

Towards Cultural Co-design

Connecting Communities through Culture
Year I evaluation report



Acknowledgements

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Bringing Birmingham's Communities together through Culture


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Local Government

 **Birmingham City Council**


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Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Context	2
1.2 Description of the programme	3
1.3 Evaluation methodology	4
2. Programme management	7
2.1 Culture Commissioning Team	7
2.2 Local Arts Fora	10
3. Delivering Connecting Communities through Culture	13
3.1 Listening to local people	13
3.2 Commissioning artists	14
3.3 Marketing and promotion	14
3.4 Delivering on a small budget	14
4. Stimulating Participation in Arts and Culture	16
4.1 How people have been engaged in arts and cultural activity	18
4.2 Benefits of being engaged in arts and cultural activity	20
5. Cultural co-design	23
5.1 Understanding cultural co-design and co-production	23
5.2 A framework for cultural co-design and co-production	24
5.3 Conditions for co-design and co-productions	26
5.4 Cultural co-design in Connecting communities programme	26
6. Transforming infrastructure	30
6.1 Connecting communities' contribution to local arts infrastructure	32
7. Creating Conditions for Integration	35
7.1 Arts, culture and community integration	35
7.2 Connecting communities diverse delivery	36
7.3 Celebrating together	40
8. Summary of learning	42
8.1 What works	42
8.2 Key challenges	43
8.3 Delivery against outcomes	44
8.4 Conclusions	45
8.5 Recommendations	46

Appendices

Glossary

ACE	Arts Council England
BCC	Birmingham City Council
BCP	Birmingham Cultural Partnership
C2	Positively Local C2 community asset building methodology
CCC	Connecting Communities through Culture
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
LAF	Local Arts Forum



I. Introduction

The Connecting Communities through Culture programme in Birmingham is part of the *Arts and Communities* initiative¹ to support and showcase good practice in arts and culture that brings communities together. It is jointly funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Arts Council England (ACE) National Lottery grants and Birmingham City Council.

Arts and Communities supports programmes in Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol and Burnley that locate arts activity within local communities and use the arts to increase participation, build common ground and promote stronger and more integrated communities. Each programme within the initiative has taken a different approach to achieving its aims. Birmingham allocated equal amounts of funding across the 10 Districts that make up the city to stimulate 10 locally developed arts projects, reflective of diverse local communities' ideas and needs.

The aims of *Arts and Communities* are reflected in Birmingham City Council's cultural strategy² which recognised that:

“People need to feel they belong in their neighbourhood and that they get along with their neighbours. Culture can be the key to cohesion and has a unique role to play in providing opportunities for people to have fun together, to reflect on their heritage and their future, and to get to know one another in a non-threatening environment”.

Aims for the programme

- To allow people of all different backgrounds the opportunity to participate in the arts
- To build a clear sense of shared values, aspirations and common ground building on DCLG's 'creating the conditions for integration'³

Outcomes for the programme

- Increased participation and engagement across a range of diverse groups and communities using arts and culture
- Local arts infrastructure transformed through resident engagement in ownership, design and production of local arts and cultural activities
- Models of good arts practice that demonstrate improved shared understanding of values, aspirations and common ground
- Opportunities for people in local neighbourhoods to show and value their contribution to the cultural life of their community
- Use of a common evaluation framework

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bringing-people-together-through-the-arts>

² Big City Culture 2010-2015 - A Cultural Strategy for Birmingham (due to be reviewed)

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7504/2092103.pdf

The programme outcomes are seeking to gain instrumental benefits for civil society through the Connecting Communities programme by providing opportunities to increase community integration and improve community ownership of arts and culture across the city. At the same time, intrinsic personal benefits for the individuals who take part in arts activity would also be expected⁴.

Merida Associates was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the programme and specialises in community-based evaluation and research with a focus on capturing the outcomes of funded activity. The aim of the evaluation is to consider to what extent the overall programme outcomes have been achieved and to consider whether further evidence has emerged in support of the arts and culture engagement model that was tested during the Cultural Pilots project in 2013-14⁵. It was not within the remit of the evaluation to evaluate the effectiveness of individual projects but to establish, across all project activities, the elements that supported the achievement of positive outcomes and factors that could support sustainable community engagement in arts and cultural activity at a local level.

This report presents evaluation findings at the end of the first year of the Connecting Communities through Culture (CCC) programme.⁶ It reflects on the evidence gathered from the 10 funded projects to identify the factors that have enabled outcomes to be achieved; common barriers to delivery, or difficulties that have been encountered, and lessons for the future⁷. It includes reflections on the operational management of the programme and a wider perspective so that each section of findings on outcomes is set within a deeper context to consider what might be the wider impact of the model developed through the Connecting Communities programme. Findings present overall analysis from the different data sources available to the evaluation team, including external references.

1.1 Context

Local infrastructure for arts and culture

Birmingham has developed several initiatives to increase participation in the arts over the past 5 years in response to research commissioned by the Birmingham Cultural Partnership (BCP)⁸ which identified a number of factors that impact negatively on people's ability to engage with arts and cultural activity, particularly in areas of high deprivation and outer-city areas.

The precursor to the Connecting Communities programme, the Cultural Pilots project, tested a new model of working to overcome some of the barriers identified in the research in order to increase participation and offer opportunities for communities to come

⁴ See *New Flow: A Better Future for Artists Citizens and the State*, Tim Joss (2008)

⁵ See *Igniting a Spark: An evaluation of the Birmingham Cultural Pilots programme* Merida Associates (June 2014)

⁶ Also known as 'Connecting Communities'

⁷ At April 2015 funding for Year 2 of the programme had not been confirmed.

⁸ *Ecotec: Identifying the Barriers to Cultural Participation and the Needs of Residents of Birmingham* BCP (2010); Vector Research: *P1473 Cultural participation* BCP (2011)

together. This model has been adopted as the structure for Connecting Communities and scaled up to be rolled out across the city.

Year 1 of the Connecting Communities programme has been delivered through Birmingham's 10 Local Arts Fora (LAF) which each cover one of the 10 Districts of the city. The network of Local Arts Fora was set up by Birmingham's Culture Commissioning Service, in response to the research commissioned by BCP, to develop local infrastructure for arts and cultural activity and to increase access to and participation in the arts.

Another strand of activity that supports the engagement of people in arts and culture at a local level in Birmingham is the Arts Champion scheme which aligns each of the large, revenue-funded arts organisations of the city with one of the city's Districts for a three-year period. Arts Champions develop programmes of work to offer opportunities for arts engagement for residents and support to emerging artists. Each Arts Champion works with the Local Arts Forum network to join up the cultural and artistic provision across all four wards in a District.

Changing landscape in Birmingham

The community asset-building model of engaging people in local arts and cultural activity, as tested in the Cultural Pilots and rolled out through Connecting Communities, has emerged at a time when Birmingham City Council is undergoing huge structural changes and reviewing what it does and how it does it. The new vision for the city "*puts local people and communities at the heart of everything it does, and focuses on positive outcomes for citizens*"⁹ and this programme fits very well within that vision. Connecting Communities can provide an example of building capacity at a local level which enables people to do more for themselves and helps them to become more resilient. Learning from Connecting Communities may be useful to inform the introduction of new 'local people-centred' ways of working in other public sector services.

1.2 Description of the programme

Birmingham City Council (BCC) took the opportunity afforded by the *Arts and Communities* initiative to extend the community asset-based model for engagement with arts and culture that it had previously tested in 3 diverse neighbourhoods in the city, to targeted locations in all 10 Districts.¹⁰

Connecting Communities was designed to further support the development of the infrastructure and sustainability of Local Arts Fora by providing resources to build capacity in commissioning and managing grassroots community projects and by encouraging the engagement of more local residents in arts co-design and co-production.

⁹ BCC Cabinet Report 20 April 2015, Future Council Programme, Appendix I

¹⁰ See Garry K and Goodwin P *Igniting a Spark: An evaluation of the Birmingham Cultural Pilots programme* Merida Associates (June 2014)

The Positively Local C2 model of community asset-based engagement as delivered in Birmingham was described in the evaluation of Birmingham’s Cultural Pilots¹¹ and the Connecting Communities process shown in Figure 1 was set out in the interim evaluation report.¹² Key elements of the model are the concepts of cultural co-design and co-production which describe processes whereby local people work alongside professionals to develop their own ideas into action, achieving outcomes that respond to local needs and securing community ownership of what is produced.

Figure 1: Connecting Communities through Culture process



Each of the 10 projects was developed in response to listening to people in the small neighbourhoods that were selected as locations for Connecting Communities during the research phase. As a consequence they all delivered different activities and produced a wide variety of original art works and performances that reflected the interests, and to some extent, the cultures of the areas in which they were located. Local Arts Fora were encouraged to target areas with little, or no, existing arts or cultural activity and to bring in professional artists to work with residents to create something exciting as an introduction to arts in their community. A summary of each of the projects can be seen at Appendix 1.

The programme ran from August 2014 to March 2015 and included a showcase of work at venues across the city during February and March 2015 and a Symposium at the Library of Birmingham on the 13th March 2015 where activity and learning from across the 4 towns and cities involved in the *Arts and Communities* initiative was shared.¹³ Reflections on the management of the programme follow in section 2.

1.3 Evaluation methodology

The Connecting Communities programme was designed to incorporate learning from the preceding Cultural Pilots project which identified the importance of setting clear monitoring and evaluation requirements at the inception of the programme. The Connecting Communities programme therefore included opportunities for the Local Arts Fora and the BCC Culture Commissioning Team to work together with the evaluators to discuss the evaluation framework and contribute to the design of data capture tools for the evaluation

¹¹ As above

¹² *Bringing Birmingham’s Communities together through Culture* Interim Report Merida Associates | Dec 2014

¹³ See separate Symposium report Jenny Smith

before projects started delivering on the ground. A summary of this process is presented in the interim evaluation report.¹⁴

The evaluation framework that was devised for the Cultural Pilots was amended and simplified to address the outcomes of the Connecting Communities programme. The framework was shared with DCLG and ACE and the other towns and cities in the *Arts and Communities* initiative to facilitate common data gathering across all sites, although this opportunity has not been developed further.

The scope of the evaluation, covering all 10 Connecting Communities projects across the city, precluded an in-depth qualitative evaluation approach, as had been undertaken for the Cultural Pilots project. It was agreed that the evaluation would seek to gather data from people engaging with the programme in different roles, to gain a wider perspective of levels of engagement,¹⁵ and that survey questions would be used to gather both quantitative and qualitative information. Project co-ordinators were responsible for gathering the data and uploading it on to an online survey site.

Other sources of evidence included:

- Connecting Communities research reports produced by the Local Arts Fora
- contextual analyses of each target area prepared by the Culture Commissioning Team as a baseline of arts and cultural activity
- project monitoring forms for each project

The following activities gathered qualitative data on what worked well, what people learned and what they would do differently next time:

- reflective discussions with the Local Arts Fora or the Connecting Communities steering groups in each of the 10 areas
- knowledge exchange workshop with co-ordinators and Local Arts Fora leads
- focus group with the Culture Commissioning Team
- interviews with the manager of the Culture Commissioning Service, the lead officer for the Connecting Communities programme and BCC Cabinet Member for Skills, Learning and Culture

Learning from the evaluation process

The use of surveys to capture data for the evaluation has not been successful. There are a number of factors that contributed to several projects not collecting or uploading survey data. The consequence is that for several projects measurable evidence of impact for people taking part is not available and the survey samples are small. There is good data from a few projects and secondary source data provided by all co-ordinators that has been analysed to

¹⁴ Garry K & Goodwin P *Bringing Birmingham's Communities together through Culture* Interim Report Merida Associates (2014)

¹⁵ See p.26 for engagement scale

give a sense of the difference Connecting Communities projects have made; however the voices of many people who have participated in the projects are missing.

The evaluation process has been reflected on with the Culture Commissioning Team, Local Arts Fora representatives and Connecting Communities project co-ordinators to ensure learning can take place before further activity is commissioned.

Factors contributing to low usage of evaluation tools:

- Too many surveys to get completed

Surveys were designed against the evaluation framework to capture the experiences of people as they engaged with the Connecting Communities projects at different stages of the engagement scale and in different roles:

- audience members
- participants
- volunteers
- co-producers

An additional survey was designed to enable feedback from artists to be captured. This made 5 surveys in all.

- Surveys were too long

This was possibly a perception rather than too many questions being asked – surveys were printed on several sheets of paper which made them feel long. However, one aspect was considered too lengthy; the surveys needed to comply with BCC guidelines on recording demographic information resulting in quite detailed demographic questions.

- The surveys were designed as online tools and it was hoped that some could be completed directly on laptops, tablets or smartphones however very few were completed that way. Project co-ordinators asked for paper versions which were provided, however having not been designed as paper surveys the layout was not user-friendly and this impeded data capture.

- Assumptions were made by the evaluation team that project co-ordinators would have the skills to take survey questions and adopt more creative methods of data capture. This was based on experience from the Cultural Pilots and there is scope for knowledge about creative approaches to data capture within the LAF network that could be shared further between Local Arts Fora and project co-ordinators.

- Lack of clarity about support available for co-ordinators

There was a lack of clarity for some Culture Commissioning Team members about their role in supporting co-ordinators with data capture, for instance helping them to upload survey returns. This was exacerbated by limited capacity in the team.

These factors are relatively easy to address and will be incorporated into discussions on the design of evaluation tools before the start of future projects.

However, the principle of collecting evaluation data to support creating an evidence base of outcomes achieved by participative arts and cultural activities should be clearly communicated and upheld in future programmes.



2. Programme Management

The successful testing of the C2 Positively Local community asset-based engagement model in the Cultural Pilots project in 2013-14 created the confidence for Birmingham Culture Commissioning Service to roll it out to all 10 Districts through the Connecting Communities programme in 2014-15. This approach marked a significant difference between Birmingham and the other towns and cities in the *Arts and Communities* initiative that focused on smaller areas or bigger projects.

The Connecting Communities programme succeeded in delivering 10 arts projects in less than a year and included the creation of artistic products, some of which were co-produced with people not engaged in arts activity before, and collaborative performances in new local venues and spaces across the city. These achievements could not have happened without partnership working between the city's Culture Commissioning Team, the Local Arts Fora, project co-ordinators, artists and local people.

The decision to offer Connecting Communities to every Local Arts Forum in Birmingham meant that there was less resource available for each project than had been available for the Cultural Pilots in terms of funding. It also meant that support from the Culture Commissioning Team was stretched across the 10 Districts and as a result officers had less time to offer to each project steering group and reduced capacity to effectively focus on outcomes and monitor against them.

There were delays to the start of the programme, mostly due to the complexities of aligning different funding streams from DCLG, ACE and BCC, which reduced the time available for the research phase of the delivery model and had a knock-on effect across the year. All of these factors had an impact on the delivery of the projects which will be explored below.

Officers from the Culture Commissioning Service, members of Local Arts Fora and Connecting Communities co-ordinators have reflected on the management of the programme as part of the evaluation process, to help inform future activity.

