

Embedding participation across multi-sites

We're using a number of different approaches to embed partnership working.

We're building stronger communication links with staff across site and making supportive networks.

We're out and about sharing best practice, but also listening to the work that's already going on and supporting that.

Our community partners and HR team are working together closely to create an all-encompassing training programme that will support all staff to be able to work in a participatory way.

Our community partners are powerful advocates, encouraging other community partners to work with us.

We're enabling staff to make their own connections through community volunteering.

We developed the community engagement strategy in a participatory way and we're now out and about supporting staff to use that and encouraging strategic thinking and change.

Community partners and Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales work together to create a community of volunteers at St Fagans based on the needs of the volunteer.

What we're trying to do is to embed
and extend the volunteering model
across the whole of Amgueddfa Cymru
whilst also creating models
for partnership working
and for shared decision-making.

We are a large organisation with lots of museums
and we have to be aware
that all of those sites are potentially
very different, with different
communities' needs and resources.

Communication is actually really key
so we went out to visit lots of sites
and we wanted to talk with people
who were on the ground and engaging with people.

We wanted to tell them about what we were doing
but more so, we wanted to talk
about what they were doing
and how we could support them
so that we were all working together towards one aim.

We met with heads of departments
and museum managers.

This is a key group that need
to be championing this sort of work.

We also coincided this with operational planning
to make sure that we were working strategically.

We wanted to give them space and time

to really think about how their work aligned not only with the community engagement strategy but also with Welsh government policies like child poverty and culture and poverty.

Community partners have helped us by delivering training to staff, for example, supporting people recovering from substance misuse, mental health awareness and disability awareness.

The feedback from staff has been really positive and this has really helped them to develop skills to be able to support different areas of our communities.

HR have picked up on this and they really want to kind of develop these skills across the whole of Amgueddfa Cymru so it's going to be part of the new HR strategy.

Sometimes, the volunteer model that we have set up here at St Fagans actually isn't appropriate for other sites, but the thing that's key is to take the principles of shared decision-making and partnership working across Amgueddfa Cymru.

And we worked with two sites to specifically map their communities

and we invited potential
community partners to come along
and we held an event where we looked
at the needs of the communities
and how we could meet those.
Now, actually, those community partners
were initially quite sceptical
but when they met our current community partners
and really heard about the processes
that we'd gone through
that made a huge difference for them
having buy-in to this way of working.

One attendee commented;
"The Our Museum model that you spoke about
shows a big difference to how public sector bodies
normally try to engage with us.

But this seems to be more inclusive
and gives us more say."

If we want all staff to be working
in a participatory and partnership way
then we need to make sure
that they have a strong connection
with their communities.

That can't just be one group who's focused on it
but it needs to be that everybody has that connection.

One way we're doing this
is by giving staff the chance

to volunteer with community partners.

This is not only good for their personal and professional development but also gives them a chance to first-hand see how communities are operating.

Which gives them a real connection to be able to focus and to have a personal drive for wanting to work in a participatory way.

Collaboratively, and working with staff across the whole of Amgueddfa Cymru, we created a community-engagement strategy.

Which has actually been really helpful in creating a framework for embedding this kind of work across the organisation.

The next big questions for me are around whether the practice that we're actually implementing now is actually true participation or do we still have some areas where we're looking at 'engagement light.'

So quality needs to be considered, and one of the ways that we can do that is through better evaluation.

One of the things we're looking at is having a relationship with Cardiff University who will help us to look

at the longer-term impact
of the work that we're doing.
We also need to consider
whether we can keep working
with just people who have got buy-in
or whether we have to kind of move away
from an opt-in system to a mandatory approach.
We're not quite there yet
but we can really see changes.
For example, recently a curator said;
"It's no longer about 'who is this for',
but 'who do we work with'."