

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service: Case Study

Museum: Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Project: Muddy Museum Café

Why we did it: This pilot programme of six sessions was run for children aged from 18-months to five years old and their parents, grandparents and carers. It was developed in partnership with Norfolk County Council's Children's Services as part of their county-wide Café programme which aims to "enable all parents and carers to confidently support key aspects of their child's learning and development." Our plan was to create a session that would develop parenting and literacy skills using the outdoor and indoor spaces at Gressenhall.

What we delivered: At the start of each session, adults and children settled down on the bean bags and comfy chairs to eat some healthy snack food. They listened to a story together then headed outside to take part in a related activity. We then returned indoors to make something related to the story to take home. Here's one example of a session:

Story: *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury. We read the story and encouraged everyone to join in e.g. squelch-squelching through the mud with hand actions.

Activity: We walked to the woods and hunted for bears and collected natural materials to use in our art activity.

Art activity: We made bear hunt collages using their found materials, mud paint and poster paint. We created bear caves from oasis flower-arranging foam, decorating them with natural materials.

Who benefited: Twelve children and their carers attended each session. Parents enjoyed involving themselves in their children's play with 100% rating their visit as 'excellent' or 'good'. Over six weeks the children were increasingly interested in the selection of books and their listening skills and participation during story time also improved. Our project partners were delighted [see quote right from a children's centre Family Support Worker] and the response from children and parents was equally enthusiastic: "**Great again J Loved collecting things and making the cave. My child said 'me like going outside'!**"

What happened next: We are currently running our third season of the Café; numbers have remained buoyant and feedback continues to be positive. The programme will be rolled out to our museums in King's Lynn and Thetford.

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"It was lovely to see the children looking for the animals they had seen in the story, making the noises and talking to them."

The Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS) is a multi-award winning service comprising **ten museums and a study centre**. The Service aims to inform and inspire people's interest in the cultural and natural heritage of Norfolk, and address relevant contemporary issues by:

- **Collecting, preserving and interpreting material evidence of the past**
- **Stimulating creativity, inspiration and enjoyment**
Providing an enjoyable way to learn throughout life
- **Engaging with the widest possible audience**
- **Enriching people's lives and creating a sense of place and identity**
- **Enabling people to understand and value other cultures**

It is a high performing service. In 2010/11 **380,000** visits were made to the museums, and **43,000** schoolchildren participated in formal learning events.

The Norfolk Museums Service was established in 1974 when the County and District Councils in Norfolk agreed to delegate their museum powers to a Joint Committee to manage museums through a county-wide Museums

Service. The museums in each district are managed by local Area Museum Managers who liaise closely with each District and ensure that the museums support local strategies and initiatives.

NMAS is one of only 16 Major Partner Museums receiving substantial revenue funding from Arts Council England in order to achieve ACE's vision for museums:

"A museums sector that is delivering inspiring public programmes using high quality collections to reach more and more people, especially children and young people. The sector is innovative; it shares best practice and is embedded in communities and responsive to audience needs. It is made up of strong, sustainable organisations with a highly skilled and diverse workforce; it is excellently led."

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