

Islington Museum
Audience Consultation Report
February 2022
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Consultation Aims

The aims of the consultation were to find out:

- How visitors felt about the museum as it currently is – what people liked and what people wanted to see changed
- How to make the museum easier to find, use and enjoy
- How to better represent the people of Islington through the displays, collections, and stories
- How to make the permanent gallery relevant, accessible, and interesting to local services

Consultation Methods

Consultation with target audiences took place in November and December 2021. The consultation methods used were:

- Tours and a survey for general visitors
- Tours and a survey for families
- Tours and a survey for teachers
- Tours and discussion with group of young people
- Discussion with group of volunteers
- Tours, surveys, and discussion with range of service users

Overall, we achieved 185 separate instances of engagement.

Consultees

We undertook consultation with:

- **Service leads (18 individuals interviewed) from:**
 - **Islington Communities Team (ICT)**
 - Supports the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) in a number of ways: funding, access to space and advice and support. Working in partnership with local community associations the team manages a number of community facilities across the borough.
 - **Islington Council Commissioning Team (ICCT)**
 - Work with users to create useful services, usually for the most marginalised groups in the community.
 - **Disability Action in Islington (DAI)**
 - A DPO (a disabled people's organisation) run by disabled people for disabled people. Exists to enable local disabled people to

access services and entitlements and challenge exclusion and discrimination.

- **Islington Schools Improvement Team (SIT)**
 - Promotes improving outcomes for Children and Young People in Islington by supporting with leadership and management, improving teaching, and learning within the Islington Community of Schools and as a broker of developing school to school support and capacity building for the future.
- **Islington Bright Futures (BF)**
 - Support families with school-aged children up to 19 years old.

- **135 general visitors (GV)**

73 general visitors completed a survey, and 62 general visitors gave feedback via the engagement boards in the Museum. Three community tours with 23 individuals took place, with all attendees encouraged to fill in the survey. A third of those completing the survey had visited the Museum before. A third were visiting alone. The majority were not visiting with children under 12. These visitors had primarily found out about the Museum through word of mouth or by walking past (some worked nearby, and some used the library). See appendix A for more details.

- **3 Islington teachers (T)**

One tour with these 3 teachers took place. One had brought pupils to Islington Museum before. All completed a survey.

- **8 Islington families (F)**

Two tours with 16 attendees took place. Families were encouraged to fill in the survey and eight did. Three families had been to Islington Museum before.

- **Group of young people (YP)**

Two tours with 14 YP took place. They gave some general feedback.

- **7 Museum volunteers (V)**

They gave some general feedback.

Demographic profile of consultees:

Demographic data was gathered from 82 consultees (out of the total 87 that completed a survey), but not everyone answered every demographic question.

Of those who provided data, two-thirds of consultees described themselves as female and a third as male. The majority described themselves as heterosexual. There was a wide age range from 18 to 76+. Approximately two-thirds described themselves as White and a third described themselves as Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani Chinese, Japanese, Korean), Black and of mixed ethnicity. Just over 10% of consultees said they had a disability. Approximately two-thirds of consultees lived in Islington and just under half worked/went to school in the Borough. Please see appendix B for all details.

Project Team Reflection & Action

In autumn 2021, Islington Heritage Service conducted an audit of Islington Museum's current permanent exhibition, layout and facilities with their drop in audiences, key council services and local community groups. The findings from this consultation reveal much to be celebrated about the current museum, while also identifying a number of key challenges to user enjoyment and access (see key findings, p5).

Based on these findings, the Heritage team are developing early recommendations for the future museum, including the following:

- Audiences are keen to leave the museum with a stronger sense of place. The redesign will involve a rethink of the story we tell, and how. At this stage, residents' feedback emphasises Islington as 'home' or a 'community', suggesting a potential lens through which to explore Islington's history.
- Islington is a diverse borough. The future museum will better reflect and celebrate this. More flexible display methods will allow us to accommodate new collections, community projects and resident responses, while coproduction throughout the redevelopment will allow us to embed community voices into the redisplay.
- People are excited about the museum collection and want a more interactive and hands on experience. The new gallery will feature more opportunities for visitors to interact with objects via questions, prompts, handling stations, talks and tours with experts, and imaginative interactives.
- While some visitors are happy with the levels of information on display, the current interpretation panels proved a barrier to access for others. More objects, interactives, larger text, more images and clearer lighting will be central to our rethink of the gallery displays.
- Finding, entering and navigating the museum can be confusing for visitors. The future museum will be more welcoming and accessible. The team proposes:
 - improving our online presence, establishing a clearer visitor journey and allowing audiences to plan their visit
 - creating a vibrant and inviting street level entranceway to better attract and welcome visitors
 - improving internal and external signage
 - the removal of the rotating doors and highlighting of accessible automatic doors
 - a more prominent welcome desk, clearer sightlines and better signposted facilities, events and exhibits
 - inclusion of an interactive orientation area, featuring maps of Islington, timelines and prompts to help visitors navigate the space and contextualise the heritage on display
 - the provision of suitable access, wayfinding and learning tools, in keeping with the newly curated gallery

Residents and stakeholders will explore, feedback on, and refine these ideas via:

- 3 upcoming focus groups in February 2022
- An online consultation running during March 2022
- a consultation open day on 19th March 2022

This process will guide the team in developing a wish list for the future museum, which will in turn inform the physical redesign of the space, the curation of the new gallery, and the museum's future programming. Residents will join us for co-curation sessions at key stages throughout the project.

Key Findings

The Museum is really enjoyed as it is and described as a manageable size, informative, with 'wonderful and interesting' objects, play opportunities, a community room and changing exhibitions. Families and children love the 'child's corner' and kitchen play. However, many visitors see the potential for making it even better (it was often described as a bit 'dated').

There are considerable issues with finding the Museum – in the area generally and on location at street-level (see p14). The signage in the area and at street level needs to be better, bigger, and more inviting. A lot of people say they don't see marketing/press about the Museum: *'more marketing and signage from the street – you don't know what the place is or that it is there' (F)*.

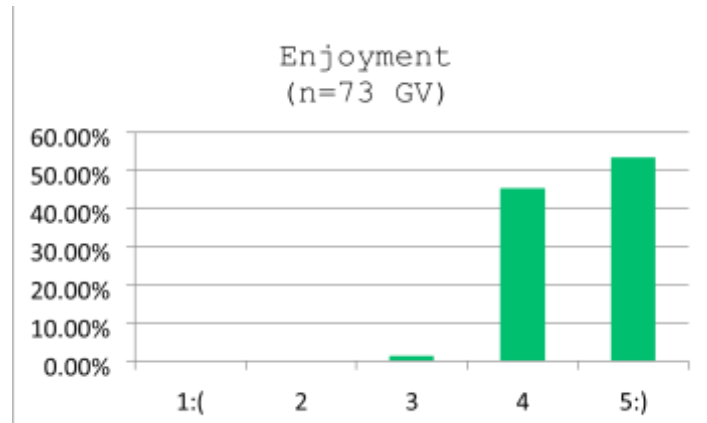
There are four key problems with the entrance to the Museum: not very attractive/appealing (street level and museum entrance), confusing doors, the wall visitors are faced with on entering, and the location of the welcome desk (p15).

The public see a lot of potential for improvements in the following key areas:

- ✓ Improve welcome space/orientation (p16)
- ✓ Better use of the space (p17)
- ✓ Clearer overarching narrative: *'is it the history of Islington or the heritage of the people?'* (V) (p17)
- ✓ Better represent the diversity of Islington, celebrate people's stories and reflect Islington as a 'home' and 'a community' (p21)
- ✓ Clearer layout (orientation, coding, themes, flow, internal signage) (p18) ✓
Content (p19):
 - more objects
 - more in-depth information in different formats
 - more people's stories
 - more about changing Islington over the years with stronger links from past to present day life
- ✓ Integrate family and school engagement activities into the displays. Teachers and their representatives see many possibilities for increasing opportunities for schools (pp 24-26)
- ✓ Increase accessibility, removing barriers for all target audiences (p22)
- ✓ Update interpretation methods (p23)
 - more to do, touch, explore, listen to and experience
 - use of digital where appropriate
 - alternatives ways of telling the stories, beyond paragraphs of text

Detailed Findings

How much do visitors enjoy the Museum?



Many described their visit as interesting and informative¹ (particularly about local history):

- ☞ *'In general, I think this museum is fabulous! It's unassuming, tucked away in a basement, so I had no expectations. Its similarly understated in the explanations around the displays. I had no idea Islington was so interesting! (Wesley! Wollstonecraft!)*
- ☞ *'I loved the museum. History is great, local history even better!'*
- ☞ *'Learned a whole lot more about the war, the call phone booth really made me feel like I was part of it'*
- ☞ *Because there's lots of interesting things to read! And it's a beautiful place!*

They enjoyed the great variety of wonderful and interesting objects (*'nicely displayed'*) that *'track the history of Islington'* through a wide variety of themes and accompanying information:

- ☞ *'Surprised and impressed by breadth of content'*
- ☞ *'Interesting information, easily read and understood'*
- ☞ *'Lots of info packed into a small space'*
- ☞ *I like the stories about normal people. I like the lack of glorification of weapons as found in other museums. Thank you for this. Nice children's playthings. Empathy for prisoners is nice, as this is a hard thing for children to grasp*

Some added that it was warm, clean, free, quiet, compact and the staff were helpful and friendly. A number mentioned that their children had enjoyed it too:

¹ Some of the feedback was about the tour visitors had joined e.g., *'lovely clear tour guide'*, *'storytelling is always well presented prepared and thoughtful'*.

- 🗨️ *'Clean, friendly and enough to entertain both young child and me'*
- 🗨️ *'It's been a long time since we have been here, but my girls asked to come, and they really enjoyed it'*
- 🗨️ *'Nice child's corner'*
- 🗨️ *'... it was so cool that you had a play kitchen'*

But one visitor mentioned there was a *'noisy kid running around'* which made it difficult to concentrate.

