

# Studies in Partnership: Stepping Stones



# Acknowledgements

The work described in this booklet is supported by Renaissance, the MLA's ground-breaking programme which is transforming England's non-national museums. It strives for excellence, and through targeted investment, and cultivation of local, regional and national partnerships, it is realising the sector's potential to make a real difference to people's lives. Central government funding is enabling regional museums across the country to raise their standards and deliver real results in support of education, learning, community development and economic regeneration.

In the East of England, Renaissance is managed by the Renaissance East of England Office, and delivered by the four large museum services which together make up the East of England Museum Hub:

- Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service
- The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge
- Luton Culture
- Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service

You can read more about the impact of the Renaissance programme in the East of England by visiting our website: [www.mla.gov.uk/renaissanceeastofengland](http://www.mla.gov.uk/renaissanceeastofengland)



The  
Fitzwilliam  
Museum



Cover Image: Stepping Stones evaluation event  
courtesy of The Fitzwilliam Museum

# Contents

- 4 Stepping Stones: In a nutshell
- 5 Foreword
- 6 Can museums play a role in supporting young people facing unemployment?
- 8 Impact: Key findings

## Case Studies

- 10 Ailsa Clarke  
Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service
- 11 Stephen Roe  
Stockwood Discovery Centre
- 12 Adam Bass  
Wisbech & Fenland Museum/  
Wisbech Library Fenland Collection
- 13 Amy Seaman  
Norwich Castle Museum
- 16 Reece Pursey  
Epping Forest District Museum
- 17 Jordan Taylor-Todd  
The National Horseracing Museum
- 18 Max Tucker  
Fitzwilliam Museum

- 14 Impact: Museums as mentors
- 15 Impact: The value of the museum environment
- 19 Thanks and project partners

# Stepping Stones: In a nutshell

"I think it will be so much easier for me to find a job now, because I have experienced so many different things – I have worked in the shop, in the café, have done projects getting people into the museum, designing a float for the carnival, so many different things."

# 32

jobs created for unemployed young people

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working at the museum. I have found the Stepping Stones/Future Jobs initiative to be everything it 'says on the tin'; offering an influential and useful transition stage between pre-working and working life."

# 24

museums involved across the region

"I would imagine that other work environments don't have that constant atmosphere of reassurance. I think it is important. It is quite a lot to take on, you need a crash course in confidence, and reassurance is a big part of that."

"The sheer variety of work involved within my particular role allows me to learn something new every day and to take on new endeavours - allowing for great job satisfaction!"

# 6

colleges supporting Stepping Stones apprenticeships

# Foreword

In the current economic climate there is a greater emphasis than ever on working in partnership to deliver services more efficiently and more responsively to local needs.

This booklet is one in a series of six highlighting ongoing projects led by East of England museums which have partnership working at their heart. Taken together they demonstrate that museums have a valuable contribution to make in:

- Engaging local people in decision-making
- Promoting community cohesion through exploration and celebration of the past
- Providing economic benefits through employment and tourism.

Communities benefit when museums share resources and expertise with each other:

- **The Greater Fens Museums Partnership and Maritime Heritage East** are networks which bring together museums with similar collections to celebrate and promote unique aspects of the region's past. Economies of scale are combined with a richer offering to the public and more effective promotion of heritage to visitors.
- **Something Borrowed** is a partnership with the British Museum which is enabling smaller museums in the East of England to borrow items from the BM's collections, creating new opportunities for tourism and learning.

Museums are also working increasingly with partners beyond the cultural sector:

- **Growing Communities** provides a forum for museums, local communities and planning departments in Growth Point areas in the region to explore how the past can help shape future development
- **Stepping Stones** has brought together 24 museums in a partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to create 32 jobs and apprenticeships for long-term unemployed young people
- **The Sustainability Project** is unlocking the potential of rural life museums to engage the public in debate around environmental and social issues, as well as joining forces with other organisations to find ways of reducing the sector's carbon footprint.

This work is supported by Renaissance, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's ground-breaking programme that is transforming England's non-national museums. The staff leading these projects are funded by Renaissance East of England which has also developed the strategic vision and infrastructure to help the sector become more outward-looking and innovative.

The projects showcased in this series show museums have a part to play in making the Big Society a reality – by providing a unique space for communities to learn about their past and get involved in shaping their future.

Vanessa Trevelyan  
Head of Norfolk Museums &  
Archaeology Service  
President, Museums Association  
October 2010

# Can museums play a role in supporting young people facing unemployment?

**“It’s made museum staff look afresh at their work and has helped us incorporate new ideas which will appeal to a younger audience.”** Polly Hodgson, curator, Cambridge & County Folk Museum

An East of England Renaissance programme, Stepping Stones, is looking at how museums can meet the needs of those who are out of work by building confidence and developing transferable skills. The programme explores the role of museums as a ‘stepping-stone’ to employment by providing experience of the world

of work through short-term job placements and apprenticeship opportunities.

