LEARNING ON THE FRONTLINE
FIND OUT MORE
## Contents

**04 Foreword**  
by Godfrey Worsdale, Director, BALTIC

**06 Learning on the Frontline**  
by Emma Thomas, Head of Learning and Engagement, BALTIC

**16 Overview of BALTIC Training**  
June 2010-May 2012  
by Sarah Bouttell, Lee Stokoe and Sarah Wilkinson, Learning and Engagement Managers (Front of House), BALTIC

**22 Talking Yourself Out of a Pickle:**  
Spotlight Tours, Communications Skills and In a Pickle Training Module  
by Hayley Duff, Learning and Engagement Manager (Front of House), BALTIC

**32 BALTIC Professional Practice Award:**  
Learning In and Through Work  
by Garth Rhodes, Head of Flexible Learning, School of Health, Community and Education Studies, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne

**40 BALTIC Professional Practice Award:**  
Developing Learning and Engagement. Examples of Work-based Projects Undertaken  
by Claudia Espana (Crew), Alicia Talikowska (Crew), Lianne Bell (Crew), Ilaria Longhi (Community Programmer), Lucy Smith (Schools and Colleges Programmer), Jonathan Lynch (Crew / Assistant Community Programmer), Anneliese Kopko (Learning and Engagement Manager, Front of House), Catherine Cooke (Learning and Engagement Coordinator), Lesley Ann Rose (Crew) and Daniel Howard (Crew).

**52 Audience Research and Development**  
by Annelies Kopko, Learning and Engagement Manager (Front of House), BALTIC

**60 Top Ten Tips to Take Away**  
by Emma Thomas, Head of Learning and Engagement, BALTIC

**62 Visitor Comments**

**64 The Culture of Staff and the Contemporary Arts Centre**  
by Iain Wheeldon, Senior Teaching Fellow in Art Museum & Gallery Education, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University

**78 The Funder’s Perspective:**  
Rootstein Hopkins Foundation  
by Ian Cole, Trustee, Rootstein Hopkins Foundation

**80 Paul Hamlyn Foundation**  
by Regis Cochefert, Head of Arts, Paul Hamlyn Foundation

**82 Appendices**

**84 BALTIC Core Values**
Foreword

Godfrey Worsdale, Director, BALTIC
My earliest experience of a person invigilating an exhibition gallery was to be reprimanded by a stern, uniformed man who clearly regarded my being in the building as an imposition. When I became a curator, I was quickly trained to regard the ‘wards’ or ‘attendants’ with suspicion; they mustn’t be allowed to engage with the artistic content and if they were to try, then surely they would undermine the values that the institution stood for.

The contents of this publication introduce a number of voices and perspectives that demonstrate how far, across the sector, things have improved. It also shows how BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art continues to adopt genuinely radical models of organisational and staff development in the cause of visitor engagement that repeatedly re-designs and deepens the relationship between artistic content, institution and audience.

It is important to note that the centrality of a meaningful learning experience within an institution for contemporary art is not, and in my view should never be, at the expense of a rigorous and uncompromising programme. Indeed the developmental steps that are described here have been made infinitely more significant because at every point, the primacy and authenticity of the artist’s voice has been so highly cherished.

My involvement with BALTIC covers the most recent third of its ten year history, and the part it has played in the field of audience engagement in that short time
LEARNING ON THE FRONTLINE

by Emma Thomas, Head of Learning and Engagement, BALTIC
BALTIC has been in the fortunate position of receiving funding from both the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation over five years in order to develop and establish a new organisational model which repositions learning and engagement within the visitor experience in order to widen audiences and meaningfully enrich the quality of their experience. As well as structurally repositioning our front of house team (Crew) within the Learning and Engagement Team, we have been able to invest in a comprehensive, bespoke and accredited training and development programme and to build on audience research and feedback systems.

This book offers BALTIC as a case study. We hope that it will stimulate conversations to explore best practice and ways of effectively engaging visitors through front of house and creating a culture of learning within organisations. By sharing what we have learnt and the models that we have developed, we hope that they can be adapted and made relevant to others.

*Learning on the Frontline* was the title given by Rosie O'Donovan for her MA dissertation in Learning and Visitor Studies in Museums and Galleries at Leicester University (2011) where she used BALTIC’s approach as a case study. I have adopted her title for this book as it reflects not only the emphasis on visitors’ learning, but importantly acknowledges the learning that takes place front of house by staff, which can be channelled back into the organisation as a whole to improve what we do and how we do it.

Cultural organisations are all looking for ways of engaging meaningfully with visitors and creating loyal, regular and sustained audiences as well as developing and growing new ones. At BALTIC our strategy has been to embed learning in the visitor experience. We aim to impact on visitors’ learning through the Crew as well as creating systematic feedback systems to help us know and respond to our audiences better. We are seeking to grow and diversify audiences by deepening their engagement with BALTIC and contemporary art, sustaining relationships and encouraging loyalty and repeat visits.

BALTIC has positioned learning at the centre of the visitor experience and created a new organisational mission. *Contemporary Art: Transforming Thinking and Learning.*

We have had, and continue to have, many conversations and work collaboratively with a great many galleries, organisations and museums and it is evident that there is a fast-growing interest in this area. A recent seminar at BALTIC entitled *Engaging Visitors through Front of House* attracted 92 people from 37 organisations across the UK.

Also, at the recent Contemporary Visual Arts Network Third National Summit, Gill Nicol, Arts Consultant, ‘lights going on’, affectionately referred to the ‘BALTIC Model’ when describing her involvement in the training of 10 front of house teams at different art galleries. She commented that ‘*BALTIC has been a leader in the visual arts sector with its Crew*
training programme and approach. Now known as the ‘BALTIC Model’, it led the way in terms of embracing dialogue within its Front of House team, and goes from strength to strength.’

My hope is that these writings can play a part in continuing to promote the vital work that takes place every day in galleries through front of house teams; their fundamental role in engaging visitors and creating more sustainable audiences as well as the value of their involvement in gathering systematic visitor feedback for organisations as a whole to develop and learn from.

In 2009, BALTIC made the unprecedented step of moving the Crew, previously part of a stand-alone Visitor Services Department, into the wider Learning and Engagement Team. The aim was to embed learning in the visitor experience, navigating our visitors through contemporary art, enhancing engagement and learning opportunities as well as developing staff skills.

In order to achieve this aim, ongoing research and evaluation have been vital. We have sought to understand the needs and motivations of our audiences in order to be relevant and responsive to them. The Communications Team at BALTIC lead on audience research and are able to segment our audiences into meaningful groupings which, as well as evidencing demographical data, identify people’s motivations for coming to BALTIC and their
perceived level of knowledge of contemporary art. We structure our learning and engagement with gallery visitors using the groupings identified by the Communications Team. However, we overlay a lifelong learning framework for more specialist programmes; namely families, young people, community groups and adults as well as schools, colleges and universities.

Our research confirms that 35% of BALTIC’s visitors are culturally aware and are coming to BALTIC specifically to view the exhibitions; they are knowledgeable and want to deepen their knowledge of contemporary art. These people are confident in visiting BALTIC and are au fait with the building and protocols associated with visiting a gallery.

However, 66% of BALTIC’s visitors have different reasons for coming. Many have chosen to attend for social purposes; the three key segments in this category are Sightseers, where the destination and building is as important if not more so than the art (24%), Family Visitors whose day out is driven by the desire for their children to engage in art activity (22%) and Third Spacers who view the gallery as a place to meet family and friends; while they are interested in the exhibitions their primary interest is the venue itself (20%)¹.

This information and ongoing audience research is vital in order to sustain and grow our audiences. People’s knowledge of contemporary art varies considerably, from first time visitors to those with specialist knowledge. Our aim is to engage with people at different levels and build upon their motivations for visiting, while seeking to deepen their breadth and depth of knowledge of contemporary art.

**BALTIC’s Opening**

BALTIC opened to the public on 13 July 2002 as a free contemporary art venue presenting a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events. Situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, BALTIC has welcomed over 4.5 million visitors since opening, and now has approximately 500,000 visitors per year.

BALTIC was born from an Arts Council strategy called ‘The Case for Capital’² which set about redressing under-investment in arts buildings in the North East of England. In the early 1990s the North East had the lowest levels of attendance in the visual arts of any region. The £250m cultural regeneration programme included other projects such as The Sage Gateshead and the Angel of the North, which have transformed the area of Newcastle Gateshead and North East England. £46m was invested in transforming the former Baltic Flour Mill, a disused 1950s grain warehouse, into a leading international contemporary art venue.

On opening, BALTIC welcomed a largely regional audience who were new to contemporary art. Ten years on, BALTIC is now firmly established as an important part of the landscape locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. It has moved into the next
phase of its development, planning its long-term future as well as opening a new project space, BALTIC 39, in Newcastle City Centre. Towards the end of 2008, BALTIC appointed Godfrey Worsdale as Director. One of his first priorities was creating a sustainable and effective staffing structure for BALTIC, as well as redefining the organisational mission.

**BALTIC Crew**

At the time of Godfrey’s appointment, and thanks to generous grants from the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation in 2006 and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2009, BALTIC had invested heavily in the development of the Crew. Over a three-year period, we had developed a progressive training programme tailored specifically to the Crew role. The Crew role is unique in its skill set; combining in-depth knowledge and experience of contemporary art with the skills needed to communicate ideas effectively and provide a high quality visitor experience, proactively approaching visitors, sharing knowledge and striking up conversations.

The grant for Crew training and development enabled us to undertake a staff skills audit, to think outside the box and design exciting opportunities for personal development, to support Crew needs and also to boost their confidence and knowledge in engaging the public with contemporary art. There is a strong passion for contemporary art amongst the Crew, with approximately 80% of them also practising artists.
The training and development programme we designed, and still use as a base, has three major components:

The **first** is the BALTIC know-how and induction programme which delivers all of the essential modules to new Crew members. This ensures they have a good understanding of BALTIC, our vision, the arts programme and the core values in the Crew role as well as emergency evacuation procedures, policies for child protection and equality and diversity, and the visitor experience.

The **second** enables staff to further develop their people skills. This includes communication skills, ‘In a Pickle’ sessions to help deal with difficult conversations and more specialised disability awareness training.

The **third** is focused on exhibition learning and comprises of paid independent research time in the library, study bags on each exhibition floor, artist talks (also documented and made available via the online archive), seasonal exhibition programme presentations, peer-led exhibition walk-throughs and venue and exhibition research visits, the findings of which are disseminated to colleagues throughout the organisation.

**Crew become part of Learning and Engagement**

Godfrey Worsdale, Director, recognised the potential in Crew to engage visitors and offer them insights into the art and exhibitions at BALTIC. At the time of Godfrey’s appointment in 2008, BALTIC had recently commissioned Morris Hargreaves Mcintyre (MHM³) to conduct a piece of audience research. One of the key findings in this research was that to grow its audience, BALTIC must ‘provide a high quality, engaging visitor experience that leaves people wanting to come back’. This research also confirmed that the motivation for many people visiting BALTIC was centred around learning: ‘improve my knowledge’, ‘gain a deeper insight into art’, stimulate my own creativity’ and ‘encourage children’s interest in art’.

Our response to this research was the conclusion that innovative investment in Crew was crucial to increasing visitor confidence, improving the visitor experience and the depth of their engagement with contemporary art and thereby growing and sustaining BALTIC’s audiences for the future.

On the positioning and role of Crew at BALTIC

Godfrey comments: **BALTIC’s Crew is its frontline interaction with its audience. Whilst those colleagues also have a responsibility to care for the physical well-being of both visitors and exhibits, their impact in articulating the potential of the art that BALTIC shows is of immense value, particularly when tailored to the individual needs of every visitor. This critical contribution to the purpose of BALTIC clearly illustrated the rationale for moving the entire Crew into the Learning Team.**

This has been a very positive structural move and one which has become an organisational model within the cultural sector. Learning is now at the centre of the visitor experience, and this has been achieved.
largely through putting learning at the centre of the development of Crew. More than ever, Crew understand their importance in achieving BALTIC’s aims and recognise the role they play in broadening people’s perspective on contemporary art and deepening their engagement with it.

Anneliese Kopko, Learning and Engagement Manager (Front of House), believes that being part of the Learning and Engagement Team has been a step forward for Crew and Front of House Managers, as well as for the institution and its goals.

‘We enjoy working hard to recruit, train and develop Crew to be able to deliver a unique service for a contemporary art gallery, by way of really engaging with visitors to tackle a subject that can often be challenging or difficult to grasp. Many Crew are artists themselves, which gives them a genuine enthusiasm and passion for art. Coupled with the desire to let more people know about BALTIC and make contemporary art more accessible.’

Reinforcing the restructure, BALTIC launched a new mission statement with a strong emphasis on learning. BALTIC’s mission is: ‘To create exceptional access to important and innovative contemporary art in a unique setting, that encourages learning and transformational thinking.’ Crew are instrumental in driving forward this mission. Their role is now a fundamental part of the Learning and Engagement Strategy, Interpretation Strategy and Audience Development Plan at BALTIC.

**Cultural exchange, Crew development, audience research**

In 2010 BALTIC was successful in securing funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation over a two-year period to enable us build upon the established training and development programme, initially funded by the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation, introducing new elements to take our initiatives to the next level. The core activities for these developments have focused on: cultural exchange, Crew development and audience research.

Through the cultural exchange programme, we are having ongoing dialogues with other cultural organisations, primarily through meetings and research visits as well as organising two annual seminars, allowing key questions to be raised and creating a forum for sharing approaches to engaging audiences and learning. We have also set up a number of staff exchanges with other galleries such as Ikon, Birmingham and the Science Museum, London, in order to share best practice and learn from each other.

