

# Tool-kit for working with young people in museums



Inspired by *Scotland Creates: A Sense of Place*,  
a project supported by



# Toolkit at a glance

Young people from the Scotland Creates project team

**This Toolkit contains information, hints and tips on working with young people in museums.**

It draws on the experience of a two year national project, *Scotland Creates: A Sense of Place* led by the National Museum of Scotland. This project shows how museums can provide young adults with positive personal, cultural and learning experiences, develop their creativity and improve their life skills. Staff from four museums across Scotland worked with National Museums Scotland, creative organisations and young adults, to create dynamic gallery interventions and exhibitions.

To find out more about *Scotland Creates: A Sense of Place* see [www.nms.ac.uk/scotlandcreates](http://www.nms.ac.uk/scotlandcreates)

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*Scotland Creates: A Sense of Place* exhibition at National Museum of Scotland





Young people attending the Legacy of Lace opening event

# 1. Hints & Tips

## How do you recruit and retain young adults?

Be clear about what you can offer your young people: what will they get out of working with you? Use targeted approaches to youth theatre groups, volunteer centres or creative subject teachers. Word of mouth is good: flyers and posters in public spaces can be less successful.

## They are NOT all the same

We struggled to find a way of describing the 16-24 age range. The *Scotland Creates* participants told us: 'Don't call us young people!' So, we use 'young people' and 'young adults' interchangeably in this Toolkit. Ask your participants what they want to be called, how they want to define themselves.

## ...it's not all about cake!

Opinion is divided on this. Some people have run very successful youth engagement projects where regular intake of cake was vital, or going for pizza to celebrate the end of a project. Some young people have special dietary requirements, allergies or conditions that can be aggravated by the wrong sort of

food. Some young people don't like to eat in front of others. Do not assume 'buy cake, they will come' when working with young people. ASK them what (and when) they like to eat. Be prepared to use petty cash so they can buy their own food for meetings.

## Establish mutual respect

Agree what it is that you want to do, together – and stick to it. Keep your project plan or activity simple, informal and achievable. Milestones or targets help everyone look forward to the next step and back to see what's been achieved. If something goes wrong or cannot be achieved – be honest, explain why, talk it through and learn from the experience.

## A friendly face

If it is possible, have the same friendly person (or people) facilitating for the duration of the project or activity. It makes a big difference to the dynamics and flow of the project and encourages the young people to stick with it.

## Shout about it

Don't wait until the final outcome of your project or activity to tell people what you are doing. Ask your young people to write a Blog, post on Facebook, tweet on Twitter, upload photos on Flickr or wherever they are comfortable communicating. *Scotland Creates* young adults blogged, wrote *Object of the Month* web content and made digital films about their local museum and posted these online as part of a 'viral' marketing campaign.

[bit.ly/scotlandcreatesblog](http://bit.ly/scotlandcreatesblog)  
[www.nms.ac.uk/museumvirals](http://www.nms.ac.uk/museumvirals)



Scotland Creates digital film workshop





Museum Takeover Day 'Flashmob'  
at National Museum of Scotland

## 2. What is *Scotland Creates:* A Sense of Place?

**A two year, national project involving young people, creative organisations and five partner museums across Scotland:**

1. The Dick Institute, East Ayrshire Council
2. Museum nan Eilean, Benbecula and Stornoway, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
3. The McLean Museum & Art Gallery, Inverclyde Council
4. The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
5. The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum

- A collaborative creative response to national and local museum collections, taking the theme 'Sense of Place' to create gallery interventions, exhibitions, dance, music and films with a local connection.
- An opportunity for the partner museums to learn from each other, working with young adults, to re-interpret their collections.
- A unique partnership project generously supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Creative Scotland that increased capacity across the partner museums.

