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A collage of four images showing Warwick University Police officers in various settings. The top-left image shows a colorful, curved architectural structure with a rainbow-like pattern. The top-right image shows two officers in high-visibility vests, one holding a radio. The bottom-left image shows two officers in white jackets, one holding a radio. The bottom-right image shows a large red sculpture of a face. The collage is overlaid with a network of thin, white, curved lines.



WARWICK  
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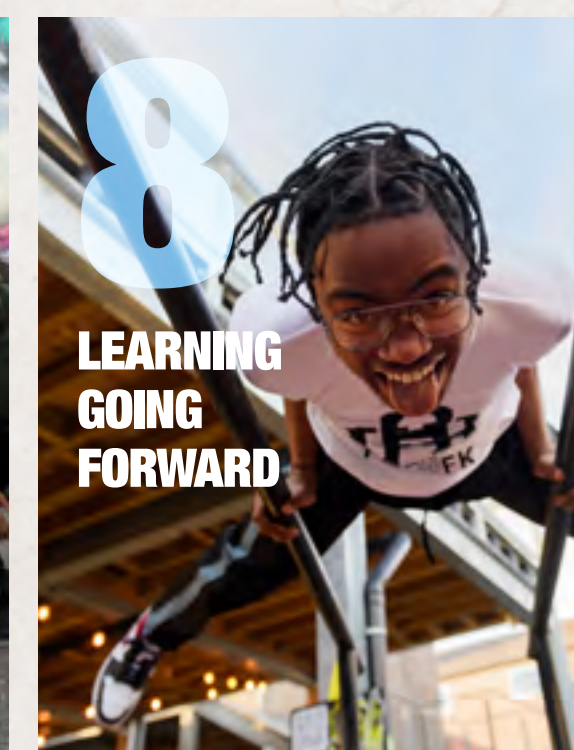
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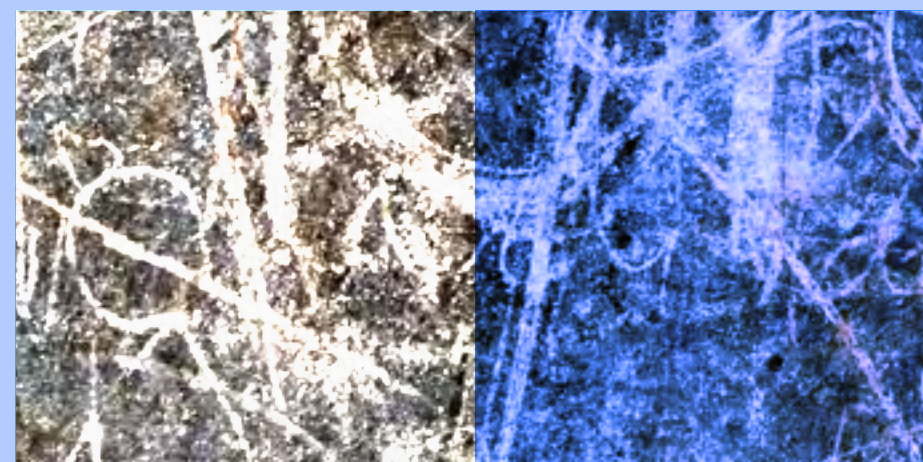
## FOREWORDS

**Mike O'Hara: Assistant Chief Constable, West Midlands Police**

I am delighted to introduce this research report produced by the Centre for Operational Police Research at the University of Warwick. The researchers conducted more than a hundred interviews and focus groups to produce this independent evaluation of our policing approach for Coventry City of Culture. This document details their research and sets out their findings on the achievements, impacts, benefits and challenges of the West Midlands Police/Coventry City of Culture Trust Partnership.

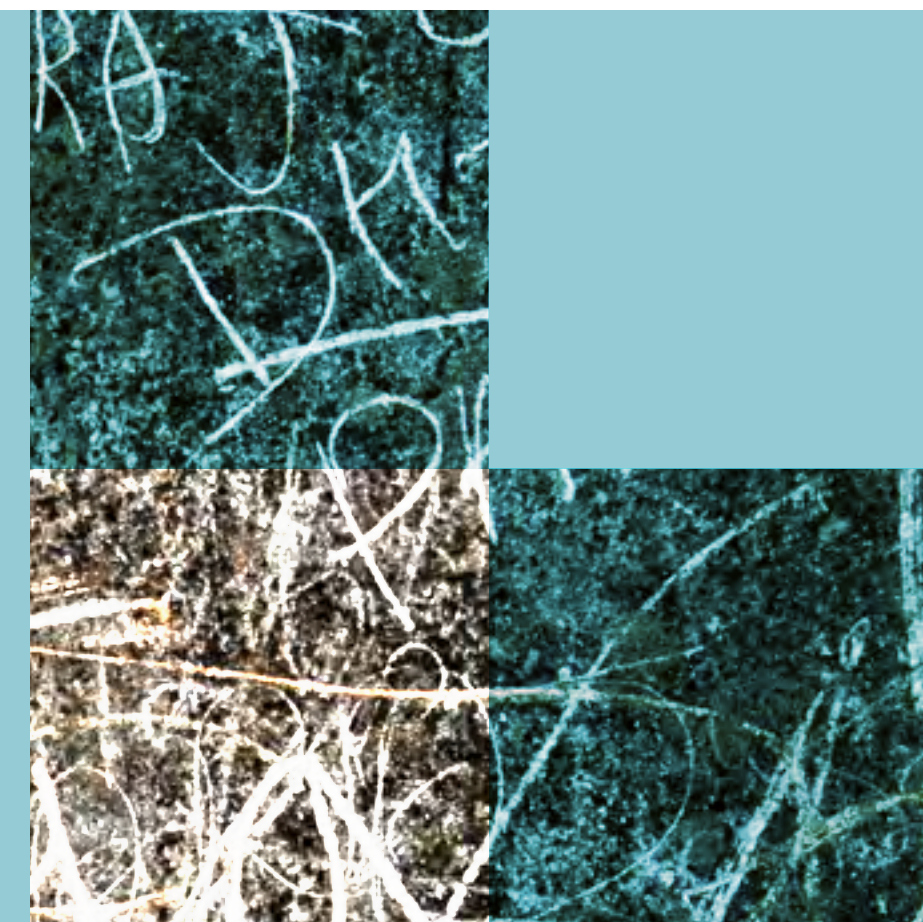
Utilising arts and culture as a problem-solving approach in addressing both policing and social improvement priorities is innovative and novel, and a police force partnering in a cultural mega-event is unprecedented. As such, it is vital that we understand the impacts for the police, for the delivery of Coventry City of Culture, and for the communities we serve. Therefore, **this research is valuable in helping us to understand what was achieved through this partnership and what recommendations there are going forward – for us and for other police forces, as well as for potential partners and community groups.**

We have already started to implement some changes with a view to normalising the use of arts and culture as a tool in policing practice. We are, for instance, rolling out new in-house training on engagement through arts and culture to all Neighbourhood Policing Units in the West Midlands, and building engagement training into our Student Officer curriculum. The findings from this research report will help to inform our work and approach further, and will influence the ways in which we build on our experience to continuously improve our service to the public. Both our successes and our challenges can be of use to decision and strategy makers in and outside the police, by expanding our understanding of effective approaches to police-community engagement. We look forward to sharing the report both internally across the West Midlands force, and with other police forces nationally.

**Martin Sutherland: Chief Executive, Coventry City of Culture Trust**

Coventry City of Culture Trust made the decision in 2019 to embark on an innovative and unprecedented partnership with West Midlands Police. There was no blueprint for this but together we crafted a unique relationship through which both the Coventry City of Culture Trust and West Midlands Police could support one another in realising some of our key objectives, helping Coventry's culture to contribute to social and economic prosperity in the city and the region.

We know that participation in arts and culture initiatives can have a transformational impact, increasing mental wellbeing and civic pride, affecting social determinants of health, and changing perceptions. And we have seen how closely policing priorities can overlap and dovetail with those of the arts and culture industry – we aligned in our focus on fostering stronger communities, on increasing public safety, and on engaging with vulnerability, loneliness, and mental ill health.



**This research report offers us a powerful insight into the ways in which a police force and a City of Culture can collaborate, supporting one another in achieving our objectives for the city and the wider region.** Underpinned by a strong evidence base, the report gives us an important evaluation of the benefits and the challenges of our partnership with WMP. It also offers key recommendations both for future Cities of Culture, and for other arts and culture organisations looking to engage with a police force going forward. **This will help to inform our legacy work, and will be an important resource for future collaborations between police forces and the arts and culture industry.**



# AUTHORS



**Professor Jacqueline S. Hodgson** is co-director of the Centre for Operational Police Research and Professor of Law in the School of Law at the University of Warwick, where she is also Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. Her work focuses on how the criminal justice process operates in practice in the UK and Europe.

[Centre for Operational Police Research](#)



**Dr Rachel Lewis** is a Research Fellow in the School of Law and a member of the Centre for Operational Research at the University of Warwick. She works at the intersections between Law, Sociology, and Applied Linguistics, and is currently researching policing and the arts.

To learn more about related work and events stemming from this project, go to [Building Trust in Policing Through Collaboration](#)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Martin Sutherland (Chief Executive, Coventry City of Culture Trust) and Mike O’Hara (Assistant Chief Constable, West Midlands Police) for their enthusiastic engagement with the research, and together with the Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Account, for funding this project.

During the course of the research, Helen Kirkman and Cat Stock from West Midlands Police, together with Mark Scott and Josie Bamford from the City of Culture Trust, provided invaluable assistance, advice and a wealth of helpful additional information. We are also indebted to Chenine Bhathena (Coventry City of Culture Trust), Dr Anastasia Chamberlen (University of Warwick), and Laura Caulfield (University of Wolverhampton) for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of the report.

Perhaps most importantly, we would like to thank those who so generously gave their time and insights by speaking to us in interviews and focus groups. We cannot name them here as they wished to remain anonymous, but they include: community organisations; independent artists and creative practitioners; members of the Coventry public; producers and production team members and those in senior leadership positions at the Coventry City of Culture Trust; and officers and staff at West Midlands Police. We are grateful for the range of perspectives all participants brought to the research and to our understanding of the nature, scope, and impact of Coventry City of Culture Trust’s partnership with West Midlands Police.

February 2023

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**CEPWEPS:** a branch of the police team embedded within the City of Culture Trust, responsible for Community Engagement, Partnership Working, Evaluation, and Problem Solving

**CROD:** a branch of the police team embedded within the City of Culture Trust, responsible for Coordination, Readiness, and Operational Delivery

**FET:** the Force Executive Team at West Midlands Police

**HSSREC:** the University of Warwick Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

**Producers:** those at the Trust responsible for planning, developing, and commissioning creative projects and outputs

**Production:** those at the Trust responsible for overseeing operational delivery planning

**SAG:** the Safety Advisory Group, responsible for supporting and advising organisers on the safety of events

**The Trust:** the Coventry City of Culture Trust

**WMP:** West Midlands Police

**WMPCC:** the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

**WMPCCO:** the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office

## DISCLAIMER

The views represented in this research are those of individual members of West Midlands Police, the City of Culture Trust, and other organisations in Coventry, rather than those of the institutions as a whole.



## BACKGROUND

In 2019, West Midlands Police (WMP) embarked on a unique partnership with the Coventry City of Culture Trust (the Trust) in the delivery of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021.

This partnership in a cultural mega-event was unprecedented and its architects had no clear blueprint on which to build. It involved both a financial investment and also a clear commitment to close partnership-working in the form of a six-person police team embedded within the Trust.

The partnership gave the Trust budgetary clarity and offered them the opportunity to embed closely with a key organisation in the city; important both in terms of gaining knowledge and support from WMP, and also in embedding cultural production within partner organisations.

From the WMP side, the partnership afforded WMP an opportunity to engage with strategic policing priorities, both in terms of ensuring safety and security throughout the City of Culture year but also in finding ways to build relationships with communities in the city through arts-based engagement.

In particular, the partnership offered WMP an opportunity to explore the possibilities offered by arts and culture projects for building trust with members of the public, particularly more marginalised, vulnerable or seldom heard communities.

WMP see trust building through positive community engagement as crucial to reducing crime and increasing public safety. And in the context of the current ‘crisis of public confidence’<sup>2</sup> in policing and

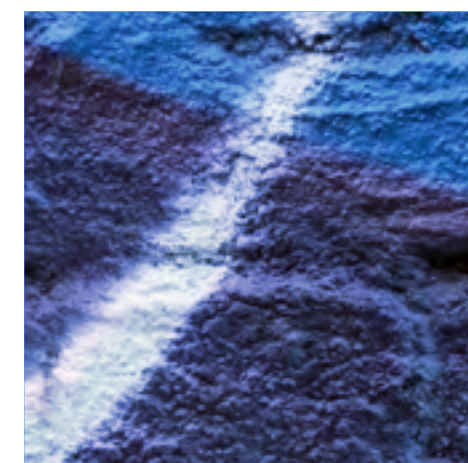


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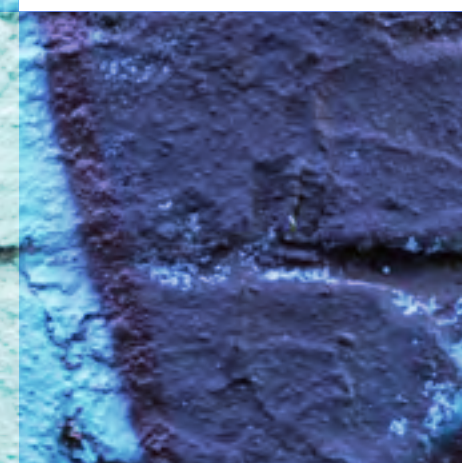


Photo Credit: West Midlands Police

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

police institutions, increasing public trust and confidence in the police is seen as particularly important.

## THE STUDY

Based on over 100 interviews, this evaluative report presents findings from a 15-month study to explore the benefits and challenges afforded by the WMP-Trust partnership, and to consider the broader implications of police-community engagement through arts and culture.

*[Arts and culture] strip away the uniform, they strip away any preconceptions of people and job roles and authorities. And it puts you on a [...] human level*<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> WMP15, January 2022.

<sup>2</sup> The Police Foundation, 2022.



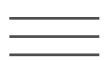


Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography

KEY FINDINGS

Our research found that the partnership offered notable benefits to both WMP and the Trust, and provided opportunities to other organisations in the city.

In particular:

- It was beneficial in managing the safety and security of City of Culture events, alleviating some of the complexities involved in events management, and allowing WMP to be involved in safety conversations from the earliest stages of initiatives.
- It helped both the Trust and WMP to target initiatives in areas of higher need in the city, and to begin to build connections with seldom-heard communities – a key objective for both institutions.
- It allowed WMP to develop new creative partnerships with 3rd sector organisations and arts practitioners, and to strengthen existing relationships.

- It offered WMP the opportunity to explore ways of partnering with arts and culture organisations which they can now build on going forward. WMP are, for instance, embedding the learning from the partnership in their training practices for student officers and for more established personnel.
- It was well-received by many community organisations and members of the public, who spoke positively about the willingness shown by WMP to take part in arts and culture initiatives with seldom-heard or marginalised communities.
- It went some way to building understanding and empathy between those taking part in WMP-Trust initiatives – some spoke about experiencing a sense of equity and mutual support; and for many, arts and culture initiatives offered police and community participants an opportunity to gain an understanding of one another's experiences and perspectives.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Alongside these benefits, there were complexities and challenges for WMP and the Trust to manage, both in terms of navigating partnership-working between a police force and an arts and culture organisation, and also in terms of the notable distrust and suspicion felt by some artists, community organisations and members of the public towards the police as a force.

With this in mind, we set out key learning from the research in the form of recommendations for police forces, community organisations, and arts and creative practitioners looking to embark on similar partnerships.



These are relevant both to police engagement with future Cities of Culture, and to police engagement through the arts more broadly.

A. Institutional culture change

Community organisations, artists, and members of the public expressed a willingness to engage with the police but wanted to see visible cultural change beyond the individual officers involved in an initiative. Buy-in for broader institutional change was evident from many WMP participants in this study, but this was not universal.

B. Strong, long-term relationships

Community organisations play a key role in facilitating and enabling police-public engagement, acting as mediators between police and public, and between police and artists/creative practitioners. In general, there was a willingness from organisations to work with the police, but a widespread desire for this engagement to be sustained and long-term. This requires targeted, lasting funding.

C. Shared objectives

Community organisations, artists, and members of the public sometimes questioned police objectives during engagement activities. Our research points to a particularly complex tension between the engagement and enforcement roles of the police, but suggests that ensuring transparency and clarity on police aims and intentions from the outset of an initiative can go some way to building trust and alleviating anxiety.

D. Ethical commitments

Complications arose on occasions where one party was seen as upholding different ethical standards towards participants in a project. Matters around confidentiality and anonymity should be considered, discussed, and clarified (where possible) at the outset of an initiative.

