Introduction

As we have now marked the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, there is a high level of public interest in the anniversary period 2014-2018. Many ambitious and significant projects in the arts and heritage sector are supporting this unprecedented level of public interest in the history of, and perspectives on, the First World War.

These stories and the knowledge of the conflict have passed from living memory. This can contribute to history being perceived as distant and disconnected from many individuals especially young people. On closer examination these links are still there through the personal stories represented in objects and museum collections. This presents a significant opportunity for museums and galleries to ensure that their collections are used to develop these stories in meaningful ways for young people, making a stronger connection with those involved, and to understanding the scale and impact of the First World War and its ongoing legacy. Through this approach it is hoped we can also bring a more critical view to understanding conflict in the world today.

The use of anniversaries and centenaries by museums, galleries and heritage sites is an increasingly common device used to focus on key historical events and moments in history: often informing how organisations plan their displays, exhibitions and public programmes.

Working together with artists, young people and collections, National Memory - Local Stories aimed to develop a model that can be used to explore anniversaries and critical moments in history in a way that deepens knowledge and engagement with these milestones and makes them more relevant to young people.

We hope that our experience on this project will not only link to the ongoing events surrounding the First World War centenary commemorations (2014 – 2018) but will be a model applicable to other historical anniversaries for the National Portrait Gallery and the wider museum and gallery sector.

Along with the project website and learning resources, we hope that this Toolkit shares relevant parts of the project journey and provides useful starting points and ideas on how this model of participation practice could be developed by others to deliver deeper engagement with key anniversaries, events and moments in British history for young people.

The National Portrait Gallery is very grateful to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for their support in developing and delivering National Memory – Local Stories.

www.npg.org.uk/nationalmemory

Liz Smith
Director of Participation and Learning
October 2014
The Toolkit

As part of the project activity we have produced this project model and Toolkit.

It is intended that the Toolkit offers support and guidance for educators and practitioners at different stages of their career; those in early stages, those developing and advocating new models of engaged practice with educators, artists and subject experts, and those new to working with artists to interpret collections. It includes guidance on:

- How an imaginative selection of museum objects and subject expertise are central to the project model for participants and artists.
- The ways in which participative practice can deliver deeper engagement with the significance of key anniversaries, landmarks and events in British history for young people.
- How the role of the artist can be clearly defined, developed and supported to be central to the project process and experience for participants.
- How to get started in planning and developing an idea for a similar project within your organisation. This section includes some of the important considerations for maximising successful outcomes for both the participants and the organisation.
- How the experience for some partners enabled them to make additional funding applications which contributed to the legacy and increased impact of the project for some project partners.
The Toolkit

The Toolkit is organised under the following content headings:

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National Memory – Local Stories, was an 18-month creative participation project, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and led by the National Portrait Gallery, London, in partnership with Media 19 and five national and local area museums across the UK.

This project explored how the objects and collections material with a local connection could inspire young people and artists to produce their own creative response and in so doing find a link to the national story working with artists, educators and subject experts to explore themes associated with the selected collection material.

Through this model the aim was to strengthen their connection with the 2014-2018 centenary and test whether this approach could provide a replicable model for future historical anniversaries and events. Partners worked with a wide range of young people many of whom were new to museums and working with collections.
1. Project Summary

The Project

15 Young People
1 Artist
1 Digital Producer
Museum Educators / Curators

Collections with
strong biographical
stories and local
connections

Part One
Project Introduction
Historical enquiry, collection exploration, site visits

Part Two
Research
Young people and artist storyboard, outline creative response

Creative Concept
Creative Output (digital)
Young people and artist produce final creative response (individual or collective)

Public Platform and Access
Integration of creative work within museum collection narratives

National Memory – Local Stories was shaped and directed by a Project Advisory Group and Project Steering Group.
Typically, at each of the partner museums, museum educators and curators enabled the exploration of specially chosen objects, opening up their associated stories to challenge perceptions and make personal connections. By using objects and associated visual images young people were able to develop an understanding of how the First World War affected their own area in terms of people and place.

In deconstructing some existing ideas about the First World War, the National Portrait Gallery and its partner museums aimed to use the collection material to explore the local, biographical and the familiar, as a way to enable the young people to build their own narrative and form individually-created meanings about the First World War in their area.

Through structured discussions and supported research in the early stages, young people were able to share and discuss ideas with others, thus enhancing ideas about community, identity and a sense of place beyond this context into a national and even an international framework.

Professional artists worked alongside the young people as they both developed creative responses to their new understandings, with the artist supporting and encouraging alternative approaches to thinking about the objects and developing the initial ideas and responses using digital media. Through this process, young people developed a concept for their creative response and were supported in producing it digitally.

