



## **We, the constituency**

### **MUSEUM OF THE JEWELLERY QUARTER**

*'It's been a brilliant experience. We've got to go behind the scenes at places I'd never thought I'd go, let alone the service users. It's been eye opening; fascinating.'*

*'Service users know now that the places we visited are places they can return to on their own.'*

Graham Taylor, Creative Group Leader, NHS Birmingham Mental Health Services

### ***What happened?***

Initially, the MJQ team had intended to build on an emerging relationship between the museum and BID Deaf Cultural Centre to engage participants from the Deaf community. The Deaf Cultural Centre had recently undertaken research into the history of Deaf people in manufacturing during the 1920s and 1930s and this project would have been a development of this work.

However, it became clear that although BID's clients represented a strong community, it was not one of geography, as most participants lived outside Ladywood.

### **Community delivery**

Instead, the MJQ developed a partnership with clients of the Ladywood Health & Community Centre in Vincent Road.

Over a period of 3 months, participants explored the history of the area and learned the basic metalworking techniques that underpin the jewellery industry. They visited visit museums and galleries in the local area, as well as operational factories and workshops to gain insight into the industry.

### Participants visited:

- The Birmingham Assay Office, Ladywood
- Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Ladywood (Birmingham City Council)
- JW Evans Silver Plate works , Ladywood (English Heritage)
- Warstones Lane Cemetery, Ladywood (Birmingham City Council)
- The Pen Museum, LAdywood (volunteer run, independent museum)
- Black Country Living Museum, Dudley (independent museum)
- Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

Participants visited the studio of a working silversmith and, over 6 weeks, were taught how to produce a piece for themselves under her direction; these pieces were exhibited alongside the contemporary work.

### Developing the workforce's community skills

Although the MJQ team did not work with participants from BID, they did want to improve the services they offer to Deaf and hearing impaired visitors.

Therefore, they worked with BID to develop a deaf awareness course paid for by Cultural Champions. The course was opened beyond MJQ staff to community museums, BCC partners and BMAG and was attended by 25 frontline staff from 6 organisations.

### Showcasing the Jewellery Quarter

Under a separate strand of the LAA; 'Raising the Profile of the Jewellery Quarter', the Museum commissioned a piece of silver for exhibition.

It was intended that participants would have the opportunity to view the process of making this piece from design to manufacture. However, this did not prove to be feasible and did not take place.

### Exhibition and celebration

On 3 March 2011, MJQ hosted a private viewing of the new commission and the spoons made by the community participants. This event was attended by local dignitaries, 6 members of the Day centre group, their families and staff from Birmingham Museums Service and Arts Department.

### About Ladywood

Ladywood is located to the west of Birmingham and includes part of the city centre. It is the city's 2<sup>nd</sup> smallest constituency in terms of area (2,046 hectares) and 72% of Ladywood is within the 5% most deprived SOAs in the country.

Aston and Nechells wards display the most acute deprivation although the entire population of Ladywood falls within the 40% most deprived areas. The vast majority of the constituency is characterised by 'hard-pressed' and 'limited means' households although there are small pockets of 'urban prosperity' in the city centre. In 2001



- It was home to the highest proportion of BME groups across the city: 40.5% are Asian, 17.3% are Black and 7% are classified as other. 28.75% were of the Muslim faith, compared with 14.3% from Birmingham.
- 27.6% of the population were born outside UK or the EU, compared with 13.42% from Birmingham.
- Over 45% of the population were under the age of 25, the highest proportion of young people in the city.
- The employment rate in Ladywood was the lowest of the four priority constituencies at just 48.2%. The employment rate was lowest for women and ethnic minorities at 39.9% and 43.7% respectively.
- In addition, 43% of Ladywood's working age population had no qualifications, compared with 37.09% from Birmingham

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

### ***About Ladywood Health & Community Centre, Vincent Street***

The Day centre hosts a wide variety of community activity including a day centre for people with mental illness and learning disabilities; older people's groups and the women's support team.