For more information go to  
[www.nms.ac.uk/scotlandcreates](http://www.nms.ac.uk/scotlandcreates)



Gallery intervention at National Museum of Scotland





Greenock Wanderers Under 16 rugby team

# 3. Working with young adults

## How do you find and reach young adults?

**If you have never worked with young adults in your museum before, this is the first question you will ask.**

*“Young people are entering an increasingly competitive labour market and it is more important than ever that they can compete by having the necessary skills and experience to find and sustain employment.” (Impact Arts, Working with Young People)*



Participants visit the museum store

Start by thinking about what *they* will gain from being involved, e.g.

- new skills and experience to help them find jobs.
- social aspect – meeting and making new friends.
- personal development, building self-confidence.
- creative outlet.

Include these in your project aims and in your communication with young people.

For *Scotland Creates*, we:

- contacted local volunteer centres that support young adults to gain practical experience before moving into work or further study.
- emailed museum staff, colleagues in other organisations or local authority to raise awareness of the project and opportunities for young people.
- contacted young people already or previously involved with us. Word of mouth is often a very successful way of reaching new contacts.

- made direct contact with creative subject teachers (e.g. art, drama, dance, music), youth leaders and other facilitators at local secondary schools, art centres, theatre groups, groups for excluded pupils and staff at local colleges.
- put information on Facebook and other social media with a named contact at the museum – young adults are not necessarily using these sites but parents, teachers, youth workers will pass information on.

**Do not be discouraged if, at first, you don't succeed OR if you attract small numbers.**





Greenock Wanderers Under 16 rugby team

# 3. Working with young adults

## Your second question will probably be: how do I motivate and retain them?

*“Groups work best when there is a mixture of personalities, abilities, genders, ethnicities and individual experiences.”* (Impact Arts, Working with Young People)

Involve young people in the planning and development of the project. At the National Museum of Scotland, young people were part of the recruitment process for the *Scotland Creates Project Officer* and also interviewed animators for our film project.

Create a safe, supportive and positive learning experience and environment. All ideas should be welcomed and participants not judged or compared. Everyone can learn from other participants’ ideas, experience and suggestions. No one person should dominate the group sessions (and this includes the facilitator!), everyone should have a chance to be heard. This requires skilful management, diplomacy and

understanding different personality types. Play to the strengths across the group.

Some things that can help are:

- have a consistent, key contact person throughout the project: participants get to know who they are going to work with each time they meet.
- have a structure: plan workshops and activities so that the participants know what they are going to be doing, when and where.
- allow enough time for discussion and group consensus: remember, some young people may not have taken part in formal meetings or discussions before and may not be used to being asked their opinion.

## Getting out and about

Unless your young participants live within walking distance of your museum, they will probably need to travel to you by public transport. You may also want to take them or send them to look at other museums, galleries or places of inspiration and interest.

Do not assume that all participants are confident, independent travellers or are even familiar with their own town or city. Support them by planning ahead, involve them in decisions about how to travel, checking timetables and buying tickets. They may need or want someone to travel with them, e.g. a friend, parent, guardian or other adult.



Group visit to The Roslin Institute





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East Ayrshire Youth Theatre  
with Scottish Ballet

# 4. Creative partners and young adults

**Having a creative partner in place from the outset can be an added attractor for young people joining or staying with your project.**

*Scotland Creates: A Sense of Place* was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Creative Scotland, with the specific aim of working in partnership across museums, with young adults and creative organisations.

Look at your creative partners' aims and objectives – do these fit with your young adult project? Is the creative partner already working with this audience or are they also looking to develop their work with young people? Do they have a database of young people or youth organisations that they are willing to share or contact with details of your project?

Young people can be involved in the creative partner selection process, researching artists or organisations to work with. The *Scotland Creates* group at the National Museum of Scotland were interested in film making and stop frame animation.

They researched animators and with help from museum staff, organised a tendering process. One of the young adults was on the interview panel for the selection of the animator, asking specific questions on behalf of the young volunteers.

Creative input to *Scotland Creates* included:

- film-making workshops at The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum, using iPads and smartphones, taking inspiration from Dundee's scientific, engineering and photographic heritage
- stop frame animation workshops at the National Museum of Scotland to create short films about scientific inventions or innovations developed in Edinburgh
- music and song writing workshops at Sgoil Lionacleit, Benbecula and National Museum of Scotland arranged by Live Music Now! Scotland with members of Skerryvore and Miniature Dinosaurs.

