

## 1 Executive summary

1.1 This report provides a summary of the research carried out to support the writing of the North West Hub's Education Programme Delivery Plan (EPDP). Extensive research and consultation with LEA officials and teachers throughout the region was carried out by a team of consultants. The purpose of the research was to find out how the Hub museums can best develop their services to schools.

The report has been published to share the results of the EPDP research with the wider museum community. It offers an insight into the current educational climate, describing the main initiatives and stakeholders affecting schools and museums. It also provides a summary of the research carried out with teachers who were asked about their views on museums. A summary of the EPDP for the North West is included.

1.2 The research showed that the educational climate is changing in relation to the creativity agenda, albeit slowly. It appears that Government is taking the view that education in creativity can help schools raise achievement. There are opportunities here for museums to advocate to schools and LEAs the contribution they can make to creative learning.

1.3 Focus groups were conducted with 71 teachers across the region. The main findings are as follows:

- Teachers value museums because they are "...the keepers of so much magic for kids". They notice changes in behaviour, group dynamics and academic performance during and after museum visits. They consider a friendly welcome all-important and it is, above all, the *human* dimension of the museum visit that teachers and children enjoy and remember – the expert educator, facilitator or curator who provides an alternative perspective to that of the classroom teacher.
- Whilst teachers' awareness of national debates about creativity is limited, the teachers were all committed to teaching more creatively, and many sense that the educational climate is changing for the better. They would like support with experimentation, but are disillusioned with the training on offer from their LEA, much of which is geared towards the implementation of the latest government initiatives.
- In general, teachers' view of museums tends to be coloured by their own subject specialism. Opportunities for cross-curricular learning did not appear to be a key motivation in making museum visits. They are wary of Citizenship as a curriculum area and are unsure how to teach it.
- Teachers' use of and access to ICT varies considerably. The picture here is complex and museums clearly have to exercise great care before investing in new initiatives.
- There was no clear consensus on the most effective means for museums to communicate with schools, although there seemed to be a general

presumption in favour of simplicity and the pooling of information about museums' education services in one place.

- The teachers identified the main difficulties in taking children out of school as: the cost of transport, Health and Safety considerations and timetabling pressures at Key Stage 3. These matters are arguably beyond the jurisdiction of individual museums and can only be addressed by multi-agency action and cultural change at a national level.

1.4 Headteachers in schools which rarely use museums were also consulted. Certain common themes emerged, such as the pressure of league tables in poorer areas, behavioural problems, the cost of transport and a general view of trips out as a post-SATs treat rather than a basic educational entitlement.

1.5 A wide range of officials from nine LEAs in the region were interviewed. Museums appear to be low on LEA *official* agendas, nevertheless, many LEAs are developing initiatives for creative learning or are working in partnership with other agencies. All the LEA officers who were consulted spoke enthusiastically about the contribution that museums can make to children's education. Because of this it became evident that museums could benefit from developing closer ties with their local LEA(s). The time is right for a sustained campaign to demonstrate to LEAs and other educational agencies that museums can make a purposeful and creative contribution to their work.

1.6 Among the other agencies and initiatives working within the education system, awareness of museums was relatively high. Education Business Partnerships, Excellence in Cities, Gifted and Talented, Aim Higher and other initiatives have all worked with museums.

1.7 The Government has committed unprecedented levels of financial support for ICT in schools since 1997. The majority of secondary schools and many primary schools now have well-equipped ICT suites providing 20 – 25 networked workstations, intranets, Internet connections and 'clusters' or stand-alone machines around the school. However, despite increased access to technology both at school and home, the majority of teachers use ICT resources in less than half of lessons and generally prefer to rely on paper-based sources for lesson planning, rather than making use of the Internet. The development of research and investigation skills is an area where museums could provide excellent packages of material, published online or on CD-ROM, drawing on their collections to support specific curriculum areas.

1.8 The Education Programme Delivery Plan contains six elements which are designed to enable the Hub to develop a 'comprehensive and integrated' service to schools. The Plan consists of posts and projects which will help to develop a more strategic and discerning response to current educational agendas and will build on existing practice within the Hub.