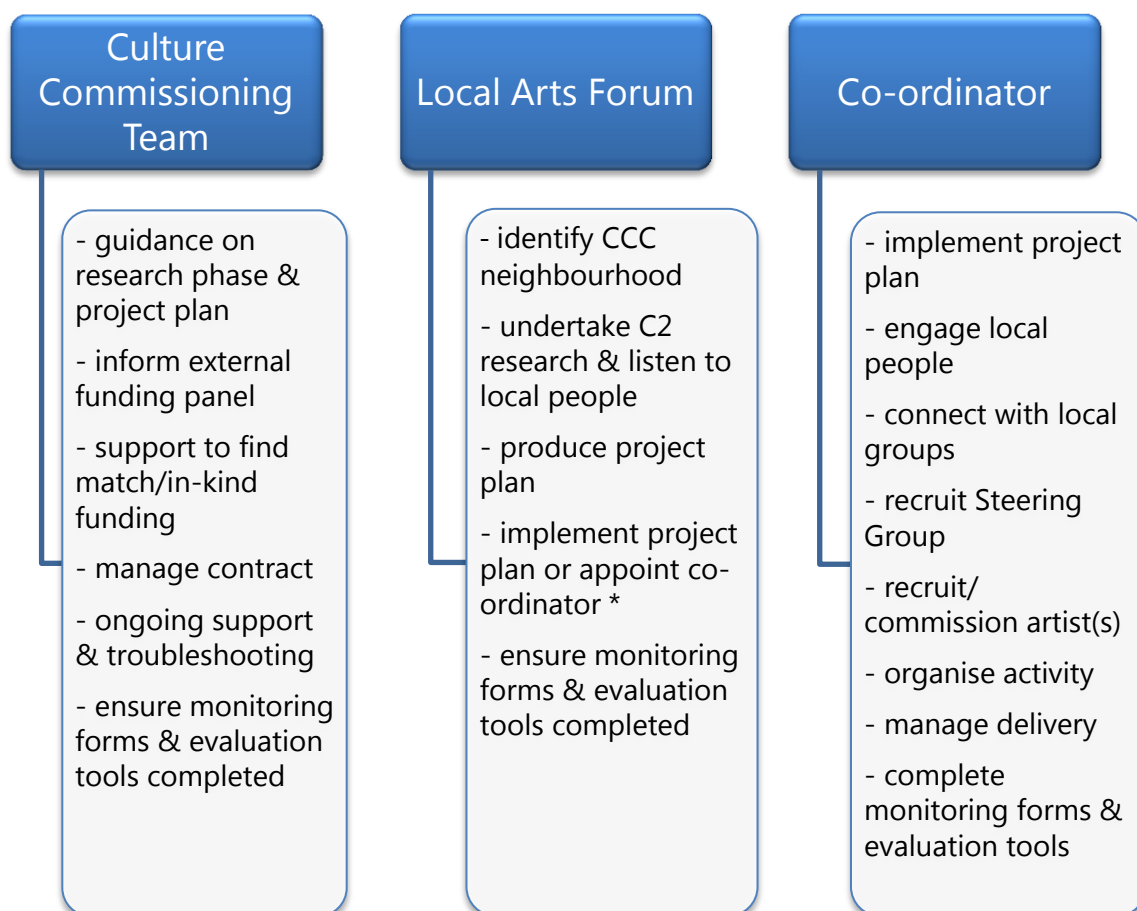
Across all of these stakeholders there was a lack of clarity about their different roles and how these fitted together around Connecting Communities. Figure 2 provides an outline of the complementary roles for the management and delivery of the programme based on feedback and while some of the elements are contractual, overall responsibilities and support boundaries were not clear. The key learning point is that improved two-way communication between all stakeholders in the programme should be a priority for future work.

2.1 Culture Commissioning Team

Each Local Arts Forum was supported by a member of the city's Culture Commissioning Team, most team members were supporting 2 LAFs. A key contextual factor for the Culture Commissioning Team was that for the first 5 months of the programme the team was under-staffed, with colleagues from elsewhere in the Culture Commissioning Service

providing interim ad hoc support to Local Arts Fora. As a result, officers returning to the team were playing catch-up in a programme that was already underway and they had not played a part in any of the pre-programme discussions, for instance about supporting projects with meeting the paperwork requirements.

Figure 2: Roles within Connecting Communities through Culture programme



* Some LAF lead organisations co-ordinated the Connecting Communities projects and some commissioned a freelance co-ordinator

The Lead Officer supported the programme overall and was responsible for writing funding bids, managing relationships with ACE, DCLG and the other *Arts and Communities* towns and cities, drawing up the overarching project plan, managing the external evaluation and reporting monitoring data to DCLG.

On reflection, officers acknowledged that they had seen Connecting Communities as a separate project, rather than as part of the core work of the team; officers were trying to balance competing priorities within the local authority at a time of significant change and Connecting Communities was considered a lower priority. Team members are now much clearer about where Connecting Communities sits within the Culture Commissioning Service offer.

One learning point was the recognition that officers would have benefited from internal programme management meetings where team members could share information and progress across the city, identify emerging problems and collectively problem solve. For instance, officers found it difficult to balance allowing the flexibilities of an unfamiliar co-design process with their more usual grant-monitoring role and as a result projects took different approaches to completing their project monitoring forms and that has given rise to inconsistent datasets for evaluation purposes.

Another area of learning for the team was the acknowledged need to fully understand the Positively Local C2 community asset-based engagement and co-design methodology used in the Cultural Pilots and in Connecting Communities. Consequently, the team have engaged with the methodology and re-framed it slightly to adapt it to the Connecting Communities programme. They have called the approach CHOICES¹⁶ and plan to share it with arts organisations in the city to build a shared understanding of the cultural co-design process in Birmingham.

Different way of working

Officers identified that the Connecting Communities programme introduced a different way of working. The implementation of a cultural co-design process using a community asset-based model meant a move away from a formal contract management relationship with groups and a move towards a more facilitative and enabling role – it required a more flexible approach. The team were not prepared for this behavioural shift and as a consequence it happened in an ad hoc manner across the team; team members did do things differently but felt uncomfortable because they were not sure that it was their role to facilitate and they had not expected or planned to do it. In effect, the team have been ‘learning by doing’¹⁷ and reflection is part of that cycle.

There has been recognition within the team that the enabling approach is the right way to support cultural co-design at a local level. More than that, the team will be able to model the co-design it wants to see in communities by working with LAFs and other arts organisations to develop and plan programmes like Connecting Communities collaboratively. Officers feel more comfortable about taking that approach in the future and are actively planning to build on the learning.

The different way of working tested through the Connecting Communities programme is in line with the behavioural shift envisaged as part of organisational cultural change in the Birmingham Future Council plan. It may be useful for the learning experienced by the Culture Commissioning Team to be shared within the local authority as an example of the way forward.

Following reflection on delivery in Year 1, the Culture Commissioning Team is making some practical changes to the management of the programme:

¹⁶ See Appendix 2 for CHOICES model

¹⁷ See the reflective learning cycle in Learning by Doing, G Gibbs, Oxford Brookes University (1998)

- Officers will be open with projects about their capacity and manage expectations more effectively
- Simplified application process with a clear timetable and pre-application support to build more successful project plans¹⁸
- Reduced paperwork and less bureaucracy, paperwork pre-packaged and clearly explained
- Increased flexibility to accommodate co-design at all stages of research, planning and delivery and clarity about what is non-negotiable
- Clarity in tender briefs to professional artists to be part of the co-design model
- Simplified evaluation process negotiated with project leads/co-ordinators

2.2 Local Arts Fora

The Connecting Communities programme came at a time of flux in the Local Arts Fora network. In 5 Districts new organisations had just taken on the lead agency contract for delivering Local Arts Forum functions and the Connecting Communities work was an additional piece of work that some existing and new lead agencies felt unprepared to deliver. At the same time, the Arts Champion organisations were rotated which meant that they moved to work in different Districts of the city. The impact of these changes was that new relationships needed to be forged between LAFs and Arts Champions, and in 5 areas between lead agencies and local forum members, and as a result Arts Champion engagement with Connecting Communities projects was less than it might have been and Local Arts Fora were at different stages of readiness to take on a project like Connecting Communities. These factors were a matter of timing and it is expected that any future Connecting Communities work will be much more inter-linked with other local arts activities as part of the Culture Commissioning Service offer.

As noted, Connecting Communities was an ambitious programme that introduced a new way of working into LAFs too, apart from the 3 that had been involved with the Cultural Pilots. Some people within LAF lead agencies are volunteers and others had no previous experience of using community asset-based methods to develop and deliver arts activity in communities. In addition, the Culture Commissioning Service encouraged LAFs to target Connecting Communities projects into areas with little or no arts activity or infrastructure which meant really starting from scratch, which was a tall order for inexperienced groups.

The learning is that there was a skills, knowledge and experience gap within several LAFs that had an impact on their ability to fully implement the Connecting Communities model. Nevertheless, activity did happen in all 10 Districts including in areas of low arts participation.

¹⁸ Modelled on Culture Commissioning Service 'Culture on Your Doorstep' format

Some Local Arts Fora commissioned consultants to undertake the research phase of the model and to co-ordinate the delivery of the programme activity; others have done the research themselves and managed their Connecting Communities project through a steering group. All LAFs commissioned professional artists for specific elements of activity. The different approaches to the programme are explored in section 3.

Most Local Arts Fora / project co-ordinators found the research phase of the model, where they got to go out and speak with local groups and people, very useful, once they understood what was involved. For some, going into neighbourhoods with no history of arts work, the research highlighted how difficult it would be to deliver cultural co-design effectively within the timeframe of the programme, as community engagement work would need to take place first. This experience reinforces a similar finding in the evaluation of the Cultural Pilots.

Co-ordinators developed project plans from the research to reflect what they had heard from local people and submitted them to an external panel for approval, following the established model. Several projects were asked to amend their plans to better address the programme outcomes, as some did not target areas of low participation, or did not involve professional artists or sought to provide additional funding to existing activity. Some people who had done the research felt frustrated by this aspect of the process as it seemed to contravene what they understood as the community asset-based approach. However, although the external panel aspect of the programme was generally experienced as too bureaucratic it did provide a reality check on research ideas to ensure they were deliverable within the timeframe and available budget.

The LAF members and co-ordinators reflected, independently of the Culture Commissioning Team, that the programme management should move away from a grants management model and towards a dialogue-based commissioning model that includes co-design at the programme devising stage too. People commented that the LAF network includes a lot of skilled and experienced people who could contribute effectively to the design of a future programme and the opportunity to do so would help to build trust in partnership working. The suggested new approach would fit very well with the recommendations of the recent Kerslake review¹⁹ that the council should adopt a partnership approach to commissioning services in the city.

Overall, the main points made by LAF members and co-ordinators about the management of the programme were that:

- They needed a clear brief and to know what is expected from the beginning
- There was not enough resource in the budget to do the co-ordinator role effectively
- The paperwork, including for the evaluation, was onerous for voluntary/not for profit organisations and should be reviewed

¹⁹ The way forward: an independent review of the governance and organisational capabilities of Birmingham City Council; Sir Bob Kerslake December 2014

- Expectations were ambitious and should be more realistic in terms of time and resources
- Getting into communities to make a real difference takes time
- They did not have a shared understanding of what was meant by cultural co-design and co-production
- Future project meetings could involve more learning exchange and opportunities to share experiences



3. Delivering Connecting Communities through Culture

This section analyses and compares the various approaches taken to implement the Connecting Communities programme across the 10 projects. A summary of activities delivered by the projects can be seen at Appendix 1.

3.1 Listening to local people

The activities delivered in each area were designed to meet the needs identified during the research phase of the C2 model, where local people were asked for their ideas to shape the projects. The Connecting Communities approach as outlined in section 1.2 of this report has been used by the co-ordinators in all of the Districts. It is a recognised model and one that has helped to 'locate the energy' within new areas, create new partnerships and bring arts and cultural activities to a wider audience.

There is evidence to show that activities have been delivered in the way that was anticipated following the research and design phases in Edgbaston, Hall Green, Ladywood, Northfield and Yardley.

In Erdington, Perry Barr, Selly Oak and Sutton projects experienced a number of challenges and some aspects of delivery were not implemented, however what was delivered was in line with the research findings and projects plans.

In Hodge Hill, the initial research identified that local women were not accessing post-maternity health care and that health was a District priority. In Bordesley Green, the CCC neighbourhood, almost 40% of residents have a main language other than English. The co-ordinator designed Mothers at the Heart, a project intended to support maternity staff to connect with mothers who do not speak English as a first language and who do not access post-maternity care. Although Heartlands Hospital staff were enthusiastic, the project panel highlighted that it would be difficult to deliver without the involvement of community-based health workers too, and eventually due to internal constraints at the hospital, it had to be abandoned. A hospital dementia ward-based activity was delivered instead and an additional activity took place with parents from diverse communities in a local Stay & Play group.

Some co-ordinators provided clear evidence of how project delivery related to the initial research and local people's ideas, others less so. Some co-ordinators usefully reflected on delivery on their project monitoring forms, in the spirit of learning what worked well and what lessons had been learnt. This information is useful for measuring to what extent the model being tested has been successful and a more consistent approach to capturing this evidence would be advisable in the future.

3.2 Commissioning artists

Integral to the Connecting Communities approach is enabling people to engage with professional artists. The role of commissioned artists is key to successful community engagement in arts activity, particularly in co-production, and co-ordinators noted the need to commission experienced and skilled artists and then to trust them to get on with the work.

In some projects co-ordinators found that good artists with weak community facilitation skills could deflate the joy and energy in a project and they reflected on the difference between artists with community work skills and those without. Where artists collaborated on projects, more experienced artists were able to support and mentor the less experienced and that worked really well.

Overall the need for skilled and experienced artists resonates strongly with the findings of the evaluation of the Cultural Pilots project²⁰ which found:

"Working with the right professional artist means you can produce a very high quality piece of artwork. Collaboration with residents can be challenging for a lead artist that usually works alone, but from this challenge can come a wonderful result."

Co-ordinator

"Working with professional artists: Works best when artists work with co-ordinators to nurture and extend local talent, skills and knowledge, as well as bringing a creative perspective, injecting high quality skills and polish into the events and performances and helping to provide the 'wow' factor."

3.3 Marketing and promotion

On reflection, co-ordinators agreed that their key learning was that they needed to put marketing and communication strategies in place in time to let people know what is going on and to provide more detailed information about times, dates and content of project sessions.

Some concerns about how to gauge the appropriate translation of publicity material into community languages, addressing issues such as whether or not the intended audience for the translated material has the literacy levels required to read it, were expressed; as was the need to source access to reliable translation services.

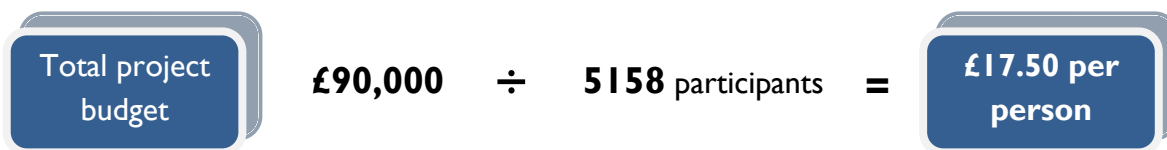
3.4 Delivering on a small budget

Each District was allocated a budget of £9,000 to deliver a Connecting Communities project, including £2,000 for the initial research phase, and across the programme significantly different approaches have been taken to the use of available funding. The remainder of the programme budget covered the Symposium to disseminate learning and the external evaluation. It should be acknowledged that from a small citywide project

²⁰ Garry K & Goodwin P; *Igniting a Spark: Evaluation of the Cultural Pilots project*, Merida Associates (2014)

budget Connecting Communities was able to engage over 5,000 people in arts and cultural activity.

Figure 3



Some co-ordinators were able to extend the available resources by negotiating cash and in-kind contributions; some prioritised the budget to bring in high quality artists and gave more of their own time to meetings as in-kind contributions; and some charged a fee at a professional rate for every meeting they attended. One project allocated most of the budget to the facilitation and mentoring roles of the co-ordinator in an area where there was no existing arts provision and a lot of engagement work was required.

