

City of Culture Leadership Programme Evaluation

Initial Phase Report

December 2021

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Executive Summary

The project and its context

In 2019, Arts Council England Transforming Leadership Programme funded eighteen projects to support the ambition that the leadership and workforce of the arts and culture sector reflect the diversity of the country, indicating that there are fair routes to entry and progression.

The City of Culture Leadership Programme (CoCLP) was the successful project bid by Coventry City of Culture Trust in partnership with Beatfreaks, Coventry University (Centre for Business in Society; Faculty of Arts and Humanities, International Centre for Transformative Entrepreneurship), Coventry University Social Enterprise, People Make it Work, TRG and Warwick Arts Centre. The bid's joint aim was to both support Transforming Leadership and the aims of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 (CoC21).

To be delivered over 24 months, the core aims of the CoCLP are to:

- Enhance the diversity of leadership in Coventry's cultural and creative sector to reflect the city's demographics
- Develop great, skilled cultural leaders embedded in the city of Coventry
- Inspire social change through cultural leadership.

Given these aims, the objectives are to:

- Develop and support 15 people who want to change the city, and be the next cultural leaders in Coventry
- Target unequal access to cultural management and leadership opportunities in Coventry
- Bring forward established, independent and emerging leaders from Coventry's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic¹ communities to support the legacy of UK CoC 2021
- Deliver against the key outcomes and impacts of UK CoC 2021.

A programme of innovative leadership development

CoCLP identified a need to create opportunities and support for creative leaders, entrepreneurs and practitioners who are more representative of the city's demographics than the current leadership profile. The CoCLP recruitment and delivery approach is designed to identify and support 15 people with the ambition and potential "to change the city and be the next cultural leaders in Coventry".

"When we say 'leader' we mean anyone that wants to make a difference in the city and/or their community through art, culture and creative projects. This change will look different for each person, but the important thing is the dedication to bring it to life." (Programme marketing materials)

"Programme participants will be selected for the cohort through an innovative and involving recruitment process. We will be looking for people who share

¹ This is the term used in initial programme bid, scoping and recruitment material, and does not necessarily reflect the current language preferences of the participants, programme team or Trust.

the values of the city, have practical initiatives and changes they want to enact during the programme, are committed to social change through arts and culture and demonstrate great leadership potential. We will be working hard to attract people from diverse backgrounds, those who experience barriers to engaging with arts and culture and those who reflect communities who are under-represented.”

City of Culture Leadership Programme Bid Document, 2019

Based upon a model of facilitated learning experiences – at individual and group level - the programme activities have included: formal and informal personal, leadership and management training; leadership exposure from across the cultural sector; a peer-based support programme; development of a dedicated learning hub; individual stipends and learning development funds; mentor and coaching programme; project development activity; and matching with sector opportunities.

Recruiting for diversity

Recruitment, in early 2020, was designed in three phases:

- Engagement, including Taster Sessions
- Expressions of Interest, through multi-channel and supported options
- Assessment and Selection, including Development Days

Of 96 Expressions of Interest, 94 individuals were invited to a Development Day. Of the applicants:

- 70% identified as female (Coventry average – 50%)
- 42% identified as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (Coventry average – 33%²)
- 25% identified as having a disability / limiting health condition (Coventry av. – 18%)
- 47% were aged between 20-34, and 34% were aged between 35-49
- 77% identified as being heterosexual.

Applications were received from all 18 wards in the city, the county of Warwickshire and from further afield where candidates could show a strong link to the city.

A cohort of 15 were selected – all of whom accepted the offer – and a pool of 81 “Allies” was generated as a further output of the recruitment process.

A number of learning points can be identified around the programme’s approach to seeking inclusive engagement and recruitment:

- Peer networks were very important including both word-of-mouth engagement and mutual confidence to engage and apply
- The use of simple multi-channel Expressions of Interest (written, audio, video) with support for completion by candidates
- A shift from ‘recruitment / selection’ events *per se* to ‘(shared) development opportunities’

² 2011 Census figure

- Removing barriers by identifying 'potential', not just achievements
- The approach was resource-intensive to both plan and administer
- The process offered sight of latent demand from future leaders in Coventry; it successfully identified a larger pool of potential cultural leaders – the 81 Allies.

A co-creation model

The programme has been driven from the outset by a co-creation model. Incorporating both a cohort-based and individual component of co-creation, the openings for all aspects of curriculum design have been based on group discussion, buy-in and subsequent curation by the cohort with support from the Programme Delivery Team.

Delivery has been framed by the pandemic and the need to pivot rapidly to digital delivery, including from the announcement of the selected cohort in June 2020.

A number of learning points can be identified from the experience of the co-creation approach:

- That within a learning group of considerable diversity, co-creation has been enacted and has supported learning and group identity
- The need to educate applicants on the 'co-creation process' itself (because many in the cohort struggled with it initially)
- The need for stronger identification of 'where everyone is at' to begin with (to support structure and sense of initial development)
- Co-creation is a challenging curve for deliverers (it might not work, cohort itself unsure of needs, trusting cohort to self-create – 'letting go', funder demands, delivery expertise).

Conclusions

The City of Culture Leadership Programme was at recruitment stage when the first lockdown of the pandemic took place (March 2020). Managed by the City of Culture Trust, and part of the broader programme for and expected outcomes of UK Coventry City of Culture 2021, the programme continued with its schedule. It moved fully on-line with initial lockdown and extended its activity as part of a broader moment of support activities and pledges offered to the city, its communities and cultural providers by the City of Culture Trust.

At the initial point of evaluation up to July 2021, the Programme:

- **has achieved – and arguably gone beyond – its recruitment targets.** A full cohort of 15 participants has been achieved, targeting unequal access to cultural management and leadership opportunities and reflective of diversity and its range within the city of Coventry. The extension has seen identification of and engagement with a larger leadership pool of similar characteristics – the 81 Allies
- **is progressing an inclusive approach to cultural leadership development, including learning.** The recruitment approach engaged successfully with emergent leaders and change makers who are reflective of the city, under-represented within cultural leadership, and who have been enabled to participate in the programme through removal of barriers to participation

- **has progressed bringing forward established, independent and emerging leaders from Coventry's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.** Overall, both the chosen cohort and the 81 Allies group to a large extent reflect diverse ethnicities within the city³.

Considerations

Following evaluation of the initial stages of the CoCLP we put forward the following considerations:

- **The challenge to consolidate leadership development for all of the cohort:**
 - Has the financial, personal, and learning support offered overcome all the barriers being experienced?
 - Across different leadership characteristics and dimensions, individual diagnostic scores varied considerably. These individual differences are likely to need consideration to ensure individual as we all as cohort progression.
- **Focus on maximising the impact of the programme on the city, its communities, and its cultural leadership.** A range of channels offer potential for further development as part of delivery of the programme's aims:
 - The continued development of the individual 'projects' of each cohort member
 - Seeking to embed the cohort into 'leadership activities and roles' in the city
 - Consideration of demand-side barriers to 'inclusive' cultural leadership within the city
 - Consideration of the potential to generate new cultural infrastructures (and their leadership) within the city, including through cohort projects
 - The potential for using CoCLP learning and the demonstration effect to consolidate and expand inclusive pipelines
 - Further harnessing of the potential of the 81 Allies as a newly identified pool of emergent cultural leaders in the city.

³ Currently available benchmark data is historical with 2021 Census data yet to be available.

1. Evaluation of the City of Culture Leadership Programme

1.1 Introduction

In Autumn 2018 Arts Council England (ACE) launched a call for bids to 'Transforming Leadership', a funded programme aimed at ensuring arts and cultural leaders are appropriately skilled and from diverse backgrounds to support the continued growth and long-term sustainability of the sector.

The City of Culture Leadership Programme (CoCLP) was the successful bid by Coventry City of Culture Trust in partnership with Beatfreaks, Coventry University (Centre for Business in Society; Faculty of Arts and Humanities, International Centre for Transformative Entrepreneurship), Coventry University Social Enterprise, People Make it Work, TRG and Warwick Arts Centre. The bid's joint aim was to support both transforming leadership and the legacy aims of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 (CoC21).