- Scottish Ballet dance workshops with young rugby players inspired by Clyde Pottery objects for the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock
- Scottish Ballet dance workshops with the local youth theatre group, inspired by Ayrshire lace production, for The Dick Institute, Kilmarnock



Songwriting workshop with Miniature Dinosaurs



Dundee Youth Action Group filming with Smallpetitklein Dance Company





Bethany and Ruairidh from Museum nan Eilean with a sunshine recorder

# 5. Museum objects as inspiration

**If possible let young adults make their own object selection for their project.**

For *Scotland Creates*, we had a theme (*Sense of Place*) and collections (Science & Technology, Art & Design) which our funders approved before we had recruited our young participants.

A visit behind-the-scenes to the museum store can stimulate ideas, discussion and questions about the objects, conservation and collections care. Museum staff could bring selected objects out of store, or work with photographs or online collections database.

Document this part of your project: ask your young volunteers to take photographs or write a Blog for your website about the objects they have chosen, or describe their day in the museum store or with Conservation. *Scotland Creates* generated 10 blogs and *Object of the Month* articles for the National Museums Scotland website. The objects inspired film-making, dance, song writing, art work and creative writing.



A visit to National Museums Collection Centre with a curator from the Science & Technology department



Ruairidh from Museum nan Eilean with James Clerk Maxwell's Dynamic Top



Aileen from National Museum of Scotland with Dolly the Sheep's death mask



The Prepare for Work and Study Group create their own exhibition





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*Legacy of Lace exhibition at The Dick Institute*

# 6. Case studies

## Case Study 1: The Dick Institute, Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire Leisure

### Creative Partners: Scottish Ballet and MYB Textiles

The Dick Institute team recruited their participants through local secondary school drama departments, who encouraged pupils to attend the first meetings for *Scotland Creates*. Being part of East Ayrshire Leisure, the team were also able to invite East Ayrshire Youth Theatre to dance workshops with Scottish Ballet.

The East Ayrshire participants and museum staff chose *Legacy of Lace* as their *Sense of Place* theme, focusing on the historic and contemporary lace-making industry in Ayrshire. They borrowed three Ayrshire lace pieces from National Museums Scotland, to exhibit with objects from their own collections and contemporary lace pieces.

Activities undertaken by the East Ayrshire participants included:

- guided tour of the lace production stages at MYB Textiles factory
- with artist Gemma Coyle and MYB Textiles, designed and produced a lace screen featuring local places and industries in Kilmarnock
- research into lace-inspired high street fashion and interior designs, which were then included in their final exhibition at The Dick Institute
- object handling and collections care sessions with the Museum Officer; installation of the exhibition
- writing text and exhibition layout planning
- Scottish Ballet dance workshops and final performance at exhibition opening
- design and production of lace accessories for dancers

- planning, marketing and delivering a Big Craft Giveaway event in Kilmarnock
- attending digital film-making workshops in Edinburgh and creating a viral film inspired by poet, Rabbie (Robert) Burns, using an online rap



© Mike Scott

*Dance performance with Scottish Ballet*



© Mike Scott

*Lace room panel made by MYB Textiles for The Dick Institute*





© Mike Scott

Legacy of Lace exhibition  
at The Dick Institute

## 6. Case studies

### Case Study 1: Samantha and Scott

Samantha (Sam) and Scott, senior secondary school pupils in Kilmarnock, found out about *Scotland Creates* from their drama teacher. Over the course of the project they were involved in creating the lace panel and planning their exhibition at The Dick Institute. They participated in project meetings and digital film workshops at the National Museum of Scotland. They then planned, directed and filmed their viral film 'Rappy Burns', persuading some of their friends to play costumed characters in the film.

Participating in *Scotland Creates*, Sam and Scott made useful connections with museum staff and developed a strong interest in museum work. At the end of the project, they both entered further education and volunteered at the National Museum of Rural Life, East Kilbride.

