

Culture Track Report

The Culture Track Programme engaged with unemployed people, facing complex barriers and issues in the North East. Culture Track provided them with support, training, an accredited qualification, advice, guidance, and real practical experience within the workplace through volunteering, to help prepare them for and facilitate their route into paid employment.

The volunteers were placed in a specific volunteering role over a number of weeks within one of our cultural venues in Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, such as the Discovery Museum, the Laing Art Gallery, or one of our partner organisations such as the Dance City, Centre for Life, The Sage Gateshead or The Mining Institute.

The volunteer placement was tailored to suit the individual's interests, needs and ability. Culture Track offered a variety of roles to the volunteers, giving them the opportunity to sample a number of potential career paths and to progress through an organisation or across a number of organisations in a safe environment.

The volunteering roles that they participated in include, customer service, supporting the educational and outreach programmes, Summer Schools, cultural events, explaining exhibitions, gallery invigilating, data entry and administration.

Training that was available to the volunteers included an in depth volunteer induction, Welcome Host, Diversity and Disability Equality Awareness. There was also a number of numeracy, literacy and IT courses available free of charge and NVQ's such as Business Administration, Customer Service, and Event Volunteering, which were linked with their volunteering experience.

- 69 people were completed the Culture Track Programme
- On average each volunteer participated in 44 hours of formal learning activities
- 64 volunteers received employability support
- 5 volunteers has completed a basic skills qualification
- 16 volunteer have completed a full level 2 qualification
- 19 volunteers have secured employment
- 1 volunteer secured refugee status
- 27 volunteers have moved into Further Education or further voluntary work

Volunteers have progressed into a variety of jobs including some roles within the cultural sector which is indicative of the potential progression route from Culture Track volunteering into employment within the cultural sector. The jobs include;

- Front of House at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens
- Temporary Exam Invigilator at Newcastle University
- Deaf Blind Support Worker for SENSE
- Trainee mechanic
- Bar work
- Library Assistant
- Gallery Assistant
- Care Support Worker
- Admin Support
- Events steward
- Promotions assistant

- Shop Assistant
- IT tutor

Volunteers completed a soft outcome assessment when they entered into the programme to assess their pre existing levels of confidence, skills and knowledge, readiness for work, how supported they felt and the strength of their vision for the future. This was reviewed after participation in Culture track to measure the distance travelled. The results from these assessments are overwhelmingly positive and indicate;

Confidence

83% of volunteers felt their confidence had improved following their voluntary experience.

15% of volunteers felt they had maintained their confidence levels after volunteering (no change)

2% of volunteers felt their confidence levels had decreased after volunteering, however this was a result of securing a job and having a negative experience, rather than as a result of volunteering.

Readiness for Work

80% of volunteers felt more ready for work following their voluntary experience

13% felt that their work readiness has not changed after their volunteering experience. This indicates that volunteering is a good way to maintain confidence and skills levels.

6% felt less ready following their voluntary experience. However this was not as a direct result of their volunteering, nor is it necessarily a negative result. Those who felt less work ready had suffered a decline in their health; became more aware of their own abilities after volunteering and what they could realistically achieve; or they had over estimated previously how 'ready for work' they were.

Feeling Supported

100% of volunteers felt supported throughout their voluntary experience.

Overcoming Barriers

77% of volunteers felt more positive after volunteering about overcoming any barriers they were facing that was making it difficult for them to look for work or to volunteer.

19% of volunteers felt that there had been no change in how they felt about the barriers they were facing

4% of volunteers felt that they were further away from overcoming the barriers they were facing that would make it more difficult for them to seek work after volunteering. These volunteers have long term health problems or disabilities.

Knowledge and Skills

79% of volunteers felt that their skills and knowledge levels had increased since participating in Culture Track.

21% of volunteers felt that there had been no change in the level of the skills and knowledge since participating in Culture Track. This is indicative that volunteering is an effective tool to help maintain skills levels during unemployment.