Targeting unequal access to cultural management and leadership opportunities in Coventry, the programme is especially seeking to bring forward established, independent and emerging leaders from Coventry's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic⁴ communities to support the legacy of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021. It is framed around the delivery of activities and resources such as an action learning programme, a mentor programme, international visits, informal learning opportunities, sector placements, and a suite of learning resources. In line with the co-creation ethos of UK Coventry City of Culture 2021, the programme outline has not specified a fixed syllabus, instead bringing together a range of appropriate potential resources and stakeholders within the bid and proposing a co-created approach to curriculum development with the successful cohort.

CoCLP was one of eighteen projects funded under ACE Transforming Leadership comprising just over £7m of funding in total⁵. CoCLP was awarded £450,000 within a programme budget expected to total just over £770,000.

Each of the successful projects are required to contribute to the overall strategic objectives of the ACE Transforming Leadership programme:

- The leadership and workforce of the arts and culture sector reflects the diversity of the country, indicating that there are fair routes to entry and progression;
- The workforce of the arts, museums and libraries is appropriately skilled; and
- There is a strong, robust evidence base developed through an established process of evaluating impact and long-term evaluation.

⁴ This is the term used in initial programme scoping and recruitment material, and does not necessarily reflect the current language preferences of the participants, programme team or Trust.

⁵ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding-finder/transforming-leadership>

1.2 Evaluation context and approach

As part of CoCLP, the Centre for Business in Society (CBiS) at Coventry University was engaged at the bidding stage to provide evaluation expertise and activity. The evaluation is being carried out within Coventry University's ethical framework and guidance for research. In July 2020 *An Evaluation Plan for the City of Culture Leadership Programme* was signed-off by the CoCLP Steering Group.

The framework for evaluating the programme is set by the combined strategic objectives of the national ACE Transforming Leadership programme – and its national evaluation activity – and the expected outcomes and impacts of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021.

The evaluation of the CoCLP therefore sits:

- within the broader UK City of Culture 2021 Programme Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Strategy⁶, including its adopted evaluation approach and framework. This framework includes the use of Theories of Change – now renamed 'Stories of Change'. Reports on CoCLP feed into Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 monitoring and evaluation reporting.
- alongside the national ACE Transforming Leadership evaluation including the provision of monitoring and activity data.

Following commencement of CoCLP, a Theory of Change was confirmed which both aligned with the overarching UK City of Culture 2021 framework and that provided by ACE in its original call for project submissions (see Annex 1).

1.3 This Report

This Report covers evaluation activity concerning the development, recruitment and opening phases of the City of Culture Leadership Programme from October 2019 to July 2021. This is framed around key themes regarding the programme:

- Section 2 discusses the programme's approach to cultural leadership
- Section 3 looks especially at the activities undertaken to 'recruit for diversity' and the recruitment outcomes
- Section 4 explores the initial experience of co-creation as the delivery model adopted by the programme
- Section 5 draws some conclusions to date, key considerations and next steps.

Annexes provide supporting material.

⁶ https://www.coventry.ac.uk/globalassets/media/global/city-of-culture/monitoring--evaluation/city-of-culture_pme-strategy_jan20.pdf

2. The City of Culture Leadership Programme

2.1 Aims and Objectives

Awarded in late 2019, and to be delivered over 24 months, the core aims of the CoCLP are to:

- Enhance the diversity of leadership in Coventry's cultural and creative sector to reflect the city's demographics
- Develop great, skilled cultural leaders embedded in the city of Coventry
- Inspire social change through cultural leadership.

Given these aims, the objectives are to:

- Develop and support 15 people who want to change the city, and be the next cultural leaders in Coventry
- Target unequal access to cultural management and leadership opportunities in Coventry
- Bring forward established, independent and emerging leaders from Coventry's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to support the legacy of UK CoC 2021
- Deliver against the key outcomes and impacts of UK CoC 2021.

2.2 Partnership and management

The City of Culture Trust were the named programme bidder, in partnership with Beatfrees, Coventry University (Centre for Business in Society; Faculty of Arts and Humanities, International Centre for Transformative Entrepreneurship), Coventry University Social Enterprise, People Make it Work, TRG and Warwick Arts Centre.

Representatives from these groups form a Steering Group for the programme that meets monthly (see Annex 2). Meeting since October 2019, the Steering Group are advisory, providing oversight of, insight on and support to the programme's delivery. The lead evaluator was invited also to sit on the Steering Group. In addition to the Steering Group, progress by the CoCLP is reported to Arts Council England, the City of Culture Core Monitoring and Evaluation Group and to the ACE National Evaluation being undertaken by A New Direction (AND) and BOP Consulting.

In operational terms, the CoCLP is co-ordinated by the City of Culture Trust Programme Coordinator, in post from July 2020, supported by the main delivery partner, People Make It Work. Key responsibilities include grant administration and budget monitoring, support for activity programming, delivery and governance, and ongoing and substantial contact with the cohort of individuals taking part in the programme.

Day-to-day delivery is supplied by People Make It Work, one of the consortium partners, with responsibility for the learning programme development and its delivery, using a co-creation approach and drawing in an array of commissioned and partner inputs both from within and outside of the city.

2.3 The opening approach of CoCLP to co-creating creative leadership

In its alignment with the Coventry Culture Strategy 2017-2027, the UK City of Culture 2021 'Story of Change' and ACE Transforming Leadership, CoCLP identified a need to create opportunities and support for creative leaders, entrepreneurs and practitioners who are more representative of the city's demographics than the current leadership profile. Recognising the challenges of equality, diversity and inclusion, consideration incorporated protected characteristics and other barriers such as financial, neurodiversity and health conditions. In this context, the CoCLP recruitment and delivery approach was designed to identify and support 15 people with the ambition and potential "to change the city and be the next cultural leaders in Coventry".

To do so, an initial starting point was that in advertising for and recruiting to the programme during spring 2020, the City of Culture Trust set out the following description of creative leadership for the programme:

"When we say 'leader' we mean anyone that wants to make a difference in the city and/or their community through art, culture and creative projects. This change will look different for each person, but the important thing is the dedication to bring it to life." (Programme marketing materials)

In interviews, Steering Group members reinforced this sense of an approach regarding cultural leadership, social activism and a place-based focus (in Coventry):

"shifting the nature of the leadership within the arts orgs to be more reflective of the city and its citizens." (Steering Group member, July 2020)

"I guess what I'd like to see is a broader range of perspectives across the cultural sector. I would definitely want to see that the cultural sector is not bed blocked by people who look like me, the institutions need to not be led by white middle class men – we need to use our power to create space, and shift. And also I guess to ensure that those individuals are resourced well enough to establish themselves rather than relying on structures that are already in place which they somehow have to find a way through – it's more about how do we create the conditions whereby self-starting is supported as well." (Steering Group member, July 2020)

"The biggest thing is diversity of leadership. The arts have a bad rep for not being culturally diverse – not even just leadership. I hope there will be a big shift there. I hope it will feel very connected to place, it will create excitement and inspire people to think of the city and the region differently." (Steering Group member, July 2020)

"I think there's an interesting opportunity, not for just this leadership programme to create, but to join up the philosophy of the Trust with a philosophy of leadership and a place, and see a kind of ecology of ambition and behaviours sort of mutually supportive, socially progressive sense of cultural leadership." (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“aligned with the CoC Trust’s ambitions for the city, for its definition and understanding of culture as a lived, experienced thing, and of Coventry as a city that has culture... that makes culture, that is a living culture.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

Similarly, in line with the values and practices of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021, the approach has been to allow and support the cohort to co-create their leadership curriculum. Taking a people-centred facilitated learning approach, and following ice-breaker activity, the programme commenced with the cohort shaping and developing the curriculum and programme pathways from an extensive menu and array of possibilities. This was, in part, supported by the breadth of partners and their (city-based) relationships and knowledge. This particular approach was set out at the bidding stage for the Transforming Leadership funding.

