How diverse are we, really?

CREATIVE PEOPLE AND PLACES

July 2021
Dawn Cameron

Contents

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This work emerges from numerous, often lengthy, conversations and interactions with many people involved with CPP. They are directors and staff members and artists, respondents to the survey circulated at the outset of the research period and attendees at a focus group for audiences, volunteers and participants. I am immensely grateful for their input throughout this process. Focus group attendees – Samina Ali and Jill Blanchard – agreed to be readers of the report in draft form; their insights were invaluable.

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1

Getting started

1.1 **Creative People and Places**

Creative People and Places (CPP) is an Arts Council England programme that aims to enable more people to take the lead in choosing, creating and taking part in brilliant arts and culture experiences in the places where they live. There are currently 33 funded projects, each located in a place where people are least likely to engage with arts and culture.

The CPP programme has resulted in over 7.4million engagements and 86% of those people weren't previously engaging regularly with arts and culture. Arts Council England has recently created a new Creative People and Places National Portfolio 2022-25 fund as a core part of the delivery of its strategy Let's Create and part of their commitment to focus investment in parts of the country where people's involvement in arts and culture is in the bottom third of engagement according to the Active Lives Survey.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/guidance-and-resources/creative-people-and-places

The CPP network is committed to reflection and learning and with funding from Arts Council England has commissioned a range of thematic studies. The topic of diversity and inclusion and the core question of 'How diverse are we, really?' came from the CPP network, leading to the commission of this research which explores how diversity is understood and practised across the CPP network. We are delighted to share our learning with the wider sector, and those who also have a passion to ask questions, reflect and create change. All our thematic studies can be found in the Our Learning section of the Creative People and Places website.

www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/creative-people-and-places-network-research

About the Author

Dawn is a researcher, project manager and evaluator working primarily in the creative arts and cultural sectors. She has attained Master of Arts degrees in Social and Public Policy and in Creative Writing. She specialises in working on projects which seek to deliver social and cultural change, and which enable individuals to engage in creative practice.

She has a particular interest in storytelling approaches and in interrogating the ways in which notions of co-production are operationalised in project delivery. Dawn works as one half of consultant team Armstrong Cameron.

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1.2 **Where I'm coming from**

When I was interviewed for this piece of work, I confidently and truthfully asserted that I was going to simply hold a mirror up to Creative People and Places. What I uncovered, I assured the panel, would be untarnished by any views or opinions which I might hold. I may also have said at some point or at many points, that my aim has for some years been to discard opinions and positions. This, I told myself and anyone prepared to hear, would be liberating and would enable me to hear objectively what people said to me over the course of a deliberately conversation-led methodology.

That's not quite how it worked out.

It turned out that though as I've gotten older and am much more prepared to answer a yes/no question with a shrug and have discarded some fixed opinions, I am left with some thoughts and beliefs that have embedded themselves in my DNA and which I can't dispense with. Also, I don't want to. They're born of experience, which is something I have in abundance.

I've done paid work which has been directly or indirectly associated with what we now call diversity since I was 21, which is over 30 years ago. Before then, in my teens, I was part of a collective which published a community newspaper and which produced arts and cultural events (we didn't call it producing at the time; I think the technical term was *putting stuff on*). Unfathomably securing a place at university, my only memorable first year contribution to the School of Social Sciences was a mumbled *Oh, by the way, I'm pregnant* to a tutor as I embarked on a decades-long sabbatical from higher education.

I did other things, too. I worked in a black women's refuge back when black was widely accepted as a political term; there was work with homeless ex-offenders then with high-risk offenders with serious substance misuse issues; heading up an Equality Services team back when organisations invested real money in that sort of thing; leading a development team at a housing association (random but challenging and a lot of fun) and then – before doing what I do now – a

position with the title chief executive which hubris enticed me to take and which I regretted pretty quickly. Along the way, I had two kids and by the time I was 38 I was a grandma. I mention these things because one of the questions I asked all of the people I interviewed was *What is your lived experience?* And it seems only fair that I summarise mine.

I was genuinely and absolutely convinced that I could shed all of the knowledge and experience I had acquired and be someone who approached this work unencumbered. That worked really well for a period of time but the ultimate failure of my quest illustrates something which I think is important when we talk about diversity and equality and inclusion, and that is that we always take ourselves and all that entails with us to whatever new situation we encounter.

1.3 **My approach**

Creative People and Places is a national action research programme funded by Arts Council England which seeks to enhance access to arts, creativity and culture by supporting cross-sectoral consortia to develop customised programmes of work which meet the needs, interests and aspirations of communities in areas of low cultural engagement.

In its current guidance, the vision and aims of the programme are described by Arts Council England as follows[1]:

Our vision for Creative People and Places is to support the public in shaping local arts and cultural provision and, in so doing, to increase attendance and participation in excellent art and culture. This investment will encourage long-term collaborations between local communities, arts organisations, museums, libraries, amateur groups, the voluntary sector and others. It aims to support new and different approaches to developing cultural programmes that deliver excellent experiences, genuinely engage people in shaping provision and involve a variety of partners.

We will invest in consortia in eligible places to develop a programme of cultural activity and engagement over the next three years but with a long-term vision.

The central aims of the fund are:

- To empower communities to take the lead in shaping and/or co creating local cultural provision

- To regularly engage more people from the identified places so they can experience, create and be inspired by arts and culture, both as audiences and/or participants for both the process of engaging communities and the art and culture itself to be excellent

- To learn from past experiences (including learning from the current Creative People and Places programme) and create an environment where the arts and cultural sector can experiment with innovative approaches to engaging communities

- To learn more about how to establish sustainable and relevant arts and cultural opportunities and make this learning freely available across the cultural sector

- To encourage partnerships across the subsidised, amateur, voluntary, and commercial sectors as well as collaborations across community, arts organisations, museums and libraries

- To demonstrate the power of arts and culture to enrich the lives of individuals and make positive changes in communities

- To enable cultural activity that is radically different from what has happened before in the eligible places, prior to any Creative People and Places programme

- Where possible and appropriate, to maximise digital opportunities for cultural engagement and empowering the public

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1   https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/New%20Creative%20People%20and%20Places%20National%20Portfolio%20Programme%202022-25%20Guidance%20for%20applicants_07_04.pdf

Approach and scope

This piece of work seeks to provide some answers to a disarmingly straightforward question devised by the National Peer Learning and Communications (NPLC) programme:

How diverse are we, really?

In addition to the central enquiry, the CPP Research Advisory Group devised a number of supplementary questions as follows:

- What does diversity and inclusion mean to CPP in its widest sense?

- What are the barriers to being truly diverse and inclusive, and how do we address them?

- How does diversity of leadership compare within the CPP network to the arts and cultural sector more generally and what are the reasons for any differences (and ideally what does that indicate about how to improve diversity)?

- How does the CPP approach to workforce (to include consortia, teams, volunteers and artists) support diversity and reflect lived experience? How could this be further developed?

- What are the impacts of diverse and inclusive infrastructure in the context of CPP?

I've approached the enquiry by:

- **Conducting a survey** of CPP places and asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree with a number of different approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion. 75 people responded to the survey. Its outcomes are dispersed throughout this report and a full summary of outcomes is included in Section 2. Survey respondents were also asked to discuss what they felt were the distinguishing characteristics of organisations which do diversity well and organisations which take a *skin-deep* approach to diversity.

- **Analysing quantitative data** provided by Arts Council England and CPP places which summarise the representation in the workforce and audiences of people embodying the nine characteristics protected in the Equality Act 2010.

- **Conducting semi-structured interviews** with 24 CPP representatives, most of whom (18) were directors, one an artist, another an adviser, another a critical friend and three team members.

- **Recruiting two storytellers** from the Research Advisory Group with whom I had more free-flowing, less structured conversations over the course of the research period. From these conversations,

I constructed two narratives which bookend this report.

- **Facilitating a focus group** attended by 12 audience members, advisers and participants from across the CPP places.

- **Introducing and inviting feedback on the emerging themes** arising from the research at the CPP peer learning gathering on 18 May 2021 attended by around 70 individuals.

1.4 **Breadth and depth**

This work took place in the first half of 2021 when we were still in lockdown in England[2]. This meant that all of the interactions I had with contributors to the research (survey respondents, interviewees, storytellers, focus group attendees etc.) were remote. Everyone was generous with their time; conversations often exceeded an hour and I spoke to some people more than once.

We were all preoccupied with Covid-19 but there were other things going on as well and because we were all at home and in front of our screens, we were perhaps more acutely aware of national and global events. Among these were some striking visual news stories: we saw a man murdered in real time outside a convenience store in Minneapolis giving rise to protests which quickly spread across the globe; we saw a US president clear a Washington DC square so that he could hold a bible awkwardly in front of a church; the toppling of a statue of Bristol slave trader, Edward Colston, was broadcast

across the world. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities published its report under the chairship of Tony Sewell CBE and though its eschewal of the term BAME was welcomed, this was overshadowed by its blithe assertion that institutional racism is a thing of the past, in this country at least.

Towards the end of this research period prominent arts and cultural organisations in England found themselves in deep water over their policy and practice in respect of race and representation[3]. In the final days before completing this piece of work, another report was published which – from its title onwards – set its stall out about where the problem lies in respect of racial disparities. *The forgotten: how white working-class pupils have been let down, and how to change it* is another government report which looks at disparities in achievement through the prism of race and ethnicity, concluding that it is white, working-class pupils who have been most let down. Writing in *The*

Guardian, David Gillborn voices his concerns about its central premise and its conclusions[4],

> *Since 2010 the education select committee has conducted dozens of formal inquiries; only two have focused on a single ethnic group and both were about the white working class. This gives a clue as to why the report is so controversial and so dangerous; it is the latest step in an ongoing campaign to use the underachievement of poor white people as a weapon to demonise anti-racism and keep the same people angry at the wrong target.*

Looking at the pupils on whom this report is focused – those in receipt of free school meals – Gillborn finds strong evidence of lower outcomes across all ethnic groups. However, being working class and being in receipt of free school meals are not the same thing at all,

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2   See Section 2.2 for a more thorough discussion of the impacts of Covid-19
3   https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/jun/23/barbican-boss-to-step-down-after-institutional-racism-row
4   https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/23/how-white-working-class-underachievement-has-been-used-to-demonise-antiracism

In Britain around 60% of adults think of themselves as working class; but free school meals [FSM] kids make up only around 15% of white pupils in state schools. Simply by replacing "FSM" with "working class", the MPs' report exaggerates the size of the issue by a factor of four. Not only that, it makes 60% of adults feel that their children are being held back unfairly.

In short, much of the conversation over the past 16 months has concerned issues of race and racism. Many organisations across a range of occupational sectors have moved from conversation to action, putting in place discrete anti-racism policy and plans. This is – in my view – long overdue and it is no surprise to me that these issues were at the forefront of many of the discussions I had over the course of this piece of work.

However, this is not a report whose primary focus is race or ethnicity or racism or anti-racism. I have attempted to reflect the preoccupations and interests of everyone I spoke to and – in pulling together the Nine Ideas which form Section Three of this report – have tried to make them relevant to CPPs whatever the demographic make-up of their communities. I also caution against conflating race with

diversity and inclusion; making racial equality and anti-racism manifest in CPP programmes of activity is critical and should be done alongside tackling other inequalities.

One of the movements at the forefront of black activism – Black Lives Matter – explicitly addresses this point in its charter[5]:

We affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. Our network centers those who have been marginalized within Black liberation movements.

People and communities are complex. All of us make our way through life embodying a whole range of characteristics (protected or not). Some – like age – we naturally progress to and from. And, of course, it is possible to do two or more things at the same time. We don't have to wait for one type of injustice to be dismantled before moving on to the next.

5   https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

1.5 **In the beginning**

Walls and piers

I interviewed Shahda Khan (director of Borderlands) in March 2021, the day after I had received my first Covid jab. I had gone from feeling quite pleased with myself – a sense of having fulfilled a civic duty – to feeling quite poorly. I was glad when Shahda told me that she wasn't feeling so good herself and asked if I minded dispensing with video.

I'd known before speaking to her that Shahda is one of five black and Asian CPP leads (two of whom share the role) but what felt unexpected to me was the location of her CPP. Borderlands focuses on Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. I mention to her that I visited Redcar once with a friend who had worked in some tangential way on the development of what was referred to as a vertical pier. It had been quite a blustery day but being by the sea had felt refreshing.

Though Middlesbrough is the most ethnically diverse local authority in the Tees Valley with a minority ethnic population of 11.7% (an increase of 86% since 2001)[6], Redcar was – according to Shahda – until recently the whitest borough in the country. Both areas voted overwhelmingly to leave the EU: 66.2% in Redcar and Cleveland[7] and 65.5% in Middlesbrough as a whole[8] compared to a UK leave vote of 51.9%[9].

In common with many post-industrial towns in the north-east, political representation shifted somewhat in the 2019 general election. Though Middlesbrough re-elected its Labour incumbent, it was with a significantly lower share of the vote.[10] Redcar and Cleveland, on the other hand, elected one of the country's youngest MPs in 28-year-old Jacob Young – one of many demolition jobs on the hitherto indestructible 'red wall'.

Making stories

We started out by talking about the stresses and strains of online working. I told her that I missed train journeys, unwinding and decompressing and watching bits of the world appearing and disappearing from view. Listening back to the recording of our conservation, I hear each of us sighing a lot – myself more than Shahda. She describes work as 'flipping relentless'. Apart from at Christmas she's taken no time off since last August though she says that she intends to take the following week off,

> *Usually when I'm off I'm still working but I need to switch the laptop off and bury it in the back of the car.*

She surprises me by turning the tables and asking me how I'm finding this piece of work. I explain that it always takes me a while to find my

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6   https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/open-data-foi-and-have-your-say/about-middlesbrough-and-local-statistics/local-population-diversity
7   https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/update/2016-06-24/eu-referendum-redcar-and-cleveland-vote-to-leave-the-eu/
8   https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/elections/election-results/2016-eu-referendum
9   https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results
10 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/constituencies/E14000819

feet and then to find the story; that I have to wait around for the story to tell itself to me but that I thought I knew broadly speaking what it was and what its central plot points were. (I sound very confident in this as I listen back. I was wrong as it turned out, but I wasn't to know that at the time).

Shahda was appointed during lockdown so the first time I spoke to her she was working from home as she had been since her appointment the previous summer. She was enmeshed in business planning which had been delayed in large part due to the pandemic. The process had begun before her appointment, so it was a challenge to pull everything together. She told me,

> *It's been exceptionally difficult trying to retrospectively change a document to reflect where we are now and there's been other challenges, so I've torn my hair out going back and forth. I hope this week that the Arts Council will sign off the business plan and the related budget but it's been a rollercoaster, backwards and forwards and up and down.*

First impressions

I was interested to know where Shahda had been before she started with CPP and learned that she had worked in local government as a lead for integration, cohesion and migration, describing her portfolio as *all things people*. But that was only her paid work. In addition,

> *…in my personal and voluntary capacity I'm involved in lots of networks and organisations around gender-based violence and communities and conflict, counter-terrorism, so you can see there's lots of overlap in terms of my job and my personal interests. So it very much became a 24/7, seven days a week kind of job and it's really difficult to explain to people who haven't worked in this sort of area and being people-focused that it's more than a job and you can't just switch off.*

Though she had not previously worked in the arts and cultural sector, Shahda had some experience of collaborating with arts organisations. The arts and public sectors differ in some ways, she explains, but there are some similarities, not least that everyone seems to know everyone. Her initial impressions of CPP are positive,

> *What I've liked about CPP is that everybody seems really open to working together and supporting each other and it feels like a safe space to air challenges without people getting upset and defensive. We haven't dealt with any really hard questions yet. So far, it's about keeping each other safe and well and dealing with the now.*

The brown girl talking about the brown things

My conversation with Shahda was one of a number that day – the others with friends and family – in which the subject of Harry and Meghan came up. They'd just been interviewed by Oprah Winfrey. Lots of the content had been leaked in advance so we all had a pretty good idea of what the key points were going to be by the time it was broadcast on the Monday. I watched it on the Tuesday and by that time the papers had really gone to town, one way or the other, on the whole thing. Piers Morgan was behaving in a way which – were he a middle-aged woman – would be described as hysterical or hormonal or menopausal.