The early workshop sessions involved historical enquiry using museum collection objects; linking the stories of the locality and the people that lived there. They considered what was important about the First World War and the complex associated narratives so that the young people could understand the issues and challenges of representing the First World War and the diversity of experiences of those involved throughout its duration.

The workshops were usually held in the museum but also included walking tours and visits to other relevant sites. Some sessions also took place at the school or off-site at youth groups to support the retention of participants in the project. Where possible, young people were encouraged to have behind-the-scenes access to collections and develop their own selections and responses. The local narratives were linked with what was happening on a national and international scale and used material from the period sometimes revealing conflicting stories and perspectives.

The second set of workshops focused on collaboration with the artist with a view to developing the concept and ideas for the production of a creative response. Participants used digital technology to support their work, producing storyboards, collages and scrapbooks of their collected images working with input from the artist to produce their own response. The digital art works from the young people and the artists were displayed in each of the five partner museums and on the National Memory – Local Stories microsite. (continued)
1. Project Summary

The Workshops

Through this approach the project was able to offer a variety of different activities, to ensure continuing engagement of participants, with opportunities to ask questions and explore ideas in an open and safe environment. Time was needed to support learning journeys that positively encouraged participants to bring in their own objects and stories from home and thus creating an immersive but structured experience.

I think having this different type of resource... gives you a much more emotional and individual response to the soldiers, one of them went to our school so we can relate directly to them and hearing what they (wrote in) their diaries gives such a personal view of the war.

(Participant, Salisbury)

More can be discovered about the individual projects and the artists’ work on the National Memory – Local Stories microsite.

www.npg.org.uk/nationalmemory

A Project Advisory Group met regularly with the National Portrait Gallery project team from the start of the project until its completion. It supported the directional planning of the project. Members asked strategic questions and reviewed the project’s current activity and future plans. Their advice was fed back to the Project Steering Group and supported the wider learning experience of project partners.
Through working with the objects the young people began to develop narratives about individuals in the war, helping them make personal connections: They were encouraged to ask questions, share their own opinions, trying on the clothing the men would have worn as well as bringing things in from home to share with others.

(Teacher Bishop Wordsworth School)

Central to the project has been the opportunity for the young people to work closely with museum objects. In choosing the objects to work with, museum staff and volunteers have often used items relating to one person, including diaries with maps and illustrations, letters, postcards and photographs, but also more generic material such as period clothing, trench art and memorial plaques.

Success relied on the context and interpretation of these objects being provided by museum staff and volunteers and the opportunity for some behind-the-scenes access to collection material not on display.

By providing this understanding of the objects, museum staff and volunteers were able to offer nuanced and alternative viewpoints on the First World War that extended beyond simplistic interpretations of empathy, good and bad, right and wrong and the value judgements often present when working with historical events. This input helped develop a deeper understanding of the period and those involved.

Reflection on our own practice suggests key elements to think about are:

- The value of going beyond the obvious collection objects to use material that extends the history into a political or cultural context e.g. a picture of an individual or family response as a starting point, or a theme developed with the artist and/ or participants from which a selection can be made. Artists and participants can then work with curators and others to develop exploratory questions through which contextual material can be explored.

For example, at Redbridge Museum newspapers and journals from the period were used to provide a context for the journey Cyril Page (the young man from Wanstead the participants were studying) took before leaving for The Front.

- Behind-the-scenes access in the museums added a sense of drama and privilege for all participants.

- Providing opportunities for participants to access specialist knowledge led to lots of creative ideas. A way of documenting this process can be useful and form a rich part of the storytelling process in the project.

When working with objects it is worth considering the following questions:

- Is there additional ephemeral or archival material that could provide further context and ideas?

- Is there opportunity to use visual material in different ways including from an art historical, biographical or a cultural perspective? (continued)
2. Developing The Project

Working with Objects

- Do participants have material that they would like to bring to the discussion and process as a way of unlocking personal connections, developing critical engagement?

- Are there any hidden histories or themes that can be more readily approached through working with the artist to arrive at a new interpretation for them?

At National Museums Scotland, trips were made to the National War Museum and the Museum of Flight, which included trying on a flight jacket:

‘making students feel that they were standing in the shoes of individuals from the past.’

(Project Manager)

National Museums Northern Ireland chose to use First World War posters and a diary belonging to a local young man, George Hackney. The posters enabled the discussion of how information shifted over time as recruitment became more difficult. The diaries told a contrasting story about the experiences of being at war, which were less positive than the impression given by the early recruitment posters. The objects provided links to personal stories.

The Rifles (Berkshire and Wiltshire) Museum provided opportunities for the young people to choose objects from the collection store themselves. The participants used images of their chosen objects in their own creative work. A teacher commented on the opportunity to handle objects:

‘having the ability to, touch it, hold it, move it around and photograph it….made the experience much more … alive for the students. It’s been really interesting to watch them being inspired and engaged by historical objects.’

