Open City Project

End of project report to
Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium

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1   INTRODUCTION

As the Open City project comes to a close, this report provides a review of the project, specifically focusing on learning from the past two years' activity.

Section 2 gives a brief overview of the project context and framework and its management structure.

Section 3 gives an overview of the project structure, procedures and overall achievements.

Section 4 reports on feedback and learning gathered throughout the project's work.

Section 5 focuses on two key case studies that further illustrate some of the learning points identified in section 4.

Section 6 gives a final overview of the project and its achievements.

2   CONTEXT

Open City was a collaborative audience development initiative run on behalf of Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium (LARC). LARC is an alliance of eight of the city's major cultural organisations and was set up to play a leading role in helping regenerate Merseyside. Its eight members include the Bluecoat, FACT, Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, National Museums Liverpool, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Tate Liverpool, and the Unity Theatre.

With funding from Arts Council England's Thrive! Programme and other partners, LARC is testing out a new model for embedding the arts and cultural sectors in the processes of social and economic renewal. The Open City Project was introduced as one of the strands of work in the LARC Thrive! Programme under the Audience Development strand, specifically to help support achieving the programme's second aim "A More Audience and People Friendly City Centre".

The Open City project in Merseyside was developed from a model first adopted in Manchester by All About Audiences (previously Arts About Manchester). The project in Greater Manchester aimed to address non-engagement in the arts. Working with community groups, the project worked to create arts attendees who are aware of what's on offer and confident attending events and venues.

It was developed in Liverpool as part of a wider Audience Development Programme. The LARC Heads of Marketing group and the Thrive Director commissioned All About Audiences (then Arts About Manchester) to deliver this programme in Liverpool from 2008 – 2009 during Capital of Culture and following TEAM's demise in 2007.

Open City worked closely with community groups that had never attended the arts to develop their confidence and foster an interest in the arts, and encourage future independent attendance.

The project grew from a realisation of just how many barriers are faced by non-attendees and the steps required over a period of time to overcome these - from understanding all the barriers and increasing awareness of what's on offer, through to facilitating visits and helping to establish trust between individuals and venues, resulting in increased confidence in visiting the arts.

By targeting community groups, Open City aimed to identify people in similar situations, and, with the support of other group members, help individuals increase their confidence in attending the arts.

The Open City project was originally partly funded by the Arts Council England (ACE) Grants for the Arts scheme and the LARC Thrive! Programme. Following

the end of the Audience Development Programme, the LARC Thrive! Programme continued funding the project until March 2011.

The Open City project was initially managed by Jo Kay, who headed the overall LARC Audience Development Programme, and Ginevra Jacobucci coordinated the delivery of activities. Following the end of the overall Audience Development Programme, Ginevra Jacobucci took over the management and delivery of the project part-time (three days a week) and was line managed by Catherine Bradley, Deputy Head of Evidence Engagement at All About Audiences (AAA). In June 2010, following a budget review, Cliff James was recruited as part-time Open City Project Assistant (two days a week).

The Open City project reported to a steering group throughout its activity. At the end of the project, the steering group included Catherine Bradley (AAA Deputy Head of Evidence and Engagement), Adeyinka Olushonde (LARC Thrive Partnership and Development Coordinator), Helen Dunnett (The Bluecoat, Head of Marketing), Danielle Percy (Everyman & Playhouse, Outreach Assistant) and Richard Nutter (LARC Thrive Programme Director).

3   PROJECT STRUCTURE

There were three sets of partners engaged with the Open City project: community groups, volunteers and LARC organisations.

Based on earlier models of community engagement including Arts Ambassadors schemes and West Yorkshire Playhouse's Community Network, it is acknowledged that those with no or very little engagement with arts activity need an intermediary figure to bridge the initial relationship between an arts institution and an individual. With a limited time-frame and aiming to maximize the reach of this intervention, Open City followed the model used in Manchester of working with community groups, matching the group leader with volunteer Community Coordinators.

3.1   Volunteers

Over the duration of the Open City project, 39 volunteers were successfully recruited as Community Coordinators to engage with community groups. Data from the applicants' equal opportunity questionnaires suggests that applications for this voluntary position were received from a variety of age groups, with most applicants being between 25-44 years old.

Age Group:	Volunteer Applicants:
16 – 24	9
25 – 34	14
35 – 44	10
45 – 54	5
55 – 64	2
65 – 75	1

The Open City project used several channels to advertise the ongoing recruitment of volunteers as Community Coordinators. These channels included free websites (Art In Liverpool, Kin2Kin, Arts Jobs), arts newsletters (DaDa Fest), social media (Facebook, Twitter), arts organisation websites (Biennial, Tate Liverpool, FACT, Everyman&Playhouse, All About Audiences), promotion in local newspapers (The Echo, Merseymart), free advertisements with volunteering organisations (Volunteer Centre Liverpool, Liverpool City Council, LCVS, Liverpool University & LJMU students union).

Over the lifetime of the project, 51 applicants for the role of Community Coordinator completed the attached equal opportunities questionnaire in their application pack. This questionnaire asked applicants to state where they saw the Community Coordinator position advertised. The following table records the most common channels through which applicants became aware of the Open City volunteering opportunity (next page):

Channel	Number of applicants
Art In Liverpool (www.artinliverpool.com)	10
Facebook	5
Word-of-mouth	5
LARC venues: FACT Biennial Tate Bluecoat Everyman&Playhouse (Total)	 3 2 1 1 1 (8)
Adverts in Newspapers	3
Arts Jobsl	2
Other/No answer	20

The recruitment process was ongoing throughout the lifetime of the project and was formally brought to an end in December 2010 (three months before the project closed). Applicants for the post of Community Coordinator were invited to email, write or telephone the Open City office and request an application pack. The application pack consisted of a cover letter, a job description (including a description of the project, key responsibilities, expenses policy, person specification and a summary of the benefits of volunteering on the project), and a blank application form and equal opportunities form.

Completed application forms were assessed against the selection criteria as set out in the person specification. Applicants who fulfilled the criteria were invited to attend an informal interview. As the project progressed, experienced volunteer Community Coordinators were invited to sit on the interview panel to interview prospective volunteers. The purpose for this was to ensure that volunteers had the opportunity to engage with the project on different levels and to develop new skills.

Successful applicants were informed of the outcome of their application within one week of their interview. New Community Coordinators were required to complete an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check and to submit the contact details of two referees who could supply character references.

All Community Coordinators attended a half-day induction session before they were engaged on the project. This induction session included:

- a detailed discussion of the role description
- a history of the project
- volunteer guidelines
- evaluation/feedback forms
- expenses process and budget

All volunteers read and signed the Open City Disclaimer, which clearly delineated the role of the volunteer as being a liaison between community groups and venues, and having no duty of care towards the community group and no responsibility for the wellbeing and safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults on the project.

