

Transforming how museums engage with young people

Young people are an **underserved**, but **important**, audience for museums.

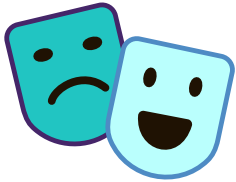
Museums are treasure troves of heritage and material culture, representing our collective sense of community, place and identity.



Access is a birth right. However, young people¹ are rarely a priority:

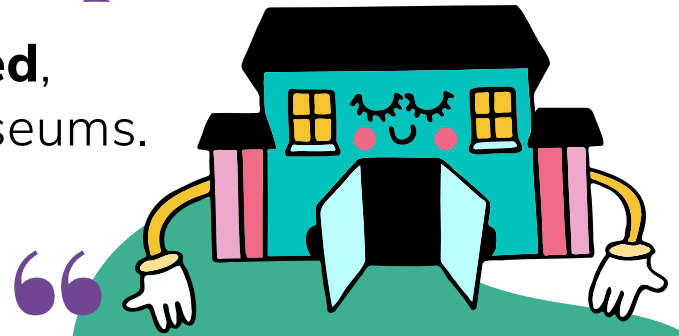
- They are consistently underserved.
- They receive limited interest beyond schools and families.
- There aren't enough opportunities for access into museum, cultural and heritage work.

Youth participation needs systemic and sustainable organisational change



For most museums, youth engagement is not part of core work and is delivered in peaks and troughs through grant

funding. Youth engagement needs to be embedded in the heart of an organisation's work through strategy and planning. The Hope Streets project shows that this sort of entrenching is key to sustainable change.



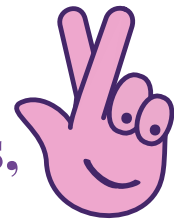
“ Young people were generally absent in strategy, plans and policies, amongst visitors and participants, and in the workforce. They were often not distinguished as different to children, families and schools. Their participation was rarely counted.

Independent Evaluator, Cath Dillon ”

Hope Streets,

a five-year project by

Curious Minds, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund's **Kick the Dust** scheme, aimed to increase access to cultural education. Hope Streets partnered with **Museum Development North West** and **Youth Focus North West**.



The organisations that took part in Hope Streets:

TULLIE

Bolton
Library and
Museum Services

Lancashire
County
Council



WEST CHESHIRE
MUSEUMS

THE
ATKINSON



“ What's really exciting is that this is going beyond museums to the wider service. The service is excited about youth engagement. But we need to change the whole approach, and embed practice, not just make it tokenistic.

Senior Leader at
West Cheshire Museums ”

¹Teenagers and young adults aged 11-25

Guidance from Curious Minds was key to creating change

Curious Minds and partners applied their expertise to guide five organisations through a tailored program on organisational growth.

The **phases** of the programme designed by Curious Minds for **Hope Streets**

Phase 1

Mobilise & Discover

Carried out research and consultation to understand the current situation.

Built a steering group with expertise from Museum Development North West and Youth Focus North West.

Recruited museum partners with ambition and capacity for organisation level change.

Phase 2

Explore & Test

Organised youth-led events to uncover barriers to youth-led work.

Provided mentoring, training and support to develop the skills and confidence of heritage professionals.

Organised the 'Festival of Hope' so museums could experience large-scale youth-led work.

Phase 3

Deliver & Embed

Focused on internal processes and weaving youth leadership into the everyday workings of the museums.

Supported youth employment opportunities within the museums.

Facilitated policy and organisational planning to embed commitments.

Phase 4

Influence & Inspire

Created opportunities to share achievement, learning and influence beyond the partner organisations.



Working intensively with a learning or engagement officer and a senior leader at each museum, Curious Minds provided:

- Vision, leadership and ambition for youth engagement.
- Access to specialist skills, expertise, advice, guidance, mediation, facilitation and mentorship.
- Ideas, examples and practical help to bypass institutional roadblocks.
- Accountability, momentum, project management and navigation of challenges.

The Youth Engagement Expert has been an amazing mentor for me. He has boosted my confidence, he offers advice and has supported me to step back and think about the potential of the project. It's been a fantastic partnership.

Project Lead at Tullie House

Hope Streets created lasting positive change across all aspects of museum operation

External evaluation shows that if funders invest in work that embeds practice, they see more impact for their investment as the work is sustained.



I think it's probably made us more sustainable within Greater Manchester as an organisation. Because when you look at the wider goals for the region, it's about improving quality of life for young people.

**Team Leader,
Bolton Libraries and
Museum Service**



After Hope Streets:

Engagement	More, wider, deeper youth engagement.												
Youth voice	More opportunities for youth voice and young people consistently contributing to decision making.												
Museum workforce	<p>More employees, trainees and volunteers under 25.</p> <p>Change in workforce across all five Hope Streets museums from 2018/19 to 2021/22:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Workforce</th> <th>% increase</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Employees under 25</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Youth-participation focused roles</td> <td>260</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Volunteers under 25</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Trainees, interns and apprentices under 25</td> <td>133</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Trustees under 25</td> <td>300</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 	Workforce	% increase	Employees under 25	56	Youth-participation focused roles	260	Volunteers under 25	9	Trainees, interns and apprentices under 25	133	Trustees under 25	300
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Strategy, plans and policies	<p>Young people appear in policies and procedures.</p> <p>Strategic documents reflect an increased commitment to working with young people.</p>												
Sustainability	<p>More permanent youth-focused job roles, partnerships and resources.</p> <p>Youth engagement is built into external funding bids and capital plans.</p>												
Legacy	<p>Participating museums have become experts in youth engagement and are a resource for the sector.</p> <p>Young people can influence heritage management at a national level.</p>												



I think it feels a lot more youth-oriented, not least because of placements that we've got on the go, the Alternative Saturday Job and so on...you know, it's just altered the demographic.

Senior Leader, The Atkinson

Key takeaways:

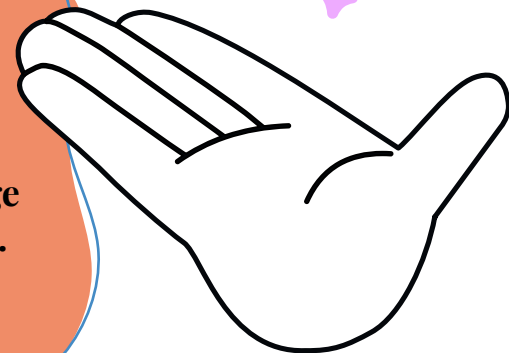
Organisations must focus on long-term strategic change rather than short-term initiatives.

Engaging teenagers in museums can be a catalyst for changes that make them more interesting for other audiences too.

Funders must continue to prioritise long-term interventions for embedding youth participation.

Working on policies and procedures is a valid indicator of success and sustainability.

Sustainable organisational change cannot be rushed.



Talk to Curious Minds

for advice and practical support about creating change that sustainably embeds young people in your organisation.

The evidence for this document is drawn from the 'Hope Streets Evaluation Report' conducted by independent evaluator Cath Dillon. An executive summary of this report can be found at curiousminds.org.uk.

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