A general observation might be that co-ordinators more experienced at working in community settings recognised and accepted that things would probably take more time than was available in a Connecting Communities project budget and were prepared to give some of their time 'in-kind' to enable projects to be successful. The evidence shows that co-ordinators have shown resourcefulness and initiative to make the most of limited resources. The creative use of budgets and how to increase resources through match-funding and in-kind contributions is something the Culture Commissioning Team has identified as an area for capacity building for people taking on the co-ordinator role and experienced co-ordinators could share their knowledge through the LAF network.

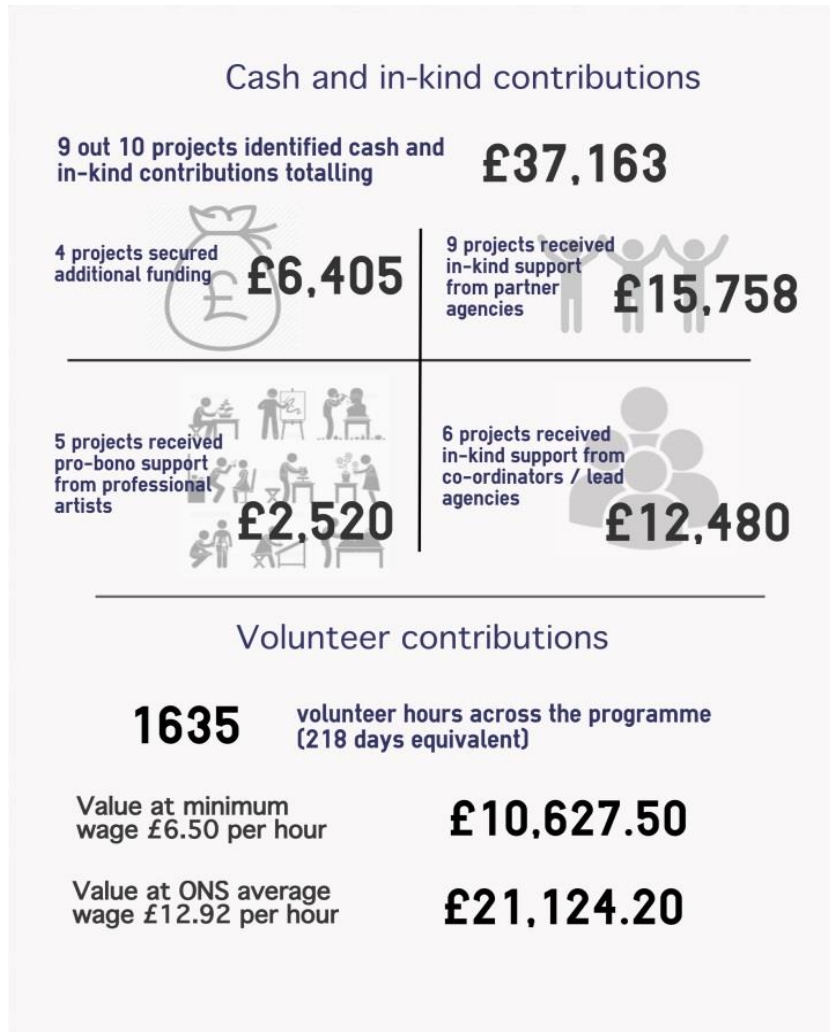
Bringing in additional resources: cash and in kind contributions

While it was not a requirement of the Connecting Communities programme that co-ordinators secured additional funding, it is worth noting the cash and in-kind contributions identified by co-ordinators into the programme, see Fig. 4. Further detail is available at Appendix 4.

Many of the 'in kind' contributions made by partner agencies and organisations were for venue hire or staff time to attend meetings.

There was inconsistency across projects in how pro-bono and in kind contributions were costed and it would be useful if basic costing rules could be agreed and applied across all projects to facilitate future cost analysis.

Figure 4



(See notes ²¹2222³²⁴)



²¹ Total excluding the value of volunteer time

²² Volunteer time around 218 days based on a 7.5 hour working day.

²³ Minimum wage for over 21 years old

²⁴ ONS (December 2013) gave the average hourly earnings before tax for UK workers as £13.60 for men and £12.24 for women. We have used the mean average wage in this illustration.

4. Stimulating Participation in Arts and Culture

Connecting Communities demonstrates Birmingham City Council's ongoing commitment to increasing participation in arts and cultural activity in neighbourhoods across the city, building on the Cultural Pilots 2013-14.

Previous research²⁵ described the factors that impact on people's ability to engage with arts and cultural activity, particularly in areas of high deprivation and outer-city areas. The research identified a number of barriers to participation that have been addressed through Connecting Communities.

Table 1

Barrier	Connecting Communities response
Affordability – people cannot afford to pay for arts or cultural experiences	All activities were offered for free All activities held in local areas that were accessible by walking/ local bus to reduce cost of transport
Not knowing what is on offer	Each of LAF/ CC programmes used local websites / social media to promote activities Worked with local partners e.g. libraries/ schools/ venues to promote activities
Perceived cultural elitism – a sense that 'arts and culture' are for educated, wealthy, middle-classes people, not 'for us', people might feel too intimidated to participate	Activities that were co-designed with local residents reflected their own ideas One project enabled Christian & Muslim groups to find common ground and address cultural barriers to imagery
Public transport deficiencies and issues of distance – Birmingham is a large city and many people are not willing to travel into the centre to arts and cultural activity	All activities held in local areas that were accessible by walking/ local bus Activities held in parks, a cafe, schools and community centres known to people – art activities, exhibitions and performances for the first time in some neighbourhoods – bring art to people
Community safety concerns – in some areas people do not feel safe in their neighbourhood and would not look to engage with local activities	The question of where people feel safe was considered when planning activities – research identified local places and spaces that would, and would not, be considered as safe places to take part by local people
Lack of time	Fitting activities into family schedules, after school and weekends, worked well

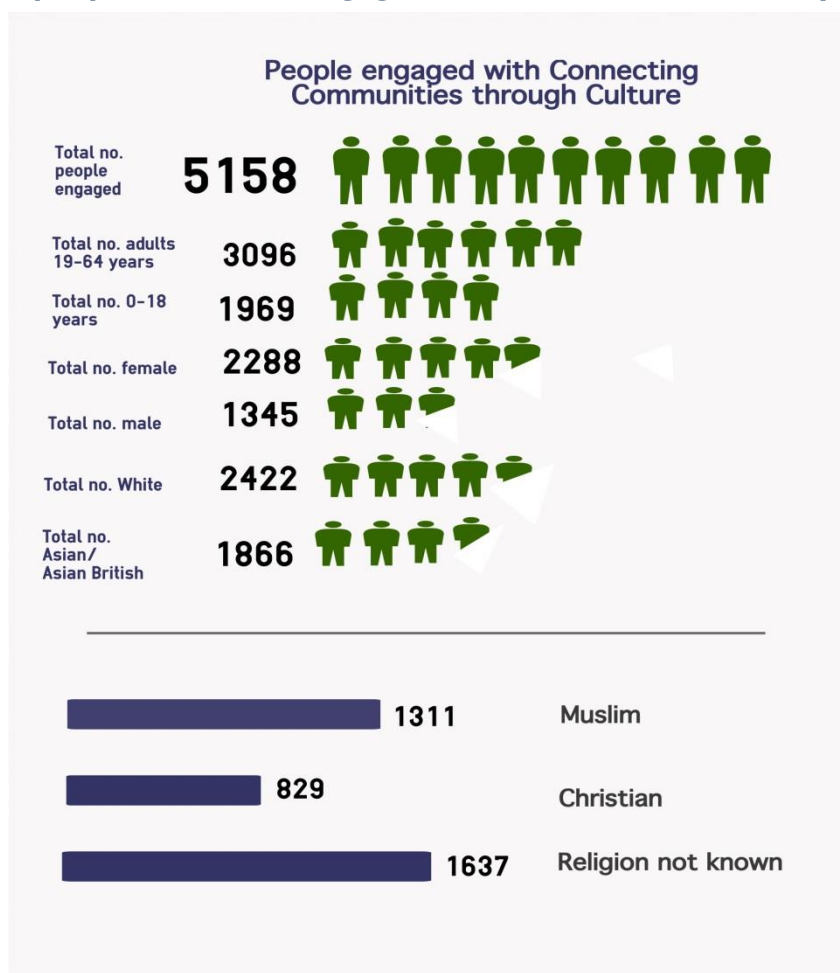
²⁵Ecotec: *Identifying the Barriers to Cultural Participation and the Needs of Residents of Birmingham* BCP (2010) Vector Research: *P1473 Cultural participation* BCP (2011)

When the Positively Local C2 approach was tried in the Cultural Pilots, it was found that experiencing arts or cultural activity, as participants or audience members, was often people’s first step to engagement. The Connecting Communities projects have offered a number of ways for people to gain experience of arts and cultural activity:

- As audience members – Connecting Communities projects included a showcase element such as a community event, performance, exhibition or an artwork launch (often a combination of these)
- As participants – taking part in Connecting Communities activities with a skilled leader/artist, either a one-off event or a series of workshops or sessions
- As volunteers – helping at events or activities with identified tasks and managed by the co-ordinator (or artist/local leader)
- As co-producers²⁶ - local residents and/or partner organisations actively involved in organising, delivering or managing an arts project/activity or event

4.1 How people have been engaged in arts and cultural activity

Figure 5



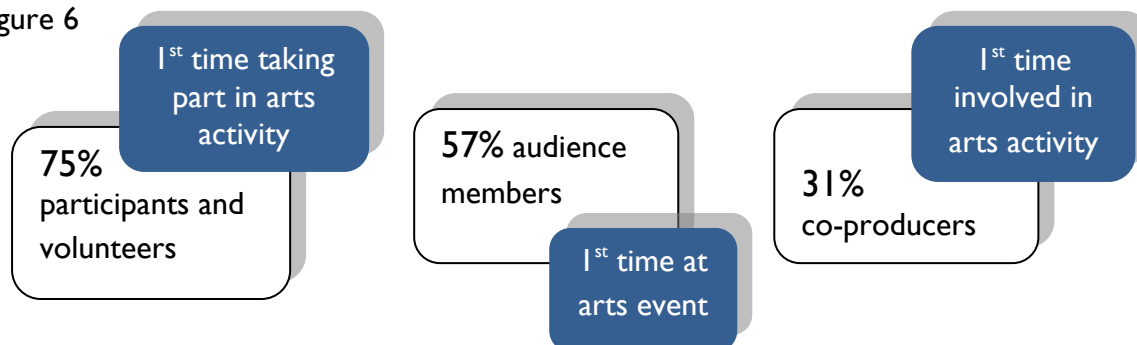
Source: Figures provided by the Culture Commissioning Team to DCLG. A more detailed breakdown is on p. 41

²⁶ This term has been interpreted differently by projects

Some participants may have been involved in a number of activities and therefore counted more than once, however the figures do provide a useful overview of the numbers of people exposed to arts and cultural activities across the whole programme.

This section of the report presents evaluation findings around people's experiences of being participants, volunteers, co-producers and audience members based on surveys and other sources; a summary of survey respondent information can be seen at Appendix 5.

Figure 6



Source: evaluation surveys

Survey data shows that people came along to the activities because they were local, affordable and easy to get to, thereby overcoming some of the access barriers identified in the BCP research.

- 40% thought it would be fun ✓
- 35% heard from word of mouth ✓
- 69% came to try and arts activity ✓
- 26% audiences came to support family or friends ✓
- 97% participants enjoyed taking part ✓
- 76% participants felt their ideas were taken into account ✓

Source: evaluation surveys

"It's important that things are free and local."

"Having artists visit us is perfect as I have a baby and wouldn't be able to do art anywhere else. This is the only local activity."

Participants

Residents and local organisations, in their role as co-producers, reported playing an active part in encouraging people to come along, using their local networks and spreading the word.

Artists reflected on what they brought to activities that enabled people to take part:

- Experience of running workshops
- Ability to support and inspire people to take part, building their confidence
- A friendly approach
- People able to create an end product
- Knowledge of particular groups e.g. women who might need a safe space in which to express themselves
- Giving people a chance to present what they have done

“Giving them the knowledge that there's no wrong way to do art.”

“We pride ourselves on being professional and enthusiastic in bringing inspiration to an event”

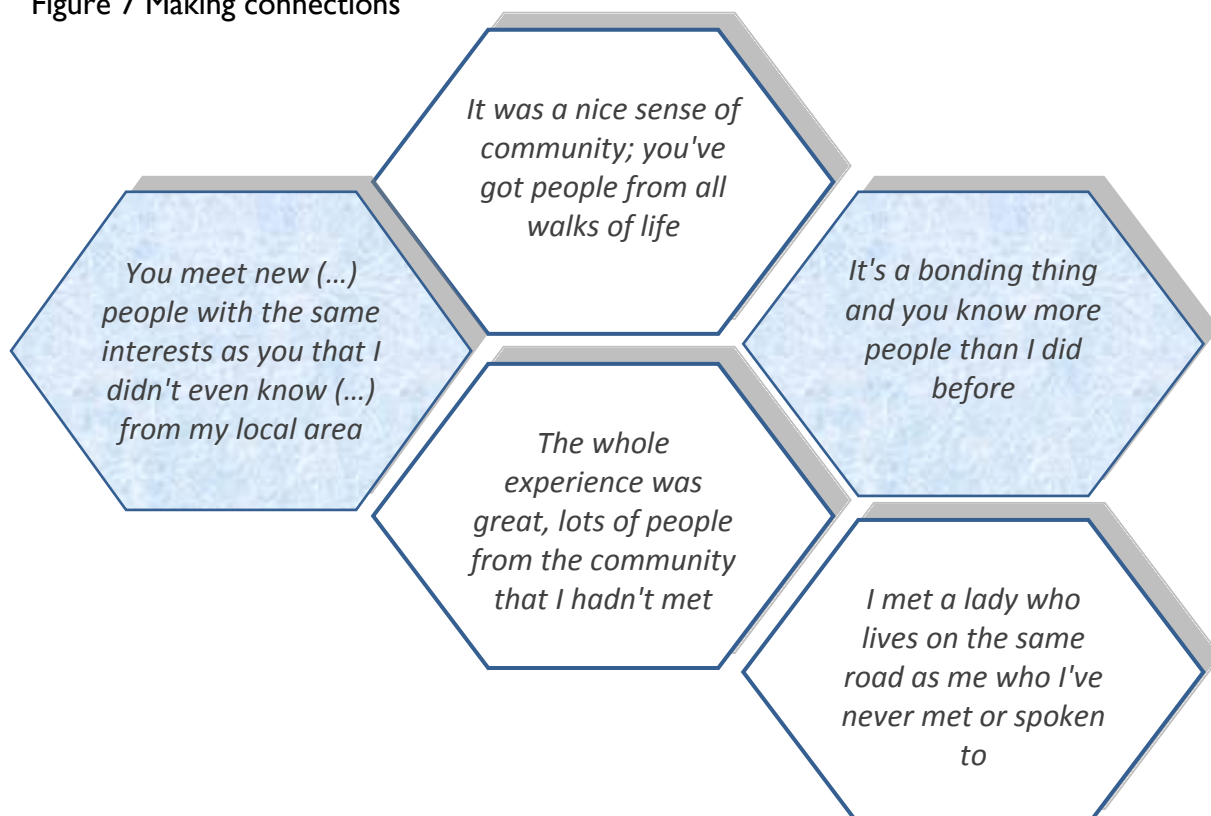
Artists

The most common activities provided through Connecting Communities were craft making, painting and the visual arts, singing, dance, making music and creative writing and the evidence suggests that if people are interested in the art form and have a goal to work towards they can be successfully engaged even if they have never participated in arts activity before.

