



Enable or sustain?

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM & ART GALLERY in HODGE HILL

'The project has helped me see a different aspect of Bromford and the way people think about it and the pride they have' ... 'Technically I've learned I love Bromford. I'd like to more stuff like this to be honest - speak more about the area.'

Your Birmingham participants

What happened?

BMAG delivered two strands: Your Birmingham, a filmmaking project for younger people, and In Our Back Yard, events and an exhibition in the Community Gallery of pieces created as part of year 1 of the Artists in Residence programme organized by Birmingham City Council Community Arts Team.

Your Birmingham

David King described the recruitment process as *'interesting and difficult'*.

'I walked round the streets of the target areas chatting to YP and parents. Some parents got their children involved. By talking to young people I found the local 'hot spots' where they spend time and talked to them about the project.

I also used the Hub in Bromford to help spread the word [youth worker and participant, Phil Bodenham, was a key contact], and Saltley Leisure Centre, who host a number of sessions for young people. At the leisure centre I pitched the project to a

cricket team – mostly Asian young men, and a football team about to lose their funding.'

The two *Your Birmingham* film making projects aimed to represent the stories of two distinct groups from two diverse cultures thereby providing personal relevance for visitors and a positive reinforcement of identity; promoting cross cultural understanding and community cohesion, as well as to represent the diversity of Birmingham.

A film-maker and support artist were recruited to deliver two series of film-making workshops with young people, in Bordesley Green and Firs & Bromford, and to edit the resulting films. They also delivered:

- A sharing event in Ward End Library for members of the two groups to meet and view each other's films. The library was chosen as it is 'neutral' ground and thus less intimidating. This event was not open to the public
- A launch event for the public at Ward End Library
- 2 open film master-classes in Ward End library. Participants from the earlier workshops volunteered to help out.
- A sharing event and screening of the films in the Community Gallery, BMAG

In Our Backyard

An exhibition of work produced in the four target constituencies by the Artists in Residence during 2009-2010. The pieces included a large scale mosaic based on by Islamic calligraphy, created by family groups in Ladywood; a filming and photography project made by under 5s and their parents showing community perspectives of Hodge Hill; the planting of fruit trees in Erdington High Street town centre arcade and creation of a map of fruit trees in the area – and a story telling project in Perry Barr, which worked with community elders to hear their tales and then helped young people to learn and re-tell them.

Four related workshops were delivered during the run of the exhibition (4 April to 10 July 2010).

About Hodge Hill

Hodge Hill is the most populous constituency, with a population of 112573. It is the third largest constituency in Birmingham and comprises the inner city wards of Washwood Heath and Bordesley Green, Hodge Hill, and Shard End.

Around 41% of Hodge Hill's population are below the age of 25 (26.7% below 14) meaning it has the second largest proportion of young people in Birmingham. Bordesley Green has a particularly high proportion of young people.

- 59.5% of the population are white; 32.5% are Asian, with the largest group being those of Pakistani / Kashmiri heritage.



- Differences across the wards exist. Hodge Hill Ward and Shard End Ward are predominantly White (86.1% and 92.1%) whereas Bordesley Green is mostly Asian (62.2%).
- 16.27% are 'lone parent' households, well above the Birmingham average of 13.5%.
- 49% of Hodge Hill's working age population have no qualifications.
- Hodge Hill displays relatively high levels of unemployment with only 52.2% of the overall labour-force in employment. Female and ethnic minority workers show the lowest employment rates.
- 60% of residents live within the 5% most deprived SOAs in the country.

[Socio-economic context based on 2001 Census, and data provided by *Identifying the Barriers to Cultural Participation and the Needs of Residents of Birmingham, a Final Report to the Birmingham Cultural Partnership* by Ecotec, 31st March 2010.]

