Hurdles to the participation of children, families and young people in museums:

A LITERATURE REVIEW

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this literature review a complex mix of hurdles or barriers to participation by children, families and young people in museums has been identified. Each is set out under one of six headings, however, as would be expected, they do not form discrete groups and are frequently interconnected.

Before looking at the barriers it is important to be clear what is meant by 'participation'. The use of the word can be misleading as it may mean different things to different people. In this report we assume true participation to be the same as 'meaningful engagement' or engagement which is designed to enable and empower children and young people in becoming regular and comfortable consumers of what museums have to offer; and which, in the longer term, may contribute to a reduction in inequalities for the less advantaged and marginalised, and the development of personal and social skills, boosting of self-esteem, have a positive effect on health and well-being, and ultimately the enhancement of an individual child or young person's life chances and choices.

The hurdles to participation range from very practical barriers to social and attitudinal barriers and from changes to the school curriculum and cuts in funding:

a. **PRACTICAL BARRIERS**: these may include the availability of public transport, and its cost; the cost of involvement – entrance fees etc.; project closures; availability and cost of refreshments; information on what's available; poor communication and marketing; rurality (scattered populations and isolation); and available time.

b. **SOCIAL AND ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS**: under this heading we explore the impact of differences in class and socio-economic background as it is argued that audiences/visitors tend in the main to be from better educated and more affluent backgrounds. Parental influence can be both positive and negative: if a parent is unwilling to engage this can impact on other family members whether their unwillingness is caused by emotional (fear, discomfort) or interest barriers (not knowing what is available or understanding the relevance of what their child is doing). Children and young people may well hold a negative view of museums as remote and inaccessible, and not relevant to their everyday lives. Through school visits, museums and galleries could also have negative associations for some children and young people as may schools and other authoritarian environments.

c. **PRESSURES ON SCHOOLS AND CURRICULUM CHANGES:** schools are generally seen as the best way to engage with children and young people, however we learn that creating and sustaining relationships with schools has become a real challenge for the sector. Poor communication, timetabling demands, budget cuts, a shift in targets, a reduction in time available for visits, less of a focus on arts brought by the change in curriculum, and stopping museum and gallery outreach activities have all contributed to the difficulties and uncertainties now existing.

d. **LIMITED CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE:** current literature which discusses the importance of consulting young people, although the practice may be limited and patchy around the country, is very clear on the importance of proper engagement and the need for museums to develop a way of interacting with young people with equal respect as they give adults. It may well be that more support is needed for this to become commonplace:

'Only children and young people themselves can communicate what they like or dislike, what works for them and what doesn't. Services that involve them meaningfully in individual decision-making and planning, delivery and evaluation will be better able to meet their needs and be better used by them.' [1]

e. **POOR COLLABORATION – MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS:** we learn that at times collaboration and co-production can become one-sided if the museums are too controlling and risk-averse, leaving community partners disillusioned and unwilling to work with them again. Strategic partnerships need to be very carefully planned and put together to ensure an equal match throughout a project.

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[1] From *The Participation Charter*. www.participationworks.org.uk

f. **PROJECT FUNDING AND FUNDING CUTS:** the short-term nature of project funding, and pressures of finding match funding can prevent the achievement of longer term changes and sustainability. The pressure to produce positive reports to encourage further funding without time to reflect on learning can be damaging to local needs and relationships.

All the above can contribute to the creation of an environment which sustains a lack of equality of opportunity for all to experience what is rightly theirs to experience.

Through discussions with those working in museums it is clear there is much innovative and exceptional activity around the country, but we need to learn more about what that is. It would also appear that the need for more detailed statistical data collection has been recognised and is underway at least in some areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to be better equipped to undertake further work overcoming hurdles to participation, it may be helpful to focus on the following actions:

A the development of clear practice and guidelines on, and the rolling out of, programmes supporting effective participation and meaningful engagement of children and young people in museums and other venues;

B further research to fill in gaps in existing knowledge and tell us, for example:
- how many venues around the country operate a youth panel or something similar – how do they operate and what are the backgrounds of the children and young people with whom they engage?
- how and who do schools select to go on school visits and what can be done to ensure the less advantaged do not miss out?
- where are there young volunteer schemes operating and what is the impact of these schemes on, for example, the involvement of those from diverse ethnic backgrounds and less advantaged communities, both rural and urban?
- what programmes are there that engage with family members and break down barriers of exclusion?
- what programmes of work have proven to be particularly effective and where can they be rolled out further?

BACKGROUND

Kids in Museums is a small charity whose mission is to work with museums nationwide to make them more welcoming of children, families and young people. The charity has been funded by the Arts Council England, as part of its 2015/16 grant, to commission a piece of research exploring the hurdles to participation for children, families and young people in museums.

Kids in Museums hears regularly from the families, children and young people it works with that museums could do much better in terms of welcoming them and engaging with them effectively. It is for this reason that Kids in Museums does the work it does: seeking the views of children and families, updating the Kids in Museums Manifesto, and actively encouraging museums to sign up to it and take it on board in their institutions; running the annual Family Friendly Museum Award; encouraging venues to adopt family friendly ticketing; working with museums to successfully participate in Takeover Day activities and now More Than A Day…; training events for museum staff and a range of other projects. However, together with many others around the country, Kids in Museums is also aware that visiting museums is not part of the lives of many children and young people, and their families.

This piece of desk research is designed to explore and report on what is currently known and in the public domain, about why so many choose not to take advantage of what our museums around the country offer. It will provide Kids in Museums with a stronger evidence base to combine with its anecdotal knowledge and develop future work. In the absence of a systematic review of previous research and literature indicating the gaps in current knowledge, this piece of research will provide a picture of what knowledge is currently available and what further research should be done to increase our understanding of the issues and challenges involved.