4.2 Benefits of being engaged in arts and cultural activity

Many people reported that being involved in Connecting Communities arts activities had connected them to their local community and to people who live there.

Figure 7 Making connections



Being connected to other people and their locality helps people to feel a sense of place, it fosters cross-community relations and supports the wider community integration agenda (see section 7); it is also good for people's health. In 2008 the New Economics Foundation

(nef) developed a set of evidence-based actions which promote wellbeing and since then the Five Ways to Wellbeing have been widely used by health organisations, local authorities, schools, and community projects across the UK to shape what they do in order to enhance health and wellbeing.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing can be applied to Connecting Communities:²⁷

- Connect - people can form relationships by engaging in a common creative task
- Be Active - physical activity is intrinsic to artforms like dance but applies equally to the making of material objects
- Take Notice - creating art encourages people to reflect on their world and their experiences in it
- Keep Learning - people develop skills and find out new things through arts projects
- Give - art is a powerful means of communication as well as self-expression, and participation in the arts can build both self-esteem and empathy

The evidence analysed for this report indicates that all Connecting Communities projects deliver to some extent against most, if not all, of the wellbeing action areas.

Learning from Castle Vale Social Prescribing Project - Arts on Prescription²⁸, funded through the Cultural Pilot, showed that participants made significant improvements in their wellbeing from engaging in arts activities.

An ACE report²⁹ found that attending cultural events can have a positive effect on blood pressure and hormone levels, and that singing can increase the quality of life for people with dementia.

"... there is a considerable evidence base, from both the UK and internationally, with hundreds of research studies and evaluated projects that clearly demonstrate the benefits of using the arts in health."

ACE report³⁰

The Marmot Review³¹ found that social participation, such as that offered by the hospital dementia ward project in Hodge Hill, appears to act as a protective factor against dementia over the age of 65 and is positively associated with reduced morbidity and mortality.

It is now widely acknowledged that cultural interventions can improve rates of healing and recovery in the healthcare environment. Evaluations of the Enhancing the Healing Environment programme, run by the King's Fund, which is aimed at humanising the hospital environment, showed clear benefits of arts activity for staff, patients and visitors³².

²⁷ Adapted from Be Creative Be Well: Arts, wellbeing and local communities R Ings, N Crane & M Cameron, ACE (2012)

²⁸ April 2014 Arts on Prescription Pilot Report January- April

²⁹ (2004) Staricoff RL Dr, Can the Arts Have A Positive Effect on Health ACE

³⁰ Arts and health: research and evidence ACE (undated)

³¹ Sir Michael Marmot, Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010, The Marmot Review, (2010)

³² Enhancing the Health Environment, Kings Fund and Department of Health, (2009)

A co-producer involved in delivering the Hodge Hill project learnt *“that the most straightforward activities can make a huge difference to patients’ time in hospital. Activities don’t have to be too complicated or fancy as patients are able to (...) have something unique that they have made or contributed to. This has given patients a sense of self worth and achievement and boosted confidence.”*

Another project was based in a community café with a healthy eating focus and all arts activities were themed around food.

Participants reported skills and attributes they had gained by being involved in Connecting Communities projects, these include:

- confidence and self esteem
- learning how to work with others
- patience
- mentoring skills
- building new partnerships and networking with people and organisations
- food hygiene qualification (2 volunteers)

Evaluation data shows that participants and co-producers had a real sense of pride in the work they helped to produce, enhanced by the opportunity in some areas to work alongside well respected professional artists.



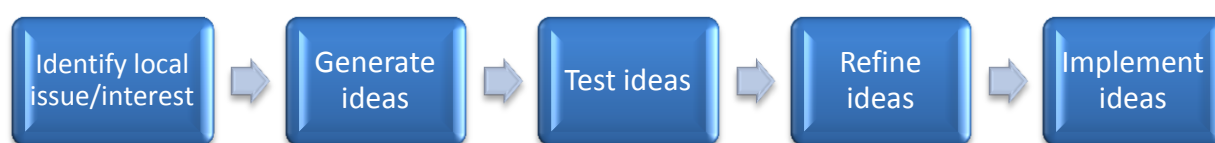
5. Cultural co-design

5.1 Understanding cultural co-design and co-production

The Positively Local C2 process underpinning the Connecting Communities programme sets out to create active community engagement with arts and culture through local people working together with a skilled arts producer/co-ordinator and professional artists and making use of local assets – people, places and resources. A key aspect of the approach is that professionals as well as local people are open to doing things differently, are prepared to change their practice in order to respond to a locally-owned vision and to achieve shared goals. The process for agreeing shared goals and deciding how to achieve them is called co-design; the process of achieving the goals is called co-production.

Good use of co-design (collaborative design) in community-led action supports community development. This is because co-design promotes the creativity of everyone involved in community projects and encourages all stakeholders to play active roles throughout the entire design process:

Figure 8



Self-confidence, positive attitudes and ownership of community projects can be enhanced through this collaborative approach to design. If these stakeholders are given an opportunity to co-produce the solutions that they propose, positive changes can be even more profound³³.

Cultural co-design and co-production are contributing factors to one of the main outcomes for the Connecting Communities programme and this section considers to what extent they have been achieved in Year 1.

The cultural co-design approach of Connecting Communities provides a ‘real life’ example of the approach informing the current transformation of Birmingham City Council, the Future Council programme, which advocates “*real change comes from “letting go” and giving the wider group of people the freedom to shape and deliver the change*”³⁴.

Research has suggested that encouraging individual creativity and building confidence through collaborative cultural co-design and co-production processes can help to strengthen connections between neighbours and support community cohesion. It suggests cultural co-design can have a wider impact on people’s wellbeing and ability to engage more broadly as active members of the community^{35,36}.

³³ Unearth Hidden Assets through Community Co-design and Co-production: The Glass-House Community Led Design & A Gilchrist, AHRC Connected Communities (2014) p.1

³⁴ Future Council Programme Cabinet Report April 2015 Appendix I

³⁵ Be Creative Be Well: Arts, wellbeing and local communities R Ings, N Crane & M Cameron, ACE (2012)

³⁶ Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth, The Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value

The C2 process is about finding and harnessing the assets that are often already in communities and making best use of them. Recent Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) research found that by ‘unearthing hidden assets’ and making them more available, communities are better able to use them to realise their own visions for their local areas in terms of services and facilities and become more resilient³⁷. An example of how a community asset is in the process of being ‘released’ through the Connecting Communities programme is given below (p.29).

The authors of an evaluation of a large-scale Arts and Wellbeing initiative also argue that cultural co-design offers the opportunity to achieve both artistic excellence and the positive social outcomes that flow from active participation in the arts - ‘good art and the social good’ – outcomes often considered to be mutually exclusive³⁸.

“By focusing on how assets could be ‘reconfigured’ or ‘released’, the research demonstrated that improving and extending networks could lead to communities having more influence and better access to the resources they need to accomplish their ambitions.”

AHRC research

5.2 A framework for cultural co-design and co-production

Within community development literature it is accepted that there are different levels of community engagement³⁹. The International Association for Public Participation’s engagement scale (Figure 9

) has been adapted for the Connecting Communities programme to illustrate where project activities might sit on the continuum. This is a useful tool for planning activity to help think about the different levels of engagement within a project and to formulate the ‘offer’ to local people. People will choose at which level to engage with a project, depending on a range of factors including their personal interest, skills, previous experience and confidence. The engagement scale does not present a linear process, people can engage effectively at any point; however some capacity building is usually required to achieve higher levels of engagement.


University of Warwick, Feb 2015

³⁷ Unearth Hidden Assets through Community Co-design and Co-production: The Glass-House Community Led Design & A Gilchrist, AHRC Connected Communities (2014) p.1

³⁸ As 3 above

³⁹ See Community participation and empowerment: putting theory into practice, JRF (1994)

Figure 9: Connecting Communities engagement scale

	INCREASING LEVEL OF IMPACT 				
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	WORK TOGETHER	EMPOWER
Community engagement goal	To provide the people in CC areas with information about arts and cultural activity and how to get involved	To engage people in the C2 research to generate ideas for the Connecting Communities projects	To provide opportunities for people to take part, as audiences, participants or volunteers in local arts and cultural activity	To partner with local people in developing ideas, options and preferred solutions and implement them	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed about arts and culture opportunities	We will listen to your ideas and provide feedback on how what you said has influenced decisions	We will provide a range of ways for you to be involved	We will work together to develop ideas for local arts and cultural activity and make them happen	We (or you) will implement what you decide
Connecting Communities ways to engage	Promoting arts and cultural activity Community Marketing	Research phase for C2 Listening exercises	Participatory arts and cultural activities Steering Groups	Co- design and co- production	Budget devolved to local group
Evidence for Connecting Communities	Number of events and activities How were these marketed?	C2 report	Participation in workshops/creating art and cultural activity with a maker, artist or producer, involvement on Steering Groups	Local people design/plan/commission/ implement arts and cultural activity with coordinator /partners/artists	Community-led and managed arts and cultural activity

Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation IAP2 Public Participation spectrum see <http://www.iap2.org>

As noted in the evaluation report for the Cultural Pilots project, co-design and co-production in local arts and culture can create a different cultural offer, one that reflects the diversity of communities and responds to ideas that resonate with local people, encouraging them to engage and become involved. For this to happen effectively, local leaders must be encouraged who reflect local diversity and investment in capacity building is essential so that the co-commissioning decisions people ultimately make are informed and good for the community.

“We should be encouraging communities to see themselves as co-commissioners of their cultural and arts experiences, working with cultural partners locally and nationally.”

Warwick Commission

5.3 Conditions for co-design and co-production

The following factors enable co-design to take place:

- **Space** must be created for people to come together to discuss what is important to them
- **Open, frank dialogue** on ‘why, what, who, when, where and how’
- **A shared vision** should be agreed
- **Investment in building relationships** is essential
- **Time** for trust to be created
- **A skilled co-ordinator/** facilitator
- **Professional artists** with community engagement skills

Learning from the Cultural Pilots was that the role of the co-ordinator is most effective when held by someone with an arts background as a producer/creator balanced with knowledge and experience of community development processes and techniques.

(Experienced) co-ordinators recognise the necessity of working at the pace of local communities, knowing when to push people a little and when to hold back and consolidate. (...) the process (is) like building the scaffolding to enable people to grow and develop by providing information and guidance in a timely manner, not rushing or overloading them but facilitating and supporting their decision-making so that people become confident in their own decisions⁴⁰.

5.4 Cultural co-design in Connecting Communities programme

Local Arts Fora were asked to target Connecting Communities activity in neighbourhoods with low participation in the arts and/or poor arts infrastructure. This created an additional challenge for LAFs who were being asked to deliver projects using cultural co-design for the first time. Previous research showed that in areas with little history of local arts and cultural

⁴⁰ Igniting a Spark: Evaluation of the Cultural Pilots project, Merida Associates (2014)

activity, a more directive approach is initially required in order to create an appetite for deeper engagement by providing taster activities for local people to try and to build from there. These activities would be located at 'Involve' on the engagement scale.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the activities provided through Connecting Communities projects were designed to introduce people to arts and cultural activity for the first time. The research phase informed the activities offered so that they responded to locally expressed areas of interest or local issues and this contributed to a wide variety of activity across the city.

The participatory arts activities provided through the projects helped to lay the foundations for future cultural co-design by showing people that their ideas had been listened to and by creating the first condition for co-design – a safe space for conversation, where participants could contribute side-by-side on an equal basis, new relationships could be made and new creative ideas could emerge.

Examples of co-design and co-production

Co-design approach

Erdington - Café Arts at KFC

The co-ordinator had originally planned a co-design process through which a group of local people would co-manage the project involving: planning; allocating budget; recruiting artists; marketing and recruiting participants/audiences; delivering the activity and evaluation. Some aspects of this process did happen but it was clear from the start that people were not ready for that level of engagement, especially within the timeframe of the project; they required support and nurturing to get there.

The project offered arts workshops with several artists over a 3 month period in a café setting. The co-ordinator allowed the project to develop on a weekly basis, based on people's interests and responses to the arts activities they tried. She was confident to take the risk of making decisions with the group week by week because *"it allowed for quick changes in direction, allowed room for exploring an idea plus it allowed people to really shape what was happening"*.

The project inspired one participant to co-produce her own spin-off activity in the café, a crafts-based coffee morning. The co-ordinator provided mentoring support to encourage and enable the participant to develop her idea and make it happen. The co-producer provided survey feedback where she described what she had gained from being involved with Connecting Communities.

"(I've learnt) how to lead a group, now more confident and more self-esteem, (...) learning how to work with other people. I've learnt new ideas (...) It's helped people communicate - I was very shy the first week."

Co-producer

Yardley - Hobmoor Community Centre

This project provides a good example of a community asset being identified and moving towards being 'released' (see p. 25); because of a complicated management agreement, the community was not able to access the community centre. Through the Connecting Communities project a Hobmoor Community Centre Stakeholders Group was formed from a range of local groups and the community centre was opened up to arts and cultural activity. A number of mini-projects were delivered by the project, the first workshops event brought nearly 500 people into the previously empty centre. The event stimulated the creation of the stakeholders group who, through a process of co-design, decided they wanted a permanent piece of artwork that would celebrate the project and be a starting point for the future life of the community centre. The co-ordinator brought in a well-regarded local artist who co-produced the artwork with local people and the artwork was subsequently displayed at the Connecting Communities Symposium in the Library of Birmingham before being unveiled in the community centre, a source of great local pride.

“For me the most exciting part of the project was to bring all the artwork created by the workshop attendees together so they could see the final finished artwork of their individual pieces. (...) Through the arts forum I've been able to deliver this for my community.”

Artist

Co-production

Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) research⁴¹ shows that co-design and co-production can encourage local residents to go on to do something else for their community. It builds confidence in local people of their ability to design and produce something by themselves, as illustrated by the co-producer at the Arts Café above. Something similar happened in Yardley.

Members of a newly-formed local residents association, part of the community centre stakeholders group, were inspired to deliver an arts-based half term activity. The Connecting Communities co-ordinator provided mentoring support and practical advice to the residents who formed their own planning group of local people who co-designed and co-produced a Halloween-themed event. The co-ordinator introduced them to professional artists with experience of public events. The artists provided high quality activities and also came with DBS checks and public liability insurance which provided reassurance to the co-producers that they were 'safe', especially as it was an event for children and families.

The co-producers provided survey feedback and reflected on their learning:

- They had discovered new venues in the local area

⁴¹ Unearth Hidden Assets through Community Co-design and Co-production: The Glass-House Community Led Design & A Gilchrist, AHRC Connected Communities (2014) p.1

- They felt they had developed leadership qualities and more confidence to plan, promote and deliver activities
- They had learnt the order, timescale and processes needed to plan an event
- They had learnt it is difficult to please everyone
- They feel they could do it quicker next time and would be able to streamline the process.

Ladywood - Summerfield Sessions Community Arts Festival

The project provides another good example of an arts activity engaging people in their community and inspiring them to take more responsibility to do things for themselves. The co-ordinator responded to the feedback from the research phase of Connecting Communities and organised the event to celebrate the rich cultural diversity of Soho Ward, through a family-friendly outdoor arts and music festival. The festival was held in Summerfield Park and the use of the bandstand as a stage “*proved an eye-capturing feature of the Festival*”.

The co-ordinator reflected that the festival provided the opportunity for members of diverse ethnic communities to be involved in the planning and delivery of the project, “*creating a sense of community pride for those involved in the process*” and after the event an acknowledgement of the poor condition of the bandstand resulted in members of the community expressing an interest in applying for Heritage Lottery funding to repair and restore the bandstand. The co-ordinator reported that local people intended to develop a working group to undertake this task.

