

# Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service: Case Study

## Museum: Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery

### Project: *Stories of the World*: Involving young people in co-creation

**Why we did it:** *Stories of the World* was the Cultural Olympiad programme for the museums and archives sector. The programme aimed to transform the way the sector engages with young people giving them the opportunity to work alongside staff, creating exhibitions and events in a genuine collaboration. At NMAS *Stories of the World* acted as a catalyst for developing the service's work with young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups including looked after young people, Young Offenders and young people with learning and physical disabilities.

**What we delivered:** Alongside discrete projects, a permanent Youth Forum was established to enable young people to devise and deliver events designed to attract a younger audience into Norwich Castle. The programme resulted in 20 events and activities led by young people including:

- An exhibition of word, sound and sculpture by young people with learning and physical disabilities responding to artefacts made of bronze, silver and gold [see image right]
- A major two-day event at the Castle on the theme of *Skin*
- The PUBlic Museum which saw young people taking museum objects into local pubs to engage new audiences
- An event at the Tate in London as part of a national partnership project
- An award-winning animation project with a group of young offenders [which told the story of 1066 using lego characters!].

**Who benefited:** In total there were **8,726** attendances at these events plus **101** workshops which attracted a further **770** attendances. The increase in the variety of events offered at the Castle was appreciated with the following comment typical of many responses: ***“Thanks for a brilliant day! It's great to see the Castle come alive, and be so inviting and interesting for young people...”*** The young people gained skills and improved their confidence. Young people like Matthew who has been in care for 11 years and who spoke movingly at a national conference about what the service has meant to him [see quote right].

**What happened next:** As a direct result of the project, the museum service created three Youth Engagement Officer posts to continue this work. The Norwich Castle Youth Forum has been adopted as a model across the service.

**Contact: Esther Morgan, Relationships Officer, [esther.morgan@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:esther.morgan@norfolk.gov.uk), 01603 223215**



**“I love history...so being at the Castle is good. I find it comfortable, it's become a kind of second home.”**

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."*

**For more information contact:**

**Esther Morgan, Relationships Officer**  
**01603 223215**  
[esther.morgan@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:esther.morgan@norfolk.gov.uk)  
[www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk)

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