

BUXTON CRESCENT HERITAGE TRUST

Visitor experience training for the new Buxton Crescent exhibition

The Big Idea

People visit heritage sites in their leisure time. They are not studying and are not focused on remembering things. However, we want visitors to remember something and to tell other people about it.

There has been considerable research into how people learn in informal situations like this, particularly by Professor Sam Ham. The key point is that **people remember what they think and talk about**. Children and adults alike tend to remember only what they have talked about in their group. The key role of the guide therefore is to promote conversation about the exhibition content with and between visitors, not simply to tell them all the information. Instigating discussion within groups who are social bubbles is likely to be easier than with groups of strangers.

Guides need to subtly steer these conversations so that they reiterate the Big Ideas of the experience. Most visitors will not remember a lot of information so it is important know what the most important ideas are and ensure that they are referenced regularly in different ways during the visit.

The Big Idea should be introduced at the beginning of the tour, reinforced wherever possible during the tour and be part of the summing up at the end of the tour.

.

There are three main ideas of the exhibition:

- the Crescent is an amazing building
- the therapeutic waters and invigorating environment were already well known before the 'Buxton Cure' was devised – the Duke was monetising an existing phenomenon
- Buxton's water is the heart of the town and vital to many people who live and have lived here and our many visitors over the centuries

Two supplementary ideas:

- the water had been sought-after for a very long time
- the restoration of the building – (This is important now, especially to local people, but the importance of this element may diminish over time.)

