



VAYA
MAYA PRODUCTIONS

EVALUATION OF ROUTES TO ROOTS

2023-2025

Camerⁿ
& Limited

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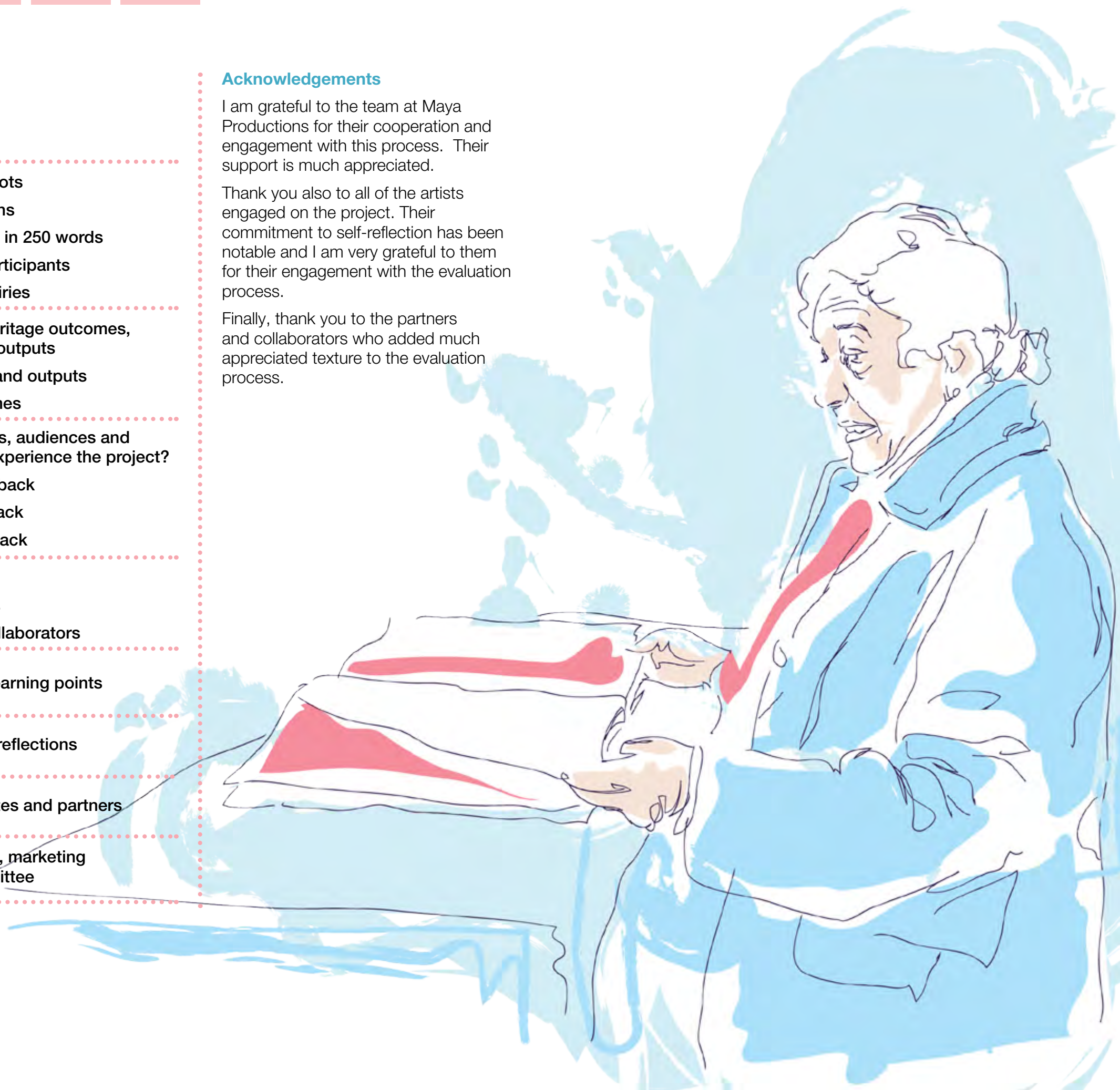
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and Steering Committee

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the team at Maya Productions for their cooperation and engagement with this process. Their support is much appreciated.

Thank you also to all of the artists engaged on the project. Their commitment to self-reflection has been notable and I am very grateful to them for their engagement with the evaluation process.

Finally, thank you to the partners and collaborators who added much appreciated texture to the evaluation process.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The project met – and in some respects – exceeded its targets. Specifically heritage products included:
 - 4 exhibitions: Bradford City Library, Museum of Croydon, Stanley Arts (Croydon) and Sheffield Millennium Gallery
 - 22 films and oral history podcasts
 - 14 live performances
 - 3 learning resources for KS2 and KS
- The project worked with contrasting groups of women and girls: Pakistani women, an established group of Anglo-Indians and a group of girls, primarily of South Asian descent. Unsurprisingly, the project operated differently across the three locations, reflecting the interests and preoccupations of the participating groups.
- Working with locally based practitioners helped to ensure that projects responded to issues of interest and concern to participants, resulting in a rich, multi-layered set of perspectives.
- On the whole, participants' expectations were exceeded. In particular, most reported that it had felt worthwhile to share their thoughts and experiences with others and that through participation in the project they had learned new things.
- For the women in Bradford and Croydon in particular, engagement with the project had brought about a sense of joint endeavour and connection to others.
- The girls in Sheffield felt a stronger connection to their parents' and grandparents' experiences of migration.
- Artists noted a range of benefits of participation including: enhanced self-confidence; acquisition of technical and performance skills regarding staging a performance; development of creative writing skills; and development of friendships.
- Audience feedback increased year on year with a total of 190 audience members completing feedback forms by the end of the programme.
- Looking across the three years, audiences consistently reported that:
 - Sharing events were engaging and thought provoking
 - The events helped audiences to learn about migration in new ways
 - The events supported audiences to reflect on issues of cultural identity
 - The event encouraged a sense of connection with other people
- A total of 188 exhibition visitors completed feedback forms. On the whole, exhibitions attracted visitors who were not regular or frequent visitors to the host venue. Amongst those responding to the Croydon exhibition feedback form, around half were first time visitors.

PREFACE

- This document reports on activity undertaken as part of the Routes to Roots project, devised and delivered by Maya Productions. Specifically, the report covers three years of activity from 2023 – 2025 (inclusive) carried out in Bradford, Croydon and Sheffield.
- Annual activity is discussed in detail later in the body of the report but to summarise, it included 8-10 week programmes of cross artform activity with each participating group; sharings – primarily performance-based including poetry readings and monologues – along with displays of visual arts and crafts; annual inter-group workshop sharing at the Migration Matters Festival in Sheffield; exhibitions in each of the three locations; and video and other digital outputs.
- Report navigation: Sections One and Two of the report discuss the project outline and processes and report on achievement of the contracted heritage outcomes, project aims and annual activity and outputs.

Section Three summarises data collected through feedback forms over the course of the project. Feedback includes that from participants, audiences at sharings and visitors to exhibitions.

Section Four discusses the lived experiences of project actors including participants, facilitators and collaborators.

The report concludes at Section Five with a set of observations and learning points.

SECTION ONE

About Routes to Roots

1.1 Maya Productions

The company's vision is a world where everyone, regardless of age, ability, culture and class enjoys enriching theatre, arts and heritage experiences.

Its mission is as follows:

We bring together individuals and organisations who passionately want their work to enable racial justice and social change by:-

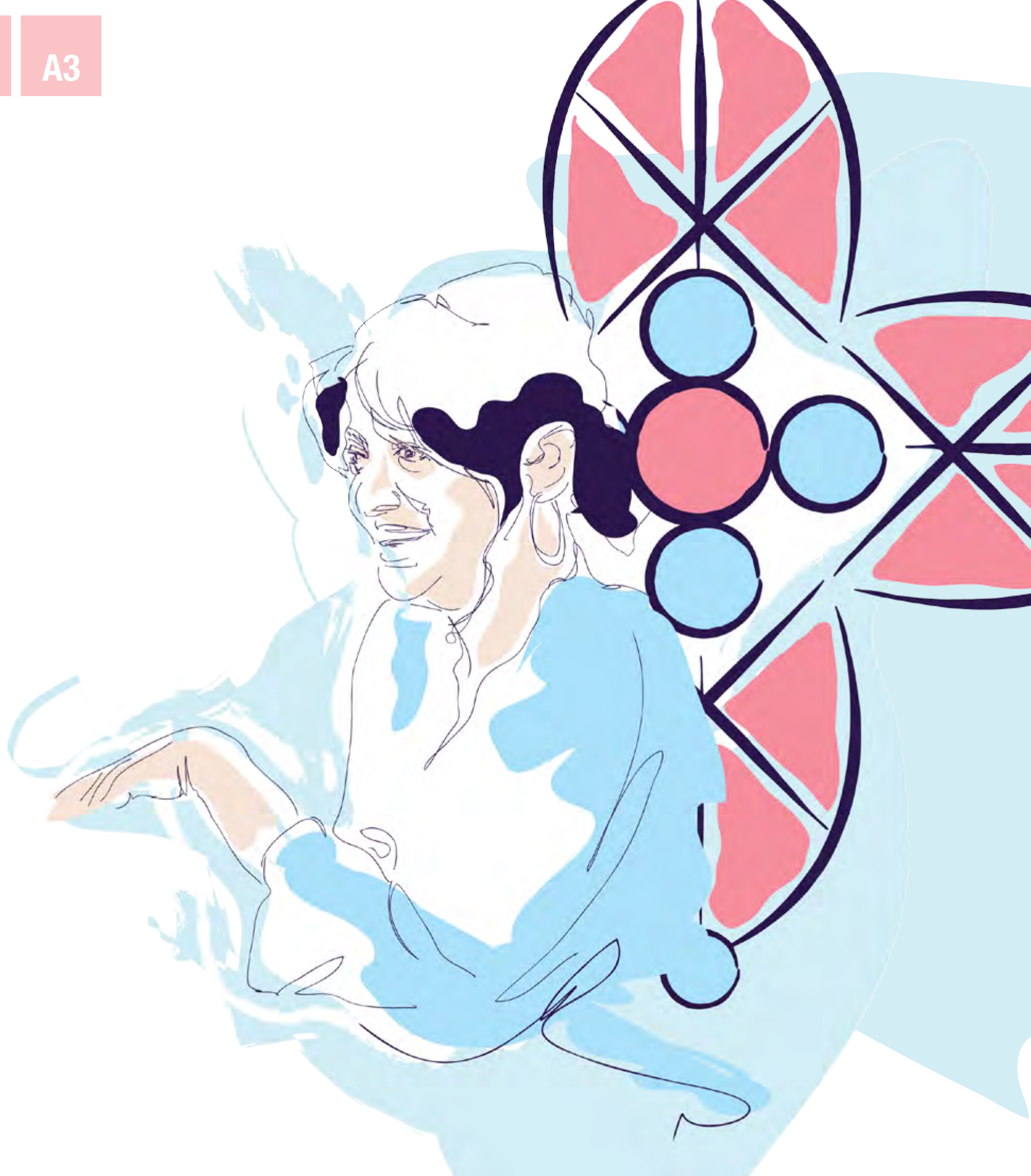
Making and touring theatre led by South Asian, African, Latin American diaspora and Global Majority artists:

Engaging young people and underrepresented communities across the UK in creative processes

Developing inclusive workforce practices across the arts

The company was founded in 1994 by Sita Brand and Christopher Preston with the aim of developing and producing new drama reflecting cultural diversity. Over a period of 15 years, the company supported the careers of many ethnically diverse industry professionals, creating theatre productions, touring plays to over 30 venues nationally and producing the popular Write to Ignite Hackney Word Festival over four years. The company's Outwrite programme engaged hundreds of young people in developing writing for theatre and other theatre skills.

