outcomes**:

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Stronger and Safer Communities
3. Strengthening public life.

Although by its nature, community development is difficult to evaluate as a result of a time-limited programme, many of the Festival Programmes identified *Health and Wellbeing* as an intended, and positive outcome of their activities on participants. As one participant commented at the Health information event run by Suffolk Libraries: *“Very important, it provides information, signposting people, empowering. It also brings the issue of mental health into the open as 1 out of 4 adults will suffer from mental health problems in their life time”*.

Some projects, such as the Mencap Life Stories run by Winchester Discovery Centre in partnership with Mencap, set out to improve the health and wellbeing of those participating as part of a longer-term programme of activity. The interim evaluation reported that *“Thinking about their future wishes has also offered them a chance to really think about what they want in their lives which provokes a sense of optimism and hope. Thinking about their achievements and focussing on themselves will have helped to boost their self-esteem. They are communicating and socialising with others therefore developing these skills for future use.”* (Mencap facilitator).

Other projects sought to identify the broader positive impact that their activities had had on strengthening public life. In Blackpool, many of those taking part in the Family Days expressed appreciation of a well run free creative learning events for the local community, the project lead also reporting that *“Local schools were particularly supportive and had encouraged participation. The take up from re-assurance plus neighbourhoods was notable”*.

Some programmes undertook more formal monitoring and evaluation in this area. The Hull *Aim 4 Change* programme, for example, presented a sample of 50 participants with the statement *‘This museum provided a welcoming and safe environment’* with which 100% strongly agreed or agreed. 90% of the sample also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement *‘This activity helped me to interact positively with my child’*. Taken as part of a long term programme of evaluation, which these samples are, these results show a demonstrable benefit for people’s sense of wellbeing and community, and illustrate how the *Inspiring Learning* framework can be used to track change and impact across a range of personal learning and wider community outcomes over time.

Further tracking of impact and outcomes

Ten of the regional Festival Programmes reported that they planned to continue to track the impact of the Learning Revolution Festival activities beyond the October Festival in 2009. It was encouraging that so many projects aimed to follow up the work done during the Festival and were interested in looking more long term at issues of progression, learning and engagement. This emphasises that for most the Festival programme was not perceived as a stand-alone externally funded project but as part of an ongoing process of partnership development and extension of informal learning opportunities to local adults. *“Yes. We are tracking the outcome (GSO and GLO) for the community partnerships. Community partnerships are seen as vital for our progress in Adult learning”* (Programme lead, York Museums Trust).

2.4 Development of staff and volunteers

Developing staff and volunteer knowledge and understanding

The Festival of Learning had a positive direct impact on the knowledge and understanding of staff. 14 Festival Programmes reported that they had gained a better understanding of how their organisation could support informal adult learning, with 395 museum, library and archive staff reporting a direct improvement in this area. They also reported that 172 volunteers improved their knowledge and understanding of informal adult learning by participating in the Learning Revolution Festival.

In addition, all of the museums, libraries and archives involved in the Learning Revolution Festival reported that they had better contacts or had built better relationships with other local organisations as a result of the Festival activity.

Staff skills development

There is evidence that the Learning Revolution festival enabled participating museums, libraries and archives to develop new ways of using their collections and spaces to support informal learning, with 13 of the Festival Programmes reporting that they had developed new initiatives or ways of working as well as greater confidence in this area.

Evidence collected about the development of staff skills, whether existing or new, demonstrates that the Festival projects had an incremental impact across a range of skills areas. With the exception of training, the majority of museums, libraries and archives staff improved their skills in both “softer” areas of relationship development (particularly building partnerships with other informal adult learning providers and community groups) as well as “harder” process areas of planning and delivery (such as evaluation).

The positive findings on the extent of new partnerships with other informal adult learning providers and community groups, plus the evidence of an increase in understanding of the needs of learners, suggest that there is likely to be a long-term improvement in the ability of museum, library and archive staff to develop and deliver informal adult learning opportunities in the future.

Volunteer skills development

For the majority of the projects in which volunteers were involved, they carried out activities that developed their skills in a range of areas. Most prominent was the development of communication and interpretation skills such as in presenting

collections or information to different audiences, reflecting the importance of volunteers in knowledge transfer to learners. Of similar importance was the development of skills in managing events and activities. Many of the programmes intended to continue to develop this volunteer work in the future.

