

BUXTON CRESCENT HERITAGE TRUST

Visitor experience training for the new Buxton Crescent exhibition

The vital first five minutes

Remember *'you only have one chance to make a first impression'*. That first impression can make or mar a visit experience.

A lot of things have to be done well in the first five minutes. Particularly for host or tour guides; they have to be planned and rehearsed.

During the first five minutes you must:

- meet all the needs of the visitors
- set the tone of the whole visit

What do people need when they arrive?

- The toilets!
- Reassurance that they have made a good choice to visit and that they will all have a good time.
- Confidence that they are in safe hands and any special needs will be catered for.
- Clarity about what to expect.
- An indication of what they will experience.
- Clear instructions on routes and to be shown where they need to go.
- Knowledge of how long it will take.
- Guidance on when/how they can ask questions, get help or find out more.
- To be made to feel that they are important.

Seven key tasks for a guide to the Buxton Crescent Heritage Experience in the first five minutes

1. A warm welcome. Smile. Say hello enthusiastically. Introduce yourself. Make eye contact and ensure your body language is open not closed. Make a personal connection. Recognise that this may be a very special occasion for people; some may have been waiting 35 years to come back to the Crescent!



2. Get to know your visitors. Discover critical information for your tour. Personal interaction; ask open-ended questions (i.e. that do not have a Yes/No answer). Make it a friendly conversation not an interrogation, you are trying to build rapport. Useful things to find out include: Where have you come from today? Who is in your group? How well do you know Buxton? What are you hoping for today? Do any of your group have special needs I should know about? Why have you come? What do you hope to get from today? Observe your guests – pick up on clues on what might be most relevant to their needs/interests and talk about them; don't make assumptions about interest and ability based on appearances.

3. Meet visitors' basic needs. Tell them where the toilets are (also breastfeeding/changing facilities if appropriate). Describe the Covid precautions. Tell how long the tour is. Explain facilities for those with special needs; hearing loop, ramps and lift to avoid steps and stairs.

4. Physical orientation. Describe where we are and where we are going (dependent on starting point). Place Buxton as a town in the heart of the Peak District; this is key to the story of the Crescent. Emphasise the exhibition is over two floors; visitors may need to follow room numbers/arrows.

5. Intellectual orientation. “We will be taking you back to the late 18th century.” Choose contemporary things e.g. films/shows like ‘The Madness of King George’, ‘Hamilton’, ‘The Duchess’ or TV shows to help visitors relate to this time.

6. Raise expectations. Teasers of what to expect. Remember what your group said when you were getting to know them; highlight elements that will be of particular interest. Also manage expectations; people may be hoping to see the Assembly Room and original Georgian interiors; this tour cannot offer that.



7. Lead into the Big Idea of the exhibition. Explain briefly what it is about e.g *'You will discover the 'Buxton Cure' and the therapeutic effects particularly of our natural, and still famous, spring waters and also the environment. People, of all kinds and classes, have come here to be cured for centuries, particularly in the Georgian times ...'*