During the induction session, volunteers were provided with a copy of the Community Coordinator support pack. The support pack, which was also accessible on the Open City website (hosted on Basecamp), provided volunteers with an overview of the Open City project and a directory of all the LARC organisations, including descriptions of each organisation, offer details for Open City bookings (e.g. free refreshments, guided tours, education workshops) and contact details for booking tickets and organising tours. This was not a public-facing website hence the decision was taken to use Basecamp (an online project management tool) to create a flexible but closed platform which all volunteers could access the support pack materials and share experiences and tips and also to act as a shared communication channel between the Project Manager and all volunteers.

The induction session also included a description of the support available to volunteer Community Coordinators, including:

- Monthly volunteer network meetings
- Access to the online forum, messaging facilities and documents on the Open City website
- Use of the Open City Facebook group
- A monthly Open City e-Newsletter
- Regular volunteer social events

After receiving a full induction, volunteers were paired with an appropriate community group based on the following criteria:

- Volunteer's previous experience
- Volunteer's interests
- Volunteer's availability
- Community group availability

After agreeing to work with a particular community group, volunteers attended an introductory session with that group, accompanied by a member of Open City staff. The role of the Open City staff member at this meeting was to provide an overview of the project to the community group and to ensure that all members of the community group were aware of the limitations of the role and duties of the Community Coordinator. Following this introductory meeting, the volunteer and the community group leader agreed to schedule meetings to proceed with the Open City project.

The volunteers' primary role was to act as a facilitator between arts organisations and community groups new to the arts. As such their role very much focused on sharing information with groups about what was available at arts organisations as well as organising introductory visits on behalf of the group.

A number of community group leaders stressed how valuable they found the information provided by the volunteers about local art organisations, as volunteers' updates were often the only access the group would have to this information. They also reported community group leaders are often stretched in terms of capacity and the fact that volunteers could organise visits was therefore highlighted to be of great benefit. Overall volunteers were reported to have fulfilled a useful and needed role on behalf of their community groups.

3.2   Community Groups

In total, 15 community groups in Merseyside were actively engaged on the Open City project. The procedure for recruiting community groups onto the project consisted of advertising the programme on free websites (Art In Liverpool, Kin2Kin, Arts Jobs), arts newsletters (DaDa Fest), social media (Facebook, Twitter), arts organisation websites (Biennial, Tate Liverpool, FACT, Everyman&Playhouse, All About Audiences), promotion in local newspapers (The Echo, Merseymart), and the distribution of Open City leaflets at community centres, libraries and arts venues throughout Merseyside.

Following an expression of interest in the project, community groups were provided with an application pack, consisting of an introductory letter and description of the Open City project, a sign-up form and equal opportunities questionnaire. The sign-up form provided an opportunity for the community group to describe their profile and activities, and detail any current engagement with Liverpool's arts and culture scene.

After receiving the completed sign-up form, Open City staff arranged to meet with the community group leader to discuss the group's engagement on the project. A further meeting would then be scheduled for the Open City staff member to introduce the Community Coordinator to members of the community group. Following that meeting, it was the responsibility of the volunteer to make arrangements for further appointments with the group to discuss the programme of cultural engagement.

We specifically encouraged volunteers and community group leaders to work closely together to make sure the skills and knowledge volunteers built during the project would also be passed on and shared with the community group leaders, making them ultimately further informed and confident about how best to approach LARC organisations and organise a visit for their group. An Open City Community Group Support Back was created and handed over to each community group leader.

An engaged and informed community group leader proved key to a group successfully engaging in the project. All community groups' leaders also received the Open City newsletter with updates about the project and further information about what was available at the LARC organisations.

Most of the community groups that successfully engaged in the project were support groups for people who tend to live isolated lives or weren't confident and needed further support in accessing public services. These groups are often looking for opportunities to further interact with wider society and therefore often respond positively to engagement projects.

See next page for a list of all engaged groups.

Engaged Community Group:	Description:
Anew – St. Helens	Support group for people with mental health issues.
Bellevale Pensioners Group – Bellevale	Group of older people who meet weekly.
Dovecot Dads' Group – West Derby	Social group for dads and their kids.
Imagine Mental Health - Liverpool	Support group for men who experience mental health issues.
Imagine Mental Health - Knowsley	Support group for a range of people who experience mental health issues.
Liverpool Community College (x 3) - Liverpool	Life skills classes for learning disabled young people.
Making Space - Croxteth	Charity which offers supported living for people with mental health issues.
Spider Project - Liverpool	Support group for people that have a history of substance abuse.
St Luke's Residential Home	Group of ladies from a residential home for older people.
Thatto Heath Children's Group – Thatto Heath	Social group for dads and their kids.
Wirral Society for the Blind & Partially Sighted – Birkenhead	Support group for blind or visually impaired people.
WIN (Women's Inspired Network) - Speke	support group for local women.
Fazakley Federation - Fazakley	Support group for local pensioners.

3.3   Venues

At the beginning of the project, the Open City team met up and consulted with the marketing team from each of the LARC organisations regarding their involvement in the project. Each organisation was specifically asked to indentify:

- One Open City champion, responsible for liaising with volunteers and championing the project within each of their organisations

- Offers the organisations could put forward for new groups visiting

The Open City team also undertook briefings with front of house staff from the different LARC organisations to further encourage internal communication about Open City.

Volunteers fedback that the venues they developed best relationships with were those with good internal communications. They especially stressed the importance of a proactive Open City Champion who would take responsibility for putting together a suitable offer for the groups they were introducing. Joint working between marketing and education teams also proved key in making a visit a success.

Community groups on the Open City project achieved a total of 47 visits to Liverpool's cultural venues. See next page for a breakdown of Community Group visits to venues.

Community Groups	Total Visits	Tate	FACT	E&P*	Unity	Biennial	RLP	NML	Blue-coat	Other
Hope Centre	3	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Bellevale Pensioners	8	1	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	1
Dovecot Dads' group	5	0	2	0	2	0	1		0	0
Fazakerley Federation	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Imagine Mental Health (Knowsley)	6	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Imagine Mental Health (Liverpool)	7	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
Liverpool Community College (1)	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Liverpool Community College (2)	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Liverpool Community College (3)	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Making Space	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Spider Project	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
St Luke's Residential Home	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Thatto Heath Children's Group	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Wirral Blind Society	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Women's Inspired Network	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	47	5	3	16	6	2	2	8	4	1

* Everyman and Playhouse manage two separate theatres but the figures are aggregated here

4   FEEDBACK AND LEARNING

4.1   Methodology

Feedback on Open City has been collected throughout the duration of the project via a number of formal and informal methods. The data used in this analysis has been gathered via:

- Feedback questionnaires filled in by <u>community group members</u> after each visit

- Feedback questionnaires completed by <u>group leaders</u>; and

- De-briefs held with <u>volunteers</u> before they exited the programme either in person or via email

As is common in working with participants unused to expressing and sharing opinions or in completing paper forms, obtaining feedback from everyone is difficult. Some project participants chose not to fill in or return forms. As a result data has not been collected on every visit, nor from every group participant or volunteer. However, the data below reflects a breadth of opinions and experiences that are helpful to allow us to reflect on the successes of the project, identifying elements and approaches that worked well and make recommendations on key learning and areas of development for future community engagement projects.

A copy of the questionnaires and debrief questions can be found in the appendix to this report.