2.5 Development of learning partnerships

Development of new or strengthening existing partnerships

The evaluation provided excellent evidence that partnership development was a key underpinning feature of all the Learning Revolution Festival Programmes.

The majority of museums, libraries and archives worked with 6 or more different kinds of partner organisations across the public, private and third sector. Unsurprisingly, most Festival Programmes forged partnerships with sister museum, library and archive organisations (13) and also with the wider heritage sector (8) and nearly all projects developed new or existing partnerships with local community and voluntary groups (14).

Benefits and strengthens of partnership working

Respondents were asked to rank what they perceived as the benefits of partnership working to support informal adult learning. The most important perceived benefit was that partnerships improved a museum, library or archives **capacity to engage** with adult learners. After this, Programme organisers ranked the importance of partners in improving museums, libraries and archives' knowledge and understanding of adult learners; delivery of activity and extending their reach to engage with new audiences more effectively. Overall the evidence suggests that museums, libraries and archives feel that they are well placed to reach informal adult learning audiences and are looking to create sustainable partnership across the informal adult learning landscape to help them build more capacity to deliver.

Sustaining partnerships

The evaluation revealed that all Festival Programmes had considered how to sustain the existing or new partnerships they had developed during the Festival. It was clear that organisations were thinking about this as part of a wider planning approach for more effective informal adult learning delivery.

The project has enabled NCMG to build new sustainable partnerships with Nottingham's Healthcare Trust that will continue throughout the long term IAL programme.

It has also enabled NCMG to build and sustain new links with 15 community groups through the People's Panel workshops. Again this will be sustained through regular People's Panel meetings.

The project has raised awareness in staff in the importance in consulting with participants about how we can support their individual needs to enable them to participate. This has resulted in a much stronger partnership between staff and participants. (*October Festival, Nottingham City Council*)

2.6 Benefits for the wider museum, library and archive sector

The majority of those replying indicated that they would be disseminating lessons learnt through other providers and partners with whom they had worked to deliver the

project. There was also clearly a great deal of planning for maximising new or improved staff expertise and learning internally, both horizontally and vertically.

The relatively high instances of using internal steering groups/management groups and cross disciplinary teams with partners to do this is encouraging, and should help to sustain some of the new partnerships across the museum, library, archive sector and wider community and learning organisations.

3. Conclusions and looking ahead

Local Authorities have been invited to become lead accountable bodies for informal adult learning from April 2011 with the safeguarded budget of £210 million, currently held by the Learning and Skills Council transferred to them at this time. Local Authorities, in return, will be required to develop adult learning plans that reflect local needs and brings together the rich array of local providers across the public, private and third sectors. The evidence of impact of learning opportunities offered by the museums, libraries and archives sector - evidenced by the generic learning and social outcomes and wider evaluation in this report - will support the sector to play a strong role in the roll out of the local adult learning plans.

The Festival Programme demonstrates that the key strengths of the museum, library and archive sector within informal adult learning, and local related networks, are that they:

1. Offer a unique combination of expertise and enthusiasm, resources and physical space which enables and facilitates learning at the heart of the community;
2. Sit at the centre of local networks and partnerships and have a pivotal role in promoting and signposting local informal adult learning opportunities to a wide range of audiences;
3. Have a powerful focus on the individual learner, providing a depth and breadth of experience through a range of activities and programmes;
4. Have the ability to motivate individuals to commence or re-start their learning through appealing to individual interests and enthusiasms;
5. Can offer support for progression activities and continuous development for the individual if they so chose;
6. Provide unrivalled variety in terms of the informal adult learning offer and have a track record in developing innovative approaches to engaging new informal adult learners;
7. Provide wide ranging volunteer opportunities to keep individuals engaged and active within their community;
8. Offer particularly strong activities and support for older learners helping to keep them physically and mentally active so they can continue to contribute to their community and share their skills and knowledge with younger people;
9. Can evidence results in developing individual skills, knowledge and understanding, and community development, through the use of the Generic Learning and Generic Social Outcomes evaluation methodology;
10. Provide a ready made network of local, accessible spaces and resources to support self-directed learning across the English regions.

Following on from this evaluation, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council will be undertaking further research into the role and value of the sector within informal adult learning networks, by conducting follow up interviews with a cross section of partners involved in the Festival Programmes. In addition, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council will be conducting further work to track the progress of learners engaged during the Festival programme. This should provide additional, valuable insight into the unique contribution the sector makes to informal adult learning and enable a sector offer to be developed that best meets the needs of local learners, communities and informal adult learning partnerships.

