

Enabling Cultural Diversity Lancashire

FINAL REPORT

February 2003



arts about manchester



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1. CONTEXT

1.1 Project Partners

Arts About Manchester (AAM) managed the project and appointed a Project Co-ordinator to oversee the delivery of the Enabling Cultural Diversity - Lancashire element.

A partnership was established with Mid-Pennine Arts (MPA) in Burnley. MPA is the arts networking agency for East Lancashire.

The Steering Group members included:

- Arts About Manchester (overall project co-ordination / advisory role)
- Mid Pennine Arts (local project deliverer)
- Preston City Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Action Factory
- Spoton Rural Touring Company

A variety of venues and organisations in Lancashire also participated in the project.

1.2 Assumption

Blackburn, Preston and the East Lancashire (Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley, Rossendale) areas are very culturally diverse. Significant Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi communities are found across the whole region and significant African and Caribbean in Preston.

Prior to the Lancashire Ambassadors project there had been no generic attempt by arts organisations across this region to reach these communities. There was a history of venues / organisations struggling individually to make links with them. And despite the size of the culturally diverse communities, there was little available information about them (where they lived, which languages they spoke, how old they were, cultural sensitivities etc) which aided this process.

Arts About Manchester's Arts Ambassadors Unit (AAU) had achieved great success in reaching African, Caribbean, South

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Asian and Chinese audiences in the Greater Manchester area. The Lancashire Ambassadors project was developed to pilot some of the successful elements of the AAU with the hope of replicating similar success. From the outset it was recognised that different politics, issues, geographies and barriers existed for Lancashire's often rurally located Black and Asian communities and the project aimed to learn more about these.

2. THE PROCESS

- The project was a jointly co-ordinated venture between Arts About Manchester (AAM) and Mid Pennine Arts (MPA), Burnley. MPA is the arts networking agency for East Lancashire, an agency with a strategic role in developing the arts across the East Lancashire area. MPA offered itself as local delivery co-ordinators for the project as it is well placed in the region, has many community and arts based contacts and had been working with South Asian communities for a number of years.
- A Steering Group of interested parties was established in summer 2001. This group was committed to the aims of the project. Members represented venues, local authorities and participatory arts projects. All members had some experience of working with South Asian or African Caribbean communities but their experience of attracting people to events had been extremely difficult.
- At first it was anticipated that the project should focus around the local Mela and Carnival events. However, it became clear very quickly that this activity was already well-supported by members of the Black and Asian communities and generally well promoted and attended. It was particularly mainstream venues programming South Asian and African Caribbean product that needed support in reaching diverse communities.
- A Co-ordinator from the Asian community was appointed in October for auditing work between October and December. The auditing work was to ground the project solidly in the needs of the local communities and to act as a valuable resource for steering group members and others involved in the project. It was to cover:
 - 1) Information on Black and Asian communities: language spoken / written, age, where they lived, religion, key cultural issues, existing community groups
 - 2) Information on Black and Asian programming, where and when it was being programmed
 - 3) Lists of Black and Asian artists living / working in the area
 - 4) Lists of Black and Asian press / newsletters in the area.

- It became clear from the audit that "word of mouth" networks were working most effectively for community based events as each area has its own culture, needs, languages and cultural patterns. Work for Black and Asian audiences programmed into mainstream venues was being promoted through the venues' usual methods such as brochures and regional press but not through community networks which worked for community based events. As a result it was agreed that the Ambassador approach used by the AAU was essential to the work.
- The project work plan was re-developed. Activity was focused on: 1) Delivering Ambassador marketing direct to the South Asian and African Caribbean communities 2) Producing some generic marketing material 3) Press and media work targeting South Asian and African Caribbean communities 4) Advice / support to mainstream venues programming culturally diverse work.
- A worker was engaged in January to manage the print and design process of *Diversions* - a newsletter dedicated to promoting forthcoming culturally diverse events. There were 4 editions mailed to individuals, community groups, venues, press, distributed around MPA's runs and steering group networks and used as a tool for the Ambassadors.
- At first it was thought that the project should engage a Lead Ambassador for the South Asian community and a Lead Ambassador for the African Caribbean community. These 2 workers would be experienced in community liaison work and they would source and develop a pool of junior Ambassadors as well as undertake outreach work and be the key contact for information collation to inform the project. The project was unable to source individuals for the Lead Ambassador roles so in January sought to find junior Ambassadors who could undertake a variety of work.
- The Ambassadors job description was drawn up (see Appendix One). Key responsibilities were:
 - 1) ongoing research into culturally diverse programming in the region
 - 2) outreach work to communities: word of mouth networking and print distribution and building up contacts
 - 3) providing community intelligence to venues

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4) ongoing informing of Lancashire Ambassadors marketing strategy

5) data collection at culturally diverse events (to build information and mailing lists on audiences)

Due to time and resource pressures recruitment was done on a recommendation basis, via the steering group and via posters in community centres.