Two visitors wanted to find out more:

- 🗨️ *'Some thought-provoking and interesting stuff. Made me want to do more research, Which is what all good museums should do!!'*
- 🗨️ *'I didn't realise how much history Islington has as someone who isn't a local. It's made me more aware of the community and I now want to visit all the places mentioned that took part in significant events'*

Three enjoyed their visit but could see more potential:

- 🗨️ *'Enjoyed but felt that there is potential for more on the people and changing Islington over the years - how the street and shops have changed in photos for example'*
- 🗨️ *'The museum gives a great overview of local history, covering lots of periods/themes and also telling the stories of members of the local community, often under-represented people (such as the LGBTQ+ community.) However, there is sometimes a lack of coherency in the displays, which would benefit from closer connections to individual biographies. It may also be beneficial to make stronger connections between the past and past events and modern life. For example, a display about fashion through the ages could explore the connections between styles of the past and the modern day. A discussion of radicalism through the ages could culminate in discussions of today's local art and music scene, for example. I notice that art, literature, and music as subjects are quite absent from the gallery, despite local connections (e.g., authors and poets buried at Bunhill Fields). Art is, by its nature, a great way to engage people and offers opportunities in terms of interactivity and constructivist methods of telling stories (i.e., self-exploration)'*

What do visitors want to keep?

A few visitors said that the Museum was totally fine as it was:

- 💬 *'I actually love it - surprised that the feeling is that it needs to be redone. I like the curving aisles, and also that if you came with other people, you wouldn't fear losing track of them' (GV)*

They particularly wanted to keep the wonderful artefacts, the clothes and kitchen play (*'the universality of these objects are helpful for ESOL and family learning'*- SU), the wealth of information, film, the temporary exhibitions, people's stories, the size, and layout (SIT & F), the children's area and the community room (*'a great space'* - BF).

What are these visitors' favourite objects?

Visitors talked about a whole range of objects. Particularly appealing were the cast iron animal heads from Caledonian Market, the kitchen, the historic clothes (including the 1950s dress and the man's swimming costume), the Collins Music Hall reel, objects/films about Arsenal Football Club and the bust of Lenin. They also liked the WW2 objects, objects from Highbury Hill House, badges from the 70s, the nurse's uniform, the cat collage, and the silver presentation cup.

- 💬 *The kitchen because my daughter loves making pretend foods and have lots of good memories*

Other objects mentioned just once were Joe Orton's books, the workhouse recipe book, the letter from Eva Holmes, a book about school punishments, the Holloway prison toothpaste (*'makes you think about women saving up to buy branded toothpaste, so they don't have to use the cheap gritty stuff'*), concealed wood from the house at Cross Street, the milk cart, an embroidery postcard, a suit case, a hospital urine bottle, nightclub posters and flyers, the medieval dagger, the Russian Bear Grease pot lid (*'opened a vivid window into the past. Personal grooming practices and bears!'*) and the drover's badge and whistle (*'really bring home to me the history of the immediate area where I live'*).

Young people liked the cow skull, milk cart, fireplace, cross street collection, and Lenin bust. Families liked the kitchen, the firefighter clothes, and the medals: *'[my child] clearly loved stirring the milk - a sensory input experience.'*

What do these visitors think about the object information?

The majority felt the information about their favourite object was pitched at the right level and told them what they needed to know. One wanted a bit more detail about their object (concealed wood from the house at Cross Street).

- ☞ *'Very good, right level and yes told me what I wanted to know about the market'*
- ☞ *'It was pitched at the right level for me, with an opportunity for further exploration'*
- ☞ *'For a museum containing a lot of written panels, the lengths of the majority here are good'*
- ☞ *'Yes, the information displayed is very readable and easy to digest and also colourful'*

A few were *'somewhat satisfied'*. The visitor who chose Joe Orton's books said there was missing information i.e. the information neglected to include that *'Islington Council prosecuted Orton'*. Four said the information about their chosen object wasn't pitched at the right level and didn't tell them what they needed to know. One visitor thought that their chosen object could be better brought to life through engaging questions posed to the visitor:

- ☞ *'...the object's great age (medieval dagger) helps to ground the gallery in deep history and so it's well placed near the entrance. ...even if there isn't much historic context for this object, you can still ask questions about it...what was it used for, why was it here, who may have used it? These questions don't rely on facts but draw out answers from visitors from the get-go'*

These visitors had a whole range of questions they wanted to ask an expert about their chosen object. In particular they wanted to know more about people's lives, if they can visit places mentioned, when, why, and how objects were made. Please see appendix D for more details.

Teachers said a visit to the Museum could fit into the following topics:

- ☞ *'Local community history sessions at school would be enhanced by visits to the museum'*
- ☞ *'Y1 and y6 - local area topics, local area and sustainability, Black history month and exploring equality and diversity'*
- ☞ *'Victorians in Summer term - what was Islington like during this period?'*
- ☞ *'PSHE sessions - what makes a community? Black History Month – Windrush- Nurse Pearlina and her account of life in Islington'*
- ☞ *'Suffragettes, Dick Whittington, Upper Holloway, Y6 WW2'*

Objects and stories that would interest their pupils included:

- 🗨️ *'Migration stories - cows walking through the streets of Islington!'*
- 🗨️ *'Suffragettes'*
- 🗨️ *'Radicalism/activism - especially if this could be accessible even for the younger years'*
- 🗨️ *'Immigration - I have a hugely diverse class'*

Key curriculum links they would like to see made 'local':

- 🗨️ *'Architecture, climate change, land use and trade (tricky to teach this subject knowledge wise) and art/modernism'*
- 🗨️ *'Victorians is a topic that is taught in most schools. Could there be something about an immersive Victorian Islington experience?'*

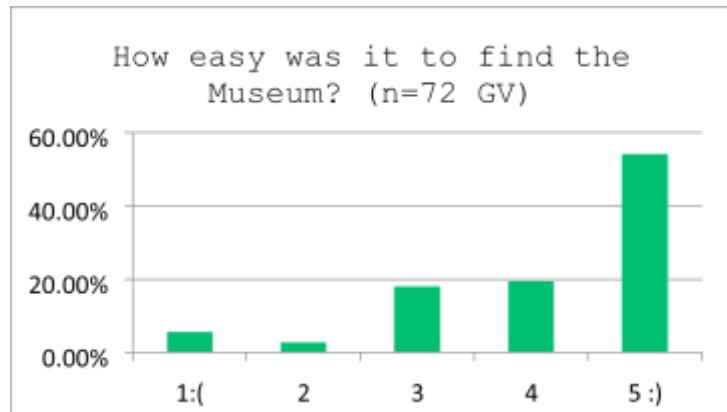
They rated the current practical facilities a 3 on a scale of 😞1-😊5 and felt that only some of the text was at the right level for pupils to understand:

- 🗨️ *'Lots of information is too high and some font is tricky to read. Perhaps a sectioned board would be easier to interpret'*
- 🗨️ *'There is quite a lot of reading which would only be accessible to Y5/6 at age related expectations. Slightly too much looking and reading'*

What do these visitors want to change

Make it easier to find

- ☞ *'I walk by all the time. Glad I mustered the nerve to come on in!'*
- ☞ *'I wasn't entirely sure how to get in, nor if it was open, despite the signage. It's a bit too discreetly located'*



Of those visitors that rated this highly (4 and 5) some stated that the signage was clear. Some said they already knew it was there as they have walked past before (or walk past regularly). A couple had used Google maps, one visitor had been brought by someone else and one had come in a taxi.

Of those that rated this lower (1 to 3) they wanted the signage in the area and at street level to be better, bigger, and more inviting because the Museum was in such a *'discreet location'*. A couple felt that the Lenin banners were *'a turn off'*. A couple were confused and thought the Museum was part of the library.

- ☞ *'You wouldn't know that there was a museum from upstairs - whenever I mention the museum to people, they say I didn't know that as there is nothing on the street level - I bet people in the flats don't know it exists'*
- ☞ *'Hard to find and didn't know it existed, badly signposted – came on the 19 bus and there was a map which had Sadlers on it, but not the museum – why? no Brown sign (SIT)'*
- ☞ *'Brown sign or included on the maps in the area – needs to be more investment in the advertising and signposting of the museum' (SIT)*
- ☞ *'More marketing and signage from the street - you don't know what the place is or that it is there' (F)*

The Schools Improvement Team (SIT) had a suggestion re schools:

- ☞ *Consider how schools will get to the museum from around the borough. The website needs to show a clear map of the bus routes and transport for the museum from around the borough (e.g., it is on the No19 bus route, which lots of schools would visit via). It needs to let people book into the education room for lunch in winter, so classes could bring lunch if coming from the other end of the borough. Show local parks or areas to have lunch in summer' (SIT)*

Update the entrance

The lower ground location is problematic, but generally people understand this can't be changed. The families who took part in the consultation said they were all fine with getting down to the Museum from street level, getting into the Museum, getting around the Museum with a buggy, the toilets/changing area and the Museum being generally 'family friendly'. However, they said they had had clear instructions for joining the family tour. This wasn't typical of the feedback from most.

Visitors said the impression from ground level could be improved. The staircase was described as *'daunting'*.

- ☞ *'Looks miserable from the front' (GV)*
- ☞ *'Make the outside area much more welcoming with murals, plants, banners, waterproof cushions. Could you project onto the concrete with themed archive images which change throughout the year?' (SIT)*
- ☞ *'If not allowed a café, could you get a coffee and food cart who sets up in the concrete outdoor bit on Fridays and Saturdays or on days there are events?' (SIT)*

The actual entrance to the Museum has three main issues which are a barrier for visitors feeling welcome and confident to come inside.

