



Adult Basic Skills

101 Things that Museums, Libraries and Archives Can Do!

1. Make contact with local Basic Skills Services/Adult Education providers.
2. Display information about national strategies/campaigns - for example the 'Get On' campaign, developed by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit. (For free information and promotional materials contact the Get On campaign office: 020 75443130 or visit the website: www.dfes.gov.uk/get-on)
3. Raise staff awareness of the Government strategy 'Skills for Life' which recognises that, 'public libraries, as a preferred place of learning for many adults, have a crucial role, particularly in support of those learning independently or online.'
4. Offer an information and referral service to other agencies that may be able to help learners/potential learners.
5. Offer a wide range of local information and publicity.
6. Develop projects or run courses in partnership with local Basic Skills Services/FE Colleges/Adult Education providers.
7. When developing new projects or initiatives target what adult learners actually require and want, rather than simply assuming - involve them in the planning process.
8. Recognise that for some people with basic skills needs a library, museum or archive might not be the most natural or comfortable place when they first visit.
9. Demonstrate that museums and libraries are informal, friendly and fun places to be - breaking down the barriers of perception.

10. Provide resources that are suitable for the reading habits of basic skills learners - this will give them greater choice in what is available, leading to them having more pleasure and confidence in what they read.
11. Offer a simplified library joining pack.
12. Libraries, museums and archives might have more initial success in attracting basic skills learners if they appeal to groups rather than individuals.
13. Museums and galleries have rich and diverse collections/resources, use them to motivate learning and build the confidence of adult learners.
14. Do you have a room or space available within your venue that could be offered to a tutor for a basic skills class?
15. If you are holding a course in a library it is an ideal opportunity to get learners to join and help them find resources that interest them.
16. Following courses or activities within a library encourage participants to stay and select books to take home, or access other facilities that are available. Library staff could be on hand to help with recommendations.
17. Provide a different kind of learning experience - informal learners can leave at the end of a visit having learnt something because their experience was engaging and fun.
18. What libraries, museums and archives can offer by way of support depends largely on what else is available locally, and linking in to it. By liaising with other organisations the sector can ensure that it plays a part - whether it is through providing a venue, referral, resources, or on a thematic basis.
19. Run activities/programmes to tie in with national events such as Adult Learners' Week, Sign Up Now Week, National Storytelling Week, and Family Learning Weekend.

20. One way to get learners in is by linking locally with schools and family literacy groups. There are many examples throughout the country where parents are keen to be involved in activities that will help them support their children's development.
21. Family Literacy Groups - provide introductory tours of the library, information on visiting and borrowing, or themed events around books.
22. Local FE Colleges and Adult/Community Education providers are likely to respond positively to offers of new venues and opportunities to widen participation.
23. The Local Learning and Skills Councils each have a Basic Skills Co-ordinator who you can make contact with. (If you are not sure who this is, your local Learning Partnership or LSC will be able to put you in touch) They will be able to advise you about other activity in your area, so that you are able to link into other initiatives or avoid duplication - they can also advise on the wards that could benefit most from your activities.
24. 'Make a Book' and 'Storysack' projects have been well-documented and successful activities.
25. Develop reminiscence or oral history groups - use collections, local studies resources, photographs and everyday objects. (Possibly historical or from particular cultures/faiths)
26. Target community groups with basic skills needs who may have been excluded or excluded themselves - this could include ESOL learners, refugees, asylum seekers or travellers.
27. By working closely with tutors and learners, you will be able to base your library bookstock on actual needs rather than perceived. ICT facilities could then be used to support what is on offer.
28. Use the knowledge, skills, enthusiasm and expertise that members of staff already possess.