Kids in Museums commissioned consultant Sally Whitaker to carry out the research. She was assisted by Jodie Sadler.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this report has been primarily desk-based research comprising a review of literature related to the participation of children, families and young people in museums and galleries. The documents referred to cover national discourses and local/regional reports, several of which cover research which involved consulting young people directly.

The reports cited range from 2009 to the present, however from the references the reader will see the majority are from more recent years. The earlier reports are included to provide an historical perspective where considered relevant although it is acknowledged that in many cases new initiatives, and new funding streams[2] have since been launched, and the landscape has changed slightly, since their publication.

Although the focus is primarily on England, recent work in Wales has also been referenced as helpful background to understanding the issues.

In addition to the literature review, further research was carried out by telephone interview with a handful of the organisations which are known to have a strong focus on meaningful engagement with children and young people and where relevant, observations from those are included in this report.

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[2] For example, Arts Council England: Museums and schools programme; and Creative People and Places. www.artscouncil.org.uk
Heritage Lottery Fund, Young Roots www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/young-roots

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PARTICIPATION?

The word 'participation' can sometimes mean different things to different people, as can 'engagement' and for example, 'consultation'.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) there are two Articles of particular relevance to this piece of research:

- **Article 21**: states that any child or young person has a right to express their views and have them taken into account in decisions affecting them
- **Article 31**: states that access to and participation in cultural and artistic opportunities is a fundamental right of all children and young people.

Since 1989 children and young people's organisations and others have worked tirelessly to ensure the rights of children and young people are recognised and acted upon. Increasingly over the years we have seen, for example, public services are taking the wishes and feelings of children and young people into account when designing and delivering their work.

'Only children and young people themselves can communicate what they like or dislike, what works for them and what doesn't. Services that involve them meaningfully in individual decision-making and planning, delivery and evaluation will be better able to meet their needs and be better used by them.' [3]

The DCMS' annual survey *Taking Part: 2014/15*, defined 'participation' and 'engagement' as follows [4]:

Engagement – *This refers to either attending and/or participating in the sport, culture or arts sector. For example, if the respondent attended an art gallery (attendance) or gave a dance performance (participation).*

Participation – *This refers to the respondent actively taking part in the activity. For example sports participation could refer to playing football or tennis, whilst participating in the arts may refer to painting.*

In this report we assume true participation is the same as 'meaningful engagement' or engagement which is designed to enable and empower children and young people in becoming regular and comfortable consumers of what museums have to offer; and which, in the longer term, may contribute to a reduction in inequalities for the less advantaged and marginalised, and the development of personal and social skills, boosting of self-esteem, have a positive effect on health and well-being, and ultimately the enhancement of an individual child or young person's life chances.

Furthermore it may be useful to distinguish between 'passive participation/engagement' i.e. being a spectator, or observer; and active participation/engagement i.e. being involved in an activity or engaged directly in the museum in some capacity. Visiting with family and friends, informal engagement or education, could be termed passive but be of great value in terms of reducing barriers to future visits; whereas school visits with a formal educational focus could be termed active.

There have been discussions around participation in the participatory arts (theatre, music, art) [5] and sport, as covered by the DCMS statistics (see next section), but how do the same definitions work for understanding the hurdles to participation in museums and galleries? What needs to be changed to encourage children, families and young people to become regular visitors to museums and galleries?

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[3]   From *The Participation Charter.* www.participationworks.org.uk

[4]   Taking Part 2014/15 Annual Child Report Statistical Release. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. July 2015

[5]   Participatory Performing Arts: Literature Review. Chrissie Tiller Associates. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. 2014

Finally, it is often the case that children and young people are treated as a homogenous group, but they are not. There are different age-groups, diverse interests, socio-economic backgrounds and situations, identities and needs, all of which need to be taken into account. It is vitally important to remember that if such things as hurdles or barriers to participation are to be overcome and equal access to services and opportunities for children and young people are to be achieved, the 'one size fits all' approach cannot work. The following pages attempt to set out the impact of the range of differences experienced by children, families and young people around the country.

STATISTICAL DATA

The main source of statistical data on museum visits by children and young people ages 5-15 is the DCMS' survey *Taking Part: 2014/15*[6] . The survey is in two parts: 5-10 year olds; 11-15 year olds. Those 16 and over constitute adults.

62%[7] of 5-15 year olds visited a museum in the last year: 64% of 5-10 year olds and 60% of 11-15 year olds. These figures are all similar to 2008/09 and 2013/14.

However there has been a decrease in the number of boys aged 5-10 years participating: previous figures were 70% in 2008/09, and in 2014/15, we see 62%. This pattern was not seen in the 11-15 age group.

In the data for 11-15 year olds analysis was possible on in and out of school visits. 24% had visited a museum in school time and 48% had visited at least once in their own time.

For those children with a limiting disability we see a sharp difference between in and out of school visits: 25% of all 11-15 year olds with no limiting disability had visited with school in 2014/15, however only 13% with a limiting disability had done so.

In 2014/15 the DCMS sponsored 16 National Museums which provided free entry to their permanent collections. The DCMS *Sponsored Museums: performance indicators 2014/15*[8], show there were 9.2 million visits by children aged 15 and under in 2014/15. This was a 2% decrease since 2013/14 (9.4 million). The Science Museum Group (comprising five branches) had the greatest number of child visits at 1.7 million, followed by the Natural History Museum (comprising two branches) with 1.4 million child visits.

The 2014/15 figures for educational visits and online activities across all sponsored museums were as follows: there were 2.8 million instances where people under the age of 18 participated in on site events, a 24% increase on 2013/14 (2.2 million); the Science Museum Group (comprising five branches) had the greatest amount of instances with 792,000 in 2014/15, followed by the Natural History Museum (comprising two branches) with 542,029 instances.