The doors

- ☞ *'Separate accessible door and revolving door is alienating – may not be the intention, but may be the impact – equally the accessible door is not suitably signposted, and many may not know can access the space' (DAI)*
- ☞ *'The difficulty of being down a level from the street, and the visual block caused by the rotating doors, are both problematic for making our communities feel welcome' (ICT)*
- ☞ *'Revolving doors – pushchairs and small children often get stuck' (V)*
- ☞ *'The swing door is a bit heavy to move'*
- ☞ *'The revolving door can be confusing'*
- ☞ *'The automatic doors aren't intuitive'*
- ☞ *'Automatic doors – very difficult for people to find the button from inside or outside'*

Wall on entering

- ☞ *'Wall on entering blocks way in and leads to confusion of where to go' (BF)*
- ☞ *'The big wall at the front hits you as you come in and you don't know where you're meant to go'*
- ☞ *'Main wall is a barrier – does anyone even read it? (V)*

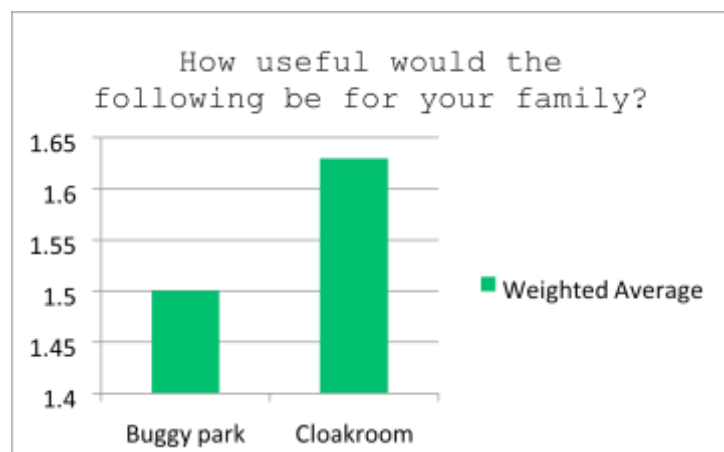
Location of welcome desk:

- *'It's not welcoming – the location of the welcome desk is strange' (SIT)*
- *'Finding the museum is challenging for visitors - also once they are inside, they are unsure if they can come in because the desk is so far from the door, it feels unwelcoming' (V)*
- *'A welcome desk near the front door to offer directions and information would enhance their experience' (V)*
- *'When I came in, I couldn't see the info desk and didn't know if I'd come on the wrong day'*
- *'Not somewhere that is welcoming when you walk in'*
- *'No line of site between front desk and the entrance, which hinders supervision of the galleries and also creates a confusing entrance to the gallery'*
- *'Sight lines – difficult to see a lot of the cases, impossible to see the play kitchen, lack of entrance clarity' (V)*
- *'The front desk should be moved closer to the entrance, so it is more welcoming, and it is easier to engage visitors' (V)*

Once inside, they wanted the general welcome/orientation to be improved.

- Make it clear its free. There was some uncertainty whether the museum is free or not, and *'some people might be too scared to ask!'*
- Provide a designated buggy park and cloakroom

'We need buggy park...a shed and a space for our coats'
'It is not crowded today - if it were, these may be needed'
'Would be nice to put coat up to make us stay here for longer'
Need a proper buggy park where people can safely lock up their buggies if they wish – can this be under the concrete stairs in the entrance? (SIT)



- A welcome board which tells an overarching story, shows you how to approach the museum what the facilities are, where Islington is and its boundaries. Ideally in common local languages (SIT, BF)
- Increase colour in entrance and include images of local people today (BF)
- A character guide at the start of the museum – a cartoon or a real person, suitable for the age of the audience (BF)

Make better use of the space

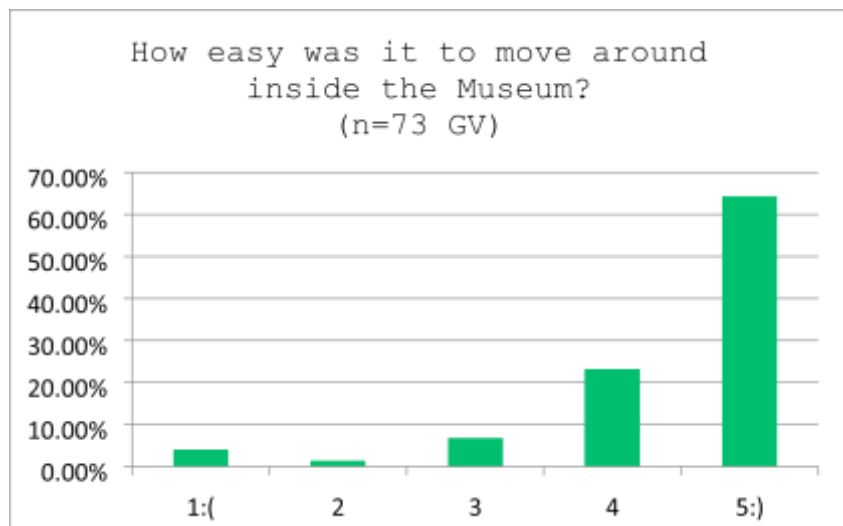
Although quite a few people said they liked the smaller, manageable space some (including volunteers) also suggested that better use could be made of it:

- *'A lot of large, dead spaces being wasted' (V)*
- *'Need to open the museum out' (V)*
- *'If the desk is moved closer to the door it would open up the floor plan for the museum making it bigger' (V)*

A clearer narrative and layout

Of those visitors that rated this highly (4 and 5) they explained it was easy to move around because there was lots of space and few other visitors (they could see it might be harder if more people). They liked the size, layout, clear themes, and informal approach:

- *'Some uncertainty where to go, but enjoyed freedom from a fixed route'*
- *'Informal, easy to meander around and small enough to let the kids explore by themselves'*



They were positive about the lift, that the Museum was on one level, there were seats, and it was well lit. These all helped these visitors navigate and enjoy the Museum.

Of those that rated this lower (1 to 3) they felt the layout was *'confusing'* and *'haphazard'* and *'not helped by poor lighting'*.

- *'There are some issues about accessibility once inside the museum walking around isn't too difficult, however the snaky nature of the displays could create some problems for access. Also, the toilets are quite hidden away'*

- ☞ *'The first panel does not tell you about the museum itself or set the tone, or help you prepare what to expect – could there be a window in it, surrounded by the intro?' (ICT)*

Some museum visitors obviously prefer a more informal experience, and some want a clearly laid out route. The overwhelming feedback from the service users and volunteers consulted was that a clearer overarching narrative and layout would be good.

Clearer overarching narrative:

- ☞ *'Overarching narrative unclear' (ICT)*
- ☞ *'We could start at the now and look back on Islington or start in 'green fields' and look forward to now – current gallery does neither in that it starts with 'green fields' but doesn't really go anywhere' (V)*
- ☞ *'Is the museum about history or heritage? Is it the history of Islington or the heritage of the people?' (V)*
- ☞ *'Wealth of info but it feels like it doesn't flow or connect' (BF)*
- ☞ *'What is our USP? – Museum doesn't really show why Islington is special: first village north of London' (V)*
- ☞ *'Choose fewer broader themes and make the links between them clearer – currently feels piecemeal' (ICCT)*
- ☞ *'Theme of Islington as a home would be powerful central idea' (ICCT)*
- ☞ *'Needs to have a clearer narrative or story, and to show the two 'sides' of Islington more clearly' (SIT)*
- ☞ *'Make the overarching narrative clearer – this would help teachers put together a trip and make sense of the content with their class' (SIT)*

Examples of museums given that have a clear overarching narrative were Hackney Museum and the People's History Museum ('We tell story of the past, present and future of democracy in Britain): *'it is clear what holds all the stories together in these museums but not here'*.

Clearer layout:

- ☞ *'Had difficulty working out which way to move through the exhibition'*
- ☞ *'Chaotic displays and busy structure – lack of cohesion and flow between stories' (ICCT)*
- ☞ *'The layout is not good for a school class – unclear colour coding, themes and no flow' (SIT)*
- ☞ *'Clunky. You walk in and are hit by a board then pinball around the museum. I didn't know where to go – where is the floor plan, the trails, the footprints or arrows on the floor?' (SIT)*
- ☞ *'Lines on floor mapping direction to key items or places' (ICCT)*

- ☞ *'On entering, don't know where to start – the layout is not clear, and nothing is signposted' (DAI)*
- ☞ *'(Needs) an orientation map (at entrance)'*

Clearer internal signage was suggested to help visitor orientate themselves. This is borne out by the repeated questions asked to the volunteers (see appendix C).

- ☞ *'Toilet signs and general signage would help navigate these challenges (posed by visitors)' (V)*

More content

Some visitors said there wasn't anything they expected to see/find out that isn't in the Museum (some said they had no expectations before they came).

Some expected to see a really big map (possibly interactive) of Islington:

- ☞ *'So, visiting residents can spot where they live!'*
- ☞ *'I grew up in Islington so would be nice to find out more about the street I lived on'*
- ☞ *'Mention many places around the borough but not clear where these all are. Could each place be accompanied by a mini map that shows where it is? Map could have QR codes taking you to google maps so people can take themselves off to see key sites'*
- ☞ *'Larger maps leading up to a contemporary map with magnets to locate your home or school or landmarks...'* (SIT)

A lot of visitors wanted more artefacts, more old photographs (side by side with their modern counterpart) and more film (including vintage). They wanted to be able to access more in-depth information about what interested them and suggested screens, QR codes, a guide (could be online), more audio. and *'pull out drawers to allow visitors to delve deeper into the subject areas'*, One visitor wanted *'information to take-away'* as there was too much to absorb on-site.

Topics/stories where they wanted some or more information included:

- Arsenal FC
- Camden Passage
- Crime and criminal groups
- Dickens
- Doctors' surgeries
- Housing
- How the main streets have evolved (shops, restaurants, businesses)
- Industrial past and the canal
- Islington through time (change and continuity)

- ☞ *'sense of Islington through time is missing – same streets and buildings but different stories' (V)*
- ☞ *'Some nice links to the present, but not in other cases e.g., disability stories – there should be a clearer through-line to what happens today in Islington – opportunities for people to connect with story through time as well as learn history' (ICT)*
- ☞ *'Consider the educational level of some of the families we work with – the text and the approach needs to be adjusted to be more accessible. Perhaps provide wider historical context and build into the specific local info and don't assume their knowledge about wider history' (BF)*
- ☞ *'More of a conceptual/thematic run through of how this has influenced today's Islington'*

- Markets
- Medieval history
- Night life (evolution)
- Poetry, music, and art
- Political changes
- Post-war planning
- Pre-history, pre-Victorian, and modern Islington
- Transport (evolution)
- Religious history (*'Islington was founded around 4 religious' institutions, but you wouldn't know that from the museum' - V*)
- Sadlers Wells and Clerkenwell
- Stories of wider Islington, e.g., Finsbury Park
- The V2 attack on Highbury Corner
- Watch makers
- WW2

Objects expected but missing included:

- Maps through time
- Bomb damage maps of area
- Plaque to the volunteer team who set it up
- The Islington flag

Other things expected but missing included:

- Changing displays (?)
- Film Club (Islington feature films)
- Gift shop/Café
- Info about Islington historical walks
- Reminiscence opportunities

- Sound/music (*'quiet and hushed, feels like are not allowed to talk or play – impacts audience confidence' -BF*), (*would*) *add to the visitor experience'*

Better represent the diverse people of Islington

When asked *'what does Islington mean to you?'* via the Museum engagement boards visitors talked about *'home'* and *'community'*:

- ☞ *It means 'community', many people coming together now and again – sharing a living space*
- ☞ *I live here, it's my home*

These visitors wanted more stories about Islington people, right up to the present day. These should be at the heart of the Museum:

- ☞ *(You can't tell the story of Islington without....) all the people who lived here past and present – unheard stories giving a voice to a diversity of stories and experiences (GV)*
- ☞ *'Stories of ordinary people are good – but some bits rely too much on stories about institutions or objects rather than the people who used these, made these, etc.'* (ICT)
- ☞ *'Telling peoples local stories -these stories are important' (YP)*
- ☞ *'Multiculturalism is hinted at but should be front and centre and should link to today. Our families would love to come in and be able to find their own story or stories like theirs, and then explore their links to Islington's past. Could we have talking heads of locals talking about their parents and grandparents and what they contributed or experienced in Islington?' (BF)*
- ☞ *'Start with the personal and then go out to the historical context' (BF)*
- ☞ *'People should be able to see part of themselves reflected and say I belong here'*
- ☞ *'Nothing specifically about disability - just health not much interaction'*
- ☞ *'Loved the range of voices in the Holloway quotes and the video – this section was the most linked to the now, with real diversity in who you saw and heard. Sometimes in the text around the gallery, there were references to a range of people from diverse backgrounds, but images didn't always reflect this diversity' (ICT)*
- ☞ *'Making home in Islington section feels like an add on to the cross-street collection rather than a real engagement with the diversity of the borough' (ICT)*
- ☞ *'Not sufficiently diverse or reflective of Islington' (ICCT)*
- ☞ *'Other communities mentioned in the 'home' display feel like a tick box afterthought' (V)*

Bright Futures (BF) suggested bringing in young people to tell their stories and design a display in the museum:

- ☞ *'A display or workshop based on family trees, created by young people exploring where we have come from and what we want next in Islington – and space for visitors to input own stories'*
- ☞ *'Recording audio, podcasts or video led by the young people, following a prompt'*

Increase accessibility

There were some reported accessibility issues:

- ☞ *'Came to see Orton and Halliwell - couldn't see the book covers from my wheelchair - these should be more accessibly placed'*
- ☞ *'There was no dropped curb for taxi to put down ramp for wheelchair access. Perhaps a designated accessible drop off space would be good?'*
- ☞ *'Larger text would be appreciated' (YP)*
- ☞ *'Partially sighted audiences probably cannot access this space' (DAI)*
- ☞ *'Maps on entry panel are good to have but are currently too small to find anything' (V)*
- ☞ *'Couple of cases where the panel AND the object are really text heavy – not good for all audiences' (ICT)*
- ☞ *'Very busy – too much text, graphics a bit overwhelming' (DAI)*
- ☞ *Text heavy and all in English (BF)*

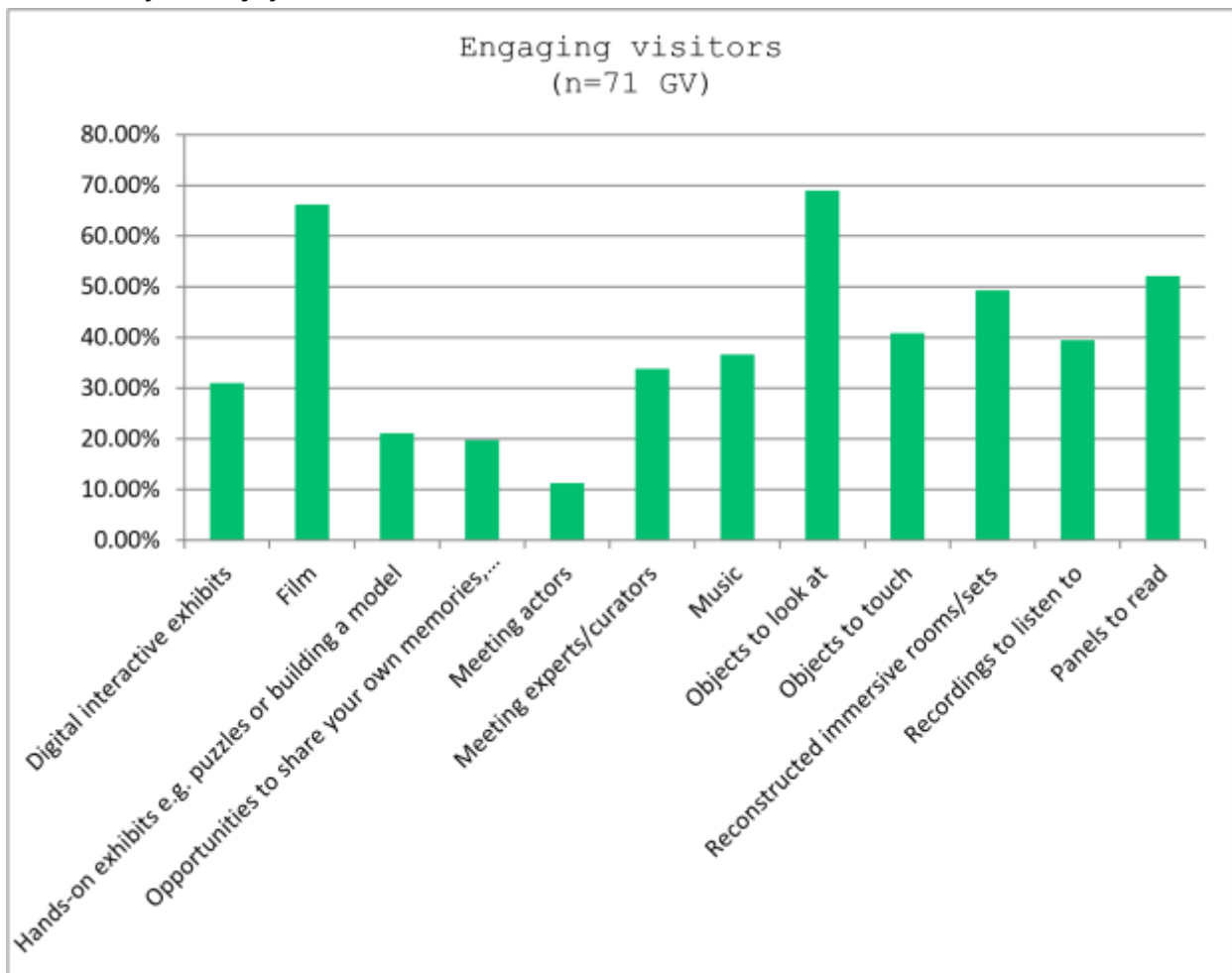
Disability Action in Islington (DAI) made some detailed recommendations – please see appendix E.

Update interpretation methods

This was the area where feedback came thick and fast! Film and objects to look at were high on their wish list. They also talked about having more audio, oral histories, engaging questions and maps. Digital interpretation was attractive to some i.e., the use of QR codes *'for interactivity'* and *'Flashboards - tech or changeable screens embedded throughout to allow flexibility responding to Black History Month, NHS's birthday, etc.'*(ICCT)

- ☞ *'The gallery is also quite traditional in its modus operandi, and certain displays could be very entertaining with some creativity. For example, the mannequin display case has a lot of potential, for instance it could be used to display Grimaldi in various poses and outfits! Perhaps some of the didactic information could be replaced by constructivist statements, e.g., "how does this make you feel", "what are the connections to your life?", the kind of statements that naturally draw people in and don't just feel like an extension of*

school-based learning. People should leave the museum with a feeling that they've enjoyed themselves'.

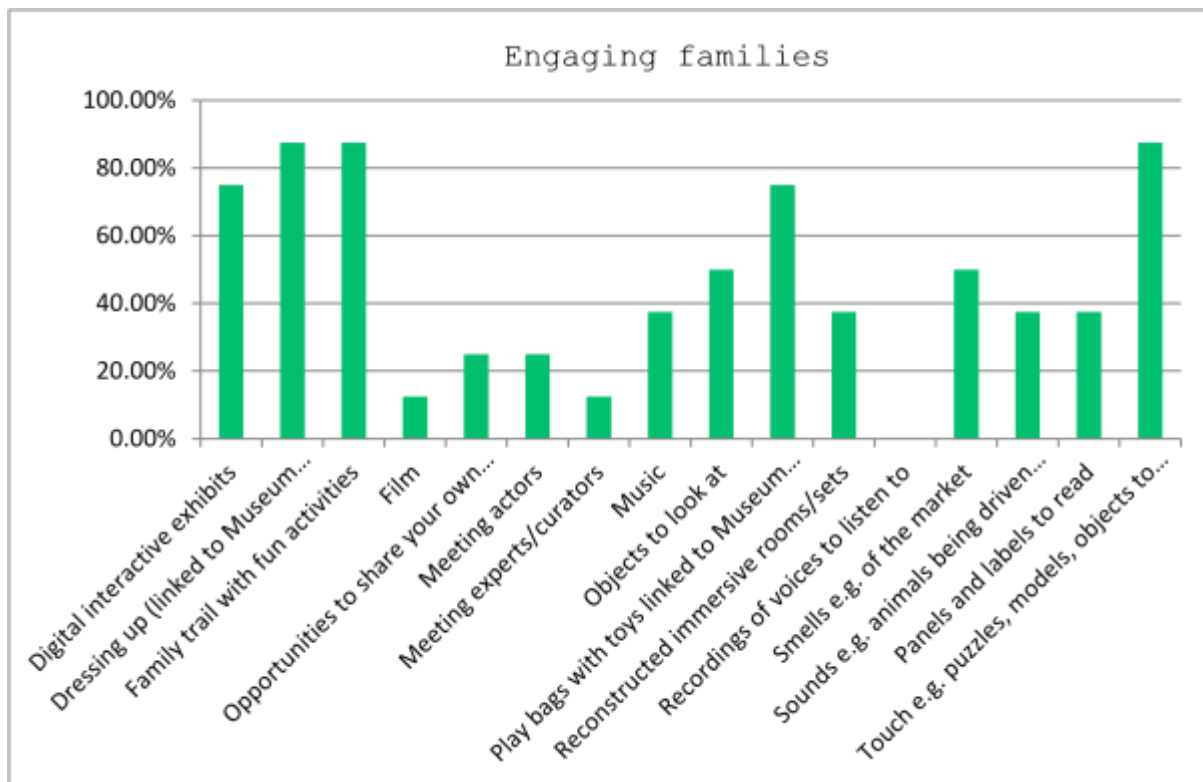


That there were already interactive elements in the displays was acknowledged but they were felt to be *'quite traditional and perhaps even old fashioned'*, and visitors wanted much more of them.