29. Use the wide experience that members of staff have of working with all sections of the community, from young families and children, to older learners and asylum seekers.
30. Museums, libraries and archives can provide diverse locations within communities for learning to take place - in city centres, towns, suburban areas, rural communities, and with mobile branches, good outreach services and services for the housebound.
31. Museums, libraries and archives can provide a wide-range of accessible resources, from books and other literature, to historic collections, contemporary art and ICT facilities - most of which can be accessed free of charge.
32. Use the current interest in local heritage, family history, culture and ICT to attract adult learners.
33. Participants enjoy and appreciate the learning activities provided at venues, which offer a relaxed and informal atmosphere and can engage them interactively in the learning process.
34. Provide new and imaginative opportunities that encourage adults to learn and develop fresh skills.
35. Progression is not a prime motivator for taking part in activities and courses - personal gains in skills, knowledge, confidence and social opportunities are more significant and many people are attracted by provision that does not require too great a time commitment.
36. Adult learners are often interested in practical and workshop-based activities with structure and support. Methods can include discussion, observation and other interactive forms.
37. Learning through hands-on activities gives participants the satisfaction of producing/doing something for themselves.
38. Tutors are often critically important to the success of activities - use their expertise.

39. Consult learners about the types of activity undertaken and the selection of topics and locations.
40. Allowing the learners' ownership of the project and the learning process means that they feel able to contribute to their own courses, to ask questions when they do not understand and to give constructive advice on improving any aspect of the service and delivery.
41. Try to offer a range of learning activities - including taster workshops, short courses and one-off events.
42. Taster sessions and one-day workshops can provide a brief introduction to topics without requiring any long-term commitment from participants.
43. Try to offer a range of subject areas - including art appreciation, creative arts and design, collecting and collections, culture and heritage, local history, photography, science and literature.
44. Think about the location in which learning activities take place within the museum or gallery:
- General ambience can encourage and inspire learning
 - Using displays of artefacts and pictures that are directly relevant to the nature of the activities can provide excellent stimulus
45. Offer flexibility and choice.
46. Provide activities that are related to learners' lives and the history/culture of their communities.
47. Provide access to exhibitions and displays that can support the learning process.
48. Museums, galleries, libraries and archives are more likely to maximise the part they can play in widening access to learning, if they identify and draw on their own distinctive contribution to attracting and engaging adults in learning activities.

49. Try to offer provision that is free to participants and if possible organise transport for groups of people who might not be able to take up learning opportunities otherwise.
50. Use tutors, and members of staff, who are supportive and who have the knowledge, skills and understanding to inspire people to learn.
51. Targeting specific interest groups and community organisations can help providers in the arts and cultural sectors to extend their reach to additional users.
52. Building partnerships with other local learning providers can offer access to additional expertise, and progression opportunities for learners.
53. Libraries are able to adapt to local circumstance. This helps to address the needs of different learners and helps libraries to think about different resources offered to learners and more specific targeting.
54. Libraries, museums and archives are more dispersed than FE colleges and other adult education providers - this unique placing means that they have the potential to reach many more people than traditional education institutions.
55. Libraries could act as a gateway between formal and informal learning, providing people with advice and access to both forms of education.
56. Promote the use of clear and plain language in displays.
57. Collaboration is critical to the success of projects that involve museums, libraries, archives, Basic Skills providers and most importantly, learners.
58. Develop partnerships with other agencies - to provide staffing and funding for mobile units and projects.
59. Make museums more accessible to adult literacy and numeracy learners, as an educational and cultural resource.

60. Provide encouragement for adult learners to come and participate - many may be first time visitors.

61. Examples of museum/gallery based literacy projects:

- Oral History - enables learners to tell their own stories and gives them an opportunity to hear about and record accounts by other people in their community. Specific objects/collections can provide reference points for actual accounts and memories.
- Reading Pictures and Writing Text - encouraging learners to look at works of art or objects and write about them.
- Learners as Reporters - observing and writing about the worlds they experience in and through the museum. Exhibitions: for example observations about nature in respective community with objects from collections related to these.
- Clear and Plain Language - learners involved in developing exhibitions or assisting in developing plain language brochures/publicity material about venues.

62. Museums can provide learners with resources, knowledge and activities that assist in building their confidence, in giving them a voice and in improving several literacy skills.

63. Working with Basic Skills groups/learners, heightens awareness of the need for clear language for all visitors and the importance of providing greater access to many individuals and groups.