Suzanne Gorman, has led the company as Artistic Director, since 2013. She remains committed to continuing and growing Maya Productions' reputation for bringing diverse work into the mainstream. Suzanne is a Clore Fellow and her AHRC/Clore Funded research Project WHERE AM I, revealed the importance of global majority role models and leaders for workforce diversity and inclusion in the arts. These findings underpin the Company's work, whose recent achievements include: National tour of critically acclaimed Super Chefs, Maya Productions' new bi-lingual, interactive Latin American family musical and engagement programme; Premiere of Dynamic Flights, a new play developed through a two and a half year arts and mental health project, delivery of Diverse Voices; Writing the Future, a playwriting project for Year 9 Pupils in Tower Hamlets; development of Inclusion Boost, an online theatre careers toolkit highlighting global majority role models and development of a Race and Allyship Training Programme to support arts organisations to be more inclusive.



1.2 Routes to Roots in 250 words

The project aimed to:

- Increase access to heritage for South Asian and global majority groups as producers and consumers of heritage.
- Create a safe space to reflect on themes of migration, cultural identity, heritage, home, family, colonialism and their impacts.
- Develop participants' research, documentation and archive skills to produce their own heritage products.
- Support mental health and wellbeing through activities that combat social isolation and promote inclusion.
- Amplify stories of migration/South Asian heritage for South Asian and wider audiences.
- Leave a digital legacy of the histories of South Asian people for the next generation in local archives, contributing to placemaking in each location.

Project activity and annual outputs

- 10 heritage and cross-arts workshop programmes in each city, led by local facilitators as a means to develop creative and heritage skills and capture heritage.
- Creation of heritage products (poetry, stories, visual art) including oral histories of migration journeys and settlement stories bolstered by archivist research.
- 3 live sharing events (one in each city) sharing heritage with friends, family and wider community, involving performance and visual art exhibition.
- One intergenerational in-person event at Migration Matters Festival, Sheffield, bringing three groups together.
- An exhibition of heritage products (art, poetry, photos, research, documentary, oral histories)
- Three podcasts (one per city), highlighting oral histories and research of objects/photographs
- One 15-20 min documentary focused on the heritage of each location. (Croydon 2023, Sheffield 2024, Bradford 2025)
- One highlights video sharing project process and participant feedback.
- Three dedicated web pages
- Contributing heritage pieces to local archives/museums.

1.3 Partners and Participants

Funded by National Lottery Heritage fund (NLHF), Routes to Roots was an ambitious, multi-site project working across three locations to 'bring together arts venues, community organisations, museums and archives to capture, archive and preserve authentic stories that reveal the diversity of South Asian Heritage and challenge assumptions and stereotypes surrounding these communities.'

Location	Partners	Participants (annually)
Bradford	WomenZone, Kala Sangam (now known as Bradford Arts Centre), West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford City Library.	15-20 South Asian women who attend WomenZone
Sheffield	Handsworth Grange School, Migration Matters Festival and Dig Where You Stand, King Egbert School, Sheffield City Archives, Sheffield Museums.	15 students aged 11-16 from South Asian and Global Majority backgrounds
Croydon	Stanley Arts, Museum of Croydon and Croydon Archives.	15-20 members of Anglo-Indian Community aged 60+

1.4 Evaluation enquiries

The evaluation of Routes to Roots had a focus on assessing the extent to which the project achieved its heritage outcomes and its annual activity and output targets. However, it felt important that Maya made the evaluation an opportunity to delve into other areas of practice relating to the project. To this end, I met with Suzanne Gorman shortly after my appointment as evaluator to devise a set of evaluation enquiries. These are as follows:

- How does Routes to Roots contribute to the achievement of Maya Productions' mission, vision and aims?
- What does best practice look like?
- As a London-based organisation, how effective are we at working in other cities? How do we establish a sense of joint endeavour and connectivity across and between all of the locations?
- How effective is the project Steering Committee?
- As a theatre company moving into heritage territory which has attracted significant project-based which covers the direct costs of delivery but little else, how does Maya Productions bridge the gap from delivery mode to continuous development? What operational model enables the Company to both raise funds and deliver? How does it best manage this period of growth?



WHATEVER RACIST STEREOTYPES OR REMARKS THAT GET SAID TO YOU, DON'T LISTEN TO THEM – JUST DO WHAT YOU WANT. I ASSURE YOU IT WILL BE FINE BECAUSE THERE ARE RACIST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, PEOPLE WHO ARE PRETJUDICED – BUT THEY DON'T MATTER, SO YOU HAVE TO CARRY ON.



SECTION TWO

Progress against heritage outcomes, annual activity and outputs

2.1 Project activity and outputs

Like all NLHF-funded projects, Routes to Roots is expected both to deliver specified, agreed outputs and to make a difference by contributing to heritage outcomes. The tables below summarise the extent to which the project has delivered against these this year

Activity	Status	Summary of activity over project lifetime
10 heritage and cross-arts workshop sessions in each of the three cities annually, led by two local South Asian facilitators in collaboration with an archivist, Maya Productions’ new Anglo-Indian musical in development – Benny and the Greycats – as a stimulus to explore project themes.	Exceeded	- This target was regularly exceeded as the project responded to the needs of the group. - In 2023 Croydon had 14 workshops and Bradford 11. - In 2024, Sheffield had 15, Bradford 13 and Croydon had 13. - In 2025, Bradford had 16, Croydon 14 and Sheffield 12.
Create Heritage Products: Previous projects have captured oral histories of; migration journeys from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh to England, memories of home, separations of families; recipes; first impressions of England, experiences of racism, UK working life and more. The meaning of special objects (e.g. a grinding stone) will be researched with the archivist to understand and share their particular importance.	Exceeded	- Heritage products created over the course of the project were many and varied. Some including documentaries, podcasts, learning resources and videos of sharing events – are accessible via Maya’s dedicated Routes to Roots web pages. - Heritage products include: 4 exhibitions: Bradford City Library, Museum of Croydon, Stanley Arts (Croydon) and Sheffield Millennium Gallery 22 films and oral history podcasts 14 live performances 3 learning resources for KS2 and KS3 3 exhibition books, one in each location
3 live Heritage events (one in each city) sharing heritage with friends, family and wider community.	Met	Sharing events took place annually in each location over the duration of the project
One intergenerational event at Migration Matters Festival, Sheffield, bringing three groups together.	Exceeded	In addition to the local sharing events, each year the three groups got together to produce a joint event staged at Sheffield’s Migration Matters Festival.
One “highlights” video sharing project process and participant feedback	Exceeded	
3 dedicated web pages on Maya Productions site holding digital outputs	Met	The project is covered extensively on the Maya Productions website.
1 documentary (15 - 20 mins) focused on the heritage of one group/city each year.	Met	- Films were produced showcasing the work across each location as follows. These are hosted on the Maya Productions’ dedicated Routes to Roots web pages. Sheffield: 2023: What Makes Me? - Exploring cultural identity through movement, sound, visual arts and writing 2024: Journey of our Voices - Exploring differing experiences of migration 2025: Echoes Between Us - Exploring cultural identity through movement, sound, visual arts and writing Bradford: 2023: Dear Girl - Cross artform performance on the theme of mothers and daughters 2024: Over the Sunrise - Poetry and visual arts performance exploring experiences of motherhood and marriage. 2025: Dressed in Strength - Celebrating female empowerment through spoken word, music and traditional dress Croydon: 2023: 1960s Bingo Night - Stories, memories and monologues 2024: What Box do you Tick? A journey through the subjects of identity and migration, connecting generations past and present. - Poetry, sound and movement 2025: Echoes of a Name - Monologues, stories and song honouring the legacy of Anglo-Indian women and the wider South Asian diaspora - Three documentary films were made - Routes to Roots: 1960s Croydon (2023) - Routes to Roots: The Story of the Madras Jazz Group (2024) - Routes to Roots:The Bradford Poets (2025)



2.2 Achievement of Heritage Outcomes and project aims

Project aims:

- 1 Increase access to heritage for South Asian and global majority groups as producers and consumers of heritage.
- 2 Create a safe space to reflect on themes of migration, cultural identity, heritage, home, family, colonialism and their impacts.
- 3 Develop participants' research, documentation and archive skills to produce their own heritage products.
- 4 Support mental health and wellbeing through activities that combat social isolation and promote inclusion.
- 5 Amplify stories of migration/South Asian heritage for South Asian and wider audiences.
- 6 Leave a digital legacy of the histories of South Asian people for the next generation in local archives, contributing to placemaking in each location.

“ I THINK IT WAS REALLY EXCITING TO GO SEE EVERYONE’S WORK IN THE ARCHIVES. LEARNING AND EXPLORING DIFFERENT CULTURES AND PEOPLES’ STORIES WERE REALLY SPECIAL TO ME ”

Outcome	Summary of activity in pursuit of outcome	Which of the project aims does this activity contribute to?
A wider range of people will be involved.	The focus of the project was on supporting South Asian and other ethnically diverse women and girls to tell their own stories. These are stories which are underrepresented in archives. Specific measures were put in place to support inclusion and participation including: • Interpreters for WomenZone • Providing refreshments at adult groups and food at all events • Commencing WomenZone workshops after Eid • Running sessions in school time at Handsworth to maximise attendance • Keeping all sessions free and paying for travel and accommodation costs for the Migration Matters event. Conversations with facilitators and with partner venues indicate that considerable efforts have been made to support the active inclusion of anyone interested in taking part in the programme of work. However, issues were raised regarding the translation and interpretation of consent forms for women taking part in Bradford.	1, 2
Heritage will be identified and better explained.	The Maya project team underwent three days of training in year one with a specialist organisation/trainer to develop skills required to capture, document and preserve testimonies and stories. . Workshop facilitators developed new skills and heritage experience. Workshops used theatre, dance, poetry, storytelling, singing, visual arts and photography to access heritage - supporting participants to develop a range of skills. In Croydon, the already established Anglo-Indian group built on foundations of Maya Productions’ 2022 project, where individuals unlocked skills in public speaking and storytelling. Partners discovered new approaches to engaging South Asian communities. Workshops introduced participants to a range of artforms. Participants across the three groups engaged in: poetry, embroidery, painting, collage, filmmaking, acting, writing, storytelling, singing and performance. Participants also learned about exhibition design and production. Sharing events were typically cross artform and included: creative writing; performance; music and song; and use of digital artforms. Performances and exhibitions contributed to this outcome for participants, audiences and visitors.	3