Young people liked *'the telephones with the stories'* and said they *'are amazing if you don't like reading'*. They wanted more historical videos/animations, games, copies of objects, trails, dressing up, storyboards, virtual reality, models of old buildings, and music.

Families wanted more immersive, interactive experiences, trails, drawing, colouring, play spaces related to displays (e.g., Islington trade), dressing up, photo opportunities and role play. One parent suggested *'a little guidebook to help families talk through the museum or maybe an online social story to download for SEN families.'* Another said the Museum could make the maternity/hospital info more interactive with toy babies, hospital toys and dress up. Bright Futures (BF) wanted the Museum to increase video and audio interpretation throughout, provide access to alternative audio in common local languages and options for reading the text in

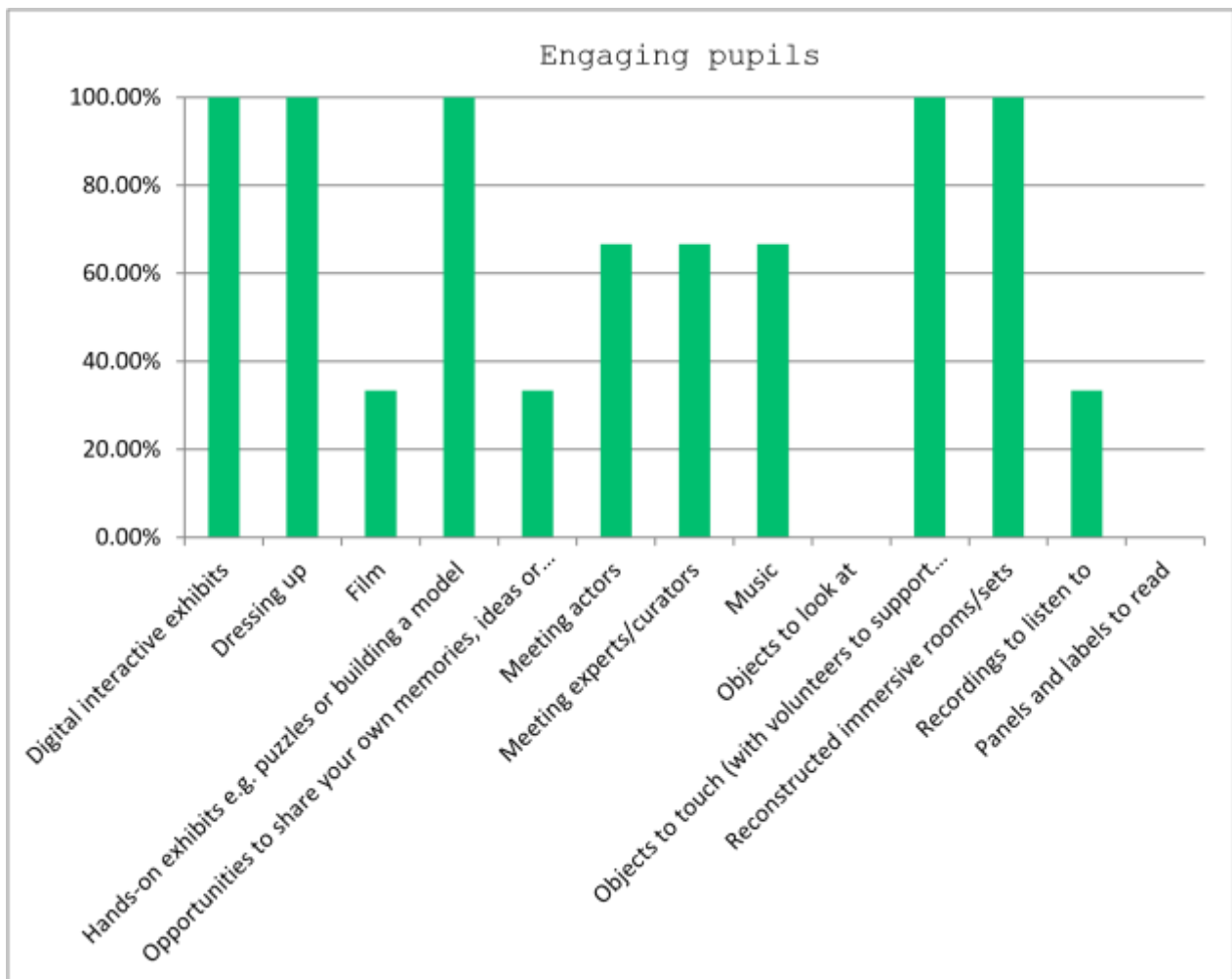
different languages and introduce a trail *'which introduces and leads you around the space'*.



More integrated family learning opportunities were suggested:

- ☞ *'Needs better integrated family learning and activities for families and young people in the exhibition'*
- ☞ *'Activities that are interactive, integrated, and relevant for families, children, and young people'.*
- ☞ *'Children's area isn't linked to anything in the gallery – this doesn't encourage family play in or exploration of the gallery' (ICT)*

Teachers were asked about ways of engaging pupils. Digital interactive exhibits, dressing up, hands-on exhibits, objects to touch and reconstructed rooms/sets were rated highly. They wanted *'giant'* timelines, less words/highlighted glossary words - labelled pictures/diagrams/instead of paragraphs and ways of providing the information without too much reading. Photographs of their local areas at different points in history - now and then would be very useful. Hologram or videos of characters speaking to the children would be great!



The teachers described the kind of self-led museum visits that have worked particularly well on other school trips:

- ☞ *'Highlights trail specific to year group'*
- ☞ *'Quiz, treasure hunt with markers/objects to find. Objects or interactives which make children say wow - or run towards!'*
- ☞ *'Hand-outs of quizzes and games to give the trip a focus. Nice when this links to certain exhibits and areas. Non-school based adults interacting with the children. Not replicating a school day in a different location'.*

The Schools Improvement Team (SIT) said the Museum needs to be more interactive via tech and hands on opportunities from the very start of the experience. They suggested:

- Puzzles – things which encourage close looking/observation
- 'Slidey' puzzles and interactives which encourage collaboration
- Wooden blocks shaped like iconic buildings in Islington to build up or to play with

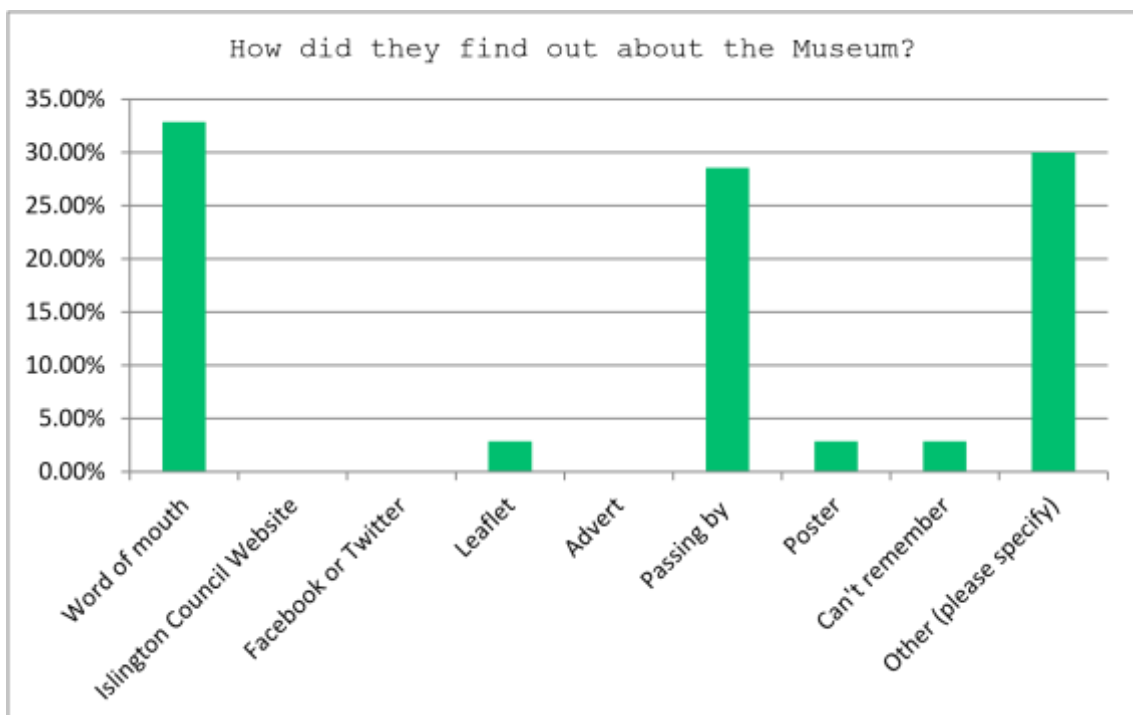
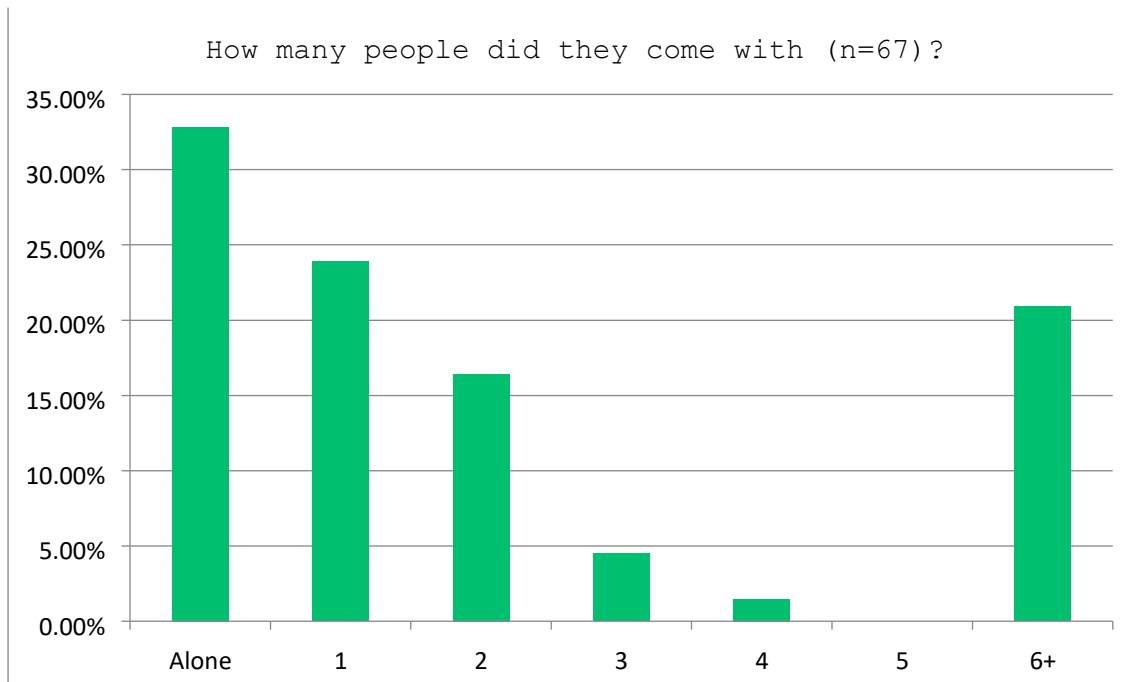
- Replicas on a string so can't be moved around the museum
- Feely boxes – sensory learning
- Role play and small world play would be key - could you offer role play with a toy milk cart and churns? – with Grimaldi the clown? With Pearlene? the Postal Museum's play sorting office as an example – linking dress up to key objects and collaborative play
- Replica and handling objects
- Open ended and closed ended question prompts ○ Activity trail