*"They thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of performing in a Museum/Exhibition space, and valued the process of looking at a piece of art and bringing it to life through the medium of dance."*

**Michaella, Youth Theatre group leader**

*"I feel the young people benefited greatly from this project. I could see their confidence build and their interests in different areas grow."*

**Gemma, artist in residence**



Sam and Scott at National Museum of Scotland



Sam and Scott with their lace display at National Museum of Scotland





Zoe, Bethany and Ruairidh from Museum nan Eilean

## 6. Case studies

### Case Study 2: Museum nan Eilean, Benbecula and Stornoway, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

#### Creative Partners: Live Music Now! Scotland, Skerryvore and Dance tutor Rosalind Masson

Museum nan Eilean operates from two sites in the Western Isles: inside Sgoil Lionacleit (secondary school), Liniclate on the island of Benbecula and at Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis. Young people were recruited through contacts that the museums staff already had at Sgoil Lionacleit and through email round the local authority (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar) network .

The Western Isles participants and museum staff chose ‘weather’ as their *Sense of Place* theme for their exhibition *A Reir na h-Aimsir (Without Rain there would not be Magic)*, focusing on the impact the weather has on every aspect of island life. They borrowed ten weather instruments from National Museums Scotland,

together with a Harris tweed suit designed by Vivienne Westwood, representing traditional textiles with contemporary fashion design.

Activities undertaken by the Western Isles participants included:

- working with the Museums Development Officer to plan and install their exhibition at Sgoil Lionacleit, using Skype to include a young volunteer attending the University of Edinburgh
- selecting objects and writing exhibition text
- creating a Harris tweed collage, inspired by the weather-related proverb ‘Red Sky at Night, Shepherd’s Delight’
- gathering over two hundred images depicting the changing weather and landscape of the islands
- designing exhibition posters and invitations
- creative writing in English and Gaelic to tell weather stories through prose and poetry

- song writing workshops with the band, Skerryvore (Live Music Now!) to create piece, *Where I Want to Stay*, inspired by the weather
- dance workshops in Benbecula and Stornoway
- Big Craft Giveaway workshops in both locations using tweed off cuts
- writing an *Object of the Month* article for the National Museums Scotland website: Vivienne Westwood Harris tweed suit
- attending digital film-making workshops in Edinburgh and creating a viral film ‘Do you dare visit?’ to promote the new Museum nan Eilean in Stornoway



Song-writing workshop with Skerryvore





Zoe, Bethany and Ruairidh from Museum nan Eilean

## 6. Case studies

### Case Study 2: Zoe, Bethany and Ruairidh

Bethany attended Sgoil Lionacleit, Benbecula and heard about *Scotland Creates* from the Museum Development Officer. Interested in exhibition design, Bethany worked with the officer to plan all stages of the exhibition and organised the call out, via social media, for weather images. Studying in Edinburgh, Bethany continued to be involved, Skyping with the other volunteers and staff who were in the museum to install the exhibition. She also joined the Edinburgh *Scotland Creates* group and helped with the final exhibition installation there. At the end of the project, Bethany had applied for postgraduate Museum Studies.

Ruairidh is from Ness, in the very north of the Western Isles and undertook a considerable amount of travel to take part in *Scotland Creates* on the islands and the mainland. Ruairidh heard about the project from a relative who saw the museum's email. Interested in developing his graphic design skills, Ruairidh worked on some of the promotional material for the exhibition. He took part in a Museums Galleries Scotland/Creative Scotland *Insights Café* panel discussion in Edinburgh, speaking to an audience of around 30 museums, galleries and youth sector delegates. At the end of *Scotland Creates*, Ruairidh is now looking into other training and work options including art, design and film-making.

Zoe attended the digital film workshops in Edinburgh with Ruairidh and together they created their viral film, 'Do you dare visit?', inspired by the 'Blair Witch Project'.