In 2014/15 there were 2.2 million facilitated and self-directed visits by people under 18 in formal education, a 2% per cent increase on 2013/14 (2.1 million). The Science Museum Group (comprising five branches) had the most educational visits with 480,000 in 2014/15, followed by the British Museum with 271,055 facilitated and self-directed visits over the same period.

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[6] Taking Part 2014/15 Annual Child Report Statistical Release. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. July 2015

[7] All percentages are rounded up

[8] Sponsored Museums: Performance Indicators 2014/15. Department for Culture, Media and Sport

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

In reviewing the available body of knowledge around hurdles to participation several common themes emerged. This report will expand on each in turn, although in reality none stands alone, to present an overall picture of the challenges out there. This review does not attempt to summarise each document in full but simply extracts learning and comments relevant to our understanding of the hurdles to participation faced by children, families and young people.

PRACTICAL BARRIERS

Throughout this research a set of practical barriers to participation emerged, ranging from the availability of public transport to its cost; the cost of the activities with which to be engaged; closure of projects; refreshments – availability and cost; availability of information; poor communication and marketing; rurality; and available time.

In her audit report for the Norfolk & Norwich Festival, the Bridge organisation, Davis[9] reports on the challenges for those in rural areas who experienced: 'scattered populations, isolation, poor public transport and communications'. She goes on to note 'However if transport difficulties or expense that create barriers to participation are considered; then the CYP in the urban areas are often no better off than their rural counterparts… There is little point having opportunities on your doorstep if you or your family cannot afford to access them either directly, or because the cost of transport bars you from going.' Often she found it was by not being able to participate in cultural activities away from home, young people were held back from expanding their horizons and '…experience(ing) more of the world at large to expand their learning and development'.

Another Bridge organisation, Curious Minds, in the northwest of England carried out research into parental engagement in arts and culture in the region[10]. On exploring why parents don't engage Precious uses a piece of work by Staffordshire Children's Trust[11] to identify what can be practical barriers: transport (cost of public, lack of car etc.), childcare issues and timetabling issues, and skills and language issues.

The National Assembly Wales' *Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales*[12] which was set up following concerns from a number of organisations that budget cuts in the arts sector might have been having a negative effect on participation in the arts among some groups of people, noted several barriers to participation. Many of those[13] consulted highlighted transport and rurality as barriers to participation: 'People noted that … reductions in local transport services and the closure of local arts organisations were all factors in their decision whether or not to take part in activities.'

The Inquiry also learnt that those living in deprived communities were more likely to be affected by budget reductions as they were more likely to depend on subsidised provision.

Also sponsored by the Welsh Government, *Transforming Futures*[14] an 'anti-poverty resource pack to support arts, cultural and heritage organisations as they create pathways to cultural participation for children and young people in Wales', addressed the barriers to participation. Included in the barriers are expense; information; transport; and location. Involved in location issues are not just the practical aspects of accessibility but also ensuring the participant feels comfortable wherever their location.

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[9]   A State of the Region Report commissioned by Norfolk & Norwich Festival (Bridge). Catherine M Davis. June 2012

[10] Parental Engagement in Arts and Culture. Dr Mandy Precious, Burnley Youth Theatre. April 2014

[11] How to involve hard-to-reach parents: encouraging parental involvement with schools. Clare Campbell. National College for School Leadership. 2011

[12] Inquiry into Participation with Arts in Wales. National Assembly Wales. April 2013

[13] It is important to note that this Inquiry covered the whole population and not just children, families and young people, although the learning from it is clearly relevant.

[14] Transforming Futures. Cultural participation for Children and Young People Experiencing Poverty. Research seminar report. Stephanie Roberts. National Museum Wales. 2013

In work carried out for the Derbyshire Arts Development Group and Derbyshire County Council[15], Humberstone, Harris and Williams observed the three most frequently cited barriers to taking part in the arts were: lack of time; costs of arts events; and not having enough information about the event. Their research covered all ages, however those participants up to and including 24 years also identified being isolated geographically, being without motivation and having no-one to go with as barriers.

> SUMMARY POINT
> **Practical barriers can include the availability of public transport, and its cost; the cost of involvement – entrance fees etc.; project closures; availability and cost of refreshments; information on what's available; poor communication and marketing; rurality (scattered populations and isolation); and available time.**

SOCIAL AND ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

This section will explore barriers to participation which may come from class and socio-economic background, parents, peers and the negative impression young people may hold of museums in particular.

Class and socio-economic background

Doeser reviewed arts policy and young people over a seventy year period[16] and comments: 'Yet despite successive governments making young people's engagement a priority, data continue to show that arts audiences of all ages do not reflect the make-up of the wider population: they tend to be better educated and more affluent.'

Similarly the Warwick Commission[17] recently raised concerns that 'the publicly funded arts, culture and heritage … are predominantly accessed by an unnecessarily narrow social, economic, ethnic and educated demographic that is not fully representative of the UK's population.' Concluding that free entry has failed to ensure flagship museums become more inclusive, the figures are quoted as follows: 'Higher social groups accounted for 87% of all museum visits, the lower social groups only 13%.'[18] The Commission concludes that such figures show a 'worrying decrease' in participation in cultural activities.

The Commission calls for an educational intervention especially at the time when because of changes in the National Curriculum we are seeing a significant decline in the number of state schools offering arts subjects to be taught by specialist teachers and correspondingly there is a fall in the number of arts teachers (11% since 2010).

The Commission notes that children born into low income families with low educational qualifications are 'the least likely to: be employed and succeed in the cultural and creative industries; engage in and appreciate the arts, culture and heritage in the curriculum; experience culture as part of their home education; and have parents who value and identify with publicly funded arts and heritage.'