The further investment in Crew training and development has enabled us to evaluate the current programme, make further improvements to the induction process and also as develop on-the-ground and progressive training modules for all Crew. Importantly, we have successfully piloted the BALTIC Professional Practice Award in Developing Learning and Engagement (PPA). Through the PPA, Crew can receive accreditation at Masters Level (Level 7) for their learning whilst at work.
There are currently ten members of staff who have chosen to undertake the PPA. Each person completes 2 x 30 credit modules. The first module is a reflection of the impact of their learning whilst doing the training programme as a whole. The second module is a work-based project where individuals identify an area for improvement within BALTIC’s Learning and Engagement Strategy, Interpretation Strategy and Audience Development Plan and then research and prototype their ideas. Work-based projects must meet an individual’s interests as well as those of the organisation.

The PPA ensures that we are offering consistently high quality, professional training which has a direct impact on an individual and their role as well as moving the organisation as a whole forward. It highlights the importance of reflection in the learning process and encourages Crew to think about the bigger picture and their role in achieving the organisation’s mission. The PPA is also recognition that ideas can come from anywhere within the organisation and creates an opportunity for individuals to bring forward and trial their ideas.

We have established feedback mechanisms so that all this information can be channelled back into the organisation, creating further opportunities for audiences and staff to influence BALTIC and see their thoughts and needs acted upon.

BALTIC is an exciting, challenging and creative place to work. We are continually pushing to improve what we do and care a great deal about our success. It is clear that there is a solid team here with a strong sense of loyalty to BALTIC. As practising artists themselves, Crew are passionate about their subject and want to share that enthusiasm with others. When asked why this organisational model is working, I think it is a combination of the above but importantly it is staff having their own creativity and learning stimulated by the training and development programme offered and the daily interactions with visitors and artists as well as the constantly changing programme of exhibitions and events.

Notes

1 Data from ‘New Ideas in an Old Space’ 2011-2012, a research document prepared by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

2 The Arts Council awarded £33.4 million from the National Lottery Fund with £1.5 million a year for 5 years towards the running costs. Other sources of funding included: Gateshead Council, One North East and English Partnerships.

3 Morris Hargreaves McIntyre is a management and research consultancy with a huge breadth of experience across the cultural, public and media sectors. They combine wide-ranging strategic consultancy with full in-house quantitative and qualitative research, working in the interests of audience and organisational development.
Cultural Exchange Photographers: Lizzie Bracegirdle, Claudia España and Scott Patterson (BALTIC Crew)
Training between June 2010 and May 2012
by Sarah Bouttell, Lee Stokoe and Sarah Wilkinson,
Learning and Engagement Managers (Front of House), BALTIC
### BALTIC Know-How and Induction Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Crew Attended</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>All new Crew (refresher training as needed)</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Crew induction includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Arts programme and vision</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Core values</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Visitor experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Equality and diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Emergency evacuation procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Child and vulnerable adult protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of BALTIC Library and Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of radios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty Manager Training</td>
<td>All Duty Managers (regular refresher training)</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>• Emergency evacuation procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lift rescue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Opening and closing procedures for the building</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Report writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• New Duty Managers spend 1 day shadowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>St John Ambulance</td>
<td>First Aid skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Safety: Child Protection &amp; Youth Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Artsplan</td>
<td>A session run by Artsplan for creative practitioners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### People Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Crew Attended</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills (Pt1)</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>Northern Stage</td>
<td>Learning new skills and techniques to build confidence when speaking to visitors and leading Spotlight Tours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to Newcastle Gateshead (Pt1)</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI)</td>
<td>A fun and interactive 3 hour destination awareness and customer service training session for anyone who works in tourism or talks to visitors in NewcastleGateshead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In a Pickle</em> Training Module</td>
<td>Open to all Crew (limited places at each session)</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Group sessions to share approaches to dealing with difficult situations and visitors and to delivering tours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to Newcastle Gateshead Quayside Tour (Pt2)</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>NGI</td>
<td>Crew gained a more thorough knowledge of the local quayside so that they could better deliver and inform the content of BALTIC’s Quayside Spotlight Tours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Crew Attended</td>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Disability Awareness                              | All Crew                                   | Newcastle College              | A training session designed specifically to suit the gallery context to give a better understanding to Crew of working with a wide range of disabilities. The training:  
• Gave an introduction to the Equality Act 2010  
• Provided an overview and awareness of a range of physical / learning disabilities  
• Ensured Crew were able to greet, give basic directions and finger spell in British Sign Language  
• Raised awareness of protocol / etiquette when working with people who have a disability / learning difficulty  
• Promoted confidence when working with people who have a disability/learning difficulty  
Research is currently underway to source and design a complementary training module for Crew that encompasses the Equality Act and its impact within the visual arts and cultural sector in order to champion and further embed diversity and equality in the organisation. |
<p>| 5 x Open House Events at nearby venues: Dance City, Centre for Life, Tyneside Cinema, Seven Stories and the Laing Art Gallery | 2-12 for each event                         | Newcastle Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV) | A chance to learn about other cultural venues in the local area to better inform BALTIC visitors of the local offer. Following each event, Crew who attended wrote a piece for the staff intranet.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Behind the Scenes Tour – knowledge sharing session| 3                                          | BALTIC                         | Crew-led training in the content of the BALTIC Behind the Scenes Tours.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Observational Skills and Research Training         | 5-12                                       | Lisa Baxter, Freelance Consultant initially and then BALTIC to develop and cascade further training | The training gave an understanding of the theory of people’s behaviour, learning how to observe a location and understand how people behave in it. Practical observational research, skills in how to read body language and how to make targeted approaches as a result. Participants also learned how to design and implement an observational research programme in BALTIC and about the potential application of the research findings. |
| Turner Prize Group Tours Briefing                 | Open to all Crew delivering tours to school groups | BALTIC                         | Lucy Smith, Schools and Colleges Programmer, hosted a briefing for Crew delivering group tours during the Turner Prize 2011.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Crew Attended</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Explorers session with BALTIC Freelance Artist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Crew joined a freelance artist-led session in how to utilise the Exhibition Explorer Packs to enhance visits for BALTIC’s family audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD: Exhibition Explorer Packs session for teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Crew joined a session run for teachers in how to utilise the Exhibition Explorer Packs to enhance visits for BALTIC’s younger audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour Management and Youth Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Artsplan</td>
<td>Improved skills and knowledge of behavioural management and understanding of barriers that young people face.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exhibition Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Crew Attended</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Exhibition Programme Presentations</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Programme team presented the forthcoming season of exhibitions to staff. These events were also filmed and made available to watch via BALTIC Archive during research time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curator talks and walk-throughs of all exhibitions at BALTIC</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Programme team lead a talk and exhibition walk-through of all exhibitions for BALTIC Staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Exhibition Walk-throughs</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Informal learning and sharing of exhibition knowledge amongst Crew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Evening</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Hosted by Crew as an outcome of a research trip, Crew informally shared information on artist Robert Breer and their approaches to engaging visitors in the exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinetic Colour: Animation and Robert Breer Seminar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Crew attended a public seminar to deepen knowledge of and give wider context to the Robert Breer exhibition. Also documented by Library and Archive for Crew to watch during research time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Art and Introduction to Contemporary Art</td>
<td>3 each session</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>These sessions were led by a member of Crew looking at the history of art to provide other members of Crew with a deeper context and knowledge within which to place BALTIC’s exhibitions programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the Turner Prize</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>North East Centre for Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>A 7-week evening course in the history of the Turner Prize. Crew produced a visual timeline of its history and displayed this in the staff and exhibition areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of a Film Resource</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>A creative video resource for staff and visitors to help understand approaches to animation, taking cues from artist Robert Breer’s visual style and production methods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Training Crew Attended Provider Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Crew Attended</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist talks for staff which have included: Maurizio Anzeri Mariah Robertson Mike Kelley/ Michael Smith Elizabeth Price Ed Carter, Introduction to ~FLOW Richard Rigg Mark Wallinger</td>
<td>All Crew</td>
<td>BALTIC</td>
<td>Exhibiting artists talk and lead walk-throughs directly to staff about their work. These talks are filmed and made available to watch via BALTIC Archive during research time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Research trips to exhibitions have included: Turner Prize 2010 at Tate Britain Robert Breer at the Bordeaux Museum of Contemporary Art (CAPC) Karla Black at the Venice Biennale Mike Kelley at the Gagosian Gallery, London | 2-3 for each trip | BALTIC | Research trips take place in advance of works being exhibited at BALTIC to learn about the artists, invigilation, care of the works and visitor responses. Crew are selected to go on research visits following a short application about what they will gain from the research visit and how they will disseminate what they have learnt to colleagues on their return. Outcomes to disseminate information to staff have included:  
- Reporting back on the Turner Prize 2010 in written form and producing a visual timeline documenting the history of the prize up to the present day. The timeline was exhibited in the staff and exhibition areas  
- Production of written newsletters and hosting of a Robert Breer discussion evening for Crew  
- The production of 2 videos from the Karla Black exhibition to share knowledge with other Crew, available on the archive database  
- The creation of a blog to disseminate information about Mike Kelley to the wider Learning Team  
'It was a totally incredible experience and one that I won’t forget. I am now looking forward to all the hard work that needs to be done to feed this juicy information back to my lovely co-workers. I really can’t wait to see how the show will work here at BALTIC. It was truly phenomenal to go on the trip.' Crew. |
| Self-led Research. Crew are given paid research time in the Library | All Crew | BALTIC | Extended research period to give quality time to investigating the forthcoming exhibitions and preparing for tours. |
| Exhibition Study Bags | All Crew | BALTIC | Study bags are available on each floor so that Crew can read about the exhibitions during quiet times. |
Annual Performance and Development Review (PDR)
Staff Performance and Development Review is the name of BALTIC's appraisal scheme for all employees, where every member of staff has the opportunity to reflect upon their own performance with their line manager. Objectives are agreed for the year ahead and training and development needs are identified. These needs are analysed and the results are then factored into the training and development programme for the year ahead.

Staff Surveys
We developed a comprehensive staff survey specifically for the two-year period of funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The questions are structured around three strands: Cultural Exchange, Audience Development and Training and Development. The survey was repeated four times during the funding period and the results were analysed to inform the ongoing training and development programme.

Case Studies
Each of the five Learning and Engagement Managers (Front of House) identified a member of Crew in their team to be a case study for the funding period. This more in-depth picture allowed managers to track the development of five individuals over the funding period and demonstrate the impact of the funding at an individual level.

Feedback Questionnaires
Crew attending any formal or informal training or development event were asked to complete a brief set of questions to capture an immediate response to the learning. The completed questionnaires are collated and feed in to the overall training and development programme as well as being a useful tool to trace an individual’s development.
TALKING YOURSELF OUT OF A PICKLE

Spotlight Tours, Communication Skills and In a Pickle Training Module
by Hayley Duff, Learning and Engagement Manager (Front of House), BALTIC
My role at BALTIC is to work within a team of Learning and Engagement Managers (FOH) in the recruitment, training, development and line management of Crew. As part of this role, I coach and respond to feedback as well as design training and assistance for Crew in order for them to have the very best interactions and conversations with our visitors.

There are three main areas of training that I currently work on within our team: Spotlight Tours, Communication Skills and In a Pickle training module. These elements in our training and work with Crew are key to ensuring they are equipped and empowered for their experiences in the galleries.

When it comes to welcoming and engaging visitors, the conversations Crew have on the gallery floors are what make the difference. They are the initial point of contact for visitors who would like to know more. This sits amongst the other ways of learning but, from my perspective, is by far the most interesting and exciting way to understand, form opinion and ‘feel’ contemporary art.

Crew have been developed into specialists who can assess visitors as they enter a gallery. They decide on whether the visitor is confused, enthused or disinterested and adjust accordingly. The best Crew do this every minute of their day and apply their knowledge to each visitor in a bespoke and special way.

**Tours**

Previously, Crew had support and some guidance in how they interacted with our visitors and to what extent; those who felt confident and wanted to do more than have conversations could opt into giving a standard tour, which happened twice every day and lasted up to an hour. This tour would take in all aspects of BALTIC; it would be about guiding visitors around the building, touching upon the history and vision and then fitting in the exhibitions on each gallery floor too.

With financial support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation we deconstructed the elements of an ordinary tour into a selection of bitesize ‘spotlight’ tours, with each one picking up on a specific exhibition or subject. It was clear from BALTIC’s audience research by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre that people come to BALTIC for many reasons and we needed to make our tours more widely accessible and interesting for our wide range of visitors. Exhibition Spotlight Tours now last 15-20 minutes and are delivered at three evenly distributed times throughout the day, with Crew signing up and giving tours on one exhibition at each allocated time.

The thinking behind this was that on the whole, the shorter time to participate would make it easier for visitors to join a tour without planning in advance and it was also less daunting for Crew to deliver. With shorter and more succinct Exhibition Spotlight Tours, we also designed and adapted the other elements of the old-style tour into shorter tours and put them on days where there is more likely to be an audience for these ‘alternative’ tours. We made the move to provide a Quayside Spotlight Tour on
two weekdays late in the afternoon for tourists and interested locals as well as a longer tour for the building and history now named ‘Behind the Scenes’ on a Sunday for our weekend audience. Family Tours also took shape and have been offered on a Saturday at a time that fits nicely with the other regular activities we have on in the building for families at the weekend.