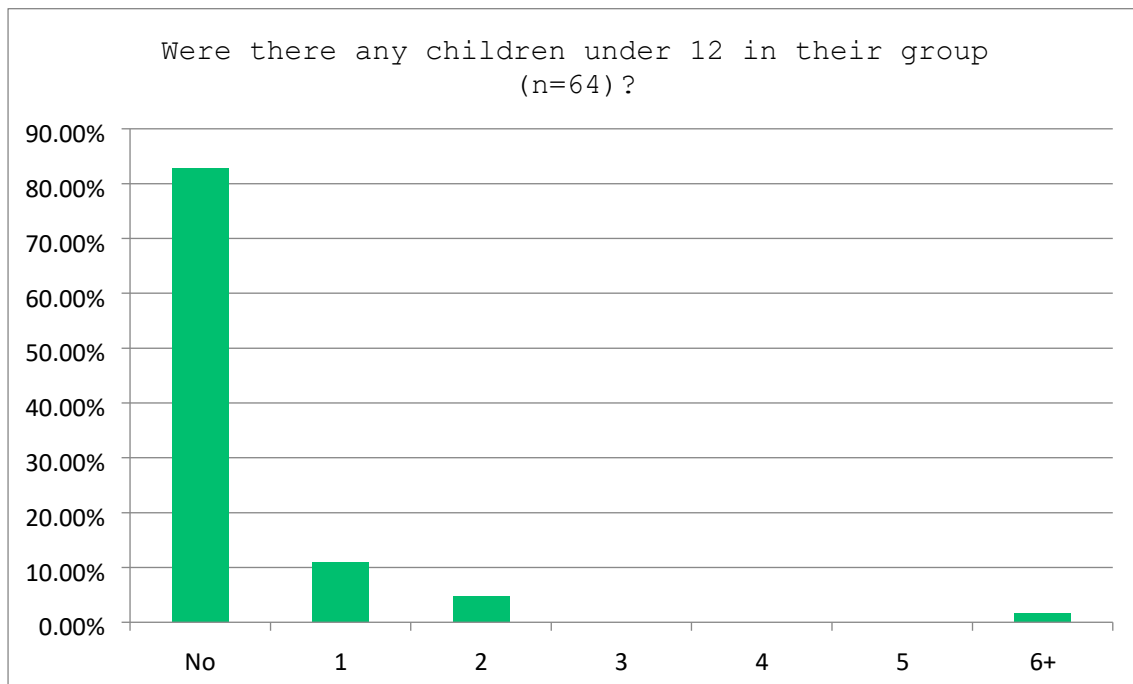
☞ *Balancing between great text for adults and info for children and young people. Could heights of text or characters or symbols denote areas where there is text and engagement for young people? A trail could guide you to the key themes or objects which have info directed at schools and families. Use blown up archive and modern images to fill dead spaces. Personal stories, like Pearlene's, should be emphasised – it's not clear that the uniform, photos, and oral history are linked – could you do an interview with her on video which could play where she talks about and is with her collection?' (SIT)*

More recommendations from the Schools Improvement Team regarding the curriculum can be found in appendix F.

Appendices

Appendix A: General visitor data





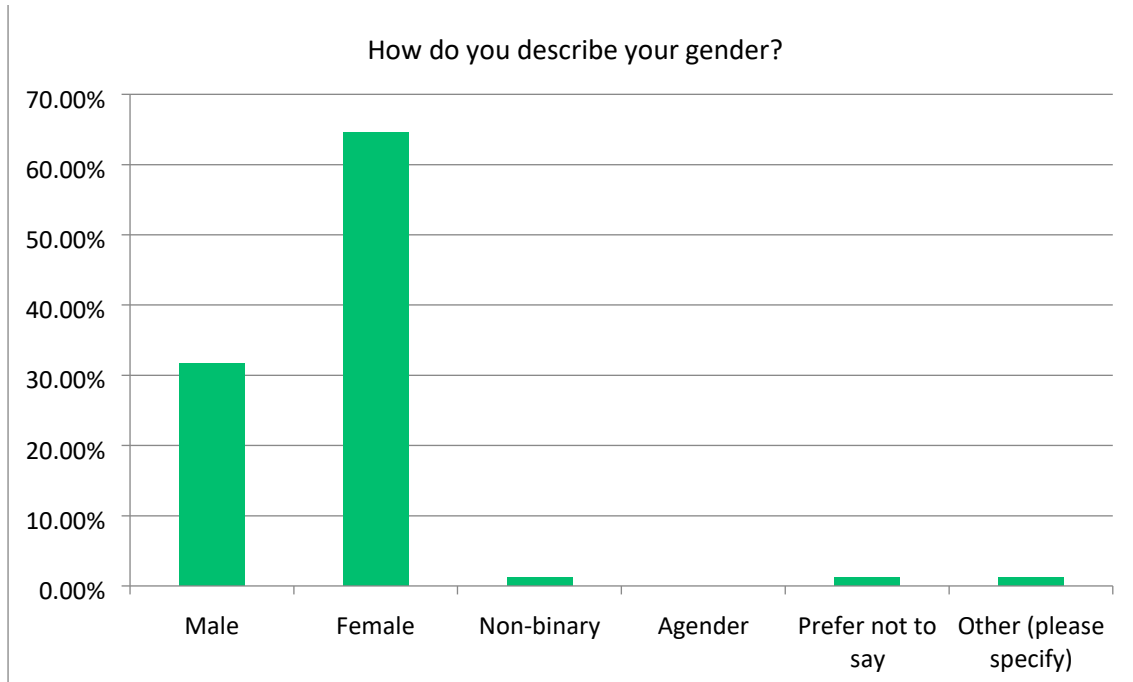
'Other' includes a few visitors who made a web search, one who found out about the Museum in the Art Fund book and one who explained they were *'doing a project on bus routes in London and I found this in the #4 bus route'*. It also includes individuals who didn't answer the question and those who were invited to come along to a tour at the Museum as part of the audience consultation project.