E. Remit of police influence

A key challenge for Trust staff revolved around the degree to which WMP could/ should influence the events planning process. Agreeing the extent and boundaries of police influence at the start of a partnership – both within and beyond a City of Culture – would go some way to alleviating these concerns.

Ensuring a clear induction process for all participants in a collaboration would also help to ensure clarity for all parties.

F. Police practice and police presence

There can be a tension when police are seen to enact law enforcement practices within a community engagement space – this can make it difficult to build trust and a sense of security amongst participants in an initiative. There may also be occasions where direct police involvement in an initiative is inappropriate, and instead should be mediated fully via a third party.

G. Respecting organisational difference

The success of the WMP-Trust partnership was partly attributable to the significant time and effort individuals from both institutions took to learn and understand the differing boundaries and practices of one another’s organisations. Recognising and showing an openness to learning from these different bodies of knowledge/ practice can go some way to alleviating distrust, managing concerns, and ensuring equitable collaboration. This requires good lines of communication and sustained engagement.



Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography



Photo Credit: Trevor Price – TV Trev Photography

# INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the then-Coventry Commander at West Midlands Police (WMP) and the Chief Executive of the Coventry City of Culture Trust (the Trust) constructed an innovative partnership between the two organisations for the delivery of Coventry UK City of Culture year 2021/22. This partnership was unprecedented – the police have previously integrated with organisations in the delivery of sporting mega-events, e.g. the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, but a police force has never collaborated so closely in a cultural mega-event.

The partnership involved a financial investment from the Trust to WMP, and the construction of a six-person police team to be embedded within the Trust. This embedded police team worked closely with both Trust producers and with Trust production teams, sharing advice and support from the planning phase of events through to their delivery, and also collaborating to co-design creative initiatives.

For the Trust, the overall aim of the partnership was twofold: firstly, to ensure budgetary and resource clarity in terms of the policing of the Coventry City of Culture; and secondly, to embed with a partner who would help the Trust to deliver their key objectives in areas such

as health and wellbeing, education, and public safety. As part of the Trust’s Theory of Change model, a key long-term impact was for Coventry’s culture to contribute to the social and economic prosperity of the city and the region. It was hoped that the partnership would help to support this focus, embedding cultural engagement, activity, and capacity in the city.

For WMP, in addition to ensuring the safety and security of the people attending the City of Culture, the partnership was designed as a unique opportunity to explore ways of using arts and culture to connect with communities in the city.<sup>3</sup> This involved working closely with the three Trust producing teams – Caring City, Collaborative City, and Dynamic City – to co-design initiatives which engaged both with those involved or at-risk of involvement in criminal activity, and also with those described as socially excluded, vulnerable, and/or seldom heard. This included people with experience of homelessness, and young people at-risk of school withdrawal or exclusion.

For WMP, their two core objectives are interlinked in the sense that building trust with communities, particularly those members of the public who have low

levels of confidence in police institutions, is viewed as a crucial starting point in the journey to reducing crime and increasing public safety. This trust building is seen as particularly important in the context of a widespread ‘crisis of public confidence’<sup>4</sup> in police institutions following widely publicised accounts of police brutality and malpractice.<sup>5</sup> As one police participant (WMP13)<sup>6</sup> in this research noted: “the scrutiny of policing is at an all-time high, legitimacy is at an all-time low.” In this way, Coventry City of Culture offered WMP a unique opportunity to explore different ways of building trust and confidence with communities in the city.

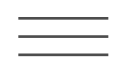
<sup>3</sup> Initially, this was framed as an opportunity to explore how arts and culture could be utilised to address policing priorities, but this evolved more specifically into understanding how arts and culture could be used to connect with communities and ultimately to try to reduce crime and make Coventry safer.

<sup>4</sup> The Police Foundation, March 2022, p5.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the killing in the US of George Floyd among others, and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement; and in the UK, the murder of Sarah Everard and the strip-searching of predominantly young, Black teenagers, amongst other practices.

<sup>6</sup> See section 1B for explanation of coding of interviewees and focus group respondents.





Between May 2021 and December 2022, we conducted a qualitative study to examine the WMP-Trust partnership, with fieldwork interviews and focus groups taking place between September 2021 and September 2022.

The central focus of the research considers the benefits and challenges offered by the partnership model, and explores the broader potential beyond the Coventry City of Culture for police-partnerships around arts and culture to have a positive impact on police-community relations, and to help build public trust and confidence in policing, particularly among vulnerable people and those at-risk of exploitation.

This Report presents the background to and findings from our research, and is structured as follows.

1. RESEARCH METHODS
2. PARTNERSHIP MODEL
3. TRUST-WMP CREATIVE PROJECTS
4. RESEARCH AND POLICY EVIDENCE
5. PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
6. ARTS-LED POLICE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
7. CHANGE IS HAPPENING
8. LEARNING GOING FORWARD
9. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography



# INTRODUCTION





# RESEARCH METHODS





# RESEARCH METHODS

## A. Research questions

The central objective of this research was to understand the potential benefits and challenges of WMP partnering with the Trust in the delivery of a cultural mega-event; and to examine the broader potential afforded by arts and culture as a medium through which to build public trust and confidence in the police, and to strengthen police-public relationships.

This involved an exploration of the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent did the model of partnership with the Trust enable WMP to contribute to the design and delivery of Coventry City of Culture 2021 in order to make positive impacts in the city?
- 2) What were the benefits to WMP and to the Trust in investing in a partnership in the delivery of a cultural mega-event?

- 3) (How) did the WMP-Trust partnership enable WMP to build relationships with members of the public, in particular young people, seldom heard communities, and those in areas of multiple deprivation?

## B. Data set

Over 100 interviews were conducted with individuals from a wide variety of organisations.

This included:

- 5 independent artists/creatives/consultants
- 13 City of Culture Trust employees
- 9 Coventry City Council employees
- 19 representatives from a range of arts, culture, and other 3rd sector organisations
- 23 police officers and police staff from WMP and West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office (WMPCCO)

Three members of WMP, one member of WMPCCO, three Trust personnel, and one member of the City Council were interviewed on two or more occasions in order to capture changes in perspectives over a period of time.

The data set also includes four focus groups and three 1:1 interviews with 20 members of the public in total, including:

- 14 young people
- 6 people with experience of homelessness

The majority of the 1:1 interviews and half the focus groups were conducted over Microsoft Teams, with the remaining focus groups and interviews conducted in person in settings proposed by the participants, for instance in schools and community spaces.<sup>9</sup>

We also had informal conversations with a further 10 members of the public encountered whilst conducting other interviews or attending City of Culture events.

These 10 individuals were prepared to share their perspectives but did not wish to be interviewed formally. Their perspectives provided important contextual detail which we draw on along with the formal interviews in this report.

Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, and topics included:

- interviewees’ perceptions and experiences of the police (and/or those of their family members and friends)
- interviewees’ awareness and/or experiences of WMP-Trust partnership initiatives
- interviewees’ broader perspectives on the idea of police forces using arts and culture as an engagement tool

The research was granted ethical approval by the University of Warwick Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). All participants were given an information sheet and consent form on first contact (Appendices 1 and 2), with the researchers’ contact details provided for any queries or clarifications they may wish to raise. All participants consented to be recorded and for anonymised verbatim quotations to be used in the final report and in related research and publications.

All participants have been anonymised in the final report, with the following code utilised in the report:

<sup>9</sup> Interviews were conducted by Rachel Lewis. Focus groups were conducted either solely by Rachel Lewis or jointly with Jackie Hodgson.

PARTICIPANT CODE	PARTICIPANT KEY
WMP + number	West Midlands Police or West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office
CofC + number	City of Culture Trust producer/production/ senior leadership
Council + number	employee of the Coventry City Council. This includes individuals working in educational settings in the city
Org + number	employee of an organisation in the city. This includes charitable, community, and other 3rd sector organisations
Consultant + number	an individual engaging with WMP or the Trust in a consulting capacity
Artist + number	an independent artist or creative practitioner
YP + number	a young person in a 1:1 interview
FG + number	focus group





Photo Credit: Jamie Gray

### C. Identifying participants

Throughout the course of the project, we held monthly meetings with two representatives from the WMP embedded police team and a member of the City of Culture Trust in order to establish the scope of the research and to ensure clarity on practical aspects of the WMP-Trust partnership. Other members of the City of Culture team were also available to us to provide additional information throughout the project.

The relationships formed with these individuals also enabled us to gain access to research participants from within the two institutions – this would otherwise have been extremely challenging, particularly on the police side. As such, WMP participants were initially identified through a list constructed by members of the embedded police team, with the researchers requesting contact details for as wide a range of participants as possible, to include police officers and staff across the ranks of the police force and from a range of WMP departments. The policing lead then circulated a general email to all potential participants introducing the research and offering the research team’s contact details for those interested in taking part.

The researchers followed this up with introductory emails to each individual on the list.

For Trust participants, these individuals were similarly identified through initial conversations with the Trust, and included representatives from all three producing teams, individuals on the production side, and those in senior leadership positions. Emails were sent by the researchers themselves to those included on the contact list. Both researchers also met with Trust producers at the outset of the project to explain the nature and scope of the research, and to provide an opportunity for questions and discussion. This also helped us as researchers to map out some of the contours of the police-Trust relationship.

Following these early interactions, we used a snowball sampling technique to identify further contacts: in each interview, the researcher asked participants to suggest other potential contacts who may be interested in taking part in the research. Whilst we were aware this meant we were sometimes introduced to participants by other stakeholders in the research, we were careful to ensure we emphasised our position as independent researchers.



In the majority of cases therefore, we made contact with potential participants directly rather than via WMP or Trust contacts. We also utilised our own networks outside the research project to identify other charitable and community organisations operating in the city, and made contact with a number of individuals independently to ensure we accessed as broad a range of participants as possible.



Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography

In terms of members of the public, 19 interviews and all four focus groups took place within organisations who had either taken part in a WMP-Trust initiative, or had had some form of interaction with Trust producers during the Coventry City of Culture. Staff within these institutions put messages out to their service users to advertise the research, and, in all focus groups, at least one member of staff was present as a safeguarding measure. The researchers offered to write letters of reference for all young people taking part in focus groups as this was seen by staff as beneficial to the cohorts. Finally, one interview and several informal interactions took place with individuals accessing an outreach event which had no connection with the WMP-Trust partnership and had been identified independently by the researchers.

#### D. Data analysis

All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded. Informal conversations were not audio-recorded but were written up by the researchers soon after, with as much insight and contextual detail as possible included in the fieldnotes.

We took an inductive approach to the analysis of the data rather than testing the appearance of pre-established theories.

We began by pre-coding (Dörnyei, 2007: 250) – reading through field notes, transcribing the first 15 interviews in full, and noting and discussing preliminary thoughts on this data. We then moved on to the next stage of coding, drawing on Corbin and Strauss’ (2008) approach to the coding process – listening to all the audio recordings in full, pulling out salient features, making comparisons across the data, and noting patterns and themes within and across the data set. From here, we drew out categories, or descriptive groups – for instance, points around trust, or staff turnover – which were mentioned frequently.

At this stage, the researchers complemented the manual, Microsoft Word-based analysis with a more technological approach, inputting all the data into NVivo – a qualitative data analysis software tool. NVivo allowed the researchers to do keyword searches and therefore to identify quickly any comments made on a particular point, for instance ‘artist-in-residence,’ or ‘uniform,’ across the data set. From here, the researchers worked together to construct analytical themes from the descriptive codes, reviewing these across the full data set and alongside the relevant scholarship.



Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography

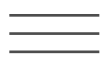




# PARTNERSHIP MODEL







# PARTNERSHIP MODEL

## A. Origins and objectives

### I. Budgetary and resource clarity

The partnership model constructed by WMP and the Trust was unique, with no clear precedent for its architects to follow. A senior officer (WMP2) noted that policing for Coventry’s City of Culture predecessors – e.g. Hull and Derry – had followed more traditional models: Humberside Police, for instance, took opportunities to engage at events but essentially reacted and responded to events as they arose rather than collaborating with events planners on initiatives. This was entirely different from Coventry’s embedded approach in which a policing team partnered closely with the Coventry City of Culture Trust, not only to offer support to the Trust on safety concerns, but actively to “[explore, innovate, and shape the nuance](#)” (WMP2) of the City of Culture year.

There were key differences between Coventry and Hull, both as cities, and as Cities of Culture, which led to this partnership decision.

Firstly, where Coventry is the second city in the West Midlands, Hull is the dominating city in Humberside, and the allocation and direction of resourcing is thus different. Secondly, Hull and Coventry also face differing crime profiles and policing challenges. And finally, where the Hull City of Culture team constructed a fairly clear pre-planned programme of events for their year of culture, the Coventry City of Culture Trust committed to a principle of co-creation with communities at the centre of the construction of events and initiatives.<sup>10</sup> This co-creation approach inevitably led to a more organic and flexible programme, and necessarily meant that there could not be the same level of precision and clarity on the timetable and nature of events at the outset of the City of Culture period (CofC2).

This uncertainty around programme content made it difficult to predict the policing needs of Coventry City of Culture and so the charges WMP may levy

against the Trust. In response, WMP’s then-Coventry Commander, and the Chief Executive and Creative Director of the Coventry City of Culture Trust reached an agreement in early 2018 for a financial investment from the Trust to WMP, and to work in partnership throughout the programme. The model therefore sought to allow the Trust to cap their expenditure, and to ensure some resource certainty for both parties.

<sup>10</sup> There was some inconsistency in terminology in our interviews, with some using the term ‘co-creation’ and others speaking about ‘co-production.’ We take the former to place a particular focus on process, and the latter on end product or output. Some collaborative WMP-Trust initiatives could be described more accurately as co-created and others as co-produced; however we utilise the term ‘co-creation’ throughout the report for simplicity. For further discussion around the principles of co-creation and co-production see eg Kaszynska, Anzel and Rolls (2022).



## II. Engaging with overlapping priorities

Along with this financial clarity, the partnership also sought to support both WMP and the Trust in meeting some of their key priorities. The Trust had constructed a Theory of Change model which posited 15 outcomes and 4 longer-term impacts as key to their programme.

As a senior member of the Trust explained (CofC3), central to this Theory of Change was the importance of embedding the Trust within existing organisations and structures in the city.

Rather than, for instance, attempting to create a new programme to engage with mental health issues, the Trust aimed instead to start from the action plans already in place within third sector organisations, seeking ways to support their plans through a culture lens.

For the Trust then, partnering with WMP offered them close proximity to a key organisation in the city with whom to collaborate to help deliver their Theory of Change – to utilise WMP’s networks and community connections, and to gain advice, support, and local knowledge and understanding from the police.