- A team of 3 young South Asian people was recruited to begin work in March. 1 from East Lancashire, 1 from Blackburn and 1 from Preston. A young man from Preston's African Caribbean community was also recruited.
- The plan was to promote 2 events per month with Ambassador campaigns until the end of the project. Events would be selected to reflect a variety of cultural backgrounds / artforms / geographical areas and would target events / venues that most needed support in building relationships with the communities.
- Ambassadors had one day's training in the basics of audience development. One of the AAU's Ambassadors visited the Lancashire Ambassadors to speak about her work as an Ambassador in Manchester: how she planned her campaign, how she persuaded people to give events a try, how she saw her work make a difference.
- Ambassadors were then set to the task of gathering information about programming. They undertook Ambassador outreach activity on "Home" at Darwen Library Theatre and Brierfields Community Centre in March and "Achanak" bhangra night at Burnley Mechanics in May.
- Due to various issues with Ambassador activity (see later in report) the project ceased working with the original 3 young Asian people in June. Unfortunately the young man from the African Caribbean community in Preston had to leave the project in the spring for personal reasons.
- Due to the timescale of the project (finish date for activity - July), rather than re-recruit Ambassadors the steering group decided that the focus at this stage should be on 1) data collection activity at Melas over the summer

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to build a useful mailing list 2) production of a summer *Diversions* newsletter 3) press and media work 4) Cultural Awareness Training for venues.

- A team of young Asian people were recruited to undertake data collection at Melas across the region.
- It had been intended that press work would promote the project from the Ambassador perspective but as the project "lost" Ambassadors the focus had to shift. Summer listings information was circulated to press and media lists including Black and Asian. A press release was also circulated about the Lancashire Ambassadors project and highlighted the summer Mela season.
- It was clear from the outset that staff in mainstream venues lacked knowledge about diverse cultures in their area. Asian Culture, Religion and the Arts: Cultural Awareness Training took place between May and September 2002 (see Appendix Two). Training sessions were led by a local community arts expert. Participating organisations included: Action Factory, Mid Pennine Arts, Rossendale BC, Rossendale Museum, Howarth Art Gallery, Burnley Mechanics, Preston Guildhall, Harris Museum and Gallery, Preston.
- The AAM project co-ordinator liaised with MPA project co-ordinator throughout the project on a regular basis. Attending planning meetings, sharing experiences and learning from the AAU project, gathering evaluation data, administering the steering group

3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

The **aim** of Enabling Cultural Diversity - Lancashire was to apply learning outcomes from the AAU project to develop and pilot relevant audience development activity with culturally diverse communities in Blackburn, Preston and East Lancashire.

The objectives of the project were to:

- undertake an audit of culturally diverse arts activity in the area and create information resources such as lists of groups and networks, demographic information on communities
- develop promotion networks from within, and delivering directly to, the diverse communities
- undertake some collaborative marketing activity
- develop the participation of local South Asian and African Caribbean communities in arts events and activities
- develop the skills, knowledge and capacity of arts agencies, venues and arts projects to reach and develop audiences from local Asian and Black communities
- research the project as long-term and sustainable.

4. OUTCOMES

4.1 Audit

Audit information from the 1st stage of project activity was invaluable in creating a clear picture of the geographical spread of South Asian communities in the East Lancashire area and cultural and religious issues and attitudes towards the arts. The most pertinent information that came out of these audits are identified below.

- 23% people in East Lancashire are literate in Urdu, 90% literate in Arabic.
- Events programmed during the traditional fasting month of Ramadan or on Friday afternoons are not good practice and will not be well attended.
- Women only arts events are popular.
- Most Asian dance is influenced by Indian dance and Bollywood film, and therefore is less likely to attract Pakistani audiences.

The information was excellent and a real education for the steering group and other venues worked with. Unfortunately very limited work was undertaken with the African Caribbean community in Preston. This was due to the worker not having the same links with or experience with working with the African Caribbean community.

