



Policing, Culture & Community: WMP as City of Culture Partners

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Outline



Background to our research



WMP-Trust partnership



Possibilities afforded by arts interventions



Challenges



Recommendations going forward

BACKGROUND

Arts-based interventions

'Crisis of public confidence' in policing (The Police Foundation, 2022)

Social, health, and economic benefits of engaging with the arts widely researched

Arts interventions in prison contexts and YOS becoming more widespread

Police forces have seldom engaged through the arts

Key question:

What might be the impact of the police engaging with communities through the arts?

The scrutiny of policing is at an all-time high, legitimacy is at an all-time low

(WMP13)

WMP-Trust partnership

WMP-Coventry City of Culture partnership

WMP and Coventry City of Culture Trust entered into an unprecedented partnership

Overlapping WMP + Trust priorities:

- Ensuring safety and security
- Connecting with communities
- Sharing networks, advice, and knowledge

An embedded police team of 6 worked closely with Trust producers and production teams: co-devising, co-creating, co-producing initiatives



City Mural

See the Bigger Picture



Barriers to Bridges Artist in Residence





Forest Camp

Key research questions

To what extent did the model of partnership enable WMP to contribute to the design and delivery of Cov CoFC 2021 in order to make positive impacts in the city?

What were the benefits to WMP and to the Trust in investing in a partnership in the delivery of a cultural mega event?

(How) did the WMP-Trust partnership enable WMP to build relationships with members of the public, in particular those from seldom heard communities?

Funded by WMP, Coventry CoC Trust, ESRC IAA

Data

- 100+ qualitative interviews + 4 focus groups
- Wide range of stakeholders:
 - WMP - officers and staff across departments and rank
 - Trust - producers, production staff
 - Community organisations, charities, other 3rd sector organisations
 - Coventry City Council employees, incl. people in education sector
 - Independent artists, creative practitioners, consultants
 - Members of the public, including young people and people with lived experience of homelessness

Possibilities afforded by arts interventions:

Within and beyond the City of Culture

Managing events

“We’re getting over those hurdles, we come to the Safety Advisory group and actually d’you know what there’s no low ballers - we’ve had those conversations and we’ve worked it through”

(WMP3)



Developing knowledge

“We’ve learnt a lot from the City of Culture partnership, where maybe in the past we would’ve wanted to have done this but we wouldn’t have seen where the opportunities were”

(WMP21)



Building relationships: with creative practitioners, and with communities

E.g. the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry Cultural Education Partnership, the artist-in-residence

“The City of Culture has been a really good vehicle to [...] link in with some of the groups we might not have had exposure to previously”

(WMP20)

“For me the very foundation of policing lies within communities, it requires police officers to be seen, to have conversations with the local community, and that kind of method of policing has eroded because of austerity”

(WMP3)



Willingness to engage

“That they’re willing to listen - that’s what I admire [...] they really did want to listen”

(FG3)

There was a “willingness and a curiosity from the police to be involved [which was] delightfully unexpected”

(Org 6)



Equity and empathy

- Re-balancing power through co-production

Breaking “what is historically a very binary relationship [...] between people in authority and people who [...] don’t have any power”

(Org8)

- Beginning to build understanding and empathy - to ‘humanise’

“Opportunities like that strip away the uniform, they strip away any preconceptions of people and job roles and authorities. And it puts you on a level which is a human level and enjoying things everyone enjoys, and showing that human side of policing”

(WMP15)



Challenges

Within arts/community organisations

- Longevity of engagement
- Wider police practice
- Police objectives

The reality is the police officers on the ground are still profiling, are still stereotyping, are still breaking the relationships before they've even been built
(Org15)

It's not fully trusting that they're not trying to gather loads of data rather than listening to people
(CofC13)

Particular desire to protect relationships built over time with vulnerable groups

Within communities

- Wider police practice
- Police objectives
- Just the individual or the wider institution?

[The officer] was very understanding, the words he said were what we all want to hear, but I couldn't shake the feeling that if we were in a completely different scenario [...] he wouldn't be speaking to me with the respect that he was speaking to me with

(FG1)

Within the police

- Buy-in

Some officers have a 'very set view as to what their job is, they see themselves as we're here to go and arrest people and that's how we police'

(WMP13)

- Time and resource

We haven't got enough staff to go to robberies in progress and shootings, so to then expect them to go and decorate a police station window...

(WMP4)

Recommendations going
forward

Key recommendations

1. Engage with institutional police culture change
2. Build strong, long-term relationships with organisations + networks
3. Establish shared objectives
4. Discuss ethical commitments

Key recommendations

5. Consider remit of police influence
6. Consider police practice and police presence
7. Respect organisational difference

Q+A

