

Working with Home Educated and Non-school Attending Children in the Museum and Gallery Sector



Case Studies

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Introduction

Children learning outside of a school setting are a growing audience. As well as families who are Electively Home Educating, there are thousands of children who are not accessing school full time for a variety of reasons. I am researching how museums and galleries currently support these audiences and what might be needed by the sector to further this work.

Following a survey circulated to the museum and gallery sector I have had follow up conversations with a selection of museum services to explore their offers and ambitions for non-school learners. The following case studies highlight a range of approaches by museums of different sizes and funding models, in different geographical areas and at different stages in the development of their offers. Contact details are provided and others in the sector are welcome to get in touch to find out more.

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums

[Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums \(twmuseums.org.uk\)](http://twmuseums.org.uk)

Morgan Fail

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Background

There are 10 venues under the umbrella of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums. This includes the Great North Museum which is managed on behalf of Newcastle University and has a team of 4 delivering the wider learning programme. Programming for home educators began in 2016 following consultation with a group of families who were borrowing a room at Shipley Art Gallery.

Current Offer

- Annual Take Over days at the Great North Museum led by museum staff plus Newcastle University staff and freelancers. Activity is offered throughout the building and a lunch space and quiet room are available. They include a quiet hour with reduced numbers, lower noise levels and sensitive lighting. These are very popular with 350 bookings. Provision is free of charge for families.
- The service also organises cross venue events, bookable workshops and Arts Award with progression available from Discover up to Gold level. https://gem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/GM160-Gem-Case-Studies-26_AW-SP.pdf
- The Great North Museum support other children out of school by hosting a traveller's school annually to coincide with the Hoppings Fair. https://gem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/GM169-Gem-Case-Studies-31_v2-1.pdf
- Morgan recently initiated the Northeast regional Home Education network for cultural providers to come together and share practice.

Challenges

- Home Education visits don't count towards performance indicators which gives them a lower priority at a strategic level.
- There are a high proportion of dropouts on the day of events
- Reaching hidden groups who are not on the internet

Ambitions

- Introduce programming for home educated teens
- Re-introduce work with hospital schools which happened pre-covid <https://greatnorthmuseum.org.uk/working-with-the-great-north-childrens-hospital>
- Continue to explore how to work with other non-formally educated children e.g. unaccompanied young people or those waiting for a school place.

Learning Points

- Use individual ticketing systems to keep the booking process simple for families
- Keep numbers lower to allow for additional adults accompanying the children
- Plan for free flow, unstructured activity
- Have a home educator mailing list & dedicated home educator section on your website
- Use waiting lists and reminder emails to fill places
- Work with local authority Home Education teams to match up your work

New Forest Heritage Centre

[New Forest Heritage](#)

Hayley Long

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Background

A charitable trust with a small team including one member of staff currently responsible for learning. Since the Covid pandemic, whilst they cater for school visits this has been on a more ad-hoc / bespoke basis rather than having an established programme of topics and they are beginning their programming with home educating families. This is based on a recent consultation with a number of families and the result of a Learning Review carried out.

Current Offer

A very new programme designed specifically for home educating families with children aged 6-11 years. Based on nine modules about the New Forest, each module including semi-led activities at the museum and a booklet to use at home to take their learning further. There is one session at the museum per month for around 6 families at a time. Each session covers one topic and offers a craft-based activity, creative writing and games or puzzles. They are creative, relaxed sessions catering for differing learning styles. There is a small charge for the sessions to cover costs.

Families can sign up to a mailing list to become part of their home educating 'Hub' with the aim of connecting home educators together.

Challenges

- Managing expectations can be tricky with some home educators preferring the very informal approach that they offer, whilst others expected a more traditional taught lesson
- They are still exploring whether a fixed start time or drop in style are best
- There are a lot of unknowns in terms of the number of adults and siblings who may attend

Ambitions

- For the Home Education Hub to develop into a sociable space where peer support can take place
- They would like to extend their offer to cater for 12-15 year olds
- Connecting with hospital school service to reach children out of school for health reasons, this may begin by contributing remotely to their teaching and learning
- Would like to find funding to support the offering and develop it further
- The home education sessions will inform the development of a future offering to schools

Learning points

- To initially contact families for consultation they used one social media post and an anonymous survey through google forms which reached 80 children
- The Home Education Coordinator at Hampshire County Council was helpful to connect with. They send out information about opportunities to known home educators and this has helped the audience to grow
- Families will travel a long way to attend a home educator's event
- Many of the families included SEND. It was optional to disclose any additional needs and all activities were designed to be accessible

- There are misconceptions about who home educates and why they are home educating. It is not always a lifestyle choice, but often out of need because traditional schooling doesn't fit everybody. The majority of their families had children who had been in school but could no longer attend for a variety of reasons. Some families have children both in and out of school, some are flexi-schooling and for some home education is a temporary solution
- There are a complex set of situations and facilitators need to have sensitivity so that families do not feel judged. Consider briefing staff including any volunteers to check their understanding.
- Printed take-away resources have been popular with families, rather than emailed resources