“Yes, absolutely transforming leadership for social value gain ... however alongside that ... how could we do some really interesting things which wouldn't necessarily be part of a mainstream leadership programme and that would include the method, the pedagogy...” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

Based upon a model of facilitated learning experiences – at individual and group level - the programme activities have included:

- Formal and informal personal, leadership and management training
- Leadership exposure from across the cultural sector
- A peer-based support programme
- Development of a dedicated learning hub
- Individual stipends and learning development funds
- Mentor and coaching programme
- Project development activity
- Matching with sector opportunities – from city to international level.

3. The City of Culture Leadership Programme: recruiting for diversity

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the activities, outcomes, experience and learning from the CoCLP cohort recruitment phase. This phase can be seen as the beginning of ‘client journeys’ as individuals engaged with the programme at its commencement.

Recruitment to the programme started in January 2020. Activities were accelerated given recognition of impending ‘lockdown’ with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic – which occurred in March 2020.

The programme targeted ‘emergent non-identifying leaders’ to overcome diversity-related barriers to leadership development, and to bring forward future city leaders. It sought to create a cohort of 15 individuals who work or live in Coventry, who wanted to use arts or culture to create positive change in Coventry, and who wanted to work and learn in a collaborative manner with a diverse range of peers:

“Programme participants will be selected for the cohort through an innovative and involving recruitment process. We will be looking for people who share the values of the city, have practical initiatives and changes they want to enact during the programme, are committed to social change through arts and culture and demonstrate great leadership potential. We will be working hard to attract people from diverse backgrounds, those who experience barriers to engaging with arts and culture and those who reflect communities who are under-represented.”

City of Culture Leadership Programme Bid Document, 2019

3.2 The process of cohort recruitment

Recruitment was designed in three phases:

1. Engagement and expressions of interest
2. Assessment
3. Selection.

The process was designed to identify participants who:

- Would benefit from a range of professional development
- Had experience of being under-represented in the city’s cultural leadership
- Would benefit from, and contribute to, learning in a group
- Could demonstrate a level of personal need (including financial circumstances, lack of opportunities, employment status, and barriers to inclusion)
- Showed potential to make a difference in their community.

This process of identification was carried out within the city demographic context of Coventry.

Recruitment began in January 2020 and included a range of activities designed to inform and develop interest in the Programme prior to formal applications by 28 February 2020.

Awareness raising activity and promotion of the programme used Twitter, Facebook and Instagram promotions. Promotion materials reflected the broad range of participant experience and aspiration that was sought:

“The programme is for anyone that lives or works in Coventry. It’s for people at all stages of their career. Whether you work for an organisation or independently, whether you want to run a theatre or arts organisation in the future, or set up your own cultural business, the City of Culture Leadership Programme is for you. We are specifically interested in hearing from people who have faced barriers to inclusion in accessing similar opportunities in the past. The programme is open to everyone aged 18+ and no prior experience is needed. We want to ensure the final City of Culture Leadership Programme group reflects the diversity of Coventry, and that each member of the group is passionate to change the city. We are looking for people who have ideas for changes they want to make for their community and/or the city as a whole and are committed to social change through arts and culture.”

Programme marketing leaflet, January 2020

Print materials were produced also to promote the Programme and taster sessions.

Taster sessions formed part of the awareness raising activity. It was not compulsory to attend these events in order to make a subsequent application to the programme. Three sessions were held (see Annex 3), each with a particular theme related to the goals of the Leadership Programme:

- Monday 17 February – 6-9pm / Leadership – Shaping a diverse city
- Wednesday 19 February – 2-5pm / Social Activism – Making a sustainable change for the benefit of the community
- Saturday 22 February – 2-5pm / Community – Realising our cultural aspirations through Coventry’s values and challenges

The taster days involved members of the Steering Group who both delivered and observed the sessions. There were 76 attendees across the three sessions. Of these, 61 (80%) completed a short evaluation form on their experience; 38% rated the sessions as good and 62% as very good. On their experience, 70% strongly agreed that they had had a good time and 89% were inspired to continue cultural activity.

This awareness raising led to a more formal application process, described as an Expression of Interest. This process deliberately eschewed ‘traditional’ recruitment and application formats, forms and CVs. To make an Expression of Interest, applicants were asked to supply answers to three questions in either written, audio or video formats:

- | |
|---|
| ■ Who are you? |
| ■ What idea would you like time and support to develop? |
| ■ What do you think you’d want to learn with and bring to the cohort? |

Three levels of support were offered by the City of Culture Trust to any individual seeking to create an Expression of Interest – a call, initial feedback, or a dedicated support worker to enable an application.

In total, 96 applications were received by the deadline of 28 February 2020. These applications were subject to an eligibility check against three criteria: focused on the applicant working or living in the Coventry city region; wanting to use culture to create positive social change in Coventry; and wanting to work and learn in a collaborative manner with a diverse range of peers. Once this check was completed, applications were sent to an Assessment Team drawn from the Steering Group and Programme Team, for applications to be scored.

- Demonstrates experience of barriers to progression due to:
 - Discrimination
 - Financial circumstances
 - Lack of opportunities for career development or education (Q1)
- Level of commitment to using culture to create positive social change in Coventry (Q1)
- The potential impact of the idea on a community or the city as a whole (Q2)
- Level of commitment to working collaboratively / contributing to and learning from the cohort (Q3)

Recruitment Assessment Frame

Of the 59 applicants who provided the monitoring data:

- 70% identified as female (Coventry average – 50%)
- 42% identified as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (Coventry average – 33%⁷)
- 25% identified as having a disability / limiting health condition (Coventry av. – 18%)
- 47% were aged between 20-34, and 34% were aged between 35-49
- 77% identified as being heterosexual.

Applications were received from all 18 wards in city, the county of Warwickshire and from further afield where candidates could show a strong link to the city.

Of the 96 Expressions of Interest, 94 applicants were invited to one of three Development Days (held on 10, 11 and 12 March 2020).

Each Development Day comprised of sessions totalling five hours. Designed as a structured networking opportunity, the days themselves offered group collaborative work and one-to-one conversations for applicants “about the change you want to see in the city”. The days incorporated presentations from cultural sector representatives, carefully considered to

⁷ 2011 Census figure

demonstrate to potential participants the range of possibilities inherent in cultural leadership, and as explained by a Steering Group member:

“I would also see cultural leadership as in a more instrumentalist place too, so those people that see that social change can happen as a result of enabling, resourcing and connecting culture to people and communities, enabling those communities to express themselves through that, but also enabling individuals to see beyond their direct experience, to imagine a future beyond the direct lived experience that they might be having.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

Participants were asked to explain the social impact of a proposed project and how it would:

- Reach underrepresented communities
- Offer transformational experiences
- Support community cohesion.

The Development Days were attended by Programme Team and Steering Group members. They collected assessment-related detail about applicants, scoring individual candidates and their project ideas out of 10 on four areas of observation, and providing reflections on the impact, strengths, group role, potential of and opportunities for each individual. This material was used for subsequent feedback.

The detailed awareness raising and recruitment approach generated a wide pool of applicants and participants. Given the high numbers of Expressions of Interest that were eligible and deemed worthy of further development, the nature of these days shifted much more strongly from recruitment shortlisting *per se* to development activities:

“... we had [94] people that we wanted to invite to development events. We then shifted from thinking about them as like recruitment ... selection events to like development events. You're going to get something out of this, you'll move your practice forward, you'll meet some people who are likeminded, you will have the chance to think about your project's initiatives and how to make them work better – and during that we'll be watching you and identifying who's got the most – who's got some of the characteristics that we need for this programme.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

The process became framed as a development opportunity with a clear message that the final selection of 15 individuals was designed to create a particular cohort and was not a reflection on capacity or capability. Alongside subsequent feedback, participants on the Development Days were seen to be discussing ongoing collaboration opportunities. Following the days, the participants self-labelled as the “81 Allies” (alongside the Cohort of 15) and set up a Facebook group to communicate, collaborate and share resources:

“The 81 allies – yes they were like ‘right that's it – we're going to meet every four months – we need a building’ – it was really interesting... [...] I'm sure they were disappointed when they didn't get selected – but they really heard that, because we heard them reiterating it – that the 15 was going to be this selection of many, not the best of many – so I think that allowed them to feel like it was no dishonour to be part of the 81. So I think that's a success... I'm really proud of it.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

In response to observation on the day, and the areas of need that had been shared, all 94 attendees were given 1:1 strength-based personal feedback and a development plan, supporting and signposting them with their career and ideas.