The programme is funded by Renaissance and the national Future Jobs Fund\*. Renaissance East of England bid to the Future Jobs Fund on behalf of a partnership of museum services across the region. It was successful in the very first round securing £195,000 towards the programme and was, as far as we know, the only museum-led bid.

The Stepping Stones programme has created 32 extra jobs for unemployed



Above and Right: Evaluation event courtesy of The Fitzwilliam Museum

young people in 24 museums across the region. The museums have offered a diverse range of job opportunities including front of house, retail, catering, learning and outreach, collections care, marketing, design, events and site maintenance all designed to develop a broad range of skills.

The programme started in December 2009 and will finish in June 2011. Most of the jobs were for a 6-month period but 7 were offered as 12-month or 18-month apprenticeships where the young person is attending a local college on day release. Their apprenticeship courses include the new Creative Apprenticeship for museums, Customer Care, Business Administration and Farming linked to a rural museum site.

Young people were recruited to jobs in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. They came from a wide range of backgrounds with very differing levels of qualification and previous work experience. For some this was their first experience of paid employment.

The museums undertook to mentor the young employees identifying training and development opportunities, encouraging them to keep 'learning logs' and helping them to update CVs. In return they have benefited from extra capacity and development opportunities for line managers and mentors. They have also gained a new perspective on their service from young people, most of whom had no previous contact with their museum.



The impact of the programme is being evaluated by Discovery Research Ltd. They have spoken to museum staff, interviewed many of the young people involved and have also run an online forum. A summary of their findings so far is included in this booklet alongside seven case studies prepared by young people.

We hope that all of the young people involved in Stepping Stones leave better equipped and more confident to take advantage of future job opportunities, that some may embark on a career in museums and that all will be advocates for the sector.

\* *The Future Jobs Fund (FJF) was announced in 2009. By the end of March 2011 the existing bids will have funded over 100,000 jobs, mainly aimed at 18–24 year olds who have been out of work for six months and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance*

# Impact: Key findings

## What is the impact of the Stepping Stones programme?

The Stepping Stones evaluation process has revealed that **the project has had a profound effect on those taking part**, and to a large extent worked extremely well for young people to transform their attitudes and mindset, boost feelings of confidence and self-worth, and crucially, their propensity to continue into employment or training.

**Below: Stepping Stones evaluation event courtesy of The Fitzwilliam Museum**

The experience has done this in a number of ways:

1. **For many this was their first experience of full-time employment**, and the very fact of having to be organised and timely has a significant impact and proves to the young people themselves that, although daunting, they are able to commit to and hold down a full-time job. In addition having a purpose and reason to get up each day, and a regular, productive routine, gives participants energy, enthusiasm, more meaning in their lives and helps them feel more positive about their future.



**II. The responsibility and confidence that is placed in the young people is equally transformative.**

Many of them go on a journey, from very low self-confidence and esteem and, in some cases, feelings of despondency or depression that can accompany long periods of unemployment, to feeling confident, valued, with high self-worth, self-belief and a positive 'can-do' mindset. This is a side-effect of the sense of achievement they experience from being given a 'proper job', with specific expectations, that makes a significant contribution to the museum and its visitors.

**III. The technical skills and training that accompanies the experience of working within the museum also make a significant impact,**

ranging from administrative skills, to health and safety, software and IT to marketing and PR. The young people are keen to add these to their CVs to support the overall work experience in the likelihood that future employers will be attracted by the training and certificates acquired.

**"Before the project started I was really down, I didn't have anything to do, I spent all my time applying for jobs and not getting anywhere, I was really depressed, I didn't think I could really do a job. Having been here for about 5 months everything has changed, it's brilliant, and hopefully it will just propel me into going far. It has proved to me that I can do all this work."**

**"I have been given a whole exhibition to do by myself; I've never had that much responsibility given to me before. I like that. It makes me feel like I have got a role, and I'm not just a dogsbody."**



**Name:** Ailsa Clarke  
**Job title:** Marketing Assistant  
**Museum:** Colchester and Ipswich  
 Museum Service

### **What has your job involved?**

Organising the image library, researching and building new contact databases, writing and proofing press releases, leaflets and banners. I answered queries, photographed events, designed and wrote the e-newsletter, processed feedback forms, archived press clippings, and attended trade shows to promote the service.