Visitor numbers on tours took a huge leap with these changes. For June-September 2009 the total tour visitor number was 229. For June-September 2010 (when the new tours were rolled out) the total visitor tour number was a much improved 909 (total for the year was 1554). This rise in visitor tour takers carried on throughout 2011 with a total of 3161 takers for the year and continues to go from strength to strength with a take up total of 995 for 2012 (as of 5 May 2012).

Over the past two years, we have actively supported Crew in giving tours and highlighted the ways they can interact and have useful conversations with our visitors.

Our continued work and input in developing and delivering these tours mean that our visitor take up is still going strong. Spotlight Tours will continue to adapt to the new season of exhibitions and as ever we will work towards all Crew delivering these.

Our plan for the Family Tour is to re-brand this tour and make it more ‘relaxed’ in content for visitors. Renamed Family Quest, there will be formalised time and room for Crew to lead on activities, mini tours and games. This will embed the Crew role in learning even more, with activities happening in the hub of learning, Quay and in the galleries too.

It is also worth noting that it has helped strengthen and develop Crew skills and confidence as most Crew now deliver tours and are more confident in speaking with visitors in larger groups. This helped with the way we delivered the Turner Prize 2011. With the familiarity of delivering Exhibition Spotlight Tours, most Crew had the content and preparation for delivering impromptu tours for the Turner Prize 2011 to large numbers of visitors who queued in the gallery spaces to see the art on show. Their skills have adapted to our increased demands and are now part and parcel of what Crew know we expect from them.

**Communication Skills**

One of the consistent needs of Crew picked up through Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) in 2010 and 2011 was the requirement by many to improve their communication skills. With many Crew noting this as something to assist them in providing tours it is something we researched for our team. We needed training that could be adapted to our Crew, something that would help with their variety of fears and lack of confidence. Training could not be the usual boardroom presentation training; it needed to be dynamic, easily enjoyable and useful to everyone regardless of existing skills or levels of confidence.

In Summer 2010 we road-tested and subsequently rolled out Communication Skills training with
Visitor Numbers for Tours 2008-2011

2011 TOTAL VISITORS TAKING A TOUR: 3161

2010 TOTAL VISITORS TAKING A TOUR: 1554
(2 January – 19 June: old-style tour, total visitors: 43)

2009 TOTAL VISITORS TAKING A TOUR: 406

2008 TOTAL VISITORS TAKING A TOUR: 497
Northern Stage, a theatre based in Newcastle upon Tyne. This was a one-day training session which took place at Northern Stage, with groups of 15-18 staff for each session. The training was provided by two actors specialising in improvisation techniques, with some introduction and guidance from other professionals within the company.

The striking thing about this training was that most Crew genuinely feared it; they were asking a lot of questions beforehand, wanting to know if they needed to prepare. With a variety of practical tasks in groups or pairs to ensure they were feeling relaxed, suddenly they were at ease and before they knew it were standing and speaking for 5 minutes about something they hated or loved to a group of people: halfway to giving a tour. The feedback from these sessions was really positive; some Crew learned a tremendous amount with such a supportive session of training. Crew felt that this altered their abilities, with many starting to give tours very soon after the training.

‘I was very apprehensive about going on the course; it took me completely out of my comfort zone. I learnt about eye contact and body language and that your perception of yourself can be different to how others see you. We were taught how to hide or mask nervousness with confidence. I also learnt not to take myself too seriously and that mistakes are ok. This will help with tours.’

Crew, Oct 2010
‘It really boosted my confidence and helped me to get to know my colleagues better. The exercises were useful, especially the one where we had to maintain good eye contact. I learnt that “talking like a man” is a good trick to use to give your voice more strength. I have used the skills in university presentations and will use them when talking to visitors. I have really improved my confidence when speaking to people.’

Crew, Feb 2011

Following feedback from those initial sessions we are now in the process of rolling out secondary sessions, this time taking place in the galleries at BALTIC. These next sessions for 2012 will be more focused on refreshing those skills learned previously in training and also addressing habits or needs whilst out on the gallery floors. Some Crew gave feedback (from the first session) on needing more advice on how to handle those visitors who get ‘aggressive’ about knowing more and how to end tours once a conversation has blossomed and it becomes time to move on.

Training will focus on the ever-changing and expert needs of Crew giving tours and having daily interactions with the public. In the long run we hope to have training in place for Learning and Engagement Managers (FOH) with Northern Stage’s team in order for BALTIC to top up and keep this Communication Skills training fresh and ongoing for years to come.

In a Pickle
This subject takes us on to how we work with Crew in the difficult situations of proactively engaging with visitors in conversations. There are times when the message can be misunderstood by visitors and conversations can become inappropriate or unrelated to what the Crew are there to talk about. Crew also experience conversations that turn heated, uncontrollable or jumbled because a visitor may feel passionate in their dislike or like of the content in an exhibition.

After a visit to the Science Museum, London, in May 2010, I picked up on an element of their induction training which was in place to ensure that new Explainers (a role much like our Crew role) felt prepared for visitors who may talk too much, take up too much time or become inappropriate.

We decided to try this with our Crew as they had always been coming to us and asking for advice when a conversation was not right for the gallery floor. Although advice was given, it was not necessarily shared with others in the team apart from informal conversation on breaks between themselves. So we developed and started delivering what we call In a Pickle sessions. In a Pickle took the shape of two-hour sessions with a mix of Crew (up to 10 staff) brought together in one space to talk about their experiences and knowledge of visitor conversations. Rarely do Crew have the opportunity to formally have time together and speak about their experiences. In a Pickle sessions made this happen, with some guidance from a Learning and Engagement Manager.
(Front of House), who was only there to give advice relating to operational procedures/safety/support. Crew could go through past and current situations that had happened in a small and supportive team. It was clear from the initial session that this time was valuable and that Crew were learned from each other’s best practice, even those who were totally accomplished still learnt top tips from other Crew because everyone has different ways and skills in conversation. One thing massively important to *In a Pickle* was that the session is about a whole range of experiences. This includes the negative but the session should never become a forum for discussing negative experiences only. The emphasis is on solving problems not assigning blame or complaining.

‘The whole thing was invaluable to me. I used to take it personally when someone said something negative because I am so dedicated to BALTIC. Now I empathise and try and turn it around to something positive. I would never have thought that simply talking with a small group of colleagues would lead to such a change in my outlook but it really has... it has proved essential to my development and made me even more positive on the gallery floors.’ Crew, July 2011

‘This was an extremely valuable opportunity to sit with fellow colleagues and share experiences, concerns and ideas to improve and add value to the way we perform within our job roles and the way we
communicate not only with visitors, but also with colleagues. It can be quite easy to sometimes forget we are all in the same boat, doing the same job, but each having very different experiences, so it was enriching to sit down and communicate and share our experiences together.’
Crew, June 2011

I found that these In a Pickle sessions could give me a real insight into what Crew were experiencing. In Induction Training this session works very well in preparing Crew for the conversations which they’ll experience soon after joining us. It pre-empts the problematic situations and gives them the confidence to know what they should talk about and what they should politely excuse themselves from. It also highlights ways to get help from colleagues and how we work operationally in supporting Crew on the floors as managers too.

It continues to be a useful tool not only for Induction Training but also as a session that we can make happen quickly, easily and at low cost in order to smooth out any stresses or problems. This year I have delivered an In a Pickle session for tours specifically to work on problems that were being raised by some Crew who were already giving tours and to those who wanted to give tours but needed more information before starting.

In a Pickle has become a model that will continue to be used and developed at BALTIC as well as being used outside of BALTIC. We recently delivered a session with the Front of House team at Nottingham Contemporary as well as at Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne.

In a Pickle sessions can be beneficial and easily adapted by other teams external to us and are fairly straightforward to apply to small or large teams of staff. In essence these modules are about communication and are an informal forum for everyone to learn from one another.

The sessions I have conducted with both organisations mentioned above have been at low cost and included only the use of our staff, but once an organisation experiences it for themselves it can be taken on. We roll these sessions out for our team and pay them for their time. It’s a cost-effective way of ensuring best practice is felt and shared. Below are a few quotes from staff at other organisations after an In a Pickle session;

‘I thought it was a great, light-hearted session and really put our work at Nottingham Contemporary into perspective... you most certainly have the answers to most problems we've come across, in our early years.

To be perfectly honest it was really refreshing to put some time aside for all of us to sit down as a team and talk about various issues and dilemmas we've come across recently within the gallery. As simple as that activity is, when an exhibition is underway we rarely get the chance to cover weaknesses and generally
what people feel they need help with... most issues that develop normally just become another email sent round. I’d hope that this session has inspired the gallery assistant coordinators to consider bringing us together as a whole more often.

As one of the newest gallery assistants I often feel that I still haven’t established some of the core ways to approach visitors and particularly how to initially greet the public/engage in conversation.

One thing I remember in particular was how to approach people who you find initially intimidating. Since the meeting I’ve really got at myself for the fact that, although I didn’t realise it, I was often apprehensive towards several people who came through our doors purely because I wouldn’t know what to say... but realising that most quite intimidating characters in fact have made an effort to come into the gallery, and discovering they are completely harmless makes me in fact really quite disappointed with myself that I’d be so quick to judge.

So thank you for that particular factor... I now make it my goal whoever walks in the gallery to be there, exhibition notes in hand, ready to say hi.’
Gallery Assistant, Nottingham Contemporary

With situations in an agreed way. It was interesting to see how some members of staff had the customer at the heart of what they do and understand the importance of delivering good customer service.

As an observer it was great for Hayley to share best practice of how similar situations are handled at BALTIC and how we can adapt those strategies for Live Theatre.’
Front of House Manager, Live Theatre

BALTIC’s Learning and Engagement team are creating their own visitor service models of best practice, testing them out within the wider sector and re-shaping and then adapting new approaches to learning, which can be rolled out across the sector as a future way of working.
A mode of learning for employed people to extend their skills, capability and individual effectiveness in their work roles, which places the workplace at the centre of learning.

by Garth Rhodes, Head of Flexible Learning, School of Health, Community and Education Studies, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne
**Introduction**

Northumbria University has developed a highly effective Work-Based Learning (WBL) programme, designed to be delivered in partnership with organisations. It provides a vehicle whereby in-house Continuous Professional Development (CPD) can be integrated and further enhanced through a process of critical reflection, to advance the professional attributes of staff and enable them to gain academic recognition for their work-based learning.

The University has for many years pioneered development to promote flexible and responsive provision to meet the needs of the workplace. Within the School of Health, Community and Education Studies, work-based learning is increasingly being used as a mode of study for employed people and as a significant agent for change within the workplace. The Professional Practice Award (PPA), offered at both Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels on a part-time basis, is the key vehicle for work-based learning within the School. The School has contracts for the programme with various employers including NHS Trusts, private medical organisations, several Local Authorities and schools. The programme started in September 2006 and now enrolls between 450-600 learners annually.

The PPA focuses on learning in and through the workplace, where work provides the focus for the programme of study. Through reflection, it promotes awareness of the workplace as a learning environment and utilises this to extend the learner’s capability and individual effectiveness.

The Award has been developed for, and with, employers such as BALTIC to respond to and support their workforce development needs and is relevant for a range of organisations and occupational sectors. As a real learning-through-work experience, it is very different to a traditional university course. It uses a range of provision to provide a broad, proactive and comprehensive structure that responds to the needs of the workplace enabling individuals, groups of learners and employers to negotiate flexible and bespoke programmes of study through clear, straightforward and robust processes. Flexible delivery in this context includes mode of learning, location of learning and start/end dates of programmes outside the normal academic calendar.
Key Elements of the BALTIC Professional Practice Award

- It acts as an agent for change within the workplace
- There is a focus on learning in and from the workplace, where work provides the focus for the programme
- Critical reflection promotes awareness of the workplace as a learning environment
- It places responsibility firmly into the hands of the learner
- It supports and extends the existing imaginative and effective training and development programme for Crew

Working in Partnership

As in the case of BALTIC, most PPA programmes are primarily developed at the behest of an organisation and rely on a tripartite learning partnership between the student, the employer and the university. To be successful, the organisation and institution develop a learning partnership culture in order to deliver, assess and evaluate the programme of study.

BALTIC was the perfect partner for Northumbria University. As a committed learning organisation which recognises the importance of partnership working to develop and deliver innovative and responsive organisational learning and which places continuous development of its staff at the core of its values, it was
an ideal organisation to work with in the development of a work-based learning programme.

To enable this programme to work, a Learning Partnership Agreement was developed which set out the contributions of both partners in the joint design, development and delivery of the programme. The agreement outlined BALTIC’s role through its Learning and Engagement Team in the support of the learner by way of formal and informal inputs to the programme, and through the support from work-based advisors to support participants during the work-based project. For Northumbria University, this included: access to University study and library resources; group learning sessions and individual tutor support (mostly provided in the workplace). Additionally the University was responsible for assessment and all matters related to quality assurance. The programme was overseen by a joint steering group.

The Focus
The aim was to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of the introduction of a University-accredited programme for Crew and to ascertain the effectiveness of the model for enhancing the future professional development of staff more generally within the organisation.

BALTIC, already having in place an imaginative and effective development programme for Crew, was keen to have its training programme recognised for its high standards. Recognition by the University would ensure consistency of delivery, whilst enabling staff to be rewarded by having their learning accredited. Such accreditation would also enable staff to gain an academic award.