Subsequently the CoCLP Steering Group and Programme Team have seen benefit in maintaining an ongoing relationship with this wider Allies group (as well as the successful cohort of 15 participants). This aspect was not in the initial bid or activity plan but was generated by the success of the recruitment process.

3.3 The selected cohort of 15

By mid-March 2020, the recruitment panel were due to produce a final shortlist of applicants using data and observations gathered through the stages above, alongside city demographic and cultural leadership data. This was also the point at which the impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic began to be felt acutely in the UK. As a consequence of physical lockdown and social distancing rules, programme activities and the selection process were delayed during a 'crisis management phase' where all Trust office activities were shifted to remote working and responding to the immediate crisis faced by the cultural sector and communities in the city. Programme partners faced similar challenges. It was also the case that the success of the recruitment and development activity had led to an extensive longlist of candidates.

A comprehensive shortlisting process was carried out by the City of Culture Trust and People Make It Work programme delivery staff and included:

- Interviewing team recommendations of top candidates
- Programme delivery team recommendations of top candidates
- Reviews of demographic and monitoring data for the city and its cultural leadership from different analytical perspectives
- Shortlisting options lists reviewed against monitoring data.

A final shortlist was presented to the Steering Group on 2 April 2020 along with the demographic profile presented by different cohort options. In line with the approach of the Programme to identify potential rather than recruit against existing achievement, this stage of the process explored a variety of cohort compositions, exploring the demographic profile of the group and discussing the potential that each combination could bring.

The selected cohort met the programme aims of recruiting against the diversity characteristics of the city and under-represented groups within cultural leadership (Tables 1 and 2 below). Table 1 sets out the demographic profile of the 'cohort of 15' against population statistics for Coventry (using 2011 census and other data). Table 2 maps the cohort against the characteristics of England's existing cultural leadership⁸ and the recruitment data for all projects funded under the ACE Leadership programme nationally.

⁸ Arts Council England 2018-19 Case for Diversity data; [ACE DiversityReport Final_03032020_0.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/ACE-DiversityReport-Final-03032020-0.pdf) ([artscouncil.org.uk](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)).

Table 1: The Selected Cohort Demographic Comparison

| | CoCLP Fifteen (2020) | Coventry census (2011) |
|---|----------------------|---|
| Female | 53% | 50% |
| Male | 33% | 50% |
| Transgender | 7% | No choice provided |
| Prefer not to say | 7% | - |
| Has a disability or long-term health condition | 47% | 18% |
| White British | 33% | 66.6% |
| White Other, White Irish, or White Gypsy or Irish Traveller | 13% | 7.2% |
| Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British | 40% | 5.6% |
| Asian or Asian British | 7% | 16.3% |
| Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group | 7% | 2.6% |
| Any other ethnic group | 0% | 1.7% |
| | | Coventry mid-year population estimates (2018) |
| Under 19 | 13% | 25% |
| 20 – 34 | 33% | 29% |
| 35 – 49 | 47% | 17% |
| 50 – 64 | 7% | 15% |

Table 2: The Selected Cohort Cultural Leadership Comparison

| | CoCLP Fifteen (2020) | ACE Transforming Leadership | ACE funded organisation Leadership (2018/19) |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Female | 53% | 81% | 40 – 52% dependent on leadership position |
| Male | 33% | 17% | |
| Transgender | 7% | 2% | <1% non-binary |
| Prefer not to say | 7% | | - |
| Has a disability or long-term health condition | 47% | 22% | 5 – 9% dependent on leadership position |
| White British | 33% | 58% | 67 – 80% dependent on leadership position |
| White other background | 7% | 9% | 4 – 8% dependent on leadership position |
| White Irish | 7% | 4% | |
| Caribbean | 20% | 3% | |
| White and Black Caribbean | 0% | 3% | |
| African | 13% | 3% | |
| Black other background | 7% | 5% | |
| Chinese | 7% | 1% | |
| Any other mixed background | 7% | 2% | |
| White Gypsy/Irish Traveller | 0% | 0% | |
| White and Black African | 0% | 2% | |
| White and Asian | 0% | 2% | |
| Indian | 0% | 2% | |
| Pakistani | 0% | 0% | |
| Bangladeshi | 0% | 0% | |
| Asian other background | 0% | 3% | |
| Arab | 0% | 0% | |
| Any other ethnic group | 0% | 3% | Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British 10 – 11% dependent on leadership position |

The Coventry cohort is notable in reflecting gender diversity. It is especially notable for its success in recruiting individuals declaring a disability or long-term health condition. The cohort is notable also in its recruitment of underrepresented ethnicities within cultural leadership, especially Black, African, Caribbean or Black British. The programme does have

a slight under-representation of those identifying as Asian or Asian British compared to city demographics. A range of ages is represented in the cohort.

A majority of the final cohort, 9 (60%), were arts freelancers, with one individual reporting as employed in the arts. A third stated they had active caring responsibilities for children or relatives. Of the 13 providing data, 12 had A levels, vocational level 3 and equivalents or above qualifications.

3.3.1 Cohort reflections on programme recruitment

Interviews with cohort members were conducted in February 2021. These focused on how the cohort found out about the programme, their experience of the recruitment process and the ways in which they thought about themselves as cultural and/or leaders at the point they applied.

These interviews reinforced the significance of how the programme had approached the concept of cultural leadership, and identifying leadership, across the city population:

- Most of the cohort were encouraged to apply by others in their network (10 of 15 respondents)
- A minority of cohort participants identified some level of existing leadership identity, but most did not consider themselves as leaders from the outset
- Most of the cohort participants saw their existing activities and interests as related and relevant to the cultural sector, but a small minority (4 of 15) made a specific point that they did not consider their work as 'core' to this sector.

The recruitment activities had encouraged them to think more broadly about leadership, their contribution to the city and, ultimately, to apply:

“the cultural leader term was off-putting to me and to other people I know who I would consider to be cultural leaders but wouldn't identify with the term.”

“I wouldn't be confident saying I was a leader at the time, no. I was an aspiring leader, or maybe an unrecognised leader, but I wasn't a leader. I wouldn't feel confident with that.”

“I absolutely loved the days that we went to Fargo's – development days – they were brilliant and that sort of set the tone.”

3.4 The cohort and leadership

The cohort of 15 was announced publicly in late June 2020.

The evaluation sought to undertake a 'leadership baselining' exercise with the cohort on their entry into the programme; this needed to be designed alongside the activity and monitoring data required by the national evaluation. Following joint national evaluation development sessions with all the funded projects, in October 2020 the national evaluation agreed the need for projects to report against a set of five Leadership Characteristics defined for the programme as common across all projects⁹.

⁹ Arts Council England (2020) *Transforming Leadership Programme* October; BOP Consulting/A New Direction

For each of these Characteristics, the project evaluation was supplied with an Indicator Question by the national evaluation.