### **Any highlights?**

Being with the press photographers for the CT scan on our Egyptian Mummy and attending the opening of the new Saatchi Gallery exhibition. I also looked after the marketing department for three weeks after my boss was signed off sick.

### **What skills have you gained?**

Better understanding of marketing, working in a team, creative writing, time management skills, improved IT skills ....the list goes on.

### **What difference has this job made to you?**

It's given me a massive boost in confidence. I was so depressed before I started, I hadn't done anything productive in months.

### **Future plans?**

I'm going to do my MA Degree in Art, Design and the Book at Colchester Institute. I don't think I would have even got an interview if I hadn't put down all the things I've done whilst I've been at the museums on my application. I'm also signing on as one of the museum casual front of house staff.



**Name:** Stephen Roe  
**Job title:** Retail and Visitor Services Assistant  
**Museum:** Stockwood Discovery Centre, Luton

### What has your job involved?

I have learnt retail skills, how to operate the cash register, take money, cash up and reconcile the cash book. Also I have been involved with ordering, checking off deliveries and operating the EPOS system. I am now also learning about other aspects of the museum e.g. maintenance.

### Any highlights?

I enjoy working with the public, and much prefer it when we are busy. Event days are great.

### What skills have you gained?

Operating the cash register and the EPOS system, reception duties - answering the telephone and dealing with face to face enquiries. I access the computer for e-mail, bookings and

filling in orders. I am in the process of taking exams for the ECDL course and have already passed three exams.

### What difference has this job made to you?

Being employed and gaining experience means that I am now more likely to get a job in the future. Working in a team and gaining social skills, by working with the public and my colleagues.

### Future plans?

Winning the lottery ... but joking aside I would like to go into property development. I would like to buy a property and renovate it for the rental market.



**Name:** Adam Bass  
**Job title:** Admin Assistant  
**Museum:** Wisbech & Fenland  
 Museum/Wisbech Library  
 Fenland Collection

### What has your job involved?

Detailing museum items on the computer catalogue, photocopying, scanning and working on the reception. At the library I have spent a lot of time meeting and greeting the general public and dealing with enquiries as well as scanning, book shelving and using the microfiche.

### Any highlights?

I helped to teach small groups of children on a library visit. Beforehand I was extremely nervous and unsure of what reaction I would get. As it turned out I was able to interact with them in a confident and relaxed manner and I really enjoyed the event.

### What skills have you gained?

The ability to deal with the public in a relaxed and helpful manner. My ICT has improved as I have become more experienced in using Microsoft, printers and photocopiers.

### What difference has this job made to you?

It has given me an extra confidence boost and the much needed experience of a full-time job.

### Future plans?

I am currently looking and applying for admin jobs in the Fenland area and also considering starting an admin/business course.



**Name:** Amy Seaman  
**Job title:** Visitor Services Apprentice  
**Museum:** Norwich Castle Museum

### What has your job involved?

Customer service, cash handling, data input, financial work and working with the archaeologists with finds that come in. I have also worked on the front desk and in the shop.

### Any highlights?

My first day working here; all I could think of was I now work in this amazing museum!

### What skills have you gained?

More customer service skills and a lot more confidence dealing with a lot of people on a regular basis in person, on the phone and e-mails. I also feel that I have got better at maths!

### What difference has this job made to you?

It has shown me that you can still follow your dream of working in a museum, even though it might take a while to get there! It has given me the skills and confidence to move up to the next level.

### Future plans?

To complete my Level 3 certificate in Cultural and Heritage Venue Operations and to finish my Archaeology A-level. I also have a place ready and waiting for me to start a BA in Humanities with the Open University next year.

# Impact: Museums as mentors



Some advice from the curator, Wisbech & Fenland Museum

Many of the young people have benefited a huge amount from the way they have been welcomed, nurtured and mentored by staff within the museums. Aside from the skills they have learned, they have enjoyed excellent professional working relationships, in many cases an extended social network, which only adds to the feelings of confidence and self-esteem.

**“Weekly debriefs were helpful because I got to talk about things I wasn’t sure about or talk about what I had learned.”**

**“I definitely think they value me, they tell me so on numerous occasions.”**

The experience of unemployment can prompt people to feel like second class citizens, or judged negatively by their peers. Working in the museum challenges these feelings and leads to a more positive social life. On a practical level, the money they earn in working enables the young people to re-join their friends and peers in social activities.

**“I was going out of my mind, losing confidence... I was intensely bored and a bit embarrassed because people have an opinion of people on the dole and it’s not always right.”**

# Impact: The value of the museum environment

The young people all indicate that the experience of working in a museum environment has provided some very specific advantages. **Many were amazed at the sheer breadth of activities taken on in their museums,** and were fascinated by the variety and high quality of the outputs for members of the public. Their exposure to such a **broad range of skills and activities** means they are very optimistic about applying successfully for all kinds of jobs in the future.