In *Child Poverty Facts and Figures, The Impact of Poverty*,[19] the Child Poverty Action Group observed 'Children from low income families often forgo events that most of us would take for granted. They miss school trips; can't invite friends round for tea; and can't afford a one-week holiday away from home.'

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[15] Arts Audiences and Participants Research: a report delivered for the Derbyshire Arts Development Group and Derbyshire County Council. Alan Humberstone, Tim Harris (Cultural Consortium) and Dr Glenn Williams (Nottingham Trent University). 2009

[16] Step by step: arts policy and young people 1944-2014. James Doeser. King's College London. 2015

[17] Enriching Britain: culture, creativity and growth. The 2015 report from the Warwick Commission of the future of cultural value. University of Warwick. 2015

[18] Analysis of DCMS figures Taking Part 2008/09-2011/12

[19] Child Poverty Facts and Figures: The Impact of Poverty. Child Poverty Action Group. 2013

In *The Listening Museum*[20] Anderson comments that few museums know the socio-economic profile of their audience of children and young people. This is necessary he argues, if the museums are to move from 'isolated "outreach" projects to strategies for institutional inclusion'. He continues that just aiming at equality of opportunity is not enough as in theory every child can participate in museums activities: 'the tough, but more meaningful, challenge will be to achieve … equality of opportunity – visible change.'

The recent *Panic! Survey*[21] looking at social mobility in the arts revealed that the arts sector is 'a closed shop where most people are white middle class'. Amongst its other findings were 90% of the respondents had worked for free at some time; most white people didn't acknowledge the barriers facing black, Asian and Minority ethnic people trying to enter the sector; women are more likely than men to work for free. All these factors could also signal the lack of diversity in the museum workforce and the absence of appropriate role models amongst staff and volunteers, and explain the lack of career aspirations and of the sense of accessibility and ownership which deter so many children, families and young people from visiting the institutions.

Parents

Precious, in *Parental Engagement in Arts and Culture*[22], as well as identifying practical barriers as above (see page 7), noted both emotion and interest barriers to why some parents are unwilling to engage and can as a result bring negative influences to bear on the children and young people in the families.

Emotional barriers can be: 'fear of being judged; level of discomfort; fear of feeling out of place; fear of exposing emotions / showing themselves up; fear of being excluded; feeling of not being educated enough; lack of practical emotional support; pressured by other demands of parenthood; a perceived attitude of what staff will be like; attitude (or fear) of their own children; and overwhelming sense of chaos that doesn't offer sufficient time.'

Interest barriers can be: 'not knowing anything about what is available, how they could be involved; not understanding the relevance or purpose of what a child is doing; suspicion and mistrust; feeling they won't be taken seriously; having had a bad experience in the past; not believing staff understand/care enough; bad memories.'

Amadasun in *Black people don't go to galleries*[23] tells us of an ethnographic study – Experiences of exclusion within the mainstream art gallery: an ethnography of black and minority ethnic visitors – he decided to conduct after he had the experience of his daughter being uncomfortable about entering the Hayward Gallery. Initially he had difficulty in getting the parents he was working with in his project into the gallery. At one point he observed that one parent in particular was uneasy: 'he looked uncomfortable and kept glancing around at the other visitors … he said that due to the lack of representations of his culture, it was as if he and culture had never existed.' The exhibition was supposed to represent popular working class culture in Britain 'but in reality was an exhibition of white working class lives and cultural artefacts.' The parent's anxiety was because of his feelings of inferiority, being out of place and excluded. He concludes 'I have worked within higher education outreach and have seen first-hand how a lack of the "right" cultural capital can continue to impede the realisation of aspirations.'

Young people

We have seen that family influences on engagement can be either positive or negative. The same can apply to a young person's peer group. Manchester & Pett in *Teenage Kicks: exploring cultural value from a youth perspective*[24], spoke to

[20] The Listening Museum. David Anderson in Learning to Live: Museums, young people and education. Edited by Kate Bellamy and Carey Oppenheim. 2009. IPPR and MNDC

[21] Panic! Survey. http://www.createlondon.org/panic/survey/

[22] Parental Engagement in Arts and Culture. Dr Mandy Precious, Burnley Youth Theatre. April 2014

[23] Black people don't go to galleries. David Osa Amadasun. Media Diversified UK. 2013

[24] Teenage Kicks: exploring cultural value from a youth perspective. Dr Helen Manchester & Dr Emma Pett. Arts & Humanities Research Council. 2014

young people themselves in Bristol about their cultural lives and everyday participation.

The factors they identified as affecting young people's participation included class differences or 'geographies of class' (white working class young people especially between the ages 12-15 did not tend to go into the city much, and had feelings of geographic and social isolation from cultural institutions in the city); increasing age (as they got older they stopped participating). Similarly these same white working class young people 'because of their lack of mobility as well as differences between what is culturally valued in the homes and communities, and what is valued in cultural organisations in the city, do not tend to enjoy what the city has to offer culturally.'

In *Learning to Live*[25], Bellamy, Burghes and Oppenheim when discussing reaching out to all young people, including the hard to reach, describe the young people's stereotypes of 'museums as remote, dusty, daunting and sometimes silent institutions'. At their time of writing, the number of visits by children had increased with the removal of admission charges: 'but some might argue that there is a considerable way to go if museums are to become open, responsive, pluralistic bodies … as accessible … as a local park or sports centre and are places where the public can participate and create as well as receive and where a sense of shared ownership is created.'

Manchester and Pett[26] also asked the young people they were working with in Bristol what animal they thought museums would be. They responded 'big, awkward, cumbersome walruses', 'ghost animals' or 'dinosaurs full of old dead stuff'. They concluded 'Young people across our groups seemed to be positioning themselves in contrast to these institutions to which they said they rarely went.'