- Leadership Characteristic: **Able to bring others with them**
Indicator: I can motivate others to effect positive change
Indicator: I can persuade policymakers and funders of the value of what I do
- Leadership Characteristic: **Authentic in their own vision and voice**
Indicator: I am better able to communicate my own vision for the future
- Leadership Characteristic: **Collaborative in practice & enabling of others**
Indicator: I am better at working collaboratively with others to achieve more together
- Leadership Characteristic: **Inclusive and open to all communities**
Indicator: I am better at actively including others in my work
- Leadership Characteristic: **Situated and contextually aware**
Indicator: I am better aware of the context I am working in and how I can make a difference

ACE Leadership Programme National Evaluation: Leadership Characteristics and Indicators

These Leadership Characteristics were incorporated into the development of a CoC Leadership Diagnostic that included a broader set of leadership questions derived from the CoCLP aims and objectives, its Theory of Change, and themes beginning to be developed within the CoCLP curriculum planning (around personal reflectivity; understanding of the city of Coventry; and place-based practice). The drafting process was also used as part of an 'introduction to evaluation' with the cohort – as part of which they were asked to comment on and amend the draft diagnostic.

The diagnostic was undertaken online during Christmas 2020, recognising that the cohort had been with the programme for several, heavily pandemic-impacted months, with ice-breaker, inception and cohort-building work undertaken almost entirely online.

Table 3 below provides the initial scores by the cohort in January 2021 across the 21 questions asked within the Leadership Development Diagnostic.

Table 3: Cohort Leadership Characteristic Scores, January 2021

| Diagnostic Question | Average Score (out of 10) | Range of Scores | Mode (most frequent score) |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. I can motivate others to effect positive change | 7.73 | 4 to 10 | 8 |
| 2. I can persuade policymakers and funders of the value of what I do | 6.27 | 3 to 9 | 7 |
| 3. I feel confident practicing advocacy and leadership | 6.73 | 4 to 10 | 7 |
| 4. I am better able to communicate my own vision for the future | 7.13 | 4 to 10 | 8 |
| 5. I can explain the values and vision that drive my work and my approach | 7.53 | 5 to 10 | 8 |
| 6. I understand my leadership style | 6.13 | 3 to 8 | 5 |
| 7. I am better at working collaboratively with others to achieve more together | 6.93 | 4 to 10 | 7 |
| 8. I have more connections and wider networks now | 7.27 | 3 to 10 | 8 |
| 9. I know how to learn from, work with, and maintain relationships with connections in my network | 7.00 | 3 to 9 | 7 |
| 10. I know how to build confidence in others and support their goal realisation | 6.80 | 3 to 8 | 8 |
| 11. I understand the ways in which working together can benefit the city | 8.07 | 5 to 10 | 8 |
| 12. I am better at actively including others in my work | 6.93 | 3 to 10 | 7 |
| 13. I understand how to recognise the importance of diversity and inclusivity in my work | 7.93 | 3 to 10 | 8 |
| 14. I am better aware of the context I am working in and how I can make a difference | 6.60 | 2 to 9 | 8 |
| 15. I understand the meaning of context | 7.73 | 2 to 10 | 8 |
| 16. I understand how to adapt my leadership to my context | 6.73 | 2 to 9 | 6 |
| 17. I have made progress on my leadership journey emotionally | 6.93 | 4 to 9 | 7 |
| 18. I have made progress on my leadership journey professionally | 6.40 | 2 to 10 | 6 |
| 19. I know how to identify my own skills development needs and address them to improve my leadership | 6.47 | 3 to 9 | 6 |
| 20. I know where to go for information, support and resources as part of my leadership approach | 6.60 | 2 to 9 | 7 |
| 21. I feel connected to Coventry as a leader | 6.60 | 3 to 9 | 8 |

Question score average ranged from 6.13 for 'I understand my leadership style' to 8.07 for 'I understand the ways in which working together can benefit the city'.

Overall, average scores for individual members across the cohort similarly ranged from 6.0 to 8.48, with an average score of 6.98 out of 10.

The statements with the lowest mean levels of agreement covered personal identification of leadership style, identifying and addressing skills development needs, and influencing policymakers and funders. There was a low level of agreement with the statement 'I have made progress on my leadership journey professionally', which triangulates with the early stage of the programme at the time of the diagnostic.

Overall, the relatively high scores early in the project are believed to recognise that the cohort were chosen partly because they have shown leadership qualities in the past – whilst possibly not being fully aware of this. Nevertheless, different experiences are reflected in the wide range of scores for individual answers. It is expected also that scores could fluctuate in the future as the cohort's knowledge around leadership and their particular development journey evolves.

Alongside the diagnostic, members of the cohort undertook a one-to-one evaluation interview on their experience to date.

Asking about the Programme's aim for the cohort to be the next generation of cultural leaders and changemakers in the city, comments received included:

"I believe that in that team we are already cultural leaders in Coventry, it is the programme coming in to shape that journey and support it in a way that is more focused. Maybe at the end it will be more distinct and focused on who we are as leaders. At the moment I don't know where it is going and how it is going to be shaped – at the same time maybe it is working for some people so far. For me I am waiting to see where it is going." (Cohort member reflective interview, February 2021)

"I'm really excited about it. At the moment, because it feels quite early on and a bit disjointed because, obviously not being able to meet, that it feels like that's a big ask. But I have faith in it that we will. I think if you just have faith in the process, somebody's worked it out, somebody's put all the thought into it and decided it. So, yes, pretty hopeful." (Cohort member reflective interview, February 2021)

"It has been said that we're going to change Coventry, yet nobody really knows [who we are], so I don't want it to get to the end and then be like – well these are the people that have changed Coventry and everyone's like well who are they?" (Cohort member reflective interview, February 2021)

3.5 The programme and the pandemic

As has been suggested earlier, CoCLP has operated almost entirely during the period of the pandemic, including the range of restrictions and guidelines imposed throughout the period, and within a context of considerable, generally negative, impacts on the functioning of the cultural and creative industries.

Recruitment activities took place roughly as scheduled up to 12 March 2020 when cohort confirmation and programme activity was paused from the initial schedule in response to the Covid-19 crisis. At this point in time the City of Culture Trust published a statement which in the short-term saw a refocussing of their planning for the year in order to lend support to the cultural sector and the community groups of the city¹⁰. The Trust's response entailed four major components:

- The establishment of a Coronavirus Resilience Fund;
- Nine 'pledges' to the community concerning operational and working practices and their impact on the city/region;
- Strategic leadership in developing a coordinated response to the challenges faced by the creative and cultural sector with other city and regional partners; and
- Rapid development of online programming in response to the cultural vacuum created by the lockdown and social distancing.

We include this summary as part of Programme evaluation reporting on two counts.

First, the significant impact on the City of Culture Trust delivery team of the crisis and the organisational response. Lockdown measures and the Trust's response came at a point in the programme schedule after the application deadline and after longlisted applicants had taken part in development activities, but before shortlisting and the announcement of successful candidates. The announcement was delayed until July 2020 and the programme was forced to commence and run on a virtual basis in the months that followed.

Second, given the programme's stated objectives and aims – to develop cultural activities, community leadership and resilience throughout the city region – it became a significant delivery channel for the Trust's emergency response to coronavirus. Generated through the recruitment programme, the Allies group and the cohort combined represented a unique, city-wide, community-based and seldom-recognised cultural practitioner network. It was a group 'under-the-radar' if not 'entirely off the map' of the variety of governmental and sector body responses, whilst experiencing similar crisis conditions.

As part of the pledges of the coronavirus response a total of £46,000 was allocated to fund 92 lots of £500 'microgrants' distributed amongst this group to support community-based cultural activity and resilience during lockdown. This built on the initial identification process for this group that had included articulation of their activities and project ideas as part of the CoCLP recruitment process. In addition to the grant, all the recipients were offered further support for the delivery of their project as well as access to feedback in general.

Feedback on how the grant was used came through a Grant Recipient Survey (completed by 63% of grant recipients) supplemented by direct conversations with the Leadership Programme Coordinator and Programme Delivery Team who captured anecdotal feedback.

Due to Covid-19, around a quarter of recipients used the grant for immediate financial security. Of the survey respondents, around three-quarters reported being able to have the financial resilience to explore creative ideas with the grant, being enabled to carry out their initial project idea (which in some instances amounted to 'cultural entrepreneurship') and reporting that they felt their project had been successful. A total of 73% stated that the grant

¹⁰ <https://coventry2021.co.uk/news/coventry-city-of-culture-trust-coronavirus-statement/>

had been very beneficial to them as an individual, with 22% stating it was somewhat beneficial.