BALTIC was keen to ensure that the programme was designed to meet the organisation’s specific need, built around its own provision, whilst focusing on the CPD needs of individual staff. A key feature of the programme would be that throughout participants were exposed to and encouraged to engage in key BALTIC strategic themes both in terms of their own development and that of the organisation and its visitors. The key themes identified were to:

- Deepen engagement, transform thinking and promote enjoyment of learning
- Understand and respond to BALTIC’s ethos and key strategies
- Engage with and reflect upon how a person’s own development has:
  - Promoted engagement of hard to reach groups
  - Increased visitor numbers and frequency of contact with the public
  - Improved the visitor experience
  - Enabled individuals to further their own contemporary art and audience-related interests

The Programme
Learning in and through the workplace is not easy. Learners need to be able to manage and take forward their learning alongside, and often integral to, their daily work activities within an environment that is often hectic and unsystematic. In such an environment it is therefore important to provide an
Learning on the Frontline

adaptable structure for learners so that they can maintain a focus for their learning and development.

Key Outcomes of the Programme
Participants are able to:
• Identify their learning needs and manage the learning process
• Draw upon, use and develop prior work experience and professional knowledge
• Develop and utilise appropriate learning, enquiry methods and project management skills
• Work autonomously
• Investigate the relationship between academic theory and workplace practice
• Critically reflect, interpret, analyse and challenge current thinking and practice

The Professional Practice Award has been designed flexibly in such a way that, whilst maintaining academic rigour, in-house CPD is able to be placed at the centre of the learning.

The programme followed a six stage approach where learners:

1 Exploration
Explored their organisation, their current practice, and their organisational and professional requirements in order to identify a personal CPD programme and work-based project which would address their own personal goals, draw upon their prior knowledge and experience and which was intended to result in a positive outcome for their own and their organisation’s development.

2 Proposal
Engaged in a process of negotiation with their employer and academic tutor regarding the focus and extent of their CPD and project matched against organisational, university and individual requirements. Learners outlined their programme in a proposal document which formed the basis of a learning contract, signed by the three parties concerned which identified the purpose and appropriate enquiry methodology and project management strategies.

3 Enquiry
Used appropriate practical, methodologically-sound enquiry skills and techniques to gather the necessary underpinning knowledge of the 'subject' of the identified project and to ascertain the detail for the project methodology.

4 Project Planning
Developed a detailed plan for implementation of the specific innovation, which detailed the implementation methodology, timescales, resources, evaluation methodology etc.

5 Project Implementation
Implemented and managed the project within an agreed timescale. Refined activity to meet unexpected situations.

6 Project Presentation and Evaluation
Presented and evaluated the project, drawing upon the concepts, models and theories they had
researched and presented this through an oral presentation and written report, making recommendations for their own professional development and that of the organisation and proposing a strategy for a wider and/or further implementation and development of their innovation.

Those successfully completing the full 60 credit BALTIC programme gain a Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice. Students then have an opportunity to progress to a full Masters.

The Programme is made up of two modules:

**Module 1: Recognising Continuing Professional Development**

In the BALTIC model, individuals were in the first instance able to gain 30 academic credit points at postgraduate level for their CPD, which was linked directly to their Performance Development Review (PDR). Through a process of critical reflection individuals were able to bring into play the evidence of action planning and their ensuing current development in order to have their learning formally recognised for credit.

In this model, participants gained academic credit from CPD learning (equivalent of at least 72hrs), delivered by or for BALTIC, or for other activity undertaken to support their professional role such as in-house staff development, external short courses, seminars, conferences, workshops, one-to-one coaching etc.

Learners participated in the event(s) in whatever way was appropriate and intended by the organisers. The University did not stipulate any specific requirements for delivery of the CPD; only that it meets the personal and professional needs of the individual and their organisation.

**The aims of the module were to enable individuals:**

- To gain academic credit from relevant CPD learning experiences
- To develop and demonstrate the skills and knowledge gained from attending, participating in, recording and reporting on higher-level work-related learning

Assessment was by way of a portfolio. In order to be successful participants were required to:

1. Negotiate a learning contract that identified:
   - The areas for their development
   - The learning activity to be undertaken to meet their development needs
   - How they would reflect upon this learning and how they would report this for assessment
   - An Action Plan/Timeline for completion

2. Attend a learning event or events lasting the equivalent of 72 hours

3. Provide evidence of the learning gained from the learning experiences

4. Evaluate the learning and reflect upon this with respect to their own current and future personal development needs
Module 2: Work-Based Project

Additionally, a further 30 credits was undertaken through a work-based project (WBP). This negotiated service improvement project focused upon the direct application of learning gained in the workplace. In negotiation with their workplace and supervising University tutor, individuals were required to undertake a project that focused upon an organisational-based issue that would enable the further development of skills in the diagnosis of problems, enquiry and analysis, development of strategies to address problems, and techniques of presentation and evaluation. Not only were learners expected to research around a particular issue but also to implement a real change in workplace practice.

A clear specification for the project was provided, which gave learners generic detail concerning the programme’s overarching aims, learning outcomes, learning and teaching strategy and assessment. Individual need was addressed through the development of specific aims and objectives, learning outcomes, methodology and scope of the project, which were negotiated by the learner with their employer and University tutor to form the basis of a learning contract.

Assessment of the work-based project was through two formative activities in the form of a work-based project proposal, which formed the basis of a Learning Contract, and an oral presentation identifying the
theme, scope and outcomes of the project. Delivered to co-learners, key members and the academic tutor of the organisation during the latter stages of the project, the presentation was an opportunity for learners to share and celebrate their work. Following the presentation, learners were given feedback by co-learners, workplace advisers and the academic tutor, after which they completed a written report for assessment. Formative and summative evidence was presented in a portfolio through which the learner was able to demonstrate the totality of the project and learning journey.

Details of each of the ten work-based projects can be found in the following section of this publication.

**Evaluation**

An essential component of the contract between BALTIC and the University was an evaluation to identify the contribution and impact the programme has made on both the participants and the organisation. The evaluation offered recommendations for future development both for Crew and more generally across BALTIC.

**Conclusion**

In this development, effective partnership working has been an essential ingredient for success. Each partner brought a range of expert knowledge, experience, skill, capacity and resource. Skilled leadership at a senior level has been required to provide the direction and to negotiate responsibilities in order to ensure delivery and success through: openness; trust and honesty between partners; agreed shared goals and values; regular communication between partners.

Participants have responded extremely positively to the challenges of the programme and hopefully have gained significantly through the process. Through their work and particularly their projects they have been able to demonstrate their ability to think critically and to be reflective in their practice. Projects have been undertaken that are of importance and significance to BALTIC.
DEVELOPMENT
LEARNING AND
ENGAGEMENT
CLAUDIA ESPANA, BALTIC CREW

Module 1: Recognising CPD
This module was an interesting reflection on the training I had undertaken over the past year, analysing the learning which had been applied to my role as Crew. Through my analytical and critical reflection I was able to fully appreciate where my training had come to improve my work and develop my position at BALTIC.

My CPD essay, which investigated models of learning, helped me to better understand my own learning methods which I was able to apply when researching for my work-based project. Realising my particular skills and areas which I found most interesting informed the idea behind my work-based project and I have been able to utilise skills learnt through my training.

Module 2: Work-Based Project

Aims
To review other arts organisations and artist-led galleries, (including Eastside Projects, Birmingham and Spike Island, Bristol), investigating their visitor services and how the gallery spaces are managed. By considering their visitor numbers and the type of person coming into the gallery, I sought to gain a better understanding of the audience to be expected at BALTIC 39, BALTIC’s new sister gallery in Newcastle, and how the Crew role can be developed.

Through my research into other arts organisations and by monitoring the opening weeks of BALTIC 39, I hope to propose a new approach for BALTIC Crew to engage with BALTIC 39 and to develop my position as Crew.

Outcomes
Personal
• I was able to fully engage with BALTIC 39 and develop my position as Crew.

BALTIC
• My investigation into other arts organisations gave BALTIC the opportunity to learn from other venues which have primarily a specialist arts audience, much like the one expected at BALTIC 39. My report provided suggestions towards the Crew role and the visitor experience offered at BALTIC 39, giving the organisation a new model and approach to trial within the new gallery space.
ALICIA TALIKOWSKA, BALTIC CREW

Module 1: Recognising CPD
Engaging with all visitors at BALTIC and interpreting the exhibitions is a large part of my role as a member of Crew. Critically reflecting on my training has enabled me to identify my strengths and weaknesses and to look at how my learning can be utilised to improve my working practices. The learning I gained from different training that I have attended has built my confidence to take on this project.

Module 2: Work-Based Project
Engaging Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals in Contemporary Art at BALTIC
• I undertook an analysis of how exhibition interpretation, including tours and conversations, can be improved to better engage with visually impaired and blind individuals. As a result of this analysis, I looked at ways in which BALTIC could become more accessible to visually impaired and blind visitors through accessible verbally descriptive tours.

Outcomes
Individual
• Gained a new perspective on how to 'look at' and experience contemporary art.
• Built my confidence and ability to engage with a wide range of people.
• I found out more about this area of research and furthered my interests.
BALTIC
• Better exhibition accessibility for visitors, improving understanding of contemporary art by increasing tour and activity offers.
• Encouraging greater engagement from people who are blind or visually impaired, providing a wider offer for all visitors.
• Improved audience development.

LIANNE BELL, BALTIC CREW

Module 1: Recognising CPD
The CPD module provided the opportunity to create a reflective postgraduate level project, which focused on the training I had undertaken in the last year. The opportunity to reflect upon the training I had undertaken at BALTIC promoted a greater understanding of the aims and outcomes of the training I had been on and how I have implemented them into my Crew role. The opportunity to consider closely the training programme at BALTIC increased my confidence in approaching the work-based project.

Module 2: Work-Based Project
Encouraging Older Audiences to Engage with Contemporary Art and BALTIC
The work-based module at BALTIC allowed each member of staff to pick the project that mattered most to them and gave them the motivation to focus on a key area they would most like to improve or understand better in their job role. Through the work-based project, my aim was to provide suggestions of best practice on how to encourage more people over the age of 55 to visit BALTIC and to improve their visitor experience within BALTIC.

Outcomes
Personal
• I enjoyed the work-based project a lot and the opportunity to undertake a research-based project improved my project management and essay writing skills. The work-based project gave me the opportunity to connect visitor and Crew feedback with academic theory, which gave me greater understanding of the older audience at BALTIC and how to best serve that audience.

BALTIC
• The work-based project produced a series of recommendations on how BALTIC can move forward and improve the way it engages with an older audience during their visit to BALTIC. The outcomes of the project are intended to increase the older audience visitor figures and create more opportunities for an older audience to become more connected to BALTIC during their visit.
• I believe the outcomes for BALTIC go beyond the actual results of the work-based projects and are also found in the staff who have undertaken these modules and their greater understanding of the organisation, the training they have been on and the confidence they now have to run their own projects to improve BALTIC.
ILARIA LONGHI, COMMUNITY PROGRAMMER

Module 1: Recognising CPD
The CPD project was a very useful tool to reflect critically and in a constructive way on training undertaken as well as my professional development more generally; it helped me to identify areas of improvement as well as areas where I had improved quite considerably.

By analysing my learning and development process at BALTIC in a reflective way, I was able to identify areas that I would like to expand in the future and that will benefit my professional development, my personal interest and BALTIC on a more general level.

Module 2: Work-Based Project
Engaging Older People with Contemporary Art
• The aim of my work-based project was to identify ways to better engage older people with the exhibitions at BALTIC. I therefore conducted research into older people and in particular their engagement with contemporary art in order to improve and develop a successful programme targeted to this specific audience at BALTIC.

Outcomes
Personal
• I improved my academic skills which could be used in the future to help me to achieve a PhD.

BALTIC
• The outcome of this project was to help BALTIC to diversify its audience, and for this audience to fully engage with BALTIC’s exhibitions as well as the Learning and Engagement offer.

LUCY SMITH, SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES PROGRAMMER

Module 1: Recognising CPD
Creating the space to reflect upon training allowed me to gain a much deeper understanding of myself. It helped me to clearly see the impacts of training, both personally and professionally, and allowed me to identify areas which will ultimately enhance the value and quality of my work in the future.

The training module allowed me to realise that I was particularly interested in exploring different learning styles and preferences and gaining new skills in engaging with learners.

Module 2: Work-Based Project
Engaging Early Years Foundation Stage in Contemporary Art at BALTIC
My aim through the work-based project was to investigate ways in which contemporary art can be more easily accessed by early years groups. I explored ways in which BALTIC can become more accessible to this audience through consultation with early years providers, children and specialists. Contemporary art and art galleries can often be perceived as not appropriate for young
children. Through research and consultation I wanted to understand these perceptions and explore ways in which they can be overcome, allowing BALTIC to become more accessible to early years groups.

**Outcomes**

**Personal**
- I was able to build on my previous professional experience.
- I aimed to become a specialist in early years practice.

**BALTIC**
- I made a series of recommendations as to how BALTIC can best engage early years providers and children with contemporary art.
- The project helped to engage BALTIC’s priority audience of young people through longer-term engagement.
- The project has also helped develop BALTIC’s audience.
- I have devised a strategy to take these recommendations further.

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**JONATHAN LYNCH, BALTIC CREW / ASSISTANT COMMUNITY PROGRAMMER**

**Module 1: Recognising CPD**

Evaluating my CPD process allowed me to identify skills and knowledge that I had been gaining throughout my time working at BALTIC. This was the first time that I really began to see the bigger picture of where my professional development was at and enabled me to draw up a plan of how I wanted to continue this in a more focused way, to eventually form the proposal for a work-based project. I think that this was a very valuable time in the course for me as it really made me consider the place I was at, not only in my employment with BALTIC but also within my other working commitments, enabling me to identify commonalities and differences in the skills and experiences I was gaining from my professional practice.