ENDS

This report is a summary of the main evaluation report produced for the festival programme by Cultural Consulting Network December 2009-February 2010.

Final summary report: 23 February 2010

Appendix One: Festival Programme Summaries

Learning our Lives: Black Histories in Birmingham and the Black Country – Birmingham Library and Archive Services

In support of Black History Month, Birmingham Library and Archives Services worked with young adults aged 19-25 and older adults over 65, who represent the first generation of post war emigrants, to create an extension to their successful Connecting Histories website project. A social historian provided basic training in oral histories, as well as training in uploading stories onto the website for participants at Birmingham Library venues and other museums, libraries and archives across Birmingham and the Black Country. These sessions created a web-based resource and activity which is sustaining interest in a programme for on-going self-documentation of black history in the area.

Aim4Change – Hull City Council Museums

Hull Museums' new 'Aim4Change' informal adult learning programme is designed to tackle worklessness and disadvantage in the City in partnership with other providers that support the skills for life and wellbeing agendas, such as Hull Connexions. One part of the programme focuses on reminiscence and intergenerational work with the over 55s and another is developing a volunteer placement scheme for young people not in employment, education or training. The project launched 'Aim4Change' using the museums' collections to showcase a series of activities including dancing, cooking, art, literature, poetry, music, live historical interpretation, local history, science and genealogy workshops. These events took place in public spaces such as city centre shopping centres, parks and gallery spaces.

Live Learning in Lancashire - Lancashire Library and Information Service

'Live Learning' was a celebration of learning through words in all guises – written, electronic, spoken and performed - through a series of cross-cultural activities in different locations across Lancashire covering areas of urban deprivation, such as Burnley, and rural deprivation, such as the Ribble Valley. The varied programme included: interactive workshops using poetry, music, drama to explore audience perceptions of equality, diversity and black history; an Urdu poetry event; words and stories from creative writing workshops for 19-25s projected onto the exterior of selected libraries – a library inside out; oral history sessions using museum objects to develop digital life skills and an audio-visual documentary using film archive material to create vision of modern Preston.

Reel Revolutions – North West Film Archive

'Reel Revolutions' enabled adult learners to tell their stories through new and old films – made by and about them – which were shared at public screenings and preserved for the future at the North West Film Archive. Using footage from the North West Film Archive, people in Lancashire learnt to discover films, recording dying rural crafts and life in Burnley, and to interpret them in new ways. With the latest High Definition camera and editing kit, they were trained to record their own material, and edit it with archive footage. In Greater Manchester, the project allowed a new intergenerational film about the stories of the older generations of black and Asian families who settled in Moss Side in the 1960s to collect more personal testimonies and to be screened widely.

My Suffolk Story - Suffolk County Council (Libraries, Archives and Information)

'My Suffolk Story' captured the experiences of new and existing communities in Suffolk through words, recipes and photographs with connections to the past through local and family history. Events took place all over Suffolk, particularly in Ipswich, Lowestoft, Bury St Edmunds and Beccles. People were introduced to the past with town walks around Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Lowestoft, finishing with an introduction to the resources available through Suffolk Libraries and Record Office, using the facilities at weekends to attract a greater audience. A mobile library with online connection via satellite was available in the Carlton Colville area of Lowestoft, a large area geographically, to promote all kinds of online resources. Many partners, such as Suffolk Family Carers, were involved to encourage people to contribute to the blog developed for the festival. Reminiscences were used to produce a publication to reflect what life is like in Suffolk now, and the recordings archived and used as part of the BBC's My Story campaign.

Learning in the Limelight –York Museums Trust

The 'Learning in the Limelight' programme focuses on informal adult learning activity at four sites - York Art Gallery, York Castle Museum, Yorkshire Museum and Museum Gardens. A unique aspect of this ambitious programme was the desire to open up spaces after dark, including outdoor spaces and thereby attracting substantial new audiences to enjoy and benefit from over 40 events during October 2009. It offered activity at night, after hours and outdoors and emphasised practical and creative opportunities, encouraging learning for pleasure, geared to a whole range of abilities. Torch light tours and tag tool light interactive technology are just two of the innovative ways that York Museums Trust presented a fresh look at its collections and sites. New partnerships were created with people from local communities groups, including those with learning difficulties and Autism Spectrum Disorder, that are being sustained by legacy projects into the future.