'This is a growing audience and there is a need for programmes to support this audience. Their needs, style of learning and mixed age groups mean there needs to be a different approach than adapting an existing Schools Programme. I have designed my programme specifically for Home Educators'

We are Culture & Creative Industries at Bristol City Council (Bristol Museums sits under this umbrella title)

[Bristol Museums](#)

Jane Hack



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Background

A local authority service and Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. They have recently restructured, and formal and family learning have combined. There are six sites, with the Home Educator offer mainly run from Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and M Shed. The offer began in 2015, initially based on their school workshops. They have a learning officer whose work programme includes Home Education.

Current Offer

- As well as scheduled workshops (also available to groups on request) and self-led resources for use on site (available on their website), they offer virtual live and recorded resources.
- They run special events bespoke for home educators twelve times a year. These can be linked with exhibitions or Arts Award Discover in a Day.
- They are also trialling loans boxes for use at home.
- Programming is aimed at Key Stage 2 aged children.
- Workshops are often investigative activities about objects with related crafts.
- For children who can't access school they are trialling loans boxes for use at Hospital School, alongside 'explorer bags' for long term patients to use in the museums (located near to the hospitals). These contain sketchbooks, trails and some handling items.
- They include Home Educator activities in their learning newsletter and encourage families to sign up to their mailing list.

Challenges

- Workshops require two members of staff, but cater for half the quantity of children who visit in a school group. This means charges are higher per head (£8 for a workshop, £15 for Arts Award).
- Advertising of specific events can be tricky, but they could be running a workshop for a home educator group every week as they will travel long distances. They have to balance requests for workshops with the rest of their programming.
- There are often families who book but don't attend.
- Reaching isolated families who may struggle in a group environment.

Ambitions

- To cater for older home educated children, beyond Key Stage 2 and also to expand to younger children, thinking about elements of their family learning programme. They aim to help any family who contacts them and wants to take part

Learning Points

- Terminology is important, for example understanding the difference between 'home education' and 'home schooling'
- Limit the number of children and specify the number of adults who can accompany to maximise use of spaces. They don't allow siblings to attend the Home Educator sessions but are happy for parents to stay on site rather than in the session if needed.
- Age isn't an indicator of knowledge and ability – learners may have no background knowledge about a subject, have Special Education Needs or know about the subject at a very deep level.
- Keep activities relaxed and informative and remember that our USP is access to objects

Culture Coventry – Coventry Transport Museum

About — Culture Space Coventry

Lisa Ford

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Background

Independent charitable trust and Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation operating across 3 sites. Have offered school workshops to Home Education groups on request and held ad-hoc event days.

Current Offer

- Recently ran a special event day for home educators at Coventry Transport Museum focused on STEM and including workshops and self-led activities for different ages from early years to 16. Warwick University staff gave their time for free as part of their public engagement remit.
- The event reached well beyond Coventry. It offered good value for money as they are a charging venue and a ticket included 2 free adults.
- Pricing is kept low and structured so that younger children pay less. £10 per child for ages 6-16.
- On average the income is £1,000 per Home Educator day, so they can justify dedicating the site to them.

Challenges

- Catering for secondary level is hard due to depth of subject knowledge, need funding to bring in specialists

Ambitions

- They intend to hold an annual home educator day at their other two sites so that there will be three per year, forming a predictable and sustainable programme.
- Through funding from the Science Museum 'Science in Your World' programme they will be developing block-booked workshops for Home Educated children, targeting specific STEM skill sets and opening up understanding around career pathways in STEM. This will be linked with the Cresta award.
- CPD/knowledge and skills building for parents will also be included to raise confidence in teaching STEM subjects at home.
- There will also be the development of online content and resources for families to access at home.
- The project runs over 2 years, but they intend to build in a sustainable model and long-term resources through the research and development of the programme.
- They want to create opportunities for peer support for families.

Learning Points

- The nature of home education has changed and there are lots of different reasons for home educating and different expectations. Lots of parents are asking for help, more like 'forced home education' than 'elective home education'. Some parents are quite traumatised.
- The environment in museums is a blessing as children can walk away, the school discipline is removed.
- Having a whole day dedicated to home education means that all staff can get involved including Front of House.
- Include staff training in any funded projects so that specialist skills and programming can be embedded. To cover costs going forward they need to use their core staff.
- Consider all members of the family – could match programming with days when there are early years activities for younger siblings. Are there opportunities for CPD and peer support for parents?
- If you can designate meeting or activity spaces in galleries this gives opportunity for informal gatherings by Home Educator groups without having to reserve rooms.

Report compiled April 2024

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