



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COMMUNITY



Trueman Change working with Birmingham City Council

Strategy Development Focus Groups for Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council are preparing to write their new iteration of a 2023 to 2033 arts and culture strategy, “Creatively Birmingham.” This strategy will grow and develop Birmingham’s diverse creative, cultural and arts sector over the next decade. Birmingham City Council set out a clear statement of intent emphasising “the creativity of Birmingham’s people, our communities, businesses, and organisations, as part of our past, our present and our bold future as a city” and wanted to hear voices from all around the city, from people of all cultures and backgrounds, especially silent and quiet communities.

Led by their Public Health Team, Birmingham commissioned a series of 24 groups held in the community to help to shape the strategy based on people’s lived experience. At Trueman Change, we delivered 21 of these groups. Our key challenge was doing justice to the importance of reflecting community voices in policymaking. We made sure people’s voices were heard in underrepresented groups and it’s great to know that these voices have become an important part of shaping the future inclusive arts and culture strategy for Birmingham. We reached out to communities across the city in the places where they live,

work and socialise, building relationships and set up safe listening spaces where people could share their views and lived experience comfortably.

We delivered listening and discussion sessions with 21 different communities, such as ethnic communities across the city, including South Asian, African Caribbean, Chinese and Polish people. We worked with people from a range of religious communities such as people from Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian and Jewish faiths. We engaged with carers, people with learning disabilities, people with sensory impairments, and physical impairments as well as people over 55 and over 80, and people not in employment.

Our work brought us to people in spatial communities of place in different geographical areas across the city including north, south, east, west and central Birmingham. We engaged with local networks and built relationships with groups from the voluntary, faith, charity and social enterprise sector, and our own experiences are richer for it. We heard what was important to the people we spoke with, delivering their views to Birmingham through themes, direct representations, and their unique voices. We presented views back to our client in a set of reports, supported demographic mapping, and brought the programme together in a thematic overview and summary of the project, its learning, and our recommendations for working with silent and quiet communities in the future. Birmingham City Council are using our findings to gain unique insight into lived experience in the city and are now able to share the views of people from less represented communities with their teams and partners.

Our work for this client will shape Birmingham City's 2023 to 2033 strategy, influencing arts and culture priorities and provision for the next decade. Our client is able to ensure a diverse range of voices are heard as a result of this work, bringing the Council and its partners closer to people in their local community. We delivered value by providing insight, supported by evidence, in our reports to reflect the depth of views gathered, and we made recommendations to make future community engagement more inclusive with greater participation in the longer term.

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