(Teacher, Avon Valley College)

The importance of the museum objects therefore is to provide a stimulating starting point for participants. They should enable participants to ask questions, and through guidance and discussion with experts and educators, see, empathise and consider different viewpoints. In-depth exploration of the stories behind the objects, and associated images can inspire creative responses but we found that it is useful to reflect on:

- How the objects selected determine the extent to which you can develop personal and local narratives. Portraits provided a powerful link to a person’s own ephemera that might include diaries, letters and postcards and also contextual items such as recruitment posters and newspapers.

- How a rich variety of objects enables the expansion of themes and concepts with the artist and participants.

- An opportunity to work with collection material that is not on display really extends engagement, thereby providing a special opportunity for the young people.

- How storytelling with object exploration inspires participants’ creative response. Providing a context for the objects supports challenging ideas, asking questions and stimulates reflection.
2. Developing The Project

Working with Young People

I actually connected with the stuff in the museum and just thinking about our experiences now that you could tie in to the emotions that people would be feeling back then and how similar they actually were.

(Participant, Cardiff)

Despite the progress that museums and heritage sites have made in broadening their audiences young people often remain a group that it is difficult to engage. They often need to develop their own point of connection to want to visit. The appropriate balance of focused and flexibility activity for the sessions was crucial. The working style of the artist and workshop leader impacted on the ability of the participants to engage, respond and create. These aspects are a crucial part of project planning and practice.

Who to work with?
Careful consideration of which young people to work with can really improve the impact of the project.

- Is there an audience who would benefit from closer engagement with the subject matter and process?
- How will the relevance of the project idea be expressed and shared to encourage participation and commitment?
- Consider whether you wish to work with an organisation or group e.g. schools, youth group or after school club to develop the project or whether you wish to work with a self-selecting group.
- Consider how committed the group may be and the most appropriate way to communicate the museum’s expectation in terms of involvement and commitment.
- Are there practical considerations on timing, budgeting and resources that need to inform which groups can be engaged successfully to participate in the project activity?
- How could the selection of the participants (based on starting points and engagement levels, gender, age, socio-economic background) inform and impact on wider organisational practice and audience development activity?

One of the two participating schools in Salisbury branch of National Memory – Local Stories had a connection to the featured museum collection objects; the soldiers who wrote the First World War diaries went to their school. The other school had a large proportion of military service families in the group and wider school. For them the subject matter and experience of life in a service family and living overseas made powerful connections with the local and international stories explored in the project.

National Museums Scotland selected a particular school to work with to ensure the project went ahead within the planned timeframe and a structure. It operated successfully given the constraints on resources and staff availability. (continued)
Working with Young People

For Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales a strategic priority was to test participatory practice through working with young people in the development of a new Youth Forum. Participation in National Memory – Local Stories was one of the first experiences of the newly formed Youth Forum.

National Museums Northern Ireland wanted to work with a hard to reach community in order to explore the complexities of the history of the First World War for Northern Ireland:

I think to be inspired you’ve got to find some personal connection, or something that just interests you; something that you can grab hold of, work with and develop as an idea or dig into and uncover new thoughts, new experiences and new information about what happened all that time ago.

(Media 19)

Finding an audience group and building a partnership

Places to try could include local schools, local arts networks, local museums, galleries and education links or the Arts Council Bridge organisation for your area. A call for participation through local youth networks and youth agencies can be effective in finding other new organisations.

Finding the right participants can take much more time than one might expect. Once a potential group has been found it is important to test out and establish a shared understanding and expectation of the group and the project. A proactive and engaged teacher/group leader or partnership coordinator is often key to an effective project and maintaining engagement throughout.
2. Developing The Project

Working with Artists

Because they were working alongside each other, there was an element of cross fertilisation of ideas, with the artist and young people being exposed to the same objects and experiences in the Museum. For example, at The Rifles (Berkshire and Wiltshire) Museum a participant spoke about the fact that the artist was involved with textiles and sewing; this gave him an idea for his own creative work, of using red thread, red like blood, to try to sew a broken ration biscuit back together. He said this represented an attempt to put the pieces of the soldier’s life back together.

(Project Manager, National Memory - Local Stories)

Why work with artists?

When choosing to work with an artist on a participatory project with young people, finding the right artist is key.

In the best examples their contribution will enable a creative experience for participants. The involvement of an artist in this way enables different perspectives to be explored and creative engagement to take place.

Artists connect with the history in new ways and often develop conceptual responses that are provocative, reflective, innovative and challenging. They offer young people a new framework for thinking and creating. Through this process, young people are able to develop an idea, either collaboratively or individually, and gain new skills as part of the process.