Outcome 1: Increased awareness and understanding of the cultural institution partnered with the constituency through project activity and associated outreach and visits

***'I don't want to go back.
It was alright, I was a kid so I enjoyed everything back then innit.'***
17 year old participant, Your Birmingham

% of respondents who HAVE HEARD of city centre venue	25%
% of respondents who HAVE visited before	20%
% of respondents who HAVE NOT visited before	80%
% of respondents who have been to another art gallery, museum or library in the preceding 5 years	48%

BMAG's 2004 consultation¹ with young people in Ladywood had revealed ***'that young people lacked understanding of the art and the advertising was felt to be unappealing to their age group... [and] the staff were not welcoming'***

50% of participants questioned had previously been to BMAG, 29% on a school trip. The respondents were aware of the BMAG's cultural offer. Younger respondents from the Bordesley Green group (aged 14-18yrs) described BMAG's displays relatively accurately (***'full of pictures and art'***) but were nearly all disinclined to visit: ***'I don't want to go back. It was alright, I was a kid so I enjoyed everything back then innit.'***

During the project, participants were given privileged access to Birmingham City FC stadium but not to BMAG. When challenged about this, the project coordinator said ***'I***

¹ Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Non-Visitor Research, 2004, BMAG

haven't arranged it as they would not be interested'. However, at the end of the project 71% said that they would like to visit.

Outcome 2: Increased desire to contribute to or participate in cultural activity in city centre

% of respondents who WOULD LIKE to visit	No data
% of new participants (engaged once only)	63%
% of return participants (engaged more than once)	37%

74% of participants in cultural champion activity delivered by BMAG engaged more than once. This high proportion of repeat engagements suggests a high level of motivation.

The nature of the Cultural Champions activity might also have a bearing on high proportion of repeat engagements as the film-maker effectively arranged for low-skilled participants to take part in skills development training.

Outcome 3: Increased uptake of cultural offer through participation in activity and visits to partner venue

'Generally the young people involved did not access cultural venues. In feedback they said that museums are not for YP, they are for posh people.'

David King, film-maker and cultural practitioner

Museums and galleries attendance by Ladywood residents	
% adults attended in previous 12 months (2008-09) ²	17.75%
% of Cultural Champions participants attending (2010-11)	52%

Exposure to the creative process helped change Hodge Hill participants' attitude to cultural venues in the city.

He personally promoted Birmingham's cultural offer, particularly to a participant interested in a career in filmmaking, who is going to the cinema and theatre more often.

The percentage of participants in the Cultural Champions activity who visited the partner city centre cultural venue was far higher than the percentage of constituency residents who said, in the Annual Opinion Survey (2008-09), that they had visited a museum or gallery during the preceding 12 months.

However, it should be noted that the average proportion of the population of each constituency participating in Cultural Champions activity was 0.01%.

² Constituency participation figures, p.62 *Barriers to Cultural Participation*, 2010. Source: Annual Opinion Survey, 2008 and 2009

As none of the Cultural Champions organisations consistently collect demographic data from visitors who are not participating in a specific project activity, there is no quantitative data to prove an increased uptake of the cultural offer through participation in activity and visits to partner venue outside the project delivery period.

It is to be hoped that during the next Opinion Survey and DCMS Taking Part survey, there will be an increase in the % of adults visiting museums & galleries.

Outcome 4: Personal / Community growth:

'[They've gained] self confidence and new skills, and also learned that they can become involved in a project and see it through.'

Phil Bodenham, Youth Worker, Hodge Hill

The groups appeared to be highly motivated - 76% of the participants repeated their engagement. Four had already gained media skills through courses at college or on a NEET training scheme.

- 71% of the Hodge Hill participants had never tried filmmaking before (4 participants were or had been studying media at college)
- 50% learned something new during the session in which they were interviewed
- 43% were motivated to try something new as a result
- 43% said that the experience had changed the way they thought about things

One participant said that he took part because *'The opportunity was there and it's something...I don't know it was just there and I thought why not it's just a new skill isn't it?'*

Increased enjoyment of cultural offer and creative activity

Participants from Hodge Hill, interviewed about their experience whilst working with the film-maker, were reserved about how the project had affected them and how it had affected their outlook.