4.2 Ambassador campaigns

"Home" at Darwen Library Theatre, 8th - 9th March and Brierfield Community Centre 20th March. Unfortunately the Brierfield event was cancelled as there were no advance bookings. Attendance figures at Darwen Library Theatre were disappointing. 73 people attended the event at Darwen Library Theatre over its 2 day run. Capacity was 214 per day. However, there were Asian attendees due to Ambassador activity and the Ambassadors began to create some valuable links with the local Asian communities.

"Achanak" at Burnley Mechanics, 17th May 2002. 18 people attended the event. The capacity was 500. The majority of attendees were Asian. Again audience figures were extremely

disappointing but feedback from communities via the Ambassadors highlighted a number of significant factors which prevented South Asian people from attending the event, many of which were issues that were important throughout the Lancashire Ambassadors Project.

- The first Burnley council meeting including the recently elected BNP councillors took place in the vicinity of Burnley Mechanics the night before the "Achanak" event. There was significant coverage of this on local TV.
- The event took place on a Friday night. This is seen as a big "White night out" in Burnley and to be avoided.
- Many Asian people the Ambassador spoke to were involved in the taxi / takeaway industries, so Friday was one of their busiest times of the week. They were unlikely to be able to take time off.
- The band were Indian and this may well have deterred the predominantly Pakistani local community from attending.

Burnley Mechanics had been very pleased to be working with someone from the Asian community and ask their advice.

4.3 Diversions

4 issues of *Diversions* were produced. The publication developed considerably in content, design, circulation, the final issue having a 5000 print-run and containing translation.

There is no hard evidence from the limited data collection activity that suggests *Diversions* influenced attendance at events. We tried to obtain information from all events promoted in *Diversions* to find out the size of their audience and if it met / exceeded targets and an idea of what the cultural mix had been but this was not readily available.

However within 6 months *Diversions* certainly began to raise awareness and interest of culturally diverse arts amongst promoters, venues and communities. MPA noted increasing interest from organisations wanting to submit information and even advertise. *Diversions* was well received by communities. Sample feedback includes:

"It's great to have something which tells you everything that you might go to or see on one piece of paper." (member of public, Blackburn)

"For Black people it shows stuff relevant to them - things that reflect their culture." (Jean Lindsay, Black Womens Group, Preston)

"I keep it in my handbag- we like to go on outings with the family." (Shaida Ahmed, Youth and Community Worker, Nelson).

4.4 Cultural Awareness Training

The training sessions aimed to offer an insight into the culture of Asian communities, eliminate myths and misconceptions, raise awareness about the needs of Asian communities and help people to understand the issues that may be relevant among Asian arts audiences.

Feedback questionnaires have shown that people attending the sessions felt they were a fantastic introduction to Asian culture. Most felt that their awareness of Asian cultures prior to the training had been minimal. They felt much more aware after the training but were still keen for more training which would go into greater detail and develop their knowledge further.

Sample responses from feedback questionnaires:

"An excellent, informal and non-threatening presentation. We were actively encouraged to ask questions and challenge viewpoints - we could have gone on all day!"

"I will make changes to the kind of activities [we program] as a result of this work."

4.5 Database

A database of 425 records was built up from capturing data from the general public at various arts events. The ethnic breakdown of this database is:

- 35% Pakistani
- 20% White British
- 13% Bangladeshi
- 15% Indian
- 2% Black African / Caribbean
- 13% Asian British

- 2% Other

Records were for people from Preston, Blackburn, East Lancashire. Basic analysis shows that people were largely attending events in their own area although more people travelled to Preston from outside. Events in areas such as Brierfield and Accrington were not travelled to from the residents of Burnley (very nearby). People also travelled to events from Manchester and its surrounding areas.

By using the database of individuals to promote the work of the project there were clear indications of raising awareness, not just of the project but of arts work in the area. The MPA Co-ordinator took in the region of 12 telephone calls over one 8-week period asking for further information.

The database showed that word of mouth networking is the most effective with Asian and Black people.

Data collectors reported that the response from the communities they spoke to had been positive. People thought the project was important for bringing local communities together. There were new events in the Diversions mailing that they hadn't heard of and were interested in.

A database of venues and community organisations across the region was also created as was a database of press and media contacts including Black and Asian press and media.

4.6 Press and Media work

Strong links with local radio and press networks were forged and sustained over the period of the project. Contacts have been maintained with the organisations represented on the Steering Group.

4.7 Steering Group

Steering group members were interviewed individually by the Project Co-ordinator at the end of the project. All members said that the networking and information sharing had been

invaluable.