Appendix B: Demographic data

68 GV, 8 F, 3 SU, 3 T

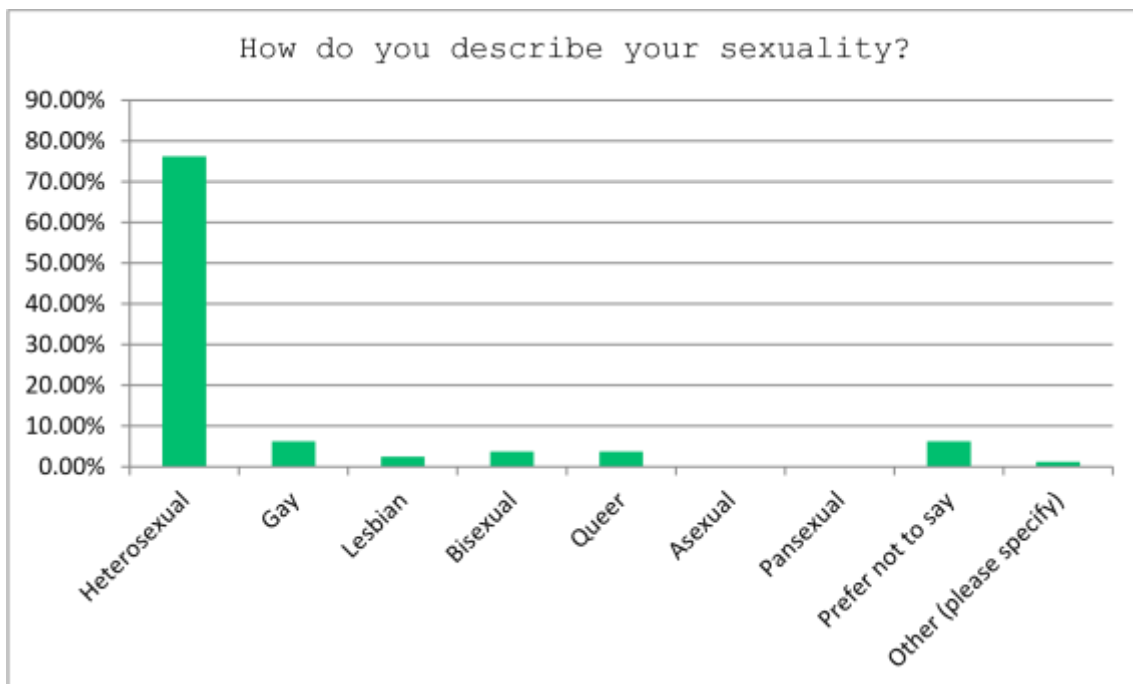
Total 82

One visitor described his gender as non-binary, trans masc

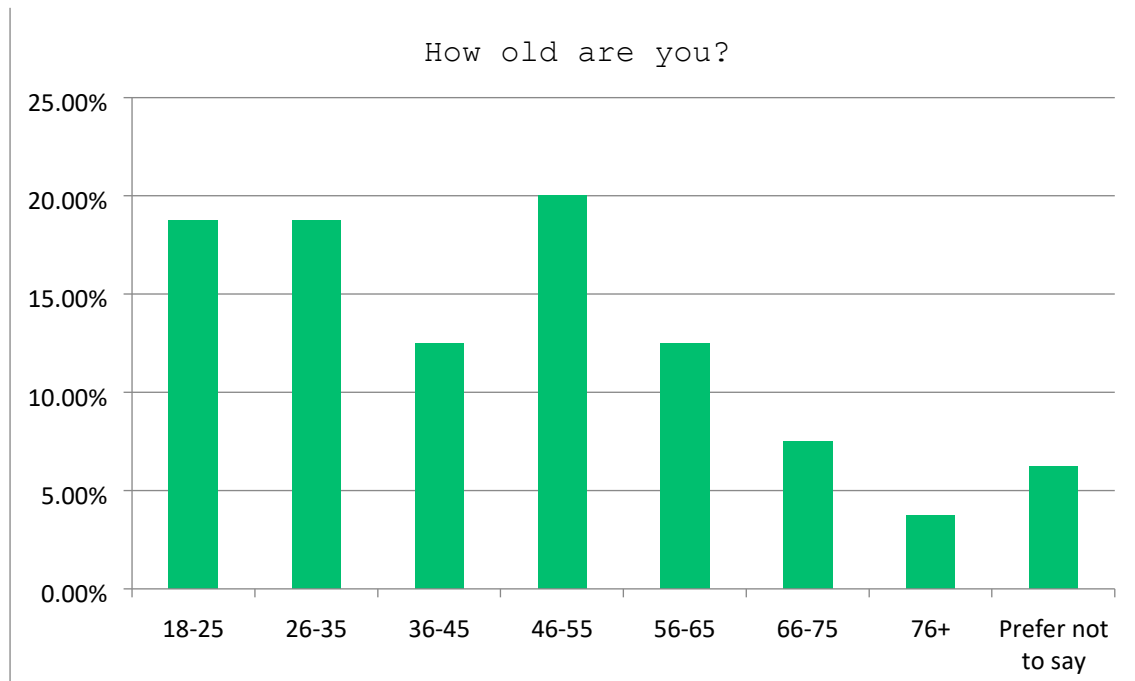


66 GV, 8 F, 3 SU, 3 T

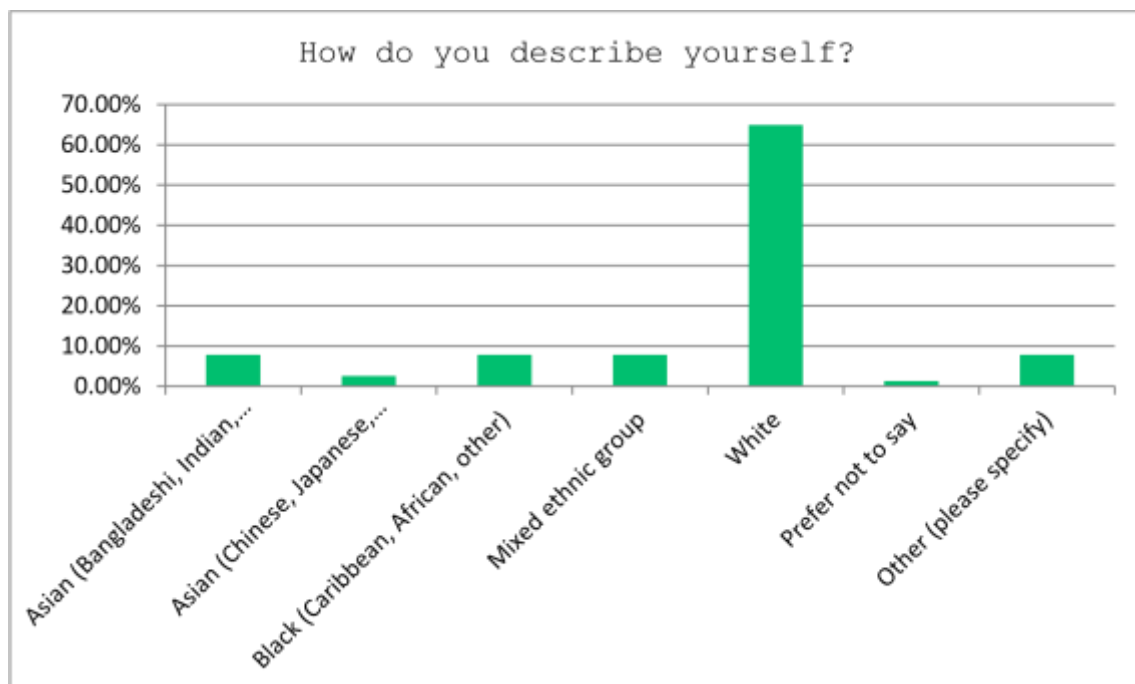
Total 80



67 GV, 7 F, 3 SU, 3 T
Total 80

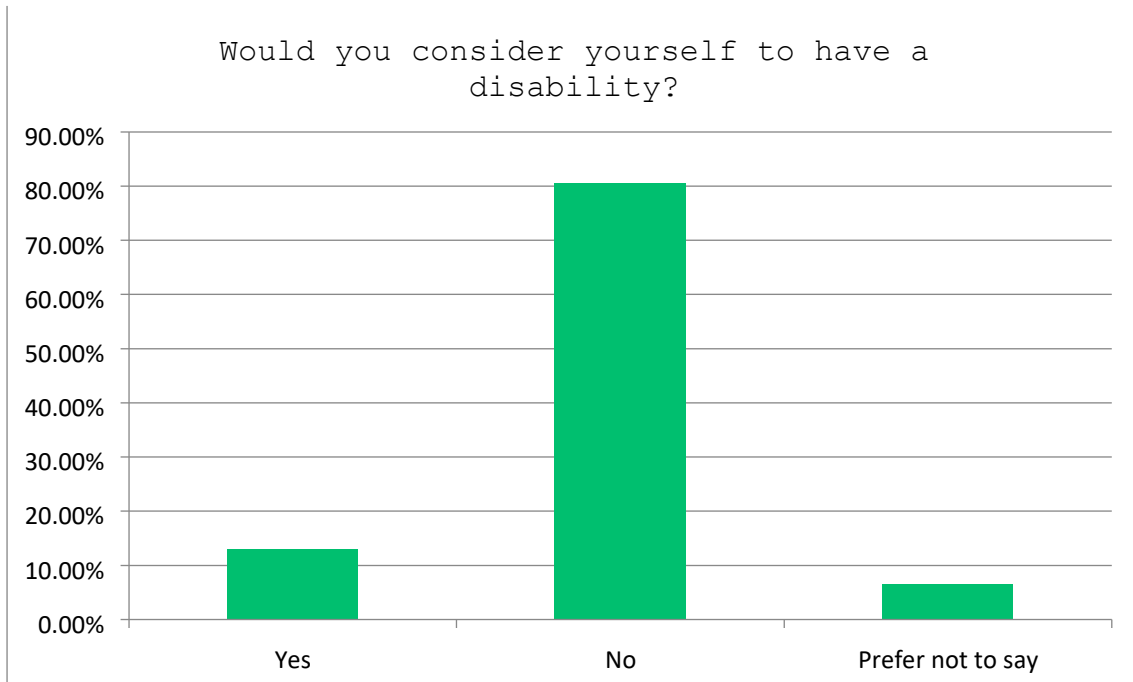


64 GV, 8F, 3SU, 3T
Other: Latin America (x2), Arabic, Black British, White Irish



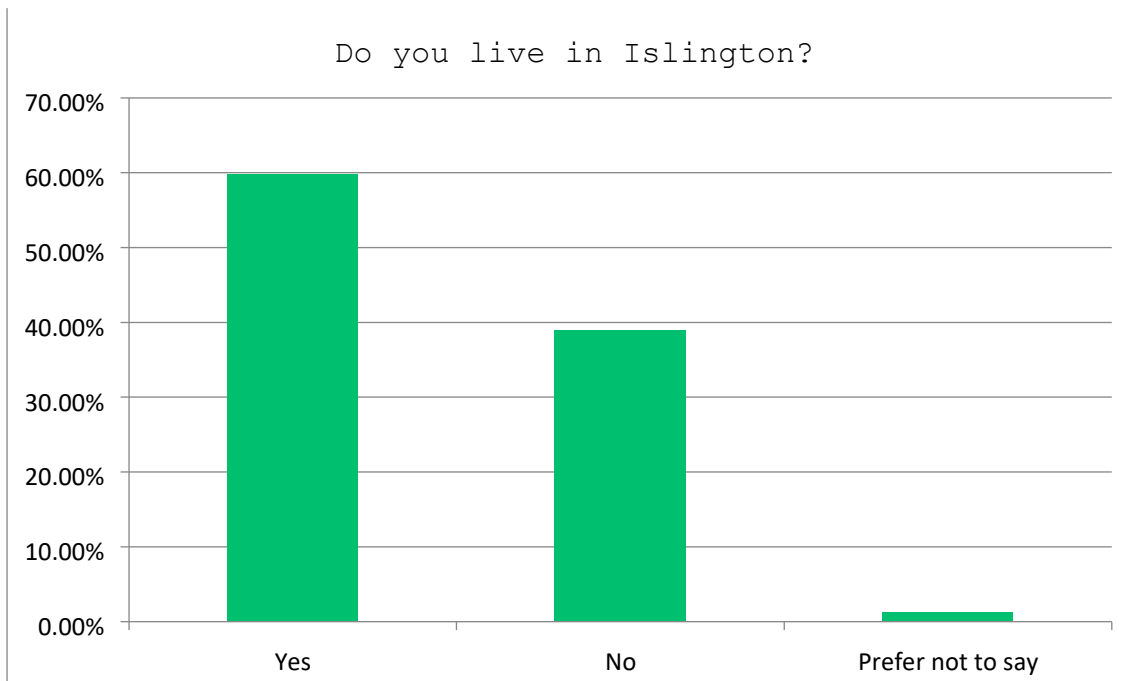
64GV, 8F, 2SU, 3T

Total 77



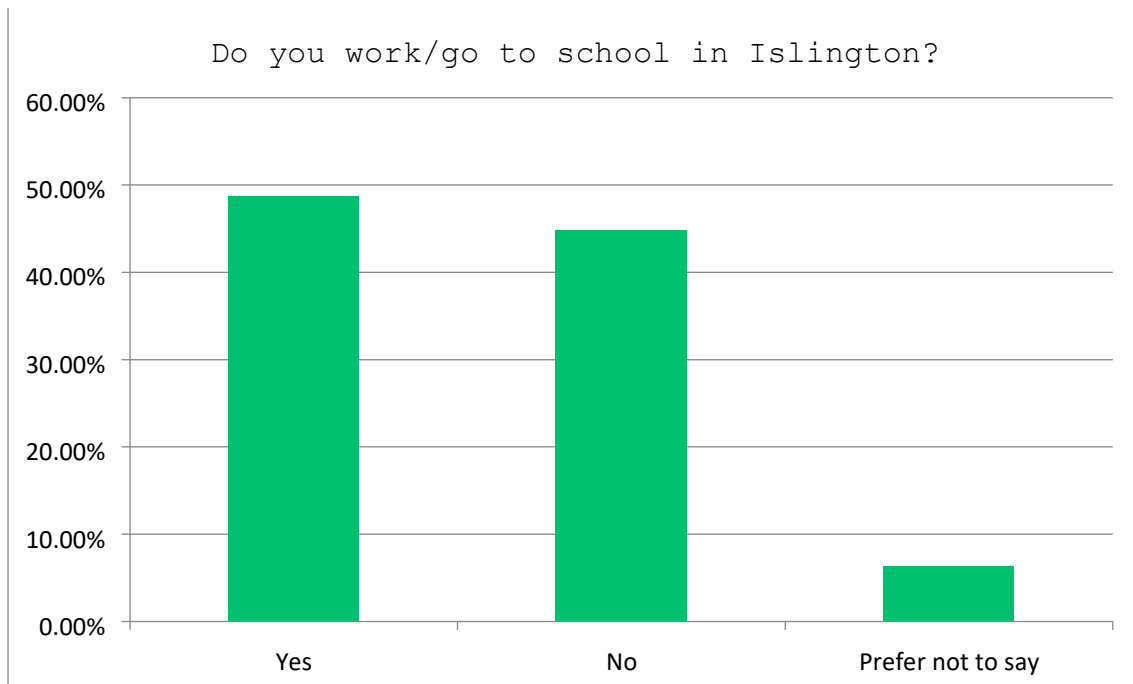
64GV, 8F, 2SU, 3T

Total 77



65GV, 8F, 2SU, 3T

Total 78



Appendix C: Regular visitor questions volunteers report responding to:

- Is it free?
- Where do I start?
- Not clear what can be touched
- Where are the Joe Orton book covers?
- Can we play with the kitchen?
- Are there/where are the toilets?
- I didn't know you existed ○ Are there postcards for sale?
- Is there a shop/café?
- Do you have books?
- Do you have events on?
- What would you recommend?
- I used to live in Islington and never knew you were here?
- Where's the temporary exhibition?
- How can I find out about my [ancestor] who lived here?
- Can I leave my bag/buggy here?
- Do you have anyone who can identify this object?
- Can I just come in? / Can I just wander around the Museum?
- I found this object; can I donate it?
- Parents ask – activities? What is going on at half term?
- Do you have maps?
- People looking for other council services (particularly local history centre)
- Can I have some paper and crayons?
- I want to find out where my family lived/worked in Islington
- How long have you been here?
- How is the Museum organised in terms of themes?

Appendix D: Questions about favourite objects

Cast iron animal heads:

- What was it like to be a drover?
- Who made it and why? (*expensive even in those days*)
- What was the furthest that the animals came from?
- When did the object arrive in the museum and who brought it in?

Arsenal FC objects

- About famous footballers or sportsmen from our area
- Who donated it and why (Arsenal jersey)?
- What was it like to be at Wembley on that day (Film of 1950 FA Cup Final)?

Collins Music Hall reel

- Exactly where is/was the music hall/can I visit it today?
- More about what happened since its heyday and what happened to the planned revival
- Why Islington? Why is this where theatre thrived?

Bust of Lenin

- I would probably say "Tell me more" - did Lubetkin design the bust, or the place it was displayed? Where exactly did Lenin live?
- What was your experience at the particular time? How can e.g., radical movement be avoided or is it something positive.

Kitchen

- How and when the gas supply got to domestic use
- What was it made of?

Other objects:

- Why has Islington Council not apologised posthumously for jailing Orton + Halliwell, given that the museum celebrates them? (Orton's books)
- What it was like to cook the recipes and if they looked nice? (workhouse recipe book)
- The effects of bombing (WW2 objects)
- When did swimming costumes stop being homemade, and why? (man's swim costume)
- How many others had a similar experience to her? (letter from Eva Holmes)
- The pupils' responses and their reactions to their school days (school punishment book)
- What else was in the first night welcome pack? (Holloway toothpaste)
- How and where did he collect them all? (badges)

- About evaporated milk and other products (milk cart)
- How many women would have owned a dress like this, how much did it cost?
- What kind of events the outfits worn at / who would wear them?
- Where and how was it made? (front door plate from Highbury House 1778)
- How did he learn how to embroider was it self-taught? (postcard)
- What was the owner like? (suitcase)
- How long it took people to realise the mercury was causing hallucinations? (Mad Hatter)
- What about the women? How did they pee into this? (hospital urine bottle)
- When was this cup made? (silver presentation cup)
- Post war housing and redevelopment (old nightclub posters and flyers)
- Was it a weapon or something ceremonial? (medieval dagger)
- An account of what the cattle market felt like (drovers' badge and whistle)
- Any additional info/websites/books for further information.

Appendix E: DAI specific recommendations (access)

- Layering multiple options for access including
 - Easy read panel text available
 - Folding chairs
 - Self-propelling wheelchair for adult and child
 - Audio options – tools for listening, apps which can read the text, audio describing
 - Options for reading off paper rather than screens for interactives or tech
 - Tangible items for neurodiverse audiences
 - Touch options for partially sighted audiences – going beyond braille, what are some other creative options for accessing stories through touch – as not everyone can read braille
 - Time out spaces – well differentiated from space, signposted so don't have to ask if overwhelmed – with access to water
 - Range of options for different access needs
 - Range of options which do not rely on everyone having a phone, or rely solely on tech

- Clear signposting
 - Of facilities
 - Of route around the museum
 - Of access tools and options
 - Clearer colour coding of themes if using themed approach
 - Visuals as well as words helpful in signposting
 - Maps and leaflets at entrance
 - Key to remove barriers to access which can include asking staff about facilities, routes, or access tools

- Targeted days