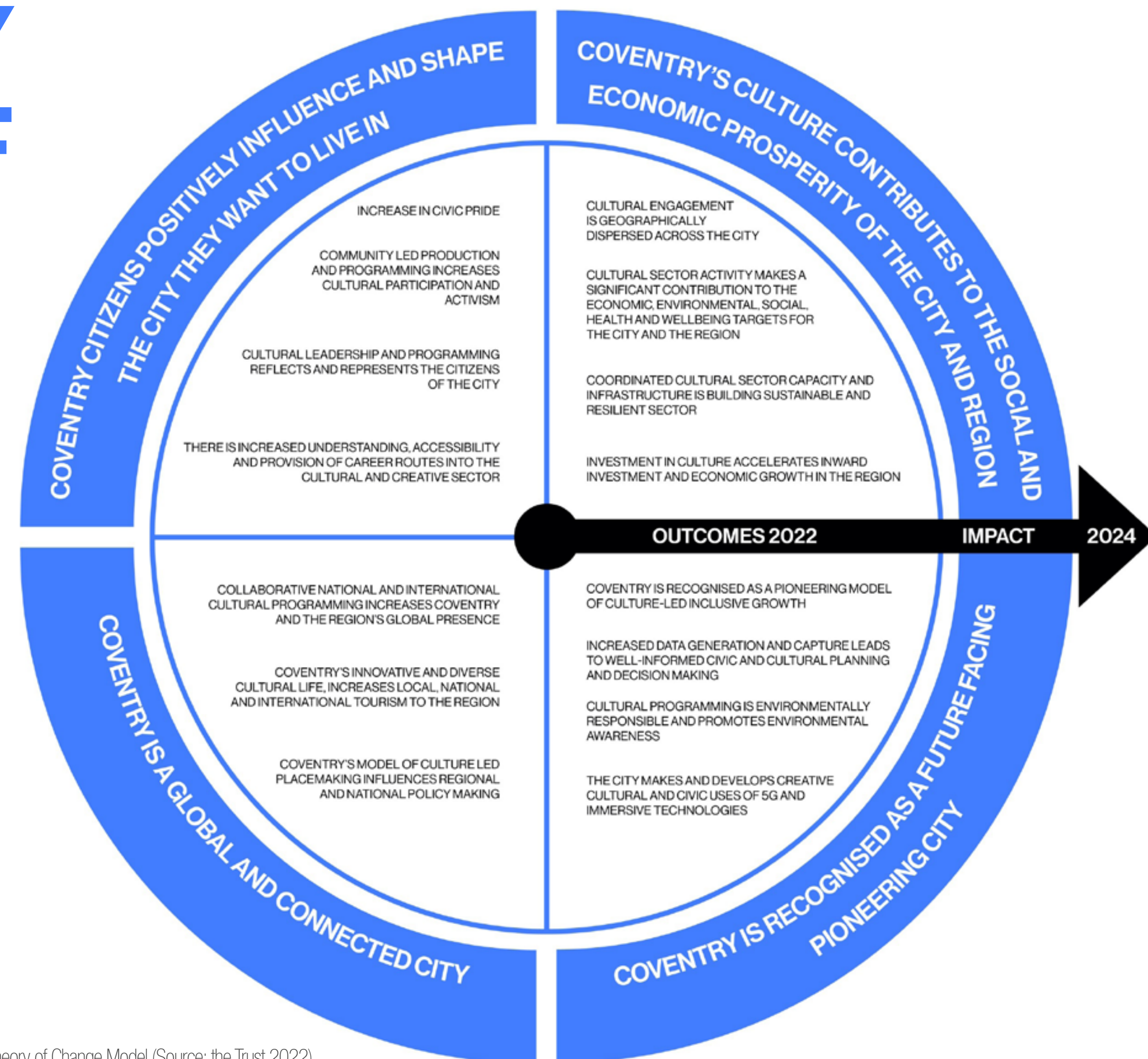
When the partnership was first developed, the Trust’s Theory of Change model did not explicitly include the police, however

# COVENTRY UK CITY OF CULTURE 2021

## WE WILL REIMAGINE THE PLACE OF CULTURE IN A DIVERSE MODERN BRITAIN

there were clear overlaps between the Trust’s priorities and WMP’s policing priorities which meant the partnership could help to support both institutions in meeting their objectives. As one Trust participant in our research explained (CofC12), the Trust’s Theory of Change model was included as one of WMP’s planning documents at the very outset of the partnership, so WMP’s work during the partnership was thus “[very much rooted within the outcomes](#)” (CofC12) articulated in the Trust’s model.

Coventry City of Culture Theory of Change Model (Source: the Trust 2022)





# PRODUCING TEAM

Coventry City of Culture Trust Producing Teams, (Source: the Trust 2022)

**COVERING:**

- YOUTHFUL CITY
- ENVIRONMENT/GREEN – FOUNDED GREEN PARTY, LIVEABLE CITY
- LEADER IN CITY ARCHITECTURE/ PLAYFUL CITY
- CITY OF PIONEERS AND INDUSTRY, PLAYABLE CITY/ CONNECTED CITY/ SMART CITY



**WORKING WITH:**

- LOCAL COMMUNITIES
- FAMILY HUBS
- LOCAL BUSINESSES
- HIGH STREETS AND ESTATES
- HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS
- SCHOOLS
- SUPPORT THE VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME AND ENCOURAGE ACTIVISM

**COVERING:**

- ARTS & MENTAL HEALTH/ LONELINESS, HEALTHY CITY
- ARTS & EXPLOITATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE, SAFER CITY
- ARTS & NEW COMMUNITIES/ ISOLATION, WELCOMING CITY
- ARTS & POVERTY/ HOMELESSNESS, INCLUSIVE CITY

For WMP, there were policing benefits which aligned with the Trust’s Theory of Change model, particularly in the intended outcome for Coventry’s culture to contribute to social and economic prosperity in the city and region. And the specific foci of the Trust’s three producing teams – Caring City, Dynamic City, and Collaborative City – as shown in the image below, also overlapped with some key WMP priorities.

Overlaps and synergies between the two organisations included, for instance: the Trust’s focus on Collaborating with Communities, which aligned with WMP’s aim of reaching communities they may otherwise have difficulty engaging with. The Trust’s focus on Young People at Risk of Exploitation, and their Youthful Cities approach – which aimed to empower and involve young people in their city and communities – aligned with WMP’s endeavour to build better relationships with young people and to find ways to prevent and divert young people from engaging with criminal activity or being subject to exploitation. The Trust and WMP also aligned in their focus on mental health and wellbeing, with WMP seeing mental ill health both as a criminogenic factor, but also as a key concern for victims of crime, and for police officers and staff as well.

As a senior WMP officer explained (WMP2), the concerns of the Caring City strand in particular “[very much aligned to strategic policing challenges around mental health, vulnerability of young people, loneliness, age, vulnerability, asylum, immigration, all of these challenges in society fundamentally driving up vulnerability and demand from a policing perspective.](#)”

As one Trust participant (CofC12) explained, this overlap in priorities between the Trust and the police is evidenced by the fact that, although the police were not initially written into the Trust’s original Theory of Change model, policing targets were added to their revised legacy Theory of Change model, with the outcome – ‘cultural sector activity makes new contribution to the economic environmental etc’ – now including policing and community safety targets.

**III. Embedding a police team: another department within the Trust**

Finally, the partnership enabled WMP to embed a team of police staff/officers within the Trust, thus offering the police a platform and an infrastructure to find ways of engaging with communities through arts and culture. The embedded police team consisted of six staff/officers working full-time over two years.

This included:

- 1 Policing lead
- 1 Project manager
- 1 police staff inspector equivalent and 1 sergeant: Community Engagement, Partnership Working, Evaluation, and Problem Solving (CEPWEPS)
- 1 police staff inspector equivalent and 1 sergeant: Coordination, Readiness, and Operational Delivery (CROD)

The key personnel with whom the embedded police team engaged at the Trust were the producers<sup>11</sup> and the production team.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Producers and curators are responsible for facilitating conversations with communities and making connections with artists, developing/commissioning creative events/activities, ensuring creative programmes deliver against outcomes, overseeing new planning for creative activities, drafting budget, contracts and developing/managing partnerships.

<sup>12</sup> The production team is responsible for overseeing all delivery planning, including safeguarding, health and safety, Front of House, technical support, stewarding, liaising with SAG (safety and planning group including council and blue light services), and liaising with venue partners and local businesses.



While the CEPWEPS officers/staff worked particularly closely with producers, and the CROD officers/staff engaged principally with the production staff, the teams were not siloed. Essentially the embedded police team operated as another department within the Trust, with access to shared workspaces and regular meetings, enabling both formal and informal interactions between the whole police team and all Trust employees across the organisation to take place.

Once the partnership was agreed, a governance structure was set up on the WMP side to ensure that the Force Executive Team were updated monthly on progress, and the partnership was formalised as a documented project within WMP with all the necessary and expected rigour – a project board, programme board (reporting to Force Executive Team/Gold), project manager, monthly feedback into business transformation, and project reports (WMP7).

**B. Breadth and depth of police involvement: the embedded police team and beyond**

Both the Trust and WMP demonstrated a clear commitment to their partnership – evidenced by the financial agreement

and also reflected in the police resourcing made available – both in terms of the reach across the institution, and in the prolonged,intensive engagement of the embedded police team.<sup>13</sup>

Over the course of two years, the embedded team attended weekly Trust meetings (City Teams x 3, Production x 2, Stand Up, Comms), and then further additional project/programme specific meetings for initiatives they were directly involved in. They often worked side-by-side with a producer to develop a concept for an initiative, and then to design and deliver the project/programme. They also sat in on weekly catchup meetings for the three producing teams, which meant they could monitor planned initiatives and advise, shape, or guide these, including on projects they were not directly involved in.

From the police side, this also meant that the embedded team were up-to-date with the most recent evolution of a project or event and could therefore feed this into planning, rather than waiting for formal updates or submissions to review boards. In discussion with us, members of the embedded team estimated that they had instigated or contributed to well over 50 initiatives.

Alongside the involvement of the embedded police team was the broader reach across WMP enabled by the partnership. Indeed, the police involvement in Coventry City of Culture was multi-layered, and included:

- Co-designing and collaborating on initiatives from the earliest stages of conception to delivery
- Co-facilitating/co-delivering Trust-led activities
- Performing/participating in events
- Attending events with the aim of taking opportunities to engage with the communities present
- Being present at events during duty time, but not attending as specific engagement resource

The table here shows this breadth of involvement across WMP, and also points to the degree to which the partnership offered WMP opportunities to engage with and inform the Coventry City of Culture, both visibly – in terms of specific events and projects; and also invisibly – in terms of the informal interactions between the embedded police team and Trust staff.

C. WMP involvement in Coventry City of Culture initiatives<sup>14</sup>




Source: West Midlands Police, 2022

<sup>13</sup> See section 2C. and [section 3](#) detailing police engagement.

<sup>14</sup> DISCLAIMER. The numbers provided here by WMP include some estimates as full shift numbers are not always available. Also, some officers attended multiple events/will have fulfilled multiple functions, e.g., one officer might have done overtime on 6 occasions, been a dedicated engagement officer at 2 events and covered 4 other events during duty time. Therefore, these figures represent shifts/time resource rather than individuals.





# TRUST-WMP CREATIVE PROJECTS





# TRUST-WMP CREATIVE PROJECTS

The following section outlines a number of flagship projects in which WMP played a particularly key role, collaborating with the Trust from conception to delivery.<sup>15</sup>

## A. Mural project: See the Bigger Picture

An Arts Against Homelessness working group was initiated by Caring City producers at the Trust to connect agencies in the city including police officers, members of the council, and people with experience of homelessness. As part of this initiative, the Trust introduced WMP to Woskerki – an international street artist – who

collaborated with a group of individuals, including people with lived experience of homelessness, to determine the themes for a large-scale mural on the side of a police building in the city centre.

The group came together weekly at a multi-agency drop-in centre over several weeks and explored their feelings and experiences around loose prompts e.g. decision-making processes.

Creative activities included photography, film-making, and creative workshopping e.g. collaging.

An artist then utilised these ideas to construct the mural.

Rules around the safety of the space were agreed at the start of the process, and meetings were informal and did

not require regular attendance, although a support worker was always present.

It was the process of discussing the design of the mural which was key, rather than the product itself: in meetings, the group worked through their own experiences, built a sense of understanding with one another, and made decisions collectively. One participant (Org7) described it as “a really nice opportunity for people who are police officers and people who do have lived experience of homelessness to just get into the same space and talk and have a think about what their relationship is.”



<sup>15</sup> See appendix 3 for specific police aims and objectives related to each project



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police





**B. Artist-in-residence:  
Barriers to Bridges**

In this unique initiative, co-funded by the Trust via the Caring City programme and widely reported in the national press, WMP brought in a resident artist, Kay Rufai, to work closely with police officers and young people in the city in order to examine their experiences and to challenge their perceptions of one another.

The artist-in-residence spent time with a wide range of departments in WMP, meeting officers of all ranks including neighbourhood officers, gang units, firearms officers, and offender management teams, and shadowing neighbourhood and response teams. He also worked closely with a group of young people, talking through their experiences with the police and their perceptions of the force. Amongst these participants, he found universal negativity towards the police and an inherent distrust of officers.

In the second stage of his residency, he produced a series of storyboards documenting through photographic portraits and narrative accounts the experiences of the young people with whom he worked, and then took these

to a small group of officers to photograph and video record their responses to these videos and images.

The artistic work he produced through this residency was exhibited at FarGo village in Coventry, and there are many plans to continue disseminating and building on this work going forward.

Describing the themes raised through the initiative, one WMP officer asked:

*Can we still be empathetic  
but go into someone's  
house with guns?* ”

(WMP13)





Photo Credit: Alamy

*West Midlands Police have  
been ‘very useful allies’  
in getting this programme  
off the ground”*

(Council1)

### C. Positive Choices

A 2-year music initiative co-designed by WMP and Coventry Music Education Hub, in which young people engage in after-school music sessions.

This project is directed towards young people described by WMP as socially excluded or ‘at-risk,’ and involves after-school music sessions across 4 schools in Coventry until 2023. Coventry Music Hub worked closely with WMP and the Violence Reduction Unit to identify the most appropriate schools to work with. Schools then put forward the students they felt would be best suited to the initiative. Originally, PCs and PCSOs were going to be embedded in these sessions with the aim of trying to break down barriers between pupils and police. Now the project is underway, the decision has been made not to have a direct police presence in the sessions in case this causes discomfort or compromises participants’ sense of free self expression.

One participant in this research (Council1) described WMP as “**very useful allies**” in getting the Positive Choices programme off the ground, particularly noting that the relationship with the police had helped to strengthen the initial funding bid significantly.



## D. Forest Camp

A group of young people at-risk of criminal/gang activity and/or school exclusion worked with WMP officers and other creative collaborators to explore issues around safety in green and urban spaces.

WMP gave select schools a set of specific referral criteria, asking them to identify young people who were at risk of exclusion, who may be on the periphery of gangs or criminality, and/or who had behavioural issues at school.

Each week, participants met in a range of spaces to take part in workshops and activities including bushcraft, cooking, lyric writing, photography, film, vlogging, podcasting, screen printing, and music making.

Through the activities during forest camp, they engaged creatively with issues around mental health and wellbeing, access, safety, representation, and identity.

For instance, the young people were invited to record sounds whilst exploring an outdoor space, and then to work with a music producer to use these recordings to create a music track. At a public event in which the

forest camps initiative was presented, one adult involved in the project noted a transition over the course of the project in the music these young people produced, from earlier tracks in which they tended to focus on urban life and experiences of violence, to music which focused on the natural world and the beauty they identified in this.



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



Photo Credit: Mia Harris



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



Photo Credit: Mia Harris



## Creative engagement opportunities for individual officers

Alongside these initiatives, there were also opportunities for individual police officers to take part in creative endeavours themselves, for instance:

### E. The Walk

As part of The Walk – an international event in which a giant puppet of a young Syrian refugee, ‘Little Amal,’ visited Coventry – a Police Constable who had herself arrived in the UK in similar circumstances to Amal was invited to be the first to greet the puppet in the city centre. She wore full police uniform

during the event, and her story was aired on local news and social media networks exploring the significance of the meeting.

She explained to us that she was surprised by the overwhelmingly positive response to her story when it was shared across social media, and spoke of the importance she saw in the fact that she was dressed in uniform during the event: “**This was the first instance where I’ve only actually received positivity. So I think that just goes a long way to show just how human it makes you seem, whilst also being in uniform. It was really impactful that way I think.**”



### F. Send Me to Coventry

WMP invited one of their Chief Inspectors (CI) to write a poem to coincide with the launch of Coventry City of Culture. In Send Me to Coventry, the CI articulated her own experiences as, in her terms, a survivor of domestic violence, honour-based violence, and forced marriage, the role of Coventry as an emancipatory space for her, and her journey to becoming a police officer.

Her performance of the poem was directed and recorded by WMP staff/officers, and shows the CI reciting the poem as she walked through the streets of Coventry, dressed in some scenes in traditional clothing reflecting her Pakistani heritage, and in others in her police uniform.

The footage was shared extensively across social media platforms, and the CI noted that the poem had, in late 2021, been viewed over 200,000 times. In our interview with her, she talked about the positive response she had received from the public: “**it resonated with people, people were saying ‘I cried,’ ‘I felt liberated,’ ‘I felt empowered,’ and for me as a police officer and as a woman, to be able to do that was actually quite special.**”



Again, as with the PC involved in the Little Amal event, this Chief Inspector saw the poem and video as a significant opportunity to share her own story, and to make connections with communities that may otherwise feel disconnected from and distrustful of the police.

### G. Freedom

Following the release of the video, one of the Trust’s Collaborative City producers asked the Chief Inspector to write another poem for their Abundance festival. Freedom was again directed by one of the embedded police officers, but this time filmed by one of the Trust’s external partners. The CI also took part in the Collaborative City-led Abundance parade through Foleshill which brought together women – police officers, cadets, and people from local communities – along with performers, film-makers, and community leaders in a procession through the streets during Diwali weekend.





Photo Credit: West Midlands Police

## H. Theatre of Wandering

A Police and Community Support Officer took part in a theatre production exploring issues around dementia and care in the city. ‘Theatre of Wandering’ was co-created with care homes network and Entelechy Arts, and produced by the Caring City producing team. In rehearsals and the final production, the PCSO performed a version of herself, and, in the construction of the piece, also offered her

expertise and understanding of the role and response of the police when encountering a person with dementia or a carer who requires help; in fact, the theatre director and writer rewrote some of the performance to reflect her professional input. She featured in a podcast which documented the theatrical experience, and through this shared her insights into the interactions between police officers and vulnerable members of the public.