Outcome	Summary of activity in pursuit of outcome	Which of the project aims does this activity contribute to?
People will have learned about heritage	Younger participants developed an appreciation of arts and heritage; benefited from participating in a project which was delivered by black, Asian and ethnically diverse facilitators; and were inspired to see heritage and arts as a potential career. Heritage events at Handsworth School linked to “cultural capital” week, supporting both participants and target audiences (those who were less likely to attend heritage events than other students) to understand the value of Pakistani/ Bangladeshi heritage and increased knowledge of these cultures and traditions for other pupils. Wider public: through events, films/media, exhibitions, website and archives each year leading to greater understanding of South Asian communities, inspiring more cohesive community action and generating closer ties between community members of different backgrounds. Audiences were surveyed to share how this exposure to the project contributed to their understanding of South Asian and migrant communities, and whether this had changed perceptions and/or challenged stereotypes. South Asian/under represented communities: Community members reported feeling greater pride at seeing culture, traditions and heritage highlighted, leading to more people taking part/wanting to better understand their own heritage and engage in heritage projects which platform their experiences. Participating girls at King Ecgbert’s School reported a range of benefits of engagement including enhanced confidence and skills development. Though feedback from audience members who attended the Migration Matters event was scant, it was overwhelmingly positive.	1, 2, 3, 5
People will have greater wellbeing	Develop and refine wellbeing measures as a means of assessing Routes to Roots’ impact on participants’ sense of wellbeing. Wellbeing measures were refined this year to reflect the ONS4 wellbeing measure. This measure was used consistently across all locations and outcomes are discussed later in this report	4
The organisation will be more resilient	As part of the evaluation activity to date, conversations have taken place with partner venues (Stanley Arts Centre, Kala Sangam and King Ecgbert’s School). On the basis of these conversations, partners remained committed to the project and to the partnership. This is discussed in more detail later in this report. A participant from the Croydon group became a Maya Productions Board trustee in March 2026.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SECTION THREE

How did participants, audiences and exhibition visitors experience the project

3.1 Participant feedback

3.1.1 Baseline and distance travelled surveys

Baseline surveys were administered at the beginning of each year’s programme activity where participants were asked to specify their motivations for taking part. A distance travelled survey was administered at the conclusion of each year’s programme to measure the extent to which their aspirations had been met.

It should be borne in mind in interpreting the data below that reportedly most of the Bradford and Croydon participants were engaged with the project over its lifetime. Numbers therefore do not necessarily denote numbers of individual participants.

3.1.2 Baseline and distance travelled surveys

Numbers completing baseline surveys increased year on year as follows with the greatest increase apparent in Sheffield where only 4 girls completed surveys in 2023, rising to 19 in 2025:

Location	Number (2023)	Number (2024)	Number (2025)	TOTAL by location
Bradford	9	9	13	31
Croydon	8	10	11	29
Sheffield	4	14	19	37
TOTAL by year	21	33	43	97



3.1.3 Motivations and the extent to which these were met across all locations

Please note that respondents were invited to select as many motivations as applied to them.

Baseline survey 2024		Distance travelled survey 2024	
	All locations (33)		All locations (35)
I would like to learn new things	12	I learned new things	21
I want to learn more about crafts and performing arts	17	I learned more about crafts and performing arts	18
I hope it will be an enjoyable thing to do	25	It was an enjoyable thing to do	26
It's worthwhile to share my thoughts and experiences with others	26	It was worthwhile to share my thoughts and experiences with others	23

Observations:

- On the whole, participants’ expectations were met or exceeded in 2024. However, slightly fewer participants felt that it had been worthwhile to share their experiences with others than had stated that this was an aspiration for participation.

Baseline survey 2025		Distance travelled survey 2025	
	All locations (43)		All locations (40)
I would like to learn new things	31	I learned new things	36
I want to learn more about crafts and performing arts	28	I learned more about crafts and performing arts	28
I hope it will be an enjoyable thing to do	32	It was an enjoyable thing to do	30
It's worthwhile to share my thoughts and experiences with others	22	It was worthwhile to share my thoughts and experiences with others	39
I did this last year and enjoyed it	19		

Observations:

- On the whole, participants’ expectations were met or exceeded.
- It is notable that whilst just over half of respondents (22) stated at the outset that felt it would be worthwhile to share their thoughts and experiences, in the event almost all of them (39) felt that it had been a worthwhile experience.



I LEARNED AN AWFUL LOT ABOUT ANGLO-INDIAN HISTORY – HOW THEY WERE USED BY THE BRITISH TO FURTHER COLONIALISM AND THEN LEFT TO FACE THE MUSIC ONCE INDEPENDENCE CAME



3.1.6 Reflections on the programme

Over the lifetime of the project, participants were asked to reflect on how they had received the programme of work. Their thoughts were gathered through group conversations. The notes below summarise their thoughts by location.

Sheffield: Most of the girls at Sheffield reported that they had enjoyed the experience of taking part in Routes to Roots.

Two girls specifically reported having grown in confidence as a direct result of taking part. One stated that she had made new friendships and that engagement with the project had enhanced her communication skills.

For some, the project gave them a sense of connection to others and brought to mind the experiences of their parents and grandparents,

It made me feel connected to other people in Sheffield, who, like my family, had come here as immigrants to study. We explored photos of students in the 1960s, and I could almost imagine my relatives as they started their new life here. We even found a photo of a man, who told his story of coming to Sheffield who had been a student at our school as a boy. There were so many different types of documents and we really enjoyed the roles South Asian people had played in Sheffield through street directories, women's liberation papers, documents of an anti racist march and theatre programmes.

For others, it highlighted that South Asian stories feel underrepresented and unappreciated in the archive. The opportunity to redress that misrepresentation felt very valuable,

It was inspiring to see people of my culture have stories that were heard, as I feel some South Asians are not represented in a very good light. It's a good way to fight back against the stereotypes. It felt nice to see men and women of my culture step and have their place. It was interesting to learn about other people's cultures.

Some of the girls felt that the project had plotted a path from the struggles of their parents and grandparents and their own,

It reminds us that people have also fought for equality and their rights as we still do today ... It made me keen to get back to school and my work on the project Routes to Roots and tell my story for others to read about for years to come.

I think it was really exciting to go see everyone's work in the archives. Learning and exploring different cultures and peoples' stories were really special to me. We could see how people had gone through their lives with different challenges and it helped us connect and sympathise.

Asked if they had a message for other young people who might view Routes to Roots materials in 50 or 100 years time, one girl stated,

Whatever racist stereotypes or remarks that get said to you, don't listen to them - just do what you want. I assure you it will be fine because there are racist people in the world, people who are prejudiced - but they don't matter, so you have to carry on.

Croydon: Routes to Roots was well-received by the women who took part. They reported many and varied positive personal outcomes. One woman discussed her enhanced learning about Anglo-Indian history,

I learned an awful lot about Anglo-Indian history – how they were used by the British to further colonialism and then left to face the music once independence came.

Another reflected on the resilience and strength of the Anglo-Indian community,

[I learned] how people survived and flourished with great resilience after being 'forced' to emigrate and the importance of the Anglo-Indian community.

Others reported on a newly found appreciation of the technical, creative and other work that goes into production, specifically,

...How very complex putting on a production is both creatively and technically.

I learned to breathe and put my mouth closer to the mic. To pay attention to which person I have to speak after.

[I learned how to] develop an idea and how theatre works.

Many of the women reported that engagement with the project had enhanced their feeling of being part of a joint endeavour, and had brought them closer to other people,

The importance of feeling an accepted part of a friendly, inclusive group, learning so much from each other.

I enjoyed the performance. It also gave me a bit more confidence in myself and I made friends.

“IT WAS INSPIRING TO SEE PEOPLE OF MY CULTURE HAVE STORIES THAT WERE HEARD, AS I FEEL SOME SOUTH ASIANS ARE NOT REPRESENTED IN A VERY GOOD LIGHT. IT'S A GOOD WAY TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE STEREOTYPES. IT FELT NICE TO SEE MEN AND WOMEN OF MY CULTURE STEP AND HAVE THEIR PLACE. IT WAS INTERESTING TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S CULTURES”

Bradford: Women in the Bradford group were especially appreciative of the opportunity that participation gave them to make connections and share with others. One woman reported,

I love this programme - being able to express the secrets of my heart.

Others felt that engagement with the programme of work brought about a sense of fellow feeling,

This type of project needs to happen more often. People like me learn a lot and are able to share and learn with others.

Another woman – a WomenZone volunteer – spoke about what she perceived were the benefits and considered what might happen next to solidify the outcomes,

I heard heartwarming stories. This project encourages and stimulates the women to speak. We want to collate the poetry in a booklet.

One of the women felt inspired to build on the skills she had acquired over the course of the programme of work,

I made a song. I want to continue writing poems and I want to make a film. I want to keep inspiring others and helping them.

One of the Bradford participants was a first time visitor to WomenZone and had particularly enjoyed being able to leave the house to do something that was just for her. She said that this was the first time that she had been exposed to activities of this type. Another woman – also a new visitor to WomenZone having recently retired from work – particularly enjoyed the trip to Migration Matters,

When we went to Sheffield, we had a nice dinner and everybody was happy...I liked Aamta and Sharena and everybody. We were all helping each other.

One of the women reported that coming along to the group had had a profound positive impact on her mental health. She had previously been depressed following a bereavement and was advised by a health professional to visit WomenZone,

These lovely people, they welcomed me so much. We were in the same boat and I felt released from inside. They'd say 'Don't worry, if you want to cry, you cry.' I really appreciate that.

In a similar vein, another woman likened attending the group to coming out of the dark into the sunshine. Like everyone else I spoke to in the Bradford group, she made particular mention of the care and support she received from the artist facilitators. Another told me that she had gained in confidence from doing things that she had never previously done. She said that though she had lacked confidence in some of the activities, Aamta and Sharena 'wouldn't take no for an answer.'

One woman, who had barely left her house for 28 years, said that coming along to the group had made her feel heard. The fact that she was unable to read or write had not been a barrier because, she said, Aamta, Rubina and Sharena had listened, translated and written her words so that she was able to fully participate alongside everyone else.

One participant, who supported Aamta and Sharena with co-facilitation and translation, also felt that she had gained a great deal,

I participated with the ladies and I really enjoyed the work which I had never done before...all of this work was an experience for me.

All of the women I spoke to said that they would like the group to continue. They felt that they had built a sense of family which was built on trust and respect.



3.1.7 Artists’ thoughts about programme impacts

Artist One: Confidence building through performance; teamwork with peers; discovering ways of being creative, discovering their voice and being listened to

Artist Two: improved skills: reading, scripts, developing their writing, ability to edit stories, appreciate the work required to put on play. Emotional well being, improved health... Greater understanding of each other, patience, cognitive improvement. Ability to work longer hours than two hrs scheduled and remain focussed. Physical stamina to complete tasks, better memory, feeling of achievement... Leaving a legacy. Archive of work over three years plus. Have exchanged ideas, stories and experiences with other communities young and old. More self confidence. Overcoming some fears of public speaking.

Artist Three: Most of the young people, because they had not been involved in a creative project of this nature (co-creating with others rather than adult/teacher-led), or been to a theatre or archive, discovered new ways to express themselves, share ideas, and feel heard, especially in spaces where they might not have felt empowered before.

The project appears to have fostered a sense of connection, enabling new friendships and helping participants feel more connected to others who share similar experiences or passions.

Through sharing experiences and engaging in creative activities, participants grew in their understanding of themselves, others and the themes.