**“It’s not just a museum, it’s a shop, a café, a business. I thought I would just be sat in a room logging items, I didn’t realise there was such a wide range of things to do...”**

In many cases, **the experience exceeded expectations.** Many young people, excluding those with prior experience of the museum sector, had expected the environment might be boring, academic or lacking in business expertise. Such preconceptions have been confounded, and some of these positive messages have been taken back into the community. In fact there was a **sense of real pride in being in a learned, cultural environment,** and around artefacts and exhibits that provide interest and pleasure to a spectrum of visitors.

**“The skills I have taken on board during the past two months are invaluable and I feel overjoyed to have been offered the chance to work in such a professional and versatile environment.”**



**Learning to work with heavy horses:  
Farm apprentice at Gressenhall Farm  
and Workhouse**



**Name:** Reece Pursey  
**Job title:** Exhibitions Assistant  
**Museum:** Epping Forest District Museum

#### **What has your job involved?**

Many different tasks such as the design and layout of exhibitions. This involved me using image editing software and 3D cad design software. Not only did I help with the design of exhibitions I also took part in the build and installation.

#### **Any highlights?**

A very different but useful experience.

#### **What skills have you gained?**

I have gained many different skills and qualifications working at the museum such as an NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration and a qualification in image editing software.

#### **What difference has this job made to you?**

This job has made a big difference to me and my future by giving me confidence in myself as well as more skills and qualifications added to my belt and C.V.

#### **Future plans?**

I have a few ideas in mind such as moving to Australia for a year or to try and get myself an apprenticeship working in a car garage or for a building company.



**Name:** Jordan Taylor-Todd  
**Job title:** Museum Assistant  
**Museum:** The National Horseracing Museum, Newmarket

### **What has your job involved?**

I have had the opportunity to try different roles all over the museum from the galleries to preparing and serving food in the café. I have worked in the souvenir shop, stock taking, selling and ordering new stock. I have helped organise events and even managed to get the museum to take part in the local carnival where I made a float. We took shop stock to sell and were able to advertise the museum to local people who hadn't been before.

### **Any highlights?**

Attending the carnival and taking part in the procession. Also going racing and helping out at a silent auction at the race course.

### **What skills have you gained?**

I am more comfortable using spreadsheets. I am much faster at typing. I feel I can interact with people who I've not met before much easier.

### **What difference has this job made to you?**

It has made me a lot more confident and the best thing about my experience is that because I have been able to work in all areas of the museum I feel like I could do anything!

### **Future plans?**

I'm not 100% sure yet I'm looking at different options before I decide my next step!



**Name:** Max Tucker  
**Job Title:** Building Maintenance Trainee Electrician  
**Museum:** Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

### **What has your job involved?**

My job at the museum involves the upkeep and maintenance of lighting and other electrical products, escort to on-site contractors and helping to set up exhibitions.

### **Any highlights?**

One of the biggest highlights for me was being able to help in the set up of the Shahnameh exhibition and to see how much hard work, dedication and man hours goes into making an empty hollow room come alive.

### **What skills have you gained?**

I don't think I have the room to write them all out as every day I seem to be learning new skills that will help me in the future. The Fitzwilliam has been kind enough to book me on courses that will help with my current job and jobs down the line.

### **What difference has the job made to you?**

I'm so grateful for this amazing chance. Within these last 6 months I feel like I have become a new person with a reason to get up in the morning.

### **Future plans?**

I think I found my calling.... I would love to be able to find another job within a museum as these last six months have been one of, if not the, best times of my life.

# With special thanks to all our project partners:

## Museum and Local Studies Services

Braintree District Museum Service  
Cambridge & County Folk Museum  
Cecil Higgins Art Gallery  
and Bedford Museum  
Chelmsford Museum  
Colchester and Ipswich Museum  
Service  
Cromwell Museum with Huntingdon  
Archives & Local Studies  
Ely Museum  
Epping Forest District Museum  
The Farmland Museum & Denny Abbey  
The Fitzwilliam Museum  
Museum of Harlow  
Museums Luton  
National Horseracing Museum  
Norfolk Museums & Archaeology  
Service  
North Herts Museum Service  
St Edmundsbury Borough Council  
Heritage Service  
Southend Museums Service  
Stevenage Museum  
Wisbech & Fenland Museum  
with Wisbech Library

## Colleges

Bedford College  
City College Norwich  
Easton College  
Hertford Regional College  
North Hertfordshire College  
South East Essex College  
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