Active Allerdale Learn Fest 2009, Allerdale Borough Council Libraries

Active Allerdale involved a diverse range of activities targeted at adults new to learning aged 19+, particularly those defined as 'most difficult to reach'. The project also specifically encouraged participation from those adults with learning difficulties. The aim was to encourage new learners into informal learning through a series of taster sessions and workshops ranging from 3D Sound scope production and African Drumming to Arabic Belly Dancing and Street Dance. New learning was showcased through a number of performances and events at the 3D Hub in the town centre – a new outdoor public art and performance space. The project was developed through a new partnership between Cumbria County Council, Allerdale Borough Council and Events Collective.

'Share' – pan London partnership project led by MLA London

Between the 17th-31st October museums, libraries and archives across different London boroughs ran *sharer* events aimed at Adult Learners where volunteers from their local communities and practitioners offered themselves to be borrowed for 20 minutes at a time to teach skills – how to sew on a button, find out finance information, understand art. This used the Living Book model developed in America and run in London libraries. Learners were offered information about further learning opportunities in their locality and were invited to form or join existing self organised groups around their interest using museum, library and archive open spaces and resources. Lead museums and archives took on themed strands of work: Craft at the Design Museum, Arts at Orleans House, Food at Haringey Libraries and Money at the British Postal Museum and Archive.

Milton Keynes Festival of Learning: Our past, present and future - Milton Keynes Council

A coordinated range of projects delivered via a partnership between Milton Keynes Council and community partners to celebrate and entice people into learning through activities that enhanced people's understanding of Milton Keynes. The project complemented other activities taking place as part of the autumn long Milton Keynes Festival of Learning, and included a range of activities that promoted informal adult learning, including family learning. Activities included informal adult learning taster sessions from the adult education service in libraries across MK; art exhibitions; introduction to modern technologies through work with the Living Archive on local history; intergenerational events, and a range of half term activities. The events took place across the rural and urban areas of the borough targeting different adult groups age 19+. The Council worked with a range of partners to reach different priority groups including Climb Your Mountain – supporting adults with depression and delivering courses on the benefits of diet and exercise; Living Archive – helping older learners to record their memories and develop community pride; Macintyre Care – supporting adults and young people with learning difficulties and focusing on multi-media provision; MK College; MK Heritage Service; Maybe Magazine – supporting adults with dependency issues; MIND – supporting adults with mental health issues; MK Women and Work – supporting unemployed and low skilled women returners; Open Door – supporting homeless and vulnerable people and providing courses in art and life skills;

Torbay Geopark world heritage site – Torbay Library Services

Working in partnership with Museums and the Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Torbay Library Services produced an interactive walkthrough of selected sites from the Geopark. Easily accessible historical and geological information was made available in a number of formats including podcasts. The finished product will be web based and accessible from touch screen computers around Torbay in sites ranging from the seahorse centre to Torquay Museum and libraries. The project involved local groups each working on their own site, gathering information from the museums and from the local archives and learning how to film, edit and produce quality film and information as part of the project. Activities included taster sessions as an introduction to resources, workshops, talks and lectures. Work involved a range of people from local groups to museum and information professionals including visitors to the area and a professional filmmaker. The project enabled the libraries to form lasting partnerships with groups across the Bay to offer a joined approach to promoting the local heritage locally, nationally and internationally, and to involve volunteers.

Learning from the Past – Winchester Discovery Centre and partners

Winchester Discovery Centre coordinated and ran a number of family history research, local social history and reminiscence events and courses across urban and rural libraries, museums and archives in Hampshire designed to help adult learners unlock the secrets of their past, discover new information and learn new skills. Events took place across Hampshire including: a family history fair at Winchester Discovery Centre with free lectures and workshops; talks, workshops and advice clinics at libraries; exhibitions and events at 6 museums; Octoberfest at Milestones museum celebrating the social history of Hampshire's agricultural and brewing history; sessions at Hampshire Record Office and a Life Stories project with Mencap. Existing partnerships were developed to recruit adult learners who face barriers to

participation such as working with Mencap to engage adults with learning difficulties, strengthening relationships with visually impaired library users; working with Hampshire Learning to contribute to their plans for a Learning Festival and developing a network of Family History Volunteers.

J3 Fired Up - Bristol Libraries

Working with local community groups in Easton and partner organisations, Bristol Libraries and Adult Learning Service aims to engage local residents in informal adult learning activities and produce a series of art works, inspired by the exhibits in Bristol City Museum, to hang in the future Junction 3 Library and Learning Centre.