In National Memory - Local Stories the artists were able to challenge ideas, share techniques and extend practice by working closely with the groups.

Whilst choosing an artist and establishing their model of engagement it is worth considering the following:

- Are you clear on why you wish to use an artist and if so how you envisage their role in the project and with participants?
- Has the artist worked in a cultural institution or with objects and heritage previously?
- Do you expect them to make new work as part of their involvement with the project? If so is the budget appropriate and how will this work be displayed and what status will it have in relation to participants work?
- Do you envisage them responding to participant experiences in their own practice? Are expectations clear on both sides? Have they worked with young people before?
- What further ways are there to strengthen the project through the involvement of the artist. This could include selecting the objects with participants, undertaking a trip to their studio, undertaking a site visit/field trip to a relevant location together?

(continued)
Working with Artists

- Is there material that would be useful for the artist to support their storytelling and creative process beyond collections access and expertise? How can the activity for young people be similarly supported? Do they need additional tools such as sketchbooks and cameras to support the process?

- Is the artist flexible in developing their concept for the project and willing to develop a model where the inspiration of the participants informs their selection of objects, practice and response to the collection material?

- Who needs to be involved in developing the brief for and the appointment of the artist? Are there opportunities for extending this conversation internally with curatorial/digital/learning team staff, project partners to ensure that their involvement is championed?

Finding an artist

Artists for this project were identified via research and advertising through agencies such as Arts Council England’s Arts Jobs, regional agencies such as Creative Scotland, and national outlets such as Group for Education in Museums (GEM) and Engage websites. Local artists might also be contacted through independent arts organisations and galleries.

An artist brief was developed and circulated to a long list of prospective artists. This helped guide the writing of artists’ proposals before interviews were undertaken. It included:

- context for the project
- the artist’s role and approach
- information on the young people/participant group
- required creative output
- schedule
- management structure
- budget
- how to submit an expression of interest

In developing an artist brief and issuing a contract it is important to be thorough and seek support from others with experience if possible.

Participating museums found it useful for the chosen artist to have some interest in interpreting themes such as family, identity and memory and a creative interest in working with material culture, collections and heritage. In some cases the strength of connection and their own family history already informed their own practice. The involvement of the artist and interest in these starting points enabled the artist to explore further the complexities of the history and help the young people to reach a more nuanced understanding.

It is also important to remember that the project artist needs not only to be accomplished creatively but also have relevant experience of working with young people; working alongside them and collaborating throughout the creative process, from concept to final result. (continued)
2. Developing The Project

Working with Artists

At Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, the young people themselves interviewed the artist prior to his appointment, providing a empowering experience.

_I was there for the interview and I knew from the answer to the first question that he was going to be an amazing artist and he knew how to work with young people. He wasn’t just thinking about his art work. He knew we needed to do what young people wanted to do, not just his vision and he would adjust to young people’s views very easily._

(Participant, Cardiff)

At National Museums Northern Ireland, the artist’s ability to connect with the young people was particularly successful.

_The interaction between the artist and the young people has been fantastic. It gives the young people a really good insight into the practice of an artist, how they move through idea, conception and realization of work._

(New Lodge Arts, Community Organisation, Northern Ireland)

More can be discovered about the individual projects and the artists’ work on the National Memory – Local Stories microsite [here](#).
3. Project Leadership and Planning

Planning

The museum, (project team) and young people should all have a role in setting the direction for the creative work from the outset.

(Evaluation Report)

Effective project development requires clarity of vision and good planning. It can take a great deal of time and should be collaborative, involving discussion with all the key stakeholders, including museum staff (curatorial and learning specialists) and partner organisation representatives such as teachers, youth workers, and the project artist.

A project team that has a shared understanding of the project’s aims and objectives has a stronger starting point. A strong vision with shared aims and objectives will support differing levels of skills and experience. It also supports the effective management of expectations and differences of opinion.

We found that at the planning stage we needed to consider:

- The overall concept for the proposed project, its aims and objectives. Does this meet the expectations and needs of all involved? Is everyone clear on what this means in practice?

- Whether as the project leader you are clear about how this project will fit amongst the range of activities for which you are responsible. How open to change and/or failure are you and your organisation in this process? How do these considerations need to inform the audience group with whom you choose to work?

- Is the project to be representative of ongoing work, developmental, or experimental? It is important to discuss with all those involved the level of risk and its fit with any wider strategic priorities (departmental and organisational).

- How will the project timetable need to develop? What is the right length of time for the project? Can all those involved commit to this timeframe? Can the project structure and schedule reflect and adapt to the needs of participants to ensure their engagement and attendance?