**Module 2: Work-Based Project**

**Encourage and Initiate a Portfolio Review Day /UCAS Prep Day**

Through the work-based project, my aim was to support students at Foundation Level education in clarifying expectations and in understanding the university admissions and application procedure. I sought to provide extra support to the Foundation Art and Design students at Gateshead College by creating a pilot program of mock interviews and ‘portfolio help’ sessions carried out at BALTIC.

The process was designed to reduce the anxiety students face when being interviewed, and also to help build confidence, become more informed and hear new or unfamiliar perceptions of their work.

Working within the Learning and Engagement Team for a year, I was able to see the different models with which BALTIC approached and engaged with young people through formal and informal education. My own educational experiences of being a student, working with BALTIC and my current Artists Access to Art
Colleges (AA2A) residency at Northumbria University have led me to recognise the importance of a Foundation Year. This transitional period from being a college student to university student is great and I feel that Foundation Courses are a pivotal point in an artistic career for experimentation, methodologies of working and an introduction to a new way of making art.

**Outcomes**

**Personal**

- I developed a wider understanding of the engagement of young people within contemporary art practice and applied all of the knowledge learned from this process to other roles within my professional development.

**BALTIC**

- My work-based project fitted in with BALTIC’s Audience Development and Learning and Engagement Strategy of working with young people.
- It built on our strong relationship with Gateshead College and Northumbria University, in particular.
- It could be a way of introducing students at a younger age to places like BALTIC 39, getting them to think about art practice in a broader way.
ANNE LIESE KOPKO, LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT MANAGER (FRONT OF HOUSE)

Module 1: Recognising CPD
My CPD portfolio was a great opportunity to pull together all of the training and development I have undertaken at BALTIC over the last year (with a few exceptions that took place outside of the year). The three training and development opportunities that I reflected on in more depth allowed me to analyse my understanding of the facts, the principles I learnt, the opinions I formed and the skills I acquired. For a while I had wanted to pull all of this together and use it in a way I thought would be relevant and useful. The idea for the work-based project was realised quite quickly and I felt enthusiastic and committed to it from the start.

Module 2: Work-Based Project
Visitor Experience Induction and Ongoing Training Modules
Through the work-based project I wanted to:
• Embed the understanding and importance of the visitor experience at BALTIC to all staff from the outset and emphasise the part we all play in this.
• Ensure that all staff understand the mechanisms in place to manage, monitor and review the visitor experience and ultimately improve what we do.
• Highlight what staff at BALTIC can do towards contributing to a positive visitor experience and how we can support them to do this.

To this end, I created three BALTIC Visitor Experience training modules to be delivered for all staff along with trainer’s notes for delivery. Each module has been adapted for different staff sectors e.g. BALTIC Crew, BALTIC Staff and Fresh Element Staff (BALTIC’s food and drink partner) as each of them require a different level of information and all have a different role to play in what makes the visitor experience. I have, however, ensured a level of consistency in the training.

Outcomes
Personal
• I now have the knowledge and ability to make a positive impact for visitors, staff, the organisation and the sector. Knowing I’ve created something that, without the PPA, would have been very difficult to find the time to do within my normal workload and busy role, is a really positive achievement.
• I have also grown in confidence and built on my existing communications and organisational skills.

BALTIC
• BALTIC has a more consistent approach to placing value on the visitor experience. By creating tailored induction training modules about the visitor experience, it reaches across the organisation and is a much more consistent and inclusive approach by us.
CATHERINE COOKE, LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

Module 1: Recognising CPD
Reflecting on my training was a useful tool in critically analysing developments in my professional practice. It enabled me to examine the specialist knowledge and experiences I have gained and allowed me to develop a work-based project that reflects this. I was able to create a project that allowed me to confidently put into practice my existing skills whilst also identifying and developing new experiences and understanding.

Module 2: Work-Based Project
Engaging families with disabled children and young people with contemporary art and BALTIC
My aim through the work-based project was to understand the barriers preventing families with disabled children and young people in engaging fully with BALTIC and contemporary art. Through a consultation process, I investigated the barriers and looked for ways to overcome these by improved communication and promoting contemporary art and BALTIC’s Learning and Engagement Programme as a positive and inclusive activity for disabled children, young people and their families.

Throughout the project, consulting with families and individuals who support families with disabled children and young people has been an inspiring and challenging experience. The project has given me the confidence and support for developing positive partnerships and inclusive sensory activities for families with disabled children and young people to help them enjoy visiting BALTIC and engage with contemporary art.

Outcomes
Personal
• I have improved my specialist skills and developed a broader understanding of delivering positive and inclusive activities for families with disabled children and young people.
• I have built on my experience of managing longer-term projects and gained recognition for my research skills and professionalism.

BALTIC
• The project developed new and existing relationships with individuals, partners and hard-to-reach groups.
• Provided recommendations and to develop BALTIC’s programme for inclusive and accessible activities for families with disabled children and young people.
• BALTIC now provides specialist support and inclusive activities for families with disabled children so that they can positively engage with BALTIC’s Learning and Engagement Programme.

LESLEY ANN ROSE, BALTIC CREW

Module 1: Recognising CPD
The CPD training module has helped me to look at my Crew role in new ways to engage a youth
audience. I have a particular interest in how we as Crew can use our specialist customer service, communication and arts knowledge to ensure that hard-to-reach audiences can have a positive first experience at BALTIC.

**Module 2: Work-Based Project**

**Suggested Strategies to Welcome and Engage Young People into BALTIC**

Through the work-based project, I wanted to look at some of the barriers to engagement for harder-to-reach groups of young people and make some suggestions for how the Crew role can be used to break down those barriers, ensuring they have a positive experience.

During the consultation stage, I spoke to some young people from hard-to-reach communities such as looked-after children, young carers and British minority ethnic groups and asked them what type of activities and experience they would like to attend at BALTIC and what they perceive the barriers to be. Based on this information I am compiling a report which suggests ways in which we can combat those barriers and in particular how we can use the Crew role to explain who we are at BALTIC and what we do, giving young people an opportunity to meet a friendly Crew member in what may be perceived as an intimidating environment.

**Outcomes**

**Personal**

- Due to my personal interest in this area, I have continued to read about this subject so as to have a better understanding of the current policies about arts and culture and young people, particularly hard-to-reach groups. As well as through reading, I hope to expand upon my existing knowledge and networks in this area by meeting young people in the north east and discussing how they feel about coming to BALTIC.

**BALTIC**

- In this project I developed strategies which can be used to make the inclusion and learning aspect of the Crew position more relevant to a youth audience.
- I created a set of recommendations and suggestions for how the Crew role can be used as a tool for engaging young people within the gallery setting and also as part of a wider youth programme at BALTIC, planned for 2013.

**DANIEL HOWARD, BALTIC CREW**

**Module 1: Recognising CPD**

When I joined BALTIC as a Crew member I was surprised by the amount of training we received. To get accreditation for all the hard work that goes into the training is even better. Reflecting upon my CPD has allowed me to realise how important the training I received is, and how my role fits into the 'bigger picture' at BALTIC.
Module 2: Work-Based Project
Feedback Mechanisms at BALTIC
Any visitor attraction depends upon regular feedback from its visitors to determine how well it is doing and BALTIC is no different. As a Crew member I had first-hand experience of how visitor feedback is gathered at BALTIC and how it helps determine what is, and isn’t, working. Choosing to focus my work-based project on this area of my role allowed me to play a greater part in ensuring that our visitors’ voices are heard and understood by BALTIC.

Outcomes
Personal
• Working on my project has helped develop my project management skills and allowed me to work with different departments at BALTIC, which has built my confidence.

BALTIC
• I created a bespoke visitor feedback database suited to the needs of BALTIC. The database creates monthly reports from visitor feedback that are distributed across the organisation raising awareness throughout as to how our visitors experience BALTIC.
Below is a selection of quotes which have been gathered as part of the ongoing evaluation.

This PPA has helped me...
‘To understand a visitor audience better.’
‘Be aware of how important training is in the workplace.’
‘Focus in on a project that will benefit the organisation. Gain project management skills.’
‘Develop specialist skills and experience in a particular area of learning and engagement.’
‘Embed my practice within up-to-date theory. Forced me to make time to do research.’

The best thing about the programme was...
‘The opportunity to reflect on and digest all of the various training opportunities I have had... and then the opportunity to do something with some of this information through the work-based project.’
‘Being given the support and encouragement at work to develop my role at BALTIC.’
‘Working on a project I really want to do but didn’t have the time to do.’
‘The reflection of CPD. This module was a great point of reflection upon all of the training so far.’
‘Having the opportunity to realise a project that I have wanted to do for a while. Making the time to do research and embed practice into up-to-date theory.’

The worst thing about the programme was...
‘Finding the time for the amount of writing.’
‘Some of the academic terminology – it often seemed more complicated than it should have been.’
‘There wasn’t a lesson on postgraduate level academic writing, research methods, referencing etc.’
‘Not enough structured taught lessons.’

In this programme I expected...
‘To have lots of lectures and tutorials.’
‘Hard work – and it was!’
‘More time to work on PPA at work.’
‘The opportunity to learn and broaden my knowledge.’
‘An opportunity to gain different experience and knowledge.’

In this programme I did not expect...
‘The level of self-directed study.’
‘So much writing / written submission for assessment.’
‘To be talking about it to a room full of national delegates at a conference.’
‘How much work it would be. How much I gained from research.’
‘To enjoy my research.’

All ten members of the staff submitted their PPA papers to the exam board in June 2012 and were awarded a post graduate certificate.
AUDIENCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

by Anneliese Kopko, Learning and Engagement Manager (Front of House), BALTIC
This article discusses how the Learning and Engagement Team and Communications Team work closely together to progress audience research and development at BALTIC. Our main aims over the last 18 months have been:

- To equip staff with the long-term skill set to create and deliver qualitative audience research
- To create a research model which gives us a richer and more in-depth knowledge of our audience, enabling us to offer the very best tailor-made experience for their needs
- To enable our audiences to influence new approaches to learning that break down barriers, accelerate confidence and familiarity, leading to more meaningful engagement with contemporary art
- To use this new research to inform future improvements to the overall visitor experience
- To prototype, trial and implement new ideas
- To find ways in which we can share valuable information and findings within the wider organisation and the cultural sector

Crew are vital in terms of influencing how deeply the visitor engages with contemporary art and BALTIC as well as determining the overall visitor experience. They are also fundamental in feeding back information about our visitors as well as our visitors’ thoughts and comments. At present, the Duty Manager collates this feedback on a daily basis, gathered in person through speaking with Crew or via the Information Desk and emails it along with a daily operational report to the Learning and Engagement Managers (Front of House). This feedback is then cascaded to the organisation on a monthly basis along with other information such as visitor attendance figures.

BALTIC’s Communications Team were already using audience research to ascertain who our visitors are and in identifying visiting trends, primarily through commissioning Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM) to carry out snapshot and project-based research. This developed into a rolling research programme of exit surveys and now gives us detailed quantitative findings. From this and through segmenting our audience into groups based on their motivations for visiting, the Communications Team and Learning and Engagement Team have been able to work with much more insight on joint audience development planning such as ‘BALTIC Bubbles’, which are awareness and informal family participation days that take place at various locations and events in the region. Crew have also helped the Communications Team with data capture, particularly at other learning and participatory events.

It was recognised by both teams that by understanding our audiences, not only will we be better able to offer the very best tailor-made experience for their needs, but we will also be able to shape our offer specifically for their requirements. With this valuable intelligence, we can then be confident in the choices we make to ensure the visitor experience is the best it can be. We were also aware that despite the collation of visitor comments, the information that Crew
experience and absorb on a daily basis and the MHM quantitative data, we wanted to broaden the research methods we used and looked at how to up-skill our staff to deliver this.

Lisa Baxter, a consultant in the arts and cultural sector who offers Strategic and Applied Marketing, Brand Development and Qualitative Research training, spoke at the Arts Marketing Association (AMA) conference in 2010. Ann Cooper (Head of Communications at BALTIC) recommended that the work she was doing and the training she was offering in Observational Research and Customer Circles would be ideal for us.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation funding allowed Lisa Baxter to deliver this training to a number of BALTIC’s Learning and Engagement Team and Communications Team, helping us to work in a strategic and cohesive way on a structured audience research and development project and flourish even further. It has been a great opportunity for shared learning and accelerating the process of putting ideas and recommendations into practice.

This training also strengthened the fact that both methods of research drew on Crew’s existing skills. From this we were able to jointly plan the first year of activity of our two-year Audience Research project.
Observational Research

• ‘Observational Skills’ training: a session for 12 Crew and other staff from the Learning and Engagement Team and Communications Team. This essentially showed us how to observe a location and how visitors behaved in it, looking at movement within spaces and including how to map the visitor journey, flow and dwell times. We also looked at behaviour and reactions within spaces, the hands-on skills of observing, as well as a great framework in which to identify and structure our own observational research projects.

• We were immediately confident to roll out the observation work which began with the exhibition spaces for Anselm Kiefer (8 Oct 2010 – 16 Jan 2011) and the entrance and welcome areas on the ground floor, from the front doors through to the lifts.

• We all joined together to debrief this first stage, and identified some quick and simple improvements we could make. Our assumption that the stairwells were used much less than the lifts was proved wrong and so it seemed appropriate to try improving signage in the stairwells. Through observing confusion of visitors as to where our free guided tours started led us to introduce some large portable signage highlighting the starting point.