Ruairidh with the poster he designed for the exhibition at Museum nan Eilean



Preparing for the exhibition at Museum nan Eilean





Exhibition launch at the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, August 2013

## 6. Case studies

### Case study 3: McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock, Inverclyde Council

#### Creative Partner: Scottish Ballet

Young volunteers were already working at the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, one as a guide and one in archives, when *Scotland Creates* got underway and were able to take part in the project. Other young people were recruited through the Greenock Volunteer Centre and local college.

The McLean holds a significant collection of Clyde Pottery Company ceramics and although the Greenock factory closed in 1905, many local people still treasure objects as family heirlooms. The young people from Greenock chose pieces of Clyde Pottery from the collections at the National Museum of Scotland and the McLean for their *Colour, Design and Creativity* exhibition.

Activities undertaken by the Greenock participants included:

- researching and writing exhibition text
- photographing objects for the exhibition graphics and museum database
- design and production of coasters and magnets inspired by Clyde Pottery ceramic designs, for sale in the museum shop
- designing posters and flyers to promote the exhibition including creating line drawings
- writing a Blog for National Museums Scotland: the McNab (Clyde Pottery Co) plaque
- attending digital film-making workshops in Edinburgh and creating a viral film, 'Bringing the past to life!', using 'Morfo' software

Scottish Ballet were the creative partner with the McLean Museum and Art Gallery. They worked with Greenock Wanderers Under 16 rugby team on a series of dance workshops inspired by the movements of workers in the pottery industry. A film of their work and final performance was included in the *Scotland Creates* exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland.



Greenock Wanderers Under 16 rugby team



Coasters inspired by Clyde pottery ceramic designs





Exhibition launch at the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, August 2013

# 6. Case studies

## Case study 3: Paul

Paul was already volunteering at the McLean Museum and Art Gallery. He has a particular interest in photography and worked with a professional museum photographer to learn about handling and photographing museum objects. He took part in the two day digital film workshops in Edinburgh and created a viral film to promote the museum which used the 'Morfo' online app to animate objects from the McLean Museum and Art Gallery collections. Paul has dyspraxia, a learning disability and has benefited greatly from *Scotland Creates*. With support from the museum curator, he travelled to Edinburgh to meet some of the other *Scotland Creates* volunteers. He was interviewed for a Museums Journal feature 'Why I Volunteer' and, at the end of *Scotland Creates* was hoping to work in media, photography and the arts.

Paul was one of five young people involved with *Scotland Creates* as the core team at the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, with others involved through work or student placements.

*"I really enjoyed the chance to get 'hands-on' with local history and think about how it was being presented in a visual way."*

**Laura**

*"Practical skills gained through projects like this are useful to everyone and provide good experience for further training or employment."*

**Laura**

*"I enjoyed meeting other volunteers too. We interviewed each other about the things we like about museums, but also the sorts of things that put us off."*

**Paul**



Paul (and camera) with the Bells Up Brass Quintet



Magnets and coasters designed by participants on sale in the McLean Museum and Art Gallery shop





Gallery intervention featuring Dolly the Sheep

## 6. Case studies

### Case Study 4: National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

#### Creative Partners: Cameron Duguid animator, Live Music Now! Scotland

As the lead partner in *Scotland Creates*, National Museums Scotland appointed a Project Officer to recruit the Edinburgh young volunteers and to co-ordinate and support activities across the partner museums. The Project Officer contacted the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, the City Council's Community Learning and Development team and visited community groups across Edinburgh to find participants. A core group of 5-6 young people met regularly throughout the project, with senior school work placements, a Project Scotland youth placement and a student placement (postgraduate Community Education) joining the team in year 1 to make a creative response to three objects in the Science & Technology galleries. These were Dolly, the first cloned mammal (sheep), the world's first

bionic arm and the dynamic top, invented by Edinburgh physicist, James Clerk Maxwell.

