

A Different Direction : Bristol
Project Report
Submitted to Bristol Legacy Commission
By Asian Arts Agency on behalf of A Different Direction
Bristol Partners.
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Key activities

Professional/career development opportunities for diverse group of independent Cultural Leaders

(See Appendix 1 for ethnicity & postcode analysis of all applicants to the programme)

9 mid-career Independent Cultural Leaders were recruited to the programme to work increase their skill level and develop their career and opportunities to become Senior Leaders within the arts sector in Bristol. Of the 9 selected, 5 defined themselves as African Caribbean, Black and/or Asian. The remaining 4 artists brought experiences of facing barriers in the sector due to their class, disability and religious background.

The Independent Cultural Leaders received a bursary and a package of professional development that included 5 x one-to-one coaching sessions with a Executive leadership coach, 3 Action Learning Sets, networking opportunities with established leaders in Bristol, Liverpool and Netherlands, Workshadowing with Senior Managers of Partner organisations and participation in the final Symposium discussions.

As a result of the programme, a number of the Independent Cultural Leaders have already gone on to develop further relationships and employment opportunities with strategic partners across Bristol.

The recruitment process for Artists was a new approach for Partners in Bristol. Partners created a longer lead in time for recruitment than usual, to enable time for open 'information sessions' which took place in St. Pauls, Easton and in a City Centre venue (Colston Hall). These sessions were well attended and the diversity of interest in the programme can be seen in the statistics which demonstrate that the project was successful in gaining interest from 98 respondents who were drawn from 25 postcodes areas, mostly from the Bristol area with the majority of those from BS5 and BS3. People were asked to define their own ethnicity and 41 different definitions were provided. The project attracted interest from over double the amount of women (68%) to men (30%), and 8% people defined themselves as 'D/disabled'. The project was successful at using a wide spectrum of organisations/ sources to disseminate information about the project from both National, Regional and local sources – the people who registered heard about the opportunity from 24 different sources.

Diversity Policies and Diversity Audit

All Partner organisations confirmed they have Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policies within this phase of the project. The project further enabled leaders to engage in challenging discussions around practice in order to bring the policies to life. To this end, partners underwent a Diversity Audit – to look at their current practice around recruitment, audience development and programming. As a further step, Partners have agreed to peer review and work together on action plans.

Recruitment Strategies - BME representation at senior workforce/ board level with all cultural institutions

The Directors and Senior Managers of Partner organisations gained key knowledge about good practice in recruitment strategies from the recruitment of Artists. It is acknowledged that it is more effective to strengthen the field of applicants than to simply set targets, as this can attract candidates only on the basis that they are 'diverse' rather than a strong candidate with the requisite skills that has also faced barriers due to his/her ethnicity/class.

The learning from this project will feed in to future practice in recruitment at all levels, including Board and Senior Management posts. The key practices will be : Develop longer term strategies for engaging potential recruits. For example, to link up participants on a community/outreach project with volunteer and recruitment opportunities at arts venues/organisations. Partners aim to work collaboratively across the city to recruit a diverse range of candidates. Finally, future recruitment will widen the networks in which adverts take place, making more use of 'community media' and include an open process with face to face meetings with staff or organisations at 'information sessions'.

Action Learning – See Appendix 2 for list of all participants

- 5 sessions for Chief Executives of partners organisations
- 1 Action Learning Set for stakeholders; Bristol City Council, Arts Council South West and Bristol Legacy Commission
- 5 Action Learning Sets for artists
- 1 Board Action Learning Set
- 1 Senior Manager's Action Learning Set (facilitated by Hilary Jennings from CLP)

Learning Sessions

These sessions were planned in place of some Action Learning Sets. Partners, in consultation with stakeholders, agreed that these would be a more strategic use of the resources, given that Action Learning Sets require a minimum number of people to make them useful. The learning sessions also had a wider impact in that they included Board members/Chief Execs and Senior Managers together.

- 3 x 1 day Learning sessions focussed on key themes; Change Management, Diversity and Leadership for all stakeholders
- 1 x Diversity and Place making day for all Senior Managers/Board Members and partners
- 1 x Diversity Day for Independent Cultural Leaders
- 1 x Diversity Day for Arts Council South West Staff; almost half the staff attended including senior management, relationship managers and assistants.
- 1 Diversity Day for Bristol City Council Staff

Coaching

- 90 coaching sessions lasting an hour per session for 16 senior, mid-career and emerging leaders (including organisational leaders and artists).

Cultural City Research Trips

- 8 delegates visited Liverpool to meet Chief Executives from the Liverpool Arts and Regeneration (LARC) consortium as well as other visionaries from the city's cultural sector
- 8 delegates visited the Netherlands, including the world renowned Eindhoven museum

Work Shadowing

- All artists and partners took place in a structured work-shadowing process, which provided artists with insights into decision-making and pressures on leaders in institutions. Partner organisations were also able to observe, interrogate and learn about different arts practice.

Symposium – See Appendix 3 for list of attendees

- 59 people attended Diversity: What Next? The speakers included people from the business, cultural and media sectors. Attendees comprised leaders, decision-makers and artists.



Finances

The programme was supported by Cultural Leadership Programme, Bristol City Council, Bristol Legacy Commission and Partner Organisations. The £10,000 support from Bristol Legacy Commission contributed to :

Bursaries for 5 x BME Cultural Leaders to take part in a Professional and Leadership development activities

Action Learning Sets and Diversity Learning Days for Senior Managers and Chief Executives to interrogate and improve their Diversity Policies

Board Action Learning Sets – attended by Board members from across all organisations, with representation from Shiv Singh (Asian Arts Agency), Fiona Kam Meadley (Arnolfini) and Colin Watson (St. Paul's Carnival). This enabled CPD opportunities for Senior BME board members and for them to have time for to influence the wider cultural sector beyond their own organisations.

