

NESM goes national with relaunched schools programme

From life during the Great Fire of London and the Blitz to the intrigues of Victorian crime and punishment, schoolchildren across the country are being given the chance to get up close and personal with history thanks to a South Yorkshire museum.

After an 18-month hiatus due to Covid, Sheffield's National Emergency Services Museum (NESM) has relaunched its learning and discovery programme with a host of brand new activities, updated workshops and outreach events aimed at learners of all ages.

Top of the bill is a brand new offer called Topic Takeover days which will take NESM national for the very first time. Delivered by the museum's learning and discovery team, in partnership with historical re-enactment group The Past Presents, this full-day activity takes the NESM experience directly to schools anywhere in the country, using role play, costumed characters, interactive activities and team games to immerse learners in their history. From walking in the footsteps of a World War II evacuee to learning about our emergency services heroes, these sessions offer a hands-on, engaging and jam-packed way to learn about the past.

Other activities the NESM team can bring directly into the classroom include bitesize workshops and talks to classes, updated loan boxes including a mixture of genuine and replica objects from the museum's collection and the always popular vehicle outreach day - which sees the team visit schools with one of the museum's amazing emergency vehicles and deliver workshops exploring the vehicle and learning about its driver.

Hosting school visits at its historic home - a former police, fire and ambulance station in Sheffield city centre - also remains at the heart of NESM's learning and discovery programme. The museum offers a range of in-house workshops covering curriculum-linked topics like People Who Help Us, Crime and Punishment, and Medicine through Time. Topics are brought to life through interaction with the museum's unique spaces, such as its original Victorian cells, historic objects from its collection and, new for 2021, costumed characters to tell the stories of the past.

Museum CEO Matthew Wakefield says, 'We're really excited about our new learning and discovery programme, and especially our new Topic Takeover days which will let us take the NESM experience nationally for the very first time rather than relying on schools coming into the museum.

'Plus we've aimed to make our offer as flexible as possible so whatever the needs and resources of individual schools, wherever they are, and whatever circumstances the new term brings, they can engage with the amazing history we have to share at NESM.'

Jed Jaggard of Past Presents, who is working with the museum to deliver the Topic Takeover days, says, 'We're really excited to be working together on this project. We believe we have something truly unique that will immerse children in fun and engaging sessions to really inspire them and enhance their learning. By learning through immersion, the pupils will have great fun and learn more than they think they could.'

The museum's learning programme caters to all ages from early years and key stage 1 to GCSE. For full details go to visitnesm.org.uk/learning.

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