Learning from the CoCLP experience also supported the recruitment and programme development of the City of Culture Trust Apprentice Programme in order to contribute towards the long-term development of the cultural and creative sector. This programme recruited 14 participants (from the target of 15) who began their Level 3 Apprenticeship journey in December 2020. The apprenticeship roles are split across the different teams that make up the Coventry City of Culture Trust, including: Finance; Team Development and Business Administration; Marketing; Communications; Fundraising; Monitoring and Data; Ticketing and Creative Programme/Producer and Production roles.

The initial expectation was that – given the alignment between CoCLP and the Apprenticeship programme objectives around developing understanding, accessibility and provision of career routes into the cultural and creative sector – the potential for shared resources, activities and networks might materialise.

3.6 Reflections and learning on recruiting for diversity

The recruitment and application process was deliberately constructed so as to:

- Be inclusive and remove barriers to participation
- Identify potential as well as achievement
- Provide development opportunities to all participants / applicants.

Person-centred, with a clear focus on diversity in terms of demographics and cultural leadership, the approach was taken in order to create a cohort with mixed levels of experience, representing a range of communities and creative practices, and to enable exciting social action in the city.

The programme was successful in its recruitment aims, creating a programme cohort of emergent leaders both broadly reflective of the city and of challenge to existing cultural leadership norms.

A number of learning points can be identified around the programme's approach to seeking inclusive engagement and recruitment:

- Peer networks were very important (these encouraged 10 of the 15 in the cohort) including both word-of-mouth engagement and mutual confidence to engage and apply
- The use of simple multi-channel Expressions of Interest (written, audio, video) with support for completion by candidates
- A shift from 'recruitment / selection' events *per se* to '(shared) development opportunities' which built value for participants whether selected or not, as well as a sense of joint endeavour
- Removing barriers by identifying 'potential', not just achievements
- Selection logics were challenging to agree and pin down, requiring clarity of objectives, individual and group assessment, joint discussion by assessors and use of multiple forms of assessment evidence

- The process offered sight of latent demand from future leaders in Coventry; it successfully identified a larger pool of potential cultural leaders – the 81 Allies.

The approach was resource-intensive to both plan and administer:

“I would say from my perspective it was a very ... engineered approach to create something that was trying to be un-engineered and more organic, in terms of the cohort to come out of it. So ... what they were trying to do was to get a group that wasn't about going through and ticking boxes in terms of skills and experience, but you have to be able to make a decision at the end of it. That balance – how do we have rigour in the process whilst at the same time not repeating what a normal recruitment process would turn out – there was conflict there which was handled really well but it was hard work getting there. Long and tiring and a tough job for those involved.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“It was very time consuming, but necessarily so, I think because it means that participants understood what it is that we were looking for and I don't think they would have got that at the very beginning.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“I guess it could have been quite easy to retreat from that original position because this process took longer to recruit, it cost more money to recruit, we haven't necessarily got a cohort who have got the same needs, a person-centred learning approach is a positive one but it's harder, so the leadership piece for me is sticking by our original promises really, knowing that even in these pressured times we have probably developed a fairly good model that is worth sticking with” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

It was also important to identify the particular context for the approach to recruiting for diversity; work was carried out to establish those diversity characteristics under-represented when compared to the city demographic profile *and* cultural sector leadership. This will differ across places; underlining how CoCLP is a *place-based* programme.

The recruitment approach to 'selecting for potential' presented interesting reflections. One stakeholder commented that one member of the selected cohort had expressed no aspiration to work in the cultural sector, but there was a feeling – discussed during the recruitment stage – that the individual had latent potential and this would be developed through engagement with the programme. There remains a skill in spotting such potential in applicants.

A further learning point on 'potential and place' is around how to effect social and cultural change. The programme approach has taken the view that this is unlikely to happen through engagement of the usual or expected cultural organisations, but instead by reaching beyond them and bringing in other voices – which itself demands a particular set of skills and experience.

4. The City of Culture Leadership Programme: a co-creation model

4.1 Introduction

The programme has been driven from the outset by a co-creation model. Incorporating both a cohort-based and individual component of co-creation, the openings for all aspects of the curriculum have been based on group discussion, buy-in and subsequent curation by the cohort with support from the Programme Delivery Team.

All of this has been framed by the need to pivot rapidly to digital delivery in March 2020, including from the announcement of the selected cohort in June 2020.

A key consideration of this pivot has been not simply repurposing 'go and see' ideas or sessions on platforms such as Zoom, but to approach this considerably in terms of benefits and accessibility – especially considering the diverse characteristics of the cohort. The intention has been to curate a style of delivery combining live and pre-recorded material, as well as formal and informal sessions and content creation (vlogs, blogs, etc.), alongside the evolution of tailored learning plans. One example of added value is that this has supported development of the Learning Resource Hub.

4.2 The Programme Schedule

The programme commenced with a series of four facilitated Co-creation Sessions where the cohort got to know each other, learnt more about the co-creation model, and began to help shape the strands of learning they wanted to experience.

These sessions sat alongside individual meetings with the programme team to understand personal circumstances since the participation offer had been made, to explore support and access needs and to create a personal support package.

The programme schedule has been structured around two key dimensions: cohort learning and personal learning (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The CoCLP Programme Schedule

| 18 MONTH CONTENT DELIVERY WILL COVER: | |
|---|--|
| <u>COHORT LEARNING</u> | <u>PERSONAL LEARNING</u> |
| 1 x ½ day workshop with expert | 6 x 1 hr UK mentoring meetings |
| 1 x ½ day Expert Panel and Debate session (with up to 3 experts) | 6 x 1 hr International mentoring meetings |
| 1 x 2 hr forum to share learning as a cohort | 3 x Site Visits or leadership interviews |
| 1 x 2 hr forum to share learning as a cohort | Individual formal training course(s) |
| | Self-directed learning, research & applying learning |
| <i>12 hours of content per month</i> | <i>12 hours mentoring delivered</i> |

Programme Schedule

Cohort learning is shaped by modules ('strands') whereas individual learning has provided a more responsive programme to opportunities arising and development progress, backed up by an individual Learning Development Fund.

Cohort learning is based on the delivery of four *foundation strands*, and three *development strands*. The Foundation Strands are:

- Forming as a Cohort
- Knowing Myself
- Knowing My City
- Exploring Place-Based Practice.

The Development Strands are:

- Enabling Creative Ideas
- Developing My Leadership
- Building My Business.

Common to all the strands is an expected format of learning activities and hours. Choice of content itself has been co-created by the cohort – with cohort members allocated as 'shapers', working on multiple areas in order to develop content and approaches that best fit with cohort members' needs and aspirations.

Figure 2 (overleaf) provides an illustration of different content and pedagogy within the foundation strands.

Figure 2: Foundation Strand Content

FOUNDATION STRANDS

'FORMING AS A COHORT' WORKSHOPS

- Cohort worked with Beatfreaks and Boghdan on how the Cohort work together
- Cohort heard from each of the 15 about the different skills they bring onto the Programme and where they think they want to develop
- Cohort heard from three different leaders about their experiences in cohorts and they gave advice/support and this was carried out in a pre-recorded video format, dispersed throughout the day and in SLACK channels.

'KNOWING MYSELF' PANEL

- One of the Cohort members facilitated this session alongside Richard of People Make it Work
- Cohort heard from 9 different speakers across two sessions:
 - Session 1: Suzanne Alleyne; Judith Knight; Della Hill; Hannah Azeib Poll & Caroline Murphy
 - Session 2: Alan Lane, Anisa Morridadi, Sandeep Mahal & Heather Morison
- All speakers answered the three questions:
 - What have I learned about 'leadership'?
 - How do I maintain my authenticity, confidence and momentum?
 - What leadership characteristics do I most admire in others?