The following analysis examines the feedback from each stakeholder group in turn. Key recommendations and overall insights are collated across these groups later in the report.

Illustrative quotations have been used for some but not all points made.

4.2   Feedback from volunteers

Feedback from Open City volunteers was gained primarily through exit de-briefs conducted in person or by email. A total of eight volunteers took part in the de-brief process.

The analysis focuses on:

- The personal impacts the experience had on the volunteers; and,

- Reflects on their insights into working with community groups that can be fed into future work of this nature.

<u>Personal impacts</u>

Overall, the volunteers viewed the project as a very positive experience both for them and the community groups they worked with.

In the debrief meetings the volunteers described a number of ways in which the project impacted on them personally. The key personal benefits the volunteers described related to:

1. Confidence

Almost all the volunteers described the experience as a boost to their confidence. This was described most often in direct relation to how confident they felt working in community settings, liaising with arts venues, organising visits and also attending the arts as audience members themselves.

'10/10 in confidence'

'Was unsure at first but after more positive feedback my confidence grew massively.'

'Not only has the project given me more confidence it cemented my passion for the arts'

2. Meeting new people and building relationships

Several volunteers reported that they enjoyed the opportunity to meet other like minded arts enthusiasts, to get to know people at the venues and to meet people outside their normal social and professional circle and from a variety of backgrounds.

'Get to know different people – interesting. Different backgrounds and get them to work together. Got to know a lot of nice people.'

'...the opportunity to work with people not in my usual work confines. The opportunity to build a relationship with some arts venues and get to know more about them in detail. The opportunity to talk about the arts with enthusiasm to other volunteers who felt as enthusiastic as me.'

'Improved people skills – meeting groups that I would not normally have worked with'

3. Sense of achievement

Several volunteers reported a sense of achievement and pride in their work when they could see that the visits were having a positive impact on the community group.

'The first time my group came to a visit with their own stories of recently visited art venues'

'A sense of achievement – that the group feel confident to attend productions'

4. Skills development

Three volunteers described gaining skills that could be applied in other contexts:

'Gained skills and understanding – got me quite interested in finding out more about students with learning disabilities. It has inspired me to get more involved and it's useful to build on my teachers' skills.'

'Organisational skills and generally finding out how things work'

Successful working practices

The volunteers described a number of approaches that delivered positive results for the community groups:

Communication with the community group
Frequent, consistent and open communication with the group was found by the volunteers to be crucial to successful engagement outcomes. This was most often described in relation to:

1. Facilitating and maintaining the group's interest in the project

Regular meetings were seen as important in establishing engagement with the project and building up a rapport between the volunteer and the group that maintained the group's interest over time and through set backs or disappointments.

'Important to keep them motivated and have regular contact. Go in the class for a chat'

2. Selecting events to attend

An open dialogue with the groups was seen as crucial in selecting events that will work for that particular community. The volunteers felt that it was important to allow the group to chose what they would like to attend themselves, with the volunteer's role in this conversation being to make suggestions to open up the wide variety of options available for engaging with the arts in Liverpool, answer questions that the group may have, and to provide information that help groups to make informed decisions themselves.

'They enjoyed a performance more when they had researched available sources themselves, many of the people within the group would listen to local radio reviews of current performances and exhibitions and also read the Liverpool Echo culture reviews. Access to information on the unknown made them better equipped to enjoy the experience.'

'I think there's a fine balance between leading the group in a specific direction where going to events is concerned and letting them choose all events themselves. I think a volunteer needs to tell the group what there options are and show them what's going on and then lead a discussion about what the group wants to see. Maybe they could take a vote.'

Two volunteers in particular emphasised the need to ensure preconceptions about the types of events that the volunteer may feel are suitable for the group do not become a barrier to open conversation and prevent the group from exploring possibilities:

'Most important is not to prejudge: not to think that such-and-such an event may be too much for them. Although the group is sometimes seen as 'vulnerable', this can sometime lead to them being treated as children. I did not ask them which events they were interested in going to, because it defeated the whole point of the exercise. With hindsight I realise that the two events (out of four that I proposed) were actually quite a challenge for the newcomer, in particular the Chamber Music concert; a very 'particular' sort of event.'

Visits
The visits that the volunteers described as particularly successful included:

- Hands-on / interactive activities that facilitated active and direct engagement from the groups.

'[The group] enjoyed the practical elements of workshops and applying new skills'

- Interaction with staff members. This was perceived by volunteers to be a key confidence builder for community groups

'The best visit was the Everyman and Playhouse as the person there paid them lots of attention'

- Activities specifically laid on for the group i.e. behind the scenes tour or special introduction to the venue that made people feel welcome and well catered for.

'Build a tour around the group's interests. Rachael at The Unity was very welcoming. And organised a nice welcome and a chat with the actors = that was the perfect visit, they did all they could.'

'The visit to Everyman was a visit behind the scenes and then have a look at the play – having a 'joined-up' visit made a really big difference'

Barriers

Through their work the volunteers identified a number of barriers they encountered that are relevant to future projects designed to engage community groups with the arts.

Access to information
Several volunteers observed that community groups found it difficult to access information about what's on at arts and cultural organisations in Liverpool.

'I feel that venues within LARC need to send marketing literature to the group leaders, if they don't already do that.'

Venue buy in and communications
Several volunteers experienced difficulties communicating with relevant staff at participating venues. While this was not the case with every volunteer, collaborative working between venue and volunteers was perceived to have

failed to work effectively in a number of cases, making visits more time consuming to arrange and damaging relationships with the groups.

> *'the contact person...very elusive, very hard to get hold of'*

> *'After making contact I waited a long time for a reply each time and eventually what was suggested completely dropped through with no further contact from them.'*

> *'I know that everybody is busy but the other venues mentioned need to understand how frustrating it is to not receive a reply and how infuriating it is to be let down. We are volunteers after all and have just as busy day jobs and we want the venues to make a good impression on the group members. It makes the group members have a negative feeling towards the venue if they found out they have been let down by them.'*

Systems for arranging group visits across venues
Some volunteers encountered a number of different administrative arrangements for organising group visits. They felt that standardisation or greater clarity of these processes across the venues could make future engagement with communities easier to manage.

> *'Every organisation has a different way of working which makes it difficult for people to access the different organisations. It would be good to have a standard way to book and organise visits.'*

Clarity of offer
Some volunteers felt that the costs, the experience visitors could expect and directions to the venues should be made clearer in marketing materials. Knowing what to expect in advance of the visit was felt to be particularly important for alleviating initial anxiety about the visit and during the more practical aspects of planning the visit arrangements.
One volunteer observed that she felt that the marketing at some venues did not make it clear who was welcome:

> *'Some members of the group I spoke to seem to think that certain activities and events were not available to them or the general public'*

This was also reflected in the findings from 'Open City – A Post Capital of Culture Audience Development Project: Social and Cultural perceptions', an MA Dissertation written by one of the Open City volunteers:

> *'One of the main findings was the participants did not know where most of the LARC venues were, therefore prior to Open City they could be truly considered as a 'new audience; and probably never visited these venues based on that reason. Most participants stated that lots of the venues are*

'hidden away' and not directly in the city centre or 'signposted'. This suggested that if they were 'mainstream' venues they should be easier to access. Further to this the majority of participants not only did not know where some of the venues were, but they did not know what goes on in them or even what they were about, and most definitely did not know that they could visit or be involved.'