The aim is to raise awareness of plans for the new library and learning centre at Junction 3; build partnerships with the city museum and community organisations, involve the community in planning the new centre, engender a sense of local ownership and give people a taste of the informal learning opportunities which will be available. Tutors and outreach workers employed by the Adult Learning Service are working with the Learning Communities Team to identify appropriate community groups, based in Easton, to participate in the project. In October they organised 3 days of awareness raising events, called J3 Ig-Nite, to generate interest in the scheme with entertainment, arts sessions, workshops - attracting over 160 people. These will be followed up from Jan-May 2010 with outreach and practical workshops to teach the skills needed to produce various art works for example pottery, jewellery, stained glass. The whole process is being recorded, thereby profiling the people who participated, and the results will be made available at various venues and through the internet.

Wordpool - Blackpool Council

Blackpool is the 12th most disadvantaged authority in the country and significant numbers of residents live in the 20% most deprived wards nationally. From previous experience, the Library Service knew that a successful way of engaging adults reluctant to learn and take part is through running events that are family orientated. *Wordpool* was a "Festival of Words", a partnership project led by the Library and Arts Services, working with the Blackpool Adult Learning Team, Heritage Service and the Archives Service for Lancashire County Council. Events were held in venues that would not usually be considered for 'literature festivals', such as in high street shops, in a town centre café, in a church at the centre of the newly regenerated public space in the heart of the town, in a park which is a popular place for local families. This was the third *Wordpool* year and the funding enabled the partners to enhance and extend the reach of the programme, for example, professional artists worked on projects such as drama for relaxation, community choir, poetry with a group of homeless people.

October Festival – Nottingham City Council

October Festival aimed to engage a diverse range of adult learners in an exciting and innovative array of events and activities. It provided at least one opportunity for informal adult learning to people in Nottingham on every day in October. This was organized as a partnership between Nottingham City Museums and Galleries and Nottingham City Library Service. New activities included piloting a new family resource and producing two temporary exhibitions: *From de Sunshine to de Snow* and *Threads 2009* at Nottingham Castle and a wide variety of storytelling, workshops and information and advice sessions organised by Nottingham City Library Service. Activities were designed to be fully accessible and empower participants to explore their heritage and identity and express themselves in a creative way. For example,

Threads 2009 used a selection of African Caribbean costumes, textiles and objects to showcase the tangible aspects of culture and traditions of members from the BECONN Carers Federation, a support service for carers who work with the black and minority ethnic community in Nottingham.

Celebrating Real Lives – The Reading Agency

The Reading Agency organised a series of events and activities across the country to celebrate real life stories and highlight the contribution of museums, libraries and archives to enriching lives through researching the lives of others. Five of these events, in Cumbria, Derbyshire, Hampshire, Kent and Lancashire, showcased the recent *Reading Detectives* work by local reading groups, researching into unknown and forgotten writers writing about their local area and the people who live there, in collaboration with local libraries, museums and archive services. There were four story facilitation programmes, enabling local people to engage with the BBC's *My Story* project, an author visit to Fox's Biscuits in Batley and a training pilot for library, museum and archive staff in how to stage author events in order to engage with community groups. The Reading Agency commented that the project allowed them *"to inject new energy, inspiration and expertise into the development of museum, library and archive activity to support Informal Adult Learning."*

North East Libraries Festival of Learning

All twelve library authorities in the region (County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, South Tyneside, Stockton and Sunderland) provided the basis of the month's activity with events which were already planned and could benefit from national branding as part of the Learning Revolution Festival. In South Tyneside, for example, the events were heavily focused on health and wellbeing for older people in the Borough; in Durham, events included the Durham Book Festival and in Stockton there were a number of Black History month activities. The combined list of activities was extensive, running to 47 pages of both regular and one off events and demonstrates the extent of the contribution the library sector makes to the informal adult learning agenda. There were logistical and timing difficulties that delayed the process in terms of the use of the specific Festival funding. It has therefore been possible to extend the work in the North East with a second tranche of Festival events and also to develop specific marketing activities that will serve to promote the libraries' offer in supporting informal adult learning, including a dedicated regional website www.northeastlibraries.org.uk. The regional partnership will enable the different library authorities to benefit from demonstrating the impact of their combined contribution to informal adult learning and provides a basis for future collaborative work.

ENDS

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