'In Touch' Volunteer training programme at the Manchester Museum and Imperial War

**Museum North** 

Adele Finley

Volunteer co-ordinator and 'In Touch' project manager

The Manchester Museum

In February 2007 an innovative volunteer training programme, serving people from the

local community at risk of exclusion was launched in Manchester, England, A

collaboration between The Manchester Museum and Imperial War Museum North the

'In Touch' programme set out to change people's lives, the diversity of the museum

workforce and the way the museums work with and sustain relationships with local

communities and service providers. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund it also offers

opportunities for direct access to museum collections for individuals that wouldn't

usually access heritage sites.

'In Touch' is conceived as a model that is transferable to other heritage sites and cultural

venues. It recognises the importance of volunteers and volunteering in strengthening the

museums relationship with local people and local communities. It also acknowledges that

volunteers must benefit from the relationship and so it promotes lifelong learning, improves

basic skill levels and offers opportunities to develop confidence, self-esteem and interpersonal

skills alongside literacy and core skills. The ultimate aim is to improve the quality of life and

employability of the volunteers involved.

The project has been successful and has addressed key questions and challenges in the

sometimes difficult areas of:

recruitment, retention and motivation of volunteers

> training, learning and skills development

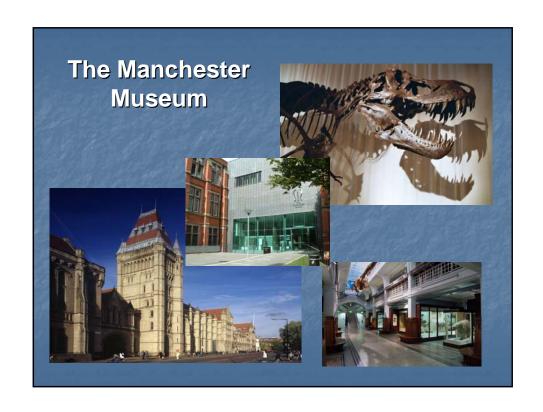
<sup>1</sup> The specific target groups for the project are all at risk of economic, social and/or cultural exclusion. Our target groups are: long term unemployed, people with a disability, youths at risk of exclusion and/or offending, refugees and asylum

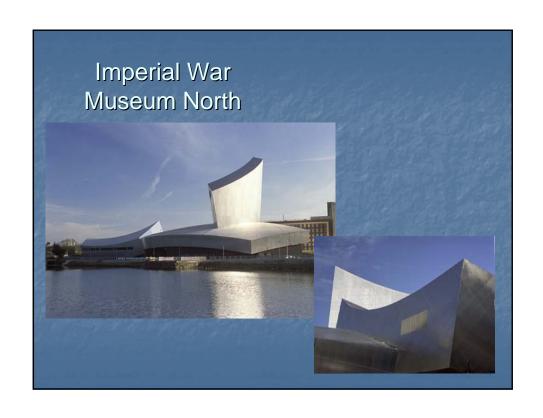
seekers, lone parents

- > accreditation
- > sustainable partnerships
- > working with hard to reach audiences
- > embedding a volunteer programme and involving all staff
- > creating cultural ambassadors in local areas
- > diversifying the museum workforce
- > providing opportunities for cross-cultural and inter-generational dialogue

The following presentation offers 'In Touch' as a case study. The project is a product of its time and so clearly illustrates the key initiatives, social agendas, skills strategies and cultural programmes of today. During the presentation I will explore further the impetus, development and delivery of the project before focussing on the successes and challenges for the museums and the participants involved.



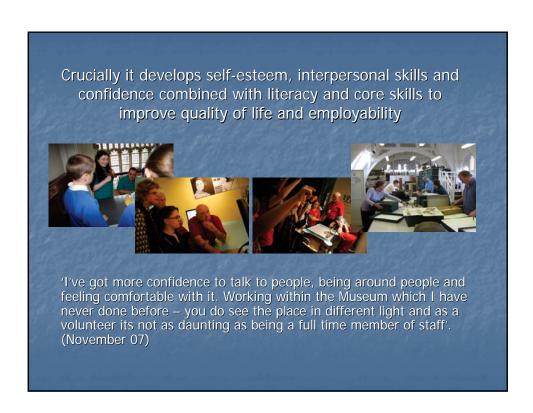








# Aims of the Programme Promote lifelong learning Promote heritage and direct access to collections Diversify the museum workforce Embed a comprehensive accredited training programme Improve basic skills levels/vocational skills Help volunteers take the next step Work with Hard to Reach Audiences



## Partnerships

Partnership working is key to the success and the sustainability of the project. We have developed a network of partners across the communities, agencies and further education organisations throughout the Greater Manchester

Our partnerships are strong because each partner benefits in real terms from working with the project

### Main Partners

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Further Education Colleges: Trafford and Salford
- University of Manchester
- Agencies: Manchester City Council, Refugee Action, Connecxions, Job Centre Plus, Voluntary Action, Mental Health agencies and community groups

# The Project: recruitment

- Research to establish relevance and need
- Consultation and discussion/dialogue
- 30 participants per year
- Collaboration with partners is key to success





# The Project: The Cultural Heritage Course

- Embeds the Literacy curriculum
- Developed and delivered by college tutors in conjunction with museum staff
- 10 week course that covers key areas of museum knowledge: visitor services, education, marketing, object handling, collections and conservation, being a volunteer
- Part way through the course new volunteers begin volunteeringsupported by a buddy

# A cultural heritage session To be successful and

achieve all our stated aims each session must:

- Incorporate group work
- Provide opportunities to present opinions and views
- visit to another museum



### The Project: volunteer roles Meet and greet visitors Orientation around the Museum Staff 'Your History' stations Support education sessions object handling tables Work on the collections Outreach Produce promotional material e.g. DVD Develop website pages Volunteer Newsletter Support events programme

# The Project: benefits

- Museum
  - Diversity
- 2. Audience development
- 3. Access to collections
- 4. Social responsibility
- 5. Community ownership
- Staff development

### Participants

- Confidence
- 2. Knowledge and further interests
- Work experience
- 4. Employment
- 5. Social interaction and new friends
- 6. Life skills
- 7. Understanding of people
- e. learning



### The Project: 08-09

### Challenges:

- Disseminating the value of the project for all involved
- Embedding the project as a part of staff development so that a cohesive, supportive and responsive environment is created
- Increasing diversity, audiences and community engagement
- Develop existing and new partnerships as part of 2010 exit strategy