- How will the project be managed when underway? Agree how often partner meetings will be timetabled. What other communication will be needed to maintain engagement?

- Developing ways in which participants as well as organisations can increase their sense of engagement. This takes time, especially those to be built with the young people. A creative pre-project session can offer participants the chance to get to know each other and find out more about the project. (continued)
3. Project Leadership and Planning

Planning

• Keeping communication methods relevant and well managed e.g. meetings being well chaired and minutes issued promptly, providing regular opportunities for reflective practice and project learning, reporting internally on project progress to maintain visibility and support.

• Agreeing to a project evaluation plan from the start. What type of evaluation will be put in place and when will it start? Who will be undertaking it?

• Issuing Partnership Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). A statement of engagement on how relationships will be managed helps underpin the project plan. These are effective tools to support resource and budget management.

• Consider establishing a Project Advisory Group with a cross-section of skills and experience. This Group can provide valuable ideas and feedback, providing an useful sounding board and counterpoint to test ideas and developments as part of an overall part of project management.
Building a Team

In looking for relevant skills and expertise on a digital project it is worth considering an initial in-house skills audit and planning the roles and responsibilities carefully:

- Do you have an educator or volunteer experienced in working with young people or are there local youth workers available as part of your partnership?

- Consider key skills and expertise of partners to complement those already held by staff and volunteers.

- Appoint an artist that has a range of skills which may include photography, film making and the use of digital media as well as an ability to work with young people.

- If the project involves digital activity beyond current experience. Are there in-house skills in photography or film? Can the partner organisations contribute this expertise?

- Is there enough equipment available at the museum for all the participants – for example cameras or tablets? If not, the school or youth group may be able to help here.

- Software is also an important element to consider. Free Apps are a cheaper and easier to use tool for content capture and editing.

Working with a youth arts organisation can mean that project planning, equipment and artistic skills are available from one organisation.

Accredited approaches such as Arts Mark and Arts Award may be valuable to participants but would require fuller investigation. Participants needs should shape the planned approach.

The challenge for success:

*Centres around how to achieve excellent collaborative practice between curators, historians, volunteers and artists working together to explore historical anniversaries through stories in the collections. Working together effectively requires the team to develop a clear brief, plan and to map out collections research from the start of the project.*

*(Director Participation and Learning, National Portrait Gallery)*
Evaluation was an integral element of National Memory - Local Stories. It aimed to explore the critical factors for success with the project model and provided the opportunity to reflect on lessons learned. Good evaluation is dependent on clear measurable objectives being established at the beginning of the project. It then uses a systematic process of collecting, and recording feedback and other data on the characteristics, activities and outcomes of a project.

National Museums Northern Ireland have adopted the feedback from participants in their activity.

We’ll be listening very carefully to their feedback and to what they have gained from the experience, and it will in turn inform how we go forward and how we develop our approaches and refine our approaches around interpretation and engagement.

(Curator, National Museums Northern Ireland)

Subsequent analysis can provide evidence to reflect on current practice and inform decisions for future activity and policy.

The evaluation of National Memory - Local Stories has been used to help inform this Toolkit.

As we were setting up the project we found it was useful to:

- Be clear about the expectations of the evaluation with partner organisations and participants.
- Ensure appropriate methods were discussed as part of the project set up and linked not only to shared requirements but also any funding body requirements.
- Include feedback from surveys, comments books/cards, vox pops, interviews, and focus groups, and allow sufficient time for analysis post collection. The methods used need to account for participants’ needs and learning styles to include written, verbal, visual and collaborative approaches.
- Data needs to be collected from all those involved; staff, partners, artists and other stakeholders and most importantly the participants themselves. Different stakeholders may need different approaches to capture their feedback and assess impact.
- Remember evaluation needs to be SMART: Specific, Measurable (not just in quantitative terms but also in using qualitative evidence effectively), Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. The approach and methods chosen needed to be considered within this context.
- It is useful to collect people’s thoughts at the beginning, during and at the end of the project to demonstrate change through a project.
- When analysing qualitative data it is necessary to look for a commonality across the responses. Some trends may also help with how to improve practice in the future - be open to constructive criticism. (continued)
Evaluation

- An evaluation framework/methodology provides the opportunity to consider how successful the project had been. Many organisations pay specialists to undertake evaluation as it can be complex, and requires specific skills. However, if funding is not available to pay for an evaluator it is important to ‘appoint’ a member of the team with organising the evaluation.

Prioritising time for a member of the team to do this is often very difficult and being objective can be more challenging. To counteract this make sure as much data as possible is collected from all viewpoints, including the participants and those involved in running the sessions.