Many of the young people valued arts and cultural experiences as 'private space for self-expression' in particular music and film. It gave them a way to enjoy 'freedom from problems or from your mind or from school'. As many children and young people are only exposed to museums and galleries through school trips, it is perhaps understandable that they may associate the museums/institution with the school institution and its authoritarian, controlling environment, thereby holding museums in a negative light and avoiding them even for informal interactions.

Exploring how parents, peer groups and the wider cultural context informed young people's cultural choices, Manchester and Pett found a mixed response from the groups. Some had clearly been involved by their families – 'because they take you when you're young'. Peers were found to be an important influence but for cultures other than museum visits – film, video games, digital etc. Some teenagers withdrew from cultural visits with parents as soon as they could for the common 'teenage' reasons of feeling embarrassed being seen with them or being too limited or controlled in their cultural lives.

A New Direction commissioned a poll of young people aged 11-25 living in London to look at how and why young people engage in cultural activities.[27] Their report noted what happens at home is important too (as well as at school see below) in enabling young people to experience culture: 'the data indicates that ongoing cultural engagement past the age of 16 is more likely among those from more affluent families, who have been taken to the theatre or to museums and galleries as a regular part of family life and encouraged by their parents to get involved in creative activities.' They take this to suggest the value of engaging parents and encouraging 'an interest in culture as an enjoyable family activity and not just something that happens through school.'

Work by the East Midlands Bridge organisation, The Mighty Creatives found identifying the variety of spaces in which young people's cultural lives play out an important starting point: 'Organisations need to fully understand these spaces and influences and base activities, programmes and events around them, rather than the other way round. They need to understand where young people are at so we can then work out what needs there are and what other opportunities

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[25]   Learning to live. Museums, young people and education. Kate Bellamy, Louie Burghes and Carey Oppenheim. In Learning to Live. Museums, young people and education edited by Kate Bellamy and Carey Oppenheim. IPPR & NMDC. 2009

[26]   Teenage Kicks: exploring cultural value from a youth perspective. Dr Helen Manchester & Dr Emma Pett. Arts & Humanities Research Council. 2014

[27]   Cultural Engagement by Young Londoners: an introduction to key trends, drivers and challenges. A New Direction 2013

present themselves from that point on.'[28]

SUMMARY POINT

We are aware that museum and gallery audiences/visitors tend in the main to be from better educated and more affluent backgrounds and the impact of differences in class and socio-economic background is critical. Parental influence can be both positive and negative: if a parent is unwilling to engage this can impact on other family members whether their unwillingness is caused by emotional (fear, discomfort) or interest barriers (not knowing what is available or understanding the relevance of what their child is doing). Children and young people may well hold a negative view of museums as remote and inaccessible, and not relevant to their everyday lives. Through school visits, museums and galleries could also have negative associations for some children and young people as may schools and other authoritarian environments for them.

PRESSURES ON SCHOOLS AND CURRICULUM CHANGES

Schools visits are generally seen as the best way for a museum or gallery to engage with children and young people, however recent changes to the National Curriculum and poor communication with some schools has raised concerns over the sustainability of schools programmes.

CapeUK, the Bridge organisation in Yorkshire and Humber, reviewed the arts and culture and the new education landscape in the region.[29] As with all Bridge organisations and several others funded by Arts Council England, they are working towards Arts Council England Goal 5: *Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries*. In her foreword, the CEO of CapeUK comments '…it's only by working with and through schools that we can meet this aspiration and connect young people with high quality arts and cultural provision.' However later in the same report concerns about the impact of curriculum changes on school visits was raised, in particular because 'so much of their (museums, libraries and galleries) offer to schools relates to their collections and archives…'

We learn that despite economic downturn and changes to the National Curriculum implemented in 2014, museums have not seen significant decrease in school visits with mostly primary schools continuing to visit on a regular pattern. However in the region, museums have been hard hit by local authority cuts and education teams affected, bringing scaling back of educational offers.

CapeUK also list the practical barriers to active engagement with schools as: hard to get information past school reception, especially for small organisations without a dedicated education officer. Timetable demands, especially in secondary schools, are complex and inflexible. Difficulty in achieving sustained engagement that has a deep impact on learning. We are told 'creating and sustaining relationships with schools is a real challenge for the sector'.

Similarly Davis in the Norfolk & Norwich Festival Bridge report[30] whilst recording the excellent provision in some parts of the Norfolk & Norwich Festival (Bridge) area also comments: 'The same evidence came up often; complacency, low aspiration, poor exam results and schools that won't encourage their pupils to participate in experiences outside the immediate area.' We hear difficulty in communication with schools has always been an issue but it is now getting worse and the impact of the Baccalaureate (focussing on English, maths and science and excluding arts subjects) bringing a reduction in arts study numbers. Schools' funding levels mean they are increasingly unable to afford school trips and in addition they are unaware of what's on offer and the quality of offer mainly because of the difficulties of communication. There is also a suggestion that where school trips do happen, only the 'good' or high achieving students are taken and

[28] The Mighty Creatives. Young People's Insights Report 2012

[29] Opening Doors: review of the opportunities for arts and culture in the new education landscape of Yorkshire and Humber 2013. CapeUK Create Bridge Regional report. 2013

[30] A State of the Region Report commissioned by Norfolk & Norwich Festival (Bridge) Catherine M Davis. June 2012

not those who may be seen as underachieving. See also earlier reference to Warwick Commission (page 8).

In the cultural engagement of young Londoners study by A New Direction[31] they note 'schools appear to play an important role in enabling people to experience culture, particularly more formal activities such as visiting an art gallery or a heritage site. Schools may also help to create greater equality of opportunity in that they involve young people in different cultural activities irrespective of their circumstances, and introduce some young people, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds, to experiences that they might otherwise not have had … However, being exposed to formal culture at school may not be enough to spark a sustained interest.' (See also earlier reference page 10).

