Participation from the start

One of the challenges with a large organisation which already has multiple stakeholders is that it can be very difficult to create space for community partners to have real agency in how the organisation functions and we believe one of the solutions is to involve community partners at the start of the process rather than later on because that allows them to shape what is happening rather than have to argue the case further down the line when they, the way the organisation impacts on it. The ambition is to create a system where community partners influence the content and the products of the service. But not to have that in a way which is dictated by professionals.

that we're able to access

It's also to ensure

the wide demographic of

communities within the city

to get a changing perspective

of the service over time

which will reflect the changes

in our population.

So it's a way of becoming responsive

to the communities we serve.

The Creative Cafés aren't just about

generating ideas for our public programme,

it's about looking at new ways

of working together

in partnership with our communities.

Our intention is that a community partner

could and would form part of

the delivery team for a project.

The role within that team would depend on

the interest and the expertise

that people are bringing to it.

The process has gone well so far.

The first Café we had last year

was very open and we generated

a number of ideas from that.

A much wider range than we anticipated,

not just programming ideas

but other things that reflect

how the service operates.

The second Creative Café,

we were really conscious that

if we simply repeated

what we'd done in the first one

that would be,

that would feel dissatisfying if people

had gone through that process before,

they would want to have

some sense of progress

and we focused out on a smaller

number of ideas of options

just to try and get a bit more insight

into those

and that was also quite productive.

Of around eight ideas that we'd

refined from that discussion

four are moving forward.

Some ideas really in the end

people thought they were

being covered by activities in a service

they weren't previously aware of.

So there was no need to duplicate.

Some of the community

partners, just in the end,

weren't particularly anxious

to pursue them, for whatever reason

and we weren't going

to drive them without them.

So the core ones where the people

genuinely felt enthused have moved on.

We have two Creative Cafés a year.

The first in late spring

and the second in the autumn,

to fit in with our business

planning processes.

And the first Café was to be a more creative,

generative meeting

and the second to firm things up.

However, we've discovered that

if we have a theme

then we can invite like-minded

individuals along to the discussion

and that's creating a community interest

and creating a network.

It also means that we can use

it as a mechanism to,

to get some steer

from creative partners

about how they think we should react

to these external pressures,

to these external projects and themes

that we're faced with.

One of themes was

the use of built heritage in the city

to support tourism and economic development. So their insight into that topic was very valuable in helping to shape how we react to that particular objective. For anyone else considering a programme of this type I think the important things that we found for us was that we needed to have that senior support, the support of a director in essence. I think it's important that you understand how much of a struggle it'll be for some staff working on this programme and it doesn't need to be perfect in the beginning, you just need to start and the project can evolve over time. It's important to have equal numbers of staff and community partners in the room. No one voice overtaking the other. To communicate the results

of the Café, if they give us their time

and they give us their intellectual

input that we are serious

about moving this forward.

It's very dangerous to set

extremely specific targets.

We've learned that we have to set targets

which are much more focused on

networks, relationships

and a joint sense of progress.

One of our community

partners reminded us

"It's not all about you."

They're right, it's not all about

Glasgow Museums.

It's the relationships that are forming

between our community partners

as a result of attending,

that are equally as important

as the relationships

they are establishing with us.

One of the important things

to remember,

and I've fallen into

the trap myself, many times, is

it's not a project,

it's a way of working

and it's a fundamental change.

It has to be something

that's sustainable,

it has to be something

that's been committed to

and it involves

feeding into all the ways of working

across the organisation.