## I. Coventry Welcomes

And finally, there were many other engagement opportunities which would not have taken place without the WMP-Trust partnership. For instance, at Coventry Welcomes 2021 – an event focused specifically towards refugees and newly arrived communities which was co-produced

by the Trust in June 2020, 2021, and 2022 with the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC) – WMP ran a session on hate crime and one on youth exploitation

WMP may have engaged to some degree with this event regardless of the partnership with the Trust. However, it was the conversations

and discussions which took place through close partnership working with the Trust producers which prompted the police to take a more direct, participatory involvement in the event, finding ways to connect with communities who may typically feel distrustful towards police and other authority figures.







# 4 RESEARCH & POLICY EVIDENCE





# RESEARCH & POLICY EVIDENCE

As this form of partnership between a police force and a City of Culture Trust is unprecedented and previous arts-based interventions have tended to be with offenders, there is limited scholarship on police engagement with local communities through arts and culture. There is, however, relevant research on the impacts of arts interventions for more vulnerable or marginalised communities,<sup>16</sup> on the importance of building police legitimacy, on the benefits and complexities of community policing as opposed to

traditional law enforcement approaches, and on police partnerships more broadly.

## A. Arts and culture engagement in the Criminal Justice System

Given the expansion of arts-based programmes within criminal justice systems across industrialised nations (Cheliotis and Jordanoska 2016), there is a growing body of evidence to add to anecdotal reports of the benefits and challenges of arts interventions within prisons (see, for instance, O’Keefe and Albertson (2016); Anderson et al. (2011); Caulfield et al. (2016); and Caulfield et al. (2021) amongst others). The primary focus of this scholarship is on incarcerated offenders and is thus very different from WMP’s preventive focus on populations who are neither offenders, nor in prison. However, this research does offer some useful insights into the potential benefits afforded by arts and culture initiatives for communities who are deemed at-risk of involvement in criminal activity/exploitation and of exclusion from mainstream education, such as the young people involved in the WMP-Trust forest camp. For example, Caulfield et al’s (2021) research on arts initiatives in Youth Offending Services found that artistic interventions gave the young people an accessible and ‘non-

judgemental’ medium through which to articulate their feelings, and, for many, this had a positive impact on their confidence, their mutual collaboration, and on their aspirations going forward. This is significant for WMP given their position that engaging with mental health challenges and the vulnerability of young people lacking safe support structures is a “strategic policing challenge” (WMP2) as well as a broader social issue.

Crucially for our case study, there are also useful insights from this scholarship on the impacts of such interventions for criminal justice personnel and for their interactions with and understanding of the communities with whom they engage. It is notable that research on the impact of arts interventions on prison staff is far less developed than the work on those imprisoned or convicted of a crime; however, Littman and Sliva’s (2021) research offers useful evidence that arts programmes can support ‘dynamic security’ in prison contexts, fostering positive relationships between prison staff and prisoners and helping to support ‘generative’ rather than ‘adversarial’ interactions between the two. Similarly, Caulfield et al’s (2021:32) research also finds that creative interventions help to facilitate

relationship-building between staff and young people, breaking down barriers and developing trust between participants. For these scholars, art initiatives are more successful than more traditional methods in enabling young people to share their thoughts and experiences and thus to offer staff an opportunity to build a greater understanding of their perspectives and personal challenges.

Outside the prison context, Ross (2016) considers the potential from a community safety perspective of arts-based interventions for communities in the US with higher levels of involvement with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. She finds very similar benefits to those evidenced in the scholarship on prisons, with arts engagement leading to positive impacts on empathy, mutual collaboration, and a greater acceptance of disparate and conflicting viewpoints.

Importantly, Ross also specifically notes the potentials afforded by the arts for strengthening community-police relations – in her research, storytelling and poetry helped to ‘humanise’ law enforcement agents and to increase perceptions of police legitimacy.



Photo Credit: Jacqueline Hodgson

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g. the All-party Parliamentary Group 2017 [report](#) on the arts for health and wellbeing; [Koestler Arts](#), and the work of [Safe Ground](#).





Photo Credit: Joe Bailey Photography

## B. Police legitimacy

The question of police legitimacy is particularly relevant for this case study: the term was widely employed by WMP participants in this research, and ideas around trust and confidence in the police were raised in all interviews with members of the public, community organisations, and creative practitioners. Scholarship on the subject (e.g. Hinds, 2008; Tyler, 2004) suggests that the public are both more willing to cooperate with the police, and more willing to offer them help and support, when they view the police as a legitimate authority. In fact, James et al (2022) see legitimacy as ‘perhaps the most important strategic policing capability’ as it is ‘preventative: it is conducive to safe, pro-social public behaviours and supportive of police efforts to maintain public safety and order.’

And scholarship suggests that the public perception of legitimacy is reliant on two key elements: firstly, a sense that the police are effective in combating crime; and secondly, a sense that the police exercise fairness in their processes (Murphy et al, 2008; Mazerolle et al, 2013). This perception of fairness is particularly significant in the context of widespread concerns around controversial practices such as stop

and search and the potential for such tactics to undermine public trust in the police (see e.g. Bradford, 2017).

The legitimacy literature tends to focus on public willingness to comply with the law and to cooperate with the police in a direct encounter whereas WMP are looking to engage in longer-term, broader relationship-building; however, the question of fairness and of police competence was a key concern particularly for the young people we interviewed, thus this scholarship is of clear relevance to this evaluative report.



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



C. Community policing

James et al (2022) also note the interconnection between police legitimacy and community policing, pointing to the recent [Strategic Review of Policing](#) (The Police Foundation, 2022) which makes this link explicitly. For James et al (2022), community policing is an ‘essential police function’ because it enables the police to use its powers in ‘more effective and legitimate ways;’ as such, upholding and striving to improve police legitimacy means ‘supporting and embedding community policing.’ And given WMP’s focus on prevention and trust-building through more effective community engagement, the literature around neighbourhood/ community policing is clearly of relevance (see, for instance, Loftus, 2019; Longstaff et al. 2015; Lowe and Innis 2012; Hughes and Rowe 2007; Bullock and Leeney 2013).

It is worth noting that the terms ‘community policing’ and ‘neighbourhood policing’ are often used interchangeably in scholarship and in our interviews. In this report, we consider the term ‘neighbourhood policing’ to mean geographically specific police-community engagement within a particular local area; and ‘community



Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography

policing’ to mean the practice of police engagement with communities more broadly. Many in this case study – both WMP and members of the public – spoke about a perceived or desired return to community/neighbourhood policing and the opportunities this approach may offer the police for connecting with communities. This was also the finding in Hodgson et al’s (2018) study across both high and low crime areas. However, research in this area points to the tensions inherent in this form of policing, particularly in terms of the complexities around covert policing and intelligence gathering within communities – findings mirrored in our own study.

D. Police partnership-working

Finally, partnership working is certainly not a new phenomenon for police forces, and there is a good deal of scholarship pointing to the potential benefits of collaborations between police and other agencies. Loftus et al (2015) note a proliferation of partnerships and collaborations across the criminal justice system in recent years, and point out the potential benefits this can bring, specifically in terms of crime prevention and community safety. Their findings mirror those of McCarthy and O’Neill

(2014) and Bullock et al (2006), who see pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and cooperating across agencies as potentially beneficial to public safety and crime reduction. However, for all these scholars, there are key challenges to overcome for partnership working to be successful. These include clarifying issues of governance and accountability, dealing with conflicting agendas and institutional cultures (Loftus et al, 2015), and building buy-in for these collaborations amongst police officers who may have limited experience of partnership working (McCarthy and O’Neil, 2014). These findings closely reflect the recommendations raised in our case study, and highlight further the importance of building long-term relationships between police and other organisations, fostering good lines of communication, clarifying objectives, and respecting institutional differences.





# PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES





# PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The partnership model, and the close working relationship it enabled, offered a number of notable benefits to both WMP and to the Trust.

## A. Safety and security: allaying concerns & managing complexity

Working in such close proximity to events planners allowed WMP to feel involved and connected in decision-making throughout the duration of the City of Culture. Given the high-profile nature of Cities of Culture, and the perceived reputational risk to the police force and the city if a major crime occurs, this offered WMP a greater sense of confidence in the security of events than would otherwise have been possible. As one officer explained:

*I was very concerned around the reputational risk of having either a murder or a high-profile incident in the middle of a City of Culture event when potentially you're on an international stage and probably fundamentally ruining the reputation of the city.*

(WMP2)

These sentiments were echoed by other WMP officers, who similarly spoke of their awareness of the reputational risks should an incident occur, and their sense that involvement in the decision-making process had helped to alleviate some of these concerns. As one officer explained (WMP22), the partnership allowed them to have a “**seat around the table**,” so that safety and security was a key part of the events planning process rather than “**an ancillary**” aspect.

Alongside this feeling of reassurance and confidence for WMP, the partnership also made the process of establishing and determining the safety of an event significantly more straightforward, which both WMP and Trust production teams found beneficial. Typically, outside of the partnership model, the scale, scope, and content of an event would be decided by the events planners, and their first engagement with the police would not take place until a Safety Advisory Group (SAG). At this stage, events planners would present their plans and members of the SAG, such as police licensing teams, would scrutinise, suggest changes, and/or reject proposals if they were deemed unsafe.

Those working on the Trust production side explained to us that, ordinarily,

interaction with the police at the SAG stage can typically be adversarial and difficult, as exemplified in the following quotes:

*The police are quite often seen as a limiting factor.*

(CofC8)

*“The police are always seen as the enemy or as a checks and balances power that isn't there to help, they're there to enforce.*

(CofC6)

*“A lot of interaction event organisers have with police is generally a negative one, particularly in planning stages [...] quite often it can be confrontational.”*

(CofC10)

One consultant (Consultant1) involved in risk management described the relationship between police and events planners as “**very standoffish**,” and in the worst cases “**antagonistic**.” In this interviewee's experience, there can be misunderstandings and misperceptions from both sides, and this can be very damaging and difficult to navigate.



However, by embedding a police team within the Trust, conversations could take place far earlier in the process than would typically occur, and, as relationships developed between the embedded team and production staff, complexities could be considered and resolved in a supportive and collegial manner. For production teams at the Trust, council staff on the SAG, and the embedded police team, this aspect of the partnership was unanimously seen as beneficial. One member of the Trust production team, for instance, talked about the embedded police team helping to mitigate some of the difficult interactions they might have expected from their previous experiences with police licensing, who are viewed as taking an “**extremely risk averse**” approach to events. As they explained:

*I think if we hadn’t had the partnership and those [licensing teams] were the individuals we were having to liaise with on events and on planning, it would’ve been a battle, it would’ve been a fight time after time after time.*

(CofC10)

The partnership alleviated some of this complexity by enabling more “**substantial conversations**” (Consultant 1) early in the planning process, and, as one member of the embedded team noted, allowing all parties to navigate and reach agreements long before the SAG stage:

*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)

A particular benefit of the partnership in safety and security terms was seen to be the consistency and stability it enabled on the police side. For one council member of the Safety Advisory Group (Council3), this had actively made their job easier because typically police officers would change roles frequently whereas members of the police embedded team acted as consistent and clear points of contact throughout the duration of the City of Culture. Another member of Coventry city council spoke similarly about the benefit of a fixed point of contact:

*I’ve got more consistency with the policing unit (embedded team) over events than I do with the neighbourhood unit or the wider West Midlands.*

(Council4)

And the Trust production team were similarly positive about the advantages this offered: “**never before have I been able to pick up the phone to my counterpart in the police**” (CofC6).

This ready access to fixed, sustained points of contact within the police force was seen by many respondents to this study as particularly useful given the unprecedented complexities of Covid19 and all the legislative changes this precipitated between 2020 and 2022.

Indeed, the relationships built between the production team and the operational side of the embedded police team (CROD) resulted in some key, substantive outcomes. Firstly, in terms of the development and implementation of the Trust’s novel approach to licensing in which licenses were sought for an area rather than a fixed event: as one Trust participant noted (CofC8), it may well have been more challenging

to implement this innovative model had there not been the support of the embedded police team. And secondly, in the creation of a new events triaging matrix to determine risk prior to the involvement of the SAG: this was an initiative constructed by Trust production and CROD along with members of the SAG and others from the local authority, which sought to streamline the licensing process and support the SAG in prioritising events appropriately. One member of the SAG (Council3) spoke highly of the benefits of this new matrix, and of their hope that it would be rolled out to the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and beyond. This is a substantive, formal structure which was supported, or perhaps indeed made possible, by the WMP-Trust partnership: as one member of the Trust’s production team explained:

*Structures have been put into place by virtue of the relationship that will carry forward.*

(CofC8)

Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin





## B. Opportunities for engagement with communities

The partnership also offered both the Trust and WMP opportunities for engaging with communities which may not otherwise have been possible.

### I. Sharing knowledge and understanding: bringing together perspectives and approaches from the police and the arts

Given their proximity to the city, the embedded police team were able to offer on-the-ground knowledge and understanding of the safety needs and complexities of certain communities, and of some of the key individuals with whom to make contact in setting up initiatives. This was seen by Trust staff as invaluable, particularly given that many of those working in the Trust lived outside Coventry and had limited familiarity with the city. As one member of the Trust explained:

*It's been really brilliant having a bit of deeper intelligence from the police in terms of areas that maybe get less attention, less investment, less support, but maybe have more needs.*

(CofC3)

Producers talked about the benefits of having access to police advice on both “the practicalities of doing things in spaces” but also of police perspectives on broader issues around ways in which the Trust could “use our power to improve relationships with the community” (CofC7). These perspectives were seen as particularly useful when unexpected situations arose in an area, for instance one producer (CofC11) recounted an occasion when she and her colleagues were given particularly useful advice by the embedded team about an event they had planned in a space in which a serious crime then took place.

She explained that the embedded team were able to give them support and guidance about community needs in the area, and to suggest ways to ensure the event could still go ahead safely.

And some organisations outside the Trust also saw similar benefits from the police involvement. One interviewee (Council1), for instance, talked about the police offering useful insight into the places in which their projects may have the most impact: we’re “using them to channel where we’re going, but then we’re still running the programme.”



Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin

From a WMP perspective, the Trust were also able to offer crucial knowledge and understanding, in their case of the possibilities and opportunities offered by arts and creative endeavours and the ways in which initiatives may be constructed in order to ensure they are well-received by participants. As one WMP officer noted:

*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)

For one police officer (WMP3), the City of Culture had brought “a gold standard in terms of our ability to engage,” while a member of the embedded team (WMP7) noted that the projects had been “ground-breaking and have helped to show us what's possible using arts and culture as the medium.”



Indeed, the Trust were able to operate as “critical friends” (WMP7) both for City of Culture initiatives and also for arts and culture endeavours planned by WMP outside the remit of the City of Culture: for instance, the embedded team sought advice from their contacts at the Trust regarding a street art project they wanted to explore. As a member of the embedded team (WMP7) explained, prior to the partnership: “we would never have known how to do that.”

## II. Accessing opportunities: time, space, and funding

Alongside this knowledge sharing, the partnership also offered WMP access to initiatives they would not otherwise have considered or had the resources and experience to engage with. Indeed, many of the City of Culture events and initiatives did not need policing input from a safety and security perspective at all, but the partnership allowed the embedded team to forge opportunities for police involvement on the engagement side.

The **HOME festival** is a particularly useful example of this: this festival consisted of a series of events co-produced with people with experience of homelessness, including a legislative

theatre project, exhibitions, open mic nights, and the mural set out in [section 3](#) of this report. Few if any of these events required any operational input, however one member of the embedded team was able to join the festival steering group, and thus had the opportunity both to play a key part in developing the whole project, and also to build relationships with individuals from a marginalised community who are often the target of police attention. During the festival, WMP offered their police museum as a site for displaying a postcard exhibition and collaborated on the mural, while individual officers took part in a flash mob which was filmed by a member of the embedded team using his drone. These interactions were widely seen by participants in this research as positive examples of police engagement, with members of the steering group (FG2), for instance, noting the strength of the relationship they had built with the embedded police officer, and their surprise at the willingness of the police to take part in these events.

For several of the WMP officers we interviewed, these opportunities were seen as important examples of a community policing approach which they wished to see enacted as standard,

with a number of officers articulating a sense of frustration about the lack of opportunity presented in their everyday jobs for such engagement. As one police officer noted:

*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)

Another (WMP19) spoke similarly, explaining that community policing has been “completely torn apart due to austerity, and there’s been a huge withdrawal of that really positive, compassionate community presence.” This speaks back to the recent Strategic Review of Policing (2020: 13) which noted the erosion of community/ neighbourhood policing since 2010, and called for a strengthened visible and responsive community policing approach going forward.



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police





Photo Credit: Lee Corden

For some of the officers we interviewed, the key benefit of City of Culture, therefore, was the time, space, and funding it offered to take part in a wide range of initiatives that would otherwise be impossible. As one (WMP5) explained: “it’s almost allowed us to have a hotbed of pilots going on,” while another (WMP14) noted that they had “certainly had a lot more engagement in Coventry because of the City of Culture.” For one officer (WMP1), the City of Culture had “provided the opportunity to think of different ways of policing, different ways of communicating with people in the community.”