'The group thought that the venues need to spend more time informing people like themselves what is going on, in particular the more practical based workshops.'

Catering for specific disability/access requirements

While not a common experience, one volunteer in particular could not work with a venue because they did not cater for the specific access requirements of his group. A key learning from the project from the volunteer's perspective was a need for venues to be clear in their ability to cater for a range of disability/access requirements and to be flexible in their provision to meet individual needs.

'Structure, especially look at who's coming and structure the visit according to their needs. You need to know who's coming, i.e. age especially in this case'

4.3   Feedback from Community Groups

Methodology

Feedback on the project has been sought from the community organisations participating. This gained through the use of feedback forms before and after the visits (see Appendix for a template of the form). These forms were distributed by the volunteers associated with the group.

Evaluation data was not collected at all visits. Survey forms were returned on 40% of visits, or 19 out of the 47 visits made on the project.

Evaluation data was not collected on some visits due to:
- Volunteers forgetting to distribute the forms;
- The survey format was found to be unsuitable for group members with learning disabilities;
- There was insufficient time to fill in forms. Some volunteers commented that groups were often preoccupied with planning and travel before a visit, and tired and keen to get home after the visit was completed and as a result they felt it was not appropriate to ask them to fill in a survey.

The table below shows the group visits where the evaluation forms were returned:

Group	No. of Visits Surveyed	Surveyed Venues
Spider Project	2	RLP, Everyman and Playhouse
Imagine Mental Health Men's Group	3	Tate Liverpool, Everyman and Playhouse, Bluecoat
Liverpool Community College	3	Everyman and Playhouse, Bluecoat, Tate Liverpool
Dovecote Dads' Group	3	Unity Theatre, RLP, FACT
Making Spaces	1	Maritime Museum and Slavery Museum
Bellevale Pensioners' Group	5	Lady Lever, Walker Art Gallery, National Conservation Centre, Maritime Museum and Slavery Museum, Tate Liverpool
Women's Inspired Network	1	Everyman and Playhouse
Wirral Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted	1	Unity Theatre

Sample

In total, 117 evaluation forms were received from members of eight different community groups.

The table below breaks down the sample by community group. Please note not all group members completed evaluation forms on the surveyed visits:

Group	Sample	% of Base
Bellevale Pensioners' Group	59	50%
Imagine Mental Health Men's Group	17	14%
Dovecote Dads' Group	12	10%
Liverpool Community College	11	9%
Women's Inspired Network	7	6%
Making Spaces	6	5%
Wirral Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted	3	3%
Spider Project	2	2%
Base	**117**	**100%**

The table below breaks down the sample by venue:

Venue	Sample	% of Base
Everyman and Playhouse	24	21%
Tate Liverpool	22	19%
Maritime Museum and Slavery Museum	18	15%
Walker Art Gallery	15	13%
National Conservation Centre	11	9%
Unity Theatre	10	8%
Lady Lever Art Gallery	8	7%
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic	5	4%
Bluecoat	2	2%
FACT	1	1%
Not specified	1	1%
Base	**117**	**100%**

Please note: Due to the low overall sample size, and the variation in sample at group and venue level, data should be used with caution.

Results

Respondents were asked to rate their feelings concerning the project activity on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = most negative, 10 = most positive) on the following measures:

- Enthusiasm for the visit;
- Interest in the content of the visit;
- Enjoyment of the visit;
- Worries concerning the visit;
- Understanding of the content, and;
- The welcome they expect to/did receive from staff.

The aggregated results for each measure are shown in the tables below[1].

Enthusiasm for the Visit:
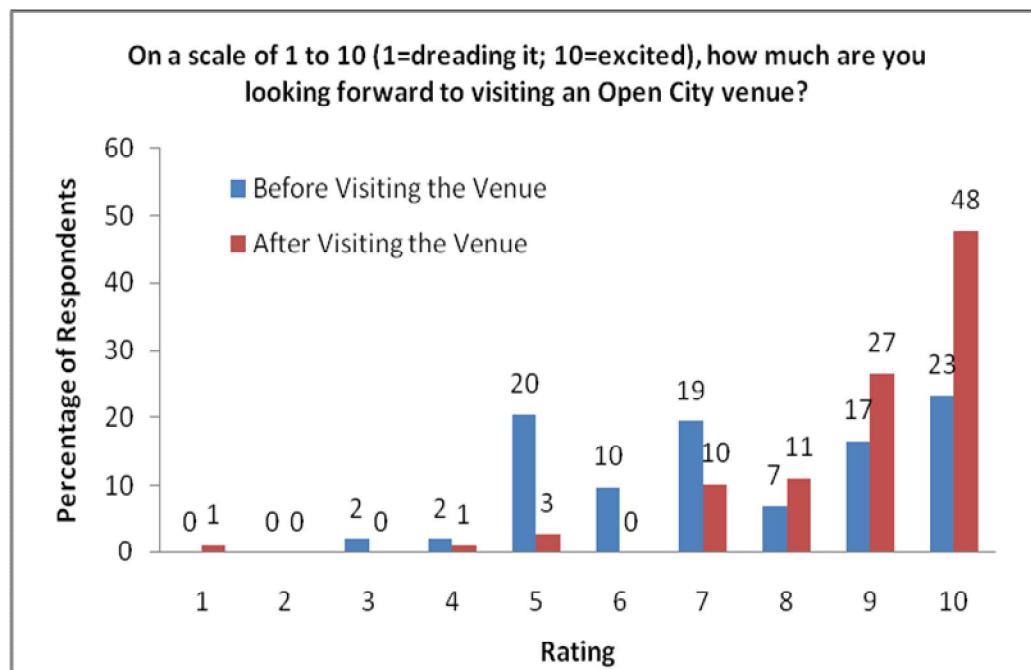
Enthusiasm for the project was high from the start, with only 4% of responses scoring at 4 or below, suggesting very little overall negativity towards the visits initially. Following engagement with the venue, 86% of responses scored enthusiasm for their next visit with the project as being between 8-10, with 48% scoring a '10'.