In starting with the observational at work, we also rapidly discovered that on a deeper level this information gave us a clear insight into the subject matter we wanted to investigate with the more in-depth Customer Circle sessions in order to inform the detailed first year plan. The two key areas we wanted to look into were ‘way-finding in the building’ and ‘exhibition learning’.

Customer Circles

• ‘Customer Circles’ training: a session for a smaller team of Crew, and other staff from the Learning and Engagement Team and Communications Team. Customer Circles are essentially visitor feedback sessions, but the training covered how to identify a subject for enquiry, how to structure the session, how to moderate a visitor group, the most appropriate and most effective ways of questioning, code of conduct and moderating guidelines as well as how to interpret the findings and convert them to recommendations that would benefit the organisation.

• We went back to the MHM research and the segmentation they used to decide how we would investigate these areas with our large and diverse audience. For Year 1 we decided to invite three groups to talk to us: Families – those visiting with children aged 5-16 years looking for a family day out; Third Spacers – adults motivated by a social visit, to see the exhibitions and have a coffee with friends; and Aficionados – a catch-all group for Culture Vultures, Academic Vocations and Creative Experts, those who work in the arts, education and creative industries.

• For the first two groups we used our mailing list data. We sent two emails targeted at these groups and the response was amazing. For the third group
we used industry contacts, regional Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN) groups, and colleagues from organisations within the NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV) partnership.

• We found out valuable and sometimes quite surprising information. The similarities between the segments were greater than we expected and we were able to identify positive feedback as well as understand areas that don’t work so well and the reasons why. Areas such as the Ground Floor entrance suggested a need for improved lighting and more information. There was agreement around the style and content of interpretation text (no one wanted ‘arty’ text!) and suggestions were made on how we could gain clarity on the Crew role, so visitors know they offer a wealth of information in a friendly, down-to-earth way and are not there purely as security. Many of the suggestions were for things we already do, but we were obviously not being clear enough in letting visitors know. This feedback has helped us judge the level of information, signage etc, that is needed from the visitor perspective rather than our own.

Within Year 1 we also cascaded the observational research training to another, smaller group of Crew and carried out research projects in the public spaces on Level 5 and in the ground floor retail areas, which again was really useful and gave some great food for thought.

Next steps
Overall, the findings from Year 1 showed us there is so much more we can build on through this knowledge, and there is an appetite from Crew to become more involved in visitor research and to have a deeper understanding of the research data.

The research strategy for Year 2 continues the path taken in Year 1. We are in the process of discussing findings from the most recent observational research projects in March 2012, again covering the Ground Floor entrance and welcome, the BALTIC Lounge and Quay spaces on Level 2 and the spaces within the floors showing the Andrea Zittel (10 February – 20 May 2012) and Elizabeth Price (3 February – 27 May 2012) exhibitions.

In Customer Circles we have selected a fourth marketing segment of Sightseers and are just about to embark on our next two Customer Circles with this group through our links to other mainstream regional tourist attractions such as Beamish Museum and The Alnwick Garden. We will offer these potentially new ‘tourist’ visitors an opportunity to visit BALTIC, and then through a Customer Circle ask them to feedback their experiences and recommendations. The following two sessions we are planning will look to gain insight into groups that we currently have research gaps for such as our teenage audience.
Crew Introducing BALTIC Exhibitions. Photographer: Dan Brady
Another important aspect is that those Crew trained in Customer Circles have trained another two members of Crew in planning and supporting delivery of these next Customer Circles. This sharing of training, empowering Crew to experience leading on projects and deliver training themselves, has been fantastically rewarding for both them and us. Crew member Maria Hryniszak, who has been closely involved in this project, says;

‘The opportunity to work on the Audience Research and Development project has been an incredible experience for me. I have always loved being part of BALTIC but this project has given me a chance to be more involved and be part of change for the better.

I have learned so much more about my role in BALTIC and the much wider context of funding, the business plan, audience development and just how big an impact Crew has on visitors.

I took part in the ‘Engaging Visitors through Front of House’ seminar (Nov 2011), which was an amazing chance to share what we have learned with other organisations. Having the chance to answer questions and to help felt wonderful. Being able to train my fellow Crew members was an excellent experience for me. It was great to have the chance to test my knowledge on the subject. I found the whole experience incredibly useful both personally and professionally, as it cemented my understanding
of the work I've been doing and gave me a new perspective. Fellow Crew member Dan Howard even commented that he had found my approach clear, easy to understand and that he would feel comfortable delivering a Customer Circle after my training. This also helped my confidence no end and I was proud that I could pass on the training so successfully. I really hope I have more opportunity to deliver or help with training in the future.'

Research Evaluation Group (REG)
At present, the visitor feedback we receive via Crew and through the likes of comment cards, letters, emails, Twitter and Facebook is collated and shared in a monthly report across the organisation. So far the reports from Observational Research and Customer Circles are shared with Heads of Departments who are then responsible for cascading this information to their teams. They are used to help inform and influence decisions, such as how an exhibition is laid out within a space, where and how interpretation, signage, seating and lighting is placed.

An important, yet natural element of Year 2, is that a Research Evaluation Group (REG) for audience research and development has been established. A need was identified for a small group to be formed, whose main aim is to pull all of this information together and inform the wider organisation in the most digestible, accessible and interesting way possible.

We aim by the end of the project to have a wealth of new knowledge, skills and experience amongst our teams and will have collated information from a full spectrum of visitors enabling us to be confident in the choices we make for ourselves, the building and most importantly our audience. We also hope that through the forming of REG, individuals, teams and BALTIC as an organisation will be able to understand the work we are putting into audience research and development, its importance and how we can all use this information to strive to achieve the objectives that underpin BALTIC’s mission statement. Although in their early stages, we have some exciting plans as to how we can share this information across the organisation.

We hope that by sharing our practices through this publication, seminars with our peers, cultural exchanges and through links with local cultural organisations such as the NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV) network, in which we play an active role, we can offer a rich, varied and valuable insight into what we do and offer support to other organisations wishing to adopt a similar approach.
TOP TEN TIPS TO TAKE AWAY

by Emma Thomas, Head of Learning and Engagement, BALTIC
1 Ideas can and should come from anywhere in the organisation. The challenge is finding ways to ensure that this happens and creating a forum for discussion e.g. cross-organisation working groups, focused on a theme.

2 Involve front of house in gathering visitor feedback as well as proactively observing what works and what doesn’t in the galleries.

3 Cultural exchange. Talk to other organisations both within the visual arts and more widely and learn from what they are doing.

4 Find out what motivates staff and their wider skill set, interests and experiences. Then build on this.

5 Create opportunities for peer to peer learning e.g. peer-led exhibition walk-throughs, *In a Pickle* and skill sharing.

6 Build in time for reflection. Don’t just move from one training session, exhibition or event to the next without thinking about its impact on you as an individual, the organisation as a whole and the audience. Keep listening and learning, finding new ways to improve.

7 Create feedback mechanisms across the organisation e.g. circulating/discussing visitor feedback widely and holding meetings two weeks into the start of each new exhibition to discuss feedback, when there is still the opportunity to make changes.

8 Actively promote front of house staff to visitors so that they know they are there to talk knowledgeably about the art, rather than solely as security e.g. through posters in the café, what’s on guide, wall text etc.

9 Invest time in recruiting and inducting new staff as well as ongoing professional development.

10 Build the front of house role into organisational strategies such as the Interpretation Strategy, Audience Development Plan and Learning and Engagement Strategy.
The training and development programme has had a huge impact on the quality and depth of engagement with visitors at BALTIC as well as the professional development and motivation of Crew. A recent selection of comment cards about Crew filled out by visitors tells its own story.

‘It was our good fortune to meet Ian who provided a great insight into the exhibition without which we would have failed to understand it as fully as we did.’

‘The most attentive to visitors of any gallery space I have visited.’

‘Fantastic building. We had a wonderful experience today in BALTIC with Matt our tour guide. He was highly informative and extremely passionate about the history of BALTIC. He made our day. From a couple of first timers in an art gallery.’

‘A great blend of challenging and beautiful art. Thank you for a wonderful tour by Maria – whose love of art combines with her extensive knowledge.’

‘Absolutely definitely very brilliant! And the people are nice. If only all galleries were made this way! Thank you very much.’

‘The use of Crew to give Spotlight Tours was very successful. The same Crew members are also used to tell the story of previous BALTIC shows. Often gallery assistants look slightly disenchanted with their work. However at BALTIC their knowledge and contribution seemed really valued. It is great to have gallery assistants contributing to interpretation rather than just the curators imparting their ‘knowledge’. The experience is much more democratic and makes the work more accessible.’

‘First visit to BALTIC and even Gateshead. Amazing gallery. Particularly liked the staff available to talk with all at every level.’

‘Been twice in recent months – particularly want to say we have been very impressed with BALTIC Crew members’ knowledge, enthusiasm and engagement with visitors and exhibits.’

‘Great Galleries! The BALTIC Crew are incredibly helpful and having someone to talk to about the artwork makes the experience all the more interesting! Thank you.’

‘The Crew member in each Turner Prize room was extremely well-informed and greatly enhanced our enjoyment. Well done to them.’

‘The best gallery experience we have had for a long time. Superb exhibits and knowledgeable staff. There is a really special atmosphere at BALTIC. Serious but very friendly.’
THE CULTURE OF STAFF & THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTRE

by Iain Wheeldon, Senior Teaching Fellow in Art Museum & Gallery Education, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University
I had been working at BALTIC for almost three months when it opened in July 2002. I joined the team as a placement student of the MA in Art Museum and Gallery Studies Programme from the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University. I went on to work within both the Learning Team and Crew for a further two years.

Following my time at BALTIC, I began working at Newcastle University for the Hatton Gallery as a Curatorial Assistant and also as the Placement Manager for ICCHS. This latter role is particularly relevant to the writing of this article in that being responsible for organising over 100 placements per year for postgraduate students who are training to work in Museums, Galleries and Heritage Sites gave me a deep understanding of how cultural organisations around the world are structured, and how they respond to the challenge of staff training.

In 2006 I became a Lecturer at Newcastle University, and then in 2010, a Senior Teaching Fellow, responsible for developing and directing a postgraduate programme in Art Museum and Gallery Education. The design of the programme offered at Newcastle University trains students to work in the sector as learning professionals, and wherever possible, provides real-world experiences for them. This has resulted in the development of an ongoing partnership between the programme and BALTIC, where students work alongside artists and schools to develop their skills and knowledge on real projects, which are assessed as part of their course. Since leaving BALTIC as a member of staff I have continued to work closely with the organisation, observing changes that have taken place as an outsider, but still close enough to be a critical friend who can talk through and provide feedback on new ideas. And that’s why I have been asked to contribute to this publication.

During my first two years at BALTIC, my experience was a combination of what I called at the time ‘fire-fighting’ (due mainly to the tremendous number of visitors), experimentation and, more than anything, learning. ‘Fire-fighting’ is a phrase familiar to anyone who has been involved in the opening of a major cultural centre, and in the use of the term, I don’t mean to imply a negative experience, in fact, quite the opposite. But at the time, I thought that we might eventually reach a plateau of comfort, a point where we could pause and breathe. I am not sure what I expected this might exactly look or feel like; I just assumed it would come. But as time moved on, I realised that what BALTIC as an organisation was actually doing was embracing its youthfulness, and as it reached a realisation that it was young enough to set a culture of responsiveness within its day to day approach to operations, it was energetically looking to improve and grow in real time albeit, in that first year, at a fairly tremendous pace.

That meant that it was our job as professionals to learn, take stock, re-group and steer things in the right direction as we went. This is a tremendously
Learning on the Frontline

exciting thing, to be involved in a venue which replaces one challenge with another, a venue that never feels like it has ‘arrived’, but instead just keeps on moving, watching, learning and responding. The opportunities to learn (on the job) came thick and fast and I, like most of the staff, was learning what BALTIC was, and what it could be, alongside our audience, and I think that all of us are still doing that ten years on.

The institution has certainly become more comfortable at using the building to maximum effect and making progressive decisions in real time. One only has to look at the way that staff managed the record-breaking number of visitors that came to see the Turner Prize during late 2011 for evidence of this. But this isn't always the case. The common pattern of behaviour for many organisations is for ten years of experience to become one year of operations which is then repeated ten times, rather than being ten years of genuine progress which is made up of maximised learning experiences.

BALTIC hasn’t fallen into this trap. It has expanded its staff, re-structured teams and management lines, it has defined and re-defined itself internally where and when necessary, and in effect, compressed history and experience into a time frame that can and often does take older, longer-established, organisations many decades to achieve. An example
of this is the development of the Quay learning space on Level 2, which represents a tremendous step forward in the positioning of learning within the organisation. Not only did it represent a new phase in the Learning and Engagement Team’s progression, but it also showed learning resources physically moved into a central space at the heart of the building. A space which is now permanently open to the public seven days a week, and a space where people can relax, engage, play and learn through the library and archive and BALTIC TV (the in-house channel which plays short programmes on BALTIC exhibitions, artists, events and history throughout the day). All of this is located outside of what we might call traditional ‘designated’ gallery spaces.

Then, off the back of this, came a re-shaping of the Learning Strategy, followed by a change in the institution’s overall mission statement to be more learning focused and with it the re-location of Crew. Crew have had many homes within BALTIC, firstly as a team within itself followed by spells where it was managed under Building Services and Finance, and then into a team in its own right under the banner of ‘Visitor Services’. Finally, and most recently, it has been moved to its current home, as a part of the Learning and Engagement Team.