64. Project activities could include; writing about art; recording oral history; developing exhibitions; writing plays using museum displays; and preparing a clear language brochure for a historic site.

65. Run special drop-in sessions, within archives and local studies, for Family History research.

66. Run storytelling or other activities for children while their parents are involved in courses/learning activities = removing barriers to accessing what is available.

67. The importance and benefits of partnerships - productive collaboration takes time and patience, requires trust and consensus, and calls for substantial human and cultural resources. Initiatives where this is recognised are often more successful in meeting the expectations and interests of participating learners, tutors and venues.
68. Explore ways of engaging learners in library, museum or archive based initiatives that use new technologies.
69. Libraries are not about formal learning! They can create a demand for basic skills support by creating an atmosphere in which people want to read, and feel empowered enough to start dismantling barriers.
70. Libraries can make available the kinds of reading materials that inspire interest, involvement and confidence.
71. Promote books in a way that does not stigmatise readers.
72. Be approachable - show that you are not a threat.
73. Explain to Basic Skills providers that People's Network facilities exist and offer them up as a resource to supplement or develop learning.
74. Develop posters, leaflets and other printed material with suitable readability level.
75. Family Learning Events - joint activities between museums, libraries, historic environment and countryside.
76. Liaise with adult education services for signposting purposes - for example keeping up-to-date on the courses that are available and when they are being delivered.
77. Keep up-to-date with new developments and ideas.
78. Liaise with literacy co-ordinators in schools.

79. Produce displays to encourage involvement - for example, "Do you know someone who has difficulty reading?" Provide information of where help is available and what it is. (Does your local adult education service have promotional materials that you could use?)
80. Think about the following when developing specialist stock aimed at those with poor basic skills:
- Get advice on what is good and current
 - Provide different levels of stock to allow progression
 - Staff knowledge of stock and confidence of what to do with it
 - Promotion/publicity of stock
 - Basic Skills tutors sign-posting people in library
81. Housebound/Bookbus staff could promote whatever resources are available to their audiences.
82. Encourage parents to come in with their children and take part in activities - this could include Homework Clubs or simply using the ICT facilities available.
83. Encourage more local groups or people from a variety of centres to visit and use the facilities of the library, museum or archive.
84. Organise visits or tours for adult learners - show the facilities and resources available, and how they can be accessed/used.
85. Make the help desk a visible but 'quiet' area = non-threatening.
86. Provide an alternative area for people to join the library - some refugees/asylum seekers/adult learners may find the main counter too 'public.'
87. Any new literature should be incorporated within the normal stock in every branch library, not just the major branches. Learners can then access the same resources in whichever library they choose to use.
88. During membership procedures, stress that books from anywhere in the library are accessible.

89. Establish a member of staff in the lending library or ICT department at a regular, specified time, to assist users.
90. Development of a universal symbol for use on all basic skills materials that can be; posted within libraries; used on websites; and used on leaflets and posters.
91. Use a sticker on the spine of books - identifiable and universal symbol - to not only identify special books, but also make it possible to incorporate them within the main collections.
92. Awareness training for all members of staff who come into contact with adult learners on a daily basis - include refresher sessions to keep up-to-date with new materials and basic skills issues.
93. Cascade any awareness training to other members of staff who have not been able to attend training sessions.
94. Use signs that feature graphics as well as text (visual aids), not only within the building but also in the surrounding area.
95. Welcome packs when join the library - specially designed, accessible format, that contains the right amount of relevant information required.
96. Provide resource bases for Basic Skills Tutors within venues - place where they can access ICT facilities and other resources easily and use them with learners from the local community.
97. Set up reading groups - provide venues for these to take place and also make suitable literature available. Provides an opportunity to discuss with learners the type of material they would like to see made available.
98. Provide areas where Basic Skills Assessments can be carried out by tutors in comfortable surroundings and within the community.
99. Access more of the current investment/funding available for Basic Skills provision.

100. Increase the recognition of the contribution of museums, libraries and archives to the Basic Skills agenda within the sector and without.

101. Ensure that Basic Skills projects in the sector are evaluated and findings disseminated.