



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

TWM Learning Team and Discovery Museum

Over the last year Susan Raikes, Adam Goldwater and Lucy Smith have facilitated the development of a '**Children's Panel**' for Tyne and Wear Museums across the region. Children and young people who have visited the eleven museums across the service were invited in to work with the team. The plan was to look at the museum environment for children and young people, how to improve the service offered and make things more accessible for children and young people.

Evidence of dialogue and change is provided for this evaluation by:

'Collective Minds.' -The Children' Panel

August 2006 - this was the first meeting of the children's panel group at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle. Twenty children came to this first session, which was a general get to know you session. Within this meeting the group discussed what they wanted to achieve and how they wanted to achieve it.

From this meeting the group decided –

- A name for the group
- How often they wanted to meet.
- Where they wanted to meet - in each of the museums.
- The children had a look at the on-line games.
- Looked at the Newcastle story gallery and said what they liked and didn't.

From this meeting the group decided -

- A new name for the group, **Collective Minds.**
- To meet every holiday.
- To meet in each museum.
- Changed some of the names of the games

October 2006 - this time the group met at The Shipley Art Gallery and worked with members of the team based there. At this session the group looked at the museum, some of the work inside and worked to make one display a little more child and young person friendly. They talked about the artefacts on display, what they thought of them and how they would name them.

Jan 2007 - the group met at South Shields Museum & Art Gallery

- The group looked in the Art Store and talked about what it takes to look after and preserve paintings, a look behind the scenes. The children took polaroid pictures and talked about what they did and didn't like in the Land, River and Sea gallery. All of this was recorded and it will affect changes made to displays the gallery in the re-development which will be complete by April 2008.

Feb 2007 - the group were invited to take part in four sessions during the holiday.

The first day was spent choosing, taking pictures and thinking about a story, which could be attached to each artifact. The second day the children enjoyed working with Adam Bushnell from Storytales. Adam told a couple of stories to the children about two of his very own - a fly swat and some black pepper! Adam has been a frequent visitor to libraries in Co. Durham so I was able to chat with Adam about the sessions he was involved in. Adam told me before the session he wasn't really sure what was happening (this was a deliberate strategy to allow the children to lead the activity.) He knew he had been booked over the half term but had to wait until the group decided what they wanted from him before he could plan the sessions. Even then having worked with Adam the children and young people who are part of his sessions are encouraged to use their own imaginations. Adam shows them how to create storyboards, how to develop their story into an interesting tale. Again supporting the children to use their own imagination.

These sessions were the start of the children creating a book. A Children's Guide to TWM - (Tyne & Wear Museums.) Collective Minds decided to put all of their stories together, alongside other fun things for children such as puzzles to do with artefacts in the museums. For the rest of the sessions the group finished their stories. Not all of the children came every day; they dipped in and out depending on how busy they were.

April 2007 - another two meetings at the Discovery Museum. I managed to join the group for the second day. Different children attended each day so the sessions ran to a similar format. In the first session the group had to think about how they would like to be treated in the museum. Please see sheet attached. Also attached is the museum protection pledge which is available for adults.

Later on in the session they thought about the ground rules they would like. In the second session the group were asked to make a poster to reflect the ground rules so they can be displayed in the museum or given out as leaflets. Please see some of the drawings in the Collective Minds second newsletter also attached. The newsletter highlights some of the other things we got up to in our session.

- Call my Bluff - the children were split into groups, given an artifact and told what it was. They had to come up with two other 'bluffs' to trick the other children. Please see the Victorian foot warmer on page 2.
- We went into the museum to look at some of the displays and the children thought about alternative uses for the artifacts, or made up riddles and poems. (Also highlighted on page two of the newsletter.)
It is planned that all of this work will be put into the children's book.

During the session I had the chance to talk to the group and find out their thoughts on what

they were involved in. I chatted with Patrick, Kate, Gemma, Chris, Brian, Adam, Kate, Katherine, Ashleigh and Douglas and these are just some of the things they had to say: -

“It’s really good.”

“I really enjoy it; it’s quite imaginative and gets you into museums.”

“It’s better than just walking around.”

“It let’s you find out about stuff.”

“I just came to two of the story sessions.”

“I like the word searches and stuff about the museum.”

“On our first session we talked about - what the group would be like

- What we would we do

- How it would help the museums

all because museums are visited by children.”

“We also talked about what children like, because they come from schools but they don’t have much time in these sessions.”

“We chose the name ‘Collective Minds’, we made them all up and chose the best.”

“You know during the holidays children are bored so its good to come and look at the museums, to play and make new friends.”

“The group started quite small but it just keeps getting bigger and bigger.”

Gemma told me “we are making a difference, if anything is broken we can get it replaced. If anything is boring we can ask Susan and Adam to change the displays.”

At the end of each session there is a quick evaluation of how it went. The general consensus from this one was **‘yeah it went well, we are happy!’**

Children and young people’s participation has taken on a new meaning across Tyne and Wear Museum’s with the development of Collective Minds. Children and young people have always been involved because the Learning Team support school visits, working with schools to provide materials for lessons and children and young people have always been able to express their views. However now that the museums have their own children’s panel, children and young people are able to have a direct impact on how the service is delivered to children and young people. I have been clearly able to highlight dialogue and change facilitated by The Learning Team, who have a TWM service-wide remit. It also means that the museums have children and young people on hand to use in their publicity. Please see the newsletter for schools. The children photographed are Collective Minds.

Therefore I am very happy to recommend that The Discovery Museum, based on the work of Collective Minds and the Learning Team, receive Investing in Children membership. This report has been read and greed by the children and young people of Collective Minds.

Helen Mulhearn
Investing in Children
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