

COG: Cultural Outreach Group

Building Inclusive Practice

COG is a peer-to-peer network focused on developing and sharing best practice in respect of audience development, outreach and inclusion activity in cultural organisations.

By working together, the members aim to develop their individual and collective ability to engage under-represented audiences and build sustainable systems for on-going participation and co-production.

COG was formed by Discover Bucks Museum and Buckinghamshire Culture, hosted at the Museum. The network was formed in 2019 as part of a funded project with investment from the Rothschild Foundation and Buckinghamshire Council. The initial funded period was 2019-2021.

Although this funding has now ended, the group are keen to continue to meet as a network.

Sharing Our Experience of COG

COG started working together in 2019. Funding facilitated a network, staff support and modest allocations to allow 8 heritage partner organisations to undertake and evaluate pilot outreach activity with a new audience. Pilot activities began in 2019 and things were just starting to get interesting when the Covid-19 pandemic forced venues to close and many of our partners were furloughed. COG took a pause for 9 months and reconvened as partners came back to work in late 2020.

In order to make best use of the time and budget remaining before the end of the project, the group agreed three actions: 1. recruit an expert in inclusion and outreach to support and steer inclusive practice, 2. training in key areas to equip partners with practical tools, 3. increase the budget for pilot activity and aim high! Sarah Pickthall came on board to support the group in 2021 – bringing incredible expertise and coaching skills. 2021 was jam-packed, but the following pages show the impact.

Across the 3 years of this project partners have engaged a range of audiences under-represented and under-served by heritage organisations – a total of 1,161 individuals from such groups as: local non-visiting families, special education needs, non-visible disabled community, blind and visually impaired, Syrian refugees, autistic adults and young people, Jewish and Black communities, those with sensory needs... and more...

This documents shares our processes, challenges and successes from 2021 in the hope that others can learn from our experiences.



2021 Delivery

Outreach Pilot Activity

8 heritage partners identified an under-served target audience with a view to:

- developing a pilot project designed to work with this audience in 2021
- breaking down barriers and delivering arts/culture/heritage activity with, and for, these new audiences
- ensuring this work would be extended and embedded into their ongoing plans, audience development aims, or wider strategies.

Audience Development Plans

Audience Development training was delivered in March 2020 with the aim of enabling all partners to deliver an Audience Development Plan over the course of the project. Staff support was provided for this.

Training

Sarah ran bespoke training on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Unconscious Bias, Action Learning and Inclusive Evaluation particular to the museums and archive sector and reflective of the different organisations taking part. Sarah also ran a session on Inclusive Language. Additional training was provided on: Introduction to ASD, Makaton and Putting Inclusive Practice into Practice.

Action Learning

Sarah ran Action Learning Sets with the group and designed and shared a bespoke COG resource on Action Learning working as a 'set'. The aim of this was to:

- a. be involved in an active group learning support process
- b. develop lasting skills and aptitude for open questioning as a way to resolve some of the challenges in developing inclusive outreach work
- c. provide an established CPD methodology as legacy

1:1 Coaching

Each COG member received three 1:1 coaching sessions and some members received up to 5 sessions as Sarah made herself available for intensive troubleshooting for those who had complex delivery preparation and plans that were particularly challenging. She also shared artist contract proformas and other examples of procedural inclusive best practice for recruitment of artists and marketing and communications, on request.

COG Support

Staff support (from Discover Bucks Museum and Buckinghamshire Culture) was available throughout – to help connect, provide context, shape projects, provide input on audience development plans, provide guidance etc. Quarterly COG network meetings were convened with external speakers and sharing opportunities. A sharing day took place in October 2021.





Reflections

Overall, the consultancy and coaching was felt to be of real value in different ways for different members:

'I have learned so much from our time together, I have really had to dig deep, questioning the way I design things and who I involve and when.'

'Choosing to feel differently about the aim of my pilot project for its focus to be on enjoyment changed things for me.'

'Feeling that our pilot project and my work was being recognised and acknowledged by management very differently for the first time through this process was great.'

'Hearing other people's stories was invigorating. I will be able to tap into the expertise of others in COG moving forward.'

'I did find the Action Learning a bit unusual, but saying that I appreciated what it was trying to do and saw other people really benefitting from it.'

There was consensus that COG working was valuable and should definitely be extended:

'Train us to train our colleagues so they value inclusion and endorse our work.'

'Having external people to support projects has been key.'