In the Kids in Museums' Takeover Day School Liaison report, Clutterbuck tells us that despite the changing education landscape, academies are affected by the same logistical barriers as other schools, 'the cost of taking children out of school in terms of transport and supply cover and the issue of detracting from other subject areas, especially in secondary schools.' However although independent schools may face the same issues 'they can rely on a higher level of parental support'.[32]

He concludes that schools would benefit from being given examples of how other schools have worked with museums; a jargon buster so the school and the museum can speak and understand the same language; and a paper outlines how Takeover Day can support Arts Awards for both teachers and Bridge organisations[33]. Also teachers need to be familiarised with the work museum educators do, 'otherwise there is a tendency for some teachers to think that museum staff are not specialist educators, and that classroom solutions are the only ones'.

> **SUMMARY POINT**
>
> **Schools are generally seen as the best way to engage with children and young people, however we learn that creating and sustaining relationships with schools has become a real challenge for the sector. Poor communication, timetabling demands, budget cuts, a shift in targets, a reduction in time available for visits, less of a focus on arts brought by the change in curriculum, and stopping museum and gallery outreach activities have all contributed to the difficulties and uncertainties now existing.**

LIMITED CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Consulting with and listening to young people, and acting on what they hear, emerges as a frequent theme in the literature. At the beginning of this report we looked at what is meant by participation and saw that it can mean different things to different people. Here we see it as designed to enable and empower children and young people in becoming regular and comfortable consumers of what museums have to offer; and which, in the longer term, may contribute to a reduction in inequalities for the less advantaged and marginalised, and the development of personal and social skills, boosting of self-esteem, and have a positive effect on health and well-being, and ultimately the enhancement of an individual child or young person's life chances. It may well be that this is not always what happens under the heading of participation and this needs to be addressed if children and young people are to participate in a non-tokenistic way.

In *Young People's Insights Report,*[34] The Mighty Creatives emphasised the importance of understanding young people's lives through their voices: 'In order to take a more young person centric approach promoting creativity and engagement there is an opportunity to utilise these voices … The ethos of this programme is not to list things that young people ought to go and see, but about them being supported to be able to source their cultural experiences and then give an opinion about it. Potentially this could become a connector between young people, giving not only information, but also social validation, which we have seen is incredibly important.'

[31] Cultural Engagement by Young Londoners: an introduction to key trends, drivers and challenges. A New Direction. 2013

[32] Takeover Day Schools Liaison. A report for Kids in Museums. Robin Clutterbuck, August 2014

[33] Now available from kidsinmuseums.org.uk/resources

[34] The Mighty Creatives. Young People's Insights Report. 2012

The Geffrye Museum, a museum greatly committed to working effectively with young people, has produced a toolkit[35], making the case for meaningful engagement with young people. They observe that 'historically museums have often seen ''young people'' as a difficult audience to attract and with which to work'. Their toolkit sets out the priorities as they see it:

- **active participation** – by involving young people in decision-making, the museum becomes more responsive and engaging for all young people

- **collaboration** – by working with staff from across all departments, resources, budgets, knowledge and expertise can be pooled together to create a well-balanced and more sustainable programme

- **commitment / passion** – it is important that staff directly involved in the programme are committed to and passionate about working with young people. They will need to drive forward their ideas and act as advocates for youth engagement within the organisation

- **adaptability** – staff need to take on board young people's suggestions and be open about developing new ways of working and enhancing present working practices, policies and procedures

- **reciprocity** – it is important to be open and honest with the young people and share any barriers and practicalities. They will respect this and work with you to problem-solve any ideas and issues.'

In Wales, the research seminar report on cultural participation for children and young people experiencing poverty[36] noted how important it was for institutions to improve their listening skills and become more responsive to the voices and views of young people. Also stressing that where young people were not already on decision panels, they should be to ensure they are involved in the design and delivery of projects.

Bellamy, Burghes and Oppenheim emphasise in *Learning to Live*[37] that, 'It will involve a change in the dialogue between museums, children and young people, and the inclusion of children and young people as participants, with a voice, visibility and places for their own displays. The aim is not to persuade children and young people to make a one-off visit, but for them to become the next generation to see museums as an integral part of their lives.'

In the same collection of essays, *Why Young People?*[38], Pontin identifies several key factors for success for working with young people including 'developing a style of interaction that treats participants like adults'; 'working out how to continue contact once project is over'; 'making sure project is a museum priority …'

> **SUMMARY POINT**
> Current literature which discusses the importance of consulting young people, although the practice may be limited and patchy around the country, is very clear on the importance of proper engagement and the need for museums to develop a way of interacting with young people with equal respect as they give adults. It may well be that more support is needed for this to become commonplace.

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[35] Young people at home at the Geffrye. Working and engaging with young people. The Geffrye. Rachael Crofts. 2012

[36] Transforming Futures. Cultural Participation for Children and Young People Experiencing Poverty: Research seminar report. Stephanie Roberts. 2013

[37] Learning to Live: Museums, young people and education. Kate Bellamy, Louie Burghes and Carey Oppenheim. In Learning to Live: Museums, young people and education edited by Kate Bellamy and Carey Oppenheim. 2009. IPPR & NMDC

[38] Why young people? Kate Pontin in Learning to Live: Museums, young people and education. Edited by Kate Bellamy and Carey Oppenheim. 2009. IPPR & NMDC

POOR COLLABORATION – MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

In *Whose cake is it anyway?*, a collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries across the UK[39], Lynch concluded that local communities remain, or at least see themselves to be fundamentally separated from processes within museums, galleries, libraries: 'rather than engaging at every level of their work, they are relegated to mere consumption of museums' and galleries' products.'