Role of artists in co-design and co-production

Professional artists played a crucial role in the delivery of the Connecting Communities projects; 32 artists provided feedback on their involvement. Most delivered workshop sessions or contributed to events, several included elements of co-production in their work with local people, discussing ideas, methods and materials for creating products or performances.

Several artists mentioned the opportunities afforded to them through Connecting Communities of collaborating with other artists to produce activities that respond to local people’s ideas and of contributing to the planning of activities as part of steering groups or LAFs.

“The meetings allow local residents and artists to share their views on how they would like to shape local arts events (...) All these ideas were successfully implemented for the event.”

Artist

6. Transforming infrastructure

A key outcome for the Connecting Communities programme was for local arts infrastructure to be transformed. The Culture Commissioning Service and partners are keen to establish ways in which arts and culture can be sustained at the local level when funding and resources are likely to reduce further as a consequence of economic constraints.

The recent Warwick Commission report agrees that “new models of support and partnership, particularly at a local level need to be developed that pool financial and other administrative resources to maximise access and engagement in mixed investment opportunities.”⁴²

The report recommends partnership building with other sectors including schools, private investors, local businesses and academic institutions and, as has been tested in the Connecting Communities projects, health services, churches and large corporate businesses operating in local areas.

Local Arts Fora were established to strengthen infrastructure at the District level. They have had varying degrees of success in building community connections to support arts and cultural activity across Districts and part of the remit of Connecting Communities was to test new approaches to building arts infrastructure in small parts of each District at a time when half of the LAFs had just changed lead agency.

Figure 10: Local infrastructure for arts

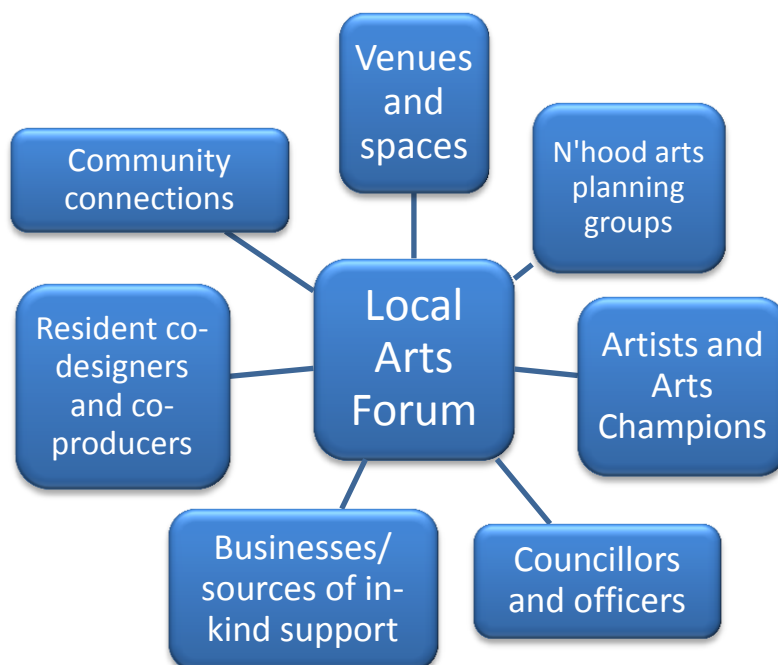


Figure X illustrates the elements that contribute to local arts infrastructure as evidenced from the Connecting Communities programme⁴³.

⁴² Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth, The Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value University of Warwick, Feb 2015

Connecting Communities challenge

Local Arts Fora were challenged to go into areas with little or no arts infrastructure and low levels of participation to deliver Connecting Communities projects and they took up the challenge. In most areas it did make the projects more difficult, mainly because the timeframe of the programme meant the time to make connections and engage people in the project was short. The initial research phase provided an opportunity to locate some of the 'energisers', people willing to get involved, in local areas and most projects built on those initial contacts. They often took pragmatic decisions to work with people who were part of existing groups, especially in areas where people were generally disengaged from any community activity.

It is recognised that time is an important factor in this kind of work, as listening to people and building relationships are key strands of the model. Evaluators of a similar programme in London a few years ago noted: *"To plonk an artist in the middle of an estate and expect things to happen straightaway is unrealistic (...) in a programme like this, aimed at engaging people who have little or no previous involvement in arts-based workshops, it is important to give artists time to develop a relationship of trust with the people with whom they hope to work."*⁴⁴

Areas with high deprivation indices, which also have low arts participation rates, such as Druids Heath (Selly Oak) and Kingstanding (Erdington), have often been targeted for other initiatives and residents can become suspicious that new projects are another short-term intervention. Co-ordinators in some areas experienced resistance to involvement, or just could not find a way in where there were no community venues to act a locus for activity, or in instances where there were one or two centres, they encountered community gatekeepers who exerted a disproportionate influence in the community over people's willingness to engage.

In one area, for example, part of the project aim was to attempt to overcome the historical challenge of connecting different community groups together. The ideas and approach taken by the Connecting Communities project were generated through discussions with groups in the area however the co-ordinator found *"some very deep-rooted and personal conflicts in the area and it was hard for us, especially as outsiders, to overcome these"*. Good work was achieved with separate groups in the area but the conflicts came to the fore when deciding on a venue for the showcase event and as a consequence some participants did not attend.

The learning by the co-ordinator was the need in future to make it clear from the start that the shared aim would be to involve all groups.

Community contacts are very important when working in a new area, some co-ordinators were working in the areas where they live and were able to draw on personal networks to kick-start activity, but for others with no leads it was difficult to make a start in an area where they had no track record and little time to build trust with local people.

⁴³ Note: Community connections in this illustration relates to community groups, agencies, venues and services

⁴⁴ Be Creative Be Well: Arts, wellbeing and local communities R Ings, N Crane & M Cameron, ACE (2012)

6.1 Connecting Communities' contribution to local arts infrastructure

Evaluation evidence shows that Connecting Communities projects have made a significant contribution to strengthening local infrastructure for arts in small areas across the city.

Figure 11: New venues opened up to arts activities⁴⁵



- Connections made between LAFs and existing groups have created new relationships and opportunities for future working
- New neighbourhood arts planning groups – while some may have been more like ‘task and finish’ groups to organise Connecting Communities activities, and therefore fragile, one or two appear sustainable because of the mix of people around the table with a shared vision of what they want to do next
- Partnerships established with other agencies and service providers, in public and voluntary sectors
- Additional funding and in-kind resources raised from local sources
- Upskilled young and amateur artists and established artists introduced to community working, strengthening the talent base
- Local people with an appetite for more arts activity and doing things together for their neighbourhoods, including a few co-producers who have initiated spin-off activities

*“Because this is a new venue
I think this event will serve
very well as a foundation for
even greater involvement in
longer projects in future.”*

Artist

⁴⁵ See Appendix 3 for map

Local Arts Fora and neighbourhood arts groups' development

As seen elsewhere in this report, the Connecting Communities programme did achieve against its outcomes overall, however across the board co-ordinators found it a difficult job. While lack of time and resources were key constraints, it has been recognised within the BCC Culture Commissioning Service that Connecting Communities was a big ask for people in several of the Local Arts Fora, many of whom are volunteers operating outside of their experience and comfort zones. When LAF members and co-ordinators reflected on the programme they too highlighted the need for capacity building for LAF volunteers and co-ordinators, as well as local residents, to strengthen the skills sets in LAFs to run similar projects in the future.

There are existing resources that could be shared with LAFs and co-ordinators, such as the Our Big Gig toolkit, which includes useful advice on crowdsource funding and marketing⁴⁶. LAF members recognise there are a range of skills and experience within their network that they could share through LAF masterclasses and mentoring schemes. The Culture Commissioning Service has linked with the voluntary sector infrastructure agency in Birmingham, BVSC, to offer access to a menu of relevant training courses for LAFs for 2015-16 to help build capacity on the ground.

Co-producers' development

Connecting Communities has shown, once again, that co-ordinators have a crucial capacity building and mentoring role on the ground).

They build capacity by supporting, informing and guiding people engaging in arts project management roles for the first time, they nurture them along the pathway to co-production and co-design and this should be recognised within their role descriptions⁴⁷.

Artists' development

Artists reported good experiences of being involved with Connecting Communities projects. Some described collaborating with local groups or project steering groups to shape the project activities; others described the experience of working as part of a team with other artists, sharing resources and complementing each other. In Hall Green, for instance, the storyteller/producer worked alongside the mosaic artist making sure participants understood the vision for the artwork and how it would all fit together. Her

“This was my first event with the arts forum (...) Greater knowledge of the Community & experience in being involved at the event. (...) Anticipate being more involved in art activity on the day using my skills & planning for future events.”

Volunteer

⁴⁶ Our Big Gig Toolkit, Superact, DCLG

⁴⁷ See Appendix 7 for a co-ordinator role description

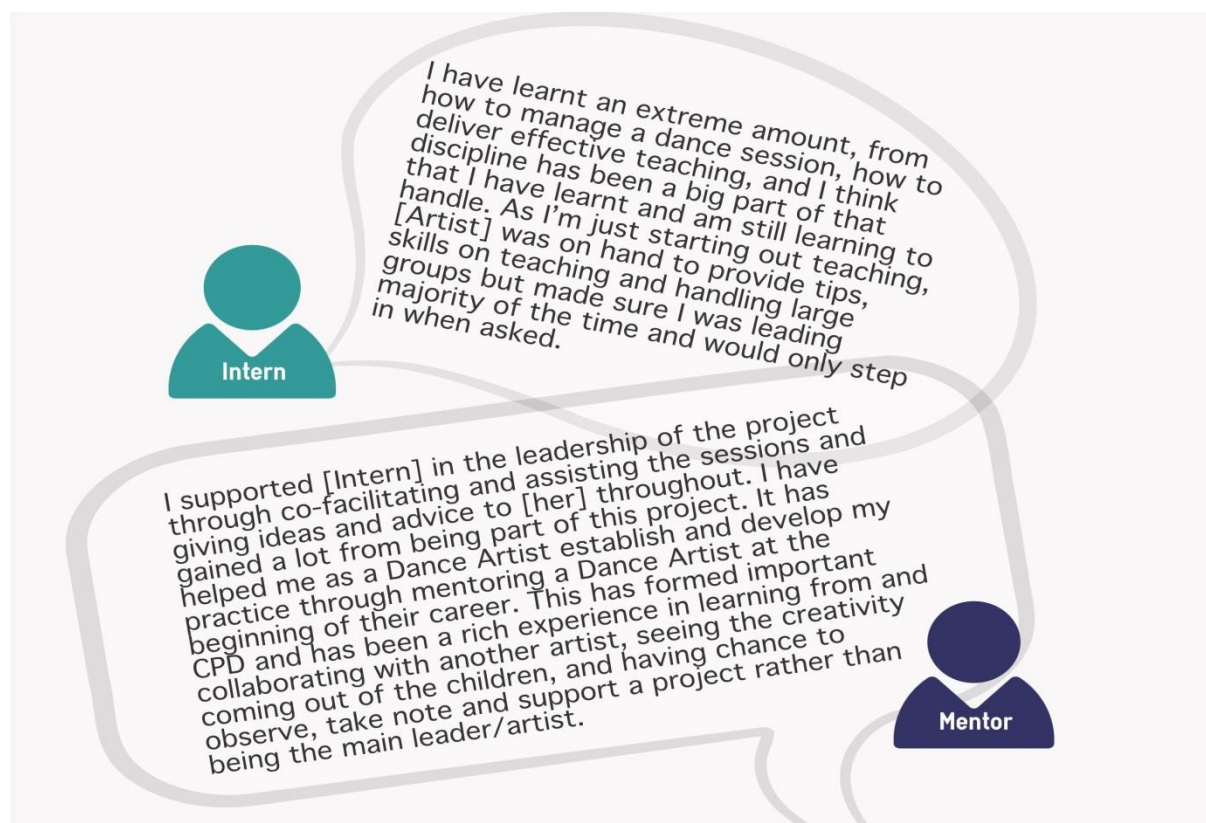
support freed the artist up to focus on enabling people to produce high quality elements to be included in the artwork.

The experience appears to have improved the capabilities of some artists to take this work forward by building their capacity to work in community settings and by creating opportunities for them to extend their practice, develop new contacts, work in new ways and with new groups. The network of artists in the city has been strengthened and new artists, including residents, have been supported to come through.

Capacity building of artists should be considered alongside that of volunteers and co-ordinators as there were some instances of people who are good artists not having all the skills needed to work co-productively with residents or to engage them effectively.

Mentoring young artists

In Yardley a Dance Intern was supported by an experienced Dance Artist to deliver a series of workshops as part of the Connecting Communities project. Feedback was received from both the Intern and the Artist about what they had gained from the experience.



A few projects were able to commission established artists, some with a significant profile that raised awareness of projects and added cachet to them. One professional artist described introducing an artform that partners and participants had not worked with and sharing experience of how the artform can adapt to engage new people.

For some artists, Connecting Communities gave them their first opportunity to work in their own local area and they reported having learnt a lot, feeling more confident about working in their community and expressed the desire to do more engagement work.



7. Creating Conditions for Integration

Birmingham a brief overview

Birmingham is the largest local authority area in Europe, over 1 million people live in Birmingham and it is a growing city with an average growth rate of 0.9% per annum; since 2001 the population has increased by almost 100,000.

Birmingham is recognised as a 'superdiverse' city following research conducted by the University of Birmingham which identified that the city is home to people of over 187 nationalities⁴⁸. In practice this means that around 42% of all residents are from an ethnic group other than White, compared to around 20% in the rest of England. 22% of residents were born outside the UK compared to 11% in the rest of the West Midlands region.

The most recent census data identifies that just over 41% of residents would describe themselves as Christian, almost 22% as Muslim and just over 19% describe themselves as having no religion.

It is a youthful city, 47.7 % of residents are under 30 (compared to 36.8% for England) and although some of these can be accounted by those coming to the city to study at university, it does mean that Birmingham has a larger proportion of young people than the rest of the UK. In contrast however there are less people over 65 than the national average (12.9% in Birmingham compared to 16.9% nationally)⁴⁹.

Birmingham is not homogenous, each of the 10 Districts has its own unique demographic profile, as do the wards that make up each District and Appendix 6 provides a brief overview of the areas in which the Connecting Communities activity was located. Each District and ward is also unique in relation to its level of art and cultural opportunities, local arts infrastructure and access to transport and other links to connect people to existing centrally located opportunities. The interim evaluation report⁵⁰ identified how Connecting Communities projects used ward and local level data to identify opportunities for development in each area.

7.1 Arts, culture and community integration

One of the intentions of the DCLG investment in the programme was the creation of opportunities for people from all backgrounds to participate in the arts and to build a clear sense of shared values, aspirations and common ground between people from different communities.