Shahda raised the interview while making a wider point about race, racism and being the one who always brings those issues up.

> *At times when I talk about diversity, it seems as if I'm just talking about race and obviously we know it's much, much wider than race and there's lots of other issues*

but your visual diversity is always going to be about that. This morning I was in a meeting… where everyone just shares an update about the landscape locally, regionally, nationally, internationally that we might need to be aware of. I sat in the meeting and thought, 'Is anyone going to mention the whole Buckingham Palace and racism thing?'

At another meeting she had listened to a conversation about vaccine uptake among black and Asian residents of a particular area,

And I thought, 'Shahda, you're going to be the girl who always puts her hand up.' Even though It's got nothing to do with my role now. So, I said, 'Before we go off deciding what we can do to get people to take up the vaccine, can someone give me some robust data about what take-up there's been and what the gaps are?' Have an informed position to start from so we can be more targeted rather than reinforcing the idea that there are these people who keep complaining that they're disproportionately affected – but won't bloody take the vaccine. You sit there and think 'In 2021, why am I still having these conversations?'

Shahda moved to Teesside when she was a young woman. She stayed because she got to know the place and moved to Hartlepool, a town with significant far-Right activity. She told me that in the lead-up to the referendum it had frequently been visited by Nigel Farage.

Middlesbrough – though very different from the Midlands where she grew up – has ethnically diverse inner-city wards and is only slightly less ethnically diverse than Newcastle. As a town, Middlesbrough combines areas of poverty with areas of affluence,

Less than 10 minutes in the car and I stick out like a sore thumb. Invariably I was the only person of colour in lots of meetings and spaces.

I wondered how that felt for her,

It's felt very challenging in lots of ways and you always carry that burden of being the one that has to speak out. Over recent years I've informally mentored lots of women from different backgrounds and I always make a point to tell non-white girls to not always be the brown girl that talks about the brown things. Because you'll be pigeon-holed and you have so much more to offer in terms of your passions, your interests, your dreams, your talent.

Over the past year I've spoken to many people who have made just this point. Many have told me that things have got worse over the past year in the wake of Black Lives Matter and a new reckoning with wider issues of race and racism. That compulsion to speak out can be draining as Shahda explains,

I think in the last year that burden has become increasingly heavy to carry and it's mentally draining.

Going back full circle to Harry and Meghan (nobody uses their titles anymore), she tells me that recent events have pulled her up short,

Sometimes you think everything's heading in the right direction and then something happens like this whole week with Meghan and Harry and Piers Morgan and this whole 'I don't believe her' and it takes you right back.

It's not about me

It was clear in my conversation with Shahda that she was reluctant to make things about her and her feelings. Her concern – and she voiced this several times as we spoke – was about other people who might be less able to deal with the challenges she sometimes faced.

She talked for a little while about the necessity to make the CPP space feel comfortable, secure and safe for everyone and in particular those who are most vulnerable: older people, disabled people, those with substance misuse issues. She sounded fervent about safety and about creating a welcoming environment. Then she said,

> *I know when I've experienced really overt, horrible, physical racism and attack, I've felt really vulnerable out and about and I think some of that vulnerability is the fear for other people who are way more vulnerable than me.*

And then she talked about her lived experience of a racist attack which took place close to the space she will shortly be working from. Of course, she introduced the story by saying: *It's going too much into being about me and it shouldn't be.*

> *A few years ago, right actually within a couple of hundred yards of MIMA, somebody tried to pull my hijab off: 'Effing this, effing that, go back to your effing country, you suicide bomber.' All that crap. And a few weeks before that at almost exactly the same spot I had a group of young boys…men?...who ranged from 16-19 on their bikes shouting similar things and at that point I'd walked towards them*

> *and said 'Don't shout racist stuff at me from over there. If you're big and hard enough, come and say it to my face.'*

> *I rang up the police and obviously they dispersed and that was that but when four weeks later it happened again, somebody tried to pull my scarf off, that time when I was calling the police, I burst into tears. And what really annoys me is when I talk about it now, I still get flipping upset.*

> *It was the fact that other people just stood by. But also, it was 'Oh my goodness, what if it was someone way more vulnerable? It could be my mum. It could be that newly arrived refugee who doesn't speak English or anybody, someone who doesn't have the Chief Constable's number on speed dial…'*

Her voice is hesitant. It sounds as if something is stuck in her throat. I recognise that voice. It's called *not wanting to make it all about me* or *not making a fuss* and knowing that there are other people who have it much harder and are less able to cope and integrate this terrible experience into the narrative of their life. It's also called downplaying your own experience. There's also a bit of disbelief in there that this has actually happened.

Lots of people – particularly people who are already marginalised – will be very familiar with

this feeling. But anyone can experience events that make them feel like that and it feels – to me, anyway – that it's important that we are able to connect with that, to imagine and to show compassion for those experiencing those feelings, even (perhaps especially) when they downplay them.

I say some words which include,

> *It's terrible and it's kind of ironic also that you said it happened just outside MIMA and you're going to be working there soon. Your workplace should always be a safe place. This perhaps is the subtlety and nuance of diversity that people don't always grasp: that it's not a theoretical issue for you. It's not theoretical and it's not hypothetical.*

My voice is also cracking. I put it down to the vaccine.

2

Background and context

2.1 **Words: the terms we use when we talk about diversity, equality and inclusion**

Embarking on this piece of work, it occurred to me how much the lexicon of equality, diversity and inclusion has changed over the years. I've pulled together some of the terms that have been used and have fallen into and out of favour since I have been active in this work. I'm sure I have missed lots out but looking at what's included, I'm reminded of how powerful language is, not least in excluding from conversations some people who might well have contributions to make if they were only able to make sense of the words we use when we talk about diversity (or equity or equality or multiculturalism or whatever, depending on our ideological preferences).

This section of the report is a first stab at bringing some of these words out into the open and exposing them to the light. The definitions are deliberately succinct and are summaries based on my own understanding, though they are backed up with footnotes. Some indicate particular ideological positions. They're an invitation to gain an overview of the varied and changing approaches we've used over the years in our pursuit of equality, diversity and inclusion and to dig deeper where any feel of particular interest.

Activist approaches

As the name suggests, this approach is led by activists; the focus is on mobilising around a campaign for change. Such campaigns might include the suffragette movement, Black Lives Matter and MeToo. Activist-led approaches may or may not be led by a figurehead.

Allyship

A practice which is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency and accountability with marginalised individuals and/or groups of people. Allyship is open to anyone. Thus, white women can be allies to black, Asian and ethnically diverse people, men can be allies to women, straight cisgender people can be allies to members of the LGBTQI+ community, people who are not disabled can be allies to disabled people etc.

An anti-racist approach

This is predicated on an understanding that at the heart of unequal treatment for black, Asian and ethnically diverse people are racist structures. Similarly, the social model of disability and some feminist approaches situate the problem of discrimination squarely with systemic processes and structures which exclude minoritised groups.

Business case for diversity

An understanding that equality and diversity practice is good for business (also see Diversity, below). By discriminating, employers miss out on attracting the best talent.
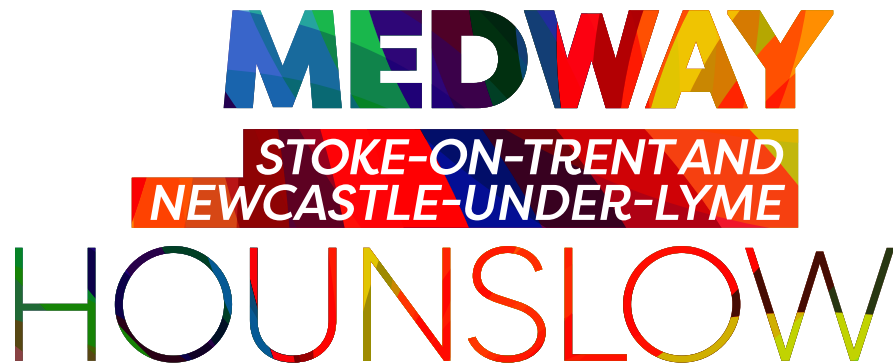
Colour-blind approach

'I don't see colour'. Most usually associated with race issues, it can also be applied to other areas. How, for example, might a colour-blind approach be applied to disability? Why might people feel offended by a colour-blind approach?

Creative Case for Diversity

The Creative Case for Diversity describes Arts Council England's approach to diversity. It can be summarised as follows: *diversity and equality are crucial to the arts and culture because they release the true potential of our nation's artistic and cultural talent – from every background. Our diverse nature offers unique opportunities for artistic and cultural collaborations and innovation*[11].

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11 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/creative-case-diversity

MEDWAY

*STOKE-ON-TRENT AND
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME*

HOUNSLOW

Diversity

The term diversity emerged in the United States in 1978 as part of the Supreme Court's decision in the University of California v Blake, according to Hua Hsu in his 2017 piece for The New Yorker[12]. Again, according to Hua Hsu, the term felt vague and ahistorical, concerning itself less with righting past wrongs or redressing inequalities and more with creating diverse workplaces which include people who embody a range of characteristics. Diversity gained ground in corporate America and later in the UK and elsewhere with its claims (some backed with research data) that workplace diversity results in better performance, more creative dialogue and higher productivity. Companies have increasingly focused their efforts on devising the business case for their diversity efforts (see Business case, above) seeking to measure the positive impacts of diversity in terms of turnover, retention, productivity, creativity (see Creative case, above), succession planning, public image, and revenue/market share.

Equal opportunities

Particularly – though not exclusively – associated with employment, equal opportunities refers to the policy and practice of giving everyone the same opportunities for employment, pay and promotion, without discriminating against particular groups. Some critics of equality of opportunity point out that equality of opportunity is not the same as equality of outcomes while others criticise it on the grounds that *'It assumes that life is a zero-sum competition for wealth and status, that the most important thing is ensuring that only the smartest and hardest-working among us end up the victors. It assumes there will always be an underclass; it just wants to reserve membership for those who truly deserve it.'*[13]

Equity

While equality of opportunity advocates that every individual or group of people has access to the same resources or opportunities, equity recognises that each person has different circumstances and starting points and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. By way of example, if an organisation commits to distributing, say, 100 laptops to every school in its town that would clearly be an equal distribution of resources, However, if in some of those schools every child already had access to laptops and in another school none of the children had access to laptops that could be deemed to be inequitable.

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12   https://www.newyorker.com/culture/2017-in-review/the-year-in-diversity-fatigue
13   https://www.vox.com/2015/9/21/9334215/equality-of-opportunity

Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are sometimes used interchangeably but are subtly different concepts. If diversity describes an expectation – in terms of what the workforce should look like and/or who should benefit from programmes and services – inclusion describes the type of culture which enables a diverse workforce to contribute and benefit fully. An inclusive organisation values and seeks out different perspectives and its values and belief system promote participation and interaction.

In short, diversity and inclusion are not synonymous: it's possible for an organisation to be diverse but not inclusive or to be inclusive but not diverse.

Institutional racism

Defined by Lord Macpherson in 1999 as the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racial stereotyping.

Intersectionality

Kimberlé Crenshaw invented the term over 30 years ago. Summarising what it means today, she says,

> *It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on*

> *gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts[14].*

Lived experience

Baljeet Sand defines lived experience as,

> *The experiences of people on whom a social issue, or combination of issues, has had a direct personal impact…[15]*

She goes on to differentiate lived experience from lived expertise, defining the latter as *knowledge, insights, understanding and wisdom gathered through lived experience.*

Multiculturalism

At its simplest, multiculturalism describes a society in which diverse cultures live together. As a practice multiculturalism recognises, celebrates and embraces the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups. Multiculturalism seeks to include and recognise the contributions of all members of society, respecting differences without an expectation of assimilation.

Positive action

The ability to take positive action to promote equality of opportunity in the workplace goes back decades and is enshrined in the Equality Act 2010.

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14 https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/
15 https://issuu.com/thelivedexperiencereport/docs/the_lived_experience_-_baljeet_sand

Positive action is defined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission as follows:

Positive action is about taking specific steps to improve equality in your workplace. For example, to increase the number of disabled people in senior roles in which they are currently under-represented.

It can be used to meet a group's particular needs, lessen a disadvantage they might experience or increase their participation in a particular activity[16].

Examples of positive action might include targeting particular groups in job advertisements, encouraging applications from under-represented groups, offering training to particular groups or favouring the job candidate from an under-represented group, where two candidates are 'as qualified as' each other.

Positive discrimination

Positive discrimination and positive action can be confused. However, they have distinct and separate meanings. Positive discrimination is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and would involve an employer recruiting or seeking to recruit someone purely on the basis of their protected characteristic rather than on their experience or qualifications. It can also include setting quotas in the recruitment process or promoting individuals on the basis of their protected characteristic.

Privilege

The concept of privilege as a prism through which to examine inequality is perhaps most often associated with white privilege but applies to other unearned benefits that individuals and groups might acquire on the basis of their identity. Types of identity that might afford an individual privilege include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion and socio-economic status

Rights-based approach

A human rights-based approach (HRBA) has been developed by the United Nations as a conceptual framework that makes respecting, protecting and safeguarding human rights the cornerstone, goal and tool for enabling sustainable human development. Placing equality and diversity within the conceptual framework of broader human rights is felt to shift it from the margins to the centre.

Social model of disability

Developed by disabled people, the social model of disability is built on an understanding that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. The focus is on removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. It is the removal of barriers that can ensure that disabled people can be independent and equal in society.

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16 https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/employers-what-positive-action-workplace

Unconscious bias

Unconscious bias refers to biases we are unaware of. An unconscious bias is automatic and is triggered by making rapid, instinctive judgments and assessments of people and situations. Unconscious biases are influenced by background, cultural and social environment and prior and personal experiences. Implicit bias is similar to unconscious bias but questions the unconsciousness of these biases given that we are increasingly being made aware of them. The task is to recognise implicit biases and to work to ensure that their impacts are mitigated.

Whiteness

A growing area of academic study which shifts the analytical gaze from the otherness of blackness and brownness to the ubiquity of whiteness. It interrogates what whiteness is, how it was constructed and what it means. Historian Nell Irvine Painter provides a thorough and readable unpicking of notions of whiteness in her book, *The History of White People.*

SLOUGH

CORBY & WELLINGBOROUGH

BRADFORD

HAVERING

2.2 **Lest we forget: Impacts of Covid-19**

This research has taken place during a global pandemic which has had profound impacts on all of us. Its most devastating impact in the UK has been the deaths (at June 2021) of almost 128,000 people in the UK and it continues to wreak havoc in many parts of the world[17]. At its most banal, it has affected the methods I have been able to use to conduct this work and has meant that all of my interviews have been conducted either online or by telephone. Among the 20+ semi-structured interviews that I have carried out, I cannot recall one where Covid-19 has not provided a backdrop to our conversations: the progress of vaccinations; side-effects of vaccinations (one of the people I interviewed was in bed when we spoke); just wanting to turn the camera off so we're not left staring at our own image for hours on end (that's my ongoing gripe); stories about people seriously affected by the virus; diminished services and support.