Interest in the content of the visit:

_____

[1]Not all individuals answered each question. The results displayed highlight percentages based forms providing a response to the question and do not account for missing answers. The percentages refer to number of forms received not number of individual respondents.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=boring; 10=interesting), how interesting do you think/did you think visiting an Open City venue is/was?
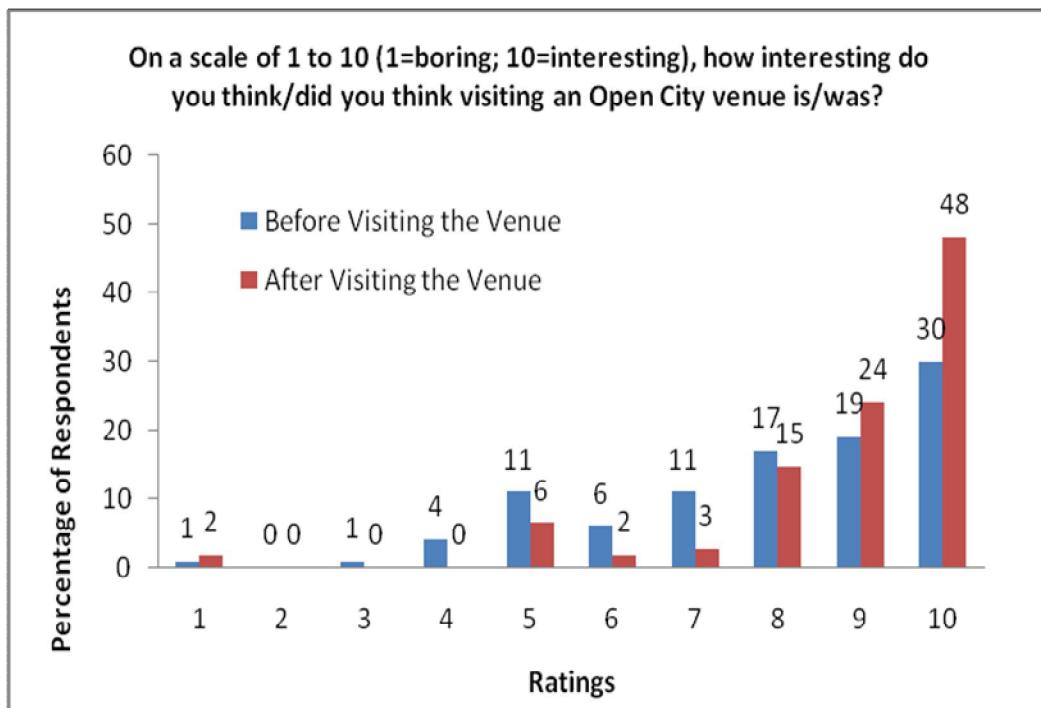
Expectations regarding how interesting visits would be was also generally high, with only 6% of responses scoring expectations at 4 or below before the visit.

Mirroring the results noted above, 48% of responses scored the visit at 10 out of 10 in terms of how interesting it was, with a total of 87% scoring 8-10.

Enjoyment of the visit:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=hate it; 10=love it), how much do you think you will/did you enjoy visiting an Open City venue?
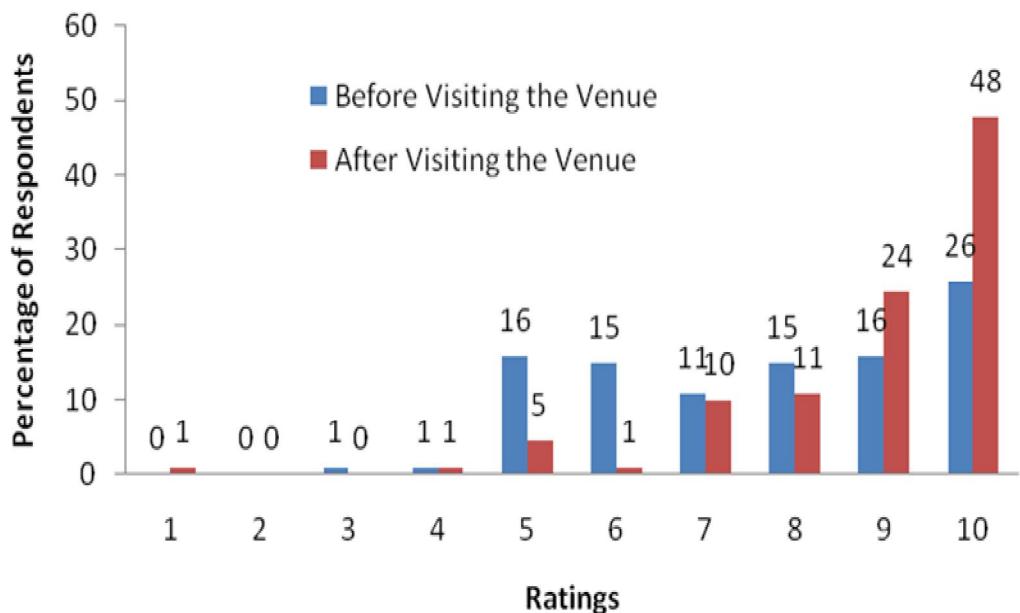
Expectations regarding how much respondents felt they would enjoy their visits was also high, with only 2% of responses scoring expectations for enjoyment at 4 or below pre-visit.

Almost half (48%) of responses scored the visit at 10 out of 10 in terms of enjoyment, with a total of 83% scoring 8-10 in the post-visit feedback.

Worries concerning the visit:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=scared; 10=confident), how much are you worried about visiting an Open City venue?
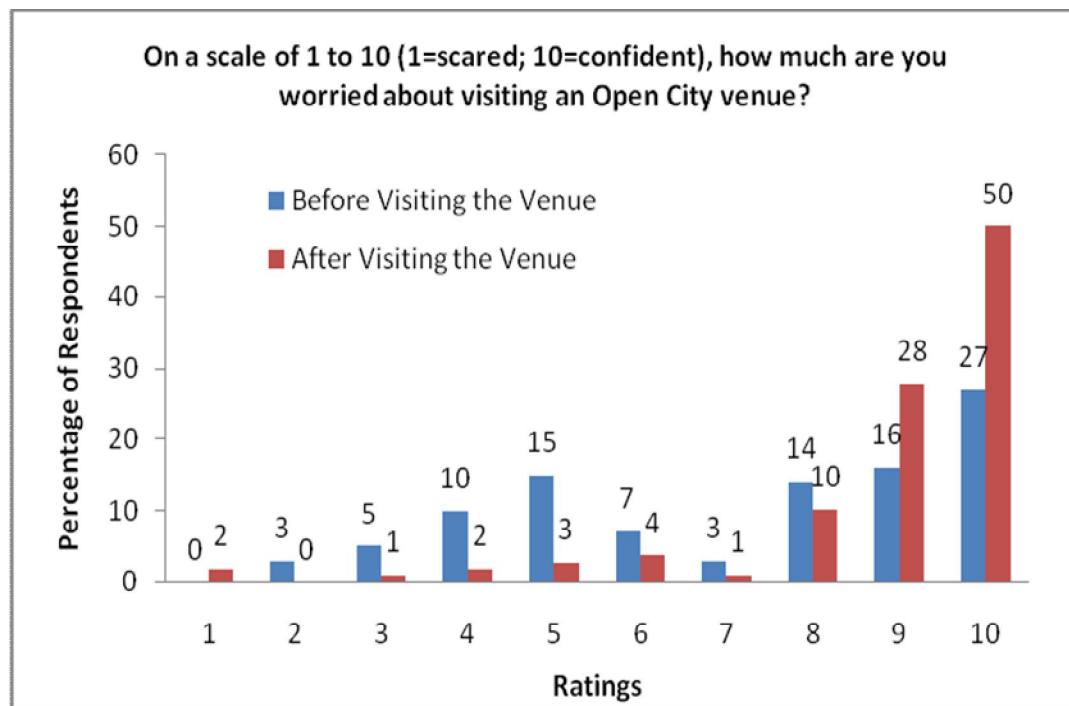
The visiting forms also provide an insight into some of the barriers facing members of these community groups that may have previously prevented engagement with the arts and culture.