 - Quiet days with lower lights, noise, and limits on overall stimulation of the space
 - Monthly day with a BSL interpreter tour in place
 - Consider whole days or weekends- rather than placing accessible events only at 9am on a Monday etc.

Appendix F: SIT Recommendations (curriculum)

- History in primary is very based on chronology so lack of timelines is a problem. Could you use the floor to allow people to physically move along a timeline?
- KS 1: Homes and housing - Toys and games – images and objects showing changing homes and housing etc. through time in Islington
- KS 2: For 8–9-year-olds/KS2 ages, provide prompts and questions supporting artefact exploration – e.g., the stone stoppers on display – ‘what is it?’ ‘What is it made of?’ ‘how was it used?’
- WW2 theme key for primary
- Science: the story of health in Islington is a key theme which could be linked to science curriculum. The flip boxes about different cures – this would be more valuable if also explained the basis in medicine for these cures –and what we use today – could see a UV light to bring the rickets story to life
- Maths: data and statistics about Islington – resources linked to these
- Diversity – where is the celebration of diverse leaders, scientists, individuals?
- Open ended questions with the displays – if taking children to the museum as a teacher, then having prompts is great, particularly if you have parent leaders
- Resources – resources provided clearly on website, for key stages or subjects, supporting teachers’ pre, during and post visit. Resources should also be available in hard copy at museum. This could include:
 - Non-fiction writing, or writing in role – prepared in advance, exploring museum looking for 4 key historical characters, discovering their stories and capturing facts on a fact-finding activity sheet – developing research skills – then space to add imaginative detail – these then form notes to take back to school and inform writing based on the heritage
- Symbols in the space which indicate which stories have curriculum linked resources available on the website (this would have to be a vinyl sticker format so that these could be added and removed as resources are updated and changed over time)
- With secondary schools, would need to develop links with history and English curriculum – link with EGA or other local secondary and pilot stuff while in development – take artefacts and resources to deliver a workshop in their schedule and once have that relationship, can get class in to visit based on that workshop – this is not possible during the redevelopment, but could be a funded piece of work when the primary learning programme is established post launch

Appendix G: Feedback from Engagement Boards (GV)

What does Islington mean to you?	Home	It was very nice	It means 'community', many people coming together now and again – sharing a living space		
	A safe learning family space and friends great		I live here, it's <u>my</u> home	Home	My home
	A nice area	A community of people ☺ means different things to different people			Home
	Its means you live there, duh	School. I live in doing Haringey	was very enjoyable <u>all of</u> the quizzes. Very fun 10/10 ☺	A lot to the Moon and back	
	Good and it's <u>my</u> home	I <3 Islington (and Camden) my home for 55 years			
My favourite object or story in the museum is...	The bench ☺ it is comfortable, and you can read lots of info while sitting on it		The kitchen	Comfier bench	
	The play corner	The cat poster because it was <u>really cool</u> in the collage format and the size drew attention to it			
	The kitchen because my daughter loves making pretend foods and have lots of good memories		Local history – Holloway Prison	The bowling ball	
	The old photo at Highbury and Islington station		Always LENIN. Mass produced by the USSR during Stalin's rule		
	Russian Bear Grease (pot lid) – opened a vivid window into the past. Personal grooming practices and bears!				
The best thing about Islington Museum is...	The interactive stuff	Free entry	The bench and interactions	I like the space	Great
	I like the stories about normal people. I like the lack of glorification of weapons as found in other museums. Thank you for this. Nice children's <u>play things</u> . Empathy for prisoners is nice, as this is a hard thing for children to grasp				
	I like the leisure centre	That it tells local stories e.g., cattle markets		Informative fun to learn about the history of your borough	
	Because there's lots of interesting things to read! And it's a beautiful place!			I love learning about the history and having a cool space to hang out with my daughter!	
The museum would be improved by...	More photographs of Islington past – places and people		Clearer layout of places	Music	

	More audio of real people		More relevant and comparison to things currently		More interactive parts
	More insight into the wars	Music	Ethos of being family friendly	Unused space	More desks
	Fill in empty space	Trampoline park	Different design	Nothing its good the way it is	
	An interactive football game, Arsenal, Samuel Pepes outfit and diary				
You can't tell the story of Islington without...	Music, art, History of the A1	fashion, creativity	WW1	River Thames	Arsenal
	Pic and words saying a bit about it		The community	Arsenal	Popular culture of the time
	All the people who lived here past and present – unheard stories giving a voice to a diversity of stories and experiences				
	Religion – the place of worship and beliefs in Islington life – past and present				