Using a combination of ONS and BBC data[18] I estimate that around 20,000 residents of CPP places have died of Covid-19 between March 2020 and 14 May 2021.

It has affected all of us, but it has affected us differently and it has held a mirror up to existing inequalities. At the time of writing, notwithstanding ominous warnings about the possible impacts of the Delta variant, it feels a little as if we may – in this country, anyway – return to something we might recognise as normal(ish) soon(ish). However, for many people across the CPP places and particularly for those less able than others to blithely 'bounce back', the impacts will remain for some considerable time.

In a report whose explicit focus is diversity, it feels important to highlight some of the impacts of Covid-19 on groups with which many CPP places are seeking to consult, collaborate and co-produce.

Headlines

- **Groups which experience existing disadvantages have been hard hit by Covid-19.**

- **Existing disadvantages multiply, intersect and layer leaving many people firefighting on all fronts: health, childcare, employment, housing, vulnerability to abuse and exploitation among others.**

- **Though race and ethnicity are factors in determining experiences of Covid-19, this is not attributable to genetic, inherent factors but rather to the interplay of social class, deprivation, poor housing conditions and systemic racism.**

- **Disabled people have been particularly severely affected by Covid-19, their experiences largely invisibilised by vague references to 'underlying conditions'.**

- **Older people, too, have had a particularly hard time. The chances of survival diminish with age and even for those not directly affected by the pandemic, isolation and deterioration in existing health conditions have been particular impacts for this group.**

- **For those who have experienced Long Covid, impacts are sustained and ongoing.**

17 https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-how-covid-19-is-spreading-around-the-world-12061281
18 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51768274

Low-income families with children

Based on an online survey of 285 low-income families and in-depth interviews with 21 families between May and August 2020, CPAG's *Poverty in the Pandemic* report[19] provided an early insight into the ways in which low-income families were affected by Covid-19.

Financial impacts were significant with 80% of respondents reporting a significant deterioration in their living standards attributable to falling income and rising expenditure. This was the case for those both in and out of employment.

Raised expenditure was due to costs associated with spending more time at home and included energy costs and food, both expenditure items which poorer families spend a higher proportion of their income on.

Some families needed to open their homes to grown-up children or to parents and this, too, had an impact on spending. Being forced to spend so much more time indoors was particularly stressful for those living in homes which were already overcrowded and/or which did not have access to outdoor space.

Though many of the families responding to the survey were able to benefit from the Job Retention Scheme and Self-employment Income Support Scheme, the cap at 80% of income left many unable to meet their financial obligations.

Disabled people

Published during the week that the UK reached the milestone of 100,000 deaths from Covid-19, Disability Rights' open letter[20] set out the impacts of Covid-19 on disabled people, highlighting that their deaths had been largely unreported and made invisible, not least because as well as being disabled many of those who died were elderly,

> *40% of deaths were care home residents. 30% of these people died in care homes, and a further 10% were taken to hospital where they died.*

> *We hear that care home residents are older people, as if that somehow mitigates their deaths. Older people in care homes are disabled, whether that is through age, dementia, sensory impairment, or physical or learning disabilities. These people were disabled people, and they need not have died.*

> *According to data from the Office for National Statistics, 59% of all deaths have been those of disabled people.*

In a further article in April 2021[21], Disability Rights asserts that Covid-19 has led to a huge rise in the incidence of disability among those affected by Long Covid. It is reported that at least 122,000 NHS staff have Long Covid and that this will have a serious long-term impact on the nation's ability to recover from Covid-19 since many staff are forced to reduce their hours of work, are unable to return to work or need time off for ongoing symptoms.

Turning to other essential workers, 114,000 teachers have Long Covid along with around 30,000 social care workers. The possible knock-on effects for children and vulnerable families are worrying.

19 https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Poverty-in-the-pandemic.pdf
20 https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2021/january/open-letter-our-ceo-100000-deaths-coronavirus-two-thirds-deaths-are-disabled
21 https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2021/april/covid-causing-huge-rise-disability

For some, Long Covid is also associated with additional mental and other health conditions. Lancet Psychiatry reported that one third of people with severe Covid went on to be diagnosed with a neurological or psychiatric condition within six months.

LGBTQ people

In May 2020, the LGBT Consortium published outcomes of a survey of LGBTQ support organisations[22]. 47% of respondents reported an immediate impact on their organisations' finances. 20% felt that they would be forced to close. The impact was particularly pronounced on smaller organisations with annual income of less than £50k.

The LGBT Foundation conducted its own research[23] – *Hidden Figures* – which sought to assess the impact of Covid-19 on LGBTQ communities. Conducted in May 2020, it shows wide-ranging negative impacts on individuals' physical and mental well-being including increased feelings of isolation and for young people forced to move back home, stresses associated with being confined with families who might be homophobic or transphobic or who were unaware of the young person's sexuality.

42% of respondents stated they would like to access mental health services. This figure rose to 66% of black, Asian and ethnically diverse respondents. 64% of all respondents stated that they would like to receive support from a LGBTQ specialist organisation. As we have seen, however, specialist support was limited with many LGBTQ organisations hard hit by the fallout from the pandemic.

Older people

According to research carried out by Age UK[24], impacts of Covid-19 on older people have been particularly severe. In addition to the increased risk of severe ill health and death from the pandemic (the mean age of those dying from Covid-19 in England and Wales was 80.4)[25], those apparently unaffected directly reported low mood, lack of support, deteriorating physical health and increased pain in part due to the non-availability of formal and informal healthcare including access to GP appointments and coping methods such as social groups, physical exercise and – for those shielding – visits from and to friends and family. In addition, friends and families of older people reported that,

> *…lack of mental stimulation and socialising throughout the pandemic has left their loved ones more forgetful, confused, and repeating the same conversations. Older people themselves sometimes told us they were finding it harder to remember things.*

Black, Asian and ethnically diverse people

Research carried out by charity Turn2Us[26] revealed that 58% of black, Asian and ethnically diverse workers' employment had been affected by Covid-19 compared to 47% of white workers. People of Bangladeshi backgrounds were most affected (80% reporting changes to their employment) followed by 63% of Black African and Black British workers, 58% of workers of Pakistani descent and 55% of workers of Indian descent.

22   https://www.consortium.lgbt/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/LGBT-Sector-Covid-19-Insight-Report-1.pdf
23   https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/lgbt-website-media/Files/7a01b983-b54b-4dd3-84b2-0f2ecd72be52/Hidden%2520Figures-%2520The%2520Impact%2520of%2520the%2520Covid-19%2520Pandemic%2520on%2520LGBT%2520Communities.pdf
24   https://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/articles/2020/10/age-uk--research-into-the-effects-of-the-pandemic-on-the-older-populations-health/
25   https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/averageageofthosewhohaddiedwithcovid19
26   https://www.turn2us.org.uk/About-Us/Media-Centre/Press-releases-and-comments/BAME-workers-take-biggest-financial-hit-from-coron

The data also show that 29% of White Other workers who lost income felt at risk of defaulting on rent or mortgage payments followed by workers of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent (24% and 20% respectively).

Runnymede Trust's 2021 report[27] examining the intersections and overlaps of race and class cites the dispiriting observation made by the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity that the most significant risk factor influencing impacts of Covid-19 on black, Asian and ethnically diverse people was *entrenched structural and institutional racism and racial discrimination* (Nazroo and Bécares, 2021).

The relative prevalence of Covid-19 in different ethnic groups has changed over time. Thus, early indications that black, Asian and ethnically diverse people were – as a block – more severely impacted by Covid-19 have been subject to change as data has been accumulated over time. Thus, death rates of those in the Mixed, other ethnic groups, Black Caribbean, Black African and Asian Other groups did not have poorer survival outcomes than white people. What has become apparent, though, is that different minority ethnic groups have been affected in different ways by the virus. Confirming what we know to be true about the fallacy of genetic racial differences, Government's report[28] (published in Feb 2021) addressing Covid-19 health inequalities by ethnic group reports that,

> *The disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities – apparent during the first wave and continuing for some ethnic groups during the second wave to date – is largely a result of higher infection rates for some ethnic groups… Ethnicity itself is not a risk factor for infection but people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience various risk factors for infection. Sage reported that "Modifiable social factors such*

> *as poverty and occupation make a large contribution to the greater burden of Covid-19 in ethnic minorities"…geography, age, deprivation, overcrowding, multigenerational households, certain occupations (in particular those that are public-facing) and lifestyle factors.*

Working-class people

In its report, *One Working Class: Race, Class and Inequalities* (Feb 2021)[29], Runnymede Trust argues against a manufactured antipathy between black, brown and white working-class people making the point that issues of race and class act together and independently to drive inequalities.

Working-class people are, by definition, a multi-racial group, though the report argues that structural and systemic racism can layer and compound impacts of Covid-19. It is accepted and understood that there is no genetic basis for 'race' and that it is largely constructed. Therefore, increased incidence of Covid-19 and the increased likelihood of death for some minority ethnic groups is, the report argues, explained by the cumulative impacts of lifelong socio-economic disadvantages,

> *These have meant that they are more likely to work in jobs outside of the home, more likely to be key workers, less likely to have been supplied with adequate PPE (Haque Bécares and Treloar, 2020), more likely to live in overcrowded housing and have less financial capabilities to buffer against the high economic impacts of Covid.*

27   https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/Facts%20Dont%20Lie%20(2021)-Begum%2C%20Treloar%20.pdf
28   https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925135/S0778_Driver s_of_the_higher_COVID-19_incidence__morbidity_and_mortality_among_minority_ethnic_groups.pdf
29   https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/Facts%20Dont%20Lie%20(2021)-Begum%2C%20Treloar%20.pdf

Women and men

Both men and women have been seriously affected by Covid-19 though in differing ways.

The Women's Resource Centre reported at the beginning of the pandemic that the National Domestic Abuse line had seen a 25% increase in online requests since lockdowns began[30]. It further reported that the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales told MPs that the number of women killed by men had risen to the highest it had been for at 11 years. There were 16 domestic homicides within the first three weeks of lockdown whose victims included six children. Home – a place to which many of us were confined for much of the time during lockdowns – was for many women and children the least safe space.

Turning to some of the more direct impacts on women and men[31], data collected by ONS covering the period March 2020 – February 2021 shows that more men died from Covid-19. Between March 2020 and January 2021, 63,700 men died of Covid-19 compared with 53,500 women.

However, Covid-19 had a more negative impact on women's wellbeing than on men's. This may in part be due to the unequal allocation of housework; from September 2020 to early October 2020, women spent 64% more time on unpaid household work.

Turning to childcare, at the beginning of lockdown in March 2020 women spent 55% more time on unpaid childcare. Those may have seemed like halcyon days on reflection because by September and October 2020 women were spending 99% more time on unpaid childcare.

The burden of home schooling, too, fell disproportionately on women's shoulders. At the beginning of the pandemic just over a third of women reported that their wellbeing was negatively affected by home schooling compared to 20% of men. Impacts evened out somewhat by late January and early February 2021 when 53% of women and 45% of men reported negative impacts on their wellbeing brought about by home schooling.

At the beginning of the pandemic, anxiety scores increased to the highest levels recorded with women reporting significantly higher rates of anxiety throughout the pandemic.

30 https://www.wrc.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=73e9c7ce-f5b7-4b13-9a36-b9a4f8d191e1
31 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19andthedifferenteffectsonmenandwomenintheukmarch2020tofebruary2021/2021-03-10

3

In numbers

3.1 **Summary of CPP survey outcomes**

As a first step in attempting to answer the question – *How diverse are we, really?* – I wanted to find out what CPP places understand diversity to mean and how they characterise effective practice. I also wanted to know what they felt were the characteristics of poor (or skin-deep or box-ticking) approaches to diversity. I was curious to learn whether there is a 'CPP way' of doing diversity or if approaches differ according to local needs and circumstances.

I also used the survey as a means of marshalling support from CPP places for the recruitment of a focus group made up of audiences, participants, volunteers and advisers[32]. Respondents were also asked if they would like to share their CPP's diversity story with me. In the event, 24 people volunteered to have individual conversations with me.

The remainder of this subsection summarises the outcomes of the survey.

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32 Focus group attendees were paid a small fee for attendance.

Total respondents: 75

Geographical spread: There were respondents from every English region. Highest numbers of responses were from East of England (15), London (11), South East (10), North East (10). Lowest number of responses were from North West (4) and South West (2).

Respondents' roles: The majority of respondents were CPP team members (48) followed by consortium members (20).

Ideologies: I asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a number of statements which summarised various ideological positions in respect of diversity and inclusion. These included: activist approaches; positive action; the Creative Case for Diversity; unconscious bias and others. I didn't specify which schools of thought each statement summarised.

I was interested to learn if – by accident or design – CPP practices embody a particular understanding of what we mean when we talk about diversity and inclusion. The ways in which people responded to those statements indicated that – on the whole – respondents were not strong adherents of any particular ideological approaches. However, it was possible to discern the types of approach with which respondents had most sympathy. These were: human rights-based approaches; business case for diversity; approaches which recognise systemic/institutionalised discrimination; and the Creative Case for Diversity.

Respondents were less committed to approaches which include positive action and approaches which require individuals and groups to confront unconscious biases.

Respondents were invited to expand on their responses. The following statements represent the range of those responses:

I think an equitable approach is necessary for a democratic arts provision. However, the consideration that there can also be an oppressive nature in the leadership of diverse groups should not be ignored for the sake of diversity.

People do have underlying behaviours but it isn't instinctive. It's learnt and can be unlearnt.

Creating bespoke provision can cause further divides or segmentation.

Treating people equally should not mean treating everyone the same.

Practical measures need to be implemented at all stages and levels of decision-making in an organisation to address systemic and structural inequalities.

I think working in a predominantly white area where many of the local MPs are publicly Right-wing and actively raising their own concerns around BLM, makes the environment you work in very toxic and difficult as many of the people we are targeting mirror these frankly racist views.

Diversity done badly

I asked respondents to describe how poor diversity practice can be recognised. How can you tell when an organisation's commitment is only skin-deep? Respondents were not expected to necessarily use CPP as their frame of reference.

The term 'box-ticking' came up frequently. When respondents referred to box-ticking they often went on to discuss organisations which use diversity as a buzzword to release cash and meet funders' expectations. Among the responses discussing box-ticking, the following was typical,

Organisations focusing on ethnicity and feeling that covers diversity…it annoys me to think people are being tokenistic and box-ticking to fulfil the criteria without actually addressing or changing their practice.

Other respondents often referred to half-hearted, performative efforts where change was not necessarily a desired outcome. Among these were the following:

When conversations are self-indulgent, and no actions are taken afterwards.

Completing surveys and not discussing it as a group.

Change does not happen.

They do things too quickly. Rush, rush, rush and we do things the same way over and over again… intentions of change are only spoken. When the reality of implementation hits, they don't have the 'time'.

Hard to explain. You just instinctively feel it.

Diversity done well

A recurring motif in responses to this question was dialogue. It was felt by many respondents that organisations which do diversity well are fearless and that their approach is marked by a commitment to conversation and a sense of dynamism and forward momentum. They are open to dialogue with people who have differing views and are able to clearly articulate and justify their policy and practice in respect of diversity. Looking at some of the responses, it feels clear that for many people, inclusion is a critical element of successful diversity practice. Here's a sample of responses:

Clear, open and honest communication about what they are doing and why, as well as where they're looking to improve.

No fear of segregation or lower opportunity as a participant. Transparent and kind facilitation of activities and a space for dialogue.

