

Open Doors
Skills for Life in museums, libraries and
archives
Project Report 2005/06



Object handling in Kirklees

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Open Doors
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Project report 2005 – 2006

“Museums, libraries and archives connect people to knowledge and information, creativity and inspiration.

Museums, libraries and archives have an important role to play in engaging and retaining adult learners, including skills for life learners.

Museums, libraries and archives offer rich and unique resources, skilled staff, special learning environments and the opportunity to switch adults on to learning through their own interests and passions.”

MLA Yorkshire Skills for Life position statement

Introduction

The Open Doors project 2005/06 was funded by MLA Yorkshire to support museum, library and archive (mla) professionals and Skills for Life practitioners to work with the Skills for Life agenda.

The purpose of this report is to provide a general overview of the Open Doors project so far, and the activities of the project in 2005/06. Further information is available in associated evaluation reports and publications, as detailed below.



Skills for Life learners in Leeds library

Background

Skills for Life, the all embracing literacy, numeracy and language strategy, is now in its fifth year of progress. Covering all adults aged over 16 on pre-entry and up to and including Level Two discrete and embedded provision, over one million adults nationally have achieved an approved qualification since 2001. With a Public Sector Agreement (PSA) target to reach by 2010, a milestone of improving 1.5 million people's functional, everyday literacy, numeracy and language skills by July 2007 has been set nationally. In Yorkshire and the Humber, this means up-skilling a total of 162,200 learners.



Exploring Burton Constable Hall

Before 2005, anecdotal evidence showed that museums, libraries and archives in Yorkshire were engaging with Skills for Life learners and providers, and that really effective learning experiences was the result of this work. However, museum, library and archive work in Skills for Life was often piecemeal, project based, and not offered across the region. There was a need to make this work more sustainable and strategic, to support museum, library and archive staff to do this work, to seek out partners on a local, regional and national basis, and to collect evidence and advocate for this work in the learning sector.

Open Doors project was funded by MLA Yorkshire in 2005/06 to support museum, library and archive professionals and Skills for life practitioners to

use museum, library and archive resources with Skills for Life learners. Museums, libraries and archives have a huge potential to support the Skills for Life agenda, by offering inspiring learning opportunities, championing learning in their venues and working in partnership with Skills for Life providers to engage hard to reach groups of learners and to offer 'once in a lifetime' learning experiences.

Open Doors project aims

The key strategic aims of the project were to:

- Promote better understanding of the National Strategy for Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Language amongst staff in museums, archives and libraries
- Promote better understanding of the role museums, archives and libraries can play in stimulating and supporting adult learners in developing their numeracy and language skills amongst the 4 Learning and Skills Councils and SfL providers
- Develop approaches to measuring the impact museums, archives and libraries have on people's literacy, numeracy and language skills
- Develop sustainable partnerships within the region between adult education sector, cultural sectors and other critical partners



ESOL learners at Leeds Art Gallery

Key activities 2005/06

The activities of the Open Doors project 2005/06 can be divided into four key areas:

- 1) Open Doors network
- 2) Pilot projects
- 3) Open Doors website
- 4) Advocacy and partnership work

More information on each of these areas is summarised below.

Open Doors network

The Open Doors network was set up to bring together mla staff and Skills for Life practitioners to network and share good practice.

The network has met as four sub regional groups, with each group meeting a total of four times between Sept 05 and April 06.

Evaluation shows that the most useful roles of the network have been exchanging ideas and information, partnership and networking opportunities, and raising the profile of Skills for Life.

The network will continue to meet in 2006/07, run by the members of the groups.



Object handling with Kirklees Community History service



At the National Railway Museum

Pilot projects



*Piloting resource packs at Leeds
library*

The Open Doors project funded and supported three pilot projects during 2005/06. These projects are summarised below.

All the projects will be completed by May 2006, and project reports will appear on the Open Doors website in due course.