Almost 1 in 5 (18%) of responses expressed feeling a lack of confidence before the visit. Post visit, this figure drops to just 5%.

After the visit, 88% of responses scored confidence levels of 8-10.

Understanding of the content:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=feel lost; 10=completely understand), how much do you think you will/did you understand the content in the venue?
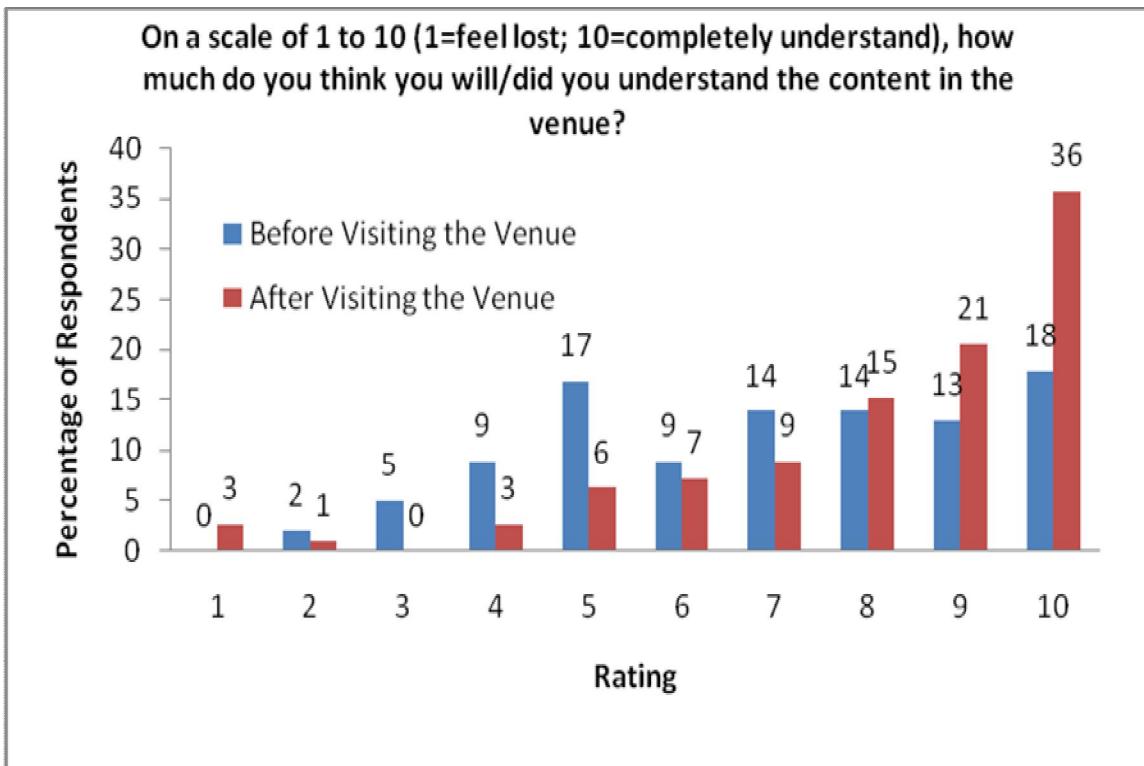
Interestingly, just over 1 in 7 (16%) of responses scored expectations at being able to understand the content of the exhibition/performance at 4 or below. This suggests this is another potential barrier to attendance for these community groups. This score dropped to 7% post-visit.

The percentage of maximum scores post-visit are lower on this rating that for other measures, at just 36%. Just under 3 in 4 (72%) of scores felt between 8 and 10.

The welcome they expect to/did receive from staff:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=stuck up; 10=welcoming), how do you think you will find/did you find the staff towards you? (%)

Percentage of Respondents

- ■ Before Visiting the Venue
- ■ After Visiting the Venue

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Before	1	0	0	1	14	4	11	15	24	31
After	0	0	1	0	4	2	2	8	24	59
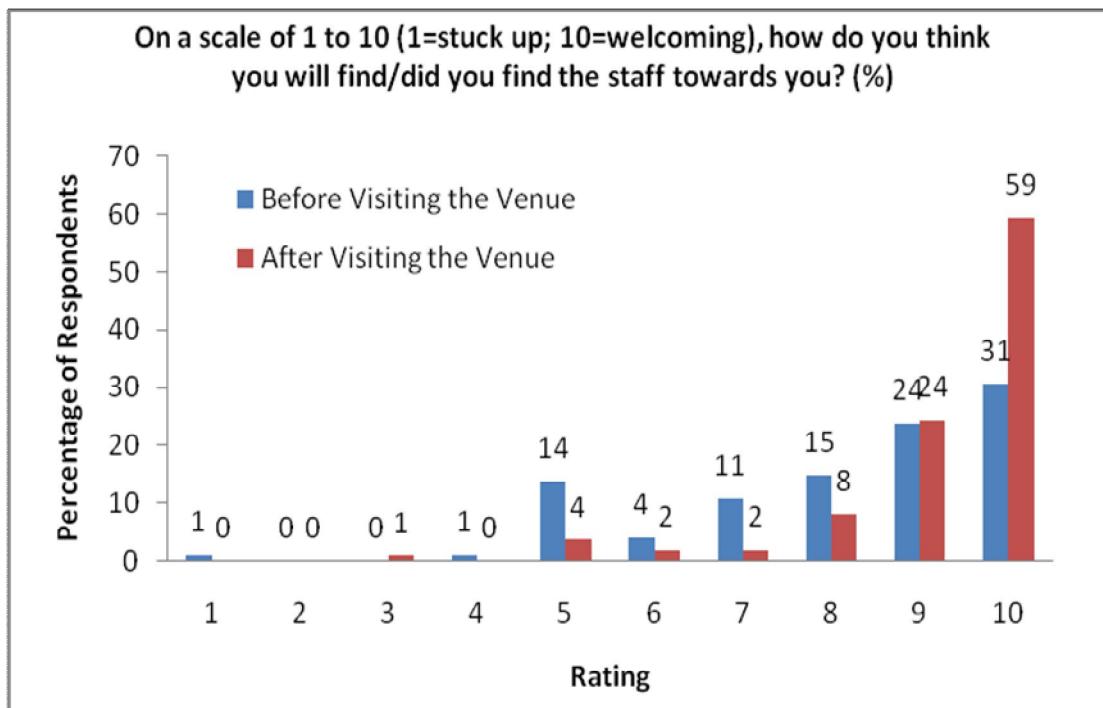
Anxiety about the welcome provided by staff does not emerge as a key barrier within this group of respondents, with just 2% of scores anticipating poor service.

At 59% of scores, this meaure recieved the highest percentage of 10 out of 10 scores of all the post-visit measures included in the survey. Just over 9 in 10 (91%) of scores fell between 8 and 10.

