

## **6 Local Education Authorities**

### **What are LEAs?**

Central and local government share responsibility for the nation's education service. There are 150 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England which are responsible for the strategic management of local authority education services including:

- Planning the supply of school places
- Making sure every child has access to a suitable school place
- Supporting and challenging schools, in inverse proportion to their success, and intervening where a school is failing its pupils
- Allocating funding to schools

LEAs are democratically accountable, which gives them a distinctive leadership role in the local community to set a vision for education. They work with local partners to bring about improvements, including other local authority services, the health service and police. Each LEA is a reflection of its local context including the local authority's political makeup, hence they are all different. This became evident during the EPDP research.

For instance, each LEA has its own particular staffing structure. Some museum education staff are in touch with subject advisers who work in departments of the LEA, usually called the Advisory and Inspection Service. But not all LEAs have such advisers, or if they do they may have a different job title. Manchester's 'LEA' is called Manchester Education Partnership. Its mission is to "challenge and support schools" to become better by raising standards through:

- The work of link advisers
- Government strategies at all key stages
- Diversity and inclusion
- Enrichment
- Innovative ways of working with pupils

The main issues facing LEAs today are the following:

- Raising standards
- Inclusive schooling
- Enriching the lives of pupils
- Establishing the right conditions for learning
- The Primary Strategy
- Continuity into Key Stage 3

### **Why work with LEAs?**

As the strategic bodies responsible for the development of schools in their local authority, LEAs can be influential in schools' use of cultural resources. They also initiate and manage various projects which open up opportunities for schools to develop this aspect of their work. It can be useful therefore for museums to develop relationships with their local LEA(s). LEA officials can give an overview of schools' requirements and so save museum staff's time in talking to individual teachers.

Overall, the conversations held with the LEAs were encouraging. It seems that 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. It is not always easy to locate an officer who might have the time and interest to work with museums, but persistence is rewarded. It is well worth getting to know the local LEA. Much of their work is based on partnerships with other agencies because they know they cannot bring about improvements by themselves.

LEA officers were able to give an overview of what schools need to do in order to start to meet the creativity agenda. One officer suggested that schools are looking for museum visits that are:

- Focused
- Curriculum driven
- Use specialist staff
- Encourage the use of real experiences to re-enact history and present cultural experiences through drama, story and the arts
- Can be 'owned' by the teaching staff
- Convey respect for artefacts
- Develop the expectation that pupils can learn and experience something new
- Require preparation and follow up
- Use exhibits that are interactive, motivating and interesting

For the EPDP research nine LEAs in the North West were looked at: Bolton, Lancashire, Cumbria, Warrington, Cheshire, Knowsley, Liverpool, Manchester and Salford. Key LEA officials were interviewed in order to ascertain how museums figure in their thinking and plans. Officials from other associated agencies (e.g. Education Action Zones, Education Business Partnerships, Creative Partnerships, Sure Start) were also interviewed.

### **LEAs' Education Development Plans**

In order to establish if the LEAs had policies on working with museums, their Education Development Plans (EDPs) were examined. EDPs are key plans produced by each authority which set out its strategies for improving standards in schools and raising pupil attainment. The plans are produced in accordance with guidance from the DfES, and submitted to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for approval. Although most plans make no specific reference to museums, they deal at length with curriculum enhancement, strategies for combating exclusion and the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum through partnership with other agencies.

Whilst the development of creative education or working with museums does not play a significant role in LEAs' formal strategies, they do figure in local authorities' cultural strategies<sup>1</sup>. For instance, Manchester's cultural strategy was developed with input from a wide range of organisations and has "joined up" different agencies and council departments, indicating that allies for promoting creativity can be found across a range of city and council activities. It is claimed that the strategy will impact on

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<sup>1</sup> In 2000 the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) published guidance requiring all Local Authorities to develop and complete a local cultural strategy by December 2002. The main aim of a local cultural strategy is to 'promote the cultural well-being' of the area it covers.

“Children and young people: helping to raise educational and personal attainment, increase confidence and self esteem”.<sup>2</sup>

### **LEAs working with museums**

On the basis of their official policy documents, such as their Education Development Plans, museums appear to be low on the average LEA agenda. However, many LEAs are involved in creative and cultural initiatives and all the LEA officers who were consulted spoke enthusiastically about the contribution that museums can make to children’s educational experience.

Cheshire’s Inspection and Advisory Service regards museums as having central importance to its work. The Primary Advisor in Cheshire with responsibility for history and geography sees working with museums as a key part of her role:

*Museums are key in developing the excitement of history and geography. If you [advisors] can be the link between the LEA and museums, that’s the key. I use them as venues for subject team meetings. They’ve got vast knowledge. I can support them with the curriculum.*

Teachers spoke warmly about the Manchester Arts Education Initiative (MAEI) (formerly Manchester Arts Festival). This is a year-long CPD inset programme which has been run for many years by Manchester LEA and Excellence in Cities (see p. 28). Each year a theme (in 2003/4 the American Civil War and the Winter’s Tale) is explored through drama, music and visual art. Partners this year (2003/4) are Manchester Art Gallery, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester Cathedral, Library Theatre and Contact Theatre. It requires a large time commitment from teachers but it provides a very intense and stimulating experience for teachers and children alike.

At Bolton LEA the Key Stage 3 co-ordinator is managing a partnership between Bolton secondary schools and Bolton Museum and Art Gallery. The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and is looking at Bolton from the perspective of “new arrivals”.

The Artists in Schools Agency for Bolton, Bury and Rochdale has been running since 1998 and is funded by the three local authorities, along with grants from other organizations such as the Arts Council. The Agency aims to inspire teaching and learning by forging relationships between the arts and education. For the Rags and Old Iron project an artist created an exhibition of her own work at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery which was then used to develop a series of workshops with local primary schools. The triangle of resources – school, artist and museum – underpinned the project.

Sixteen of the region’s LEAs have come together to form an Arts Learning Consortium. They are working with the Arts Council and other agencies to develop a strong and sustainable arts education infrastructure. They have published a recent paper, *Entitlement before Enrichment Initiative* (2004) which explores how an arts education entitlement can be introduced into schools. The project will engage up to 750 schools,

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<sup>2</sup> *Our Creative City, Manchester’s Cultural Strategy* (Manchester City Council n.d.) p. 2

eighteen LEAs, universities and other partners. .<sup>3</sup>They are using the Arts Council's "Artsmark" award as a framework. An important feature of Artsmark is the emphasis it places on visits and partnerships, including working with museums.

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<sup>3</sup> The authorities are: Blackburn with Darwen; Bury; Cheshire; Cumbria; Derbyshire; Halton; Knowsley; Lancashire; Liverpool; Manchester; Oldham; Sefton; Warrington; Wigan; Wrexham; Arts Council England, North West. See their website [www.networkingthearts.co.uk](http://www.networkingthearts.co.uk) *Entitlement before Enrichment Initiative* can be found on this website.