West Yorkshire Archive Service
Community Archive Accreditation Scheme

Introduction

In 2009 the West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake a three year long project 'West Yorkshire: Our Stories' aimed at increasing community participation with both the archive service and local heritage and history. One element of this project is the Accreditation Scheme which has been developed to create a benchmark of best practice which groups will be able to work towards at their own pace. It is being run in collaboration with a training programme, also provided by the service, which will offer support to groups involved in the accreditation process.

The scheme has been designed to be as comprehensive as possible and cover all aspects of a community heritage group's anticipated work, from using public spaces to caring for collections. This pack has been broken down into easy to understand sections that can be worked through either in isolation or as part of the scheme as a whole and there is no time limit on the accreditation process.

It is hoped that the introduction of the accreditation scheme will provide a new hub of information for all community heritage groups – whether just starting out or as an established organisation. Participation in the scheme will give groups new confidence in their work, open up new opportunities and hopefully raise standards across the region to ensure that groups can continually increase their capacity and protect the heritage they are collecting.

Accreditation is an important process and will be a learning experience for all groups involved. Whether you are a new group needing advice on how to get going or an established group looking for ways to branch out into new areas, the accreditation scheme will provide both the structure and information sources needed. It will supply both basic guidance and informed assistance from archives professionals on a range of topics that will ensure standards are raised and a level of best practice is established and maintained.

The Accreditation scheme will:

❖ Create a new hub of information provision for community heritage groups.
❖ Raise standards across the region.
❖ Establish a benchmark of best practice.
❖ Allow for varying levels of participation and acknowledge the variety of work being undertaken by community heritage groups in West Yorkshire.

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Aims and Objectives of the Scheme

This Accreditation Scheme has been developed by the West Yorkshire Archive Service to create an information resource hub for community groups as part of the West Yorkshire: Our Stories project. We have recognised that groups often require guidance and advice from the Archive Service, and through the provision of this scheme and of a training programme we hope to ensure that that need will always be met.

Aim
To create an information resource that sets a benchmark for best practice within community heritage groups, raising standards in all core activities of such groups whilst actively promoting sustainability of both practice and collections.

Objectives
- Create a set of basic and achievable standards for the core activities of community heritage groups.
- Create the opportunity for groups to gain a recognisable mark that indicates the high standards they are working to.
- Create usable and accessible information resources that are supported by training provision to ensure groups feel able to complete the Accreditation process.

FAQ's

Who is this scheme aimed at?
This Accreditation Scheme has been designed with community groups that are working in the area of heritage in mind. This could be an established group with its own archive that has been developed over a number of years or a set of people just starting out and setting up a new group. The information in this pack provides a baseline for basic standards that will need to be met but also has provision for other considerations (**see section 8**) if a group would like to continue with their development.

What can I gain from taking part in the scheme?
The success of the scheme will be partially dependant on participation – the more groups that take part the more recognition the scheme will gain. However, we hope that gaining accreditation will raise both the profile of the group and the standards to which you will be working, which will in turn increase the possibility of securing funding, working in partnership and the likelihood of achieving your aims and goals.

This pack provides a wealth of information about both the basic principles of running groups, such as how to recruit and support volunteers and generate new audiences, and in depth advice from archive professionals about the practical issues that matter to you. By taking part in the Accreditation Scheme you will be giving your group the

chance to learn new skills, gain new information and hopefully ensure the successful growth of your activities.

What do we get when we are accredited?
You will receive the WYAS Accreditation Scheme logo to use on all of your promotional material, discounts on training provided by the service, one to one support, regular briefing notes about important and relevant topics and a chance to network with other groups in the region.

How long will accreditation take?
The scheme has been designed so that groups can work through it at their own pace. Each topic has been divided up into sections that can either be worked through in isolation or together as a whole. We are setting no time frame on the accreditation process, and it is entirely up to individual groups how they make use of the material available here.

What if we become stuck?
The Accreditation Scheme is a component of a larger area of support provision that the Service has been able to develop through the Heritage Lottery Funded project West Yorkshire: Our Stories. Within this there is the **Network Group** which holds regular meetings for community groups working in the region and also a programme of **Training Sessions**. These sessions have been designed to support key areas of the Accreditation Scheme that groups may find difficult – such as copyright and legislation.

How do we become accredited?
The WYAS scheme is a **self accreditation scheme** – meaning the service will provide groups with all the resources required and the groups must then take it upon themselves to complete the accreditation process.

Each section of this pack contains an Accreditation Checklist at the end which outlines key tasks that your group will have to undertake to complete that section. These checklist points can range from creating a policy document to making sure that an issue is discussed openly with group members. You should endeavour to collect evidence of these activities to be kept safe with your accreditation pack. Each section also contains a range of Action Points designed to help you put the information provided into practice within a group context – these are there to help you and are not a requirement of the completion of the scheme.

Currently there are two types of accreditation. The first is standard Accreditation which excludes section 7. Memory Collection. There is the option however to become achieve Accreditation Plus which will include this section and give groups that have already become accredited something to work towards.

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