'Sarah's training materials and resources and extensive experience was of real value to me and to COG'

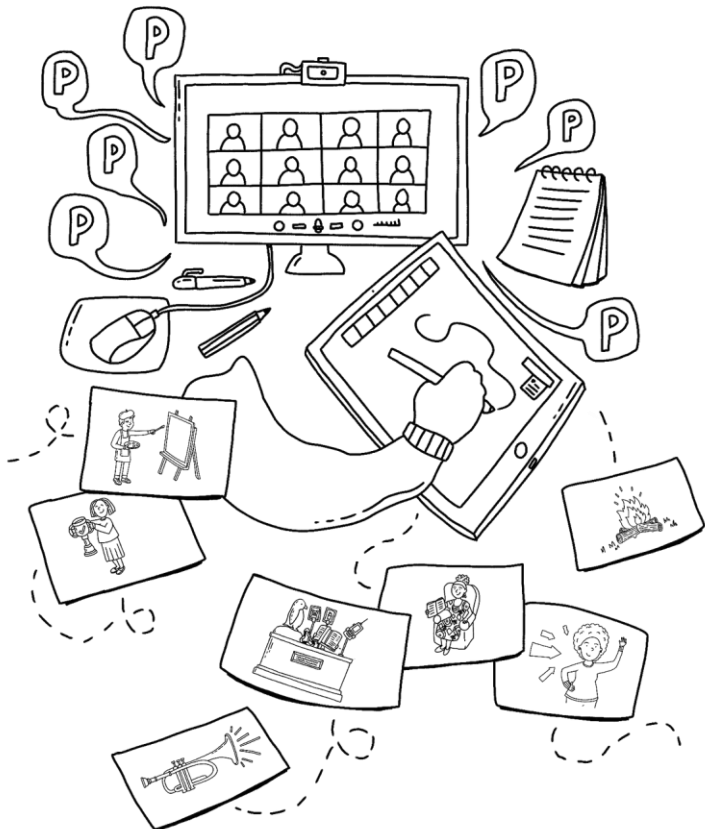
'It would be important to share contacts database or a bank of good artists and creative briefs and processes'

'It has been good to link with each other, share ideas and the different ways of working'

'You can see and feel the overlaps across different projects and ways to encourage and uphold knowledge sharing is important'

Graphic Illustration

In the final stages of the consultancy, Sarah Pickthall collaborated with illustrator Annalees Lim to deliver an inclusive project reflective evaluation process with a view to COG members exploring and sharing their learning more widely.



To support this, each COG member was asked to consider and respond to questions about the

- place and purpose of their host organisations
- previous outreach work undertaken
- proposed development points along the way
- 'prize' at the end of the pilot
- partners involved in delivery
- pathways through, both planned for, imagined and the unexpected
- pick-ups along the way; new ways of thinking and doing things
- pausing and pace within each pilot
- personal learning and journeying as museum and archive practitioner
- plans for the future

The resulting graphic illustrations capture shares these things not only in an accessible visual way but also as an example of best inclusive practice.



sarahpickthall.com

illustrations by

ANNALEES LIM.

annaleeslim.com





PREVIOUS

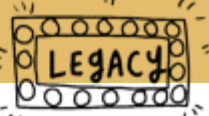
a local history museum, sharing the stories of local people and places.



Focussing on diversifying audiences including:
non-visiting primary schools
people with different communication needs
older isolated people
non-visiting families

POINTS

Not just create a ONE-OFF event but something to build on and continue



PRIZE

Wanting a positive experience for all

PARTNERS

Stony Dean School SEN



More inclusive APPROACH
EVERYONE WELCOME

PERSONAL

PAUSE

"We didn't have to rethink, just LEARN and DEVELOP for the next session"

PICKUPS



Andrew, our experienced artist

PATHWAYS

A family learning project with the school

Lots of training provided throughout the project.