The opportunity to socialise was a clear motivation - 43% took part because their friends were involved. *'I've met a load of new people and I've learnt to do new things' ... 'its fun working with everybody, meeting new people, just getting jokes really' ... 'Just [enjoyed] all of it getting together talking about the area and everything like that'*

Two participants specifically mentioned that how the project had made them appreciate their own area: *'The project has helped me see a different aspect of Bromford and the way people think about it and the pride they have' ... 'Technically I've learned I love Bromford. I'd like to more stuff like this to be honest - speak more about the area.'*

Outcome 5: Increased understanding of constituency and residents

According to BMAG's own research, cited in Barriers to Cultural Participation, 2010³:

³ p.63

'consultations with Ladywood residents [found] that young people lacked understanding of the art and the advertising was felt to be unappealing to their age group:

- *the exhibits were not relevant to respondents;*
- *the exhibits did not change;*
- *the staff were not welcoming; and*
- *there was a lack of understanding of the exhibits'*⁴

As a consequence Oliver Buckley *'jumped at the chance'* to work with young residents, community partners and a series of creative practitioners to *'learn new working style... and change our ability to represent these communities'*.

David mentioned that by empowering the group's to drive the activity, he found it a challenge to *'balance BMAG's requirements with his own, and the participants' aspirations for the films'*. However, by motivating participants to produce their own creative work, Oliver Buckley observed that the Cultural Champions activity *'transforms our ability to represent these communities'*.

Outcome 6: Creation of sustainable local/ organizational infrastructure to bridge the gap between city centre institution and constituency members

'Sustainability was not the top priority. David's methodology meant we could do something museums can rarely do: reach out to young people who hang around and are totally disengaged. Just to get them engaged in the community is a breakthrough.'

Oliver Buckley, Interpretation & Audience Development Manager, BMAG

88% of the sessions offered by BMAG took place in constituency venues. All were run by creative practitioners who were based in the priority constituencies. As a consequence, the practitioners have developed very strong links with community groups and residents.

Phil Bodenham, youth worker in Firs & Bromford, observed of David King, Cultural Champions practitioner: *'I was impressed by David's professionalism, which helped the project go well. His combination of skills in filmmaking and youth work and personal skills such as perseverance really paid off. The young people respected him.'*

In Hodge Hill, both groups of young people are interested in working with David in the future and he has agreed to contact them when he needs trainees or crew for future projects. In the constituency, Saltley Leisure Centre and The Hub want David to work with groups in the future; whilst one of the participants hopes David will direct a music video for his band.

David King also led an internal skills sharing workshop for BMAG curators on engaging groups through Video and talking to history.

When asked about the sustainability of the Cultural Champions activity in Hodge Hill, Oliver Buckley, said that *'It was more important to provide the ability to give constituents a showcase. Even if they don't come to BMAG in future they will*

⁴ Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Non-Visitor Research, 2004, BMAG

represent their communities in the new galleries in 2012. By sharing their lives with BMAG, they provide insight into the community'

BMAG will incorporate the Cultural Champions films into the displays for the new Birmingham Galleries which will open in 2012. The team do not currently have any further plans to work with the Hodge Hill groups without dedicated funding.

Outcome 7: Increased enjoyment and creativity in working with constituency groups

The BMAG team have enjoyed working with new partners such as the Council's Community Arts Team, David King and the constituency youth teams, as well as drawing on their own skills.

Oliver Buckley, Interpretation & Audience Development Manager, was frustrated that *'earlier ideas for work to be done faded with confusion over funding... We had hoped the funding would last for another 12 months.'*

Despite the shortened delivery period, Oliver was delighted with the following outcomes:

- *'We have begun focussing on Hodge Hill in a way we haven't before*
- *I feel that we will be able to represent a community not usually focussed on in mainstream museums*
- *We have made new contacts and better networks*
- *Opportunity to do groundwork, it was exciting work'*



LESSONS LEARNED

'Both groups were able to offer their own interpretation on what Birmingham means to them. Because all of this was done on their territory rather than getting them to interact with the museum directly, this had greater effect on them as individuals – we were interested in their story rather than dictating what we felt the themes should be'

BMAG project coordinator⁵

Oliver Buckley, Interpretation & Audience Development Manager *'jumped at the chance'* to work with young residents, community partners and a series of creative practitioners to *'learn a new working style... and change our ability to represent these communities'*.

'...Sustainability was not the top priority. David's methodology meant we could do something museums can rarely do: reach out to young people who hang around and are totally disengaged. Just to get them engaged in the community is a breakthrough.'

