

Research study for the development of the learning spaces at Wakefield Museums

Introduction

Wakefield Council Museum Service has been successful in securing funding from Arts Council England for a project to commission a freelancer to review our learning spaces and advise on how they could be improved.

Wakefield Council's Museums Service collects safeguards and makes accessible approximately 114,000 artefacts that document and record the human, social and cultural history of Wakefield and district from the distant past to the present day.

The Service is responsible for managing three accredited museums at Wakefield, Pontefract and Castleford. The Museum Service is funded by Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (the Council) and is located within the Regeneration and Economic Growth Directorate under Sport and Culture service area.

Further information about the Service can be obtained from our website and blogs:

<http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/residents/events-and-culture/museums>

<http://wakefieldmuseumsandlibraries.blogspot.co.uk/>

<http://museumslearning.blogspot.co.uk/>

Contract requirements & key dates

This Contract will cover the appointment of a cultural learning specialist or consortium to carry out desk and in situ research for Wakefield Museums.

The Contract is to run for a fixed period until Friday 25 September.

Payment & invoicing

The selected Contractor will be set up on the Council's payment system on receipt of a signed Freelance Contractor contract. A Purchase Order will then be issued.

An invoice, quoting the Wakefield Council Purchase Order to cover charges for all services undertaken, is to be raised on completion of the work.

Wakefield Council agrees to pay all invoices within 30 days of their receipt. However, should there be a dispute over charges or the work completed in relation to the contracted agreement, then the payment will be delayed until resolution has been agreed, and the 30 days payment period will commence from the date of resolution.

Background to learning spaces

Wakefield Museums deliver learning sessions to multiple audiences across our venues, including schools, families and adults.

- Wakefield Museum

Wakefield Museum relocated in 2012 and is now within a Council building, Wakefield One, which also includes Wakefield Library, a Customer Access Point and offices. The museum is on the lower ground floor, in a shared space with Local Studies. The museum includes 'The Front Room' – an interactive learning space centred on the home used by families, and also by school groups.

The Learning Zone is the 'classroom', and is on the Upper Ground Floor within the library. It is a shared space with the Library having priority on Mondays, and the Museum has booking priority the rest of the week. Used by school groups for booked learning sessions during the week in term times, and by adults for evening talks and workshops, Saturday clubs, book groups and families engaging in our informal programme. It is a locked space when not in use, and is the primary storage area for the museum's learning resources.

- Castleford Forum Museum

A newly constructed museum on the top floor of Castleford Forum Library and Museum. There is no separate learning space, but an open-plan area within the gallery is occasionally used for classes of primary school pupils (seated on the floor), or up to 15 workshop participants (at tables). The space is primarily used for informal drop-in activities co-ordinated by Front of House staff, and is also used for illustrated talks, seating approx. 30 people.

- Pontefract Museum

There is currently no dedicated learning space in Pontefract Museum. The museum has just undergone the first phase of redevelopment, with the foyer and temporary exhibition gallery reconfigured. Some learning activity takes place in the Reference Room (a walk-in space open in museum hours without appointment), and drop-in activities are occasionally held in the foyer. The next phase of redevelopment will include opening out a flexible activity space within the main gallery.

In addition, the museum occasionally uses a community space within the adjacent Pontefract Library. We would also like to look at options of refitting this space to make best use of it and increase the frequency of sessions held there. This will need to be done in consultation with both library and museum staff.

Brief

Wakefield Museums Service is seeking a freelancer to carry out research into the optimum fit out of the learning spaces across Wakefield Museums. Wakefield Museums comprises three public sites: Wakefield Museum, Castleford Forum Library and Museum, and Pontefract Museum

The museum service has been undergoing a period of significant change, with relocation or redevelopment of all of our public spaces.

The new learning spaces at each of our museums need to reflect current best practice and include future aspirations. These spaces also need to be flexible, for different audiences and types of session (both for museum and library use in Wakefield).

- Aim of this work

The aim of this work is to develop a realistic, practical, yet aspirational proposal for the development of our learning spaces. The report needs to build on current good practice and enable flexibility. We are looking for a combination of:

- Low cost, high impact, practical changes which can be made quickly
- Aspirational improvements, for which we would need to apply for external funding

- Internal Stakeholders

Consultation with the following key staff will be essential to ensure that proposed solutions meet the diverse needs of the team:

- Learning Manager, and Learning Team
- Exhibitions and Audience Development Manager
- Library Officers
- Curators of each museum

- End Users

- Schools
- Families
- Adult learners
- Book groups
- Community groups
- Young people visiting outside of formal education

The report will be designed to:

- Review the use and suitability of our current learning spaces and define the best approach for fitting them out to work with a range of learning audiences from schools and families, to community groups and adults. Fit out may include decoration, lighting, storage solutions and furniture, where appropriate.

- Set out clear and practical recommendations for improvement of each of our spaces, including low cost, quickly achievable solutions and aspirational long-term goals.
- Reflect likely developments in museum learning in response to external factors including National Curriculum changes
- Highlight lessons learnt from other learning spaces at museums and cultural organisations
- Explore approaches beyond the sector (for example new build schools and colleges) and highlight best practice in the development of effective learning spaces that can be applied to museum learning

This piece of work will not:

- Create a set of learning programmes
- Include requirements for office space for the Learning teams
- Estimate income from the use and hire of spaces

Deliverables

- Lead consultation sessions to involve internal stakeholders in examining the potential of learning spaces in relation to all learners.
- Evaluate current learning spaces including their uses and limitations.
- Arrange visits and look at lessons learned from current learning spaces in museums and cultural organisations.
- Carry out desk research and interviews.

Outputs

- A written report that encompasses a summary of best practice and key recommendations.
- A visual record of the spaces visited.
- A set of recommendations specific to the development of our learning spaces.
- A log/record of potential suppliers and quotes for furniture and fixtures.

Timescales

We would like the final report to be **completed by Friday 25th September 2015 (with a first draft submitted by Friday 4th September 2015)**

Budget

The budget for this work is **£2500 (exclusive of VAT)**. This includes all expenses and materials.

How to apply:

If you are interested in submitting a proposal for learning space review please provide the following information:

- An outline of your relevant experience
- An outline of your proposed approach

- A breakdown of budget.

Email to vshearman@wakefield.gov.uk by **5pm on Friday 29th May 2015**. [Selections will take place by Wednesday 10th June]

If you would like an informal discussion around the information contained in this brief, please contact Vicky Shearman, Senior Cultural Development Officer,
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