Key Learning around Diversity

One of the programme aims was to improve Bristol's cultural Leaders' understanding of key issues and context about diversity in wider society and specifically in the cultural sector. It also aimed to clarify what diversity means and why it is important and to challenge thinking, practice and policy.

The majority of Leaders said that they had changed their understanding of diversity mostly in terms of breadth and scale and the programme had highlighted new and current angles on diversity: the business case for diversity; the exclusion of working class applicants to their institutions; and the mixed success of 'positive discrimination' schemes. These points are elaborated below.



The Business Case for Diversity

Directors and Stakeholders have benefitted from exploring a range of different perspectives about diversity throughout the programme, which provided real examples of how cities can work together to harness diverse advantage. One of the most significant changes in Leaders' knowledge is a departure from the previously held idea that diversity was a 'tick box exercise' towards the realisation that there is a solid business case for diversity and it provides competitive advantage. This theme was particularly highlighted in the Diversity Days which Claire Chidley facilitated drawing on her work on Inter-Cultural cities and citing Co-Media's seminal study *The Inter-cultural City: A Reader*._ Symposium Speaker, Simone Eva Redrupp, provided her perspective as an executive from a worldwide consultancy firm Aperian Global that advises multi-nationals on diversity in leadership. Her presentation highlighted and gave solid examples of how businesses that value diversity succeed in real money terms. Her presentation cited large multi-nationals who recognise that 'diversity and inclusion affects the bottom line' i.e. diverse organisations with the right leadership have competitive advantage. Simone Redrupp made the case that diversity of workforce alone will not bring competitive advantage, but that there needs to be a confident leadership that can enable a team to build and harness the differences of its workforce.

The business case for diversity was also harnessed by Leaders in Liverpool who have demonstrated the socio-economic benefits that culture has brought to the city. Typical comments from Senior Manager who attended included, *"I was impressed by the Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium and the way they have positioned themselves to ensure culture and creativity are recognised as economic benefit to their city."* *"I thought the Liverpool Trip was a very good way to see how other artistic organisations work very closely together and also a great way to see the City's vibrant art scene. It enabled me to see how the more established organisations collaborate to give support to Artists in Liverpool."* *"I*



found this trip really memorable in the context of being a newcomer to Bristol; it has helped me to understand Bristol much better.”

Partners have come away from the programme with very real examples of how diversifying their organisation is not a policy requirement but a business imperative. This is a real shift for many who recognise now, in times of economic downturn and shifting priorities, that diversity of workforce and content can be the key to development of the sector and each organisation.

Diversity and Class: moving on from ‘positive discrimination’

Partners highlighted a key development in their understanding around diversity to be the recognition of barriers to participation for people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. One Chief Executive commented, *“The scale of the word diversity has changed for me. I think that I’ve been able to remove the simplistic race and gender labels, and now apply the word in a much much wider sense.”* *“I hadn’t really thought of socio economic situations as a diversity issue.”*

The artist Grayson Perry reviewing a debate stimulated by Sonya Dyer, one of the speakers at the Symposium, argues that class is a core factor for discrimination in the cultural sector; *“One young curator said that he felt not having studied at one of the top two art schools was much more of a handicap than coming from an ethnic minority. Racism undoubtedly exists, but in the nice liberal middle-class world of the arts it probably plays a less significant role than a lot of complainants think it does. Black artists can too easily blame their failure on racism, but we need to filter out other reasons for discrimination before we can label bias as racist. Quite often what is interpreted as racism is in fact class prejudice.”*

Perry's quote echoes much of the discussions that took place amongst Partners throughout the project. The learning around class and socio-economic barriers has informed the scoping of the new creative apprenticeship scheme that Partners are developing as part of the legacy of this phase. Partners will build relationships and development pathways with young people from Further Education colleges and those without formal qualifications, amongst a range of other potential applicants. Further, in devising the apprenticeship scheme Partners have been clear that it is not labeled as 'diversity' strand. Instead, the onus is on Partners and the sector to go out and reach as many people as possible, and to devise truly inclusive recruitment practices e.g. with face to face information days, long lead in time, building longer term relationships between participants on community programmes and arts providers so that they feel they could also apply for jobs at the organisation.

A shared language for Bristol's cultural sector around Diversity

The activities engaged Partners in a discussion and understanding of 'diversity'. Towards the end of the programme, the Programme Consultant from Create Tomorrow Today facilitated a structured session for Partners to explore and agree a shared language around diversity for the Bristol consortia to take forward in to the next phase. There was agreement that the language must be fluid and responsive, rather than a more legalistic statement of Equal Opportunities which all organisations have in place already. Rather than have a fixed definition, it was understood that any diversity statement and commitment from the sector needs to encompass the willingness of Leaders to be open to questioning their own practice, and to take a diversity of views when planning and implementing policy. It was felt that only in this way can there be a live and engaged understanding of the complexity of the issues.

Next Steps

Partners are actively working together to develop the learning from this phase of the programme. These include :

Developing a **cultural talent strategy**: through collaborative approach to recruitment, and apprenticeships, in which the onus on 'Diversity' is placed with the institutions and where and how they recruit, rather than asking applicants to 'label' their background. (see p.6 "Diversity and Class" section.)

Research and Development: developing a collaborative culture 'A thinking 'brain' that commissions shared market research and scans the external environment for funding/collaborative opportunities

Capacity building: by including staff in joint training in diversity and leadership throughout the consortia

Audience intelligence sharing: developing cultural ambassadors to spread the word about Bristol's cultural offer

Joint Programming: Partners are exploring ways of programming work together to enhance the diversity of their cultural offer