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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
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*Providing Inspection Services for*  
**Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



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## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Follow-up Inspection**

# **The Contribution of Museums and Galleries in Supporting Education in Northern Ireland**

**October/November 2008**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE SCOPING STUDY OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES IN SUPPORTING EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

The Scoping Study of the Contribution of Museums and Galleries in Supporting Education in Northern Ireland in June-September 2005 highlighted strengths in the provision including:

- the strategic planning of the organisations, which reflect appropriately the broadly defined strategic priorities of the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL);
- the alignment of much of the provision to the then Northern Ireland Curriculum and to relevant lifelong learning;
- the commitment of education staff to provide interesting, relevant and enjoyable programmes;
- the training needs analysis undertaken by the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) to identify and prioritise the professional development needs of its staff; and
- the commitment of almost all of the organisations in extending their education programmes to include a strong focus on developing outreach provision.

The study identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the need for DCAL to work with the museums and galleries sector to develop a clear strategy to guide the planning and provision of educational experiences by the sector;
- the need for agreed quality assurance procedures, to be built into the educational work of the museums and galleries sector, including the development of sector specific performance indicators;
- an overview of provision throughout Northern Ireland (NI) to help identify the extent to which museums and galleries are meeting the educational needs of individuals and the community;
- the further development of the use of information and communication technology and information learning technology to increase access to museums and galleries, to enhance learning and to reflect and support parallel developments within statutory education; and
- the need for DCAL to promote more actively, the purposeful collaboration among the groups associated with the museums and galleries sector and between DCAL and the Department of Education.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the good work undertaken by NIMC and the National Museums to develop the use of Information and Learning Technology to increase access to museums and heritage resources and to enrich the learning experiences of participants;
- the identification of the digitisation of the National Museums' collections as an important strand of its strategy to increase access to museums resources, and the good start made to the implementation of the strategy;

- the work initiated and managed effectively by NIMC in conducting a challenging survey of the education service provided by the 37 accredited museums, the findings of which will form the basis of the first comprehensive report of learning provision by the sector and will provide an important evaluative evidence base to inform the strategic planning by the organisations;
- the work undertaken by DCAL and its arms length bodies (ALBs) in collaboration with the Education and Training Inspectorate to develop a sector wide learning strategy to guide the provision of educational experiences provided by ALBs;
- the extensive work by members of the DCAL, its ALBs and the Inspectorate working group in developing agreed sector specific performance indicators to provide a framework for the continuous self evaluation and quality improvement of the education services of ALBs; and
- the productive collaboration through the DCAL/ETI working group, between the ALBs across the museums and heritage sector, DCAL and representatives of other key organisations, working in partnership to establish common systems and procedures for the continuous improvement of their work.

There remains a need to review the process of accountability between DCAL and its ALBs to take greater account of the evaluation of qualitative performance measures to inform the development and business planning and related target setting processes.

Good progress has been made in almost all of the areas identified during the original survey but most notably, the development of a learning strategy and a quality improvement framework; together these have the potential to promote a more coherent approach to educational provision and the establishment of a process of rigorous self evaluation and extend the organisations' capacity for sustained improvement.

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