All the projects have produced materials and ideas that could be transferred or adapted by other museums, as well as enabling the development of partnerships between the organisations involved.

Leeds Open Doors

Leeds libraries, Leeds Learning Partnership, Leeds City Art Gallery

Creation of tutor resource packs for literacy and ESOL learners to be used to explore Leeds Central Library and Leeds Art Gallery. The packs were piloted with 12 groups of learners from across Leeds.

Opening the doors to family history

Rotherham archives, Clifton Park Museum, Rotherham ACL

Creation of a learning resource that provides an introduction to family history for adults with literacy skills below level 2. The materials can be used to deliver a 12 week course, or on a pick and mix basis.

Rock the Walls, York

National Railway Museum, York College, York library, York Museum

Ran a 12 week literacy course for young adults at the National Railway Museum. The tutor from York College utilised the museum and library resources to enable the learners to create promotional materials using a range of communication and writing skills.

Open Doors website

www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk



Open Doors website homepage

The Open Doors website was launched in March 2006. It includes advice and guidance on working with Skills for Life learners, a selection of case studies and a Learning Resources Library.

The website was well received during its usability tests in Jan 06, and so far has proved to be a very useful way to make information available, and to signpost mla staff to available resources and information.

Advocacy and partnership work

In March 2006, MLA Yorkshire was involved in a conference delivered in partnership with MLA North West, MLA North East and NIACE. The aim of the conference 'Inspiring Skills for Life learners through museums, libraries and archives' was to raise awareness of the potential learning opportunities in museums, libraries and archive that directly support the Skills for Life agenda. The successful event was over subscribed and saw representation from both the mla



Poet Terry Caffrey at the conference

sector and the Skills for Life sector across the north of England in an inspiring and exciting event.

In March 2006, Open Doors also represented museums, libraries and archives at the two main annual Skills for Life conferences. At both events, workshops were run for Skills for life staff on using museums, libraries and archives with their learners.

Open Doors coordinated a partnership with the Quality Initiative in 2005/06. 8 museum, library and archive services went through the Quality Initiative facilitation process. This process involved one-to-one time and target setting between the mlas and an external facilitator with the aim of embedding Skills for Life into everything the organisation does. It is hoped that funding will allow the process to continue this year.

Open Doors also developed a series of training materials in partnership with Quality Initiative and PdNet. Two training courses were run using these materials in February 2006 and more planned for the next year.



Launch of a Skills for life resource pack at Huddersfield library



Family History learning resources at Rotherham Archives



Learners in Kirklees with the Quick Reads books

Further information relating to the Open Doors project 2005/06

Project activity area	Related reports / further information	Open Doors website links
Pilot projects	<p>Evaluation reports from three pilot projects</p> <p>Learning resources produced by three pilot projects</p> <p>Leeds Open Doors GEM evaluation report</p>	<p>Available Sept 2006 http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk/downloads.php</p> <p>http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk/resourcelibrary.php</p> <p>Available shortly http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk/downloads.php</p>
Open Doors network	Open Doors networks 2005/06 evaluation report	http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk/downloads.php
Open Doors website	www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk	
Advocacy and partnership work	<p>Conference Evaluation report</p> <p>Conference presentations and delegates packs</p> <p>Summative report for Quality Initiative facilitation</p>	<p>http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk/downloads/Conference%20evaluation%202.doc</p> <p>http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk/gettingstarted.php?id=12</p> <p>Available shortly http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk/downloads.php</p>

Conclusion

The Open Doors project has been a useful way to support museums, libraries and archives to develop their work with adult learners and the Skills for Life agenda. It has also been instrumental in promoting the use of museums, libraries and archives to the Skills for Life sector, and in developing useful partnerships with Skills for Life agencies.

In 2006/07 the Open Doors project will continue, with an emphasis on promoting good practice, providing training opportunities, supporting existing and new partnerships and networks, and coordinating the BBC RaW campaign.



Learners at Leeds Library

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