It also includes a community library, members of which were also invited to join the project.

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

% of respondents who HAVE NOT visited MJQ before	100%
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For participants from Ladywood, many of whom were members of a Mental Health Services Day Centre art group, lacking the confidence to make a visit provided a major barrier:

***'They would never go to these places without an organised trip and transport provided.'*** Graham Taylor, Creative Group Leader, mental health day services, Ladywood Health and Community Centre

***'I can't believe they are displaying something made by me, an ordinary person. There are so many important people here.'*** Participant from Mental Health Services Day Centre art group during the private view of the Cultural Champions exhibition

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

% of new participants (engaged once only)	22%
% of return participants (engaged more than once)	78%

78% of participants in cultural champion activity delivered by MJQ engaged more than once. This high proportion of repeat engagements suggests a high level of motivation. The nature of the Cultural Champions activity might also have a bearing on high proportion of repeat engagements. Both practitioners effectively arranged for low-skilled participants to take part in skills development training:

The participants in MJQ's Cultural Champions activity formed a very close relationship with the practitioner and project coordinator. 78% of participants engaged more than once and 35% attended a minimum of 10 out of 12 sessions.

Graham Taylor, Mental Health Day Services Creative Group Leader at Ladywood Health and Community Centre, said: *'Service users know now that the places we visited are places they can return to on their own. People were surprised by their museum visits and expressed wishes to return.'*

Owing to their shyness, the group had a preview of the exhibition on 1 March, before the private view on 3 March to which local dignitaries and cultural practitioners had been invited.

However, Victoria Emmanuel, Curator of MJQ, reported that 5 group members felt confident enough to attend on 3 March, one of whom brought her 2 children. Since the exhibition has opened, staff at MJQ have reported that other group members have brought friends to see their spoons.



Noticeboard in Ladywood Health & Community Centre showing cultural projects available to constituents



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

<b>Museums and galleries attendance by Ladywood residents</b>	
% adults attended in previous 12 months (2008-09) <sup>1</sup>	29.75%
% of Cultural Champions participants attending (2010-11)	54%

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

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

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

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

### ***Outcome 4: Personal / Community growth:***



#### **ILIESHA'S JOURNEY**

***'I won't come with you to JW Evans. I don't like museums. I went to Soho House and it was all too much talking and not enough wandering.'***

Iliesha was persuaded to visit MJQ despite her expectation that the ***'staff would talk too much'*** and it would ***'be boring.'***

After her visit she said that the staff ***'did talk a bit too much, but it wasn't too bad'***

Iliesha was so pleased at what she had achieved that she asked to have a certificate when she finished. The practitioner had not expected that the participants would want one but Iliesha said: ***'I've got stacks of certificates, I am used to working for certificates'***

Iliesha attended 8 of the 10 sessions and made a spoon which was exhibited in the MJQ. She brought her children to the opening event to show them her work.

<sup>1</sup> Constituency participation figures, p.62 *Barriers to Cultural Participation*, 2010. Source: Annual Opinion Survey, 2008 and 2009

## **Increased ability/confidence to carry out self-supported cultural activity as a group or an individual**

Such was the participants' enthusiasm for visiting cultural venues, that Victoria Emmanuel, Curator of MJQ, arranged for the group to visit the Conservation Department of BMAG and view the Staffordshire Hoard. Graham Taylor, creative group leader, found the visit to the Staffordshire Hoard particularly interesting from a professional development perspective – he plans to use the patterns decorating the pieces in the Hoard in his pottery class.

Owing to their shyness, the group had a preview of the exhibition on 1 March, before the private view on 3 March to which local dignitaries and cultural practitioners had been invited. However, Victoria Emmanuel, Curator of MJQ, reported that 5 group members felt confident enough to attend on 3 March, one of whom brought her 2 children. Since the exhibition has opened, staff at MJQ have reported that other group members have brought friends to see their spoons.