### III. Brokering connections & mediating interactions with communities

Along with creating the time and space for engagement, one of the particularly notable benefits of the partnership for WMP was the role played by Trust producers in brokering introductions and mediating interactions between the police and the communities and organisations with whom WMP have a more distrustful or combative relationship. Given that one of WMP’s key objectives was to find ways to improve trust and confidence in the police amongst more vulnerable and seldom-heard communities, this was seen as particularly beneficial.

The **HOME festival** is again a useful example: as the steering group began to form, Trust producers were able to take a very careful and “gentle” (WMP12) approach when introducing the embedded police officer to the group, initially simply raising the idea of a police officer attending at some point, and holding conversations on this officer’s behalf before she was brought into any meetings.

Importantly, as several participants in this research noted (FG2, consultant2), the principles of respect and democratic participation embedded in the steering group through the Trust’s ideological commitment to co-creation enabled a mutual sense of trust and support between participants to develop, despite historical distrust. Meeting on regular occasions, and in a space which felt safe and secure, meant that members of the steering group were able to build relationships with one another regardless of their role and position.

As one interviewee in this research noted, people were “just having a chat and a cup of tea before the subject of policing ever came up.” And this mutual trust could then extend beyond the steering group, so that, as this interviewee explained:

*By the time they were engaging with individuals who were harder to reach beyond the steering group, [the embedded police officer] was already well integrated into the group and so was introduced as a member of the steering group rather than as a police officer.*

(Org7)



Photo Credit: Jamie Gray



**Forest camps** also provided the police with an opportunity to engage with a community that they would not otherwise find easy to access, in this case young people at risk of involvement in criminal activity and/or of withdrawal or exclusion from school. For the embedded police team (WMP13), forest camp offered “a chance for us to develop better relationships and more rapport with a group of young people.” As another officer explained):

*Young people, gang culture, antisocial behaviour, is our bread and butter, that’s all we deal with at the moment, and so to get in their heads and walk in their shoes for a day a week was just perfect.* ”  
(WMP23)

Forest camp sessions involved police officers, members of the Trust, artists and creatives, and safeguarding staff from schools, and were constructed as supportive spaces in which to explore issues around safety in urban and green spaces in the city. The response of young people and Trust producers involved in this initiative will be explored further in [section 8](#).

Finally opportunities for engagement were also possible outside these collaborative initiatives – in general policing at events, where PCs and PCSOs were able to make connections with members of the public they would not typically find easy to engage with. One officer noted that they were briefed before events to see these as an opportunity for engagement rather than law enforcement:



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police

*You’re here to make it safe but actually it’s a massive opportunity to engage with communities, to understand what they want, to promote the wellbeing of the city.* ”

(WMP22)

An example of this engagement was the **Caribbean Reggae Festival**, where, as one officer (WMP15) explained, they were told that their task was to “go, enjoy the music, and just speak to people [ . . . ] integrat[e] with communities who wouldn’t necessarily trust the police.” This officer talked about the music, the dancing, and the food attendees shared, and their sense that the event was “an excellent opportunity [ . . . ] it’s finding common ground and showing that human interaction in those key parts of life that you bond over.”

The community response to policing at the Caribbean Reggae Festival suggests that these engagement opportunities are not always well received by the community, as will be explored further in [section 8](#). However, our interviews with police officers indicate that some benefit from a policing perspective was perceived.



Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin



### C. Relationships with community organisations and artists/creative practitioners

WMP already had existing relationships with a number of community organisations in Coventry. However, the partnership with the Trust provided an opportunity to strengthen these relationships, and to build new connections in the city. For instance:

- I. WMP's existing connections with the Belgrade Theatre were rather formal and transactional (Org2) – a police officer might attend occasional meetings but their input would generally be to disseminate information and to listen if any attendees wished to share intelligence about the individuals with whom they work. As a result of the partnership with the Trust, however, the embedded team were able to work more closely with the Belgrade, building more informal relationships through which to have more “organic” and “spontaneous” discussions (Org2). As one interviewee (Org3) in this research explained, these face-to-face meetings gave participants the opportunity to make connections that will persist in the longer-term: “even if the rubber doesn't hit the road during the City of Culture year, those conversations will be ongoing.”

- II. As a second example, WMP made links through the partnership with the Coventry Cultural Education Partnership (CCEP) – a network of professionals with whom the police had no prior connections. The encounter between WMP and CCEP was in fact fortuitous – it only occurred because a member of the embedded team happened to hear CCEP mentioned during a meeting and thought they sounded like a relevant network to make contact with. Through subsequent interactions, WMP made close links with Coventry Music Education Hub—who are part of the CCEP network—with whom they went on to co-design the 2-year Positive Choices project (see section 3), using music to connect with young people in areas the police “identified as hotspots” (Council1) in the city.

- III. The partnership also made possible the artist-in-residence initiative (see section 3), precipitating a relationship with artist Kay Rufai which is ongoing. The support of the Trust enabled WMP to find an artist with genuine calibre and understanding, and this was significant given the reluctance of many artists to engage with a role which involved working with the police.

The Trust were able to put the call for applicants out to their creative networks, to act as a mediator between the artist and the police, and to provide the funding necessary for this intensive initiative. The residency which resulted was unique – both for the fact that an artist was invited into a police force to engage over a prolonged period of time, and for the fact that the particular artist chosen for the role has openly expressed his own distrust of the police force and his commitment to an abolitionist position. Indeed, he was open about his perspectives with the embedded police team, in media interviews, and in his interview for this research, as he said: “my experiences of the police have always been negative. I'm an abolitionist, so I don't believe the police should exist.” Despite this stance, the embedded team and others in WMP found a real power in his engagement during the residency, and have begun to find ways to utilise his work as a tool to prompt and further complex conversations in the force around race and racism (WMP7, WMP13) and to examine police strategies and tactics in the city. More detail on the outcomes of the residency is given in section 7.

These examples indicate the importance of the informal interactions afforded by the WMP-Trust's close working relationship, and offer a clear demonstration of the value of the partnership for enabling connections between WMP and other organisations and individuals across the city – as one police officer (WMP22) noted, engagement with some of these organisations and individuals would never have happened without the partnership: some would “never have seen the value of working with each other.”



Photo Credit: Hollis Photography



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



# ARTS LED POLICE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT







# ARTS LED POLICE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During the course of this research, we interviewed 20 members of the public and had informal conversations with 10 others. The majority of these participants were members of communities with whom WMP say they want to build trust and break down barriers – adults with experience of homelessness, and young people who have been excluded from mainstream education or who are deemed at risk of involvement in criminal activity or exploitation. Some had taken part in WMP-Trust initiatives, others had no idea the police force had even entered into a partnership with the Trust.

These were not individuals who would ordinarily have been involved in any kind of police-related initiative, and every one of them articulated some degree of negativity towards the police as an institution. For some, they have had, or continue to have, negative encounters with police officers – several spoke of damaging or traumatic experiences with the police in the past, of strip searches, arrests, and house visits. Others have had little personal experience of the police but voiced some animosity towards the force on account of the experiences of friends or family, or of wider perceptions of police misconduct or brutality.

Participants in focus groups expressed views such as:

*“The image of the police is so trashed and ruined and destroyed ”*

*“Who’s gonna trust the police?”*

*“Almost everyone I know have had awful experiences with the police, and it’s not just a one-time thing, it’s constantly, constantly, constantly, they’re making these mistakes over and over and over and over again ”*

(FG1)

*“It’s a them and us situation ”*

*“There’s a detachment between police and society at the minute”*

(FG2)



*“I didn’t feel like there was any support from [the police] [. . .] I was a criminal and I was treated as such ”*

(FG3)

*“The police just see us as little brats ”*

(FG4)

And in individual interviews, animosity was also expressed:

*Most of the time I just knew I was racially profiled cos I’m Asian.*

(YP1)

*They’re constantly going round but they don’t really do a lot, they just go round in their little car, and they won’t even stop.*

(YP2)

One individual remembered a point at which their attitude to the police shifted and they no longer saw them in a positive light:

*When I was a kid I loved the police because around my area they used to speak to me, they used to help me when I was lost and bring me home, they were really people that I wouldn’t say I idolised, but I didn’t hate at all, I just thought they were kind people. I understood some were bad and some were good but that’s people, right? But I think a specific experience completely changed that for me.*

(FG2)

It is clear from these quotes that the police did indeed place themselves into groups of people with low levels of trust and confidence in policing in an attempt to build more positive relationships. However, despite the negative experiences and perspectives of those coming to these projects, our research indicates that police engagement with



Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography

the public through arts and culture can have some positive impacts on mutual perceptions, and on relationships between communities and the police.

This is a complex story, and [section 8](#) examines the nuance in more detail. However, there were three key areas in which participants in this research, particularly those who had taken part in a WMP-Trust initiative, expressed notable positivity:

- A. the apparent willingness of the police force to engage;
- B. the potential for arts endeavours to rebalance power; and
- C. the potential for arts initiatives to shift perceptions and humanise both parties

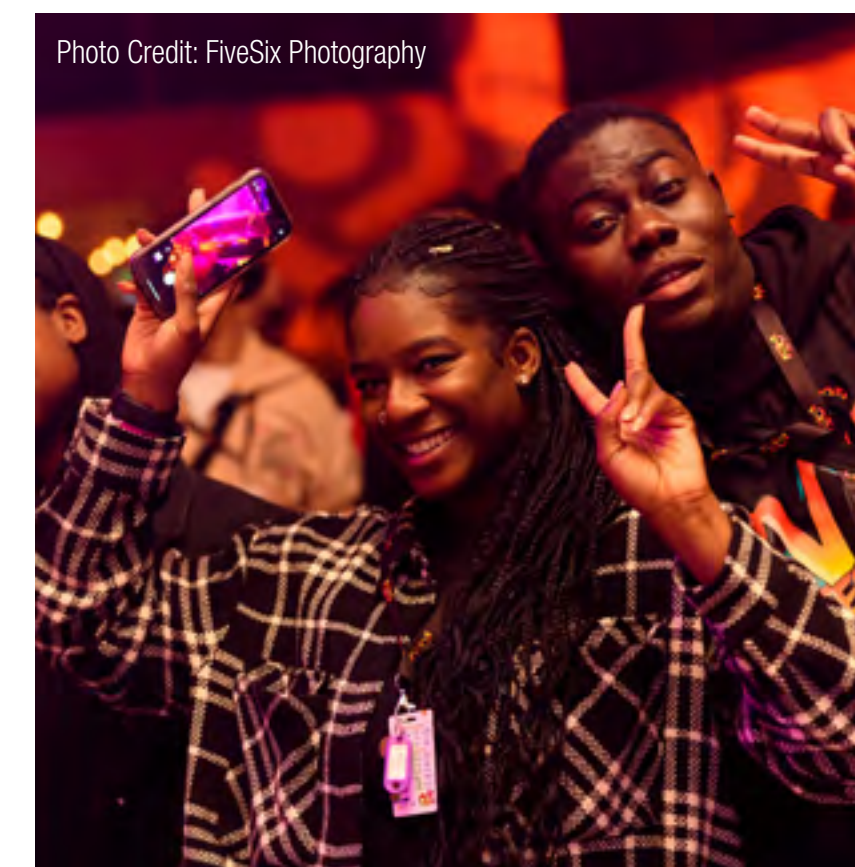


Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography





Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography

A. Willingness to engage

For the majority of the members of the public who had taken part in a WMP-Trust initiative, the very fact that WMP had shown a willingness to engage in these projects, even if initiatives were not always felt to be wholly successful, was seen as indicating a broader commitment to connect with communities in a more positive way. One interviewee (FG3) said: “that they’re willing to listen – that’s what I admire [...] they really did want to listen.” For another in this focus group:

*The idea that police want to make a positive change towards their relationship with homeless people is the starting point to build a trusting relationship.*

(FG3)

In a different focus group (FG2), one participant, who described seeing the police as “the enemy” in the past, explained that her experiences with the police during an initiative gave her the sense that the police were keen to change the way they deal with her community.

And another, who also spoke of her negative experiences with the police in the past, felt that the police had shown an increased empathy and an interest in her community during an initiative, and this made her feel that the force may now have changed as an institution. One interviewee who had also taken part in a WMP-Trust initiative spoke about the desire she saw both from community members and from the police to make the project a success:

*I don’t think I’ve ever seen a project that’s so cooperative on both sides, we were both willing to try and make it work.*

(FG1)

There was also a good deal of surprise from interviewees at the fact that the police had partnered with the Trust. When told about the partnership, one young person said:

*It’s shocking cos they don’t really do anything, especially round here [...] but for them to actually get involved in something – it is really good.*

(YP2)

A theatre director (Org6) also commented on his surprise when he realised that the police were keen to engage in such a sustained and open manner in his project. He talked about the “willingness and curiosity from the police to be involved,” and said that “recognising that we can really have a proper conversation here [...] was delightfully unexpected.” Similarly, an arts director (Org8) talked about the “courage” he felt it must take for the institution to embark on something so different from their everyday, and expressed his approval at their involvement: “to have someone at the police really being there as part of the project I think is amazing, such an opportunity really.” He was particularly impressed with the commitment displayed by the officer he encountered: “she was at every meeting, and she was never like ‘oh I’ve got to do my real job now’ – it was her job.”

For these individuals and others in this research, there was a clear expectation that policing would revolve around law enforcement rather than engagement, but a sense of support for the idea that policing could encompass this involvement with communities and organisations as well.



## B. Rebalancing power through co-creation

One of the issues raised by several interviewees in this research was the question of power, and whether initiatives with clearly asymmetrical power relations between parties could be set up in a way in which all participants could feel a sense of equity: as one interviewee from a charitable organisation in the city (Org7) noted, there is often a “really obvious power imbalance” in consultations and other initiatives which involve members of the public from more marginalised communities and official or authority figures.

It was noted by several interviewees, however, that initiatives had been constructed in ways which helped to mitigate power imbalances. As one producer explained, the artist-in-residency saw officers in the unfamiliar position of being interviewed themselves, with this inversion of roles resulting in the police “not being the ones in a position of power.” This producer also talked about forest camps as offering the opportunity for a more equal interaction between participants:

*how do you fundamentally change the way the police behave and the status they own and the power they try and put over other people? [...] maybe forest camps is doing that a little bit because on the sessions when they're there together, it's very even.*

(CofC4)

For some, it was specifically the **co-creation model** adopted by the Trust which had gone some way to address power asymmetry and to encourage an ethos of mutual collaboration. As a Trust producer explained (CofC5), co-creation as a principle places particular value on time, on relationship-building, and on ensuring that “the process is more important than the output.” For this interviewee, all these factors were “really important to the power sharing, the power dynamic, [and] how you amplify people's voices.” She saw the philosophy of co-creation as challenging for those who are accustomed to highly hierarchical structures, but believed it was central to the success of the initiatives she helped to create and take part in.

This echoes Holdsworth and Verson's (2022) findings in their research on the HOME festival. Here, they utilised the term co-production rather than co-creation, but, importantly, noted that taking an intentionally collaborative and cooperative approach enabled ‘inclusive, dialogic and open decision-making’ and facilitated opportunities for traditionally more marginalised participants to have their voices amplified. And indeed, one adult interviewee in our research, who occupies a more marginalised social position and had worked closely with a police officer on an initiative (FG2), mentioned these benefits herself. Although she did not specifically employ the term ‘co-creation’ or ‘co-production,’ she spoke about the process of working collaboratively to produce an output, and mentioned that, during their meetings, she had an impression of “power sharing” which she believed was important for breaking down barriers and starting to counteract the sense of “them and us.”

And several artists involved in police-Trust initiatives articulated a similar position: for instance, a director of an arts organisation (Org8) talked about a very “easy dynamic” with all

participants in an initiative engaging on an “equal footing” despite historic difficulties between the police and this community. For this director, the collaboration and trust built during the initiative allowed participants to break “what is historically a very binary relationship [...] between people in authority and people who [...] don't have any power.”



Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin



Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin



### C. Sharing perspectives, building empathy: the humanising potential of arts and culture

Further, while this sense of equity was seen partly as a result of the Trust’s model of working, it was also deemed by many to be a particular feature of arts and culture endeavours more broadly: many interviewees in this research talked about the idea of the police engaging with the public through sport – principally football and boxing – and this being a positive and constructive instrument for relationship-building. However, there was widespread agreement in this research that arts and culture can offer quite specific benefits which sport may not provide, particularly in providing an opportunity for participants to share their own perspectives through creative means, and thereby to increase empathy between those involved.

This was a position voiced both by WMP participants and by non-police interviewees in this research, and was encapsulated by the widely-used term “human.” For many police participants in this study, the WMP-Trust partnership offered them the opportunity to show something of themselves – to use creative methods to share some of their own personal experiences and express their own emotions.