By encouraging diverse voices and perspectives, the project highlighted the value of difference, making the young people truly proud of their distinct and shared experiences.

The young people grew in confidence, particularly in their ability to perform at the Migration Matters Festival and other school events.

I saw how powerful it is when young people are given a chance to be heard. Watching participants explore their identities, share personal memories, and embrace their roots was satisfying, especially as I learnt that two young people read their poems at a community event. This tells me that the project has made a lasting impact.

Artist Four: Seeing the women’s confidence grow, their English skills and creative writing skills develop, to see them overcoming their own boundaries.

3.2 Audience feedback

3.2.1 Introduction

Over the duration of the project, sharing events took place annually in each location, culminating in a cross-location sharing at the Migration Matters Festival in Sheffield.

This section summarises audiences’ responses to all of the sharing events over the lifetime of the project.

3.2.2 Headlines

- All aspects of the sharing events were appreciated by those completing audience feedback forms.
- Across the lifetime of the project, a total of 190 audience members completed feedback forms. Numbers completing feedback forms increased year on year: 31 in 2023; 65 in 2024; and 94 in 2025.
- Storytelling and performance were most appreciated by audience members.
- Asked what they had most enjoyed, many audience members valued the opportunity to hear women’s stories. The following comments are typical across all sharings in all locations over the lifetime of the project:

Great to see older ladies’ lives and experiences. Younger folk need to hear these experiences.

I loved the ladies’ bravery and courage to share their stories.

[I enjoyed] hearing stories from a direct experience of migration at a particular point in history.

The production and the story really pulled me in, with the feelings I was travelling the world to hear important sories from the past.

The story of the forgotten women

Watching my Grandma perform

The ladies speaking and having a voice

3.2.3 Impacts of sharing events

Looking across the three years, audiences consistently reported that:

- Sharing events were engaging and thought provoking
- The events helped audiences to learn about migration in new ways
- The events supported audiences to reflect on issues of cultural identity
- The event encouraged a sense of connection with other people

3.2.4 Why is there a need for a project of this type?

Many respondents spoke about the importance of hearing untold stories. Within this theme, the following responses are typical:

- Where else would you get such untold stories and lives recounted?*
It comes from the community. It records personal history.
Anglo-Indians are not represented as part of British society
The story of the forgotten women.
These stories aren't heard or performed often in an accessible way with intergenerational community members.

Other respondents spoke about the ways in which the women's stories might impact on audiences' understanding of 'race', racism, migration and belonging,

- We need to hear stories that differ from our own to build an empathy and relationship with those that help us build a richer picture of our place in the world.*
It helps to bring a broader world view.
[It helps] to understand how migration has positively affected our society.
These days migration has such a negative connotation – it's good to combat that.
It's a different way of looking at racism.
The more we understand, the greater the opportunity for peace.
History, culture and identity is crucial for better understanding.

Amongst the audience attending a school sharing, one audience member spoke about the importance of enabling girls to share their culture and heritage,

- It's important to have a range of ways for young people to network, open up, express and explore culture inclusivity and shared learning.*
- Many audience members discussed the potential of storytelling in enabling younger people to appreciate the contributions of their elders,
Opens access to theatre and performance and gives a voice to tell stories and pass them on.
Sharing experiences and passing on stories
Younger folk need to hear these experiences.

“THESE DAYS MIGRATION HAS SUCH A NEGATIVE CONNOTATION – IT’S GOOD TO COMBAT THAT”

3.3 Exhibition feedback

Over the lifetime of the project, a total of four exhibitions took place (Bradford City Library, Museum of Croydon, Stanley Arts [Croydon] and Sheffield Millennium Gallery).

A total of **188** visitors completed feedback forms across all exhibitions: **62** in Sheffield, **61** in Croydon and **65** in Bradford

Please note that not everyone who completed the feedback survey answered every question

3.3.1 Frequency of visits to exhibition host venue

Frequently	29	15%
Occasionally	51	27%
Rarely	52	28%
First visit	58	31%

Headlines:

- On the whole, exhibitions attracted visitors who were not regular or frequent visitors to the host venue.
- Amongst those responding to the Croydon exhibition feedback form, around half were first time visitors.

3.3.2 How did visitors find out about the exhibition?

Please note, respondents were invited to specify how they found out about the exhibition, selecting as many options as applied.

Maya Productions website	7	4%
Maya Productions social media	6	3%
Exhibition host venue website	13	7%
Exhibition host venue social media	8	4%
Other social media	9	5%
Word of mouth	43	23%
Newspaper / magazine	2	1%
By invitation	15	8%
Other	115	61%

Headlines:

- The most frequently occurring response was ‘other’. Where individuals specified the source, visitors stated that they had been passing through the space and had come across the exhibition (Sheffield); that they had learned about the exhibition through Facebook or through the library (Croydon); and through WomenZone (Bradford). In Bradford only one visitor selected the additional option of Bradford 2025.
- The second most frequently occurring response was word of mouth.
- Visitors were very unlikely to have learned about the exhibitions through Maya Production’s website or social media.

3.3.3 How did visitors feel about the exhibition?

Visitors were asked to specify whether they agreed with a number of statements about the exhibition. They were invited to select all the statements they agreed with. Responses are summarised below in descending order.

Statement	Number selecting statement	% selecting this statement
I found the exhibition engaging.	141	75%
Through this exhibition, I learned more about the migration stories of communities in Sheffield, Croydon and Bradford.	114	61%
This exhibition makes me feel a sense of connection with other people.	104	55%
The exhibition was thought-provoking.	100	53%
This exhibition encourages tolerance and open-mindedness.	110	59%
It’s important to me that this exhibition is in Croydon / Sheffield / Bradford.	100	53%
This exhibition helped me to learn about migration in a new way.	72	38%
The exhibition challenged stereotypes.	59	31%
This exhibition has inspired me to research my own heritage.	54	29%

Headlines:

- Three quarters of respondents found the exhibitions engaging.
- The exhibition was very successful in heightening awareness of migration stories of the three locations.
- Over half of all respondents felt that the exhibition gave them a sense of connection with other people. Similar proportions found the exhibition thought-provoking and felt that it encouraged open mindedness and tolerance.
- Over one quarter of respondents felt that the exhibition had inspired them to research their own heritage.

3.3.4 Three words

Visitors were invited to use three words to describe how they felt about the exhibition. The table overleaf shows the number of times specific words were used.

- The word used most frequently over all three locations was ‘interesting’.
- Visitors frequently used terms which related to the aesthetic of the exhibitions. Words like ‘beautiful’, ‘vibrant’, ‘colourful’ and ‘bright’, ‘well presented’ were typical.
- Visitors often used words which suggested new learning. Amongst these were ‘enlightening’, ‘informative’, ‘thought provoking’, ‘reflective’, ‘educational’ and ‘understanding others’ culture’.

HISTORY, CULTURE AND IDENTITY IS CRUCIAL FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

SECTION FOUR

Perspectives

How have facilitators experienced the project?

Over the course of this evaluation, I spoke with facilitators and partners in each of the three locations. The remainder of this section summarises the key issues which arose from those conversations at the mid and end points of the project.

The project was inspired by Maya Productions' musical in Development - Benny and the Greycats. "Benny" tells the story of a family of Anglo-Indian railway workers and musicians who migrate from South India to Sheffield in the 1960s and is inspired by Artistic Director Suzanne Gorman's family history. Routes to Roots was born out of the desire to invite other South Asian, migrant and ethnically diverse communities to creatively engage with themes around migration, heritage and cultural identity. These themes underpin the project, but the approach to the work has been determined by the facilitators and participants.

Facilitators were creative practitioners and brought their varied practice to Routes to Roots. To my knowledge, the same artists were engaged over the lifetime of the project. Each location worked with two artists.

4.1 Mid point reflections

4.1.1 How did the facilitators work with participants to determine content of the sessions?

Sheffield: Sheffield facilitators worked in one school for the first year of the project and then moved in year two to another – King Ecgbert School – and were therefore unable in year two to draw on institutional memory of the project. However, one of the facilitators had previously worked in the school on other projects and knew some of the staff. Facilitators were also able to share the previous year's work with girls at St Ecgbert who expressed an interest in getting involved. This proved helpful in bringing to life the theme of South Asian heritage.

In 2024, participants were drawn from across the school community. Whilst this attests to the project's popularity, it was not without its challenges. According to one of the facilitators,

First of all, the group was really big...there was an average of 20-24 every week.

This meant that it was necessary to break the girls into smaller groups to work on character monologues. I was told that the girls felt most comfortable working with people they already knew and for this reason – having tried random selection for groupings – the girls were ultimately split into year groups. Had there been more time to establish rapport in the group, I was told, the preference would have been to have mixed age range groupings.

In the event, though, and given the inherent time restrictions, it felt necessary to ensure that the sessions were very focused on achieving a final product and this meant that the time given to establishing group rapport was limited. I was told that mid-programme, the facilitators did a quick check-in with girls to find out how they were experiencing the programme and that two thirds of them stated that they found the work very difficult.

We were driving them hard because we knew that we had Migration Matters at the end and I wonder if that takes away the fun bit.

Croydon: By contrast, by the mid-point of the project the Croydon group was largely unchanged. In its first year, however, three men – all husbands of participating women – attended. By 2024, the group was all women. This, I was told, worked well and developed a sense of internal coherence, support and community. Over time, a sense of easy collaboration between the group and its facilitators grew. It is my understanding that whilst a broad framework is in place for group content, in practice content was co designed between facilitators and group members.

Because the group was well-established, trust built and the women were able to be open with each other.

We're using poetry and artistic techniques and theatre techniques where it can be just conversation with a cup of tea and a biscuit. In that, we're guiding them or allowing them to shape what happens. It might be that there's an end product...but we work towards it bit by bit.

Bradford: By the mid-point of the project, the process by which women were recruited to Routes to Roots felt smoother than in its first year. Having a sign up and registration day helped to get people on board in a much more consistent manner. What this meant was that women were able to consider whether they wanted to participate and, in the event, twelve women consistently attended across all of the workshops.

There were, however, some inherent challenges involved in delivering a project in a centre – WomenZone – which is consistently busy, well-used and hosts numerous initiatives and sessions on a weekly basis. In addition, many of the women who participated in Bradford had experienced significant personal challenges which become apparent over the course of the programme and this needed to be sensitively handled whilst at the same time sustaining the momentum of the programme and attempting to deliver to its outcomes.

The facilitators' original expectation was that the focus for each year's programme would follow a narrative stream, with the first year focusing on women's childhoods and the second year memories of young adulthood through to their 20's, 30's and 40's. In the final year, the expectation was that they would bring their stories to the present day. Infused throughout the stories would be experiences of migration.

I was told that it felt very important that the project delivered to the women's wants, needs and interests. This, it was felt, enabled the women to feel part of something that had value,

What they've been through in their lives and how they've overcome them is what defines them and describes who they are. All these things they carry are not things to be ashamed of.

4.1.2 What went well?

Sheffield: I was told that the girls became very serious as the Migration Matters sharing approached. One of the facilitators said that she would find girls going off to one side to rehearse in groups. They appeared to be proud to be there and they enjoyed the experience.

A further sharing in Sheffield was in school with an audience of students and parents. I understand that this was very well-received, though some girls felt uncomfortable performing to an audience of their peers and chose not to take part.