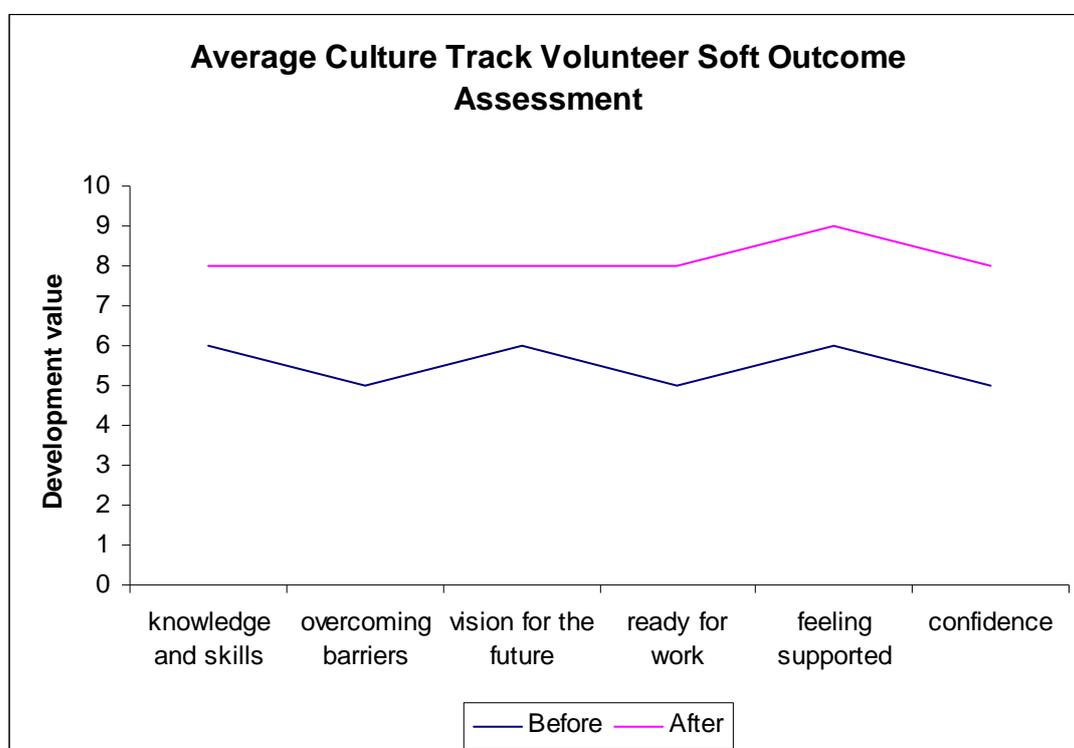
0% of volunteers felt that their skills and knowledge levels had decreased after participating in Culture Track.

Vision of the Future

62% of volunteers feel their vision for the future has strengthened/become clearer after participating in Culture Track. Some volunteers have identified new career paths following their voluntary experience.

36% of volunteers felt the strength of their vision for the future was maintained following their participation in Culture Track. Generally, these volunteers arrived with a strong vision for the future which may have been reinforced following volunteering.

2% of volunteers felt the strength of their vision for the future had declined following their voluntary experience. This volunteer in particular suffered a major deterioration in their health.



Further indicators of success of the Culture Track project are the volunteers' increased engagement and participation with volunteering and other museum related events. A number of volunteers have progressed from small volunteering roles, perhaps volunteering once a week on a Welcome Desk, to large scale events, to additional training courses such as digital media skills workshops, learning to interview other volunteers about their experiences and designing and developing their own guided tours. This is indicative of their increased confidence not only in themselves and speaking publicly but also in their ability to utilise the museum collections as they have then conducted these tours for other volunteers. Some

volunteers have also been able to work towards an accredited qualification alongside their volunteering such as an NVQ in Customer Service Level 2.

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