⁴⁸ Delivering in the age of super-diversity, Newall D, Phillimore J, University of Birmingham (2012)

⁴⁹ From Birmingham City Council website accessed May 2015 & the BCC October 2013 Population and Migration Topic Report Planning & Growth Strategy, Planning & Regeneration Dept

⁵⁰ Garry K & Goodwin P Dec *Bringing Birmingham's Communities together through Culture* Interim Report Merida Associates (2014)

In the 2012 publication 'Creating the conditions for integration'⁵¹, DCLG outlined their approach for creating an integrated society and noted that "*integration means creating the conditions for everyone to play a full part in national and local life.*" Government wants to see stronger communities where differences are understood and treated with respect, and where people come together "*on issues that matter to them*". The underpinning belief being that "*an integrated society may be better equipped to reject extremism and marginalise extremists.*"

The five factors that underpin DCLG's integration approach can be applied to Connecting Communities:

- Common ground – the CCC research identified local themes and people across ethnicity, faith and socio-economic groups came together by making common art work
- Responsibility – local people took limited responsibility for making events happen and contributing to co-design and co-production
- Participation – people have taken part in arts and cultural activity for the first time
- Social mobility – all projects included a sharing event and a chance to perform or exhibit work, work was presented at the Symposium at the Library of Birmingham
- Tackling extremism and intolerance – some interesting conversations between people that raised awareness of other cultures demonstrating art as a useful vehicle for engagement on sensitive issues

Birmingham had already recognised the role arts and culture could play in fostering relationships across and between communities and stated in the 2010 Big City Culture Strategy⁵² that: "*People need to feel they belong in their neighbourhood and that they get along with their neighbours. Culture can be the key to cohesion and has a unique role to play in providing opportunities for people to have fun together, to reflect on their heritage and their future, and to get to know one another in a non-threatening environment*".

Without any other drivers, widening participation in the arts could be seen as a challenge in itself, given that historically arts and cultural activities have been seen as the preserve of well-educated, wealthy and mainly White communities. The 2015 Warwick Commission⁵³ found that university education and high socio-economic background were the most reliable predictors of "*high levels of engagement and participation in a wide range of cultural activities, with this correlation being especially marked for those activities that attract significant public funding*". The Commission also found that while more people from across diverse communities are participating in arts and cultural activity than was previously the case, the gap in participation between the White and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) populations is widening.

⁵¹ DCLG 2012 *Creating the Conditions for Integration*

⁵² Big City Culture 2010-2015 - A Cultural Strategy for Birmingham

⁵³ 2015 Needlands et al; *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth: The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value* The University of Warwick

However the Warwick Commission suggests that low engagement is more often a consequence of the discrepancies between a publicly funded cultural offer and public taste combined with a “*narrowing of cultural education in schools and, consequently, of the skills and familiarity that might lead to the broadening of tastes.*”

Where the challenges to engagement of BAME communities in arts and cultural activities can be overcome, there is a body of research and other evidence that strongly indicates that participatory arts can help people build resilience and deal with change by helping them to identify new paradigms for expressing responses to change. For example, a 2001 literature review on the social gains of community arts conducted for the charity Barnardos⁵⁴ found that community-based arts projects have the potential to bring about social change; build cross-cultural community understanding and a stronger sense of 'locality', bringing different groups together.

Birmingham's decision to use the Connecting Communities funding in each of the 10 Districts to reach into wards or parts of wards with a history of little artistic or cultural activity or infrastructure was part of a deliberate strategy to offer people exposure to high quality artistic and cultural experiences and to bring together people from different ages, communities, ethnicities and beliefs, helping to break down barriers and promote understanding through positive interaction and building new relationships between local people.

“Promoting community cohesion involves addressing fractures, removing barriers and encouraging positive interaction between groups. It aims to build communities where people feel confident they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others.”

Community Cohesion in 7 Steps 2005

7.2 Connecting Communities diverse delivery

The Connecting Communities programme requirements specified working with diverse communities however, in recognition that not all areas of the city are ethnically diverse, projects were given the flexibility to reflect the diversity in the target neighbourhood and the priorities identified during the research phase of delivery. As a consequence the arts and cultural activity delivered as part of the programme offered a range of opportunities for people from different communities to work together.

- The Hodge Hill Making Memories project helped to remove barriers to participation by commissioning multi-lingual artists who speak a number of community languages and translating publicity material into the main community language. This enabled women who spoke different languages to communicate with each other during the activities.
- The Hall Green project used traditional Islamic designs to produce a permanent public art piece on the theme of Living Life to the Full to be displayed in a central location within the area. While the majority of those participating in the project identified as

⁵⁴ 2001 Newman T, Curtis K & Stephens J Do community-based arts projects result in social gains? A review of literature Barnardos

Muslim, the community space in which it was created was part of a Christian community and the art activities surrounding the creation of this piece brought together people from a range of ethnicities and cultures including people from Pakistani, Kashmiri, Indian, British and Caribbean backgrounds.

- In Yardley, the Art of Hasret Brown generated conversations between participants that explored meanings in Islamic Art as they learned about geometric patterns and how they are connected with all cultures and traditions.
- In Ladywood (Routes to Recognition project) young people from the Yemen attended the African drumming workshops as part of Black History Week and the Summerfield Sessions Community Arts Festival celebrated the cultural diversity of Soho ward, through a family-friendly outdoor arts and music festival.
- In Selly Oak, young people and older people were brought together to jointly curate a photography exhibition of work produced by separate young and older people's groups. In Sutton, older and young people contributed to an intergenerational event showcasing what had been produced by the separate groups.
- In Edgbaston people with Cerebral Palsy were empowered to express thoughts and feelings about their experiences using creative puppetry, the activities were filmed and shared at a church event called The Birds Wedding Day celebrating the inclusive thinking of a late Victorian clergyman. Evaluation videos show that participants from Cerebral Palsy West Midlands hoped that the project would help people be more understanding of people with CP.

“Participants engaged with each other through discussion, laughter, team work and carrying out creative thinking together. By the end of the session (...) the women were having conversations. The group was made up of different ethnicities and ages. A few women commented that although they had attended the centre previously - they had not really spoken to other users.”

Artist

Programme reach

Table 2: Programme monitoring data against DCLG categories

Category		No.
Age No. recorded 5152	18 and under	1969
	19 - 64	3096
	65 and over	87
	Age Not known	0
Gender No. recorded 3973	Male	1345
	Female	2288
	Gender Not known	340
Ethnicity No. recorded 5158	White	2422
	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	141
	Asian/ Asian British	1866
	Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	475
	Any other ethnic group	33
	Ethnicity Not known	221
Religion No. recorded 3039	No religion	44
	Christian (all denominations)	829
	Buddhist	4
	Hindu	29
	Jewish	0
	Muslim	1311
	Sikh	86
	Any other religion	5
	Religion Not known	1637

All people engaged, including audiences

76% met new people from their neighbourhood ✓

79% felt proud of their neighbourhood because of the project ✓

76% agreed that things like this can make an area feel safer ✓

86% felt the project had brought different communities together ✓

Participants, volunteers & co-producers

75% felt that taking part made them feel more a part of their local community ✓

87% felt taking part can help make their area a nicer place to live ✓

Source: evaluation surveys

See note ⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Bottom figures based on data from 8 volunteers, 12 co-producers and 211 participants (231). Note of caution: the audience returns are low and cluster around 3 projects, the findings can only be indicative for audiences across all 10 Districts

Where available, evaluation evidence indicates that across the programme people taking part have had experiences that can help break down barriers, foster cross-community relationships and make people feel better about where they live.

A review of survey data for each group (audiences, volunteers, participants and co-producers) shows the pattern of responses was broadly similar for each group suggesting that the benefits of locally delivered participative arts and cultural activities in terms of social integration and promoting community cohesion are felt across all levels of engagement.

7.3 Celebrating together

One of the desired outcomes of the programme was to provide opportunities for local people to show and value their contribution to the cultural life of their community. It was therefore a requirement of each project that it include an element of celebration at the end of the delivery period. 8 out of 10 projects held local showcase events at which people could present what they had been doing with the support of professional artists; there were 2 arts festivals, 2 events including art, dance, music and singing performances, a launch event for a collaborative art work that included dance and music performances, a photographic exhibition and a final participative arts session on a local allotment. At one showcase event art works produced by artists with Cerebral Palsy were exhibited and the artists were pleased that the quality of their art was recognised and celebrated.

“(I learnt) that the participants are eager for affordable cultural & creative activities within their local area. Also that they wish to learn and assimilate more with the rest of Birmingham, I discovered that if the workshops are well structured and that I work with the co-producers to gain insight and research of the communities - that a wealth of value is gain(ed) by the participants and expression of wanting to reduce their isolation starts to come through.”

Artist



The aim of the local showcases was to enable people to come together and share what they had achieved by participating in Connecting Communities; to show their friends and neighbours what can be gained by working together creatively and how it enhances the neighbourhood. It demonstrated to people that arts and culture can be a part of their lives where they live, that they do not have to travel into the city to see something beautiful or with local resonance.

Local showcase events were particularly successful where projects had delivered a series of workshops and sessions with different groups of people over a longer period of time. These projects achieved better engagement with local people who consequently felt more ownership of what was produced and were keen to present their work to a wider audience with pride in what they had created. Showcase events for participants, artists and project steering groups who had collectively delivered the projects to celebrate and inspire others. The showcases were also an opportunity to encourage more people to become involved in future arts activities.

Several projects engaged with different communities of identity, faith or interest and for some the showcase event was when they all came physically together for the first time to see what they had all contributed to the project. Being able to see how they each created something small to make something bigger and better when all joined together provides a strong integration message.

Connecting Communities also offered a bigger stage for projects to promote their achievements at the Symposium held at the Library of Birmingham in March 2015. The Symposium brought together all the towns and cities of the *Arts and Communities* initiative to present their work and engage in structured conversations on the learning emerging from the different programmes around the country⁵⁶.

Each of the 10 Birmingham projects was able to exhibit work and give a short presentation to the full Symposium about what they had achieved. Delegates were impressed by the variety and reach of projects around the city, delivered within the modest Connecting Communities budget. Some residents who had taken part in projects attended the Symposium in the iconic city centre venue and participated in the presentations and conversations, which added a sense of prestige to their involvement on the programme.

⁵⁶ See Jenny Smith report on Symposium

8. Summary of learning

8.1 What works

The community asset-based C2 model tested in the Cultural Pilot phase and rolled out in the Connecting Communities programme has the potential to deliver effective and sustainable community engagement in arts and cultural activity and to bring communities together.

The first year of delivery has helped to develop a more robust evidence base to demonstrate that this is an effective model for widening participation in arts and culture and developing local arts infrastructure.

Evidence suggests a number of components necessary for successful delivery:

- A live and shared understanding of what co-design and co-production means in the context of delivering Connecting Communities
- Expectations that are clearly communicated, understood, implemented and reported against
- Co-ordinators who are resourceful, skilled and who have the capacity and ability to make and maintain relationships with local people, partners and artists

The evaluation of the Cultural Pilots identified a set of core key skills and competencies for co-ordinators and these have been refined following the delivery of Year 1:

- Practical experience as producers/creators of art or cultural activity
 - Skills and experience in community engagement/development and understanding of the principles and approaches underpinning co-design and co-production
 - Creative and critical thinking skills, ability to reflect on and learn from experience
 - Facilitation and mentoring skills
 - A risk taker able to push boundaries to achieve excellence
 - The ability to be the calm centre, giving confidence to others
 - High level listening and communication skills
 - Able to create safe spaces for people to come together, learn, share and develop
 - A solution focussed 'fixer' with extensive personal resources and networks
- Local Arts Fora that are fully aware of what Connecting Communities is trying to achieve and who support and champion these aims
 - Professional artists who, as well as being good at what they do, have good communication skills/community development experience and/or skills and who are able to empower people and 'take people with them' throughout the creative process

- Mentoring is emerging as a key component of the delivery model and there are a number opportunities for this to be developed as a formal element of the model, for example:
 - Experienced co-ordinators mentoring new co-ordinators
 - Co-ordinators mentoring co-producers
 - Experienced artists and co-ordinators mentoring artists new to community-based working
- Where additional funding or in-kind contributions have been secured it has extended and enhanced the arts and cultural offer in that area.

8.2 Key challenges

- Targeting the Connecting Communities programme in areas where there is little or no existing arts and cultural infrastructure was a challenge for many projects. In areas of low engagement, with few if any arts organisations or venues in which to deliver projects, considerable time and energy was needed to build relationships and initiate activity.
- The programme was delayed and this added time pressures for delivery. In practice it takes time to meaningfully engage local people, build relationships with local stakeholders and establish ownership of the work more broadly. Projects have had to take pragmatic decisions to ensure delivery within timescales and this, on occasion, has shifted the emphasis from participative (and more time consuming) approaches to 'just getting it done'. The consequence has been that most projects have worked with small, usually targeted, groups of people to initiate activity in an area and have therefore been able to share their achievements with small audiences of mainly family and friends plus a few people from the local community.
- The programme had a small budget to deliver community engagement activity in all 10 Districts of a city the size of Birmingham and the low level of core resource has constrained the activity of some projects, particularly where co-ordinators have been unable to stimulate cash or in-kind additional contributions. The programme is a rollout of the Cultural Pilots but with significantly less funding for each project which may have raised some unrealistic expectations of what could be achieved. In practice there were not the resources to engage people with spectacular art or large-scale events, although much inspiration was generated by activities on a smaller scale.
- A lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities and expectations between the Culture Commissioning Team and the LAFs/co-ordinators created challenges that took time and energy away from delivering the programme. There was not a shared understanding of the programme outcomes and how they could be interpreted in each area, or the underpinning principles of co-design and co-production, so communication issues emerged and people became focused on the amount of paperwork rather than on what evidence was needed and why.

8.3 Delivering against outcomes

Despite limitations, the programme has succeeded in creating a more robust evidence base that the Connecting Communities model delivers against core outcomes - strengthens participation, builds infrastructure and bring people together.

Participation

Overall, LAFs and co-ordinators rose to the challenge and all areas delivered new arts and cultural activity. There is evidence that new people have been engaged and that they are open and willing to engage again in the future. However the projects have not necessarily reached the large numbers achieved through the Cultural Pilots primarily because there was less funding and additional resources to achieve the large scale 'wow factor' that was seen for example in Castle Vale.

The evidence shows that the Connecting Communities programme has provided benefits to individuals through participation in the arts (intrinsic value) and made a contribution to the wider social outcomes it set out to achieve (instrumental value).⁵⁷

Significant achievements have been made in engaging people and working with local stakeholders given that the challenge was to work in areas of low participation and infrastructure. In terms of the Connecting Communities Engagement Scale (p.26) most people engaged in activities at the 'inform' and 'consult' points of the scale and the challenge for Year 2 is to build on the success of Year 1 and move more people towards co-design and co-production.

Infrastructure

Across the city, local people who can act as 'energisers' for change were identified through Connecting Communities and new groups were involved in arts and cultural activities for the first time. Planning or steering groups were set up and linked to the LAFs, although not always explicitly, and while one or two appear sustainable, others functioned more as task and finish groups. New artists have been supported and developed and existing artists have extended their experience and networks.

It is more challenging to identify how Connecting Communities has contributed to the overall stability and capacity of the Local Arts Fora, particularly those that had new lead agencies. Even for established Fora, delivering something as complex and potentially risky as Connecting Communities was a 'big ask' and for many LAF members it was outside personal and professional comfort zones. Capacity building for LAFs, new co-ordinators and volunteers has been highlighted as a priority for the future.

⁵⁷ 2009 Joss T *New Flow: A Better Future for Artists Citizens and the State*, Mission Models Money

Integration

Each local project has taken a different approach to delivering integration and strong foundations have been laid down where communities have come together around the Connecting Communities events and activities. It is too soon to say what the impact of bringing people together to share arts and cultural activities will be in even the short term. What is clear is that Connecting Communities has brought together different groups of people who may not necessarily have come together in any other way and has delivered arts and cultural activity that has been inter-generational, ethnically diverse and brought together able-bodied and disabled people from different communities of interest.

The programme has created opportunities for conversations within and between communities and enabled people to talk with others who are not the same as them. These conversations provided a chance to understand more about people from other cultures, faiths and abilities and this can foster the spirit of integration and understanding.

Improving health

While health is not an explicit outcome that is being measured by either the programme funders or the Cultural Commissioning Team, there is some evidence that where people have engaged as participants, volunteers and co-producers some have experienced outcomes that can be measured against the 5 Ways to Wellbeing.

