

Changing Role of Front of House Services

The North West Federation hosted a third day exploring issues relating to Front of House services and staff. All three days have been oversubscribed and proved extremely popular and this was no exception.

The Theme of the day was the importance of empowering Visitor services staff to use their knowledge to influence the development of the service.

Speakers included: Joanne Irvine from Bolton Museum at present on a secondment working for the North West Hub, Bernadette Lynch Deputy Director of Access, Learning and Interpretation and Pete Brown Head of Learning and Interpretation both from Manchester Museum, Emma Varnam the Head of Service at Tameside Museum, Liz Lees from Arts Train and staff from Dove Cottage and the Wordsworth Museum Centre for British Romanticism.

Throughout the day the speakers talked about the vital role Visitor Service staff play within the museum service and how their knowledge particularly about the visitors is often overlooked. The introduction of Inspiring Learning for All has become a catalyst for change within museums and this includes involving all staff in the process. Manchester Museum are planning exciting and innovative training and development of their Front of House team and working with the staff themselves to develop the role and the standards for the service.

In the afternoon all delegates were involved in workshops looking at what they felt were the roles and responsibilities of Visitor services staff in the past, present and future. The result from the day are included in this report. Career development and progression through the service was discussed in detail and the need for credible qualifications. Staff from Dove Cottage discussed the merits of Cultural NVQ's for volunteers.

The day was a success and the delegates shared their ideas and knowledge. It was agreed that a network would be set up to begin to bring together Visitor Services staff to share their skills and knowledge in the future. If anyone is interested in joining a Visitor services network or have ideas for future Front of House sessions please send your details to Joanne Irvine email:

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