

Re-designing workplace placements to increase accessibility: equality, diversity & inclusion in Scottish Heritage

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The heritage placement. A valuable opportunity to kick start career experience but sometimes only accessible to those who have the means to navigate the often narrow parameters offered. The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Scottish Heritage (EDISH) project aimed to address that.

Funded by the AHRC, the twelve-month EDISH project was designed to explore EDI barriers within Scotland's heritage organisations. Led by Strathclyde University and Museum Galleries Scotland, the project activities included data collection, the creation of resources to support BAME-focused community heritage projects, and funded EDI-focused workplace placements. ClfA was approached by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland to support the design and delivery of archaeology-based placements.

Placement design

Drawing on our collective experience and learning from similar initiatives, we aimed to remove common barriers to participating in heritage placement schemes. Crucially, these placements were paid positions, enabling participants to learn and not lose income elsewhere.

We also avoided an open call for participants, and decided early on to work directly with one organisation who had an established youth audience to ensure participants had peer-to-peer support. This



Visit to St Cecilia's Hall Concert Room and Music Museum. Credit: Cara Jones

would hopefully reduce the potential for feeling isolated and disconnected during the placement. We were fortunate that Ando Glaso, (a third sector organisation that promotes Roma Culture in Scotland) had capacity to work with us.

We made the placement flexible – eschewing the 9-to-5, five-days-a-week structure, designing the programme around their schedules. We worked with them directly two days a week and had a shared Google Drive to support work out of direct contact time. We ensured that outputs were co-designed with the placements (once in post) – for example, the end of placement report could be a video or a public talk rather than a written document.

We had to take a hybrid approach to delivery because of capacity and the Covid-19 pandemic. However, this approach resulted in broadening the range of heritage professionals the participants were able to work with. With that flexibility, we created a programme of experiences that emphasised the variety of job roles within the profession.

Experience gained

The project made me reflect on the nature of initiatives like this – so often, placement structures are of a repetitive design. We need to look at that critically if we are serious about addressing the barriers to future archaeologists. These opportunities need to be more reactive to the audience and, ideally, co-designed with the participants.

To read more about the results of the project and next steps, visit our website to read a full summary of the project.

Acknowledgements

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Links

ClfA project summary – <https://www.archaeologists.net/projects/re-designing-workplace-placements-increase-accessibility-equality-diversity-inclusion>

EDISH project webpage – <https://www.museumgalleriesScotland.org.uk/projects/equality-diversity-inclusion-in-scottish-heritage/>

Ando Glaso – <https://www.andoglaso.org/>