4.4   Feedback from Community Group Leaders

Community group leaders were asked to complete a feedback form at the end of the project. The form asked leaders to reflect on their experience of Open City and on any aspects they felt could be improved. Three group leaders completed the form, a disappointing response rate despite renewed approaches. In retrospect it should have been communicated more effectively from the outset that the group leaders were as much a part of the evaluation as their group members. A template of questions can be found in the appendix to this report.

Benefits for the group

The group leaders described what they felt their group had gained from taking part in Open City:

- Enjoyment
- Greater awareness of breadth of the cultural offer in Liverpool
- Dispelling anxieties about attending the arts, experiencing the arts as open and accessible to all
- Ability to access free tickets and transport. This is crucial in allowing self funded groups on very tight budgets to access paid-for ticketed arts events
- One leader in particular felt the project supported him in his role as a community group leader:

'The dads were not always keen to try new things and at times their resistance really got me down with low numbers attending certain events that had taken ages to plan. At times I felt like giving up and that the dads were not taking the effort that people put in seriously, but I realised this was just due to fear of the unknown and the help that Gin and the volunteers gave in support was invaluable.'

Likelihood to continue attending the arts

All three group leaders stated that they planned to continue arranging visits independently after the Open City project finished. Two group leaders felt that the project was particularly helpful in allowing them to identify an art form (in both cases, theatre) that worked well for their groups, and planned to continue these types of visits in the future.

'Yes definitely. It has been identified throughout the project that the group prefers theatre trips therefore we will be revisiting the theatres in Liverpool.'

Good working practices

Echoing some of the comments from volunteers, the group leaders identified a couple of approaches that worked well for their groups.
Respondents emphasised how important it is that volunteers get to know the group well. Regular visits are an essential part of this process.

'Getting to know the group by attending group meetings. Their needs, likes and dislikes'

The availability of visual resources was also seen as important in helping the group to make informed decisions about the events they would like to attend.

<u>Recommendations for improvements</u>

The feedback from group leaders was overwhelmingly positive, and none of them made any requests for significant changes or improvements to the scheme. One group leader suggested that if the project were to be repeated she would like to be more personally involved in planning the visits as she felt this would prevent miscommunications between the venue and the group.

5 CASE STUDIES

The following two case studies aim to illustrate two of the learnings identified above in Section 4.

Imagine Mental Health, Knowsley

This group is part of the national mental health charity Imagine. The group was set up to support people with mental health issues based around the Kirby area. The group leader contacted Open City after being advised to take part by another support worker from another Imagine group who had previously taken part and had a very successful experience.

Elaine, the group support worker from Imagine, had set up the group and organises meetings weekly for people to meet up with each other and generally socialise. As such, the project very much supported her in fulfilling her aims. By supporting her in organising visits, the group was able to meet and socialise in new and stimulating environments.

The support of the volunteer also meant the group could find out about what was on at the different arts organisations – information that they otherwise struggled to find as they rarely travelled into the city centre and most of the group did not have access to the internet.

Supported by their volunteer Donna Doodson, the group went on six different visits.

Learning: As demonstrated by this case study, the project worked most successfully with stable groups with an organised and engaged group leader.

Also important to success was positioning the project in a way that could support the group leader to achieve their set aims.

Ability of the group to access to information about the LARC offer was poor.

Dovecot Dad's Group

This group was set up and run by a support worker from a local Sure Start children's centre. The group was independent as it aimed to bring together dads with kids of a variety of ages (i.e. not just focusing on Sure Start's under 5s remit). The group itself was based in a deprived area of Liverpool and most of the parents in the group came from difficult backgrounds.

Similarly to the group above, this group found it hard to access information about what was on at the cultural organisations in Liverpool as they would rarely travel into the city centre and did not have access to the internet. They were also often unaware of which cultural organisations were based in the city centre and whether they were accessible to the public. On a visit to FACT for example, crossing the doors parents expressed concern about whether they were allowed to go in.

As expected of the project, volunteers Michelle and Becky supported the group to find out more about what was on at arts and cultural organisations in order to arrange visits. However in addition to this, they proactively helped the group to develop a much wider awareness of arts and cultural organisations in Liverpool, introducing the many different venues and organisations and what they do, regardless of whether or not a visit was arranged to that particular venue.

A successful model when working with this group was to engage the parents via their children. Interactive activities aimed at the children, as well as direct interaction with members of staff from the venues, proved very successful in engaging the group and building up confidence of the parents.

The group was initially based in a local church who had offered free space for the parents and kids to regularly meet. Unfortunately though, due to the church undergoing renovation, the group stopped meeting for a number of weeks. At the same time, due to personal reasons, the original group leader partially withdrew and tried to pass some of the responsibilities onto one of the group members.

Without a strong and on-going leadership and with the lack of a place to meet, volunteers found it more and more difficult to get in contact with the group and organise visits, and they eventually had to stop working with them.

Although the relationship with this group went through a number of ups and downs, the group went onto five different visits.

Learning: The importance of a stable group is again demonstrated here. This time, when stability was no longer present, the group could not continue to engage in the project.

As with the first case study, the ability of the group to access information about the LARC offer was poor.

Awareness of the barriers faced by groups and being responsive to these was important to the project's success – in this case demonstrated by the volunteers taking the time to introduce local arts and cultural organisations, easing adults into the arts through children's activities, and the interaction with members of staff at venues.

6   CONCLUSIONS

The Open City project was a collaborative audience development initiative which aimed to engage community groups new to the arts with LARC organisations through committed and passionate volunteers.

As part of the project, volunteers organised forty-seven visits and introduced fifteen new community groups to LARC organisations. During the project, some key learning points specific to engaging new audiences in Liverpool were identified – here is a brief summary:

- Most of the community groups the project worked with found it difficult to access information about the city centre cultural offer and often had a low awareness of the range of cultural organisations in Liverpool and their programmes.

- The internal stability of the group was a key factor in them successfully engaging with the project and going along to visits.

- Aligning the project with the individual aims of group leaders was often important in successfully engaging community groups with the project.

- A proactive and 'added value' approach from venues in their offer to community groups was key in engaging groups with their offer.

- A clear venue offer and good internal communication within venues was important building successful relationships with volunteers and their ability to successfully plan a visit.

Open City Merseyside was set-up as a long-term intervention and pilot project. Even with the eighteen month time-span of this project and the resources deployed (Project Manager and Assistant albeit part-time), it has often been an intensive process to engage those unfamiliar with the arts who also face other social or health issues. However in addition to the individuals and groups introduced to the venues and experiences shown above and their improved perceptions of the arts offering, the project has delivered legacy materials for LARC (and other potential partners) to continue this work, namely

- Committed Community Volunteers and a clear process to recruit further volunteers
- Volunteer and Community Group Leader Support Packs
- Staff within arts organisations with a greater understanding and actual experience of welcoming and supporting these visits

For those who were part of Open City Merseyside, the experiences of the individuals and the volunteers captured here show the Project has supported the

second LARC aim to make "A More Audience and People Friendly City Centre". The challenge going forward is to maintain the commitment and support of all partners without 'independent' coordination.