Organisations that build in reflection time, that feels composed and in control are the ones that go beyond box-ticking.

When communities feel proud to align themselves with the organisations, showing a trust and understanding between community residents and organisations.

I think that's difficult to tell unless you work closely with an organisation, but when you do it looks like deep conversations, not being afraid to be comfortable and true co-creation with under-represented communities.

Open discussion, active and regular encouragement to challenge the norm and tackle difficult issues.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to working with under-represented people long-term despite the challenge of funding this work.

The work they're doing behind the scenes is in alignment with the work they're showcasing to the world.

There's usually evidence of action in surprising areas where diversity issues are more than the obvious suspects.

Consortium representativeness

CPP places are led by cross-sectoral consortia. Arts Council England guidance specifies that,

Projects are led by consortia and must include community groups and/or grass-roots organisations as well as cultural organisations such as museums, libraries or arts organisations. Other partners might include clubs, housing associations, private-sector organisations or universities.

Only 16 respondents felt that their consortium broadly reflected their locality. 44 felt that it did not and 15 were not sure. Comments included:

While the population is less diverse than the national average, there is a high level of diversity on the team in terms of ethnicity, country of origin, gender, age etc. and we have recently increased the diversity of the consortium by adding youth representation.

No business/organisation/partnership can be truly representative of the locality. They can only be representative in their interests and activities in the locality.

The local area is diverse. The consortium is white, mostly middle class.

Not aware of anyone on the consortium who represents the perspectives of someone with disabilities, anyone under 25, anyone (apart from an adviser) who has south Asian, east Asian, African or African Caribbean heritage.

It has been difficult to recruit members from local ethnic communities as they are reluctant to engage with culture and get involved with boards/consortiums.

3.2 **Workforce data**

Data in this section is derived from CPP workforce and audience data collated by Arts Council England and covering 29 places at 31 March 2021. Arts Council England urges caution in using the data given the low numbers of specialist staff, managers and all permanent staff. Readers should bear this in mind when interpreting the data below.

Please note that I use the term black, Asian and minority ethnic in parts of this section where this is the term used in the data I have had access to.

3.2.1 **CPP workforce at 31 March 2021**

Please note that:

- Permanent staff are defined as paid, permanent staff including fixed-term contracts of 52 weeks or more. Full-time hours are defined as 35 hours per week.

- Contractual, freelance and commissioned staff comprise individuals engaged on contracts of less than 52 weeks.

PENNINE LANCASHIRE GREAT YARMOUTH

32

Headlines

- The data referred to relate to 29 CPP places.

- Almost one quarter of permanent staff report as being disabled. This drops to 14% of contractual staff, among whom there is a high not known response rate of 30%.

- Across the UK as a whole, disabled people represent 19% of the working age population[33].

- There are rather high 'not known' responses to ethnic origin questions among contractual staff (24%).

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff are better represented amongst contractual staff (19%) than amongst permanent staff (11%). However, not known rates amongst contractual staff are high at 24%. Comparing this data to UK working age population by ethnicity, ONS data shows that 85.6% of the working age population is White, 8.1% Asian and 3.4% Black. It should be noted that after White British, the groups making up the largest percentage of the working age population was Other White (5.4%)[34]

- 75% of permanent staff are women. This drops sharply to 48% of contractual staff. Across the UK, women represent 50% of the workforce[35].

- Whilst staff identifying as non-binary are not represented amongst permanent staff, they represent 2% of contractual staff.

- LGBT staff are well-represented across permanent and contractual staff (at 15% and 18% respectively). However, there is a high not known response rate among contractual staff (32%). Office for National Statistics (ONS) has collated data on the proportion of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) in the population. According to this data, LGB people represent 2.2% of the population aged over 16. Younger people aged 16-24 are twice as likely to identify as LGB (4.4%)[36].

33 https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/
34 https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/working-age-population/latest#working-age-population-by-ethnicity
35 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Equality_Diversity_and_the_Creative_Case_A_Data_Report__201920.pdf
36 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2018

%	Permanent staff	Contractual staff
White	78	51
White Other	10	5
Black, Asian, minority ethnic	11	19
Prefer not to say	0	1
Not known	1	24
Female	75	48
Male	21	39
Non-binary	0	2
Prefer not to say	0	1
Not known	4	11
Disabled	24	14
Not disabled	67	52
Prefer not to say	3	3
Not known	6	30
LGBT	15	18
Straight	77	43
Prefer not to say	7	7
Not known	1	32

A note on age

The majority of the CPP permanent workforce fell within the 35-49 age range (58%), dropping to 28% of the contractual workforce. 22% of the workforce was within the 20-34 age range and 14% were in the 50-64 age range.

A note on volunteers

Women were more likely to volunteer for CPP places than were men. At 31 March 2021, 57% of volunteers were women and 25% men (there was a non-response rate of 18%). White and White Other individuals represented 53% of volunteers and black, Asian and minority ethnic volunteers made up 9% of the total. In respect of ethnicity, there was a high not known response rate of 36%.

28% of volunteers were in the 35-49 age range followed by 18% in the 50-64 age range. 10% of volunteers were aged over 65 and 9% were aged 20-34. 3% of volunteers were aged under 19.

LUTON
ASHFIELD, BOLSOVER, MANSFIELD & NE DERBYSHIRE

3.2.2 **CPP audience data**

Provisos

Data relating to CPP places' audiences has been collated since 2013. However, over the years data collection methods have changed: questions have been added and taken away and multiple-choice options have altered; recording of ongoing activity has been inconsistent; volunteers' time value may be counted more than once if they have volunteered for more than one activity for an organisation or where they have volunteered more than once for an ongoing event. Methods for collating attendance estimates differ and digital engagement data has only been collated since 2016/2017 and it is felt that the majority of digital engagement figures include social media visitors in addition to 'genuine engagement'. For these reasons Arts Council England cautions against using data for anything other than information purposes.

In collating demographic audience data, CPP places are asked to provide data for individuals who they have engaged with in a sample of activities which are representative of their wider programmes of activity. The total sample size represents 7% of known physical attendances and participants, as reported by CPP Places.

Headlines

- Disabled people represent 26.1% of audiences/participants. People who are not disabled represent only 20.4% of audiences/participants. This feels unexpected and may be explained by a combination of factors: a very high not known rate (48.9%); possibly increased proportions of disabled people able to access previously inaccessible events remotely; sampling errors among CPP places (for example, representativeness of activities selected).

- Almost twice as many women as men are represented as audiences/participants (47% compared to 25%). Again, however, the not known response rate was high at 27%.

- The most frequently cited age range for sampled activities was under 16, representing 13% of all audiences/participants. Almost one third (32%) of audiences/participants were aged between 25 and 54. Again, there was a high not known response rate of 26%.

- One third of audiences/participants were White British and this made up the largest group by ethnicity. This was followed by Asian/Asian British audiences/participants, representing 20%. Black/Black British and mixed ethnicity groups each represented only 2% of audiences/participants. The not known rate in response to this question was, however, very high at 37%. It should be noted that data on White Other groups do not seem to have been collected, or at any rate are not recorded in the data I have had access to.

- I have not had sight of data which summarise attendance by sexual orientation.

Audience group	Percentage
White British	33
Asian/Asian British	20
Black/Black British	2
Mixed/multiple ethnic background	2
Prefer not to say	3
Not known	37
Female	47
Male	25
Non-binary	0
Prefer not to say	1
Not known	27
Disabled	26.1
Not disabled	20.4
Prefer not to say	4.6
Not known	48.9

BARROW-IN-FURNESS
BLACKPOOL & WYRE

4

Nine ideas
to consider

This section proposes a number of ideas which CPP places might wish to consider as they continuously improve their diversity and inclusion practice. The ideas draw on the conversations I had, and on the survey responses and focus group contributions of colleagues, artists, advisers and participants from across the programme. They reflect their experiences, concerns and suggestions. Attendees at the May 2021 CPP Gathering also provided initial feedback and reflections on the emerging themes of the research. While there's neither time nor space to include every individual's thoughts, I hope that those who have contributed so generously will recognise some of their own ideas in those outlined below.

Many CPP places are already doing interesting, innovative work which responds to the needs, interests and aspirations of the communities in which they are located. I discuss two specific examples in subsections 3.8 and 3.9 on the basis that their practice illuminates principles which might have wider application across the CPP programme.

The key points – or calls to action – are contained in the text boxes at the beginning of each of the Nine Ideas.

Idea One
Make diversity a doing word

It's ok if you feel that the term diversity doesn't quite work for you; it's imperfect. It's just a word that we're using right now and, chances are, another word will replace it in the same way that diversity seems to have replaced equal opportunities.

In the meantime, it's fine to interrogate it, to test alternatives, to make it the filling in the Equality and Inclusion sandwich just so long as interrogating the term doesn't distract from doing the work.

If you want to define what diversity means in your CPP context, try making it a doing rather than simply a thinking or a feeling word. In articulating your approach, state what will be apparent to colleagues, artists, audiences, advisers and others when you have got it right.

Actually

When my granddaughter started becoming confident with language, she would test new words (*actually* was a particular favourite for a while), using them with brash confidence in unexpected ways and feeling very pleased with herself. I found myself saying diversity so many times over the course of this piece of work that at times it took me back to being that child who had discovered a word, chewed it over and repeated it ad nauseam without knowing quite how and when to use it.

In answering the central question of this research – *How diverse are we, really?* – it felt important to gain an understanding of what CPP people mean when they use the term and to find out what they recognise as strong diversity practice. To this end, I asked survey respondents to tell me how they can recognise when an organisation is doing diversity well. Some of the responses to this question are included in Section 2 (above). Here are some more:

> *Because they have thought about the individuals and looked beyond any 'differences' – we are all different and unique and you need to relish this diversity and not pigeonhole everyone.*

> *When it's not a conversation point, it is an attitude and cultural identity.*

> *When conversations are not happening in a vacuum and when policies are actively chased and rewritten. When hiring practices are addressed and changed and programmes that benefit marginalised people are funded as a priority in the organisation.*

> *Outward-looking and proactive at building long-term partnerships with organisations unlike themselves. Reflective and regularly stop to ask, 'Who isn't involved in what, and why?'*

Organisations and partnerships where real discussion happens: where the parameters are clear and known but where there is real openness to 'not the answer we first thought of'. Where people realise there are genuine conflicts/competitions/challenges to inclusion which need to be recognised or they cannot be recognised.

Open discussion, active and regular encouragement to challenge the norm and tackle difficult issues.

The organisation admits that diversity and inclusion is a difficult thing to get right and opens itself up to both criticism and advice from people with more knowledge and experience.

The work they're doing behind the scenes is in alignment with the work they're showcasing to the world.

Being real

Common themes feel to me to be (that over-used word) authenticity; keeping the conversation dynamic; openness to challenge and questioning; getting on top of critical processes such as recruitment and selection and being prepared to put in the less glamorous, less Insta-friendly work behind the scenes. In a nutshell, survey respondents said that you will know diversity when you see it – that it's less about marketing statements and statements of intent and more about tangible outcomes. Of critical importance for many respondents was the recruitment of a genuinely diverse workforce which resembles a distillation of the locality in which an organisation is located.

What does it even mean?

Individuals I interviewed also had their own ideas about the usefulness of diversity as a term. Many had mixed feelings: on the one hand it was a useful shorthand for a complex set of ideas and on the other it was so open to interpretation that it was difficult to be definitive about what it means. I lost count of the number of times people referred to the word as a shorthand or a buzzword. Some sounded a little exasperated,

The language of diversity is really tricky and clumsy. It's so much used now that it loses its meaning. It's a catch-all which has usefulness at times but also dismisses the complexities of what it's referring to. The breadth of things included when we talk about diversity allows sweeping statements and perceptions and 'othering'. It's also used to suggest people who are outside the 'norm' or majority when it literally means everybody and all their differences (like biodiversity).

Others suggested that diversity can provide an indirect way of talking about race and ethnicity without actually mentioning race and ethnicity,

People get confused about what diversity means because you have some areas with a large South Asian population and people describe that as diverse because there's lots of brown people there. What they mean is not diverse, it's 'other'.

Another person went further, questioning some of the foundational terms used across the CPP programme,

I don't find it [the term, diversity] helpful anymore. I think there are certain words that are used over and over again until they mean nothing: diversity, well-being, community.

Categories

For others, implicit within the term is a presumption that people are categorised into fixed groups. The following quote is typical of those for whom categorisation can feel limiting of individuals' potential,

I find it difficult to talk about diversity without falling into these categories which I feel can be quite damaging and limit potential – which is not to say that they can't or shouldn't be used. I'm mindful of separating people.

If it's frustrating to be expected to categorise people, it's worse to be the person who is categorised,

I'm always that token…because there's that box that needs to be ticked. It annoyed me because it made me question what I'm doing there: am I here because of my merits, qualifications and skills or am I there because they need someone like me to be sat around the table?

Succinctly describing the difference between seeming and being diverse, the interviewee went on to say,

What I have a big issue about, and I've said this in many conferences, is that it's really patronising that every person in this room except me is white and they're preaching about diversity. Before you go out into the world, let's bring diversity directly into this room.

One interviewee told me that efforts had been made to ensure that local advisory group members are given a voice at consortium meetings. While the intention was to amplify residents' voices, this was not how it was experienced by one adviser,

We've had a comment from one of our advisory group members that they feel like a tick-box, that they're there to be the colour in the room. It must be true because it's true from her perspective even though that is not our intention.

Not all interviewees struggled with diversity as a term. Many recognised its limitations but were pragmatic about its usage: if it's a term that most people feel familiar and comfortable with, they are happy to use it as a way of quickly and accessibly describing their actions and intentions. For one interviewee, the Creative Case for Diversity provided a helpful framework for CPP diversity practice,

We view [diversity] through the prism of the Creative Case and protected characteristics…In our context it's ethnicity and race and class.

In other words

I went on to ask interviewees if they could propose an alternative term to diversity. Naturally, it was those who felt most uncomfortable with the term who had the most to say. Some felt that despite their discomfort, it was not for them to propose an alternative. Others, however, made suggestions which they felt more accurately described both the values and the ambition of what we currently refer to as diversity. Representativeness and inclusiveness were perhaps the most frequently cited alternatives. Connection, authenticity and pluralism were also proposed. Arguing for representativeness, one person I spoke to seemed to be reaching for an alternative term which described an ambition for change rather than simply confirming the inarguable fact that as human beings we are diverse,

Representation would be a more inclusive term. Diversity is about othering and representation is about inclusion. It's to do with that relationship to things.

Idea Two
Diversity is not an end in itself

If – at is most basic – diversity describes having a workplace, programmes of work, advisers, audiences and artists who embody a range of characteristics that are present in the community in which a CPP place is located, this should represent an absolute minimum standard. It is the least that should be expected and should not be an ambition in and of itself.

What you seek to do and the changes you seek to make with that multiplicity of talents, skills and interests are the ambitions and it is against these that CPP places will ultimately be judged. Of course, having recruited those people and attracted diverse participation in your programmes of work, it's important – if you're to fulfil the inclusivity bit – to ensure that you are open to hearing their views, having ongoing conversations and making changes.

Actions, not positions

I learned a great deal from the many thoughtful and considered conversations that I had over the course of this piece of work. One thing that was confirmed for me was that diversity is not about cancel culture or culture wars or whether Piers Morgan should have been sacked. By definition – given that it's about involving and engaging a multiplicity of different people with different characteristics – it's not binary. Where you stand in arguments about Meghan and Harry or Dr Seuss or whether students at Oxford University should take down portraits of the Queen is neither here nor there in the great scheme of things. They're distractions and they're designed to stop us getting on with the work.