The Crew at BALTIC has always had a different remit in comparison to most gallery ‘front of house’ staff, and throughout BALTIC’s first ten years they have been involved in many sides of the organisation’s delivery, from gallery invigilation, to working with artists, installing art work, producing artworks and not least in assisting visitors.

In addition, BALTIC has always had a culture of developing staff, and creating opportunities for those working within the organisation. Many individuals who started out as Crew have gone on to work across almost all teams within the organisation, some in a temporary position, some permanently and some at other venues regionally and nationally as well. These include posts at the National Portrait Gallery, Workplace Gallery, The National Glass Centre, The British School of Art & Design in Moscow, and Newcastle University.

In terms of my own experience I can honestly say that the range of opportunities that came from being involved in the development of BALTIC’s infancy allowed me to compress many years of experience into a short period of time and has subsequently provided me with my own launch-pad to comfortably explore a number of career routes, including working as a freelance arts educator, lecturer, researcher and curator. These options seem unimaginable if I hadn’t worked at BALTIC. I moved between Crew and the Learning Team several times over a three-year period which gave me a unique insight into how these teams developed, and how they, as discrete groups, saw themselves and their contribution to the overall mission of BALTIC.
What I did learn is that during this early stage in an organisation’s development, both individual and team identities are often forged in the fires of operational pressure, and once those identities have been set, changes then become harder to implement and even harder to maintain.

New institutions often start up like commercial companies. They are often (relatively speaking, and if they are honest) quite information poor (even if their staff have experience from a range of other projects/venues), they are also, more often than not, time compressed and resource constrained. There is usually a series of safety nets in place and targets to meet, which are often set by external stakeholders, but in those early stages, the zeal of the staff with ideas almost always outweighs the constraints of institutional history in the decision-making process. In turn, resource issues often overshadow the time available to develop and follow up on many of these (usually quite brilliant and innovative) ideas.

Balancing these different factors can be phenomenally difficult. What BALTIC has taught me is that there is an ongoing battle in the arts to stay young and agile, and perhaps more importantly to be in a state of perpetual exploration and self discovery. In effect, this can be described as a permanent state of ‘beta’. For people in any organisation where this doesn’t happen, and especially for those who feel that they don’t have a voice in this formative process, the organisation can become alienating, and its operational approaches can easily become divisive as people start to move in different directions.

I think it is quite easy to imagine a venue as physically large as BALTIC as being absolutely definitive in its decision-making process and vision, acting as a single entity with a single voice, but like any organisation, it is really an organic collection of people, with different ideas, motivations and personal histories. And each of those people is making decisions with different purposes but (hopefully) all moving in the same direction with the same overall aim in mind.

When I first started, one could argue that on the ground, back in 2002, many of us on Crew were reacting as much as we were planning. That’s not to say we were not long-sighted as a group, we definitely saw the bigger picture, but many Crew saw their job role as responding on a day-to-day basis to issues that arose in the building and with visitors. It wasn’t always easy to push ideas up the management chain, but over the last ten years, a huge amount of work has been done to address this hugely common, sector-wide problem which frequently frustrates front of house staff in cultural venues, and equally essentially limits the speed of change that can take place within them.

BALTIC’s current director, Godfrey Worsdale, has arguably put learning closer to its heart than ever before, a move which is represented by moving the management of Crew across to the Learning and
Engagement Team and a change in the institution’s overall Mission Statement.

If we think about the make-up of the organisation in a slightly more abstract way, BALTIC is now ten years old. Let’s speculate that an equivalent of 100 people have been employed full time by BALTIC during its first ten years, including Crew, technicians, catering staff etc... that’s 1000 years of experience of working in a Contemporary Art venue here in Gateshead. This is a staggering number which was unthinkable even twenty years ago in Gateshead. Yet here we are, and what a resource we have developed: a human library of Contemporary Art specialists, all with different experiences relating to the building, visitors, the art that is shown, the artists they work with, the interpretation, the café, the shop, signage, learning, outreach, marketing, social media, print... and each of those 100 people have personalised views on what works, what doesn’t, and how we can make things better.

For a gallery to have the option to cast its net across this amount of experience, so that the breadth of information that informs the decisions that it makes at an organisational level can encompass all of those experiences, is a tremendous opportunity, but one that sadly is rarely grasped. But that essentially is what BALTIC has taken the first brave steps towards doing in the development and piloting of their Professional Practice Award in Developing Learning and Engagement (PPA).

Realising and fully utilising the skill base that exists in an organisation is a difficult thing to achieve, but the training that Crew have been undertaking over the last few years has created a multi-tiered set of motivations for both staff and institution. The first important development is the introduction of a rolling programme of training. Rather than create a singular induction point where staff are informed of basic issues, often out of the institutional context, BALTIC has developed a programme of ongoing, peer-led opportunities for experience sharing and learning. The second interesting point in relation to this, is the realisation that although BALTIC has a lot of experience within the professionals that it employs that relates to its own core operational activities (i.e. 80% of Crew would describe themselves as practicing artists of some shape or form), individuals often come from diverse backgrounds and bring with them specialist skills which can go untapped. Crew are not the only area of the organisation which carry a skill base which could benefit BALTIC.

Lucy Smith is BALTIC’s Schools and Colleges Programmer, and for her PPA project, she decided to look at improving strategies for engaging early years visitors. This also extends to developing support mechanisms for those involved in early years teaching. What Lucy’s project has essentially allowed her to do is to consolidate her current practice with the experience she has gained as Schools and Colleges Programmer within BALTIC, and then build upon her previous career working within nursery schools. Talking to Lucy revealed that this is an area
in which she has been interested in for some time and she has been looking for a way to combine these elements of her professional skill base:

‘The PPA work-based project allowed me to explore an area which I have had a desire to explore for a number of years. I was keen to build upon my previous experience within an early years setting and explore ways in which this experience could be linked up with my role at BALTIC. This opportunity not only allowed me to develop a specialism in this area but has also identified a potential area for BALTIC to pursue into the future’.

The PPA has created an opportunity and space for her to look at areas that might fall slightly outside her remit, or which might for practical or strategic reasons be lower in the prioritisation of the organisation’s current offer. The results are obviously multifaceted.

But the really interesting point here for me is the way in which her project allows her to bring in her experiences from a previous job/career, on her own terms and marry a combination of interests with possible areas of expansion for BALTIC.

The result of the project is a formalisation of findings into a firm set of recommendations that the organisation can respond to, and which Lucy can potentially professionally pursue and integrate into her current job.

It sounds simple, but giving staff the space to use the experience that makes them attractive as employees in the first place is often a missed opportunity, and when they are given the opportunity to do it, it seems to push their ability to define their own identity as a professional on at least partially their own terms, but with organisational authentication, a subtle but important twist in their career development story.

Looking at working with staff skills in slightly different ways is critical to the sparking of innovation, and finding a fresh way of looking at what was perhaps in front of us all along can make huge changes to the way we see ourselves.

The group that has the most contact with the audience is undoubtedly a venue’s front of house staff. What’s interesting is that a major theme in museums and galleries over the last 20 years has been about empowering society and developing learning opportunities. This process starts with the making of a connection with the individual which allows them to explore their own place in the world based on their own experience as a starting point. But what we often see is that venues often discriminate in the opportunities that they provide between individuals who come in the front door as visitors and the individuals who work for us and who come in the back door. This happens because there isn’t the time or the funding available to make it happen. But is that really an acceptable excuse?
Rather than advancing through careers in a smooth procession in one single organisation towards (eventual) retirement in what we can describe as a 'vertical' employment hierarchy, where the individual is loyal to a single institution and achieves promotion in reward for hard work, what we are starting to see in younger generations is a horizontal/diagonal movement pattern in employment as the norm. This is a professional route which sees individuals sidestepping from job to job, from organisation to organisation, often within the same or related sectors many times during their careers.

These fractured career paths have never become as apparent as they are in museums and galleries today.

There is then a question about loyalty and whether it’s actually worth investing in the individual employee. And this in turn raises an interesting question about the role of the gallery in the education process, and whether we’re educating within our walls for an audience that will respond within our walls or whether we are helping to educate society more widely for use out in society, and that includes people who are both front of house and back of house. Within this discussion and through projects like the PPA, we are presented with a real opportunity to build organisations across the sector in a holistic way through their employees from the bottom up as well as from the top down.
BALTIC Crew. Photographer Alex Telfer
The PPA model that BALTIC is piloting fits more into the horizontal training model than the typical vertical training model that institutions have tended to pick and promote in the past. It’s a scheme where staff choose the areas that they study and explore, and although they work within guidelines and academic parameters, it is their project, a project that they own. This potentially makes the broader skill set in the creative industries stronger and more sustainable as well as benefiting the host organisation.

What is apparent from both the PPA pilot and through discussion with Crew is the importance in the depth of understanding that comes from the formalising of the learning experience into a recognised qualification.

The requirement to present ideas to one’s peers ensures that there is a standard of commitment upheld by those involved. Similarly, the requirement to submit assignments that follow a set of assessment criteria ensures that the methodologies used to explore these ideas are robust and form useable data sets that can be picked up by others.

Both Crew and the wider Learning Team who are participating in the PPA have all talked about how important the information streams/findings that result from their projects are to the development of BALTIC as an organisation, but what is also apparent is what the accreditation meant in terms of motivating themselves in relation to their own personal career objectives.
We don’t expect our audiences to become exclusive to our venues, but instead to use museums and galleries more widely to help understand the world, and their place in it. There is no doubt that we like it when visitors come back to visit us again and again, but given a choice, we would rather have an individual come in once and be inspired by something than not come in at all. Surely this attitude should and could be transferred over to attitudes towards staff training?

Using this new skill set and the approach shown here, staff can then manage their careers, and arrange opportunities to create new networks and develop a greater stake in the sector. By creating opportunities for Crew who might then move on (or equally likely upwards in the organisation, as is the case at BALTIC) what we’ve essentially created is the foundation for a social contract between the individual and the sector, a contract that many of them will want to fulfil and work with, and go on to develop through the rest of their professional lives.

In many ways, the structure of the PPA has similarities with the early stages and approaches taken by General Motors in the 1920s towards their staff. General Motors actively looked for ways to validate the learning that their staff were experiencing, but they also wanted to train their staff, using an academic framework that would work alongside more practical platforms where applicable skills could be tested and refined and which would benefit its staff, operations and the image of the motor industry in general. The result was the opening of the General Motors Institute of Technology (now Kettering University), and it went on to offer its staff access to an undergraduate university programme, which combined classroom study with the skills needed on the factory floor.

Effectively the achievements that BALTIC has made through the work of the Learning and Engagement Team seem like common sense when you sit down and explain them to someone, but it’s a space that very few organisations have actually managed to fully occupy and it’s reflected in the interest shown by other organisations that attended BALTIC’s Learning and Engagement seminar in November 2011.

Connecting with other organisations and sharing projects is an important part of the process and allows a wider contextualisation of the findings.

The result of the work being undertaken is often the development of a transferable model such as the ‘In a Pickle’ sessions which help staff to share and discuss strategies for dealing with difficult situations and questions that arise in the gallery setting. Adapted originally from the Science Museum and then passed successfully via BALTIC to Nottingham Contemporary and Live Theatre, Newcastle, it will hopefully now organically change and adapt as it needs to, being responsive to the demands of the front of house staff as it is passes from venue to venue.
Within the PPA work-based project, Claudia Espana’s work shows how Crew can take the direct experience of BALTIC staff and transfer it across to new projects. As part of her project she asks ‘Can experiences from the main site on South Shore Road be directly transferred across to the new BALTIC 39 site in Newcastle City Centre?’ She also asks how lessons taken from within BALTIC can help form a framework to anticipate issues that might emerge as the organisation moves in new directions. By visiting venues which are very different to BALTIC, like Spike Island in Bristol and Eastside Projects in Birmingham, her project is helping to create a solid understanding of how different venues adapt according to their experiences and then how BALTIC might be able to capitalise on this.

Again, it might seem obvious, but the important part of the project is that this information gathering isn’t just happening at a management level, it is a member of Crew who is engaging in this dialogue and meeting management half way in the development of solutions to questions that are current and relevant.

Empowering employees is important. We all know that providing a space for experimentation and the opportunity to ‘play’ with ideas promotes respect and responsibility. Play is something that is a crucial part of our lives and can teach us how to manage and transform our negative emotions and experiences. It supercharges learning and is a vital part of the creative process, and the ability to pick our own ideas within a semi-structured framework goes a long way towards fulfilling this need.

Let’s park for a moment the financial implication and suspend reality for what I am about to suggest. Let’s assume that it is okay to daydream, and think the unthinkable. What would an organisation in the arts look like if it designated a proportion of its staff time to pursuing these areas, giving all staff the opportunity to undertake a PPA as part of their job? Not just conceptually, but potentially right through the organisation, and possibly even through to implementation.

Progressive organisations like Google have favoured what is known as the 20% rule in their workload models for some time. This is where one fifth of their employees’ time is devoted to areas that interest them personally and that relate to the company’s long-term goals (in the loosest possible sense). Famously, Google News and Gmail are two products that came out of this scheme via its Google lab. Equally impressively, similar schemes at 3M (which employed a similar 15% rule during the 1950s) saw the birth of The Post It Note and Masking Tape.
In most organisations, innovation slows as the organisation grows and becomes older and the kind of thinking that makes Google progressive, I can see germinating amongst staff in the PPA model. It’s a system which encourages curiosity and progressive thinking as the institution becomes more comfortable with its own identity.