Asked what the high points were of this year's programme were in Sheffield, I was told by one of the facilitators,

I think the high points for me were the points at which the girls realised there was something really special about what they had done.

Croydon: Facilitators told me that they wanted to encourage the group to tell their own stories. They worked to a guiding script but the group was free to improvise around the central themes of:

- What does migration mean?
- How has migration impacted on you?

The group was keen to engage another generation in the work and to this end, facilitators supported training in taking oral histories. These interviews provided contrasts between group members' experiences and those of their children and grandchildren.

The event at Migration Matters was felt to have gone very well,

It was very uplifting and enriching, having a different venue from before. The Hilton [where the group had stayed the night before the performance] arranged for us to have a rehearsal space before we went to the venue...the ladies are very energetic and they help each other.

The second sharing event took place at Stanley Arts and comprised an ambitious, cross-artform performance including audio, video and signing.

They all felt they got a chance to tell the story they wanted to share.

The sharing provided an opportunity to touch on some of the complexities of migration, belonging and Britishness,

It raises its own complications and questions, both positive and negative. Who are we and who are you? What does it mean to us now? Many years have gone now from one generation and the new generations coming. Will they remember or give any credit to what we've done?

The sharing – and the group sessions more widely – also provided a space for the women to reflect on some of the complexities of Anglo-Indian identity. A facilitator explained,

They feel British but at the same time they're drawn to India. So, they picked Anglo-Indian as an identity but they don't know what it is. And at every stage nobody in the empire or Britain knew what it was because it kept changing: you are Euro Asian; you are mixed race; you are Indian...but then there was another conversation which was that it doesn't matter. It changes all the time and you don't lose any of it – you carry all of it with you.

Bradford: I attended the Bradford sign up sessions in year two and it was evident that the group facilitators were held in high esteem by the women who participated and that they, in turn, treated the women with care and compassion.

We created a safe space for them to be themselves and we've put boundaries in place to make sure that women feel safe which is why they were so comfortable to share what they did at the events. We ensured that the stories were going to be presented in a very sensitive manner.

Women were encouraged to present in their mother tongue.

We were telling them to be loud and proud and to be authentic. It felt rewarding that they trusted me with their stories and the connections we were able to build with the women.

She explained that what is presented on stage barely scratches the surface of what the women disclose and share. This is partly down to the relationship between the two facilitators and their shared care and compassion for the women they work with.

I'm fiercely passionate about what I do and I'm very clear that I don't sensationalise their pain, their trauma.



4.1.3 Engaging young people in heritage

As discussed above, participants in Sheffield and Croydon were older women. By definition, those participating from King Egbert's were young people. It seemed to me that their experiences, interests and understanding of heritage differed significantly from those of the other groups.

By necessity, participating in Routes to Roots meant that in Sheffield, participating girls were absent from a curricular subject. I was told that this was a concern for some teaching staff. The alternative would have been to hold the sessions after school. However, there was a concern that there might not be sufficient numbers to justify an after school session.

A further challenge for Sheffield was that the sessions ran for a period of 8 weeks from 14:15 – 15:45. Since the end of the school day is 15:15, many girls left at that time, meaning that they would routinely miss one third of the session every week.

There was a further issue with the Migration Matters event in 2024 which I feel is worthy of some attention. The event included girls reading aloud a monologue which ostensibly described individuals' life experiences. One parent who attended the event was unhappy with the monologue that her daughter read aloud since it did not reflect the reality of her life. The parent felt that the monologue was a negative representation of their child's cultural heritage.

It was later explained to me that, given the size of the group, it had been impossible to enable all the girls (20-24 typically attended the group) to devise and read their own monologues. A work-around was devised which meant that girls drew on shared group experiences and research to devise composite monologues. However, in introducing the monologues at the Migration Matters event, the impression was given that the monologues represented girls' lived experiences rather than composite character experiences. By the time that the project was shared at school, this issue had been resolved.

Asked if there was anything that they would change, a Sheffield facilitator told me that the project would benefit from being slimmed down to a single outcome negotiated with the participating girls. This would, I was told, enable facilitators to make best use of the limited time available to them, empowering girls to be more exploratory in the work. As it was, there was pressure to make a performance for Migration Matters and for school; to make a film; and to contribute material for the exhibition.

One of the problems, I was told, with trying to fit too much in, is that notions of co-creation necessarily have to be sacrificed.

The cross-generational aspect of the project was valued by the facilitators. I was told that people rarely consider the impact of migration on children and the project gives children the opportunity to express their misgivings.

According to the Sheffield facilitators I spoke to, the project provided a platform for young people to express some uncomfortable truths about their experiences of migration. They might – for example – not have wanted to leave their home country, they may miss where they left, the people they left behind and may feel dislocated by the experience. On the other hand, their cultural connections and interests might be very different from their parents' and much more similar to their peers – of whatever background.

4.1.4 End point reflections

Towards the end of the project, I held a joint conversation with artist facilitators from across the three locations focused around four key areas of enquiry:

- What have artists learned about socially engaged practice over the course of the project?
- Do black, Asian and ethnically diverse artists encounter particular issues when working in communities? If so, what are these?
- What do artists know that they didn't know before they took on this piece of work? What has been a highlight of the programme?
- What is the impact of working with a community over a prolonged period of time? What are the challenges and benefits?



4.1.5 What did artist facilitators learn about socially engaged practice over the course of the project?

Artists spoke about the necessity to lead whilst at the same time standing back in order to enable community participants to make sense of the project, its processes and outcomes for themselves. I was told that this can at times feel challenging in the context of delivering a project which has defined, time-sensitive outputs. A further challenge concerned working equitably with individuals who have varying levels of ability, experience and understanding. This was particularly the case for artists working with children in schools where the levels of understanding between a year seven and a year nine student can feel immense,

It's something that was always at the back of my mind: how do you take this person along? How do you get this person to wait or to come down a notch?

There was also a need, in working with children, to balance disclosure about personal experiences with ensuring that children felt safe and protected when sharing their work both in school and at the Migration Matters Festival. This was also mentioned by an artist working in Croydon,

You don't want to push it too far where it encroaches on their personal lives or is traumatic, or they release something they don't want to at that stage because you want to create the best environment which is safe.

Artists in schools also found that they had to adapt their terminology in order to make it accessible to children. What might make sense in a theatre or other performing arts environment can feel impenetrable in a school.

What are the words that they know? What do they actually identify with?... Things that may seem quite normal to us – reading a poem on stage – they may never have seen that before even within school, and even if they have they don't think of it as a performance.

The smallest things can feel like huge achievements: walking across a stage, picking up a mic and saying your name. One artist reflected on how the project has caused her to reassess her approach to community engagement,

My practice has always been about making arts accessible to a much wider audience... And it does show, I think that that is getting harder and harder. That's the main change I've seen... is that there's less exposure to the arts in just that period of time.

One of the artists working with women in Bradford was monolingual. Over the course of the project, there came a realisation that language is not necessarily a barrier to engagement and inclusion. For her, it offered an opportunity to switch roles from time to time,

A lot of these ladies spoke Urdu, Punjabi, lots of different languages, and they taught me a lot of things. So, as much as I was going in as the facilitator, we were all learning from each other.

“MY PRACTICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT MAKING ARTS ACCESSIBLE TO A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE... AND IT DOES SHOW, I THINK THAT THAT IS GETTING HARDER AND HARDER”



4.1.6 Do black, Asian and ethnically diverse artists encounter particular issues when working in communities? If so, what are these?

One artist felt that an important quality that black, Asian and ethnically diverse artists can bring to the community arts space is an empathy derived from lived experience,

(We may have) experienced racism and challenges within our own profession, working in different sectors, when our thinking and creativity has been questioned or seen as not being suitable or proper.

In fact, I was told, marginalised artists are able to draw on a wealth of experiences from both the mainstream and from the edges.

One artist who disclosed that they had been subject to racial abuse whilst working on another project said that they had felt safe working on Routes to Roots in part because they were working with another artist from a racially marginalised background.

We trusted each other, our credentials and abilities.

Similarly, I was told, being an artist of colour working with groups of black, Asian and ethnically diverse participants can speed up the process of building trust,

I think we just naturally feel a connection somehow and people just start talking to you straight away.

4.1.7 What is the impact of working with a community over a prolonged period of time? What are the challenges and benefits?

Working with the same (or largely the same) group over an extended period can bring its challenges. Some of these are welcome,

It means they challenge you to come up with better things and build on what they have already done so you have to think of new things and assess what to introduce which is both a challenge, pushes them as far as we can given their abilities and health issues but at the same time allows them that space so that they can find their own confidence and voice.

The advantage, I was told, of working over a sustained period is that what there develops a sense of joint endeavour between artists and participants which makes it more and more possible to stretch the group so that they feel able and comfortable to extend their creative repertoire.

Another artist spoke about the ways in which she had observed participants' confidence and creativity grow over time. She also noted that the longer she had spent in the group's environment, the more comfortable she felt in the space. She had become accustomed to working in a noisy, busy environment and to sometimes being allocated a room that wasn't ideal. She had come to know what works and what does not; the pace at which she should take activities; when to listen and when to cajole.

We know the ladies are going to want to grab a tea and they're going to want to have a chat, but we need them to do something... We've got to work a bit slower as practitioners. We know the challenges that are there. We have that knowledge.

That space and time to decompress was a critical part of the sessions and it would have felt wrong to curtail that,

They need to get into the groove a little bit because a lot of them do experience loneliness and they are disadvantaged. They can't read or write even in their own language...one of the challenges was that the sessions were not long enough because you'd need 30-40 minutes to check in and talk with them and by the time that's done that's taken up about 60% of your session.

Although translators were provided by WomenZone, one of the Bradford artists took on the additional responsibility of translating to the women to ensure that they fully understood the process and expectations, enabling them to relax and enjoy the work. Ideally, I was told, a three hour session would have worked better. This would have better enabled the project to meet its outcomes within a warm, supportive and caring atmosphere,

They don't just look at us as artists and facilitators. They look at us as friends as if we are their family – that's what their nature is.. And they want to talk so it would be nice to have it for a bit longer because [otherwise] the session feels very transactional – you're just there to do what you're supposed to do and then just leave and come back the week after.

One of the Croydon artists agreed that three-hour sessions would have worked better and in fact she stated that towards the end of the programme she and her co-facilitator were delivering three-hour sessions through pressures on time. For this particular artist, the duration of each annual programme felt very tight since it required deciding on and devising a piece, writing it and then rehearsing it. Nevertheless, they noticed that those women who had been with the project since its inception began to take on more and more responsibility for ensuring that the pieces they devised were ready for the stage. The artist noted that on the morning of the Sheffield performance, the women had organised their own final rehearsal independently of the artists.

The situation in Sheffield was somewhat different because the artists worked in Handsworth Grange in the first year and then shifted to King Ecgbert's in years two and three. In addition, each year there was a new cohort. However, being in the same school for two years yielded benefits,

The staff know you and they give you support even if you don't work with the same students... you're going into a session very relaxed about where you are.

4.1.8 What do artists know that they didn't know before they took on this piece of work? What has been a highlight of the programme?

The table below summarises the learning which emerged for facilitators over the course of the programme and summarises their reported highlights of the programme.