Activities undertaken by the Edinburgh participants included:

- meeting National Museums Scotland staff from various departments to find out about collections and learn about the processes involved in creating an exhibition
- choosing their objects and theme for their creative response in the galleries
- appointing and working with a film-maker to script and create three animated films about their chosen Science & Technology objects
- research visits to: The Roslin Institute (Dolly the Sheep), the historic home of James Clerk Maxwell (dynamic top) and Touch Bionics (i-limbs, bionic arm)
- organising and participating in Museum Takeover Day, including launch event for their animated films, a dance 'flashmob', science shows, taking over the Info Zone (library) and song writing workshops and performance with band Miniature Dinosaurs (Live Music Now! Scotland)
- writing a Blog for National Museums Scotland: the official Edinburgh Opening [bit.ly/scotlandcreatesopening](http://bit.ly/scotlandcreatesopening)
- taking part in the installation of the final exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland
- delivered a guided tour for museum staff, of the final year 2 exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland
- visitor surveys and evaluation of the year 2 exhibition in Edinburgh
- attending digital film-making workshops in Edinburgh and creating a viral film 'Not your average date' for the National Museum of Scotland





Gallery intervention featuring Dolly the Sheep

## 6. Case studies

### Case study 4: Aileen, Callum and Sam

Aileen, a photography graduate, credits her involvement with *Scotland Creates* in helping her to secure a full time job in a local library. For *Scotland Creates*, Aileen took on a research role finding out more about the objects, visiting the museum stores and wrote an *Object of the Month* article. She also helped photograph the objects, scripted the Bionic Arm film and helped the wider group animate the films. Aileen took part in the viral film workshops and helped make the film 'Not your average date', she helped install the final exhibition in Edinburgh and gathered visitor evaluation.

Callum and Sam have additional learning support needs; Sam attends a local college and both are interested in film, media and gaming. They both attended all *Scotland Creates* project sessions from the outset, including making the three animated films for National Museums Scotland, going on research trips, volunteered at

Museum events and took part in the viral film workshops. At the end of *Scotland Creates* Sam planned to do a further college course and Callum lined up a Project Search placement.

*"It was an amazing sight, seeing all the ideas that we started with come together to create something awesome."*

**Sam**

*"The project has benefited me because of learning more about it and doing animation because I've never done animation before."*

**Hannah**

*"Working with professional equipment is also quite nice because it gives you an idea of what you can actually do when there are no limits."*

**Sam**



Aileen, Sam and Callum with their objects



Sam watching the films he helped to create





Project wall by Youth Action Group (YAG)

## 6. Case studies

### Case study 5: The McManus, Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum, Leisure and Culture Dundee

**Creative Partners:**  
Smallpetitklein dance company and 2 artist facilitators

The McManus was the only project partner museum with an established group: the Youth Action Group (YAG). YAG and museum staff chose four 19th century scientific, lens-based objects from the National Museum of Scotland that were made or sold in Dundee, by George Lowdon, Peter Airth Feathers and his son, Peter Feathers, a pioneer of early photography and film.

YAG used digital technology to make their own films, which echo those made by Feathers and created a gallery intervention and installation at The McManus.

Activities undertaken by the Youth Action Group included:

- researching the lives of Peter Feathers and George Lowdon and finding places in Dundee connected with their lives
- getting out and about around Dundee filming to 'locate themselves' in the historic and cultural narratives of the city
- interviewing Dundonian actor Brian Cox and producing creative writing which he voiced for a digital film
- choreography with Smallpetitklein dance company, filmed on location at the Tay Rail Bridge and around Dundee
- film collaboration with East Coast Rail to recreate historic film of a train crossing the Tay Bridge
- using Instagram and Tumblr to record and share their *Scotland Creates* work
- working with a digital filmmaker to create and edit films using iPads and other accessible technology
- developing QR codes to create a trail around The McManus galleries and link to more information about the collections and history of Dundee
- creating, in homage to Peter Feathers' original cinema, a pop-up 'Electric Theatre' to show their digital films at The McManus
- attended digital film-making workshops in Edinburgh and created a viral film 'What makes a museum?' for The McManus



The Electric Theatre at The McManus





Project wall by Youth Action Group (YAG)

## 6. Case studies

### Case study 4: Erin, Courteney, Marnie and India

Scotland Creates enabled four of the group to have volunteering and placement opportunities beyond the weekly group sessions.