Comments included, for instance:

*It’s an opportunity to connect for me on a human level and to say ‘here I am, I’m here to serve you, I understand, I empathise, I want to help’.*

(WMP9)

*Given all the things that have happened in the media over the past 12 months, we needed to be able to show a human side of policing.*

(WMP22)

Often, this idea of the humanity of the individual was contrasted with the persona officers feel is presented when they are wearing uniform – there was a sense that arts and culture initiatives allowed them to show something beyond their presentation simply as police. For instance:

*We’ve got to make sure we are actually representative of communities, we’re not just a uniform, we’re not a robot, we can engage with people in different ways.*

(WMP12)

*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)

*It was so drilled into us that you don’t really show emotion, it’s kind of a process and you kind of emotionally detach yourself from things, whereas actually in recent years a lot with the big push on mental health and everything else that’s gone on nationally, it’s recognised that we are human beings, we’re treated like human beings as opposed to just a police uniform, we’re not robots.*

(WMP14)



And indeed, some non-police respondents in this study spoke of the benefits of police engagement through arts and culture in exactly these terms, with several noting that initiatives might help the public to see the police as *people*:

*I think people forget that [the police] are people at the end of the day because we see them in their uniform, sometimes we only see the bad sides of policing, especially with media outlets. So I think police wanting to get involved with arts and culture makes them more visible, more relatable to people.*

(Org13)

*Maybe it's about connecting with police men and women as people, and not as their role in the police [...] you are connected with the humanity not just their jobs.*

(Org12)

*If I don't see your badge as a police officer, I see you as a Civilian, just a normal person.*

(FG1)

For one member of the embedded team (WMP13), it was significant that some of the young people involved in the artist in residency initiative had agreed to come to the exhibition and to meet police officers in person. She viewed this as evidence of the project “starting to meet some of its objectives in that they were actually quite keen to meet some of the officers whereas obviously beforehand there was a range of attitudes but on the whole they weren’t interested in speaking to the police.”

Importantly however, for some interviewees, initiatives were not simply viewed as an opportunity for the police to share something of themselves, but also as a chance for members of the public to do the same. As one adult who worked closely with the police during an initiative noted, the process of shared storytelling was powerful – for her, this was a moment in which all participants could say ‘I’m human too’ (FG2). As another said: “if you’ve built that relationship, you’ve seen that they’re human, they’ve seen that you’re human, you’ve got a common ground” (FG1).

And this idea of finding common ground was seen as a particular benefit of arts and culture as opposed to other instruments for engagement. As one

member of the embedded team explained (WMP13), art is a “portal into other people’s lives and it can generate understanding in a way that other things just can’t; it can really show you, shine a light into experiences that you will never have.” Another interviewee from an arts organisation spoke about the transformative potential of the arts:

*The arts has a way of connecting with people at their most vulnerable level and they’re able to express themselves [...] I think it’s that vulnerability and trust in sharing that builds a confidence in people and a confidence in sharing that with people maybe outside of their circle and daily life.*

(Org12)

This echoes closely Caulfield et al (2021) analysis of arts initiatives in YOS, where they found that creative endeavours broke down barriers between participants more quickly than non-creative endeavours, helping participants to see one another differently, to see each other as ‘actually human.’





For a number of participants in this study – both police and public – there was a hope that this shared understanding may go some way to increasing empathy between parties, to helping both sides to understand one another more fully. For one interviewee, who works predominantly with young people at risk of school withdrawal, arts and culture initiatives may help “to change [young peoples’] views of the police and how they interact,” but also, importantly, may help the police to understand young people and the reasons for their involvement in criminal activity:

*I really hope that [the police] do see the people behind the behaviour [...] it would be nice for the police to understand what experiences our children have [...] that causes them to go into these sort of behaviours or criminality.*

(Council8)

Another interviewee (Org10) from an organisation in the city expressed similar views:

*It’s really hard to change the mindsets of [police] on the frontline [...] so if it created opportunities for different insights, from both sides really, that would be really positive.*

(Org10)

And a Trust producer also talked about their hope that, in time, these initiatives could help to change police perceptions of the communities they police:

*Over time, and a long time, it would start to influence how the police force think about the people they work with, how they police, it might change people’s prejudice [...] in creative ways that people are telling their stories, and people representing themselves in different ways [...] it might change people’s perceptions.*

(CofC5)

It is difficult to make clear claims from this research as to whether initiatives have indeed helped to shift perspectives on the police side. Many of the PCs and PCSOs we contacted declined to take part in the research, and officers who did take part tended to speak more broadly about the partnership rather than their own personal responses to it. One PCSO, however, did talk about a shift in their understanding of the young people they had engaged with through an initiative, and their sense that this was influencing the way in which they now interacted with other young people in the city:

*It really has opened my eyes to them [...] I have a lot of respect for them and I think they did for me [...] now when I’m meeting young people when I’m out on duty I try and see it from maybe a different side.*

(WMP23)

And during the exhibition of the artist-in-resident’s work, one senior officer spoke in depth with a young person who had taken part in Kay’s project and given details of their own experiences when a

firearms warrant was enacted at their house. It was reported by others attending the event that this senior officer was visibly moved by the interaction, and that the stories presented through the exhibition offered a powerful insight into the lives and experiences of young people which could have an impact on the officers who viewed them. As a member of the embedded team explained:

*[The officer] was in tears at one point hearing their experiences. And so all of this has come about because of a piece of art [...] and when we’re talking about generating empathy and understanding, this is proving to be a really powerful way of doing that.*

(WMP13)

We comment further on public and police attitudes in [section 8](#); however, the findings presented so far do echo the scholarship noted in [section 4](#), offering support for the contention that arts interventions can afford opportunities for self-expression, collaboration, and mutual understanding which may help to foster positive

relationships between groups who typically have a more antagonistic relationship. In this way, engagement through arts and culture has the potential to go some way to humanising both the police and the public, and thereby helping to increase the sense of mutual understanding and trust across subject positions.

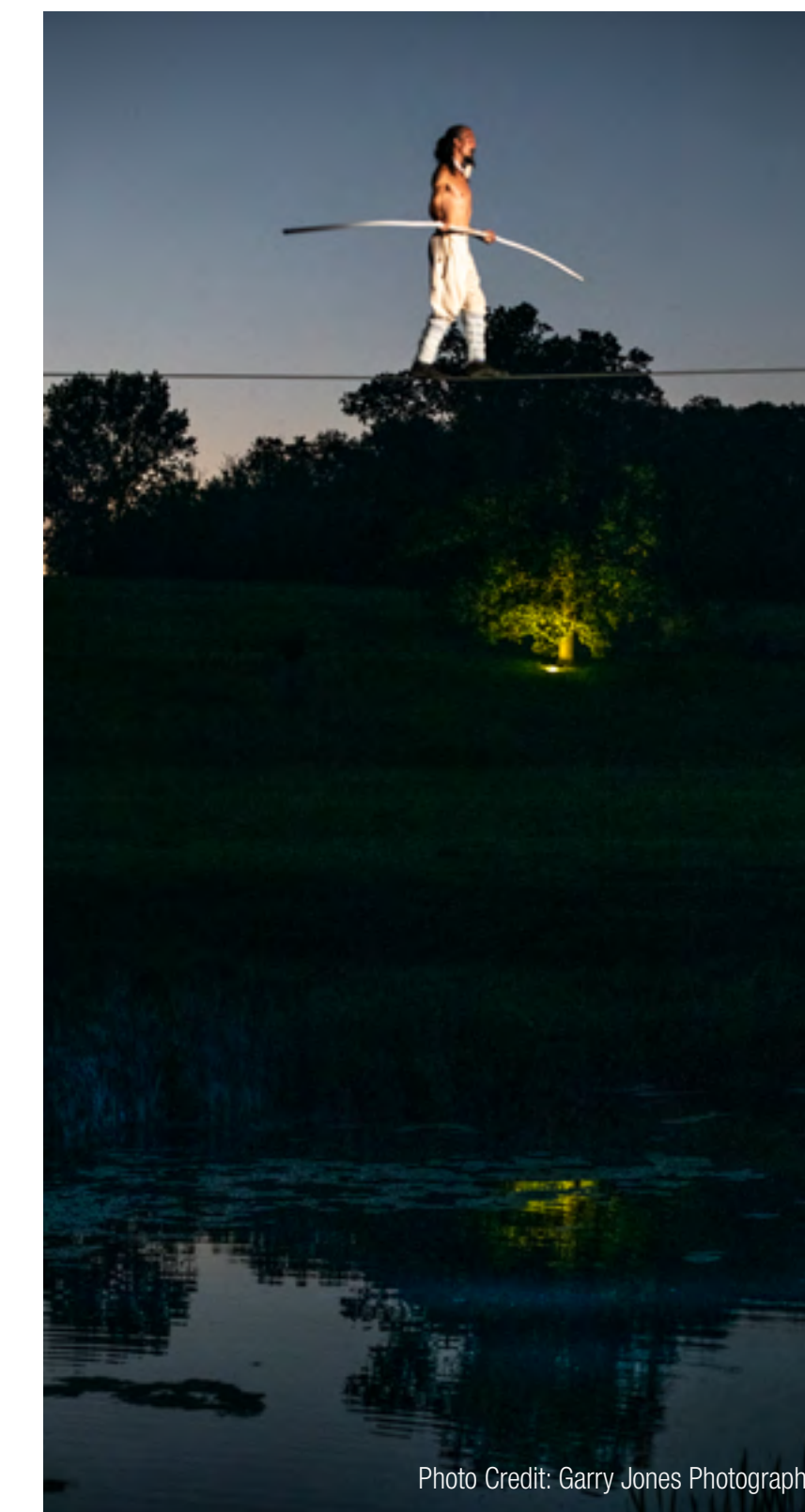


Photo Credit: Garry Jones Photography



A group of young people are gathered in a park-like setting. In the foreground, a young woman with curly hair, wearing a black t-shirt with a white graphic and a tan jacket, stands looking down. To her right, a young man in a green hoodie and black pants is in a dynamic, low-to-the-ground pose, looking towards the camera. Next to him, another young man in a black hoodie and cap is also in a low pose, holding a water bottle. In the background, other people are visible, including a man in a blue jacket and a woman in a plaid shirt. The background wall is covered in a vibrant, colorful mural featuring geometric shapes and abstract patterns. A black metal structure, possibly a climbing frame, is visible on the right side of the image.

# CHANGE IS HAPPENING







Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography

# CHANGE IS HAPPENING

The WMP-Trust partnership has precipitated or strengthened some important developments in the city – both within WMP and beyond. Some senior WMP officers talk about their commitment to a wider shift in policing practice towards a greater focus on community engagement through arts and culture. The embedded police team express their desire to see arts and culture become ‘business-as-usual’ so that arts initiatives are employed as an important engagement tool across departments in WMP.

They also talk about the benefits of rolling this out beyond WMP, to police forces outside the West Midlands, offender managers, and those working more broadly in the Criminal Justice system.

These developments sit in the context of a broader move within WMP towards a focus on police legitimacy which includes, for instance, the implementation of the Race Action Plan, a new board reviewing police powers, and an emphasis on professional empathetic practice (WMP13).

Alongside this is a move to engage more closely with the mental health and wellbeing both of officers and of offenders (WMP7). For many of the WMP participants in this research, arts and culture can be embedded throughout policing – in training, tactics, and practice – to effect positive change in the institution and to improve police-public relations.

The table on the following pages sets out some of the key changes already in progress:



### A. Within WMP

**Through the artist-in-residence scheme**, young people spoke of their trauma following the execution of firearms warrants and discussed their perceptions of the ways in which firearms officers enact their practices.

#### As a direct result:

- WMP are seeking to review their firearms process to consider whether it is fit for purpose as it stands, and whether, for instance, liaison roles may be created to try to mitigate some of the trauma caused
- WMP are using the artist-in-residence work to support and inform work streams being undertaken as part of their Race Action Plan delivery, and their Fairness and Belonging strategy
- WMP’s ‘Brave Spaces’ forum already existed as a safe space for police officers and staff to voice their thoughts and opinions. The WMP Diversity and Inclusion lead is now working with the embedded team to run a Brave Spaces session using the artist-in-residency work as a prompt to discuss issues around stereotyping and bias
- The work produced during the residency is being shown internally, and there are plans to tour the work around other sites in the West Midlands and beyond
- WMP are continuing to interact with the young people who took part in the residency, discussing ways in which they may be brought in to speak to firearms officers and others in order to describe their experiences and share their own perspectives

#### Other key projects:

- New in-house training on engagement through arts and culture will be rolled out to all Neighbourhood Policing Units in the West Midlands
- WMP’s Learning and Development team are building engagement training into their Student Officer Training, thus normalising the use of arts and culture as a tool in policing practice
- There are plans to explore the potential for new schemes such as the use of Virtual Reality, theatre, and role play to be embedded as training methods
- Co-creation will now be incorporated into the Problem Orientated Policing (POP) profile
- A wider piece of work is being undertaken to develop a toolkit for use by WMP Schools Intervention and Prevention Officers. As part of this, the learning from City of Culture will be used to inform some creative packages for officers to deliver in schools to ultimately seek to reduce crime by addressing factors with young people that might lead to involvement in crime, or to intervene for those who might already be on that road.

### B.Outside WMP

- Following the initiatives between the Trust, WMP, and people with experience of homelessness, the city’s homelessness policy and rough sleeper strategy is currently under review to consider whether it is appropriate for the needs of the homeless community in Coventry
- The learning from Forest Camps is feeding into Coventry City Council’s wider Public Places strategy which looks at a variety of issues including access, facilities, and safety, amongst others
- The embedded team are publicising their learning through conferences, roadshows, and expo-style events with other police forces outside the West Midlands
- The embedded team are working directly with West Yorkshire Police in advance of Bradford 2025, Wakefield arts and culture festival 2024, and Leeds arts festival 2023
- During the partnership, the production team, embedded team, and members of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) created a matrix to determine the safety risk of events prior to the SAG meeting. This matrix is now being employed for events planning outside the City of Culture and is a substantive, tangible outcome of the partnership
- Community safety is now included in the City of Culture Legacy Theory of Change Model. Again, this is a further substantive outcome of the partnership



# LEARNING GOING FORWARD





# LEARNING GOING FORWARD

As mentioned throughout this report, participants in this research gave a nuanced and complex picture of the benefits and challenges of the WMP-Trust partnership, and more broadly of the police using arts and culture as an engagement tool.

While there was certainly positivity from both police and public, with many expressing the view that arts and culture could help to build trust and to foster stronger police-community relations, this was not universally the case. Indeed, for many participants in this research, there remained significant distrust and suspicion towards the police.

This final section frames this complexity in terms of the key recommendations going forward. These are applicable to police forces, community/arts and culture organisations, and artists/practitioners looking to work together towards collaborative community engagement.





Photo Credit: Fabio De Paola – PA Images



## A. Institutional culture change: moving from the individual to the institution

Community organisations, artists, and members of the public expressed a willingness to engage with the police but wanted to see visible cultural change beyond the individual officers involved in an initiative. Buy-in for broader institutional change was evident from many WMP participants in this study, but this was not universal.

### I. Public perspectives: do individual officers reflect the wider force?

Many members of the public interviewed in this research spoke positively about the individual officers with whom they had engaged during an initiative. However, one of the key challenges expressed widely was a perception that these individuals were not representative of the wider force, and/or that the engagement taking place during Coventry City of Culture was unlikely to be sustained in the longer-term.

One participant (org7) from a charitable organisation reflected on a general feeling of “[distrust and cynicism](#)” towards the police from many within the community he worked with, and a sense that the police as a force are seen “[very, very differently](#)” from those individual police officers who engage directly – that there can be a feeling that the wider force “[are not like them,](#)” that “[there’s a real separation there.](#)”

And this perception was reflected in all the focus groups we conducted. For instance, one young person who took part in a WMP-Trust initiative spoke positively about their interactions with a senior police officer during the initiative. However, they expressed a lingering sense of anxiety that the respect and empathy this officer displayed would not be replicated in a normal encounter outside the Coventry City of Culture:

*[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)

For this interviewee, their everyday experiences of policing in the city, and those of their friends and family, had led to a distrust and a wariness towards the police as an institution which individual instances of respect and empathy could not fully overcome.

Several others made unequivocal statements that police engagement with initiatives would not or had not changed their opinions of the wider force. One participant in an initiative (FG2), for instance, had engaged frequently with the criminal justice system in the past and described their relationship with the police as “[cat and mouse.](#)” This interviewee said explicitly that “[it was good to work with the police](#)” during Coventry City of Culture, but when asked if it had changed the way they feel about the police more broadly, answered “[not really, no.](#)”



For the young people who took part in one particular focus group (FG4), all of whom were aged 12-15, their animosity towards the police force was particularly marked. One participant in this focus group had taken part in a WMP-Trust initiative and although they reported feeling somewhat more comfortable interacting with the police officers they met over the course of the project, they said they remained guarded with the information they shared with these individual officers. And when asked directly, this participant replied that, overall, the experience had not changed their opinion of the police.