Diversity is intimate and it's also procedural, bureaucratic and sometimes messy. It's about how we rub along together, retaining our own ways of being and respecting and making room for others while we navigate our way through this life.

The potential and excitement lie in what you do with what you've got. One person told me,

> *It's about looking at the actions and not the words.*

Many of the individuals I spoke to were clear about the necessity to knuckle down and do the hard work,

> *My ambition is to build in how we do representation better, to use our resources in such a way that we support [people] rather than taking the easier route. What we've done so far is to do some of that easy win work – which is necessary – but now we need to tackle representation.*

Missionaries

Some places have made huge strides in translating their principles and values into tangible actions. One example is the establishment of a Black Community Forum which, though in its early days, represents a purposeful approach to representation and is integrated into the governance structure of Made with Many in Wellingborough (this is discussed in more detail in Idea Eight of this report). Others have devolved or are considering ways in which to devolve budgets to local advisory groups/creative associates.

However, an interviewee who comes to CPP from another sector felt that the arts and cultural sector seemed particularly unrepresentative,

In terms of my previous work, the make-up of the cultural workforce seems to have significant exclusions in terms of ethnicity, class, gender, disability.

Addressing and resolving this issue – in the view of this particular interviewee – is critical,

I really think we need to start with changes in the workforce. Who gets paid and who makes these decisions? Until we do that, this idea that we go out and help people in communities be more diverse is quite condescending. It feels quite missionary.

BOSTON & SOUTH HOLLAND
ROTHERHAM
SOUTH EAST
NORTHUMBERLAND

Idea Three
Be a good employer

The United Kingdom has a strong equality legislation framework which has been brought together in the Equality Act 2010. It's essential that all CPP places familiarise themselves with what is lawful and what is unlawful. For legislation nerds the *Statutory Code of Practice: Employment* is a good place to start. You can access it here. Guidance on the broader provisions of the Act can be found here.

If you don't know already, learn the difference between positive action and positive discrimination. Where appropriate and legal, use the former to tackle disparities and do not break the law by using the latter under any circumstances.

More broadly, reflecting on my conversations it feels clear to me that CPP places have often exemplified innovative, high-quality practice in respect of engaging and collaborating with communities. I wonder whether they might also want to be recognised as exemplifying excellent employment practices. If that is the case, consideration should be given to addressing issues such as employment tenure, contracts, expected working

hours and pay because ultimately, these end up being issues of diversity and fairness. If you want a diverse workforce, many among that workforce will be people who seek reasonably secure, fairly paid work which enables them to progress and make plans for the future.

800 years

In Britain, the idea that there is a set of legal rights which applies to everyone – kings, queens and commoners – dates back to the Magna Carta in 1215 and culminates in the Equality Act 2010. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced a helpful summary of the key milestones between those two dates. You can find it here.

A recurring theme in many of my conversations was some CPPs' apparent failure to recruit and select a diverse workforce (people were usually referring to ethnic diversity in this respect). On the other hand, the places which seemed to have succeeded in recruiting a workforce which felt broadly representative of their localities did not appear to have struggled massively to do this.

Understanding and using the law

A couple of years ago, in an interview with David Letterman, human rights activist Malala Yousafzai described how change can be made manifest. I scribbled it down as I watched,

The answer is easy…We just need an ambition and an intention. To do is then easy.

In this country, we can add to this a legislative framework which – if used imaginatively and purposefully (and, of course, legally) – can provide a means to accelerate change.

At its simplest and most straightforward, positive action legislation allows employers to particularly encourage applications from under-represented groups. Employers must be able to justify – with reference to 12 months' data – that under representation exists if it is to use positive action lawfully. Clearly, where staff are employed by a consortium lead body, that lead body will have to be able to provide that justification.

Another interesting, legal way of using positive action is the application of what is referred to as the 'tie-break provision'. It's found in section 159 of the Act and allows an employer – under tightly defined circumstances – to treat one candidate more favourably on the basis of their protected characteristic at the point at which a selection is made. Look it up before you consider using it.

This may all sound very bureaucratic and process-driven and the opposite of creative. However, the consequences of making legal mistakes can be catastrophic and the benefits of using positive action legally and appropriately can be transformational. Two of the people I spoke to in the course of this work were graduates of positive action programmes in the early 2000s.

Standards

CPP places might also consider – if they have not already – scrutinising some of the equality and diversity employment toolkits which exist. These include but are not limited to Arts Council England's guidance which supports organisations in integrating inclusion and relevance[37]; Inc Arts' Unlock[38] anti-racism toolkit; government-led initiative, Disability Confident, whose aim is to support employers in developing their practice in respect of recruiting, selecting and retaining disabled staff[39]; and Stonewall's Sexual Orientation Toolkit[40] which provides employers with the practical steps they can take to make their workplaces more inclusive of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Expectations

Over the past year or so, it feels as if there has been more of a recognition across many occupational sectors that employers have a duty of care with regard to their employees' well-being. Health and wellbeing were topics which came up in many of the conversations I had. What also became apparent, however, was that many of the people I spoke to were working far more hours than they were paid for, a state of affairs which will ultimately have a negative impact on wellbeing. Of course, we could say that goes with the territory: apparently these are not nine-to-five roles; if we want to make a difference, we need to work with communities where they are at and that might mean irregular (for which read additional) hours. And then, of course, there's passion which is the fuel that drives much of the work. Someone at the CPP Gathering in May put it well,

I think the passion behind the individuals in the sector often adds to the problem – hours are put in and we go the extra mile which creates a problem in itself when trying to determine acceptable contracts.

37   https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_Inclusion_Preparation_Worksheet.pdf
38   https://www.incartsunlock.co.uk
39   https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk
40   https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/employer_toolkit.pdf

SEDGEMOOR, SOMERSET HULL

The sector is not fair and equitable. It mirrors the rest of society. Society is full of insecure contracts.

CPP also has an opportunity to not reproduce inequalities – through flexible/remote working, employing people from their immediate communities, being up-front and honest and supportive around insecure contracts, rather than seeing it as a condition of working in the cultural sector.

The working hours directive makes it clear that – unless individuals have voluntarily opted out – employees' average weekly hours should not exceed 48 hours[41]. I came away from some of my conversations feeling a little conflicted: the directors I spoke to were hugely committed and capable and that's a good thing; on the other hand, I worried a little that since organisational culture is strongly influenced by leaders' behaviours, an expectation might be created that staff should be prepared to contribute unpaid labour as a matter of course.

Reproducing inequalities?

As I've written this section, I've found myself returning to a provocation that I asked attendees at the Gathering to respond to. It was as follows:

Do employment practices in the cultural sector reproduce inequalities and might the sector's dependence on insecure contracts militate against its efforts to be fair and equitable?

The first of the following responses to the provocation seems to me to crystallise the issue; the second proposes a way of beginning to resolve it,

It will be for CPPs and arguably for Arts Council England – the Programme's funder – to decide where they sit between these two positions.

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41 https://www.acas.org.uk/the-maximum-hours-an-employee-can-work

Idea Four
If not me, then who?

This is everyone's work.

Just because someone embodies a particular protected characteristic, that doesn't mean it's their job to initiate and respond to everything to do with that characteristic.

If it helps, think of this as a choir: if you don't know all the words yet, don't let that inhibit you from joining in. Listen carefully and you'll learn and catch on.

Expectations of expertise

Some of the black and Asian people I spoke to in the course of this work mentioned an additional burden which can fall on their shoulders and that is the expectation – explicit or implicit – that they will be the expert/arbiter/quality assurer/spokesperson (delete as applicable) of all things race. I imagine that disabled people, LGBTQI+ people, older people, younger people (insert the minoritised group) might relate similar experiences.

Shahda Khan put it succinctly when she spoke of not wanting to be *the brown girl who talks about the brown things* (see *In the Beginning*, above). In a counter to that, a South Asian artist whom I spoke to has as his email signature, the following quote from the 1960s TV series, *The Prisoner.*

I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, briefed, debriefed or numbered. My life is my own.

None of this is to say that opinions shouldn't be sought from colleagues, artists and others who may have interesting insights and perspectives to offer that are informed by their lived experiences. However, unless the person volunteers a perspective or has been specifically engaged for their expertise in addressing issues of social class or of a particular protected characteristic, they should not be given the additional responsibility of being the de facto Diversity Czar.

One of the women I spoke to addressed the issue directly as follows,

I understand the need for and the right of people to be able to represent themselves, their lives, their needs and to be involved in something – or not – on their own terms in a way that respects and accepts them. We can only really know our own experiences, but we can learn from others about theirs and use that learned knowledge to support and be allies.

Idea Five
Fully rounded human beings

I use this term as an addition to the idea of intersectionality. It means pretty much the same thing[42] **but its focus is less on being the lens through which we understand the combined effects of inequalities and more on being the spirit in which we encounter each other, particularly people who seem to be very different from us.**

The idea is that we imagine that the people we interact with – artists, colleagues, activists, participants – might themselves have inner lives, interests, aspirations and frustrations which are not solely determined by their (real or assumed) embodiment of a protected characteristic.

Jonathan Glover expresses this as well as anyone:

...if you treat with me with courtesy and respect, you signal your recognition of my status – that I am as much of a person as you are. If, when we meet, you listen as well as talk, you acknowledge that I too have experiences, thoughts and a way of seeing the world, that I too may have something to say worth hearing.[43]

Not waving, but drowning

The idea of fully rounded human beings became a bit of an obsession for me over the course of this work, not least because every encounter I had was via Zoom and therefore nobody was fully rounded. Anyone who contributed to this work will undoubtedly be familiar with and/or frustrated by my musings on the subject.

At its most basic, it's about making room for unexpected connections which are unhindered by assumptions. It's what made it possible for myself and a white male CPP member of staff to find that what we had in common was that as children our fathers had insisted on dragging us along to the library every fortnight. In the absence of abundant cash, for each of us those visits – which took place years and miles apart – had been introductions to the habit of reading and to cultural experiences. What I didn't mention in our conversation was that when his shifts would allow, my dad would read to us from his library books. I distinctly remember him reading one of his favourite poems – *Not Waving but Drowning* by Stevie Smith – to myself and my sister when we'll have been maybe five and seven. If you know the poem, you may wonder what he was thinking of.

Who are you?

In April this year, we hosted a focus group for volunteers, advisers and participants from across the CPP estate to find out what they felt about diversity and how they defined it. I don't know which protected characteristics were represented in the Zoom room because I didn't ask, but I do know that of the 14 of us who were there (including myself and the CPP National Peer Learning Manager), all of us were women and –

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42 See Glossary of Terms for a quick definition of intersectionality.
43 Glover, 2001, p150

based on visuals and the way people described themselves – two of us were black, six were South Asian, one was Singaporean Chinese and five were white.

CPP is all about communities and places, so I asked people to introduce themselves by specifying up to three communities they felt they belonged to. The following, it turned out, is who we were (or who we were on that particular evening in that particular context):

We are strong
We are about well-being
We are from Sunderland, Leeds, Suffolk, Manchester and Wales
We are crafts
We write
We are involved in our gurdwara
We bake
We catch buses
We are mums
We are volunteers
We live on the Isle of Sheppey and in Leytonstone, Leeds, Sunderland and West London
We collect for poppy appeal
We are Muslims
We teach
We are students
We are the Deputy Lieutenant of South Yorkshire
We are about healthcare
We are sports
We have connections in Leeds and Manchester
We work in the rail industry
We crochet
We are creative
We work to facilitate conversations between Israelis and Palestinians
We are proud Northerners
We are connected to a London cultural life
We are retired
We are Singaporean Chinese
We are black
We knit
We hike
We are half Jamaican and half Scottish
We are involved with a local theatre company
We are mediators

One attendee said that she'd noticed there were no men in the group and wondered whether I'd specifically recruited only women. I hadn't; it was only women who elected to participate. Another noted that we were quite a diverse bunch. Another said that even within a group of white women, there would be bound to be lots of hidden diversity.

In the context of that focus group, we found a way of getting along with each other and listening to each other respectfully. Unexpected, shared interests were discussed. Everyone had interesting and insightful perspectives. No one interrupted anyone. I think that we were all able to imagine that we were fully rounded human beings and once you've imagined that, it affects how you interact and how you manage potential conflict and disagreement.

Idea Six
Diversity is not a proxy for race

It's understandable, in the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others (for a more complete list look here) and the resurgence of activism around Black Lives Matter that race and racism have become key focuses for action and discussion over the past year or so. For many people – myself included – it's been a long time coming. It would, though, have been helpful if the UK Government's responses to what is now known as the Windrush Scandal had provoked a similar reckoning.

However, diversity and race are not synonymous and the use of 'diverse' in place of black or brown or Asian or whatever reminds me of how people used 'coloured' years ago – a form of politeness which is received as evasiveness. Specificity is helpful, especially now when particular minority ethnic groups are subject to highly targeted forms of racism and exclusion (people assumed to be Chinese, for example).

The casual confluence of diversity with race does everyone a disservice in the end. It potentially puts action around issues other than race on hold without actually tackling race.

Also, black, Asian and ethnically diverse people don't only exist in the black and brown boxes. If practice is not strong around disability, for example, chances are you may miss black and Asian disabled people.

Staffing

In the course of many of the conversations I had, there would come a point where the person I was talking to would seek to explain the make-up of their staff team. This was most usually the case where CPP places were located in ethnically diverse areas and the staff team was predominantly or entirely white. There would often be a sense of disappointment or defeat that despite their best endeavours, they had not (yet) appointed a staff

DONCASTER
BASILDON
PETERBOROUGH

team that reflected the ethnic diversity of the area. Oftentimes, the people I spoke to would explain that while the staff team was not ethnically diverse, its roster of artists was.

However, I'm not sure that you can make up for a deficit in one area by a surfeit in another, particularly when balancing paid employment against freelance contracts which might be short term and which do not bring with them the rights afforded to people on full employment contracts. This is not, of course, to say that it is not a good idea to engage artists from all backgrounds; I know that there are some excellent black, Asian and ethnically diverse artists across the CPP estate doing some great work and that's to be commended. However, if organisations find it possible to engage ethnically diverse artists, it's worth asking why it can appear so much more difficult to employ an ethnically diverse staff team. Are there lessons to be learned from the former that can be applied to the latter?

> *It's not about words it's about actions. After BLM protests, organisations came out and made comments and it felt like they made a statement straight away before discussions and reflections came out. It felt superficial rather than a really considered response.*

Preaching and practice

One of the questions I asked of focus group attendees was, *How diverse is your CPP, really?* One of the responses seems to me to get to the heart of the matter,

> *Lots of CPPs seem to be diverse but there's a distinction in where they are diverse. With volunteers they seem to be diverse, with participants they're quite diverse, reaching a good mix of communities, engaging quite well. But the decision-makers and those in paid positions are*

> *not from minority communities… Lots of CPPs have had a kick up the backside with Black Lives Matter and realise they need to be more diverse… You can't preach something if you don't practice it.*

Some of the people I spoke to who worked in CPP places that on the face of it seemed quite ethnically monocultural provided insightful perspectives about what we mean when we talk about race and ethnicity. This person works in a rural CPP place with an agricultural economy and high numbers of migrant workers,

> *Often people look at [our place] and demographic information and say, 'It's not very diverse' because of the high percentage of white people. This discounts the people who aren't white as being too small a number to be concerned with and makes assumptions about people of different identities within the white ethnic group.*

Idea Seven
Growing pains

The discomfort which candid discussions of inclusion and diversity can bring about should not be avoided. Think of the discomfort as growing pains. It will hurt for a while but it will end and you will feel better. Other people may also feel better.