**Because National Memory – Local Stories is an experiment, it provides an opportunity to try things out, some approaches may be more successful than others. It is important that the project is evaluating its activities and learning from this.**

(Member of Advisory Group)
4. Measuring Success

Project Activity Model

All the regional projects were slightly different in approach and developed a structure that responded to the needs of the participants and the artist. This influenced the level of engagement by participants and as a consequence the impact of the projects.

The evaluation report points to a number of critical factors for the success of the National Memory – Local Stories project. These include:

- Working with objects with multiple narratives, ones that tell stories and raise questions
- Accessing the specialist knowledge of curators, educators and volunteers to support the development of associated knowledge and historical context.
- Ensuring that the artist and/or creative facilitator participates fully in all the different stages of the project, and is able to bring their passion and skills as part of an integrated experience for young people.
- Having the technical expertise needed on the project team to support the creative process and produce, edit and facilitate the production of the participants’ creative responses.
- Having an agreed and committed group leader to support and co-ordinate the participants involvement.
- Developing a process that results in a creative output that can be shared with a wider audience and adds value for the participants.

In addition this model ensures quality of the process and outcomes through a number of success factors including:

- Creating the opportunity for all those involved in the project to have a role in setting the direction of the creative work.
- Providing stimulating and relevant material as background to the historical events, engages young people in the period, its values and the perspectives of those involved.
- Suggesting concepts or themes provides different ways to explore the collection objects. In the case of this project themes such as the bittersweet nature of conflict, identity and the comparison between propaganda and reality provided starting points for ideas and research through portraits and wider collection material.
- Using a range of high quality visual images linked to the participant interests.
- Allowing time for the creative concept to be developed and completed whilst planning simultaneously the format of the work to be produced to inform options for displaying the final work.
5. Legacy

Project Legacy

Displays at each of the partner museums provided an opportunity for participants and the commissioned artist to have their creative work presented publicly, side-by-side. These displays often connected with other events and exhibitions associated with the First World War Centenary. The most effective of the project displays connected the creative work of the young people and the artist and the collection objects that were featured in the workshops.

A number of the participating museums have already developed new projects to continue working with the young people. Others have used the project to help inform future practice.

We’re simultaneously learning and developing a much better understanding of how we should now be thinking about presenting and interpreting the First World War in ways that are meaningful and relevant to very important target audiences for the museum.

(Curator, National Museums Northern Ireland)

The main thing that this project has done is actually inspire our staff to build a relationship with the Redbridge Museum so that some of the work that we have done on this project will now take place for all of our Year 9 students next year.

(Teacher, Wanstead High School)

When developing a similar project it is important to consider the longer term impact and how this relates to the project’s aims, objectives and legacy:

- **The legacy for the participants.**
  What can they take away in terms of outputs, skills, knowledge and a desire to explore further? Could this contribute to further engagement with the museum, build their portfolios and connect with curriculum studies.

- **The legacy for wider audiences.**
  How might work with other young people or wider audiences be altered or developed as a result of the project? How may the display of this work enrich planned permanent and temporary displays?

- **The legacy for the museum.**
  What will happen in the short term after the display finishes? In the longer term how will the increased skills and knowledge base be utilised and how can they be built into other projects and staff development? What opportunities exist or can be created to share the experience and learning from the project within the museum?

The directional planning of the project was supported throughout by the Project Advisory Group. As well as enabling the project model to be discussed and reviewed, the group brought perspectives on the potential legacy of the project. They encouraged the project team to consider the longer term impact and legacy of activity, outputs and practice for different audiences and stakeholders. They also assisted in ideas and networks for advocacy to support the dissemination of the project and its learning resources between 2014-2018.
5. Legacy

Thinking About Legacy in Planning

The potential legacy of the project was considered at an early stage of the project planning. The aims for the longer term were based on our thoughts about:

- How might the participant group be involved in future museum work – perhaps through the development of a youth panel or do you want to work with other young people to extend your reach?

- How might new contacts be maintained? What can the museum offer partners and participants? Considering the best way to keep communication going is important. As a result some of the artists who worked on the National Memory - Local Stories are already involved in other quite different projects with the partner museums.

- Will legacy include initiating work with a new audience, perhaps other young people or can you see the project approach working with other types of audiences?

- How could any resulting resources or creative outputs be used in the future? For example collection objects from the five National Memory - Local Stories partner museums and the National Portrait Gallery have been featured in a Learning Resource, which is accessible on the microsite.

- Will the project inform future museum approaches to participation, learning and audience development? What models for advocacy internally and externally are required as part of the project to support and prepare for this?
Redbridge Museum

Redbridge Museum is a local history museum in Ilford. The museum explores the different people, places and events which are part of the history of Redbridge and works in close collaboration with libraries across the borough.