'KNOWING MYSELF' WORKSHOPS

- Another of the Cohort members facilitated this session alongside Richard of People Make it Work
- Cohort heard from a coach, Dan Simmons, who introduced the Learning Journey Quest and shared his story into leadership
- Another member of the Cohort gave a presentation on understanding the value and impact of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- Brad Carlin from TRG presented on "Strength Finder" and using it on the Programme
- Victoria Barker came to the Cohort and showed and discussed the work that has been done so far on Monitoring and Evaluation of the Programme

'KNOWING MY CITY' PANEL

- Another Cohort member co-chaired the session involving the Cohort hearing from three City of Culture Trust colleagues
- Chenine Bhatena spoke to the Cohort about how knowledge of the city affects how she plays her role as a Creative Director
- Cohort heard from Mark Scott about our Cultural Place Profiler and how the Cohort can use this data in their work and the value of data in how we understand the city
- Laura McMillan gave insight to the Cohort on her role as the first Trust employee and how knowledge of the city shapes her work but also how audience insight is crucial to how the City of Culture can become a success
- Cohort also hear from various Cohort members on their view on data, insights and their desire to create change in the city.

Example content and pedagogy within the Foundation Strands

4.3 Communicating the co-creation model

The planned co-creation approach was incorporated into the Programme awareness raising and recruitment activities¹¹. This was in recognition that it was likely to be a new and unfamiliar approach to potential participants, and would need significant underpinning work:

“So the first development day, it took going through the process for them to understand, and when they start fully it will change their understanding again, because they will get a deeper understanding of what it is that we mean.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

4.4 Steering Group reflections on the co-creation approach

The risks and resources required to facilitate this level of innovative approach were clear to the Programme team from the beginning. Steering Group members flagged the expected challenges and potential of the approach in interview and in Steering Group meetings, including that the development of the process entailed a period of uncertainty as far as planning and schedules were concerned:

“What’s most exciting in terms of the journey I hope they will go on is that it will be led by them, their needs and wants. I don’t think I have ever been on a journey like that. The opportunity to reflect on what they want and need will be incredibly empowering – and these are skills needed as a leader. Designing it themselves will be super exciting. What I would love to see is them coming out of it with a sense of purpose and hopefully going directly into projects and work – I would want to understand how the programme will deal with those last few months where they leave the course and transition to leadership positions.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“Within that co-production process there is a challenge for the whole Steering Group and for People Make It Work in particular, in the sense that they are the immediate custodians or enablers of the group, to enable people to know what they don’t know.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“We brought together a cohort which is really representative of the city and therefore they’ll have different needs, and making sure that we address those individual needs, but also trust them enough as serious individuals that they can create their own pathway. So part of our job is to facilitate those who need to be put on a journey, and for the other ones it is about spotting where we can add value to those who’ve already got a clear pathway. So the challenge is making sure that it’s not an homogenous leadership programme that we develop.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“Going forward there is a lot of risk in terms of everything – it’s new, it’s innovative. The notion of co-creation and what that means about truly giving ownership of the development programme at the same time as quality standards and funders’ demands – could be a tense process, and probably needs to be. Could be stressed to a point where it is difficult. That has the potential to go

¹¹ Co-creation elements were included also in initial evaluation activity. Evaluators attended a cohort session in the Knowing Myself strand to present an outline of evaluation, the project evaluation requirements, and to seek feedback on key methods proposed and potential diagnostic questions.

wrong but is mitigated against by the team doing the work. An empathetic approach is key.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

4.5 Cohort reflections on the co-creation approach

The cohort had been provided with insight to, and a taster of, co-creation as a delivery approach. Nevertheless, whilst showing recognition of the legitimacy and value of the approach, a majority of cohort members articulated frustration at the nature and pace of ‘starting the programme’:

“I feel that we could have gauged where the leaders are and their needs and met each leader where they are, and somehow managed that – it felt like we are starting somewhere else and discussing a lot, whereas we are all at different stages. I don’t know what the programme was going to be but even with the remote working I think we could have done more.” (Cohort member reflective interview, February 2021)

“I love co-design, it’s what I’m used to, yeah, I love it. But some – other people have found it hard. You know, that iteration and coming backwards and forwards – so I know that other people have found it hard. So, for a while it did feel like – ‘oh gosh, can’t, you know, we just need to get on with this’ and there was just, like people kept throwing barriers in or not getting or not understanding it – not that they didn’t understand it, they just didn’t get the process, you know, that co-design process. So, I found that kind of challenging. But we’re all on our own journeys aren’t we, so. You’ve got to be mindful where other people are.” (Cohort member reflective interview, February 2021)

Linking back to the initial leadership diagnostic results, these gave a sense of a quite varied range of individual starting points within the cohort from which the co-creation model had to build. It must also be recognised that programme commencement, cohort building and momentum was not helped by the fully virtual delivery model that was forced upon the programme in its early months due to the pandemic.

4.6 Reflections on a co-creation approach to curriculum development

A number of learning points can be identified from the experience of the co-creation approach:

- That within a learning group of considerable diversity, co-creation has been enacted and has supported learning and group identity
- The need to educate applicants on the ‘co-creation process’ itself (because many in the cohort struggled with it initially)
- The need for stronger identification of ‘where everyone is at’ to begin with (to support structure and sense of initial development)
- Co-creation is a challenging curve for deliverers (it might not work, cohort itself unsure of needs, trusting cohort to self-create – ‘letting go’, funder demands, delivery expertise).

5. City of Culture Transforming Leadership: conclusions, considerations and next steps

5.1 Conclusions

The City of Culture Leadership Programme was at recruitment stage when the first lockdown of the pandemic took place (March 2020). Managed by the City of Culture Trust, and part of the broader programme for and expected outcomes of, UK Coventry City of Culture 2021, the programme continued with its schedule. It moved fully on-line and extended its activity as part of a broader moment of support activities and pledges offered to the city, its communities and cultural providers by the Trust¹².

Returning to the aims and objectives of CoCLP it can be seen, at this interim point of evaluation, that the Programme:

- **has achieved – and arguably gone beyond – its recruitment targets.** A full cohort of 15 participants has been achieved, targeting unequal access to cultural management and leadership opportunities and reflective of diversity and its range within the city of Coventry. The extension has seen identification of and engagement with a larger leadership pool of similar characteristics – the 81 Allies.
- **is progressing an inclusive approach to cultural leadership development, including learning.** Designed to support inclusivity, the recruitment approach engaged successfully with emergent leaders and change makers who are reflective of the city, under-represented within cultural leadership, and who have been enabled to participate in the programme through removal of barriers to participation (the Cohort of 15). Furthermore, the success of this inclusive engagement process delivered a developmental opportunity, micro-grant funding and network membership for a similar and much larger potential leadership group (the 81 Allies).
- **has progressed bringing forward established, independent, and emerging leaders from Coventry’s Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic¹³ communities.** Overall, both the chosen cohort and the Allies group to a large extent reflect diverse ethnicities within the city.

5.2 Considerations

Following this evaluation of the initial stages of the CoCLP we would put forward the following considerations:

- **The challenge to consolidate leadership development for all of the cohort.** This entails:
 - Successful engagement with and completion of the full programme by all of the cohort. Has the financial, personal, and learning support offered overcome all the barriers being experienced?

¹² For comparison, Arts Council England (2021) *Transforming Leadership Fund End of Year 1 Programme Evaluation Report*; February, BOP Consulting/A New Direction reported that virtually all of the other ACE Transforming Leadership programmes saw a pause or substantial delay in their activities

¹³ This is the term used in initial programme bid, scoping and recruitment material, and does not necessarily reflect the current language preferences of the participants, programme team or Trust.