It's better to go through it than around it.

Responding to feedback

The conversations I had with individuals over the course of this work were notable for their generosity and candour. This was very refreshing and many of the people I spoke to told me that a willingness to share the good, the bad and the indifferent is a much-appreciated characteristic of the CPP programme.

I've noted over the years that it can feel difficult for that candour to fully extend into discussions around diversity, equality and inclusion. People can feel defensive or got at; they might feel that they don't have the right language. The stakes can feel very high and people may feel that if they get something wrong, they will be condemned for all eternity. This can result in a sort of paralysis which is much more unhelpful than making a rectifiable mistake.

One survey respondent, describing what good diversity practice looks and feels like, said,

They will not hide or be ashamed by negative comments but will use them as opportunities for growth.

One person I spoke to recounted a story about a creative whose practice had been supported by the CPP but who had expressed his view that,

…there's a room full of white women making decisions. One of his comments has been that everything we've put on he wouldn't go to, none of his friends would go to it and none of his age group. He's been very specific about what we're doing wrong and how we're doing it wrong and who he thinks our target group is.

I imagine that being on the receiving end of this might feel uncomfortable. It had obviously bothered the person I spoke to; the subject was returned to a couple of times in the course of the conversation. In the end, though, the person told me that they understood where the man was coming from; that though they didn't agree with everything he had said, there was truth in his summation of the situation; that they had to learn and grow.

Uncomfortable truths

Someone I spoke to mentioned that all of the CPP's London directors are white in a city whose white British population is only 44.9%,

In CPP, it's tricky because the focus is very much on looking at audiences rather than the internal infrastructure. How are people appointed? How do people come together? There's little infrastructural critique.

This is an interesting point though it implies that there is a permanent, over-arching CPP infrastructure which might act as a conduit for that critique. In fact, the Peer Learning and Communications Programme ends in its current form in March 2022. Arts Council England is currently exploring how Peer Learning might continue for Creative People and Places.

Some brave souls talked about the political disconnect between some of the communities whose interests they are tasked with addressing and their own political positions and beliefs. One consultee told me that while the vast majority of CPP electoral wards had voted for Brexit, the majority of arts and cultural professionals had voted to remain. Reflecting on having worked in an electoral ward with high levels of BNP activity, someone made the sanguine observation that,

People coming together can be good or bad.

**KIRKLEES
MIDDLESBROUGH,
REDCAR AND
CLEVELAND**

Idea Eight
Make room

Sometimes, when there's a seemingly intractable problem which is to do with representation and equity, you need to step aside and make room for someone (or a group of someones) who knows and understands more about the issue than you do.

Clearly, there needs to be a relationship of trust for this to happen but, as importantly, there needs to be an atmosphere of mutual openness and a willingness to go with something when you don't know for certain what the outcome will be. It's a matter of holding tight.

This was most starkly exemplified in a story which two women told me about how – from a challenging start – they found a way to work together to make their CPP more representative and equitable. It's early days and nobody knows how everything will land but it's a story worth telling.

Made with Many

Made with Many is a CPP place which worked originally in Corby and has recently extended into Wellingborough. Helen Willmott is the director of Made with Many. I spoke to her in the middle of April. After spending a couple of minutes trying to make sense of the most recent labyrinthine plot twist in *Line of Duty*, Helen told me a bit about Corby and Wellingborough. She is local to the area and that feels important to her,

> *I could go into the shopping centre in Wellingborough and tell you every shop that's been there since the 80s. In terms of relating to people it's really important. That was the unit that so and so used to have or the one nightclub that's there and I still call it by its name from the mid 90s rather than whatever it's called now.*

It turns out that all seven Made with Many staff know their areas well. They may have moved away and returned but they are all locals,

> *That idea of some of that home grownness being in the team sits well in the CPP ethos. It was accidental in the beginning – somebody from Corby applied for the job and still lived there and they were the best person for the job.*

Staff are drawn from a range of backgrounds. Though both producers have strong arts credentials, others bring skills acquired in other settings. The Wellingborough Community Engagement Coordinator, for example, was a volunteer committee member of the local African Caribbean Carnival and brought strong engagement, participation and project coordination skills acquired from work in adult and higher education. The programme administrator, on the other hand, was one of the original project volunteers. She's been involved since before Helen was appointed.

Corby and Wellingborough

Corby and Wellingborough are both post-industrial towns with growing populations of in the region of 70,000-80,000. Made with Many works across the boroughs so its patch includes some of the rural areas surrounding both towns though the area of focus is the towns. Helen explains,

We're an hour from London on the train depending on which train station you're going to and Wellingborough is slightly closer so there's a lot of commuters here. There's a lot of wealth in those rural villages. When we look at the Audience Agency statistics, it is the town that is not engaged with culture, never the villages.

The towns differ. Corby is a new town which grew up around steelworks. That dependence on a single industry meant that high rates of unemployment followed the closure of most of the steelworks in the late 1970s and 1980s. Corby's population is 85% UK White and its largest minority ethnic group is White Other at 9%[44] followed by Black African Caribbean/Black British at 1.65%[45]. Helen tells me that the town has a large population of Scottish descent. Her favourite urban myth about Corby is that the town is the biggest consumer of *Irn Bru* outside Scotland.

Another is that the Asda sells more Irn Bru than Coca Cola. All the supermarkets have a Scottish food aisle. It was known for a long time as Little Scotland and we have a Highland gathering every year.

Wellingborough, on the other hand, is an older town and its growth was less dependent on a single industry. Wellingborough's population grew exponentially over the 1960s and 1970s from 26,000-60,000. The minority ethnic population of the borough is 7%, rising to 11% in Wellingborough town. The town has long-established African Caribbean and Indian populations along with smaller Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Polish and Irish populations[46].

Candid dialogue

I was surprised when – midway through our conversation – Helen talked frankly about what happened when Made with Many expanded into Wellingborough. If I'd expected anything, it was that she'd tell me that they'd applied a tried and trusted engagement model and that it had proved equal to the task, notwithstanding a few bumps in the road.

Instead, she told me that things had been difficult at first. The fact was that at the time of the expansion, Made with Many was an all-white team in a much more ethnically diverse town. Their reputation had not preceded them and lots of people wondered what this well-funded arts organisation was doing swooping into Wellingborough. People made their views clear and those views were not always easy to hear and to receive. Questions were asked about the organisation's representativeness and the extent to which it had consulted with black communities. To its immense credit, Made with Many went through it and not round it and what has emerged – though still at an early stage – is a very interesting take on embedding community decision-making into a CPP governance structure.

44   https://www.corby.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Equality%20Information%202017.pdf
45   https://www.corby.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Population%20Data%202011.pdf
46   https://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/info/200137/invest_in_wellingborough/1179/population

Among those asking probing questions was Pratima Dattani (of whom more shortly). They met and talked, together with the Chair of Made with Many whom Pratima knew well. He'd been around for a good while and there was a level of mutual respect.

Do the right thing

Talking to Helen, it felt clear to me that the criticism and challenge that Made with Many had encountered initially had come as a bit of a shock and that it had hurt. In my experience, the temptation for organisations can be to stay there and rest in a feeling of hurt and dismay. Of course, that doesn't get anyone anywhere but it gives time to withdraw and lick your wounds until the storm blows over.

This wasn't the path that either Helen or Pratima chose to take. In the first instance, at Helen's suggestion, the consortium invited Pratima to join them. Helen told me,

> *I had the conversation very honestly with her – once I get over a bit of upset I don't mind you being as critical as you want to be as long as you give me advice and help me to get it right because we want to get it right.*

At the point at which seemingly every arts organisation in the country was posting black squares and issuing statements, Made with Many decided not to,

> *We took the decision that we weren't going to make a statement around Black Lives Matter on the basis that the consortium thought action was better than words.*

Among those actions was the decision to devise a Race Equality Action Plan which supplemented the organisation's Equality Action Plan (which is required by Arts Council England of all CPP places).

The process of developing the Race Equality Plan facilitated new learning. Helen told me,

> *Organisations go under-funded locally and actually one of the things we found was that Wellingborough hasn't had much public money but the CPP money we got in… is not just the biggest amount for the arts that they've had lately in Wellingborough, it's the biggest amount any voluntary sector organisation has had for years. There's a real responsibility that I feel to get it right and reach the right people. Then we started to discover that lots of organisations that work with black communities used to have funding from the Council and that's all gone. There's a bit of putting right to be done.*

Made with Many worked with black activists in the town to create a Black Community Forum which was baked into its governance structure and which had access to its own budget.

The week before I spoke to Helen, Made with Many had moved into its offices in Wellingborough,

> *We moved into our Wellingborough office finally and we've taken an office in the building run by the Wellingborough African Caribbean Association because we felt that if we're going to pay our office rental it shouldn't go the council or a private landlord. It should go to a community organisation and in line with our racial equality stance it should go to a black organisation. There were other options. It was also a good office in our price range with free parking. It was a great option for us. We want that rent money to make a change as well.*

It's all taken time and dialogue and building trust. And it's definitely not sorted yet,

> *I think we've done some interesting stuff but it's embryonic and it's going to be another year before we can say, 'And we've done this and it had this impact.' But there is something really interesting about how we react to challenge. I'm sure we're not there yet and I'm not sure if equality is something we ever master, particularly in a place-based situation because places change. I think there's always more work to do.*

It had been an illuminating conversation but we were both pressed for time. I asked Helen how she'd feel about introducing me to Pratima; see if she'd be interested in talking to me about how she'd experienced this while process.

Pratima Dattani

Pratima Dattani knows Wellingborough very well. She is CEO of Support Northamptonshire and if you Google her you'll find – among an array of citations – her congratulations to a man on the occasion of his 100th birthday, her involvement with the Community Champions programme which aims to support black communities and disabled people affected by Covid-19 and her involvement in the Safer Stronger Neighbourhoods Partnership. Her roots are deep in black political activism and she considers herself to be part of a group of experienced professionals and activists in the town who have worked together over many years to bring about change,

It's not always been easy and as resources have diminished over the years, it has sometimes felt difficult to sustain momentum. Pratima tells me that in some ways Covid-19 has galvanised the black community and voluntary

sector. There was, she says, a recognition that the mainstream voluntary sector infrastructure organisations had not necessarily served them well,

> *They exist but diversity isn't their agenda. They don't get why it's different and important so we've come together to organise ourselves... We've needed to do it for a long time but we are there now. All of it takes effort.*

Black communities in Wellingborough

As Wellingborough's black community and voluntary sector was finding new ways of connecting and collaborating in the midst of a pandemic, Made with Many expanded into Wellingborough. Pratima had heard some good things about the organisation's work in Corby. But Wellingborough is not Corby and Pratima wondered how and whether the town's black communities were being engaged,

> *[Wellingborough has] had a huge history of equality-based work. They didn't touch much diversity in Corby other than about east European communities so when they came in, they had an advisory group and the kind of people they had on the advisory group were... not community people.*

Pratima knew some of the people on the consortium and a colleague who worked in learning disabilities told her that she really ought to find a way of getting involved. It took a little while for a meeting to be brokered. It was externally facilitated and Pratima described that first meeting as tense. She told me that in her experience, one of two things will likely happen when you challenge an organisation's equality practice. Either it will retreat into paralysis or it will confront the issue and work with others to change.

A further meeting took place, this time involving the Chair of Made with Many, someone Pratima had known for many years. Pratima was asked to join the consortium and after consulting with her Board of Trustees, she agreed to get involved.

Timing

The timing was serendipitous. It coincided with Helen submitting the business plan to Arts Council England and gave Pratima the opportunity to influence the equality focus of the plan, incorporating investment and positive action into the proposed racial equality measures. It was at about this time that she began scoping the idea of a Black Community Forum – a new body with real influence which would feed directly into the governance structure of Made with Many.

The business plan was approved, and the establishment of a Black Community Forum was agreed. A key first action was the delivery of race equality training for board, staff and consortium members.

A nice coincidence was that I was working with the Race Equality Council on another piece of work so we invited [them] to undertake the board training. Again, they were local, in house. We were running another project called Messages of Hope about rescoping communities around equalities so the staff attended. And Black Lives Matter happened.

There was a suggestion within the consortium that a statement should be issued. Pratima disagreed,

I said to them there's no point in making any statement. You commit to equalities and that's your statement.

Of course, leadership was critical. Pratima has been an equalities practitioner for many years and she can sense how things will pan out,

I've seen how people either change or don't change, whether you can influence or not influence. At times, you give up on people because they are not going to move. What was happening was that I took the position with Rob and Helen that it was in the interests of racial equality that the leadership felt confident about the issue… If you were to do it elsewhere, you need those kind of players who aren't going to shy away from it.

Connections

There were other unexpected benefits for Made with Many. Pratima tells me that through Support Northamptonshire, she was able to put Made with Many in touch with a group of rough sleepers which they otherwise would not have had access to.

I think they began to respect the fact that they need local people. Those long-term relationships. You have to build trust. You can't just land in an area and expect people to embrace you. People have been let down before.

Of course, gaining approval for a Black Community Forum is one thing; making it work is another. There were conversations to be had about membership and about definitions.

We had to get black communities over the line as well. You might have black people who are completely new to it all.

The Black Community Forum uses a political definition of black[47], a term which gained currency in the 1980s and which recognises the shared experiences of racism experienced by African, African Caribbean, South Asian and other people who are visibly of minority ethnic groups. It's a very British term.

I was interested to learn how the Black Community Forum had defined its terms of reference and its role as both an agitator for racial equality and as an integral part of the governance structure,

We've done some visioning. The Forum is saying, these are the gaps, this is what we don't have, we want something big and better. They know what's needed. We want the big vision. However long it takes to get there. I don't want to start with small. The beauty of Made with Many is that they are the long-term funded programme. We don't have anyone else like that in Wellingborough and now even with Arts Council, they're likely to get funding till 2025 and it's better to work with people who are going to be around for a while. We've got some really good players and we're beginning to talk about going for National Lottery Heritage Fund money which is something we've never done at scale and Made with Many will support us to do that.

During the period of austerity some years ago, black organisations in Wellingborough were hard-hit. Some organisations lost capacity while others have been forced to rely on hard-pressed volunteers. The Black Community Forum has presented opportunities to regroup and – crucially – to connect black artists with black community activists.

Black artists tell us they've been individual freelancers and suddenly they're saying we need something for the black community and they bring all of that creativity with them. The two have come together really well.

When Pratima first asked Helen to explain the rational for Made with Many, she was told that it was intended to engage those least engaged with culture. Pratima responded,

Well, that will exclude black people. Everything we do is culture. We are culture. Black communities have been doing it off their own backs all these years, so they deserve their own stuff and if you get it right there, you'll get it right across all communities. So, with the Mela that is for the whole community. Why wouldn't you make it a whole town event? You can promote diversity and make it the strength of Wellingborough instead of seeing it as separate communities doing separate stuff.

Process

Pratima is an experienced organiser. She told me about some of the procedural arrangements for the Black Community Forum: the rollout of training across the whole organisation, briefings before meetings and debriefs afterwards, revisiting and reviewing the business plan and the race equality plan. Listening to Pratima summarise the progress they have made, it strikes me that they are building a structure that is informed by the past and which operates within a noble tradition of enlightened self-interest. If it continues to succeed, it should deliver to a range of agendas in the town and within its communities.

The reason we're doing what we're doing has come out of struggle and pressure on the partnership but we've got there in a really good way and we're in a good place now. In a sense if this is a lesson to others, it's not an easy ride. It's about learning the right lessons.