PLANS

An annual event with Stony Dean



PACE

All done in just two months

very QUICK turnaround

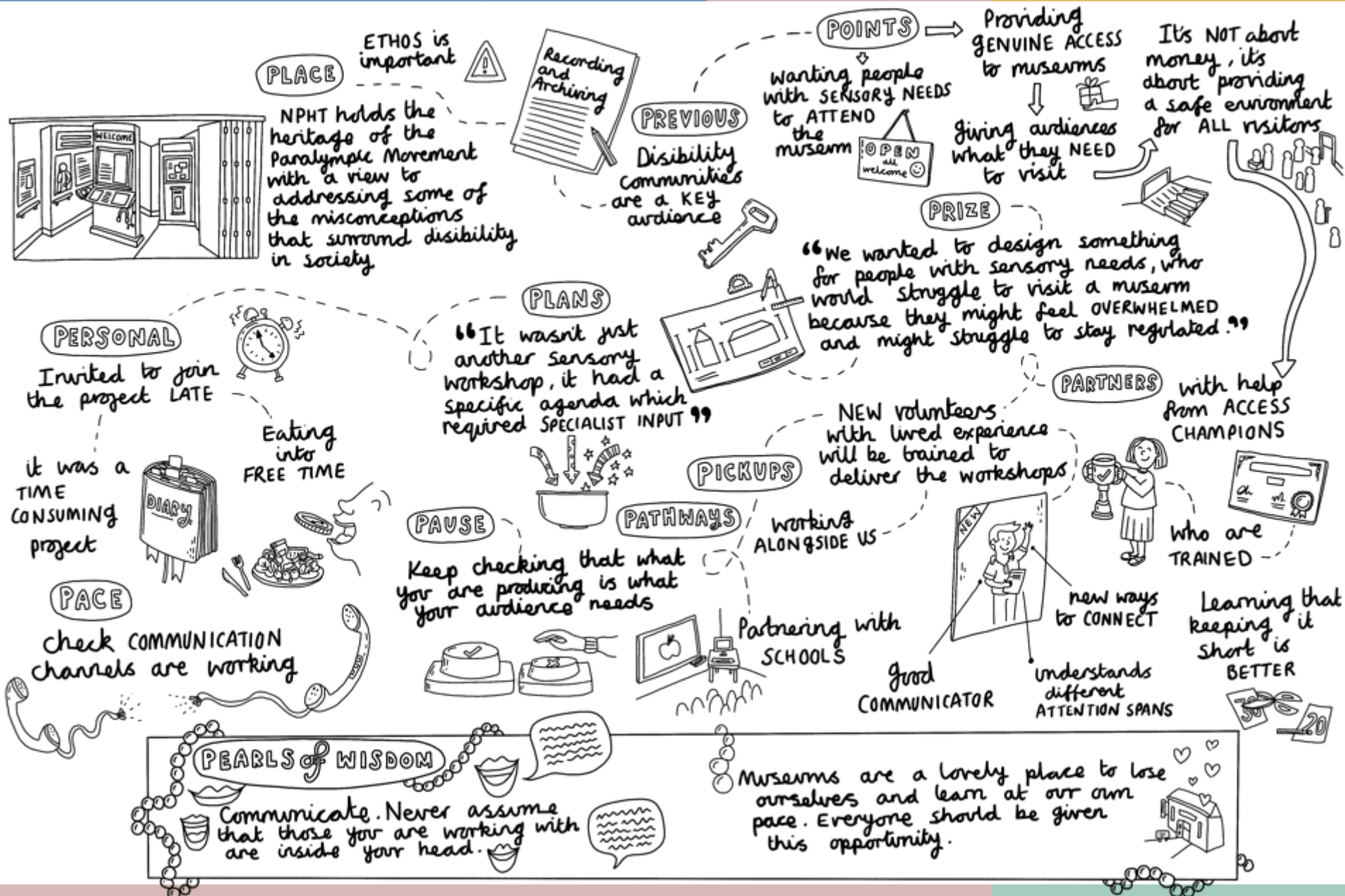
Make the museum more INCLUSIVE

PEARLS OF WISDOM

Working across several sessions made such a difference in terms of building the relationship with the school, children and this cementing the possibility of future work.

There is more STRENGTH in working in PARTNERSHIP than in working ALONE





a social history TOWN museum in a GRADE II listed building with grounds



PLACE

PREVIOUS

Different events to local residents focussing on getting lots of people to ENGAGE

over 400 events in one year

PRIZE

Increased RELATIONSHIP with more diverse family groups

PARTNERS

ADOPTION UK national and regional groups

POINTS

Change of FOCUS --- given permission to make it about FUN

doesn't need to be PROFOUND

Since leaving Wycombe Museum and going FREELANCE, continued to manage the project as a VOLUNTEER to see it through and became Co-chair of the regional group

PERSONAL

"I really believe that when you are working with the community you have to find the person who's IN the community that also has an interest in heritage because KNOWING the right people within the community is how you understand HOW the group WORKS"

COUNCIL CONTACTS

Now IN those groups so hopeful for their future involvement

PAUSE

Foster carers were INVITED but none came

PLANS The project was formed from OVERHEARD CONVERSATIONS

2019

I wish they did more

Applied for FUNDING to run an event

PICKUPS

Sensory Practitioner

Julia

experienced at working with VULNERABLE children

PATHWAYS

made it happen much easier and move the project along

PAGE

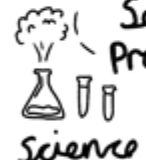
would like to apply for more FUNDING to expand this to other HERITAGE SITES