What do artists know that they didn't know before beginning the programme?	Highlights
• Much more knowledgeable about the Anglo-Indian community • Having more confidence in my practice and in using art forms other than dance and movement • Learned so much about South Asian cultures and the journeys people have taken to be here; the differences and the shared experiences • Not to generalise about young people and not to assume that they will have had similar experiences • Young people's views can be very different from those of their parents in terms of history and politics. They may have very different views about their journeys here. • All of the young people had very powerful stories, even of they chose not to share them publicly • I can be fluid in my creative practice; I'm able to deliver with groups of different ages • Whilst the groups we worked with may have appeared similar, each was different and individuals had different challenges, strengths and abilities • How to make activities more accessible (e.g. magnifying glasses; translating 'how to' instructions, laminating instructions to take home) • I know now how colonial and British policies affected so many lives globally, in the Caribbean, in Africa, in India and how that legacy continues • The resilience and strength of individuals and communities living under immense pressure • We found strength in the telling and retelling of stories	• How women managed to problem solve when things got tricky • Seeing the response of the young people once they have performed on stage in front of an audience. Shows how important having a voice is to their growth and development • Young people demonstrably benefiting from performing despite their trepidation beforehand; congratulating and supporting each other. • Enabling groups to be seen, valued and heard; having their stories amplified • Enabling the group to have new experiences • Our group was able to see another side of young people and to challenge their own stereotypes • Sharing across generations • I'm so happy to have been part of a programme which has worked with this group of ladies. I've learned so much from them and they are amazing women

4.2 How have partners and collaborators experienced the project?

As a project operating over three locations in three different host venues with three very different groups of girls and women, Routes to Roots was very much a joint endeavour, requiring collaborations between artists, participants, host venues, exhibition spaces, archivists, exhibition designers and filmmakers.

In this sub section, I focus on a selection of partners and collaborators.



4.2.1 The delivery partner

Bradford Arts Centre (formerly known as Kala Sangam) is, as its name suggests, an arts and creative space in Bradford city centre which makes and presents work organised around the following strands: This is Bradford, South Asia now and British diversity. It is my understanding that its involvement with the programme is fairly light touch but that the collaboration with Maya Productions and with WomenZone is much valued. In particular Bradford Arts Centre has provided significant support in administering and supporting the sign up and consent process at the outset of both the 2023 and 2024 iterations of Routes to Roots. This is in the context of a strong working relationship between Bradford Arts Centre and WomenZone established over several years.

The three-way partnership with WomenZone and Maya Productions contributes directly to each of Bradford Arts Centre's thematic strands.

I spoke to a senior worker at Bradford Arts Centre who observed that the sharing at Migration Matters provides a hard deadline for the work which, on the one hand, is helpful but can place some pressure on WomenZone to produce a stage-ready production for a performance in Sheffield. It is my understanding that the subsequent performance at WomenZone felt more relaxed and engaging for both the women taking part and for the audience.

Looking ahead, the staff member wondered whether it might be possible to work with Bradford 2025 to negotiate a performance at its touring Beacon performance space.

Reflecting on the sign up and consent process, the worker commented that the necessity to complete consent forms remained time consuming. I can confirm this since I was present during the introductory session when the staff member was supporting the completion of consent forms whilst the two Bradford coordinators were signing up participants and attempting an introductory creative exercise. A significant proportion of the women participating in Bradford required interpreting support in order to understand a complex consent form which is written in formal, rather inaccessible language. For example, the consent form covers GDPR, Maya Productions' data protocols; photo and video permissions categorised into different uses (approximately 10-12 different uses and scenarios); archiving outcomes of the project and oral history recordings.

The issue of obtaining informed consent from participating women was discussed in year two's interim report and, in my view, remained somewhat problematic in year three.

The staff member observed that Aamta and Sharena (the Bradford artist facilitators) have established close bonds with the women who attend the group and that the trust and care is evident in the outputs of the programme. The work the women produced, she felt, built on the previous year's and demonstrated real progress in terms of artistic and creative output.

4.2.2 The teacher

I spoke to a teacher at King Ecgbert's School. The school had been recruited to the project in year two. The school is very ethnically diverse,

We have a large number of our students who are British Pakistani and a large Somali British community and growing numbers of East Asian Chinese and Hong Kong students along with a smaller number of Black British students.

The teacher explained to me that girls were selected by a school mentor who identified girls whom she felt would benefit from the opportunity to explore their heritage. For King Ecgbert's, being involved represented an opportunity for young people to engage with heritage from a third or fourth generation perspective,

It was their chance to connect with family heritage and generational stories which we're aware sometimes get lost...and we thought it would develop their literacy and oracy skills.

The teacher explained that she'd attended both the Migration Matters and school performances. Commenting on the parent's concern about the Migration Matters performance (see above), the teacher told me that it needed perhaps to be made clearer that the stories which were read aloud were composite narrative accounts rather than being directly autobiographical. The teacher was keen to point out that the school is actively anti-racist,

We're an anti-racist school and we've achieved the Leeds Beckett award for that because of the work that was put into trying to eliminate racism. That means not just in the corridors for kids; that means in the lessons and representation in staffing and governance, leadership, training for staff, pedagogy, everything.

In the event, the school was able to respond to the parent's concerns and the issue was resolved by the time the performance took place at school.

On reflection, the teacher felt that it might have been better to work with a smaller group from the outset. Perhaps, she thought, this might have enabled the girls to engage more fully from the beginning. She observed that once a sense of trust and joint endeavour had been established, the group felt more confident in sharing,

Once they started talking about Pakistan and about their visits and their parents' descriptions, that was when their writing became brilliant...that's when it got really powerful. But it took them a while to become confident.



WE'RE AN ANTI-RACIST SCHOOL AND WE'VE ACHIEVED THE LEEDS BECKETT AWARD FOR THAT BECAUSE OF THE WORK THAT WAS PUT INTO TRYING TO ELIMINATE RACISM. THAT MEANS NOT JUST IN THE CORRIDORS FOR KIDS; THAT MEANS IN THE LESSONS AND REPRESENTATION IN STAFFING AND GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, TRAINING FOR STAFF, PEDAGOGY, EVERYTHING



4.2.3 The exhibition coordinator

I spoke to the coordinator of the exhibition at the Museum of Croydon. She had responsibility for – amongst other things – documentation and conditions, risk assessments, organisation of the installation and supporting events.

Reflecting on the exhibition launch, she told me,

It went really well. There were refreshments and performances from the people who were in the exhibition. They invited the mayor who came and spoke about it. It went really well.

I was interested to learn whether the exhibition coordinator – who is herself Anglo-Indian – had formed an impression of how visitors had responded to the exhibition,

People commented on how moved they had been by the exhibition and by the performances. I think some people didn't know quite what to expect but people said afterwards that the stories were really moving. I think it opened their eyes to a different community.

She told me that she can tell an Anglo-Indian from a mile off *because they all sound like my aunties or uncles*. It felt affirming to her to have the community she belongs to recognised. She told me that schools responded well to the exhibition,

They enjoyed engaging with it. They loved the films... the kids were really listening and watching the films... they liked that engagement.

Reflecting on highlights of hosting the exhibition, she told me that it was colourful and engaging and that it drew people into the space. The film content, she said, worked well, attracting viewers from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. She has seen a lot of exhibitions in the space and feels that those which – like Routes to Roots – combine text and audio-visual elements tend to be most engaging.

She also felt that audiences which focus on and highlight particular communities tend to draw in visitors from those communities and that this helped to diversify the gallery's audiences,

There was a lot of Anglos that visited and it was nice to be able to talk to them, particularly for me.

I asked if she could remember any particular comments that Anglo-Indian visitors had made,

It was more that it sparked off conversations about their heritage and their homes.

She told me that visitors would have conversations with each other,

Are you Anglo-Indian? Yes, I'm Anglo-Indian Where did your Dad go to school? Where did you live? I would say that it sparked conversations and reminiscences within the Anglo-Indian community...it sparked their memories.

As we finished our conversation, the exhibition coordinator told me that she'd spoken with her Dad about the exhibition and showed him some of the images. She told me that he used to go to the Anglo-Indian events at Stanley Halls so it brought back a lot of memories for him.

They always had dances and that sort of thing. Anglos that I know always used to like to go dancing.

4.2.4 The librarian

I spoke to an Area Libraries Manager responsible for six libraries in Bradford. City Library was the host for Bradford's exhibition in 2025. The space, she told me, is typically busy and well-used.

The City Library offers access to computers and that is a very important resource for the library's users. The librarian explained that,

There are lots of people without digital skills and [people use the resource] to learn basic digital skills. City Library is the busiest because of its events and its offers.

She explains that the library has an important social function and has started operating as a 'warm space' where users can access tea and coffee,

We've only got one council customer services centre, so we get a lot of people wanting help because they can't go anywhere else.

The librarian had worked with a colleague in Local Studies to support the exhibition. Her impression was that it had been well-received. It had felt quite interactive and she noted lots of people hanging luggage tags on the tree in the space,

Word got around and built up; school classes came in and we pointed people to the exhibition.

The exhibition supported the local authority in delivering to its ambitions,

From the Council's point of view, it benefited us by getting people into the library. We got a lot of people from different backgrounds. There was strength there...it was nice to work alongside with people from other organisations.

4.2.5 The archivist

I spoke to an archivist who has worked with the project. He described his as a supportive role with a specific focus on supporting the recruitment of a project archivist – ideally from a South Asian background. He was on the recruitment panel for the role and also is the archival advisor for Sheffield where some of the material acquired by the project will be stored for long term preservation.

Whatever is created through the project will be absorbed into the Sheffield collections into our catalogues. Obviously then going forward, anyone can see it and use it.

He explained that over the years, Sheffield archives have extracted from its collections, stories and materials about different communities in the city because they are often hidden deep inside the collection and take some effort to retrieve. Routes to Roots materials can, in his view, support Sheffield archives in delivering to the service's broader ambitions around expanding the stories told through archival records.

So, over probably a decade, we've developed research guides to many communities: Somali, black African, Chinese etc. But that only goes so far...sometimes the more interesting records are human life records, human stories. So, we're very keen as a service to develop that area.

I was interested to learn what the archivist felt had gone particularly well with the project and what had been more challenging. He referred without hesitation to the challenges of engaging a South Asian archivist. The profession, he explained, is very small. However, he felt it was important to remain open to employing an archivist who might not have been formally qualified but had other valuable skills. In the event, the project was able to appoint a South Asian person as the assistant archivist and to provide additional archival support.

The value of engagement with archival services at an early stage, he told me, is that it can help ensure that materials need less processing and reformatting once they are received by the archive. This presumably means that they can be made available to the public in a more timely manner.

The archivist told me that there are only around 1200 qualified archivists in the country. I was interested to learn from him about how he felt the profession could become more reflective of an increasingly diverse United Kingdom. He told me that it's partly a matter of finding ways to communicate the fact that the history of a place belongs to everyone,

It's everybody's history – you don't have to be born in Sheffield or in the UK...one of the challenges is that the collections we hold are not representative and that can make it harder for people from different backgrounds to engage with archives...if the collections were broader and were used by a wider cross section of society you'd get more applications from different parts of the community...until the collections are more representative, it might be difficult to recruit.

