

HACKNEY MUSEUM CASE STUDY: Youth Journalism in Cazenove, 2013/2014

PEOPLE

This partnership project illustrated just how much can be achieved when young people are given the opportunity to research what they want to find out about their neighbourhood – about its heritage and its rich contemporary life – not what adults think they ought to learn about it! It gave twenty-two young people new skills in community and civic engagement, communication, public speaking, research, digital photography and film-making and deepened their understanding of the area in which they live.

PLACE

The initial idea for this 12 day project came from the Boilerhouse Community Space, a small social enterprise which was set up to develop an under-used community centre on the George Downing estate in Cazenove ward, in Hackney. Boilerhouse wanted to support young people in developing skills and expertise in film-making and journalism and to build longer-term relationships with them, so they understood that the facilities at the centre were there for them to use, as well as for adults.

Hackney Museum was able to respond flexibly to their request for help. Through its participation in the Paul Hamlyn Foundation *Our Museum* programme, it had access to funding for experienced artists (Hackney residents, Tanya Harris and Winstan Whitter) to work on the project. The museum also supported Boilerhouse with planning and project management



The young people began by wanting to know more about the background of some of the adults who ran the local businesses they saw and used every day in their local area – the barber who cut their hair and the kebab owner who made their takeaways. They interviewed thirty-eight local business owners and residents, creating a film of life in their neighbourhood, 'What is Community?'

PLATFORM

The film was premiered at Hackney Museum's *Side by Side* exhibition, a portrayal of contemporary life and historical influences in the Cazenove area of the borough. Over 6,000 people came to see the *Side by Side* exhibition at Hackney Museum over a period of five months and were able to enjoy the 'What is Community?' film. The short film <https://vimeo.com/114146757> presents a positive and vibrant picture of life in Hackney and can be used as an ongoing resource by teachers, youth workers, community workers and local activists. It was screened on a loop system in the museum for over a year and formed part of the introduction to the work of Hackney Museum for primary school children during that time.

PROSPECTS

This project offered opportunities, both in the community and at the museum, for young people to gain transferrable skills and develop their understanding of the heritage of their area. For example, one young Muslim woman, who began the project sceptical about what it might achieve, ended up working on the story brief, on the cinematography, and directing the film. She interviewed a local Jewish resident about interactions between the Jewish community and the mosque, finding out how different communities in the area communicate with each other. Forty-seven adults from the Cazenove area contribute to the project; for example, one local resident became a skilled photographer and has gone on to regularly document local events. She has become a great advocate for the museum, which she had never visited before. Local business people interviewed for the film have improved their relationships with young people living in the local area and developed stronger connections to the museum. For example, a local shopkeeper donated furniture to the *Side by Side* exhibition, brought family and friends to see it and took a panel from back to display in his shop, when the exhibition was over.