- Across different leadership characteristics and dimensions, individual diagnostic scores varied considerably. These individual differences are likely to need consideration to ensure individual as we all as cohort progression
- **Focus on maximising the impact of the programme on the city, its communities, and its cultural leadership.** A range of channels offer potential for further development as part of delivery of the programme's aims:
 - The continued development of the individual 'projects' of each cohort member identified at the recruitment stage
 - Seeking to embed the cohort into 'leadership activities and roles' in the city to enable them to demonstrate leadership and achieve sustained impact, including through opportunities generated by the City of Culture
 - Consideration of demand-side barriers to 'inclusive' cultural leadership within the city:
 - Are city organisations recognising the opportunities and value of the 'new leadership supply' to support expertise, capacity and capability?
 - Are city organisations aware of and responding to the demonstration effect of CoCLP through more inclusive engagement and recruitment practices?
 - Consideration of the potential to generate new cultural infrastructures (and their leadership) within the city, including through cohort projects
 - The potential for using CoCLP learning and the demonstration effect to consolidate and expand inclusive pipelines
 - Further harnessing of the potential of the 81 Allies as a newly-identified pool of emergent cultural leaders in the city.

5.3 Next steps

The evidence base and key messages of this Initial Phase Report were presented to and discussed by the CoCLP Steering Group in July 2021, to inform further programme planning.

Next steps for the evaluation were to undertake a further diagnostic and interview round with the cohort as they entered the final six months of the programme.

5.4 Postscript

One unexpected aspect of the programme has been its impact on the thinking of the CoCLP Steering Group itself, representing a range of leaders and organisations in the cultural and creative sphere.

It is the case also that the programme has occurred within a period of dramatic social challenge including the pandemic, Black Lives Matter, gender-based violence and the Climate Crisis. Reflective comments in interviews included, for example:

“I think – around inclusion... around access and inclusion, particularly around disability and learning disability I feel like I have learned a lot about what I need to do as a leader to be truly inclusive and how my preferences aren’t in that conversation at all.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“I think by design it was about recognising that I have power and influence, and I need to use that differently.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“We need different voices in leadership roles in the sector with different lived experience – different ownership of the sector. Probably a different definition of what the sector is, maybe a complete re-evaluation of what we’re there to do, what it’s funded for – unpacking it all and having that debate with people who aren’t currently at the table.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“In Coventry itself I think the issue is that there is a weak cultural infrastructure – after City of Culture – it’s not like Manchester or Bristol where you can physically point to the cultural infrastructure and say ‘that’s where you will get your jobs’. Slightly concerned, but not so concerned, that people will leave the city.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

“I would hope that one of the things we can achieve here really is a case for investment for future leadership programmes – not necessarily in this way, but that we learn enough from it to then devise an appropriate response to what comes next.” (Steering Group member, July 2020)

ANNEX 1: The City of Culture Leadership Programme ‘Story of Change’

| RATIONALE | ACTIVITIES | OUTPUTS | OUTCOMES | IMPACTS |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <p>To enhance the diversity of leadership in Coventry’s cultural and creative sector to reflect the city’s demographics</p> <p>To develop great, skilled cultural leaders embedded in the city of Coventry</p> <p>To inspire social change through cultural leadership</p> | <p>To be confirmed on finalisation of CoCLP Workplan, will comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement and Cohort Recruitment - Leadership Journeys – differentiated between core cohort and others engaged - Learning resources - Sector development and legacy | <p>A cohort of 15 diverse cultural leaders</p> <p>A set of arts and culture inspired social change projects</p> <p>A Learning Hub and Learning Resources</p> <p>A Mentor Programme</p> <p>Sector placement opportunities</p> <p>New qualifications and accreditations</p> <p>International engagement</p> <p>Underpinned by a cocreation approach</p> | <p>FOR INDIVIDUALS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants self-identify as city-based leaders - Executive skills for leadership - Individual knowledge and practice of leadership models - Members of social peer networks - Ability/confidence to navigate career progress - Skills/understanding to deliver projects <p>FOR ORGANISATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural leadership and programming reflects and represents the citizens of the city - More agile and confident leadership for organisations - Better networked to facilitate collaboration - Expansion of capacity/capability to fill gaps and opportunities <p>FOR ARTS/CULTURE SECTOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence on benefits of partnership/place-based cohort learning - Improved understanding of importance/ value of diversity in leadership - Attracts strongest candidates from broad range of backgrounds - Coventry recognised as a pioneering model of culture-led inclusive growth - Co-ordinated cultural sector capacity and infrastructure is building a resilient and sustainable sector (CoC) - Increased understanding, accessibility and provision of career routes in the sector | <p>Coventry citizens positively influence and shape the city they want to live in (CoC)</p> <p>Leadership and workforce of arts and culture sector reflects the diversity of the country (ACE)</p> <p>The workforce of arts, museums and libraries is appropriately skilled (ACE)</p> |
| <p>Expand evidence base on impact of leadership development interventions on individuals, orgs and cultural/ creative sector</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Logic model/ Evaluation Framework - Tracking Leadership Journeys: cohort (intensive); others ‘touched’ - City/Sector impacts - Learning | <p>Evaluation Plan and Reports</p> <p>Briefing Notes</p> <p>Feedback/ Learning Workshops</p> <p>Contribution to ACE Programme Evaluation</p> | <p>Stronger evidence base on, and learning for, the impact of leadership development in the cultural and creative sector</p> | <p>Strong evidence base through evaluation of interventions (ACE)</p> |

ANNEX 2: The City of Culture Leadership Programme Steering Group

- Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive, City of Culture Trust (Chair)
 - David Brownlee, Managing Director, Purple Seven
 - Amy Clamp, General Manager, Beatfreaks
 - Doreen Foster, Director, Warwick Arts Centre
 - Ruth Richardson, Head of Team Development, City of Culture Trust
 - Richard Tomlins, Associate Head of School – Enterprise and Innovation, Coventry University
 - Richard Watts, Chief Executive Officer, People Make It Work
-
- Nick Henry, Professor of Economic Geography, Coventry University: Lead Evaluator
 - Tam Kaur Gulati, Leadership Programme Coordinator, City of Culture Trust

ANNEX 3: The City of Culture Leadership Programme Taster Sessions

Confirmed Taster Session programme:

Mon 17 Feb

4pm Set Up

5pm Speaker Arrival

5.45pm: Attendees arrival – refreshments served

6pm: Welcome & Provocation – Doreen Foster, Warwick Arts Centre

6.10pm: Icebreaker – People make it work

6.30pm: City of Culture Trust team – find out about City of Culture and the opportunity

6.40pm: Mel Smith, Grapevine

6.50pm Beatfreaks Poet – Katie Walters

6.55pm: Break – self-service food served

7.15pm: Breakout session with Coventry University Social Enterprise (CUSE)

8.45pm: Questions & Info on How to Apply

9pm: Finish / pack down

Wed 19 Feb

12noon Set Up

1pm Speaker Arrival

1.45pm: Attendees arrival – refreshments served

2pm: Welcome & Provocation – Chenine Bhatena, Coventry 2021

2.10pm: Icebreaker – People make it work

2.30pm: City of Culture Trust team – find out about City of Culture and the opportunity

2.40pm: Guest speaker – Christabell Amoakoh, The Highlife Centre

2.50pm: Beatfreaks Poet – Lanair Aderemi

2.55pm: Break – Cake / Fruit / snacks

3.15pm: Breakout session with Beatfreaks

4.45pm: Questions & Info on How to Apply

5pm: Finish / pack down

Sat 22 Feb

12noon Set Up

1pm Speaker Arrival

1.45pm: Attendees arrival – refreshments served

2pm: Welcome – Chenine Bhatena, Coventry 2021 & Doreen Foster, Warwick Arts Centre

2.10pm: Icebreaker – People make it work

2.30pm: City of Culture Trust Team – find out about City of Culture and the opportunity

2.40pm: Guest speaker - TBC

2.50pm Beatfreaks Poet – Lauren Sheerman

2.55pm: Break – Cake / Fruit / snacks

3.15pm: Breakout sessions with Doreen Foster and Chenine Bhatena

4.45pm: Questions & Info on How to Apply

5pm: Finish / pack down