Suggestions came from the group

chill zone

it was an AMAZING event



Science play

Shows



CLAY

more FOCUS

a GREAT group of volunteers helped on the day

Wristbands

PEARLS OF WISDOM

When working within a community, always find the person who is the 'IN' - this can make any project WORK



Sometimes making something FUN is ENOUGH



Our MISSION is to: Tell the story of the CHILTERNs through historic buildings, landscapes and culture for the ENJOYMENT, INSPIRATION and learning of present and future COMMUNITIES.



this event will become an ANNUAL event

"I learned how much it meant for these COMMUNITIES to be INCLUDED and how interesting their STORIES were and how important it was for us to continue to collect and SHARE heritage STORIES."



the event EVOLVED



"Audiences felt INSPIRED, they liked listening to stories and liked to feel INCLUDED"

The feedback was GREAT

LOTS of PEOPLE came!

We weren't PREPARED for the number of people

PEARLS of WISDOM

Plan events on the back end of another event encouraging people to stay on and take part in something else

Be prepared for more people, it may mean you need MICS and a SOUND SYSTEM... what else?



PLACE

PREVIOUS
Waddesdon is a 19th Century stately home built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, now managed by the Rothschild Foundation on behalf of the National Trust.

Current collection contains lots of 18th century FRENCH and ENGLISH decorative art

POINTS

This is our FIRST active OUTREACH engagement with communities

PRIZE

Always wanted to engage with the local JEWISH community to embrace the manors Jewish heritage

PARTNERS

easy to find



Just took ONE email to South Bucks Jewish Community connect

Rabbi Janes



PAGE

So enthusiastic

To learn about items in the collection of Jewish provenance from the community themselves

very little in the collection and some in the archives

Balfour Declaration

the community didn't feel a part of Waddesdon.

PATHWAYS

create a learning and education programme

a similar project has been running alongside this one

Some OVERLAPS



the group returned for a shelter building event

a strong two way relationship has grown

PICKUPS

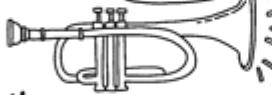
a professional PHOTOGRAPHER documented the day



great FEEDBACK

learning to blow our own TRUMPET

PAUSE



Successful day

bring our objects in to compare with collection



Ketubah

PLANS

arrange a day for the community members to come to Waddesdon for a tour



Now to work with NEW communities within the Jewish community

Possibly coming back for HANUKKAH

REACH FARTHER

PERSONAL

"the day provided a great way to get to know each other as people, rather than just a museum and a community"

Meet team to look at archives



PEARLS OF WISDOM

Let the communities decide and create their OWN experiences

Don't go into a project with a firm, fixed idea of what may happen, be open

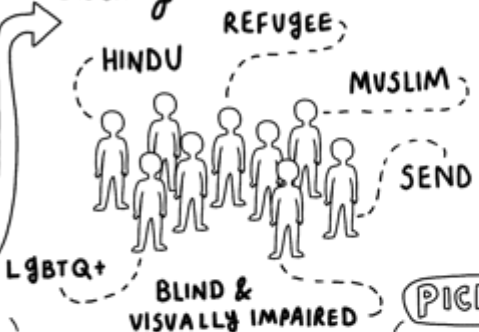




PLACE
PREVIOUS

Discover Bucks Museum is a place to explore, learn and wonder about local stories reflecting people, culture and landscape.

The museum has developed its work with a diversity of different community groups including:-



POINTS

PRIZE

PARTNERS

EMAILS

“I was keen to work with **ARTISTIC ADULTS** because I noticed many museums only serve artistic children and artistic adults get **FORGOTTEN.**”



PATHWAYS

Working with **ARTISM BUCKS**, I created a safe space for artistic adults to share their meaningful objects.

PICKUPS



PLANS

“I am **DELIGHTED** to have **5 ORAL HISTORIES** from a community we have never represented in our collection to my knowledge and this will be a part of our **PERMANENT COLLECTION.**”

TOY PENGUIN

PHOTOGRAPHS



OLD MOBILE PHONE

DIARY

SENSORY TOY / Tangle

PERSONAL

SUPPORTING HIDDEN DISABILITIES

PAUSE

We also worked with an artist on an **ARTISM AWARENESS POSTER**, which was less successful.



There was a **big WORKLOAD**

PACE

PEARLS OF WISDOM

“Don't underestimate the work to make oral histories, don't take on too much.”

“Make sure the artist is the right fit for your project, who can adapt to what you want and need to deliver.”