She found in her study that 'despite numerous examples of ground-breaking innovative practice, the funding invested in public engagement and participation has not moved from the margins to core of many of these organisations'. She uses the term 'empowerment-lite': 'Overall, the greatest difficulty expressed by a number of community partners (of the 12 museums and galleries) surrounded the issues of collaboration and co-production, with offers of participation typically amounting to the disillusioning experience of "empowerment-lite". Not always: "do(ing) what it said on the tin" the actual "management" by the organisations that served to undermine its impact and value for the "target" participants.'

Lynch also identified a tendency to reward those who were the least challenging and kept more in line with the organisation's priorities … reinforcing … a 'false consensus' among those willing to concede to the museums' goals. The community partners were often left with 'the unhappy feeling of having colluded in their own marginalization, disempowerment and even exclusion – an experience they rarely chose to repeat.'

Organisations need to move from 'consultation' to 'collaboration' and 'co-production' if they are to successfully engage.

Tackling the lack of openness in the sector is seen to be a priority: 'One community member noted: "You – your organisation – need us more than we need you." It became abundantly clear in this study that this was indeed true – that museums and galleries need their community partners in a way not always credited, perhaps as the *only* way these museums and galleries can take a clear look at their own practices, through the lens – the perceptions and the active input – of their service users and community partners.'

In their *Insights* report[40], The Mighty Creatives note the need for organisations to be appropriately partnered: 'At times there appears to be a discrepancy between organisations offering arts and cultural activities and the young people they are targeting in terms of communications.' They go on to suggest the need to partner more strategically so the partnership has 'the opportunity to both address communication issues and ensure that the activities or events created by the arts organisation are tailored to and based around the specific needs of the young people involved.'

> SUMMARY POINT
>
> We have learned that at times collaboration and co-production can become one-sided if the museums are too controlling and risk-averse, leaving community partners disillusioned and unwilling to work with them again. Strategic partnerships need to be very carefully planned and put together to ensure an equal match throughout a project.

[39] Whose cake is it anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries across the UK. Summary Report. Dr Bernadette Lynch. 2009

[40] The Mighty Creatives. Young People's Insights Report. 2012

PROJECT FUNDING AND FUNDING CUTS

The short-term nature of project funding, the pressures from matched funding, and failure to bring about long term transformation was another common theme. In *Whose cake is it anyway?*, Lynch[41] observed the impact of project funding on staff members in particular: '…the "short-termism" of projects and the frequent lack of strategic planning for engagement work, particularly as to involve the organisations as a whole' resulted in a sense of disillusionment from committed staff.

Those involved in the projects had limited time to reflect on work done as well as being pressured to produce positive reports in order to secure further funding: 'working by this way was seen by many as undermining the integrity of the work, particularly in terms of work being embedded in local needs, and long-term local relations'. Project funding can also bring with it insecurity in employment and a sense of being 'unable to escape the merry-go-round of projects that were not having the long-term impact desired'.

In *Cultural Participation for Children and Young People in Experiencing Poverty*[42], in her summary, Roberts reports that many of the seminar participants emphasised the limited long-term impact of and sustainability from project funding: 'Short-term projects are particularly problematic: they are neither generative nor sustainable, and can have little impact on the wider population.' The projects 'often leave participants feeling abandoned when the project comes to an end'. What is needed is an approach whereby 'practical participation becomes an integral part of the development of any programme.'

> SUMMARY POINT
> The short-term nature of project funding, and pressures of finding match funding can prevent the achievement of longer term changes and sustainability. The pressure to produce positive reports to encourage further funding without time to reflect on learning can be damaging to local needs and relationships.

YOUTH PANELS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

We have seen from the sections above on participation and consultation with young people above (see pages 5 and 12), how effective youth panels and their equivalent can be in bringing children and young people into the lives of the museums, whether national or local venues. Kids in Museums' Takeover Day in England and Taking Over in Wales[43] have played a key role in breaking down the barriers from both a young person and a staff perspective forging new ways of working that encourage the venues to be more inclusive and welcoming those who may not have been so before.

There must be many examples of such initiatives happening around the country. However to date there has not yet been a systematic analysis as to what happens and where, and as a consequence only limited shared learning.

During Takeover Day in 2015 (England) of the 350 participant organisations 21% notified Kids in Museums that they had a youth panel or the equivalent. In Wales, 17 museums or galleries either had a youth panel or were currently setting one up. A recent online search showed a further 28 youth panels or groups existed or had existed at various venues around the country, however the current status of these is unknown at present.

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[41]   Whose cake is it anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries across the UK. Summary Report. Dr Bernadette Lynch. 2009

[42]   Transforming Futures. Cultural Participation for Children and Young People Experiencing Poverty: Research seminar report. Stephanie Roberts. 2013

[43]   Evaluation reports for these events in 2014 can be found at http://kidsinmuseums.org.uk/resources/

For this report, in addition to the literature review, a handful of interviews[44] took place with staff in museums and galleries which were known to engage directly with young people. The purpose of this 'taster' exercise was to provide a series of snapshots of real time experience; to see what was offered; explore the barriers and challenges the staff found in this work; and to see if they were similar to barriers identified in the literature review.

The barriers to participation from schools which were identified above were confirmed in the interviews. All reported challenges with school engagement ranging from reduced budgets impacting upon travel arrangements, difficulty communicating and the changes in the curriculum. The small venues with their collections in particular need to think creatively at all times, on limited budgets, to ensure a relevance to the curriculum which will encourage the teachers to arrange school visits at this time. Communication with busy teachers with targets to reach is frequently difficult and requires special effort and time if it is to be effective. The reduction in outreach programmes and target numbers based solely over footfall into the venues has meant that the marketing and promotion of collections and events has had to be ramped up in order to persuade the teachers to bring the children and young people out of school, to the museum or gallery.