The others in this focus group had not been involved in a WMP-Trust initiative, although interestingly, they were not resistant to the idea of taking part in an activity that the police were also present at. However, they were unanimous in their view that it was the activity or project that was of interest to them, not the engagement with the police. These young people had all had experience speaking to individual police officers who visited their school to “build relationships [...] they speak to you about life and things,” so they were familiar with the idea of the police trying to build trust and confidence with young people in Coventry. However, those who expressed an opinion on this stated that it did not change their opinion of those

officers or of the force overall – as one young person said: “I’ve heard it all before.”

This sense that the police as a force were not making the necessary changes for trust to be built with communities was echoed by others in organisations in the city. One participant from a community organisation (FG1) noted that they had worked with the police several times before, but that they had seen no meaningful change in the institution:

*Our conversations in the past with the police don’t seem to have been fruitful in any way, it doesn’t seem to have changed anything, there doesn’t seem to have been an impact.*

(FG1)

Another (Org14), who worked with young people involved in the criminal justice system, expressed the view that these engagement activities were little more than “appeasement” to try to make the police look good. For this participant, visible systemic change would need to take place to overcome the distrust felt by the communities with whom they worked. And for another participant (Org15), who

works with Org14 but was interviewed separately, there was a sense that, while those in more senior positions in the police may indeed recognise the issues with policing and the importance of building relationships with communities – they understand that “crime is never gonna be reduced until those relationships are built” – this was not echoed in police practice on the ground:

*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)

The majority of the people we interviewed in this study talked about their own experiences with the police and those of their families or friends. For many of these individuals, particularly the young people we interviewed, their everyday experiences – which included frequent stop and searches for the male participants, a perception of institutionalised racism and police profiling, and a sense that their own safety in the city was not protected by current police strategy and tactics – was an intractable obstacle to trust and

relationship-building with the wider force. This echoes the research on police legitimacy cited in [section 4](#), which notes the ‘detrimental impact’ stop and search practices, for instance, can have on a sense of police legitimacy (James et al, 2022). For many participants in this study, a much wider shift in police practice and police culture at an institutional level was seen as crucial to begin to change the negative perceptions they carry. As one artist (Artist1) said: “it has to be institution-wide, it has to be consistent, it has to be deep.”





Photo Credit: David Levene



## II. Police perspectives: is there buy-in at all levels?

In terms of the perspectives towards this change in institutional culture from the WMP officers we interviewed, this was an interesting picture with a mixed response.

Some support for broad change in policing strategy beyond the Coventry City of Culture was apparent, particularly amongst more senior officers and amongst newer recruits. [Section 7](#) demonstrates that there has been clear buy-in from some in the force to begin to implement changes – both to build relationships with communities through the use of arts and culture as an engagement tool, and to find ways to use arts and culture to explore difficult conversations within WMP around police tactics and police culture. Several participants in this research (e.g. WMP17, WMP21) talked about their perception that, at management level, there is a drive to address fairness in policing and to engage with questions of police legitimacy. As one interviewee put it:

*In terms of the force exec, the chief, the dep, 100% they understand, they get it, and what they're trying to do are good things.*

(WMP10)

For newer recruits, there was a feeling that training had shifted over recent years to put more emphasis on positive communication with communities, and on encouraging police officers to show empathy, both in public interactions and amongst themselves. One interviewee (WMP15) stated that [“showing a more human face of the police is part of the graduate programme,”](#) and that [“there’s a massive focus within training to try and change and bring about positive, long-term change.”](#)

Another (WMP21) felt that, as a force, there were a lot more conversations happening around acceptable and unacceptable practices – [“we’re actually having an active discussion around what is allowed and what is a bit more problematic.”](#) For this participant, there was a sense that the police force were engaging with officers in a more empathetic way – [“at strategy level, a force overview, we are really looking at people like they are people”](#) – and that this was reflected in the ways in which communities perceived them: [“we’re coming across as more human.”](#) For these more recent recruits, all of whom were younger women, this was expressed as a positive shift which they supported.

However, the buy-in for this broader culture shift – as expressed by, or as perceived by, participants in this research – was not unanimous. Some interviewees noted the discomfort displayed by officers when asked to take part in engagement activities rather than law enforcement during the City of Culture. For some, this was an issue of nerves or inexperience:

*Officers are probably just nervous, or perhaps haven’t just had a normal conversation or a general conversation with a member of the public that isn’t work specific or for a policing purpose.*

(WMP20)



(WMP1)

*If you’re used to being frontline all the time and responding to calls for service, you’re used to dealing with certain jobs with certain logs and perhaps certain members of the community or high levels of violence, so you just get used to that. So when you strip that back and say ‘well our role today is not to go to jobs, it’s to be at the City of Culture event and we are there to engage with members of the community,’ I think sometimes it throws people into a bit of an ‘argh I don’t really know.’*

Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



For others, there was an active resistance to this style of policing, with public engagement through arts and culture – both at the City of Culture and more broadly – seen as an unwelcome distraction from law enforcement activities. Workload and resource were cited by some as reasons for this resistance:

*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)

*You sit there in a meeting and [...] I've got a packed diary, I've got all these issues to sort out, and I've now got to dedicate an hour to listen to cloud walking or walking round town with a puppet or a sensory walk through the graveyard – it didn't really register with me as being important enough to take up me and my staff's time.*

(WMP16)

For this officer (WMP16), it was the manner of engagement – through arts and culture – rather than the engagement itself that was the issue; they noted that this was a personal preference rather than a broader ideological objection – “then again I'm not into arts and culture [...] if it was to do with football [...] I'd think it was great.”

However, there were others who voiced or perceived a more fundamental resistance to any sort of community engagement:

*They've joined the job for a specific reason, that may be because they want to detain offenders and that's their sole thing [...] 'What's the point? We're here to police, we're here to apprehend offenders, we're here to arrest people. We're not there to go and talk to people – they know where we are'.*

(WMP20)

*People don't want to see the police dancing around. If you've just been robbed in the park and I'm saying to you I can't make your robbery and then you see 10 bobbies dancing around in the middle of the city centre, it's hard to justify that.*

(WMP4)

*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)



One participant (WMP19) noted that there were still “old-school coppers” across the force, including in more senior positions, who saw engagement with the public through arts and culture as “woke-ism,” and who expressed clear resistance to this. This participant in fact perceived a shift even during the several months between interviews (Feb to June 2022), stating that:

*I'm seeing some renewed tensions again with policing [...] an internal backlash from some policing colleagues about wanting to get back to basics, being a bit cynical about the role of this sort of thing.*

(WMP19)







Photo Credit: Garry Jones Photography

### III. Bringing police on board: training-by-experience, & authentic engagement

For many participants in this research, it was seen as particularly important to bring on board those positioned in middle levels in the force in order to effect broader culture change across the institution: as one participant (WMP17) noted, “it’s the sergeant and inspector level that are key because that’s where the direction and drive come from.” And for another (WMP22), it is the sergeants who “culturally set the tone.”

However, as many in this research explained, it is extremely challenging to demonstrate the value of these engagement activities in a meaningful way. Any improvement in police-community relations through the use of arts and culture may not be easily evidenced on the terms typically employed by police forces to demonstrate value – it is difficult if not impossible to quantify these attitudinal or behavioural changes using survey methods or other numerical tools, and short-term shifts are unlikely to be visible.

This is particularly challenging since, as one interviewee (WMP20) noted, the police as a force tend to be “very process driven and that drives a certain way of thinking.”

For this officer, many in the force will not see the benefits of this form of engagement “unless they see what good has come of that. And some of that might be intangible, and that’s a difficult thing.” The conclusion from this interviewee was that officers need to be involved in the outcomes of activities – to see them first hand and to be able to recognise the benefits, even if these are not tangible.

Another (WMP19) similarly talked about the importance of bringing officers on “a journey of practice to really know it” – for this participant, there needs to be “a really purposeful, sustained and well-resourced training-by-experience” in order to effect meaningful change across the institution.

One interesting complexity, however, is the sense raised widely in this research that a key factor in successful police engagement through arts and culture is authenticity (e.g. FG1, Artist1, WMP12) – that police officers need to want to engage in an initiative for it to feel meaningful and valuable. As participants in FG1 explained:

*I think if they’re not doing it genuinely [...] it’s fake, and there’s no point in doing it like that because it’s not gonna benefit us and it’s not gonna benefit them. If as a person genuinely a police officer was actually very kind and they wanted to interact with young people through sports or dance or performing arts [...] they’d find a way to do that and young people as a whole wouldn’t feel any type of way about it, if they actually wanted to be there. But being told by their sergeant that they have to go to this event and do this and do that – it’s forced.*

(FG1)

Without this sense of authenticity, initiatives can feel like a PR exercise for the police:

*If it’s a tickbox exercise, and it’s a social media exercise for you to take a photo with some young people and say we’re making relationships and then never see them again, it’s not beneficial.*

(FG1)

And similarly, for one of the artists:

*[An initiative] has to be genuine, it has to be authentic, and it has to be institution-wide, because the community and the people are not stupid.*

(Artist1)

This raises a complexity on the police side: clearly, as shown in [section 7](#), there is a move to embed engagement through arts and culture across departments and throughout the force, suggesting that officers of all ranks may be involved in these initiatives. And yet the resistance from some officers to this form of engagement provides a clear challenge for the police force. This points again to the importance of sustained and meaningful training to demonstrate the possibilities and value for the police force of community engagement through arts and culture.



## B. Strong, long-term relationships

Community organisations play a key role in facilitating and enabling police-public engagement, acting as mediators between police and public, and between police and artists/creative practitioners. In general, there was a willingness from organisations to work with the police, but a widespread desire for this engagement to be sustained and long-term. This requires targeted, lasting funding.

Alongside systemic culture change, one of the key factors in overcoming distrust among the public is for police forces to focus on forming stronger, longer-term relationships with established community organisations and youth networks. These organisations can provide the police with crucial knowledge and understanding of the needs and perspectives of their ‘service users.’

They are also safe spaces for those who access their services and can thus act as a “gateway” (Org5) for police to make contact with members of the public. As one interviewee (Council7) explained, youth workers or other trusted figures can offer “at least initial bridging” in an initiative.

Along with this mediation between communities and the police, organisations can also play a key role in supporting contact with independent artists and creatives. This is significant given the concerns felt by many artists and creatives about working, or being seen to work, with the police. One Trust producer noted the resistance they had encountered from some artists:

*Some artists we’ve worked with have specifically absolutely point blank refused to work with the police because their networks exist and they’re trusted in communities that they’ve worked really hard to gain trust in, and any association with the police would just completely shoot that to pieces.*

(CofC9)

Another Trust producer (CofC4) similarly spoke about encountering artists who declined to take part in an initiative: “I can’t, I’m just not prepared to have [the police] involved in any way.” And a member of the embedded team (WMP13) also recognised the constraints felt by some artists: “no I will not have my name associated with the police, I don’t want to work with the police and it would damage my credibility as an artist.”

For one artist/creative we spoke to, their links with certain communities in the city did indeed mean that collaboration in a police project felt untenable:

*I know with certain people in the communities I work with and am friends with [...] there wouldn’t be a conversation about what my involvement was and what the work involved, it’s just black and white – do you work with the police or do you not work with the police.*

(Artist3)

This particular artist said that they would potentially consider taking part in a project which the police had an involvement in, but only if the police remained a silent partner throughout.



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



Another artist/creative expressed less resistance to the idea of collaborating with the police in principle; however, there were clear concerns about the impact this may have on the young people with whom they work:

*My loyalty's to the young people, so I think if I turned round and said 'oh I'm doing this work with the police,' they might think twice about talking to me on the level they do.*

(Artist2)

For other participants in this research, however, there was a willingness to work with police, but a clear understanding that community organisations were crucial: as intermediaries between themselves, the police, and the public, helping to access participants, to ensure clear boundaries between police and members of the public, and to assuage the concerns participants may have about police involvement. For one artist (Artist1) in particular, their proximity to the police during their project was a significant obstacle for the young people they wanted to work with and they thus required significant support from local



community organisations to help make connections and build trust with this cohort. As they noted: “*obviously the young people would never want to engage [ . . . ] if anything is coming from the police so that's relied heavily on partnerships.*”

The interaction between community organisations and the police is undoubtedly a complicated area for the police to navigate. As mentioned in [section 5C](#), WMP had pre-existing relationships with many community organisations in the city; however, for some, these were rather complex relationships which required very careful management; indeed, there were occasions both during and outside the Coventry City of Culture when these relationships were put under particular strain.

However, despite these difficulties, our findings indicate both the importance for the police of sustaining these relationships if they want to continue engagement activities, and also, importantly, the willingness of community groups to work with the police in the future, despite the animosity they may feel towards the institution. That said, there was a widespread sense that

interactions between the police and organisations and their service users needed to be sustained – several interviewees expressed a sense of frustration with the short-term nature of initiatives in the past, and with the lack of consistency in police contacts as officers change roles:

One interviewee (Council7) noted: “*there would need to be some consistency, and one thing about the police [ . . . ] they change jobs so often;*”

Another, who runs a charitable organisation, talked about a previous initiative which they felt was beneficial to the local community, but which ended when the police officer moved roles: “*he got moved onto another neighbourhood and it was a shame cos it was only just flourishing;*”

And a third (Org5), who also runs a community organisation, expressed similar frustrations with the frequent change in police personnel and talked about the negative impact this had: “*roles change quite a bit so you could be having a rapport with someone and then, before you know it, they've changed post.*” For this participant, successful engagement is based on ‘*sustainability with regard to their relationships.*’

Similarly, another interviewee (FG1) noted that contact with the police needs to be long-term – you can't just “*take a photo with some young people and say 'we're making relationships' and then never see them again – it's not beneficial.*”

All interviewees recognised that funding was an obvious impediment to longer-term interaction. However, there was a widespread sense that meaningful change could only occur if relationships with community organisations were sustained over a prolonged period.







Photo Credit: West Midlands Police

C. Shared objectives: the enforcement /engagement nexus

Community organisations, artists, and members of the public sometimes questioned police objectives during engagement activities. Our research points to a particularly complex tension between the engagement and enforcement roles of the police, but suggests that ensuring transparency and clarity on police aims and intentions from the outset of an initiative can go some way to building trust and alleviating anxiety.

Although many participants in this research expressed a willingness to continue engaging with the police and a sense that further collaboration could help to support targeted interventions with their service users, there was widespread concern, voiced by almost all participants in this study, about police objectives.

In particular, many participants expressed anxiety that initiatives may be used by the police as a means through which to gather intelligence.

Echoing the scholarship raised in [section 4](#) on the complexities of community policing, this was a concern in particular for the young people we spoke to, for instance the individual in FG4 ([section 8A](#)) who remained ‘guarded’ despite building a degree of rapport with the police officers they encountered in an initiative.

As one young person in a different focus group (FG1) noted – “even if you build a relationship, you could still say something and they’d still report it.” For some members of the public, this was a real barrier to any engagement with the police – one young person felt they would be branded a “snake” for engaging with the police:

*I’m pretty sure no one would like to have a police officers working with them, any sort of work, it’s named as a snake – that’s what other people would see it as.*

(YP1)

Others perceived the concerns this may cause: one participant asked:

*Why would somebody [...] be seen to be working closely with the police when they know they’re gonna get their window smashed in the next day because of that?*

(Council5)

Another talked about the young people with whom they worked and the risks they may perceive in working with the police:

*The reality is that some of the kids I work with can’t be seen to talk to the cops, it’s dangerous, it’s dangerous for you [...] it could have really severe consequences.*

(Artist2)

This was also a concern for community organisations, with one interviewee (Org2), for instance, stating that ‘the infiltration of communities through arts and culture’ has to be done in “an incredibly ethical way [...] it needs to be transparent, it can’t just be a way for the police to get intel.”



And this also caused considerable anxiety for members of the Trust, particularly those working with more vulnerable individuals, several of whom spoke in detail about their concerns around police objectives and potential intelligence gathering. For one Trust producer (CofC4), there was “*constantly a delicate navigation,*” a need to question “the why, why are we doing this? Not why are [the police] involved because it’s right that they’re involved, but at what level are they involved and which conversations are they involved in?”

For another (CofC5) it was always in “the back of my mind [...] what if someone did disclose something in a meeting?”

And for another (CofC13), there was a constant wariness about the police having access to information about the young people they were working with, and a reluctance therefore to share details about programme participants: “*it’s not fully trusting that they’re not trying to gather loads of data rather than listening to people.*”

Several Trust producers (e.g. CofC4, CofC5, CofC13) voiced a particular discomfort with the fact the embedded team appeared to be engaging more closely with the strands of work focusing

on young people than with any other strands. As one interviewee noted:

*I’m not totally clear on where that interest comes from, but it certainly could raise suspicion, in a more cynical mind, of like well you’re more interested in that because you’re looking for intelligence on young people. And I think that’s certainly the feeling I get from young people about not wanting to work with the police, that it is a matter of the intelligence that might be gathered.*

(CofC9)

For Trust producers, there was a sense that they needed to put their faith in the intentions of WMP in order to maintain the partnership: “*you’re really trusting that the police are not scoping for information at any point*” (CofC4).