The result of such a change? Well, in the short term, we might be looking at slower and smaller steps in responsiveness, but longer term the benefits will undoubtedly filter through to the visitors. The skill base within the sector will expand alongside a sense of responsibility for areas that need to change and develop, and the skill set to do it will exist at all levels rather than just at a management level.

Within this model, there is undoubtedly a gamble on the employees’ level of participation and subscription, but from what is happening at BALTIC, it is a fairly safe bet that there would be productive outcomes, solid mentoring and a growing library of understanding about the organisation, its role and how it can improve its services.

This is a world where the best ideas come from all over the organisation, regardless of where they are based in the hierarchy. Competition and work ethic emerge from peer pressure, with accreditation providing a longer term goal for the completion of projects that are useable by other professionals.

A resistance to enforcing traditional vertical management hierarchies in the decision-making process can empower individuals; it helps them out of the space where they are ‘just’ a passenger, and into a space where they are a ‘driver’ of change, a contributor, a participant in the process. A space where they CAN make a contribution and more importantly, they CAN make a difference. These kinds of changes represent as much an institutional attitude and identity, and when coupled with a different type of working culture (rather than simply a definite allocation of time), it is a space where individuals can contribute to the overall organisation as well as develop individual strands of identity. We are essentially talking about a bottom-up and top-down approach where each has equal power, but different roles in the decision-making process.

If we look at this in the context of contemporary art venues, it is similar to the way in which we commission contemporary art. We don’t necessarily ask for ‘products’, we ask for an investigation of ideas. And the vehicles that carry those ideas look like, well... they look like whatever it is that they need to look like at the end of the process. We provide time and space for artists to explore the creative process. Why can’t we do this for our staff?
Between 1995 and 2008, when it wound up its activities, the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation supported artists, art students, art galleries, museums and colleges of art and design, distributing £8 million in awards to help them realise their ambitions. Awards to individuals included support for student fees, academic sabbaticals, travel for research and the funding of specific art and design projects. Awards to institutions encompassed substantial capital grants, funds to support the maintenance and development of museum collections and archives, student programmes and research and development in art galleries.

In 2005 the Trustees were considering the character and variety of the final distributions they might make and decided to be proactive in approaching a number of carefully selected institutions who, in their individual or collective judgement, might make best use of significant development funding over a period of five or more years.

As a sometime contributor to gallery education (as it was called in my day), I had an acute awareness of the difficulties galleries could experience in raising sufficient funds to support and, as importantly, to appraise objectively and sustain models of learning practice. Short, closely defined projects could be relatively easy to find support for though the proposal often had to be fitted to the predilections of the potential funder.

The underlying premise of all the large awards the Foundation anticipated making was that institutions should be asked to make their own case for what they wanted to do, argue and quantify the benefits and outcomes and demonstrate the sustainability of the proposal after the period for which the grant would be given. A second consideration was to make the distribution of awards geographically wider. Hence a number went to recipients in Scotland, the West Country, the South Coast, the Midlands – and the North East, where BALTIC presented an intriguing prospect.

It was then a relatively new gallery whose institutional ethos was founded on principles of holistic growth and development. In other words, there was recognition across the staff that everyone worked together for the achievement of commonly agreed goals. The Head of Learning and her colleagues rose magnificently to the challenge of devising a proposal and the story so far of what is clearly a healthy and continuing model of development and delivery is published here.

One of the hallmarks of a good proposal is that it has built into it the flexibility to adapt to and capitalise on changing circumstances or unforeseen outcomes. BALTIC’s programme has achieved all this and more and has far exceeded the promise set out in the plans initially floated in 2005-6. It has made a significant contribution to refining and amplifying the scope, parameters and possibilities of the learning experience in museums and galleries.
For the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation it represented a most rewarding investment in development which has taken root and provided a model of practice which can be adapted for other institutions and which, in cannily enlisting the support and guidance of fellow professionals in the universities and elsewhere in the region, has demonstrated and ensured its ability to grow and flourish in years to come.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation
by Régis Cochefert, Head of Arts, Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Paul Hamlyn Foundation is an independent grant-making body that funds organisations whose charitable activities help people to realise their potential and have a better quality of life. It has three programmes in the UK – Social Justice, Education & Learning and the Arts – and a programme in India. We tend to prefer to support work which others may find hard to fund, perhaps because it breaks new ground, is too risky or is unpopular.

The Arts programme supports the development and dissemination of new ideas to increase people’s experience, enjoyment and involvement in the arts. In 2010 we made our first grant to BALTIC – an award of £100,000 over 24 months – which is underpinning a training and development Programme for CREW.

We have been interested for some time in the impact museums and galleries can have on their communities. In summer 2011 we launched a new Special Initiative ‘Our Museum: Communities and Museums as Active Partners’ which supports a group of museums and galleries to place community needs, values, aspirations and active collaboration at the core of their work, involve local people in core decision-making, and ensure that the institutions play an effective role in developing community skills through volunteering, training and apprenticeships.

In this context, we therefore see our support of Crew at BALTIC as a way to encourage the repositioning of learning within the organisation and support the development of a model that responds to audience needs whilst enabling a richer, more effective visitor engagement with contemporary art – and a better experience.

Acknowledging the progress made to date, we look forward to this work being firmly embedded within BALTIC over the years to come and influencing how other museums and galleries think about the continuous professional development of their front of house teams.
JOB PROFILE

Gallery Assistant (CREW)
At BALTIC, learning and engagement are at the heart of the visitor experience. Crew are central to BALTIC’s mission to create exceptional access to important and innovative contemporary art in a unique setting, that encourages and enables learning and transformational thinking.

**Key Outputs and Accountabilities**

- Proactively welcome, orientate and support visitors at the information points and in the galleries, in order to help them get the most from their visits to BALTIC, encouraging repeat visits.
- Contribute to visitors’ enjoyment and understanding through interpretation and communication of information about BALTIC and its art, including leading guided tours.
- Be attentive, understanding and sensitive to the needs and well-being of the wide range of visitors to BALTIC, encouraging diversity and audience development.
- Maintain a good knowledge of contemporary art in the context of increasing public understanding and enjoyment of BALTIC’s programme.
- Maintain a good knowledge of BALTIC and its environs, including the wider cultural offer, regional history and tourism.
- Maintain a thorough and practical knowledge of BALTIC’s emergency procedures, child and vulnerable adult protection policy and health and safety requirements, assisting with their effective execution and development.
- Maintain high standards of presentation throughout the building, and in particular the galleries and public areas.
- Be attentive to the security of BALTIC and its exhibitions in an open public environment.
- Support the Learning and Engagement Managers (Front of House) with the smooth daily operation of the galleries.
- Liaise with the Catering and Events teams to provide a friendly and professional service for all our visitors, including proactively promoting our food and drinks partner and assisting with the delivery of events and activities as required.
- Support the wider Learning and Engagement Team at BALTIC as well as Building Services, Communications, Development, Events, Resources, Programme and Retail Teams through opportunities which may arise or when requests are made.

**Job Purpose:** to combine in-depth knowledge and experience of contemporary art and BALTIC with the skills, passion and enthusiasm needed to communicate ideas effectively to all our audiences, navigating them through contemporary art. To provide an optimum level of visitor service, whilst ensuring public safety and the security of the building and its contents.

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<th>Key Outputs and Accountabilities</th>
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<td>Accredited arts training.</td>
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BALTIC
CORE VALUES
Respect and Responsibility
• Respecting the part each individual plays in making engagement with BALTIC a success for everyone and taking responsibility for the personal part each individual plays in making that easier and better.

Support and Commitment
• Supporting artists, colleagues and visitors alike and making a personal commitment to always go the extra mile.

Enthusiasm and Engagement
• Bringing energy and openness to sharing knowledge, enjoyment and team spirit and engaging with artists and visitors in making BALTIC a great personal experience.

Creativity and Inventiveness
• Creating opportunities that bring art to life and using inventive ways to break down barriers, impart knowledge and transform the way people think.

This document complements and works together with BALTIC’s Business Plan, Audience Development Plan and Learning and Engagement Strategy. It provides some guidance on how to apply BALTIC’s organisational values to the Crew role and what is expected of Crew with regards to demonstrating the Core Values in their daily duties.

Respect and Responsibility
This can be demonstrated in the Crew role through the following actions:
• Keeping informed and knowledgeable about BALTIC exhibitions, events and facilities. Regularly checking BALTIC emails, the Intranet, BALTIC website and notice boards.
• Making every effort to attend programme presentations, team meetings, artist talks, exhibition walk-throughs and taking up dedicated research time when available.
• Knowing and understanding the work, ethos and vision of BALTIC and reflecting them positively to visitors. Being an ambassador for BALTIC by sharing your interest, passion and knowledge of all that we do here.
• Adhering to BALTIC’s policies and procedures such as health & safety guidelines, fire and evacuation procedures, opening and closing procedures and radio procedures. Using discretion when necessary in situations such as lift trappings, first aid incidents, lost children and suspicious visitors.
• Punctuality and being ready to start work on time along with good time keeping of breaks, lunches, tours and general movement around the building to help the day run much more smoothly for the whole team.
• Being consistent in all your duties and responsibilities. We need to work together as a team and respect each other to achieve a great working environment and to consistently provide a high level of service.
• Volunteering to take tours on a regular basis. We advertise a variety of tours to our visitors and we have a collective responsibility to ensure these are delivered each day.
• Taking responsibility for the appearance and functions of the building in your immediate areas, picking up litter, and promptly reporting any problems with facilities that may hinder public access.

Support and Commitment
This can be demonstrated in the Crew role through the following actions:
• Creating a positive working environment by communicating well within the organisation, generating enthusiasm and motivation, promoting mutual respect and team work.
• Recognising good work in others and thanking people for their support. This creates positive working relationships as people feel valued and better understand the contribution they make.
• Actively looking for ways to better support colleagues and going the extra mile – teamwork is essential to our success and encourages a community spirit.
• By each Crew member taking regular tours from the variety we offer (Exhibition Spotlights, Quayside Spotlights, Family Tours, Behind the Scenes). This ensures this load is spread evenly among the team.
• Acting as a positive role model to new staff and existing colleagues, setting good examples and feeling proud of your role.
• Promoting BALTIC Shop and their products, where possible/appropriate making links with the exhibitions for catalogues and limited edition prints.
• Supporting and promoting BALTIC’s partnership with Fresh Element for our catering and events provision, presenting us as a united front and actively seeking ways in which the relationship can be strengthened.
• Showing support and commitment though attending staff events, team meetings, artist/curator talks and peer-led exhibition walk-throughs where you can support colleagues by sharing knowledge and experience.
• Always treating others with respect, being polite and professional when interacting with visitors, colleagues and clients.
• Providing useful feedback for us to share with the wider organisation which will help improve our performance and influence future planning.

Enthusiasm and Engagement
Almost half of visits to BALTIC in 2009-10 were made by visitors who said they had little or no knowledge of contemporary art (44%), with a further 43% of visitors claiming a general knowledge of visual art. 13% identified themselves as having specialist knowledge. With this in mind, the Crew role is central to BALTIC in achieving our vision.

Your enthusiasm and positive engagement is vital in expanding our audience, increasing the frequency of visits and the diversity of our visitors. By increasing the informal opportunities available to learn for visitors we can enhance their overall experience at BALTIC and exceed their expectations.
It can be demonstrated in the following ways:

- Communicating with passion and enthusiasm about BALTIC, our exhibition programme and contemporary art in general.
- Promoting all BALTIC’s learning resources, signposting people to the Spotlight Tours, Library & Archive and Quay to find out more about artists and exhibitions here.
- Approaching family groups to inform them about Exhibition Explorer packs, Busy B’s and any forthcoming learning events taking place in the holiday periods.
- Encouraging visitors to sign up to the BALTIC Love mailing list and be the first to find out about forthcoming exhibitions and events at BALTIC.
- Smiling and making eye contact. This makes a positive acknowledgement of all visitors entering the building and the galleries, making them feel welcome to approach Crew and ask questions.
- Maintaining a good general awareness of visitors’ needs, frequently asked questions etc. Giving positive and helpful alternatives when other options aren’t available (eg. L4 Viewing Terrace closed so could suggest L5 and back of Quay, offer to email images of exhibitions as an alternative to photography within the galleries).
- If required, politely advising visitors to do/not do something such as taking photographs, touching artworks, reading guidelines before entering an exhibition. Following with a friendly explanation why as many visitors will not necessarily know why and can feel embarrassed, nervous or annoyed.

Creativity and Inventiveness

Providing a warm welcome for all visitors to the building, generating a friendly and accessible atmosphere where informal learning can take place. Ensuring our visitors are actively engaged, using the exhibitions as springboards to share and construct new knowledge. This can be achieved by:

- Acknowledging all visitors to the building or gallery spaces, assisting them in navigating around the building by promoting information resources and facilities such as the Library & Archive and Quay, highlighting that Crew are available to assist on all floors.
- Being proactive in approaches to visitors, enjoying sharing knowledge which will enhance others’ enjoyment and understanding of the exhibitions.
- Searching for new ways to communicate ideas to visitors and create meaningful relationships between the artwork and audience through guided tours and informal conversation.
- Finding new or alternative routes to engage visitors, being able to tailor your approach to a wide variety of people with different levels of arts knowledge and gallery experience.
- Being open to all feedback and remaining positive in these discussions will ensure our visitors feel valued when offering their ideas and opinions which are important to the growth of the organisation.
- Communicating visitor feedback back into the organisation through managers and being open and creative with your own ideas of how we can solve issues and improve the visitor experience.