On Thursday and Friday afternoons the Creative Learning Studio became their workspace to develop project ideas with lead artists Julie and Jon. This more intense engagement with the project allowed the young people to focus on areas that they wished to develop new skills and interests alongside gaining an insight in the day to day working of the museum and particularly the Creative Learning Team.

As well as the creative work that was produced, the placement team led the marketing and design ideas for posters and invitations, helped write interpretation, devised the QR trail around the galleries, painted walls white and edited their own films. They also led youth events and supported other projects at the museum such as documenting exhibition previews and events

using film and editing skills learned through the project.

Erin, then a secondary school pupil, led tours of the *Sense of Place* exhibition for other pupils from her school and has since been offered a place at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design.

Courteney, who developed her interest in creative writing through the project - working with actor Brian Cox - completed summer school at University of Dundee and enrolled on a creative writing course.

Marnie continued her secondary school studies and developed her creative skills with YAG.

India started a film-making course.

*“You’ve learned to think in different ways because of being surrounded by so many people thinking in different ways, you can see other avenues and other ways to achieve the same goal.”*

**YAG member**

*“There’s more opportunities that have come out of it, so you can go on being creative, it doesn’t stop.”*

**YAG member**

*“It’s something that I certainly love doing, so it doesn’t feel like a chore then, whereas, some aspects of school really do.”*

**YAG member**

**[bit.ly/yagblog](http://bit.ly/yagblog)**

**[bit.ly/yagininstagram](http://bit.ly/yagininstagram)**

**[bit.ly/yagyoutube](http://bit.ly/yagyoutube)**



Graphic created by the Youth Action Group





Sam in the animation studio

# 7. Engaging vulnerable young people

## **Peter Robinson, experienced trainer and practitioner in mental health, working with children and young people, shares his tips.**

1. Make the time and effort to get advice. Scotland has a number of organisations who will be willing to help in practical ways and in increasing understanding of the main issues. The most useful information and support can come from families and carers. Don't be afraid to ask.
2. Contact other museums. Even though you work/volunteer in a museum you may be missing the opportunity to learn from other museums across the country. Join them on Facebook, Twitter etc for constant updates and varying approaches to engaging vulnerable children.
3. Seek the full support of line managers as it is unlikely that you can manage positive change for vulnerable people if you are feeling vulnerable or unsupported.
4. Be clear about what you are trying to offer and why. When people understand what you are trying to achieve they are often more eager to get involved. Don't be vague!
5. Let people know what they can expect when they bring their families to the museum. Direct them to information sources both within and outside the museum - web sites, maps, signposting, rest areas. Both very noisy and very quiet places can be identified. Many children and young people will benefit from seeing the building and contents before they visit. Perhaps invent a game highlighting what they might pass on the way to the museum.
6. To be truly user friendly the museum must increase the knowledge base of all staff that may have contact with vulnerable young people. It will only take one inappropriate word or action to spoil a potentially successful visit and future contact.
7. Design a user friendly evaluation system which should include immediate feedback (verbally as an event unfolds), written evaluation, email evaluation, simple smiley/sad face evaluation. It should be possible for everyone to offer feedback regardless of communication issues. Finally, ask families what kind of things make it too difficult to bring their child.
8. Be realistic and open about what you can offer and, where you can see gaps in your service, bring them to the attention of colleagues. Highlight the areas where improvements can be made at minimal cost. Nominate a colleague to identify funding sources.
9. Audit the staff group and identify what skills are present and whether anyone has direct valid experience of working or living with Autism, ADHD or other conditions on the autistic spectrum.
10. Keep in mind that you are already working with vulnerable young people and that their needs are very similar to yours. The articulation of needs may be different.

**Peter Robinson**





Digital film workshop



Scotland Creates: A Sense of Place at National Museum of Scotland

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