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Whilst the objective of establishing an AAU was not achieved, it was felt that the project introduced, in some cases, and kept cultural diversity issues high up on the arts agenda, making them more pro-active.

5. EVALUATION

The project was monitored and evaluating using the following mechanisms:

- Monthly / bi-monthly steering group meetings
- Management meetings with AAM and MPA Co-ordinators and Ambassadors / data collectors / Diversions print manager
- Auditing information from 1st phase of activity.
- Ambassador campaign evaluation meetings and reports
- Interviews with steering group at the end of the project
- Feedback report from MPA as local project co-ordinators
- Feedback interviews with data collectors
- Report from Diversions print manager
- Vox pops with community about the Diversions newsletter
- Analysis of database built up
- Feedback from venues / local authorities that attended the Cultural Awareness Training sessions
- Blackburn Mela research commissioned by Blackburn with Darwen BC

Despite several attempts to obtain feedback from Ambassadors at the end of the project's work with them, we struggled to get detailed information.

6. ISSUES

The political and social situation in the region was extremely challenging to the aims of the project and the project deliverers throughout the lifespan of the project. The summer before the project began there had been racially motivated "riots" in Burnley and other areas of Lancashire. In the spring of the project BNP councillors were elected into Burnley. Racial tension increased. Communities that had been historically polarised, inevitably became harder to engage. It was recognised that although the project was funded to develop Black and Asian audiences there was crucial work to be done in encouraging White people to visit Black and Asian events to build bridges between communities. The project was dealing with very different and much more sensitive situations than in Manchester.

The short timescale of the project put extreme pressure on the deliverers of the project. It meant that finding and training suitable Ambassadors was extremely difficult. There was less time for planning and organic development (which played a big role in the work of the AAU). Also, we came to the stage of having to evaluate the project just when all concerned felt that it was just "getting going". The project needed more time to explore and evolve without such a time-limited pressure.

The Ambassadors recruited were young and inexperienced although enthusiastic when recruited. It soon became clear that they lacked in administration, written and verbal communication skills and were not confident operating within a workplace and managing their own time (they were either still in higher education or recently graduated).

They required more support from the MPA co-ordinator than had been anticipated. This worker had several other projects to maintain and was often out of the office / working in other areas. This was a strain on the MPA co-ordinator and the Ambassadors as it meant they were often without immediate access to advise / support.

Access to office resources as well as support was also problematic. Ambassadors were based in different geographical areas, some of which were not near the MPA office and some workers did not have transport. The AAM Co-ordinator was not able to be involved in the project in a hands-on way due to

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being 1 hour travel time away. The Ambassadors suffered greatly from not having a unit like the Manchester project which had a geographically accessible office and 2-full time workers to support Ambassadors. It made motivation, communication, team work difficult. It is worth noting that in Manchester, as the AAU worked with many artists and young people and ran training projects with young people, its pool of Ambassadors grew very organically (and had the time to do this over a 3-year period) whilst the focus of the Lancashire Ambassadors project was much narrower. The negative experiences for all concerned in what was hoped would be the central and core strand of activity, the Ambassador work, became a huge restriction to the project.

Because of the short-timescale of the project, widespread geography of the project and the Ambassadors, limited programming and difficulty in finding information about programming, it was impossibility to offer Ambassadors long-term contracts working in

their area with their community. Work schedules were agreed on a monthly basis. This was a de-motivating factor for the Ambassadors.

Unfortunately the project did not succeed in engaging with the African Caribbean community as hoped. The project lost its Ambassador from the African Caribbean community in Preston due to him needing to find full-time employment (see above point). The project then struggled to identify a replacement Ambassador. Due to the project not tapping into this expertise from the African Caribbean community it also meant that cultural awareness sessions about African and Caribbean communities were not developed or run with venues. This area of work was not aided by the project office being based at MPA in Burnley with no history of working with Preston's African Caribbean community.

The negative reaction from some members of the Asian community to the image used for the cover of the July / August issue of Diversions signalled the importance of involving members of the target communities in the design and print process.

The fact that the individuals responsible for print production, print distribution, Ambassadorial activity and media activity worked largely in isolation from each other (due to Ambassadors / print manager often not working from MPA office, all workers

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being part-time and working different hours and MPA Co-ordinator's over-stretched time commitments) may have weakened marketing impact and led to missed marketing opportunities.