47   https://qz.com/1219398/political-blackness-a-very-british-concept-with-a-complex-history/

Idea Nine
Grounding

In the course of this work, I came across inspiring work happening across the CPP programme. It's not possible to include all of it in this report so in picking out particular examples I've pinpointed practice which seems to me to exemplify ways of working which potentially have wider application across the programme. Among these is Revoluton Arts which seems to me to be powered by an understanding of diversity which is deeply ingrained in all of its practices. Its director describes diversity and inclusion as her life's work.

The preceding principles discuss action quite a lot. Action is really important but if you're going to be an organisation which is really successful in its diversity and inclusion practice, it helps immensely if your organisation has at its helm someone who is confident and convincing when talking about these issues.

I thought it would be interesting to talk to Jenny Williams (Project Director), Angela Harris (Project Manager) and Jo Hudson-Lett (Young People's Producer) at Revoluton Arts to try to unpick what their understanding of diversity brings to their work. They generously agreed, between them, to contribute a good few hours to talking to me about what had brought them to Revoluton Arts; what they brought with them; why they were doing the work and what their ambitions were for it. It seemed to me that the answers to these questions might reveal their underpinning beliefs and values. Here is what I took away.

Diversity as an asset

In the course of all the conversations I had, I lost count of the number of times Jenny, Angela and Jo would refer to Luton as either super-diverse or lovely. Jenny described the town as *a place of immense wonder.* It was clear that they all thought of the town as a place that presents an embarrassment of riches to organisations seeking to work with communities. Jo took me through a roll call of some of the young people she's working with,

> *We have a spoken word artist; you give her a word and she just goes on it. She has an array of confidence of issues – she's about to turn 25, and working with Revoluton Arts spurred her to go back to uni to study creative writing... We have a rapper, composer, totally on her way to being a recognised musician in the world, very focused on honing her brand. We've got L who's English and a devout Christian, E who's Muslim. We've got M who has ADHD, Asperger's, autism and he can recite the whole of Beauty and the Beast. He's great at mimicking cartoon characters. We've got G who's Polish.*

In line with Revoluton Arts' commitment to valuing the communities and individuals it works with, the young people Jo works with have recently been engaged as Young Associates. Each has a commission and each is paid.

Fierceness

Jenny, Jo and Angela all spoke about the mismatch between how the world sees Luton and how Luton sees itself. I hadn't realised until I spoke to Jenny that one of Luton's more disappointing claims to fame is that it is the home of the English Defence League and birthplace of Tommy Robinson, its co-founder[48]. For Angela – born and bred in Luton and a returnee after a spell in London – she feels that part of her role is to dispel negative stereotypes about the place and to support people to make work that tells more accurate stories about the town,

> *I have found Luton to be an amazing place to grow up: wonderful, passionate, politically charged people who want to make a difference, who are accepting of people's difference. A lot of the negative perceptions of our town come from outside and a lot of people in Luton want that platform to shout 'This is what we are. This is what we do.'*

This sense of running counter to prevailing narratives extends into the sorts of work that Revoluton Arts supports. Angela tells me that subject matter matters,

> *It's not what's portrayed on TV. Through our projects we fight those misconceptions. Looking at the themes we deal with, for instance we worked in Bury Park [a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood] and rather than going in with a project that looked at extremism or religion, it was about touch – a common theme and thread that everyone could get on board with. Even the subject matter is important to change perceptions.*

I remarked to Angela that she seems like a custodian of the town, a protector.

Baking in inclusion

Ethnic diversity is a given in Luton. Angela described it as one of the most super ethnically diverse places in the country and the data would seem to bear that out. Data derived from the 2011 Census and interpreted by Luton Borough Council shows that 55% of Luton's population were categorised as belonging to white groups, 30% from Asian groups,10% from black groups and 4% mixed.[49] It's widely acknowledged that these proportions will alter significantly when data from the 2021 Census is analysed.

The challenge therefore is not around reflecting ethnic diversity but rather ensuring that its work is genuinely inclusive – from its staff team to the communities it works with, to the artists and commissions it oversees – and this is where Revoluton Arts has expended significant effort. Approached by Wellcome Collection to extend the reach of its Touch survey for Radio 4 beyond its traditional audiences, a commission was prepared and circulated and it was made clear that the selected

48 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Defence_League
49 https://www.luton.gov.uk/Environment/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/Planning/Census/2011%20census%20data/LUTON%20BOROUGH%20PROFILE.pdf

BARKING &
DAGENHAM
EAST DURHAM

artist would be expected to show how they work with communities. The commission included detailed information on the community in Bury Park where the work would take place. Jenny explained the team's expectations of the selected artist,

> *We [talked about] Bury Park having come to represent the challenges of a multicultural society perpetuated through media headlines, tropes and a discourse of multiculturalism and immigration. So, we're making it clear that we want someone who's open to having conversations and this type of narrative. If you're scared of that, don't apply.*

> *We broke down ethnic groups, religion, gender etc. Pictures of sari shops, the high street, talking about our projects, echoes of the diaspora. You should look at it and say 'Is that really going to be my world?' and we still had people applying that were not suitable.*

Going a step further, Jenny engaged Hardish Virk[50] to contact artists who would be able to respond to the commission, encouraging them to apply. In the event, award-winning playwright and actor Sudha Bhuchar was commissioned but that wasn't the end of it. It was important to ensure that she was able to work effectively,

> *I hope that our artists they feel that I give them agency. So, for example, when we worked with the Sudha Buchhar commission…we gave her six weeks to sit within communities and do nothing and we also gave her access to our Community Ambassadors. We expected her to make work. It's that subtle difference. In the old days, the artist would have come in and had to do it all. That organisational retention and connection with communities is lost. We don't deliver projects. It's long term, it's about the team making contacts and distributing leadership and power and agency and saying, 'Over to you now'.*

Baking cakes

Like many people, I've used the pandemic as a way of reacquainting myself with baking. During one of my conversations with Jenny I was aware of the need to keep my eye on a lemon drizzle cake. That will explain, I imagine, why I asked Jenny what the ingredients would be if Revoluton Arts were a cake. It turned out that Jenny routinely uses the analogy of a cake when discussing the organisation's approach to diversity,

> *Our approach to diversity is that many organisations just do the top surface – the icing – it's sickly sweet and you're left with a sour taste in your mouth. It's too sweet. And we are a nice big thick slice that*

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50   https://www.hardishvirk.com/about/4594525352

goes from the top down. We know that we can't do everything and we focus and we say we'll work with xyz community and we will cut the whole cake. It might not be all of the cake but they will get a full slice. There'll be the icing, the sponge, the jam, a bit of cream and the sponge at the bottom. It's gonna taste delicious combined. That's our cake. It's depth of engagement and meaningful activity and it ain't sickly sweet at the end and nobody's under any illusions that we're only interested in the icing.

In it and of it

Revoluton Arts' team are all – with the exception of Jenny herself – local to Luton. They know the place well and they care about it. Over the years, Jenny has trained others in fair and inclusive recruitment and selection processes so Revoluton Arts provided an opportunity for her to manifest what she knew to be best practice,

> *I've spent my whole career campaigning for representation, saying 'This is how we recruit, this is how we reach audiences', saying, 'Not everything has to be in the venue'. It can be in the shop, in the café. You still can produce world-class work. To be in a position where I've been able to implement all this stuff has been a blessing and so beautiful to be able to do it. What else could I do – rock up into a super diverse town – what else can we do? It's been absolutely brilliant.*

I noticed, in my conversations with Jenny, Angela and Jo that I struggled to make myself clear when I'd ask them something like, *How do you do diversity in Luton?* They'd say things like, *Well, we don't really separate it off like that* or *We don't really talk about it like that.* It became apparent that this was largely because I was posing diversity as a discrete

something that an organisation might do (like making sure it submits its company accounts or renewing its public liability insurance). I got my head around the organisation's approach when Jenny told me that writing the organisation's diversity strategy had made her think,

> *I thought it's going to be in everything: in how we make decisions, in who sits on panels. It's a no-brainer about whose stories are told, who's given commissions. It's also handing it over to communities. So that has been joyous as someone who's been engaged in this work for an awful long time. So that all the things that we know we should be doing in our diversity strategy when we actually put them in to action they work and they work if it comes from the top and they work if it's stitched into everything.*

In the end, it's about what you do and how you do it and with whom,

> *I believe myself to be of the communities I serve and I understand some of the barriers. I understand the complexities. I'm not afraid of having very difficult conversations about what that looks like and I'm also aware of being respectful to the communities. When we talk about communities, we talk about culture, we talk about values, we talk about cultural reference points. So, the work that I do at Marsh Farm cannot and never will be replicated in Bury Park and when we move on my role isn't to say, 'Hey! Here's the model'. I'm just gonna sit around and listen for a bit.*

Bringing your whole self to work

Listening to Jo, Angela and Jenny I got the impression that for all of them, their roles at Revoluton Arts enabled them to enact their values and beliefs

about inclusion and diversity and engagement with the arts. All three bring a wealth of experience to the work, drawn from a range of creative and professional experience. Both Angela and Jo have worked extensively in commercial sectors and bring a keen business acumen to the work. For both, working for Revoluton Arts has been a positive choice and has provided opportunities for them to work with authenticity. Jo explained,

Working in places like blue-chip companies and being the odd one out makes you strong. You have some vulnerability so you've got to learn to man up and when to stand your ground when some people find you threatening even though you've not opened your mouth. I could talk to someone on the phone, have a really great conversation, setting up a business meeting and then meet you and you can see the look on their face, 'You're black – but you don't sound black'. And you've got to wait for them to adjust to the visual so you get used to how stilted things can be. You've picked up a rapport on the phone but then when you meet in the flesh, you're not what they expected. So, you've got to win them over again.

Angela wants to make sure that artists coming into Luton to make work are doing it for the right reasons and that the communities they work with are properly served,

I want to make sure we work with the right people. I want to be a guardian to make sure it's done in the right way. I want to make sure people are credited for what they do. My role is to enable and I want to bring together partners with similar generosity and beliefs. I want the team to have similar principles. They have to want others to grow. I don't want to work with people where it's all about them. I don't want to work with partners where it's about promoting their agenda. I want to support the telling of the story of Luton, not someone else's story.

5

How diverse are we, really?

What does diversity even mean?

So, we return to the beginning: *How diverse are we, really?*

The simple answer is, *it depends what we mean when we talk about diversity.*

Fortunately, it is possible to begin to discern what CPP directors, colleagues, artists, volunteers and others mean when they talk about diversity because through the initial survey, focus group and individual conversations they provided me with answers to that question. The responses can be distilled into three key themes:

- Actions not words

- Representation at all levels and everywhere

- Preparedness to have difficult conversations, to listen and to learn

As well as asking contributors to the research to tell me what diversity is, I asked the 70+ attendees at the CPP May 2021 Gathering the following question,

> *Imagine looking back at the CPP programme in 2035. What would it need to have achieved to be considered successful in respect of its diversity practice?*

The responses to this question can be read as articulating the diversity ambitions of the CPP programme – the changes that they want to be made manifest. I've organised and themed responses in descending order as follows:

- Diverse representation at all levels including governance

- Community creative hubs are self-sufficient with coordinated support

- An acknowledgement – backed up with evidence – of the benefits of engagement with the arts

- Difficult conversations are happening: listening, learning and changing

- Shared leadership across the board which is also reflected in other organisations

- Ableism is challenged. People understand what it is and change their language and behaviour

- CPP is seen as a model of inclusion locally, nationally and internationally

- A sea change in employment practices

- Diversity is so well-embedded that it's no longer on the agenda

- Caring compassionate, person-centred working practices for artists, participants and staff

Diversity is what diversity does

It has been refreshing to talk to colleagues and others about the internal operational workings of CPP places and to discuss the ways in which they have made manifest Arts Council England expectations regarding equality, diversity and inclusion. In the end, though, any organisation's – or programme's – commitment to diversity can only really be judged by what is evident in its work.

As we've seen, people involved across the CPP network are pretty clear about what diversity looks like when it's done well so, basing CPP performance against these metrics, how is it faring? The question of representation in particular has been an almost constant theme throughout this research. Directors, on the whole, want their CPP teams to look like the places they are situated in and are evidently disappointed when they do not (see Idea Two, above). If this is so important, it is imperative that concerted efforts are made to make that happen. This may involve positive action where it is appropriate and legal. It may also – especially where places are seeking to engage staff whose prior experience is not in the arts – involve:

- Thoroughly reviewing recruitment and selection materials to ensure that they are free of unnecessary, esoteric art-speak

- Explicitly valuing experience derived from other sectors

- Providing thorough inductions which bring new recruits up to speed

- Implementing ethical employment practices.

Where does social class fit into all of this?

Many of the people I spoke to in the course of this work – especially those working in areas which are quite ethnically monocultural – spoke at length about issues of social class and socio-economic deprivation. Sometimes the two were conflated. It is beyond the scope of this work to look in any detail at where social class fits into an interrogation of diversity and inclusion. However, this being England, it was inevitable that social class would come up.

If diversity is difficult to define, social class is arguably even more difficult. We all know that it exists and can recognise it when we see it. We know, for example, that around 60% of the UK's adult population considers itself

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SUNDERLAND AND SOUTH TYNESIDE

working class.[51] However, putting social class and its key indicators into words often confounds us. *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries,* a research project led by sociologists from the Universities of Edinburgh and Sheffield, investigating inequalities in the cultural workforce represents an excellent start though it largely restricts itself to issues of social class and the creative arts workforce[52].

I definitely do not claim any specialist knowledge about how best to define social class but I know what I feel uncomfortable with. I am someone who is familiar with the experience of being asked by strangers, *Where are you from?* giving the accurate response, *Leeds* and then being asked again, *No, where are you really from?* What they actually want to know is where my mum and dad are from.

It feels intrusive and impolite and unless the enquirer is a friend or a medical professional needing to know whether I have a family disposition for a particular condition, really none of anyone's business. I wonder, then, why it has become acceptable to ask questions about an individual's parents' educational attainment in order to decide which social class they belong (or belonged) to.

Government advice is – having tested 12 measures of socio-economic background with employers, experts and senior civil servants – that the following three measures be used to measure socio-economic background[53]:

- Highest parental qualification

- Parental occupation

- Type of secondary school attended.

The survey was piloted with 4,200 senior civil servants and 70% responded (which, of course, means that 30% did not). Might it be possible that among that 30% there were people who did not know the answers (perhaps they did not know one or both of their parents, for example)? Besides, what does it tell us? In the early 1960s, only 4% of school leavers went to university, rising to around 14% by the end of the 1970s.[54] Now it's around 40%. As an indicator of socio-economic background, highest parental qualification may be flawed.

For some, traditional class definitions are obsolete. In an entertaining article discussing its Great British Class Calculator (of which more shortly), the BBC summarises our traditional understanding of the indicators of social class[55]:

51 https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jun/29/most-brits-regard-themselves-as-working-class-survey-finds
52 https://createlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Panic-Social-Class-Taste-and-Inequalities-in-the-Creative-Industries1.pdf
53 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/768371/Measuring_Socio-economic_Background_in_your_Workforce__recommended_measures_for_use_by_employers.pdf
54 https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jun/24/has-university-life-changed-student-experience-past-present-parents-vox-pops
55 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21953364

Despite the myriad of subtle nuances, class has historically been defined by occupation as much as anything else. A builder was working-class, a teacher middle-class and the upper class waited for their inheritance.