Being a partner of National Memory – Local Stories was very much part of the Museum’s overarching aims. The workshop participants were history and art students from Wanstead High School. Redbridge Museum wished to work with the school given their diverse intake of students and specialist arts status.

The school is within walking distance of Wanstead High street which has a local war memorial and the archival collection material selected linked to a local Wanstead boy who left to fight in the First World War. Staff from the National Portrait Gallery worked with museum staff and artist Victoria Lucas to run the workshops.

The first sessions focused on working with the Museum objects relating to the wartime experience of Wanstead resident Private Cyril Page.

The Page collection objects include papers, photos and the death notice sent to his family. The participants worked with photographs and documents from the Redbridge Museum’s collection, to piece together the story of Private Page.

The Collection also includes a Kodak Vest Pocket camera, which is similar to the type of camera that soldiers used at the Front. The artist, Victoria was able to explain to the participants how this non-digital camera worked.

The participants also studied maps and photos to help them develop a sense of what Wanstead was like at that time. At the end of the first workshop session the participants and the artist used evidence from the Museum’s collections to develop a timeline of Private Page’s life.

A walk around Wanstead with a local historian allowed the participants and the artist to look for clues about what the area was like in Private Page’s time. They took photographs using digital cameras of what they discovered. The images were transferred to iPads by one of the project workers before the following session.

Scans of the collection objects were also available on the iPads ready to be used by the students, as they explored collage techniques to create imagery for their film. Participants selected images from the scans and photographs to create digital collages.

Downloadable apps such as, Juxtaposer and Green Screen, worked well as they was simple to learn and intuitive to use.

Many of the students didn’t have previous experience using digital cameras and iPads and the skills that they used in the workshops in terms of the different (photo editing) programmes … I think are very, very valuable.

(Teacher, Wanstead High School)

Some students preferred working with printed photographs from scans, scissors and glue and so a low-tech version of collage composition was also possible. The results were then scanned into digital format which were incorporated into the student’s film. The film was included in the exhibition on the First World War at Redbridge Museum. (continued)
Redbridge Museum

The participants also visited the National Portrait Gallery to study painted and photographic portraits, including those of important military leaders. The students undertook research in the Gallery’s Heinz Archive and Library, where they examined First World War copies of the *Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic* magazine from the period.

During a First World War themed walk in the area around the Gallery, students were able to reflect on the journey Private Page was likely to have taken when he left for France from Charing Cross station.

The students also learned about the history of the National Portrait Gallery during the war. In looking at the lives of individuals from the era pictured in the Gallery’s collections (such as Edith Cavell, Emmeline Pankhurst, Isaac Rosenberg) students were able to reflect on the wider, national perspective:

*I thought the most interesting thing was looking through the archives because I was able to see the type of magazines that was back then that was about the World War and how people were being influenced to join.*

(Participant)

Back at Wanstead High School, participants were able to consider their research in terms of three themes linked to Cyril Page: *Before the War*, *During the War*, and *Commemoration*. Students developed their own storyboards and narratives for the shared film they were producing.

Green screen technology was used to enable students to present their own responses to the collection objects that were layered and edited into the final piece. The artist was integral in this activity, providing creative guidance and support on the production of the student’s film.

*I found it a lot more motivating knowing that we were helped by a professional artist because it allowed us to understand different roles in productions. It was very interesting knowing that silent movies can be so interesting and influential when you’re watching them.*

(Participant)

Watch a video about the *National Memory – Local Stories* workshops at Redbridge Museum [here](#).
National Museums Northern Ireland

National Museums Northern Ireland already had experience of carrying out participative projects and chose to work with New Lodge Arts, a community organisation that has worked with young people in North Belfast for many years. They recruited the participants from young people already known to them. Ten 13-16-year-olds worked with artist, Ursula Burke.

The sessions took place on six days in an intensive two-week programme during the summer holidays (and included) an introduction to the museum, its collections (and how to handle and work with them) and the First World War, exploring feelings and conflicting thoughts. A walk around the area highlighted some of the buildings that still exist. They brought in special objects and stories from home to stimulate discussion and art work.

The third session considered imagery, propaganda and used local stories to produce a piece of work – image and text about a local story and their emotional response to it. The following workshop used museum collections to develop thoughts, reactions within project themes, before in the last sessions developing a final piece of work.

The project has been part of an extensive programme of activity linked to Ireland 100 years ago. The legacy of this project has been particularly successful with the results influencing the Museum’s new History Galleries, including the curator setting aside objects for handling, something new for them. A new engagement post has also been created.

Further workshops will be undertaken with the artist and New Lodge Arts has been keen to continue their work with the museum; bringing younger visitors to the Museum, and funding is being sort to work together in the future.