7. SUCCESSES

The project did not fully meet many of the original objectives. However it learned a lot through its mistakes and it did succeed in strongly identifying that it times time to tackle the issues around cultural diversity. These can not be solved in 12 months with a small budget and very limited human resources.

The project tried to apply 2 of the most successful elements of the AAU - the Ambassador outreach campaigns and generic promotional material - to Blackburn, Preston and East Lancashire. However the geography, political and social climate, project management and resources (as detailed above) were very different to those experienced by the AAU and impacted in a negative way.

Objective 1:

To undertake an audit of culturally diverse arts activity in the area and create information resources such as lists of groups and networks, demographic information on communities.

Success?

This was done and was informative. The information about the African Caribbean communities in Preston was, however, very limited. Audience / community group / artist / press lists are held at MPA and are available for use by arts organisations.

Objective 2:

To develop the participation of local Asian and Black communities in arts events and activities.

Success?

It is impossible to tell after 6 months actual project activity in the community whether the project influenced attendance at / involvement in events. Diversions, and to some extent the Ambassador work, started to build the profile of Black / Asian work in the area and make inroads into communities. We know this through anecdotal feedback not through quantitative data. It was hope at the beginning of the project that we would move audiences around the Lancashire area to attend events of interest. However, it was hard enough getting audiences to a venue in their own area without also trying to move audiences around. East Lancashire is poorly served by public transport between towns and there are tensions between communities in different areas. The project identified that the work needs a neighbourhood-based approach, not a region-wide approach.

Objective 3:

To develop promotion networks from within, and delivering directly to, the diverse communities

Success?

There were problems with the Ambassador activity (as explained above) which meant that limited activity took place within communities. Despite the difficulties with the Ambassador team, we feel that if the problems described in this report were overcome, Arts Ambassadors working on a community level could be very successful.

Objective 4:

To undertake some collaborative marketing activity.

Success?

Diversions newsletter was developed as a tool to promote culturally diverse arts events across the region.

Objective 5:

To develop the skills, knowledge and capacity of arts agencies, venues and arts projects to reach and develop audiences from local Asian and Black communities.

Success?

The cultural awareness training around South Asian communities was found to be extremely valuable by participating organisations. However it is worth noting that organisations did not send representatives from across the organisation i.e. front of house, bar staff, senior management. More detailed follow-up work is needed with organisations as is cultural awareness training around the African and Caribbean communities. The knowledge about diverse communities increased amongst the steering group, and the venues worked with. Some members said that they tried to experiment as a result of the project and instigated projects with communities.

Objective 6:

To research the project as long-term and sustainable.

Success?

The training course continues to be delivered by the Lead Ambassador and the members of the Steering Group are utilising the learning from the project in their own organisations.

However, despite the commitment of all partners involved to continuing this work, the project suffered from not having an

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audience development agency in the Lancashire region to push forward the future of the project.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been identified following an evaluation of the project.

8.1 Project structure

- The area the project worked in is too diverse and too spread-out to concentrate one programme in that area. Across Burnley, Pendle, Blackburn, Asian people don't identify with one another enough to form a bigger community. Need to recognise the diversity within the community and initially work on a neighbourhood basis to nurture communities.
- More human and financial resources and time are required to make an impact
- Steering group should be more representative of diverse communities it aims to serve.
- There is much scope for work to be done with the White communities across the Lancashire area to get them involved in South Asian and African Caribbean arts events.

8.2 Ambassador work

- Build teams of local South Asian / African Caribbean Ambassadors. More experienced / mature Ambassadors should be sought and training for people new to the area should be developed.
- Develop traineeships / apprenticeships for Black / Asian people to gain paid hands on vocational training in arts venues / arts projects in the area. Whilst arts staff do not represent the audience they are trying to attract, there will always be the risk of misunderstanding and a level of patronisation.

8.3 Venues

- Venues should develop programming planning groups and invite Black and Asian people onto them.
- Venues should work more closely with local community groups to offer them showcase opportunities.

- Organisations should get themselves on lists to receive information about Black and Asian touring artists.
- Venues should make tickets available through community venues.
- Venues should programme more women-only and men-only shows.
- MPA should promote its mailing and contact lists for venues to use.

8.4 Elements of Lancashire Ambassadors to retain / develop

- Database resources should be maintained and promoted as a service to steering group members and other arts organisations in Lancashire.
- Ambassador programme (details above)
- Diversions should be developed. Long-term funding and media partners should be researched
- More cultural awareness training should be delivered on South Asian and African and Caribbean cultures. This should be delivered to all members of staff within organisations.