

Getting it right

I think they got... right from the very start,
they carefully chose their partners
and the whole project was discussed with partners,
even sort of at the application process.

I think having a clear aim
of what they wanted to do,
how they wanted to achieve it
but then being open to suggestions was key
in the success of the project.

The things that Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums got right,

I think, were mostly down
to the partner we worked with, who was Suzanne.

She spent a considerable amount of time
taking small steps, making friends, building relationships,
and above all building trust
with a group of people who may,
in the past have been seen to be quite vulnerable.

But the trust-building element
of the relationship was really crucial
in the success of the partnership.

Lots of projects invite representatives
from the third sector along
because it may be written into a funding bid.

With the Our Museum project

I think it's because the third sector
was genuinely invited because they were genuinely

going to have an influence on the project
rather than it just being a tick-box exercise.
So, from the beginning, I felt
that I could have some sort of an impact
and I could make some sort of a difference
rather than being a token person that was invited along
just because we have to be invited along.

They were allowing us to do an awful lot of things
that perhaps other museums
would have been a little bit tight about
and they're trusting us with their work.

I think they got it right and it is sharing authority.

You have to have it from the top
and if you don't get that support
from the top then really it doesn't work.

But certainly in our museum in Wales,
that has happened and I think that has been very beneficial
because they are beginning to change
organisational culture.

Letting us know when decisions are made
and how we've influenced those decisions.

The whole thing really,
when the new volunteering system's set up,
we're part of delivering the training to new volunteers.

We're there all the way through.

I think the best thing that the museum did from this project
was giving us a real amount of flexibility

and also a real amount of influence over the project.

So it was great that the museum was happy to actually involve us and commission us to deliver the exhibition on their behalf with them.

I think what the museum has got right in this process is continually learning from things that haven't gone as well as we'd hoped.

So, the whole thing really is a big experiment and we're looking all the time to see what we could do better.

The resources like car parking and things like that, getting adequate directions, considering where we're driving from; not just making it convenient for the galleries.

Being realistic about how we use our time.

For me, meetings have to be succinct, they have to be to the point.

I'm not interested in waffling for hours, you know?

I need to know exactly where we're going and what the objectives of the meetings are, what we hope to achieve and what the time limits are.

The remuneration as a recognition of the value of the community partner's time, the values that they have there, right from the top.

That really comes through in the way that we've been welcomed and involved in this work.

I think our museum partners have been exemplary
in engaging with our service user base,
who are typically socially-excluded,
have multiple and complex needs and lead chaotic lives.
And those chaotic lifestyles don't necessarily fit
into any kind of a structured programme.
I think the relationship they've built
with our clients the complete non-judgemental,
compassionate approach
they've shown across the board;
from the ladies in the canteen
to the people delivering the workshops has been phenomenal.
He listened to us. I was quite concerned
that they would tell us what they wanted from us
but it was really, kind of,
"What can we do for you?" You know?
So, how can they best help my clients?
There was sharing between partners.
The museum used the partners as a resource,
asking other people what they have
and sharing those.