We are very interested in extending the programme, so for instance we have the group who are heading off to Dublin on Thursday to do an overnight residential with a local historian to take their learning about history and how it fits into the Irish context further. For us it’s very much about how participants can have a wealth of learning experiences in different mediums with different contexts and different things.

(Head of Arts and Youth Development, Ashton Community Trust and New Lodge Arts)

Watch a video about National Museums Northern Ireland collection objects featured in the workshops here.

1. George Hackney’s diary, National Museums Northern Ireland
2. Participants, Belfast
3. Jigsaw puzzle (detail) © National Museums Northern Ireland
Project Learning Resources

As part of this project, the National Portrait Gallery has developed a new First World War learning resource, to be used by students, teachers, and the general public.

Collection objects from the five National Memory - Local Stories partner museums and the National Portrait Gallery are featured in the context of four themes that relate to the First World War, as it has been explored in the project’s workshops at the partner museums.

The themes represent broad ideas that can be explored from different local perspectives via objects from project partner museums. The themes are explored from a national perspective via objects from the collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

The themes are:

1. Messages and Meanings: Words of War explores the private evidence of letters and cards, diaries, memoirs and poems - as well as the messages conveyed by official documents such as army forms, government propaganda and recruiting posters.

2. Picturing Conflict: The Arts of War offers examples of work produced by amateurs as well as professionals - paintings, drawings, posters, and several kinds of photographs. The user can compare these varied representations of the war and find out about the different contexts in which they were produced.

3. Dirt and Danger, Tragedy and Glory: Enduring the War presents the personal experiences of some of those who endured the war – soldiers, airmen and sailors, nurses, doctors and artists. Many were extremely young at the time; many did not survive; no one was unchanged by their experiences.

4. Keep the Home Fires Burning: At Home and at War explores the wide-ranging impacts of the war on British society, agriculture, trade and industry. It looks at the new roles created for women in the workplace; and the many social changes and opportunities - as well as the hardships and deep suffering – caused by the war.

For each object:

- A written commentary provides links to a range of different contextual historical material from partner collections,
- Enquiry questions help to interrogate and explore the focus collection using critical thinking and evaluation,
- Suggested further activities supported extended activity and research projects.

The resource also provides exemplary material for local history enquiry, bringing to attention the fundamental distinction between personal/private and public/shared experiences and accounts of the First World War.

The resource highlights the intersections of local/regional stories with national and international narratives of the war, demonstrating how the First World War has impacted everyone’s lives in the UK and worldwide. The resource also considers why it is important to remember and understand the First World War. Find out more at the Learning Resource here.

Pedagogy and Practice

The approach taken in the workshop programme was shaped by current thinking about learning and enquiry, where academic thinking (www.teachinquiry.com) suggests a number of key elements for successful enquiry.

These areas are as follows:

1. Evidence through objects and consultation with experts - present throughout the National Memory - Local Stories project where opportunities for in-depth engagement with the objects and their contexts as at Redbridge Museum. We looked at Cyril Page’s documents, a soldier in the First World War, who lived in Wanstead. The (students) responded to a series of objects, they pieced it all together, they start to make sense of it as a timeline and they responded to it in a very kind of emotive way. (Artist, Redbridge Museum)

2. Multiple viewpoints critical to historical enquiry and providing opportunity for reflection - enabled student to take their thinking beyond empathy to consider multiple perspectives. The approach provided the opportunity for young people to go beyond empathy into an interrogation of the history, its national impact and starting to open the perspectives presented by the collection in a challenging way that required deeper creative engagement with the issues and emotions it aroused. (Director of Participation and Learning, National Portrait Gallery)

(continued)
Pedagogy and Practice

3. Interaction with others through collective enquiry develops constructivist learning - learners where able to ask questions, to challenge and reflect. In the sessions participants were, for example, able to develop a richer understanding by talking through complex issues.

   There was one group talking about the difference between the soldiers who were sent to war and had no choice and the difference in the opinion – (including) Rosenberg a pacifist and how he really didn’t want to be there but was doing it for his family and the students captured it in a really profound way.

   (Artist, Redbridge Museum)

4. Communicate their learning - the project enabled communication not only through discursive enquiry but also through the creative output and also via the interviews with participants about their learning experience.

   Participants are able to form their own opinion and to express their opinions and to hopefully take away something which has a relevance to their lives today.

   (Curator, National Museums Northern Ireland)

5. Reflect on connections to their own lives - the links to the local area and to young people from the past allowed participants to make profound personal links.

   I felt my experience at the Redbridge Museum was quite personal and it made me think about what was around me and to find out what my area was like.

   (Participant)

We hope that this Toolkit is helpful and relevant for colleagues working in organisations of various sizes with different types of collections.

In considering our experiences we hope it inspires you to develop your own project and professional practice.
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