The young people who engaged with BMAG's Your Birmingham film-making activity had a decided sense of what they wanted. Reluctant to engage with anything that might be a short-term initiative, they challenged the practitioner and project coordinator to make sure that the experience would be mutually rewarding.

David King, the practitioner, worked at arm's length to the BMAG team.

- 95% of the Your Birmingham sessions were delivered in the constituency
- 5% were delivered in BMAG, the city centre venue

By empowering the groups to drive their own activity, David found it a challenge to *'balance BMAG's requirements with his own, and the participants' aspirations for the films'*.

The groups chose how to represent themselves and made 2 films that were very different in style and content. According to David King, the Bordesley group *'were not interested in their local area. They wanted to make a film about family and friends.'* These participants were 15-18 years old, and of both white and BME origin.

The Firs & Bromford group were older (17-25 yrs) and predominantly white working class. They *'identified heavily with their area, were very proud and wanted to explore this in the film they made'*. Members of the group later said that that the engagement had made them appreciate their own area: *'The project has helped me see a different aspect of Bromford and the way people think about it and the pride they have' ... 'Technically I've learned I love Bromford. I'd like to more stuff like this to be honest - speak more about the area.'*

The opportunity to socialise was a clear motivation - 43% took part because their friends were involved. Younger participants (15-18 yrs) said *'I've met a load of new people and I've learnt to do new things' ... 'it's fun working with everybody, meeting new people, just getting jokes really' ... 'Just [enjoyed] all of it getting together talking about the area and everything like that'*

⁵ Cited in 'Evaluation of Your Birmingham for HLF', Sally Fort, Feb 2011

Oliver Buckley observed that the Cultural Champions activity *'transforms our ability to represent these communities'*.

According to in-depth interviews with Oliver Buckley, David King and Phil Bodenham, youth worker in Saltley, David King intends to keep in contact with the participants and community groups with a view to future joint working. BMAG have no further funding or plans to continue the engagement with the young people now that the project is complete or to work with Hodge Hill constituents in the immediate future.

'It was more important to provide the ability to give constituents a showcase. Even if they don't come to BMAG in future they will represent their communities in the new galleries in 2012. By sharing their lives with BMAG, they provide insight into the community'

According to evaluation of Your Birmingham project for HLF, the film-making activity achieves its own stated aim *'to increase a greater understanding of young people, local people, diverse cultures and their experiences. It also aimed to engender a positive sense of identity and cross-cultural understanding and build skills development in participants'*⁶.

However, it remains to be seen whether it achieves the aims of the Cultural Champions project to increase awareness and understanding of the city centre cultural institution in the constituency and to create a sustainable local/ organizational infrastructure to bridge the gap between the two.

ENABLE OR SUSTAIN?

- **Is it better to enable participants in the short term than engage over the long term?**
- **Does arm's length delivery enhance or disable bridge building between the commissioning cultural venue and the constituency?**

⁶ Cited in 'Evaluation of Your Birmingham for HLF', Sally Fort, Feb 2011

RESIDENCY FACTS & FIGURES					
Cultural partner	Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery				
Constituency	Hodge Hill				
Residency cost					
YOUR BIRMINGHAM					
Cultural practitioners	David King, film-maker, and Lashana Charles-Q, support artist				
Length of residency	6 months				
Community partners	Two groups of young people from Bordesley Green and Firs & Bromford.				
IN OUR BACKYARD					
Artists in Residence:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annamation (Perry Barr)• Reel Access (Hodge Hill)• Eleanor Hoad (Erdington)• Mohsen Keiany (Ladywood)				
OUTPUTS against project targets		Initial targets	Revised targets	ACTUAL totals	Performance +/-
		(Mar 2010)	(Aug 2010)		against revised target
Participants & engagements					
No of individual beneficiaries		620	620	616	-4
Sessions, exhibitions and publications					
No of sessions		70	70	97	+27
Contribution to other city events		4	4	2	-2
No of showcase events		2	2	3	+1
Proportion of participants by location and frequency of engagement					BMAG
% of sessions in constituency					88%
% of sessions in city centre venue					12%
% of new participants (engaged once only)					26%*
% of return participants (engaged more than once)					74%*
% of participants attending constituency-based sessions					48%
% of participants attending sessions in city centre venue					52%
data relates to Your Birmingham activity only					