A range of health benefits could be identified, such as engaging young people in physical activities through dance and drama (be active), which could contribute to reducing childhood obesity and support children and young people to adopt healthy behaviours⁵⁸. There is a substantial body of evidence nationally that engagement with arts and cultural activity acts on the wider determinants of health particularly around social isolation, exclusion and loneliness by creating safe and supported, connected communities.

8.4 Conclusions

Compared with the other towns and cities in the *Arts and Communities* initiative, Birmingham's aspiration was different, with the drive for co-design and co-production to create sustainability for local arts infrastructure within the context of changing public services. As a result of the programme, there is a growing sense that people are becoming clearer about what is meant by participation, co-design and co-production in a local arts and culture context.

Connecting Communities has made an excellent start to bringing arts and cultural activities, participation, co-design and co-production to areas in the city with little existing arts and cultural activity or infrastructure. The numbers of people engaged are relatively small in each area but people have been able to access arts and culture in their neighbourhood, the majority of them for the first time, and that was the aim.

⁵⁸ Fit for the Future Birmingham's Childhood Obesity Strategy

There is a real need to build a shared understanding of the programme aims and outcomes and for everyone to be clear about the drive to build local arts infrastructure that is sustainable. Real foundations have been laid – new venues, steering groups, new artists – but the emerging infrastructure is fragile and requires further development to become self-sustaining in local communities.

Issues with the evaluation process reduced the available body of evidence for the programme. The purpose of evaluation and the principles of reflective practice could be more widely shared and understood and the mechanisms for capturing evidence collaboratively designed and agreed for any future programmes.

There is learning from the Connecting Communities programme around commissioning that could inform Birmingham City Council's Future Council agenda and scope to align future programmes with other strategic agendas in the city such as the Public Health preventative agenda.

8.5 Recommendations

The first year of Connecting Communities has seen each project make a positive start on building relationships, and get people more involved in arts and culture near to where they live. Everyone involved in the process to date is more knowledgeable, experienced and informed about what works and about the challenges involved in designing, implementing and evaluating a programme of this kind.

1. Continue working in the same areas as Year 1

In order to consolidate this learning we recommend that any Year 2 programme builds, where practicable, on the learning from Year 1 and consolidates the energy and relationships that were created in the first year. For the programme to really capitalise on the investment already made and to create a more sustainable approach (one that has some ability to continue after the current round of funding), working in the same areas as Year 1 means that work can continue to build engagement, capacity and infrastructure.

We are not recommending that contracts with LAF lead agencies or Connecting Communities co-ordinators simply roll over; rather we recommend that the Culture Commissioning Team considers, in conjunction with LAFs and co-ordinators, the learning from Year 1 and adapts the programme accordingly.

2. Embed the principles of co-design and co-production across the whole programme

We recommend that the flexible way of working that has emerged for the Culture Commissioning Team over Year 1 is developed into a dialogue-based commissioning model that includes co-design at the programme devising stage. For example, where local steering or planning groups have emerged from Year 1, how can these be included in planning for Year 2?

Put in place a common, shared and well understood definition of the Connecting Communities engagement model using cultural co-design and co-production and use this to really build on the work already done. Share the learning from Year 1 with new project leads or co-ordinators in Year 2.

Share the learning for the Culture Commissioning Team on embedding co-design as a new way of working within the wider council to inform the move towards Future Council.

3. Be explicit about expectations

As part of future programme planning, conversations should be held between the Culture Commissioning Team and LAFs/local partners to ensure a shared understanding of the programme outcomes and to clarify expectations. For instance, it would be useful to have a conversation about whether or not every project must deliver against all programme outcomes and how programme co-ordination can ensure all outcomes are addressed across the city as a whole.

Planning discussions at project level need to be informed in an open and honest way by programme outcomes, funding requirements and artistic aspirations, as well as by listening to local people. Projects should discuss (in accessible terms) which outcomes they are aiming to deliver against and be clear about how they plan to achieve them, They should also agree which communities they are aiming to reach, along with the how and the why behind these decisions. Projects should think through how they intend capture qualitative and quantitative information about who is involved, what is working well and how the projects are achieving outcomes for local people and the wider community; they may need support to contribute effectively to the programme evidence base.

Projects should have the flexibility to use locally appropriate, robust and meaningful mechanisms for collecting information that is appropriate for the people they are working with and allows for data aggregation and analysis for comparisons to take place across the programme as a whole.

4. Embed opportunities for learning

We recommend that regular reviews are built into programme management to identify and address issues as they arise. This would form part of a collective problem-solving approach and move away from a non-productive and time consuming apportioning of blame to a more open and transparent dialogue that focuses on accountability. This would create an environment that recognises that mistakes happen and that becoming aware of them opens opportunities for learning and personal and organisational growth.

We recommend that time is built into the whole process for sharing and knowledge exchange that draws on expertise at all levels. For instance, LAF meetings or co-ordinators meetings could include planned time to share what works and to encourage people to become solution-focused by sharing problems or barriers to delivery, drawing on the knowledge and expertise in the network.

A skills development pathway for new co-ordinators could be explored which could help to support the future infrastructure of community-based arts and culture. Peer-to-peer mentoring of co-ordinators, drawing on the skills and experience of more experienced co-ordinators, could help to better embed some of the approaches to co-design and co-production that have proved difficult for some to interpret in Year 1.

The creative use of budgets and how to increase resources through match-funding and in-kind contributions has been identified as capacity building need for people taking on the co-ordinator role and experienced co-ordinators could share their knowledge through the LAF network. On a practical note, it would be useful if basic costing rules could be agreed for in-kind contributions and applied across all projects to facilitate future cost analysis.

Other opportunities for Local Arts Fora and co-ordinators to meet, celebrate and share expertise could be explored. For instance, an online platform could be developed where projects could share their progress, record feedback from participants and audiences and promote their achievements more widely in the city. It could also act as a point of contact between the other *Arts and Communities* towns and cities.

Thinking about the end of programme Symposium should happen from the beginning and should inform programme planning; that would allow opportunities for the Symposium to be even more participative and allow projects to work towards it more consciously as a goal for local people.



Appendix I: Overview of Connecting Communities delivery

Area	Arts and Cultural activities delivered
Edgbaston	<p>Celebrating Spring Time - The Birds Wedding Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brought together two communities of interest, a church community in North Edgbaston and people using the Cerebral Palsy Midlands (CPM) day centre in Harborne • Puppeteers worked with people from CPM to tell their stories and share their experiences – a film was created • Workshop session at the church making birds from recycled materials • Showcase event the following day – film shown, birds displayed • Artists from CPM exhibited their own work
Erdington	<p>Café Arts at KFC (Kingstanding Food Community Cafe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Saturday morning workshop sessions with a food theme • A series of artists undertaking a range of activities including: collages in the style of Matisse using fruit and vegetables as inspiration, withy structures, forest collage, photographic portraits of people with interesting fruit and vegetables and pictures using beans and pulses • Final celebration session on the café's allotment <p>Artists changed and project developed in response to ideas of those attending.</p>
Hall Green	<p>Living Life to the Full</p> <p>Mosaic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 workshops with children and parents, a primary school, a 6th Form group, women's groups, a young people's interfaith group • 8 workshops at Day 2 of the Creative Families festival creating a two-sided mosaic decorated gateway on the theme of Living Life To The Full <p>Creative Families 2 Day Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • themed 'Living Life To The Full' offering workshops in music, dance, song, craft and textiles plus pop up performances by 8 artists and a final performance combining all these art forms • Day 2 funded by The Springfield Project <p>Storytelling training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For women's group staff and volunteers over 4 weeks on how to use traditional stories to explore women's current experiences • 2 workshops with women's group - women's stories woven onto small looms linked to Living Life To The Full
Hodge Hill	<p>Making Memories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 workshops with a Stay and Play group at a local church-based community project to create a communal memory blanket • Each participant worked on her own section, which were stitched together to form one large piece and displayed in the centre

	<p>Vivid Memories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 sessions in a hospital dementia ward offering visual arts to engage patients in positive activity • Patient-led activity created pieces of art to keep and a joint piece to brighten up the ward
<p>Ladywood</p>	<p>Summerfield Sessions Community Arts Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival activities included a bouncing castle, face painting, craft workshop, stalls on health and wellbeing, Martial Arts demonstrations, a zumba workshop, craft & chess & arts exhibition, music and dance performances <p>Soho House Museum Community Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open up museum to local community • Music and workshops <p>Routes to Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivered during Black History month • Local artists arts exhibition • Workshops (i.e. African drumming, African & Jamaican dance, poetry, drama, friendly dominoes matches played throughout the day - workshops designed for children aged 8 – 16 yrs. • Community Day Showcase - performances from the young people that attended the workshops, short play and dominoes tournament
<p>Northfield</p>	<p>Music! Dance! Draw!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 art and craft sessions - groups made dancers, cars, buildings, props and backdrops for the final showcase • 4 choir song writing sessions - writing a new piece of music to use at the final showcase • 10 dance workshops - to create a work to show at the final showcase • 6 youth song writing sessions - writing a new piece of music to use at the final showcase • Showcase finale an event showcasing the work of all the groups
<p>Perry Barr</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 dance workshops at Manor Park School concluding with the group performing for their parents • Open access craft session in large supermarket
<p>Selly Oak</p>	<p>Photography projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Young Peoples' Photography Workshops aimed at developing new skills and getting participants to look differently at their surroundings and immediate environment • Creative writing activities • Open Activity and Portrait Day – part of community event • Photo treasure hunt activity • Family portraits • 3 Elders Photography Workshops reflecting on the estate 'then and now' using participants own photos and taking new photos of the area

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting Communities Exhibition Opening - an event designed to showcase the work that had been produced by both groups
Sutton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 spoken word/lyric writing workshops with young men at the Falcon Lodge Youth Centre • 14 spoken word/lyric writing workshops with young women at the Falcon Lodge Youth Centre • Line dancing group for over 60's to rehearse for final showcase (in-kind contribution) • Singing workshops for primary school children to accompany line dancing (in-kind contribution) • Made in Sutton Arts Festival – in partnership with Arts Champion THSH celebratory and showcase event
Yardley	<p>All You Can Art Buffet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day of taster workshops arts workshops: dance, dhol drumming, singing, screen printing, lace making, poetry, 3D geometric art, messy play, painting and drawing, Big Draw activity – involving local and professional artists • New venue opened up to arts <p>Free Half Term Halloween Bonanza</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-produced with local residents association, craft activities <p>Dhol Drumming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 sessions and 1 performance - group worked towards performance piece which was 5 minutes long <p>The Art of Hasret Brown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3x 4 hour workshops that involved a presentation on traditional geometric patterns, Islamic art and the work of Hasret Brown • Participants produced pieces for the artwork which were pieced together to form a permanent piece of artwork for Hobmoor Community Centre <p>After school dance workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 workshops for children from different schools to explore creativity though the use of objects, phrase work, improvisation and group tasks • New artist mentored <p>Love Hobmoor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase event for dhol drumming and dance performances • Artwork unveiled • Arts Champion Ikon Gallery drawing workshop

Appendix 2: CHOICES model

Connecting Communities model for Year 2 developed by the BCC Culture Commissioning Team

Definition of Cultural Co-design

Cultural Co-design is a way of creating a product, programme or cultural activity where arts professionals empower, encourage, and guide participants to develop solutions for themselves.

Co-design encourages the blurring of the role between participants and artist, focusing on the process by which the art product or programme is created. This process believes that by encouraging the artist and the participant to create solutions together, the final result will be more appropriate and 'owned' by the participant.

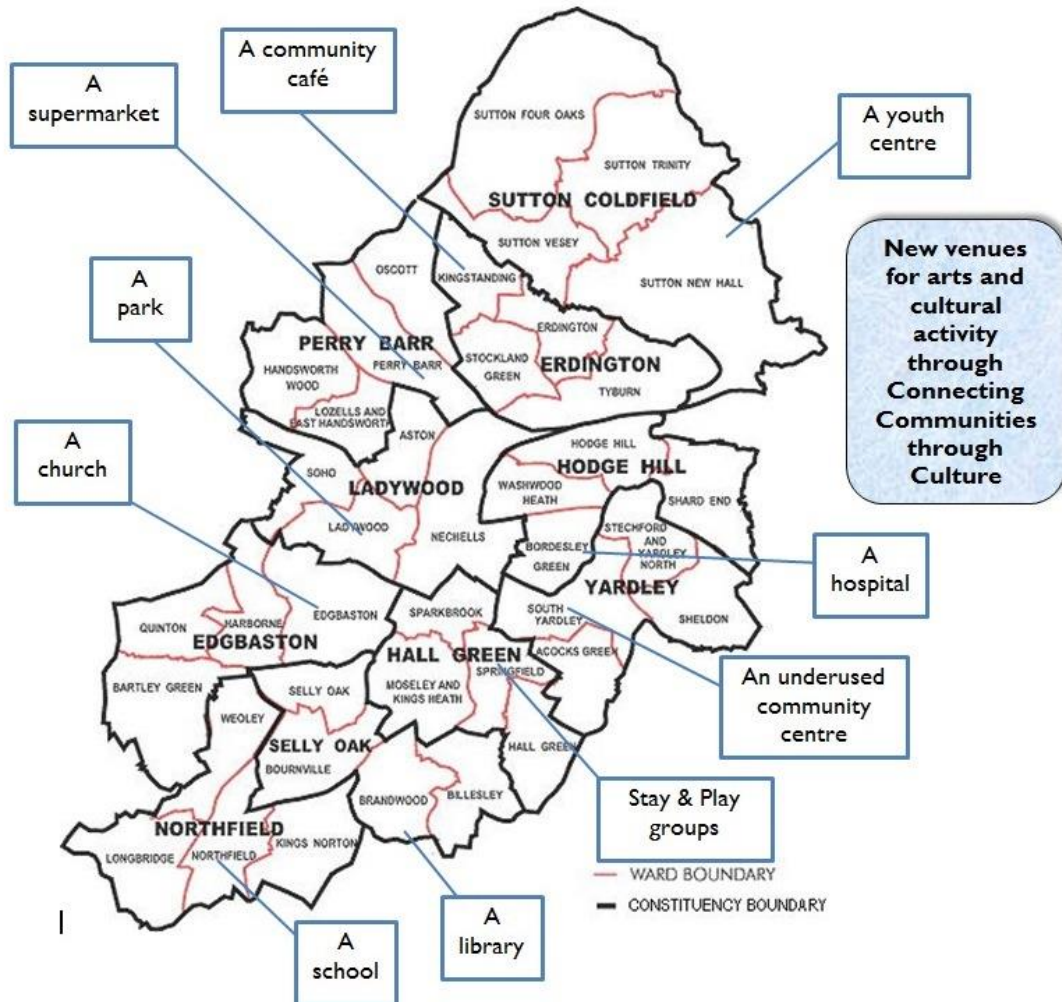
It is accepted that the quality of the art work/activities/programme can be increased if the interests and ideas from the participants are considered in the process.

CHOICES – 7 step model of Cultural Co-design

The method designed and developed for Cultural Co-design has been based on the 7 step process used by C2 Positively Local and re-named CHOICES to refer specifically to arts and cultural activities.