### **Improved skills**

Although none of the sessions constituted accredited courses, many participants were awarded a certificate at its conclusion.

*'Certificates were a good thing and added a sense of achievement to what these people had done. It meant so much to them'* Ruth Swallow, MJQ project coordinator

### **Increased enjoyment of cultural offer and creative activity**

*'One non-English speaker was particularly happy with the silver spoon she made. She had a huge smile on her face as she proudly showed people what she'd made.'* Graham Taylor, Creative Group Leader

*'From my experience, the participants have thoroughly enjoyed making the silver spoons - which look absolutely terrific! From what Ruth has said although those who have attended the trips have really enjoyed them, it's making the spoons that that they have particularly enjoyed and found rewarding.'*

Victoria Emmanuel, Curator of MJQ

## **Outcome 5: Increased understanding of constituency and residents**

*'We worked with a very specific group of people living in Ladywood and that obviously ensured a greater understanding of their needs and interests. Had we had greater capacity it would have been good to have reached a larger number of people.'*

Victoria Emmanuel

Uniquely of the four Cultural Champions, MJQ is actually situated within the constituency with which it was partnered. Ladywood also contains a portion of the city centre. As a consequence of new building around St Paul's Square, an increasing number of professionals are moving into the area.

Participants from Ladywood Health and Community Centre, situated on the far side of the Expressway from the city centre, are not as prosperous. Many were clients of the mental health day service delivered at the centre. None had visited MJQ before.

Victoria Emmanuel, Curator of MJQ, was keen to use Cultural Champions activity to build on the constituency relationships built during the earlier Buttons & Bling project run by

Anna Dolecka, the museum's Education Officer: *'we knew it worked and we wanted to give residents a holistic sense of Jewellery Quarter as a working/cultural area...'*

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

***'Audience development work has always been central to the Museum's role ...All of the Community Museums have a remit for local partnership working and have done so successfully for many years.***

***Funding for such programmes has always been problem and is likely to become worse in the near future.'***

Victoria Emmanuel

As well as providing 6 practical sessions for constituency participants, silversmith, Louise Chesshire, ran a workshop for MJQ staff. The activity gave staff an insight into some of the practical skills and processes employed by the jewellery trade to make some of the exhibits in their galleries.

Funding from the project enabled staff to purchase basic equipment to provide similar workshops for community participants and members of the public in future.

The museum also registered its own hallmark with the Assay Office, which means that in future, all precious metal artefacts produced by participants will be properly hallmarked.

Working with BID, MJQ hosted a Deaf Awareness course which was attended by 25 staff (mainly FoH) from MJQ, BMAG, Think Tank and Community Libraries.

However, where possible, Victoria plans to *'build on our new relationships with the Centre and with BID and look for future ways of working together'*.

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

***'The staff who undertook the Deaf Awareness training all found this invaluable ... building their confidence in dealing with people with hearing impairments.***

***Much of what we learned was commonsense, but we needed reassurance that this was the case.'***

Victoria Emmanuel

Summing up her observations of involvement in the Cultural Champions project, Victoria Emmanuel observed:

*'I think that Ruth has learned a lot from this project ... She has been extremely sensitive to the needs of the group and has gently steered the project to meet their needs, despite not having had a vast amount of experience to draw upon.'*



***LESSONS LEARNED: We, the constituency***

According to Victoria Emmanuel, Curator of MJQ , the team deliberately worked in great depth with a small and vulnerable group because ***'we wanted to give residents a holistic sense of Jewellery Quarter as a working/cultural area'***.

At the outset, according to Lana Finnegan, Community and Health Centre Manager, the participants ***'would never go to these places without an organised trip and transport provided.'***

The project activity combined facilitated tours to other constituency venues, during which participants could safely take a passive role, with silversmithing workshops at the day centre, which was familiar and safe. Participants were taken to see their tutor's workshop, and had their spoons assayed and hallmarked with MJQ's own registered stamp, all of which lent authenticity to their own creations.