Where the venues are more remote and not close to transport links, the young people that participate self-select to those whose parents can drive their children to and from the venue. Working with harder to reach young people requires special funding and community partners, who themselves have had or are having budget cuts. As a result those often involved in projects are white middle class who are easily attracted in as their involvement looks good on CVs, personal statements as do Arts Award qualifications. Parents may favour involvement and this can make a huge difference to a young person's ability to participate on many levels.

Much can depend on the museum or gallery collection and whether it has local, regional and/or national appeal. A strong local appeal such as Ancient House – the Museum of Thetford Life, can generate strong associations with local schools and ownership by the community as a whole. However attracting visitors from further afield, especially school visits, can be difficult unless the exhibitions run can generate a broader appeal.

New research funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, '20 years in 12 places'[45] puts heritage at the heart of improving the quality of lives across the UK. For example, when heritage reached those who were traditionally less involved it can often be more important to their identity than to the higher social groups. As well as bringing economic benefits through tourism and jobs, the research found residents believed it made places more 'visually attractive … provides leisure activities and things to do, particularly for families … instils local pride and encourages better social cohesion'.

It would be helpful to have greater information on youth panels, art and history groups and other similar initiatives to these around the country, the challenges they are facing and what they are doing to overcome them.

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[44] Interviews were with Ancient House (Thetford), Kenwood House (education marketing team), the River and Rowing Museum (Henley), and Watts Gallery (Guildford).

[45] https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/research-evaluation/20-years-heritage

CONCLUSIONS

In this literature review a complex mix of hurdles or barriers to participation by children, families and young people in museums has been identified. Although set out under one of six headings, as would be expected they do not form discrete groups and are frequently interconnected:

a. **PRACTICAL BARRIERS**: these may include the availability of public transport, and its cost; the cost of involvement – entrance fees etc.; project closures; availability and cost of refreshments; information on what's available; poor communication and marketing; rurality (scattered populations and isolation); and available time.

b. **SOCIAL AND ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS**: we are aware that museum and gallery audiences/visitors tend in the main to be from better educated and more affluent backgrounds and the impact of differences in class and socio-economic background is critical. Parental influence can be both positive and negative: if a parent is unwilling to engage this can impact on other family members whether their unwillingness is caused by emotional (fear, discomfort) or interest barriers (not knowing what is available or understanding the relevance of what their child is doing).

Children and young people may well hold a negative view of museums as remote and inaccessible, and not relevant to their everyday lives. Through school visits, museums and galleries could also have negative associations for some children and young people as may schools and other authoritarian environments for them. What can be done to overcome these attitudinal barriers?

c. **PRESSURES ON SCHOOLS AND CURRICULUM CHANGES**: schools are generally seen as the best way to engage with children and young people, however we learn that creating and sustaining relationships with schools has become a real challenge for the sector. Poor communication, timetabling demands, budget cuts, a shift in targets, a reduction in time available for visits, less of a focus on arts brought by the change in curriculum, and stopping museum and gallery outreach activities have all contributed to the difficulties and uncertainties now existing.

We see the barriers brought about by cuts to school budgets and changes in the school curriculum and the introduction of the Baccalaureate. Many children and young people only get to experience what a museum and gallery can offer through the school visit programme.

d. **LIMITED CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**: current literature which discusses the importance of consulting young people, although the practice may be limited and patchy around the country, is very clear on the importance of proper engagement and the need for museums to develop a way of interacting with young people with equal respect as they give adults. It may well be that more support is needed for this to become commonplace.

Consulting directly with children, their families and young people has been shown to have a very positive impact. But first it is important for everyone to share the same definition of effective participation and meaningful engagement to avoid tokenistic approaches to young people that can result in harming relationships further. It may well be that more support is needed for this to become commonplace.

e. **POOR COLLABORATION – MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS**: we have learned that at times collaboration and co-production can become one-sided if the museums are too controlling and risk-averse, leaving community partners disillusioned and unwilling to work with them again. Strategic partnerships need to be very carefully planned and put together to ensure an equal match throughout a project.

Collaboration between museums and community partners can be sorely tested especially during times of project funding and funding cuts. Museums need to be able to reach out and interact with external bodies whether local or regional, in addition to schools if they are to work to remove the hurdles identified.

f.   **PROJECT FUNDING AND FUNDING CUTS**: the short-term nature of project funding, and pressures of finding match funding can prevent the achievement of longer term changes and sustainability. The pressure to produce positive reports to encourage further funding without time to reflect on learning can be damaging to local needs and relationships.

There is a lot to be learned about what happens around the country. It would be helpful to have greater information on youth panels, art and history groups and other similar initiatives to these around the country, the challenges they are facing and what they are doing to overcome them. Already more detailed statistics are being gathered by individual museums or regional bodies such as the ACE Bridge organisations. Hopefully these statistics will give us the important information we need on, for example, the socio-economic profile of children and families, and young people who access museums.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to be better equipped to undertake further work overcoming hurdles to participation, it may be helpful to focus on the following actions:

A **the development of clear practice and guidelines on, and the rolling out of, programmes supporting effective participation and meaningful engagement of children and young people in museums and other venues;**

B **further research to fill in gaps in existing knowledge and tell us, for example:**
- how many venues around the country operate a youth panel or something similar – how do they operate and what are the backgrounds of the children and young people with whom they engage?
- how and who do schools select to go on school visits and what can be done to ensure the less advantaged do not miss out?
- where are there young volunteer schemes operating and what is the impact of these schemes on, for example, the involvement of those from diverse ethnic backgrounds and less advantaged communities, both rural and urban?
- what programmes are there that engage with family members and break down barriers of exclusion?
- what programmes of work have proven to be particularly effective and where can they be rolled out further?

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