- **C**o-ordinator / Community producer to undertake conversations with stakeholders and residents to locate 'energy for change' – individuals to lead change
- **H**one positive vision by listening to issues raised by residents into a plan and budget with LAF / Arts Champions and steering group.
- **O**ffer opportunities to artists and arts organisations (local and professional) to tender and engage residents in selection, writing briefs, panel selection
- **I**nitiate arts activities, Inspire residents to engage as participants, audiences or volunteer artists on programme and involve them in creating local 'buzz'
- **C**ontinue creative engagement and check –in with steering group to focus energy on key events –build community marketing and local buzz to maximise audiences
- **E**valuate programme, gain feed-back and comments from range of attenders, stakeholders, artists and establish participant and attendance data with case studies
- **S**hare Case studies and lessons learnt in Symposium for national / regional / local audiences

Appendix 3: Map of new venues for arts and cultural activity



Appendix 4: Breakdown of cash and in-kind contributions by project

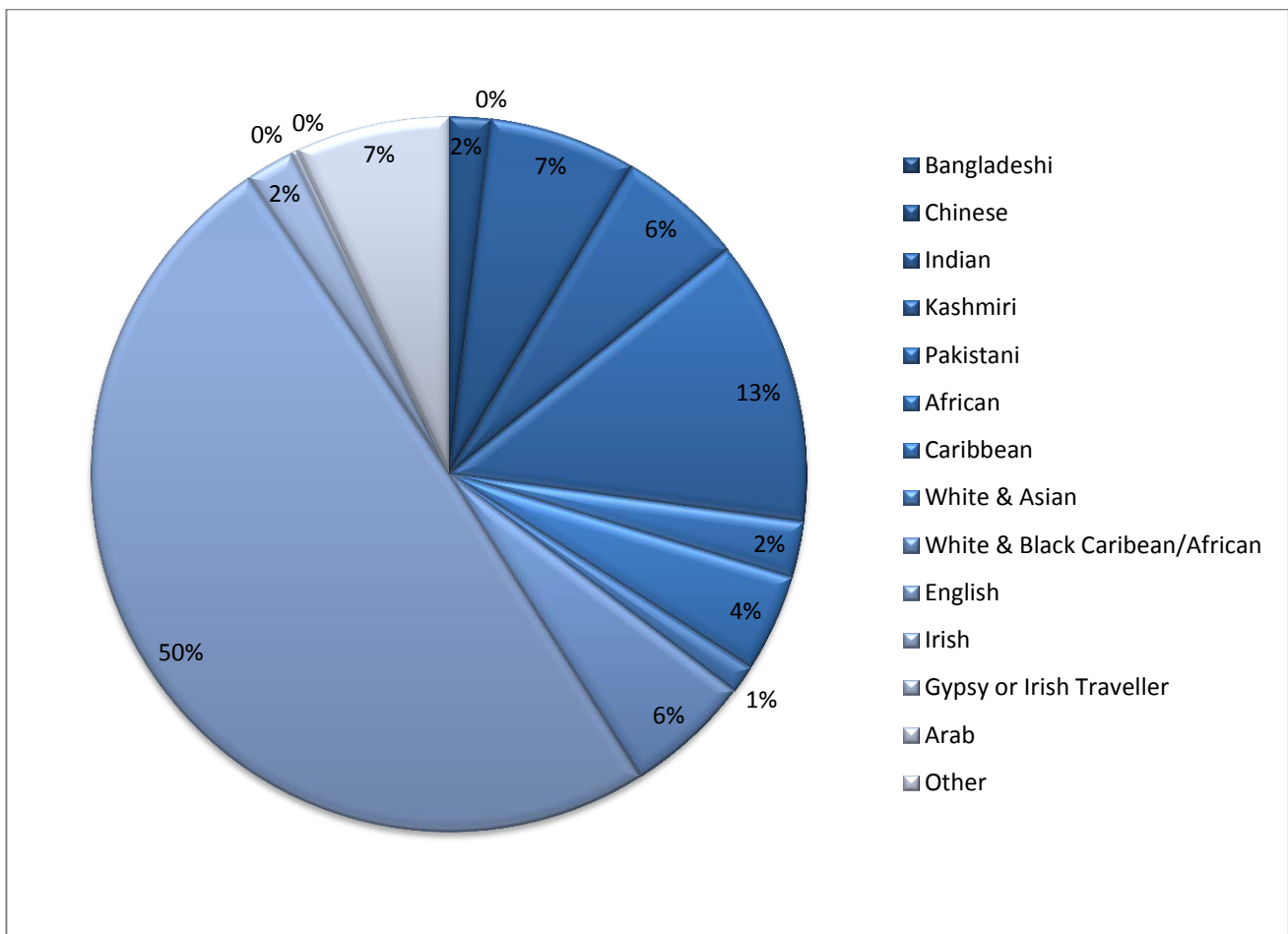
District	Additional funding	In kind contribution co-ordinator	In kind contribution partners	Pro-bono artists
Edgbaston	£1,300.00 £1,000 Edgbaston Community Chest £300 The Drum (local arts champion)	£1,600.00 16 days @ £100 per day	£600.00 2 delivery partners contributed 6 days to the project at £100 per day	
Erdington	£250 Local Arts Forum £450.00 £200 partner agencies	No details provided £1,000.00	£500 venue hire £2,500.00 £2,000 worth of staff time	
Hall Green		£9,280.00 Various tasks / various day rates	£7,802.00 Mainly staff time from one partner at various hourly rates	£1,460.00 Planning time 8 artists 73 hours @ £20 p/h
Hodge Hill			Venue hire noted not costed	Noted but not costed
Ladywood		Time to attend meetings etc noted but not costed	£656.00 £220 estimated cost for graphic design and printing £100 sporting activities £50 refreshments Venue /staff costs	£360.00 £120 Community Radio advertising £240 video
Northfield			Venue hire £1,150.00	
Perry Barr		£100 venue/space £350.00 £250 staff time		
Selly Oak	£1,510 BCC Resident £1,605.00 Empowerment Budget £95 sales of photographs	Marketing materials £150.00	Venue hire £450.00 Help with participant transport	£500.00 5 sessions @ £100 per session
Sutton				
Yardley	Community First £3,050.00		£700 Dhol drums £2,600.00 £1,900 venue hire/cleaning	£100 PR £200.00 £100 Photography
Total	£6,405.00	£12,480.00	£15,758.00	£2,520.00

Appendix 5: Summary of survey demographic data

People who completed evaluation surveys as audience members, volunteers, participants and co-producers were asked about their ethnicity, religion, gender, long term health conditions or disabilities and employment status in order to assess the demographic reach of the programme.

Only a few projects actively engaged with the evaluation process and not everyone who completed a survey responded to the demographic so these figures are based on a partial dataset. Nevertheless, they do show that Connecting Communities has reached people from different demographic groups.

Chart xx Ethnicity across all survey respondents as a percentage
No. 317 people - audiences, volunteers, participants and co-producers



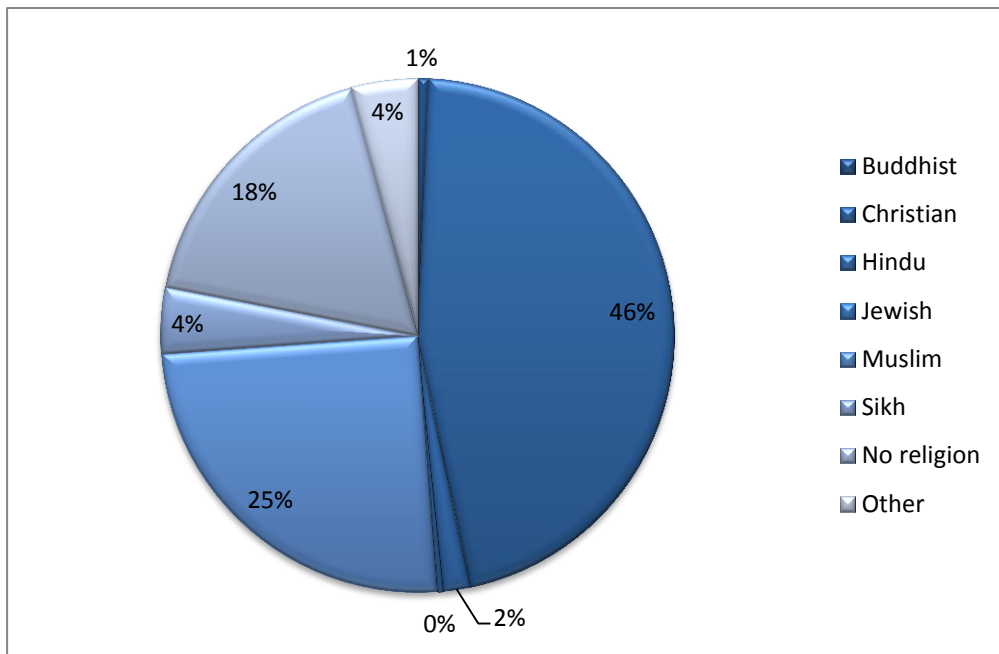
NB: English covers English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British

Those who responded 'other' ethnic group included Egyptian, French, Polish, Latvian, Black African, Black British and American.

- 72% (221/307) were women
- 19% reported a disability or long term health condition
- 301 people told us about their employment status:

- 13% (38) are unemployed
- 31.5% (95) are in employment and a further 10% (31) are self employed
- 27% (82) are students
- 18% (55) are retired.
- 316 people told us about their age:
 - 2.5% (8) people were aged 0-4 and these were all identified as participants.
 - 11% (34) people were aged between 5-11 years and again these were all identified as participants.
 - 8.5% (27) were aged 12-15
 - 41% (130) were aged 16-19
 - 5% (15) were aged 20-25
 - 35% (111) were from the 26-45 age bracket
 - 20.5% (65) were from the 46-64 age group
 - 14% (43) were over 65.

Table xx **Religion of all survey respondents as a percentage of the responses to this question audiences, volunteers, participants and co-producers**
287



Appendix 6: Connecting Communities - a demographic overview and programme reach

District	Area chosen	About the area
Edgbaston	Edgbaston ward	Edgbaston district is more affluent than the average for the ten districts of Birmingham. It is less diverse than the city as a whole, with a smaller number of non-White British residents than the city average, but has higher percentage with mixed ethnicity than the city average. There is a higher proportion of lone householders. At 5.7% unemployment rate is below the city rate (6.8%) ⁵⁹
Erdington	Kingstanding ward	73% of the district's population identify as White British, The next biggest group are the Asian/Asian British and Black/African/Caribbean/Black British communities, which account for just over 10% of the population each. The district also has a slightly larger than average proportions of Black Caribbean, and residents who identify themselves as from mixed heritage. Higher levels of unemployment in Kingstanding Ward (8%/ 889 people). Youth unemployment is also higher than the city average (22.5% of unemployed) in Kingstanding (25% of unemployed)
Hall Green	Springfield ward	57.2% of the population of the Springfield ward come from a rural Pakistani heritage, making it one of the highest traditional Muslim populations in the city. Children and young people make up more than a third of the population at 34.5% Pockets of Springfield register child poverty at more than 50%. The overall poverty of children in the ward is 32.3 %, significantly worse than the national average. Unemployment for Springfield Ward is 7.6%, higher than the city average of 6.8%.

⁵⁹ BCC Unemployment Briefing Nov 2014

Hodge Hill	Bordesley Green ward	<p>The majority of the people living in the ward are of Black, Asian or other ethnic minority origin and it is one of the most densely populated wards in the city.</p> <p>At District level 52% of all residents living in Hodge Hill said they were Muslim. Hodge Hill is one of 4 districts in the City where the number of people who said they belonged to an ethnic group other than White was above the city average of 46.9%.</p> <p>Almost 40% of all Bordesley Green residents reported a main language other than English.</p> <p>Evidence gathered through the research phase identified that: <i>"The ward has high levels of poverty including child poverty, unemployment, low achievement, health concerns and features highly in the multiple deprivation profile."</i></p>
Ladywood	Soho ward	<p>Ladywood is the largest and one of the most diverse districts. It is one of four non-White majority districts in the city.</p> <p>The largest broad ethnic group is Asian/Asian British which accounts for 40.5% of the district's population. The next highest broad ethnic group is White British.</p> <p>Approximately 18.4% of Ladywood's population has English as a second language.</p> <p>The Connecting Communities research process identified growing number of East Europeans in the ward and district.</p> <p>Ladywood is one of the 'youngest' districts in the city, with 23.5% of residents aged 15 or under (city average is 22%) and 43.5% are aged 24 and under.</p>
Northfield	Northfield ward	<p>The biggest ethnic group in Northfield is White British (nearly 86% of district population), with a slightly higher proportion of residents of mixed heritage. 8.5% of Northfield residents were born overseas, Birmingham as a whole (22%).</p> <p>Under two thirds of people in the district identify themselves with a religion, the lowest proportion of all ten Birmingham districts, the majority of people who do, identify themselves as Christian.</p> <p>Northfield district has a significantly high number of children in poverty; standing at 32.2 with the England average being 21.1 (2010). It also appears to be higher than the Birmingham average in most preventable deaths and mental health prevalence.</p> <p>Youth unemployment is also higher than the city average (22.5% of unemployed) in Northfield (27% of unemployed)</p>
Perry Barr	Witton	<p>Witton is part of Perry Barr ward where, the Census says, 22.1% of people were aged under 16, 64% were</p>

	neighbourhood	aged between 16 and 64, while 13.7% were aged over 65. The minority ethnic population made up 46.6% of the ward's population, compared with 42.1% for Birmingham.
Selly Oak	Druids Heath neighbourhood	Within Brandwood ward. Part of the Druids Heath estate is a 'super output area', the only one in the Selly Oak district – that is in the 1% most deprived nationally. 40 -50% of all children on the Druids Heath estate are classed as living in poverty. Brandwood is significantly worse than the England average for Percentage of children in 'poverty'; Adults with learning disabilities in stable accommodation; Excess weight of 10-11 year olds; Infant mortality; Mortality cases considered preventable for under 75s; Alcohol attributable admissions; Mental Health prevalence. Selly Oak district as whole has a much lower proportion of residents born overseas (14.3%) compared to Birmingham as a whole (22%).
Sutton	Falcon Lodge and Banners Gate	The district has a much older age profile than Birmingham as a whole. Less than 30% of the population are aged 24 and under, with about 18% being 15 and under, compared with the city average of 23%. This means that the district has the lowest proportion of young people compared with other districts. 20% of the population is aged 65 and older, compared with about 13% across the city. Sutton Coldfield also has the lowest proportion of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in the city. Sutton Coldfield is the most affluent district in the city with high levels of household income and low levels of unemployment and worklessness. Falcon Lodge area has more young people than the rest of the district
Yardley	Richmond and Bierton Road neighbourhood part of South Yardley ward	This area was selected as this ward is the most deprived, according to BCC's deprivation ranking. Over a third of the population are aged 24 and under, 55% of South Yardley population identified as White, 34% Asian, 6% Black, 5% Other. 7.1% unemployed in South Yardley (6.8% city), 20% of unemployed are young people Educational performance in neighbourhood is low; performance against all LAA indicators is significantly lower than the city average. Lower than city average crime rates but a high fear of crime, such as antisocial behaviour. This ward is also the most ethnically diverse in the District and has the highest percentage of 0-15 year olds

Appendix 7: Attributes of a local arts co-ordinator

- Local knowledge, preferably with prior experience of working in the area
- Practical experience as producers/creators of art or cultural activity
- Skills and experience in community engagement and development
- Creative and critical thinking skills
- Willing to take risks and push the boundaries to achieve excellence
- Ability to be calm and confident and provide reassurance when needed
- Ability to enthuse and inspire
- Excellent listening skills
- Positivity and can-do attitude
- Mentoring skills
- Respect for others and patience
- Ability to turn ideas into action
- Solution focused, 'fixer' and problem solver
- Ability to balance often competing tensions
- Skilled at creating safe spaces for people to develop their own skills or explore sensitive or potentially difficult issues

Adapted from the evaluation of the Cultural Pilots project (2014)