In addition to its work with Routes to Roots, Sheffield Archives has also worked with writer, Desiree Reynolds, on a project called Dig Where You Stand which unearths stories of black and brown people in Sheffield and south Yorkshire going back centuries. This has connected with poets, writers and other creatives with the archives, retelling and interpreting the stories for a wider audience.

There's a balance to be achieved, though, in encouraging communities to contribute their stories,

You don't want to be extractive, basically saying 'We'd love your archive material' and then take it away and put it in the Archive Service. There's no relationship there... It is not benefiting the community.

He detected threads that connected Dig Where You Stand and Routes to Roots: they're both creative projects initiated and delivered by creatives working with communities; both also want to use processes that build a long-term legacy extending beyond the lifetime of the project. Engaging a South Asian archivist is one means of working towards that goal.

It's evident that the archivist has a real passion for his work and as we closed our conversation, I asked him what got him into the archives. His answer surprised me,

It was Alex Haley's Roots. I think it was in the 1970's. It was Sunday night TV and I watched it with my parents. It was a fascinating story. Knowing that this guy in America had traced his family tree back to Africa. I thought 'I could do my family tree,' So, I learned about archives and I'm very thankful to Alex...it told me that everybody has a history.



SECTION FIVE

Observations and learning points

5.1 What does the data mean?

Routes to Roots was a small project and as such represents the very opposite of big data. It was highly customised to meet the needs of three very different groups which share one common characteristic. However, their lived experiences are very different. Attempting to generalise the learning that emerges from this project seems unwise. We can, however, observe patterns and differences between the three groups and we can use those to inform the development of future cross-location projects.

5.2 Achievement of heritage outcomes, aims and annual outputs

On the basis of the quantitative and qualitative data that I have collected and had sight of over the duration of the project, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the project has both met its heritage outcomes and its project aims (see 1.3, above). In addition, it delivered to – and in some cases exceeded – its annual activity outputs

5.3 Do less, better

In conversation with facilitators (particularly those in Sheffield and Bradford), there appears to be a tension between values of co-creation and the pressure to produce tangible, pre-ordained outcomes. It feels to me that this tension can be particularly acute in the school setting where students frequently left sessions early, meaning they missed one third of the expected creative engagement hours.

It's to the credit of facilitators that they manage to produce the outcomes that they did in the face of significant challenges.

5.4 Connected but separate

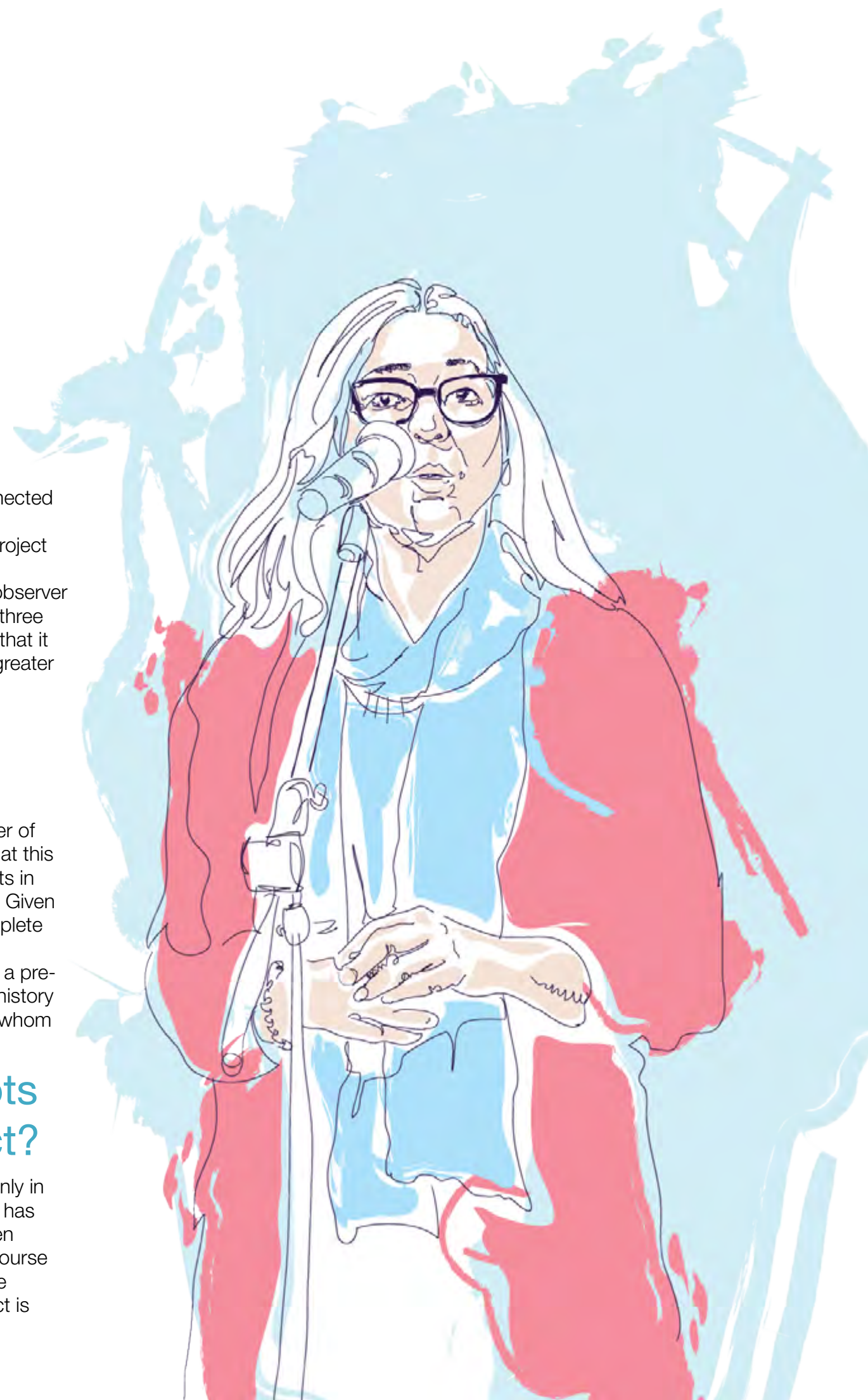
Outcomes of the three groups are ostensibly connected by a common theme (of migration) but feel quite disparate. It may be that it is the intention of the project to present three very different sets of reflections. However, I wonder whether – to a dispassionate observer – it is evident that there is a unifying thread to the three pieces of work. A couple of partners commented that it might have been helpful to have made space for greater interaction between the three groups.

5.5 Recruitment to Sheffield group

I am informed that in 2023 there was a low number of participants at Handsworth Grange School and that this led to recruitment of a large group at King Egberts in 2024. The group size was reduced again in 2025. Given the volume of work that girls are expected to complete over the course of the programme of work, could recruitment have been targeted towards girls with a pre-existing interest in drama and/or literature and/or history rather than having school mentors nominate girls whom they felt would benefit from the programme?

5.6 Was Routes to Roots a girls'/women's project?

In practice, it seems to have been the case (certainly in years two and three) that this programme of work has appealed most to girls and women. Given the often personal and intimate stories disclosed over the course of the programme, I wondered whether it might be helpful to be explicit about the fact that the project is aimed at girls and women.



5.7 Consents

Consent forms remained a fraught issue in the Bradford context. It is my view that consent should be sought as and when it is needed rather than asking women to consent to everything when – at the outset of the programme – they may not be in a position to anticipate what they might disclose. I feel that further work could have been done to make the permissions and consent processes as robust, light touch and accessible as possible.

I understand through conversations with Maya Productions' staff that consent requirements for exhibition, marketing and archival purposes are onerous. I wonder whether it mightn't be possible – to smoothen what can feel an onerous process for facilitators and for participants. I am informed that in 2025, Maya Productions requested consent forms solely from new recruits to the project and that the number of questions was reduced.

5.8 The quality and quantity of digital outputs

This was a key strength of this project. The fact that they are held on the Maya Productions website ensures a lasting legacy for the work.

5.9 Differences and similarities

Whilst all of the participating groups share South Asian descent, their experiences are very different each from the other. Both the Sheffield and London groups are, for example, fluent in English. The Croydon and Bradford groups consisted primarily of older women. Routes to Roots highlighted the similarities and differences between groups of girls and women who apparently share the same heritage but whose experiences differed significantly. A key strength of the project appeared to me to be its compassionate and caring facilitation across the three very different settings.

5.10 Was a public sharing at Migration Matters a critical element of the programme?

There may be a sound reason for the sharing at the Migration Matters Festival. However, I wonder whether it might have been worth carefully considering what precisely it added to the programme of work and whether this justified the logistical effort and pressure on facilitators and participants. In my experience, audiences were small and producing the event required huge logistical effort and time that could perhaps have been better used in adding depth and texture to the work that took place with the individual groups. Might there have been another way of sharing each group's output with the other groups? One facilitator observed,

It's not necessarily the end performance...I think that what is more spiritually enjoyable is the sharing that takes place before the [Migration Matters] performance because we get to meet the people who have taken part, of different generations....we get to see that they have worked in a similar way but have come out with completely different products or results.

5.11 Additional expectations of the Bradford artist facilitators

Many of the Bradford participants were not fluent in English and many were not literate in their home languages. This meant that one of the artists (who was bi – or possibly – tri lingual) had additional responsibilities to make the programme of work accessible to all participants. In addition, she felt a responsibility to interpret feedback and consent forms, though Maya Productions insists that this was not a requirement and that other arrangements (whose costs Maya Productions met) had been made for translation.

5.12 How was co-creation operationalised in the context of Routes to Roots?

Listening to artist facilitators, it felt clear to me that whilst co-creation was – for at least some of them – an ambition for the project, achievement of that ambition was hampered by a demanding and inflexible schedule. I wonder whether groups might have been given more autonomy to determine their outputs and/or whether the period of creative engagement might have been extended.

5.13 Archival practice

I was stuck by the archivist's commitment to extending the content of and access to archives and it is a credit to Maya Productions that the company was so determined, in its recruitment practices, to take positive action to appoint a South Asian archivist. The project demonstrably contributes to efforts to diversify archives and it will be interesting to see in years to come what the long-term impacts are of the project.

A1 SUZANNE'S REFLECTIONS

Routes to Roots proved to be a key driver of Maya's mission to enable racial justice and create social change.

By engaging underrepresented and overlooked South Asian communities this project offers a platform where participants are heard, not just once, but on a regular basis, in person, online, and through the archives. Maya upskilled the participants in multiple ways eg by working with archives and contributing to archive collections, creating performances, films, exhibitions, podcasts, visual art and even books.