Based on research carried out by the BBC Lab UK, traditional class distinctions have become redundant. Only 39% of the population fit into the traditional working, middle and upper class categories. In their place, it recommended that we use the following seven categories[56]:

- **Elite** – the most privileged group in the UK, distinct from the other six classes through its wealth. This group has the highest levels of all three capitals

- **Established middle class** – the second wealthiest, scoring highly on all three capitals. The largest and most gregarious group, scoring second highest for cultural capital

- **Technical middle class** – a small, distinctive new class group which is prosperous but scores low for social and cultural capital. Distinguished by its social isolation and cultural apathy

- **New affluent workers** – a young class group which is socially and culturally active, with middling levels of economic capital

- **Traditional working class** – scores low on all forms of capital, but is not completely deprived. Its members have reasonably high house values, explained by this group having the oldest average age at 66

- **Emergent service workers** – a new, young, urban group which is relatively poor but has high social and cultural capital

- **Precariat, or precarious proletariat** – the poorest, most deprived class, scoring low for social and cultural capital

Within a week of its publication, about seven million people had clicked on the BBC's Great British Class Calculator, proof if it were needed that we are obsessed with social class in this country. Naturally, I tried to access it (who doesn't want to know what class they belong to?) but it's no longer accessible through the BBC website. According to a follow-up article in 2015, however, we know that of 161,000 people who completed the survey the social class classifications were as follows[57] (note, GBCS stands for Great British Class Survey):

	% of population	% of GBCS sample	Average age	% of ethnic minority
Elite	6	22	57	4
Established middle class	25	43	46	13
Technical middle class	6	10	52	9
New affluent workers	15	6	44	11
Traditional working class	14	2	66	9
Emergent service workers	19	17	32	21
Precariat	15	<1	50	13

56 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22007058
57 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34766169

So, where does this leave us? I'm not entirely sure but I suspect that it requires that within the CPP programme and within Arts Council England as a funder, there needs to be some agreement about what we mean when we talk about social class. Are we using the same metrics across the piece and/or are we making snap judgments? Might we trust people to self-define their own social class and, if so, what might be the options?

Living Experience

I'm indebted to Zulfiqar Ahmed (Director of The Leap Bradford) for introducing me to this term. One of the supplementary questions which formed the focus of this research was as follows,

> *How does the CPP approach to workforce (to include consortia, teams, volunteers and artists) support diversity and reflect lived experience? How could this be further developed?*

In the course of this work, I made a point of asking people I spoke to what lived experience they brought to their roles at CPP. Most indulged me and I learned a great deal about the largely hidden diversity of the people who occupy senior roles in CPP programmes. I also learned about the differing ways in which people choose to define lived experience. While some focused on protected characteristics, others (a surprisingly high number) spoke of how as children they moved from one place to another and about having to make new connections. Some plotted journeys across continents and talked about where they felt at home and which communities they felt connected to. Some spoke about their children. A few women spoke about being women and some men spoke about being men. Many people talked about childhood and their experience of schooling. Some mentioned their racial or ethnic identity and others their experiences of neurodivergence.

When I asked Zulfiqar about his lived experience, he distinguished *lived* from *living* experience, with the latter accommodating the fact that experiences are always in flux. For example – back in 2019 – anyone seeking individuals with lived experience of surviving a worldwide pandemic would have been hard pressed to find anyone. They would not struggle now. Similarly, whilst a person may not yet have experience of being a user of mental health services, by next year they might. The experiences you have had and the characteristics you currently embody are not necessarily fixed.

However we define lived or living experience, it feels important to be clear about the meaning ascribed to it. Should one person's lived experience be universalised? Does lived experience connote expertise? What if the lesson that someone draws from their lived experience is that others with similar experiences should just pull themselves up by their bootstraps and get on with it? Might it be better to simply ask people what they are bringing with them to the work (or to a commission or to their membership of a consortium or advisory group), recognising that that might change over time and that their lived experience is not necessarily all that they bring?

In the end

The North East is Tory

By the time I spoke to Jess Hunt (project lead at East Durham Creates), it pretty much went without saying that East Durham had decisively voted to leave the European Union because almost every CPP area had voted the same way.

I spoke to Jess almost a year and a half after the Labour Party had experienced general election losses across the North East and a couple of months before Hartlepool elected its first Tory MP since the seat was created in 1974. Just so that no one could be in any doubt, in December 2020, Michael Gove MP declared,

The North East is Tory.

He wasn't strictly correct (the Tories had 10 seats and Labour 19) but the speed and scale of the political shift represented a paradigm shift for the Labour Party. Had Gove delayed his triumphal declaration a few months, he would have also been able to throw in the fact that for the first time in 100 years, the Labour Party had lost its majority on Durham County Council[58].

In December 2020, after the dust of the General Election had settled, Jonathan Walker – Political Editor of Chronicle Live – attempted to make sense of what had happened in Labour's North East heartland[59].

Phil Wilson, who represented Sedgefield as its Labour MP from 2007-2019, blamed Brexit a little and Jeremy Corbyn a lot for the Conservatives' demolition of the 'red wall'. The current Labour Party, he said, offers a *vision of the past,*

> *Areas like this were known for monolithic heavy industries – coal mining, ship-building, the steel works. Those industries have gone now. But we talk about left behind areas when these are areas that aren't left behind. Yes, they've got problems. But what they've done is moved on… The communities have moved on, but it seems to me that the Labour Party didn't.*

When elected to Parliament in 2010, Guy Opperman had been one of only two Conservative MPs in the North East. By 2019, he was one of 10. Voters in the North East, he felt, were unimpressed with Jeremy Corbyn but their disaffection with the Labour Party had been growing for many years. Highlighting West Durham, he tracked the decline of the Labour

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58 https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/19289353.labour-lose-majority-durham-county-council-first-time-100-years/
59 https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/one-year-after-red-wall-19441175

Party vote: in 1997 its majority had been 24,754; in 2017 its majority was 8,792 and in 2019, the Conservatives took the seat.

One seat which the Conservative Party had not managed to wrestle from Labour was Easington which includes Seaham and Peterlee and has been represented by Labour MP, Grahame Morris, since 2010.

Distance

Before talking to Jess, I read a bit about Peterlee and Seaham, the two main population centres which are covered by East Durham Creates.

I learned that Peterlee has a population of just over 20,000 and is a New Town founded in 1948. It is named after Peter Lee – a Durham miners' leader – and is one of few places in England to be named after an individual[60].

Seaham also has a population of around 20,000 and is a seaside town in East Durham[61]. Its first coal mine was begun in 1845 and thereafter the town's dock was extended so that it would be better able to deal with growing volumes of extracted coal.

By 1993, all of the town's three pits had closed.

After numerous abortive attempts to talk via Zoom, Jess and I decided to revert to a telephone call. We both agreed that you know where you stand with a phone call. I told Jess (and she was neither the first nor the last person I would say this to) that the thing that gets on my nerves most is staring at my own face. I tell her – with a degree of authority that is likely misplaced – that we weren't evolved to look at ourselves for prolonged periods of time.

East Durham Creates' lead body is East Durham Trust, a well-established charity and provider of support services based in Peterlee.

Getting around the place can be challenging for those reliant on public transport and there have not always been strong links between villages,

> *It's changing a bit now but at one time if you programmed something in, say, Horden people from Wheatley Hill wouldn't necessarily travel across to see it. It's hyper local in that respect and our programming has to factor that in as well as poor transport links because we have quite a low population of car owners in the area.*

According to Google Maps, the distance between Horden and Wheatley Hill is 6.4 miles.

Doing diversity in East Durham

In a way, I know East Durham best through its portrayal in *The Quality of Mercy*, a novel by Durham-born Barry Unsworth which entwines and connects stories of the transatlantic slave trade and the East Durham coalfields. It's about money and profits, poverty and wealth and the lengths that powerful people will go to in order to protect their investment. It's well worth reading.

Jess tells me that the population is 98.5% white though recently Durham County Council has begun to place refugees and settled families in the larger towns, including Seaham and Peterlee. I like the fact that Jess refers to the accommodation of these families as part of a humanitarian imperative. It's something that is sometimes forgotten.

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60 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peterlee
61 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seaham

For Jess and for East Durham Creates, when we talk about diversity we're talking about socio-economic issues which is why having lead body status rest with East Durham Trust is so important. Well-established, respected and networked, the Trust provides a trusted conduit to the communities whose needs and interests East Durham Creates seeks to meet. It complements its other programmes of activity including a food bank, benefits and debt advice, adult learning, holiday activities with food and social prescribing. East Durham Creates is one of the large projects in its portfolio.

Many of the residents of East Durham experience multiple challenges. Jess tells me that educational attainment is lower than average, that there are high levels of benefits dependency and lower than average healthy life expectancy. An article I'd earlier read in the Northern Echo[62] made the grim observation that the impacts of Brexit and Covid-19 were creating a mental health crisis, reporting a 400% increase in the need for crisis services in a region which has one of the highest suicide rates in England.

As an arts and cultural organisation, you don't just jump in feet first. You have to know the lie of the land and you can't just expect people to join in because you tell them it's good for them. Jess told me,

What you offer has to fit in with their lives. Their lives shouldn't have to fit in with what we're doing.

Past and present

Jess describes East Durham as quite traditional and with a strong history of activism which was forged around the coal mines,

A lot of the people who came to the forefront in community activism came out of the miners' strike... So, a lot of the views in community activism are very inclusive but they'll be run by older white men for whom mining is such a big part of their lives. It's very ingrained in their identity.

I imagine they must be very experienced and effective campaigners and activists. Writing in Tribune in 2019, Patrick Hollis describes Easington miners as a resolute group, the vast majority of whom downed tools from the beginning to the end of the 1984-1985 miners' strike. The fact that the pit remained open after the strike proved to be a short-lived victory. It closed in 1993[63].

Things have changed since then. The people who were active in – and who vividly recall – the region's mining history and its history of resistance are fewer and further between.

…you've got a whole generation of people who were born in this area who don't know what a pit is. They live in a village whose entire identity is based around mining heritage and a community venue which used to be a welfare hall for the miners and they'll have a pit wheel as a decoration in their village but they won't necessarily have that link or understanding of why those things are there. That's always been a bit of a balancing act for East Durham Creates in how much you look forward and how much you look back and how much heritage plays a part in your programming.

That sense of seeking balance between the past and the present put me in mind of *Sankofa* which is a word in the Akan Twi and Fante languages

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62 Gavin Havery, Northern Echo, 26 October 2020
63 https://tribunemag.co.uk/2019/10

of what is now Ghana. Usually depicted by a bird which is walking ahead whilst looking behind, it describes the importance of taking learning from the past into the present in order to bring about a positive future. For that sort of coalescence to happen, though, it is likely to require engagement from both those who remember an area's heritage and those who do not. Where once saving an industry was of paramount importance, people are now preoccupied with other apparent threats. Jess explained,

A lot of people in this area will have voted to leave Europe, and I think that's the case for a lot of post-industrial centres, and it goes hand in hand with a certain level of understanding that immigration is to blame when in fact in order to replace the industry of the mines you'd probably have to build 50 Nissan car plants in the area to fill that void.

People and place

I was interested to learn what younger people make of East Durham. How do they relate to their locality? Jess describes a generation which though affected and surrounded by emblems of the past, has no direct experience of that industrial heritage,

I think there's a lot of living in the aftermath of never knowing a life that wasn't shaded by the closure of the pits. It happened a long time ago but what was lost with the pits has never been replaced by anything else. Unemployment and high benefit levels and lower levels of income have all been issues since then and I suppose someone who's now 30 has always lived in that environment... How do you form an identity when it's so tied to something that hasn't existed for so long? How does a community move forward when there isn't a thing to move forward to? Our job is to give a focus to that moving forward.

This sense of building a new type of unity and identity is exemplified in East Durham Creates' simply stated aim to give everyone a chance to take part. I asked Jess if she felt that anyone was missing out just now. She mentioned men.

East Durham Trust has attempted to address this issue in the past, drawing down public health funding to deliver a Men's Sheds project. They named the project *Crees*, after the pigeon often found in allotments. The project was designed in response to the fact that the county has a disproportionate number of suicide deaths and – in common with the rest of the UK – men (though less likely to attempt suicide) are more likely to die of suicide. It was one of the first projects that Jess saw in action when she joined the Trust in 2015. She described how they made the project work,

The Trust used the model we always use – we meet with community activists and community venues on their ground, and say we'll support you to set up this group, talk them through developing the project then it's very much run in-house. We always empower them to lead. It allows for legacy and long term. It's established within the community and they'll run it as peer support or access additional funding. We utilise those community assets and they identify who needs support… The power of having someone on your side in the community who knows the needs and will champion what you're doing is much more valuable than spending a lot of money on social media and stuff because we wouldn't necessarily reach the right people.

Jess told me that work remains to be done but that the model they use has and will continue to shape the way East Durham Creates works collaboratively with local communities. East Durham Creates has not yet made major inroads with young men and she's aware that there are

no specific services which meet the needs of LGBTQ+ people. It will be a matter of applying the model: of listening and talking and supporting people to develop what they need.

Artification

Though East Durham Creates' relationship with East Durham Trust is a critical success factor in enabling it to meet its communities' needs, it must also help that Jess has community engagement in her DNA. She told me that her mum was a community development worker in Stockton-on-Tees and that she ended up volunteering on projects there. Graduating in commercial art, she thought about becoming an illustrator but found herself drawn to working in communities. She started out as the Trust's community engagement lead before becoming a project manager and, currently, East Durham Creates' project lead.

The aim, she told me, is to find ways of baking art into what the Trust does.

We have this word – artification – [which] is about integrating art into what East Durham Trust does. In terms of sustainability, regardless of whether we continue to exist, if we can ingrain it, we know that it is incorporated into their model.

What this means for people is that two interconnected, co-located organisations are able to respond to disparate needs.

…reaching those communities via things like the food bank is really vital because that's where we find out what's happening and what's wanted.

It works both ways. Sometimes they've been able to tap East Durham Creates participants into the Trust's work,

We've had the opposite as well so if we do go and see visits, you'll give someone a leaflet or talk to them about what the Trust does and they'll say, 'Well, I need some help with my claim for Universal Credit or I could do with being signposted to Mind or whatever'.

If we think of people as fully rounded human beings and we recognise that their ability and inclination to get involved with arts and creativity might be impeded by the fact that they can't meet their most basic needs – money for the bus fare to get to work, worries about which bill not to pay this month and the rest of it – then we're probably in a better position to design processes that might work for them. There's a word for what happens when people can only focus on that missing thing. Researchers call it scarcity and its impacts are illuminated in this podcast.

What, then, can art do for people who might be experiencing multiple challenges? According to Jess,

I think it opens perspectives…We had a youth panel which ran our last major commission and a lot of them have gone on to university and college, some are studying art and culture and that's something they hadn't necessarily considered. In the context of diversity, arts and culture broaden people's horizons and brings people together…As an area we have an amazing community spirit, but it can sometimes be a challenging place to live and opening people to arts and culture can really help.

Looking ahead, Jess feels that the impacts of Covid-19 on mental health may be long-term and sustained. It's just as well East Durham Creates works closely with East Durham and Hartlepool Mind.

Art doesn't sit in a box called art. You might first have to open other boxes, untie some other knots.

BOSTON & SOUTH HOLLAND LUTON
SOUTH EAST
NORTHUMBERLAND ROTHERHAM
ASHFIELD, BOLSOVER, PENNINE
MANSFIELD & NE DERBYSHIR LANCASHIRE BARKING & DAGENHAM
GREAT YARMOUTH BLACK COUNTRY
FENLAND & FOREST HEATH SLOUGH
BEXLEY EAST DURHAM HULL
STOKE-ON-TRENT AND SEDGEMOOR, SOMERSET
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME HOUNSLOW
MEDWAY & SWALE SUNDERLAND AND SOUTH TYNESIDE
CORBY & WELLINGBOROUGH ST HELENS
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