7   APPENDIX

Group Review Survey

Name of Group:

Contact Person:

Contact Details:

1) How do you think the Open City project has impacted upon your group?

2) In what ways has the project met (or failed to meet) your expectations?

3) In what ways (if any) has Open City influenced your group's intention to visit Liverpool's arts and cultural venues/events in the future?

4) In what ways do you think the Open City project could be improved?

5) Do you have any other comments about the Open City project that you would like to make?

Volunteer interview/email questions

Volunteer name:
Group/s you worked with:

About the group you worked with
1 - What did you learn about working with the group you worked with?
2 - What did you learn about working with community groups in general?
3 - More specifically, what did you find were your group's needs?
4 - What should venues be aware of when encouraging groups with similar needs to visit their venues?
5 - Have you got any suggestions specifically regarding marketing or programming for your group?
6 - Any suggestions regarding working with community groups/specifically the group you worked with?

About the venues
7 - What has been your experience of working with the LARC venues? And why?
8 - Have you got any recommendations about working with these venues?
9 - Is there any particular feedback you'd like to pass to venues regarding their practices?

About the project
10 - What has your experience on the project been like?
11 - What did you find was a positive experience?
12 - What was negative/you'd change?
13 - If so, how would you do that?

About your experience as a volunteer
14 - Has the project fulfilled what you wanted to get out of it?
15 - If not, why was that? How could we have made that happen?
16 - How confident do you feel on the project?
17 - Are there any specific areas you feel you've built confidence in?
18 - What support or guidance do you feel could have helped you further?
19 - Do feel you got any benefits out of the project? If so, what are these?

Group questionnaires   **BEFORE-VISIT QUESTIONNAIRE**

On a scale of 1 – 10…

How much are you looking forward to your visit?

| | | | | | | | | | |

1 (dreading it)   5   (excited) 10
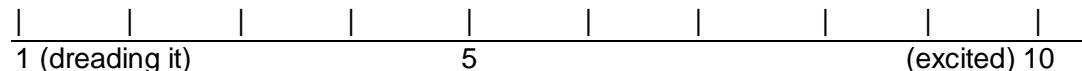
How worried do you feel about the visit?

| | | | | | | | | | |

1 (scared)   5   (confident) 10
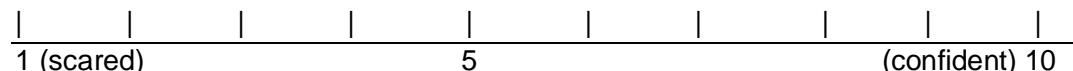
How interesting do you think it will be?

| | | | | | | | | | |

1 (boring)   5   (interesting) 10
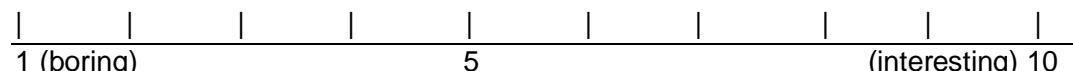
How much do you think you'll enjoy it?

| | | | | | | | | | |

1 (hate it)   5   (love it) 10

How much do you think you'll 'get it'?

| | | | | | | | | | |

1 (feel lost)   5   (completely understand) 10
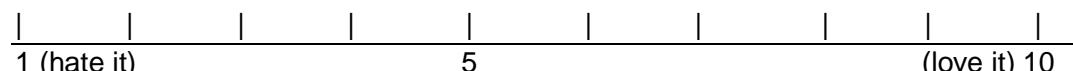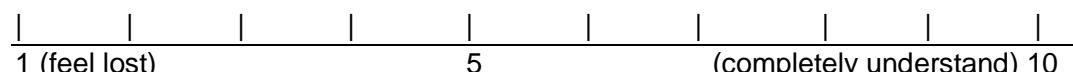
How welcoming do you think the people who work there will be?

| | | | | | | | | | |

1 (stuck up)   5   (welcoming) 10
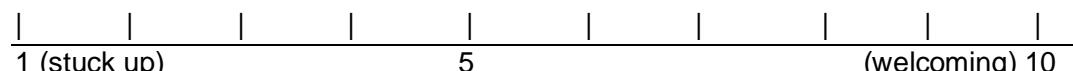
VENUE/EXHIBITION:_____

COMMUNITY GROUP:_____

DATE OF VISIT:_____

Have you visited this venue before?

What do you expect to get out of your visit today?

**If you feel worried about today's visit, what are your concerns?**

Any other comments?

AFTER-VISIT QUESTIONNAIRE

On a scale of 1 – 10…

How much did you enjoy your visit?

| | | | | | | | | | |
1 (hated it)   5   (loved it) 10
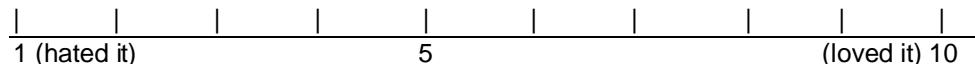
How interesting did you think it was?

| | | | | | | | | | |
1 (boring)   5   (interesting) 10

How much did you 'get it'?

| | | | | | | | | | |
1 (felt lost)   5   (completely understood) 10
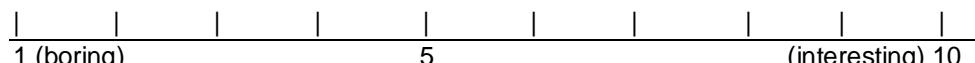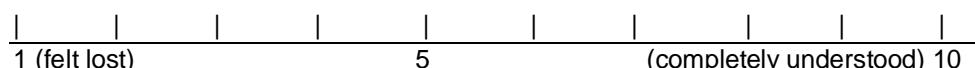
How welcoming did you think the people who work there were?

| | | | | | | | | | |
1 (stuck up)   5   (welcoming) 10
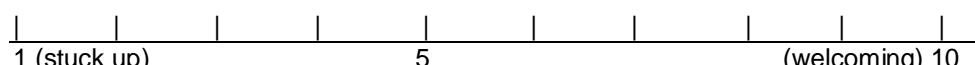
If you visited the same place again, how worried would you feel next time?

| | | | | | | | | | |
1 (scared)   5   (confident) 10
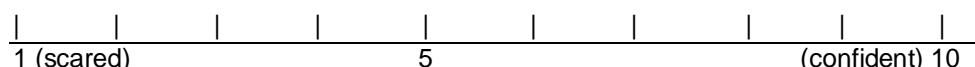
How much are you looking forward to your next visit with Open City?

| | | | | | | | | | |
1 (dreading it)   5   (excited) 10
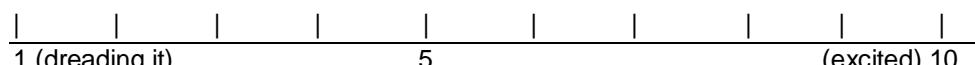
VENUE/EXHIBITION:_____

COMMUNITY GROUP:_____

DATE OF VISIT:_____

What did you get out of your visit today?

If you visited this venue again, would you feel worried?

If so, what would be your concerns?

Would you recommend it to friends or family?

Any other comments?