The transformative work undertaken by Maya has been profound. As the report details, a range of skills have been developed by participants who are at the heart of the project. From the many remarkable moments over the past three years three highlights from 2025 stand out:

- Echoes of A Name, written and performed by our Croydon participants, to explore the erasure of identity experienced by some Indian Women that intermarried with English men to form the Anglo-Indian and other bi-racial communities in a colonised India. Driven by the participants themselves, it was inspiring to see this decolonisation process in creative action.
- Witnessing young students from Sheffield talk eloquently about their experiences growing up South Asian in Sheffield, what that means for them and how this project unlocked an appetite for representation. 'We are discriminated against, a lot, and underrepresented, so we need to get our voice heard.' (student participant)
- Welcoming over 12 participants from WomenZone who wanted to share their poetry live at our Bradford Exhibition launch. The stories told by this group are both personal and powerful. Performing in public was a challenge but here the group shared publicly with enthusiasm, confidence and pride. Younger family members were inspired to also take part witnessing their increased empowerment was uplifting.
- 'I loved seeing a different side to my mum and to the South Asian representation. I feel like it's a breath of fresh air to see these types of events and productions coming up in Bradford that shows and represents us in a positive light. I look forward to attending many more events and being involved in upcoming events/productions.' (audience member)

Maya is a small organisation (staff team of 1.5 FTE) and this multi-locational and multi-art form project was a challenge. New company systems were set up to manage both the finances and organisation of this wide ranging project. Our Administrator/Project Producer, needed to wear many hats to ensure the smooth running of the project. It was an intense and steep learning curve, but one that has enabled us to develop a new set of skills, which will support the ongoing work of the company.

We needed to learn quickly how to curate and produce exhibitions, collect and preserve oral histories, produce documentaries and podcasts and importantly learn about archival processes. Our core programme of work was led by 19 artists, filmmakers, designers, archivists, marketeers, with an additional 13 people who supported as photographers, feedback collectors, design assistants. Showcasing global majority role models is a key objective for Maya. Including our core Maya staff team, we were pleased that 77% of those working on the project were from South Asian and global majority backgrounds.

Many of the freelance team worked on the project for the whole three years. Thus enabling continuity and depth of engagement with participants making the work deep and meaningful. Maya was able to build long lasting relationships with industry professionals and also offer some individuals work in our other projects. This new network is very important for the continuing development of Maya, and our ability to offer work and to support the career progression of underrepresented professionals.

The sustained period of a grant supported both myself and our Administrator/Project Producer to be employed on salaries, a welcome stepping stone to future resilience. Whilst this period of growth has enabled the company to have stability over the past three years we are operating in a particularly challenging funding climate. Global Majority led organisations face well documented systemic barriers, including lower success rates and increased risk of closure. We were pleased to attract match funding to support the project, but despite several applications to support our core staff capacity we had only minimal success. We are in the process of defining which operational model enables Maya Productions to have the internal capacity to consistently both raise funds and successfully deliver our activities.

“AS A SMALL ORGANISATION (STAFF TEAM OF 1.5 FTE) EMBARKING ON THIS MULTI-LOCATIONAL AND MULTI-ART FORM PROJECT WAS A CHALLENGING ENDEAVOUR. NEW COMPANY SYSTEMS WERE SET UP TO MANAGE BOTH THE FINANCES AND ORGANISATION OF THIS WIDE RANGING PIECE OF WORK”

As a London based organisation, working nationally the strong partnerships in our three locations were vital to the success of this project. Each partner brought a different expertise to the table ranging from archival support and expertise, support with workshops and participants, performance and exhibition space. Many partners were part of the steering committee, (alongside a Maya trustee and key Routes to Roots team members) all meeting regularly to provide feedback, strategic oversight, advice and support. The majority of this investment was in-kind. At the steering committee meetings or working directly with partners, it felt that we were on a collaborative journey people cared about. Where challenges were faced we worked through them together.

Through this process Maya has strengthened its partnerships with arts and community venues and for the first time established relationships with museums, libraries, galleries and archives. Not only were partners involved in this project, but we were able to open up other ways of working together. Our Latin American musical Súper Chefs toured to Stanley Arts, Migration Matters and to a Bradford School via our partnership with Bradford Arts Centre (formally Kala Sangam). Participants from our Routes to Roots Croydon have been involved with new projects at Stanley Arts, and we have been exploring how we can collaborate to deliver Maya's schools playwriting programme in Croydon. Alex Rajinder Mason from Dig Where you Stand is now a trustee of Maya Productions, and I am a new director of Dig Where You Stand. We are going to be working with King Ecbert's school on the adaption of our new play Dynamic Flights and on a new pilot for the next incarnation of Routes to Roots, bringing it back to our musical Benny and the Greycats that inspired the original development of the Routes to Roots programme.

Now Maya takes its learning from this Routes to Roots into the final development stages of its Anglo-Indian musical Benny and the Greycats, I am proud that this project fulfills yet another one of Maya's aims; to demystify theatre, arts and heritage process. I successfully used a 1950s photograph of the Madras Jazz Group as a springboard for Benny and the Greycats. By sharing this archival and heritage methodology we have been able to unlock the creativity of over 100 South Asian women and girls.

Sharing this work widely and in different forms we are building new audiences, and we are pleased to have reached over 100,000 visitors, audience in person and online with these unique South Asian migration, cultural identity and heritage stories.. We are delighted that our Routes to Roots 1960s Croydon film, has been selected for the London Independent Film Festival.

Maya's core mission, to bring together individuals and organisations who believe that creative work can enable racial justice and social change is evidenced in the outcomes of Routes to Routes. The outputs are now preserved in Bradford, Croydon and Sheffield archives. These archives all recognised the lack of South Asian community archival material in their collections



APPENDIX 2

Core Team	
Ada Onyekwelu	Administrator
Suzanne Gorman	Artistic Director
Sharon Mitcheson	Financial consultant

Routes to Roots Team	
Rez Kabir	Artist / Facilitator
Janet Steel	Artist / Facilitator
Nisha Lall	Artist / Facilitator
Ethel maqeda	Artist / Facilitator
Sharena Lee Satti	Artist / Facilitator
Aamta Tul Waheed	Artist / Facilitator
Dawn Cameron	Evaluator
Natalie Sloan	Filmmaker
Indira Lakshmi	Audio Engineer/Podcast Creator
Beth Astridge	Archivist
Jeevan Sanghera	Assistant Archivist
Monika Dutta	Exhibition Designer (Bradford and Sheffield)
Dayani Nisha Jinadasa	Exhibition Designer (Croydon)
Niharika Jain	Marketing and Audience Development Lead
Diana Miranda	Marketing Coordinator
Maryam Jameela	Press Outreach & Relationship Manager
Abir Tobji	Producer
Sarah Sayeed	Executive Producer
Lucy Williams	Communications Officer
Florence Gill	Stage Manager

Photographers / Videographers	
Haley Gell	Photographer
Roxane Grant	Photographer
Kimi Moderessi	Photographer / Videographer
Gemma Thorpe	Photographer / Videographer
Keyhan Modaressi	Videographer / Photographer
Hector Rodriguez	Videographer / Photographer
Chris Bovell	Photographer
Luke Green	Videographer

Feedback and Access	
Seth Cameron	Feedback collector
Ghazala Khalid	Feedback collector
Umber Babar	Feedback collector

Exhibition Support	
Claire Bessel,	Croydon Exhibition Installation Assistant
Victoria Bradley, Assistant for painting	Croydon Exhibition Art Assistant
Oliver Hewett	Driver

“IT’S EVERYBODY’S HISTORY – YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE BORN IN SHEFFIELD OR IN THE UK...ONE OF THE CHALLENGES IS THAT THE COLLECTIONS WE HOLD ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE AND THAT CAN MAKE IT HARDER FOR PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS TO ENGAGE WITH ARCHIVES...”

APPENDIX 3

Approved purposes:

- To deliver a range of heritage related activities over 3 years including oral history training and recording, exhibitions, creating archives, workshops and film making.
- To produce a marketing and audience development strategy, evaluation strategy and swot analyses to support activity.
- To set up a steering group and host meetings and other planning activity with partners and facilitators.

An Audience Development Strategy and Marketing & Communications Plan was established. The document outlined a set of strategic objectives and accompanying audience development actions to undertake during the project. This document informed our marketing and campaigns plan throughout the project,

The strategy emphasised how audience development involves Maya’s Mission, Values and Aims, programming, staff, volunteers and brand, not just marketing, identifying how much of our activities are audience development. It focused on geographic targeting (Croydon, Sheffield, Bradford) and community-led engagement to align marketing with long-term audience growth and legacy.

Each performance sharing event and exhibition was led by a mar-coms campaign that included tailored press releases, pitches to journalists/ influencers, media sheets, e-invitations, social media scheduling, print distribution, and community outreach.

Campaign assets, branded ‘Routes to Roots,’ included postcards, posters, print ads, multi-format banners, social shareables, a promotional video, and adaptable artwork. Materials were distributed via libraries, community organisations, and heritage venues, with social media post-swap partnerships extending reach.

Key marketing channels and reach included:

- **Press and Broadcast:** High-profile features on BBC Radio 6 Music (2.7–2.8M weekly reach), BBC Radio London (548K weekly), BBC Radio Yorkshire (189K weekly), and BCB Radio (30K listeners), alongside listings in Time Out London and Now Then Magazine (25K–35K monthly visits).
- **Social Media:** Organic posts, paid Meta ads, Facebook event pages, shareable assets, and partner amplification. Campaigns highlighted stories, performances, workshops, and film releases.
- **Print & Physical:** 1,500 postcards/posters in Bradford, 1,000 in Sheffield, and hand-to-hand distribution in Croydon, plus print ads.
- **Digital & Direct:** Regular e-newsletters to the Maya database, website copy, e-invitations, influencer outreach, and local listings.

This approach delivered a structured framework, multi-city grassroots outreach, strong press coverage, and significant digital engagement.

Funders

Routes to Roots: A South Asian Heritage Project was funded by the **National Heritage Lottery Fund**

Additional funders included:

- Arts Council England**
- Peoples Postcode Lottery**
- BIG GIVE:Arts for Impact 2024**
- Bradford 2025:Do Your Thing Creatives**
- Lives micro awards**

Figures & Marketing Statistics

Broadcast reach across the project included BBC Radio 6 Music (2.7–2.8 million weekly), BBC Radio London (548,000 weekly), BBC Radio Yorkshire (189,000 weekly), BCB Radio (30,000 listeners), and Now Then Online (25,000–35,000 monthly visits), representing potential reach in the millions.

Online film and video engagement was significant, with Roots to Roots: An Anglo-Indian Journey achieving 17,927 views. Other figures included:-

Routes to Roots: 1960s Croydon had 3,188 and 4,927 views across platforms, while The Story of the Madras Jazz Group reached 3,597 views. Performance engagement metrics across Croydon, Sheffield, and Bradford (2023–2025) showed sustained online interaction alongside in-person activity:

Steering Committee:

Anna Birch	(Maya Productions Trustee)
Alex Corwin	(Bradford Arts Centre, Programme and Artist Development Manager)
Pete Evans	(Archives and Heritage Manager, Sheffield City Archives)
Claire Exton	(Joint Head of English and Lead Teacher for Diversity and Equality King Ecgbert School)
Sam Holland	(Migration Matters Festival Director)
Rubina Khalid	(Co-CEO of WomenZone)
Fiona Marshall	(Archivist, West Yorkshire Archive Service)
Dr Alex Rajinder Mason	(Dig Where You Stand)
Andrew Millar	(Stanley Arts, Learning & Engagement Manager)
Rosie Vizor	(Borough Archivist, Croydon Archives)
Previous members:	
Moa Taylor Hodin	(Stanley Arts, Learning & Engagement Manager)
Gareth Johnstone	(Chair of Darnall Wellbeing)
Kinder Kelsey	(Lead Evangelist at the Attercliffe & Darnall Centre of Mission)
Virginia Smith	(Croydon Museum and Collections Manager)