At the end of the project, the participants were transformed and highly motivated to explore the city centre cultural offer still further. Graham Taylor, Creative Group Leader, said ***'it's been a brilliant experience. We've got to go behind the scenes at places I'd never thought I'd go, let alone the service users. It's been eye opening; fascinating.'***



At the participants' request, Victoria arranged for them to visit BMAG to see the Staffordshire Hoard, and arranged for them to have privileged access to it while it was in Conservation. Concerned that the participants might be intimidated by the crowds at a private view, the MJQ team arranged a separate preview event for them. However, on the night of 5 group members came, under their own steam, one with her 2 children, as well as the group leader, Graham Taylor.

*'Service users know now that the places we visited are places they can return to on their own. People were surprised by their museum visits and expressed wishes to return.'*

*'I can't believe they are displaying something made by me, an ordinary person. There are so many important people here.'* Ladywood participant, during the private view of the Cultural Champions exhibition at MJQ

Such an approach is highly labour- and cost-intensive, as Lana Finnegan acknowledged: *'We'd love to [do more work like this] but we're restricted as we're part of the Council. Anyone is welcome to come here and put things on as long as it doesn't cost the Centre anything.'*

*Staff have opened their eyes to the fact that it's possible to make day trips with people accessing mental health services – not everything has to be done at the Centre.'*

This view was echoed a comment from Graham Taylor, Creative Group Leader for the Mental Health Services Partnership: *'I work in seven other centres and would be keen to export the work to these other settings.'*

Victoria Emmanuel said that *'Funding for such programmes has always been problem and is likely to become worse in the near future.'* However, where possible, she plans to *'build on our new relationships with the Centre and with BID and look for future ways of working together'*.

Summing up her experience, project coordinator Ruth Swallow, said that she had originally envisioned that her sessions would provide *'a leisure experience'* but realised that *'the participants saw it as something much more profound'*.

*'It taught me to put myself in other people's shoes more and consider others and to ask people what they want to move forward'*

#### ***WE, THE CONSTITUENCY***

- **Build a strong relationship with the target group through repeated engagement**
- **Mix 'passive' engagements with active skills development to encourage the less confident**
- **Ensure staff in the partner organisation is aware of the wider benefits of future working in cultural venues**
- **Explore other models of joint working that might not be so cost-intensive**



## RESIDENCY FACTS & FIGURES

<b>Cultural practitioners</b>	Ruth Swallow, printmaker and project co-ordinator Louise Chesshire, silversmith
<b>Cultural partner</b>	Museum of the Jewellery Quarter
<b>Constituency</b>	Erdington
<b>Length of residency</b>	9 months
<b>Community partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ladywood Health &amp; Community Centre</li> <li>• BID</li> </ul>

<b>OUTPUTS against project targets</b>	<i>Initial targets (Mar 2010)</i>	<i>Revised targets (Aug 2010)</i>	<b>ACTUAL totals</b>	<b>Performance +/- against rev target</b>
<b>Participants &amp; engagements</b>				
No of individual participants	40	40	<b>37</b>	<b>-3</b>
No of individual contacts	-	-	<b>178</b>	<b>+178</b>
<b>Sessions, exhibitions and publications</b>				
No of silversmithing workshops	6	6	<b>6</b>	<b>On target</b>
No of sessions in cultural venues	6	6	<b>7</b>	<b>+1</b>
Deaf Awareness training for museum/library staff	2	2	<b>2</b>	<b>On target</b>
Exhibition of spoons made by participants	1	1	<b>1</b>	<b>On target</b>
<b>Proportion of participants by location and frequency of engagement</b>				
% of sessions in constituency				46%
% of sessions in city centre venue				54%
% of new participants (engaged once only)				22%
% of return participants (engaged more than once)				78%
% of participants attending constituency-based sessions				46%
% of participants attending sessions in city centre venue				54%