

Staff ambassadors programme

The core principles of Our Museum programme we've been looking at is embedding the idea of community involvement to change the way in which staff interact with each other so that there's a more effective, more positive, creative culture produced so that that becomes the norm within Glasgow Museums as opposed to something which you're trying to apply to it.

The Our Museum participatory process was a difficult one for us to get at first and the Staff Ambassadors programme was designed to spread that message.

People viewed Our Museum as just another project in our landscape of projects we were very busy with so that we needed to make sure that people understood it was actually about changing the way that we worked the way that we engaged with each other, and the way that we communicated.

And that we treated ourselves with the same respect that we treated organisations outside.

The aims of the programme were to create an experiential learning opportunity for a cross-section of staff,

to better understand community engagement.

We applied a participatory methodology
to ourselves as a group of staff,
with the hope that the skills
and experience of the group
would have an influence on immediate peers
and a longer term impact on the organisation.

The Staff Ambassadors programme
was designed to be participatory
it was designed to be something different
and it was designed to create
opportunities for sharing and learning.

It was to introduce participants, our staff
to what community engagement,
real, meaningful community engagement
in participatory practice looks like and feels like.

It was developed really, and led by,
the needs of the staff themselves
so we had 10.5 days over a 6-month period
and the staff could spend that time
in the way they wanted to.

It was very much a self-directed learning programme.

The only set point in the programme was monthly meetings.

All the rest of it was what they decided to do with their time.

We created a menu of activity
that they could choose from
which ranged from field visits

to other community arts projects
happening in the city to becoming involved
in different live projects that were happening
across the organisation doing their work swaps,
coaching and mentoring training.
Coaching is about active listening
and asking the right questions at the right moment.

It was something that very much
we tried to focus on in the monthly meetings.
It became, in a sense,
an action-learning set for each monthly meeting.

We didn't direct what they needed to do
and what they needed to achieve.
And in that sense it was very different from, perhaps
the more traditional training
that's offered by Glasgow Museums.

It was certainly different for the staff taking part
and it was intentionally different.

For me, the personal results of being part
of the Staff Ambassadors programme:

It was a real learning experience
getting to know my colleagues,
sharing skills and experience
and learning about community engagement.

And that was talking about it
but also experiencing it by going out on site visits.

And that was just incredible

to actually be part of those discussions
and share their experiences
and some of the sessions were very moving.

My concept of what a museum
actually means has changed dramatically
because it's gone from being the buildings
and a very traditional view
to engaging with people in communities

I think staff enrichment
and staff taking the initiative
to just do it, to just take an idea
and run with it is a very important outcome.

Through participating in the Staff Ambassadors programme
there's a greater understanding and recognition
of the different strengths and abilities
of different people in this organisation
as well as some of the challenges
that different parts of the organisation face.

And I think that builds a real resilience in the staff team
that will be of enormous benefit to the organisation.