In our interviews with WMP, there was some recognition of the concerns Trust staff may feel – many (e.g. WMP7, WMP12, and WMP13) talked about the importance of clarifying the role of the police in the Trust-WMP partnership and the reasons for their involvement.

And yet, it is clear from our interviews that there is indeed a notable complexity in navigating the enforcement/ engagement nexus, with several police participants talking about the importance of community engagement specifically because it does help to enable access to information which can be used by the police in their law enforcement practices.

This is encapsulated in several quotes from police participants, for instance, one member of the embedded team (WMP13) explained that: “*in terms of intel, compliance, investigations [...] it all really relies on us having those relationships with communities.*”

Another talked about the benefits of interacting with communities at Coventry City of Culture events, not only to build relationships, but also to gain information:

*Engagement at events involves ‘general conversations but also you have the underlying, from a police perspective [...] you’re getting intelligence as well, so whether it be little nuggets of information that for that intervention and prevention you can put into our intel system.’*

(WMP1)







Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin

And another recounted an occasion when a member of public had approached them during a City of Culture event and told them about drug dealing taking place in their block. For this officer:

*It's refreshing [...] people just want to talk to you for no reason, and then actually we gain a lot of information and intelligence just by building that trust [...] in a little sneaky way I think it's a nice way into communities for them to see us getting involved in events, but also for us to talk to people that wouldn't necessarily already come forward.*

(WMP14)

Another police participant spoke openly about the opportunity one City of Culture initiative had offered them to gain intelligence:

*[the participants] would very often let their guard down and start rambling about what happened last night or what happened at the weekend, and telling me loads of stuff, there was quite a lot of intelligence.*

(WMP23)

In fact, the relationships this officer built during the initiative ultimately led to them identifying a particular police target – “there was an investigation where one of the [participants] was involved, and I ended up ID-ing one of them.”

There was indeed an explicit recognition from several police participants that engagement with communities was crucial for the enforcement side of policing:

*I couldn't police without the buy-in of the community who are active and want to contribute but they won't do that if they don't feel they have confidence or they don't feel, if our legitimacy is poor, so working closely with the arts and culture sector to break down some of those barriers helps with that.*

(WMP2)

And, as one member of the embedded team explained, law enforcement ultimately takes priority over relationship-building:

*Engagement is really important, and we need to build stronger relationships, however we are still the police and we will still need to arrest people because there are guns and knives and attacks that take place.*

(WMP7)

Given the clear need for the police to find ways to navigate the discomfort and anxiety felt by many potential collaborators and members of the public around police objectives, perhaps the single most important recommendation is to ensure clarity and agreement on shared objectives from the outset of an initiative. For respondents from community organisations, artists/creatives, members of the public, and Trust staff, understanding why the police want to engage with a community or individual is crucial. And the objectives of all parties in the initiative must align and be transparent in order to build trust and ensure equitable collaboration.



## D. Ethical commitments

Complications arose on occasions where one party was seen as upholding different ethical standards towards participants in a project. Matters around confidentiality and anonymity should be considered, discussed, and clarified (where possible) at the outset of an initiative.

Both during and outside the Coventry City of Culture, initiatives with police were generally seen as less successful or more fraught when there were concerns around ethical practice, particularly in terms of safeguarding, confidentiality, and consent. As an example, one artist (Artist2) working on a project outside the City of Culture spoke about their surprise and discomfort at being contacted by a police officer and asked to provide them with some of the outputs produced by one of the young people taking part in their project.

For this artist, this was an inappropriate request which would have breached confidentiality and compromised their relationship with the participant.

Trust respondents (e.g. CofC4, CofC13) also voiced similar concerns around safeguarding and confidentiality, with several noting their discomfort when police requested or simply had access to the names and details of the young people involved in a City of Culture initiative.

Clearly, police forces are not subject to the same guidelines on confidentiality as the general public, with different responsibilities and obligations around duty of care. However, where possible, both WMP and community organisations/ artists embarking on a project would benefit from some joint agreements on issues around consent and confidentiality to ensure all parties are adhering, as far as possible, to the same guidelines as regards ethical practice. If definitive agreement cannot be reached, then being open and honest about the complexities and discussing pathways for managing issues should they arise would go some way to managing artists’/ organisations’ concerns.





## E. Remit of police influence

A key challenge for Trust staff revolved around the degree to which WMP could/should influence the events planning process. Agreeing the extent and boundaries of police influence at the start of a partnership – both within and beyond a City of Culture – would go some way to alleviating these concerns. Ensuring a clear induction process for all participants in a collaboration would also help to ensure clarity for all parties.

Concerns around the degree to which the police could or should influence the events planning process were expressed widely in this study.

These concerns were exacerbated by police practices early in the partnership, for instance the perceived over-policing of certain events, which was received very negatively by members of the Trust and by the communities present (CofC3, CofC6, CofC12); and the perceived suppression of a particular event early in the partnership on account of police concerns around safety – Trust respondents (e.g. CofC6) noted that that event was ultimately “hugely disappointing,” and felt the police had “contributed to that downfall.”

These individual instances of miscommunication or misaligned approaches were generally resolved as relationships were built during the partnership; however, concerns were still expressed by some Trust participants even much later in the partnership, with some feeling that the remit of influence of the police still remained unclear. One particular case in which police officers raised their anxieties about inviting a specific music act to take part in one of the City of Culture events was raised frequently (e.g. CofC3, CofC4) as an example of the complexities understanding and navigating police influence. However, this was not the only occasion on which Trust personnel raised some concern around the degree to which WMP could influence decisions.

One interviewee explained that:

*There’s challenge around police influencing programme. I think there should’ve been an established thing in the agreement that was signed between the two organisations that stated how far the police could go and to what point they would be overstepping.*

(CofC6)

Another stated:

*I think we’ve potentially been over-influenced or we haven’t clearly set the scene enough and maybe have taken too much from their concerns about a particular activity.*

(CofC8)

One recommendation therefore, both for future police-Trust partnerships and indeed for non-City of Culture collaborations, is for the remit of police influence to be established and agreed, as far as is possible, at the start of the partnership.

It would also be beneficial for all parties in a police partnership to receive a clear induction to the relationship, outlining the purpose of the police involvement, the objectives of both sides, and the remit of influence and responsibility of the police force. This would have helped particularly in the WMP-Trust partnership given the frequent turnover of Trust staff, but would also provide clarity in other collaborations beyond Cities of Culture, both for new starters and for more consistent parties in a partnership.







Photo Credit: West Midlands Police

## F. Police practice and police presence

There can be a tension when police are seen to enact law enforcement practices within a community engagement space – this can make it difficult to build trust and a sense of security amongst participants in an initiative. There may also be occasions where direct police involvement in an initiative is inappropriate, and instead should be mediated fully via a third party.

Many participants in this research talked about the difficulty or impossibility of building trust with police officers if they are also seen to be enacting law enforcement activities within the shared space. One focus group (FG2), for instance, reflected on the importance they attached to the fact that the PCSOs who attended their multi-agency centre were there for support, not for enforcement.

They recounted an occasion in which an unfamiliar officer had come into the centre to look for someone in connection with a crime, and described the response from attendees to this as very negative. In contrast, they spoke very positively about an occasion when a warrant had been issued for an individual who regularly attended the centre, and, rather than seeking to arrest this individual, the PCSOs at the centre instead offered them advice and support on how they may handle the situation appropriately and safely. They felt that this careful, non-enforcement approach to policing had helped them to develop a sense of trust in the PCSOs at the centre and made them more willing to engage and interact with them. We recommend, therefore, that professional discretion is employed and law enforcement activities avoided, as far as is possible, when police are engaging with communities in an arts and culture initiative.

Added to this, a further consideration is around police uniform and managing the tension around police visibility in a community engagement space. There was a concern from some participants in our research that plain-clothed officers can appear to be working covertly. However, at the same time, many participants (e.g. CofC1, CofC11, CofC13,

Council2 amongst many others) talked about the uniform as a barrier to trust-building: one member of the public, for instance, (FG2) explained that if officers arrived at their multi-agency centre in uniform “it would clear the place out;” a theatre director (Org8) noted that uniform can “set up a barrier;” while a Trust producer spoke about the young people they worked with being “freaked out” (CofC13) by the appearance of an officer in uniform at one of their meetings. Clearly this is complex and responses in our research were not unanimous on this point; however organisations generally suggested that the tension should be navigated on a case-by-case basis, and decisions on uniform made depending on the nature of the initiative and the participants involved.

Finally, it is important for the police to consider whether their presence is actually appropriate within a space, or whether some initiatives may require more distance between police and participants. As mentioned in [section 3](#), for instance, once the Positive Choices initiative was underway the decision was made not to bring PCSOs directly into music sessions with young people as it was felt that their presence may compromise the participants’ sense of

comfort in the space and their willingness to engage with the programme fully. Interestingly, this was seen as a particular issue in the case of music initiatives – many non-police respondents in this research highlighted music as a particularly powerful medium through which to share personal experience and feeling (e.g. Artist2, Council1), and several noted that police presence in a music space may therefore be particularly problematic. In situations like this then, and particularly if more vulnerable participants are taking part, our research suggests that it may be more appropriate for police involvement to be mediated fully by a 3rd party, as in the Artist in Residence scheme.



Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin



## G. Respecting organisational difference

The success of the WMP-Trust partnership was partly attributable to the significant time and effort individuals from both institutions took to learn and understand the differing boundaries and practices of one another's organisation. Recognising and showing an openness to learning from these different bodies of knowledge/practice can go some way to alleviating distrust, managing concerns, and ensuring equitable collaboration. This requires good lines of communication and sustained engagement.

Ultimately, many of the aforementioned recommendations – building relationships with organisations, establishing shared ethical commitments, ensuring clarity and transparency around objectives and remit of influence – require a recognition, understanding, and respect from all parties of the different bodies of knowledge, boundaries, and expected practices in partners' institutions.

Inevitably, this is a labour-intensive process – the embedded police team (e.g. WMP13, WMP7) spoke about the steep learning curve they undertook in order to build an understanding of the arts and culture industry, and the extensive number of meetings and discussions they attended in the early stages of the partnership in doing so.

Indeed several respondents to this research noted the labour required by the embedded police team to learn the principles and processes of events planning, as one Trust interviewee explained: “there's a process of learning a completely new language for the police.” And similarly, understanding policing practices and expectations required significant effort and input from Trust staff as well. Central to building this understanding was ensuring good lines of communication within and across

the partnership. Importantly, many participants in this research (e.g. Consultant1, Org2) noted the significance of the informal interactions afforded by the partnership as much as the formal structures. As such, access to the Trust workspace and regular attendance at meetings were seen as crucial for the success of the partnership.

Clearly, shared workspace is unlikely to be possible for collaborations between the police and other community organisations and artists/creative practitioners outside a City of Culture context. However, regular meetings and a sense of involvement in, and understanding of, one another's institutions can help to mitigate complexities and concerns as and when they arise, to alleviate distrust, and to ensure more equitable collaboration. As one senior Trust participant explained (CofC2), the key is to develop “a shared culture, a shared way of working, which then changes attitudes within institutions [and] means these [...] ways of working can continue.”

Photo Credit: FiveSix Photography







# CONCLUDING COMMENTS





# CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This evaluative report highlights the potential afforded by arts and culture for relationship-building between the police and the public – both within the context of Coventry City of Culture 2021, and beyond.

We note the benefits offered by the partnership between WMP and the Trust, seeing overlaps in both parties' priorities which meant that they could offer one another mutually beneficial support. This was particularly useful in terms of managing the safety and security of events, and also in supporting access to some of the more marginalised or seldom heard communities with whom both parties wished to work.

We find that the initiatives precipitated by the WMP-Trust partnership were broadly well-received by their participants, and see evidence that engagement through arts and culture can help to increase mutual trust and understanding

between police and communities. Importantly, we argue that arts and culture as a medium can offer benefits which may not be found through other channels, for instance sport. In particular, there can be a levelling opportunity with power more equitably shared by participants, if principles of co-creation are followed. And creative endeavours can allow participants to share something of themselves, thereby potentially helping to build a sense of mutual understanding between interlocutors.

There remains, however, a sense of distrust and anxiety around working with the police amongst many community organisations, artists/creative practitioners, and members of the public. We find that trust-building between participants in an initiative is central, and that this cannot be forged without transparency, shared objectives, and self-reflection on the part of the police force.

This relationship-building is resource-intensive and requires funding availability for long-term engagement beyond the immediacy of a single initiative. It also requires a high level of commitment from officers at all levels of the force, and an awareness that broad institutional culture change is widely desired by the public.



Photo Credit: Dylan Parrin



Photo Credit: West Midlands Police



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# REFERENCES

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# APPENDIX 1a

## Information Sheet for institutional participants



### Participant Information Leaflet

**Study Title:**

Policing, culture and community:  
WM Police as City of Culture partners

**Investigator(s):**

Professor Jackie Hodgson,  
School of Law, University of Warwick

Dr. Rachel Lewis, Department of  
Sociology/School of Law,  
University of Warwick

### Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study. This leaflet explains why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

### Who is organising & funding the study?

This is an independent study carried out by researchers at the University of Warwick. The study is funded by 3 bodies: the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); West Midlands Police; and the City of Culture Trust.

### What is the study about?

West Midlands Police (WMP) are partners with the City of Culture Trust (the Trust) in the delivery of Coventry UK City of Culture 2021/22. This is a new kind of partnership and the first time that a police force has taken on such an embedded role in a large-scale cultural mega event. This study seeks to understand the nature of this partnership and its potential to have a positive impact in 3 key areas: crime reduction; connection with and protection of communities; and diversity in police recruitment.

The research team will conduct a set of interviews with a range of stakeholders, including WMP officers, members of the City of Culture Trust, and individuals in core community organisations with whom the police are working. We will use these interviews to inform our understanding of the nature of the WMP-Trust partnership and of the possibilities for police partnerships around arts and culture more broadly.

### What would taking part involve?

Taking part means you are happy for our researchers – Prof Jackie Hodgson and/ or Dr. Rachel Lewis – to ask you questions about your perspectives and opinions on the WMP-Trust partnership and on police-community relations. This interview will take approximately one hour, and will be recorded and saved in a secure online folder on the university’s password-protected IT system. The audio recording will then be deleted from the voice recorder. We will transcribe and anonymise the interview, and your responses will only be used for this project and any related research publication.

### Do I have to take part?

No. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and choosing not to take part

will not affect you in any way. You can also choose to withdraw your participation without giving a reason by contacting one of the research team. Further details about withdrawing from the study are provided later on in this document.

### What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

By taking part in this study, you are helping to further our understanding of an unprecedented type of police partnership and the potential this sort of collaborative endeavour may have for police-community relations. This in turn may have an impact on future police partnerships around arts and culture.

### What are the possible disadvantages, side effects or risks, of taking part in this study?

It is possible that you may wish to raise some sensitive issues, or to offer some negative perspectives of the organisations in question during the course of the interview. All your responses will be anonymised and will not be shared with others outside this study, and any quotes used in the research report or related publications will also be anonymised.

If you have been affected by the interview questions, you may wish to contact NHS wellbeing support:

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/> ; or ACAS workplace support: <https://www.acas.org.uk/>

### Expenses and payments

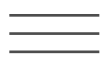
There is no payment or reimbursement offered for taking part in this study.

### Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Your interview responses will be recorded on a University of Warwick recording device and transferred straight after the interview onto a secure, password-protected device. The audio will then be deleted from the recording device. Your responses will be transcribed and de-identified using a numerical system, and all interview data will be deleted by 2031. Direct quotes may be used in the research report and related publications but will be anonymised in this instance. Only the researchers involved in this project will have access to your interview recording and transcript.

*Continues...*





What will happen to the data collected about me?

As a publicly-funded organisation, the University of Warwick have to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information from people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, such as this, we will use your data in the ways needed to conduct and analyse the research study.

We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. We are committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with data protection legislation. The University of Warwick will keep identifiable information about you until 2031 when it will be deleted.

Research data will be anonymised as quickly as possible after data collection and it will not be possible to withdraw your data after this point.

If we hold your email in order to contact you, this will not be shared outside the research team and will be retained until the study is complete at the end of 2022

Data Sharing

Your data will be shared with the two researchers named above. Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. The University of Warwick has in place policies and procedures to keep your data safe.

This data may also be used for future research, including impact activities following review and approval by an independent Research Ethics Committee and subject to your consent at the outset of this research project.

For further information, please refer to the University of Warwick Research Privacy Notice which is available here: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/idc/dataprotection/privacynotices/researchprivacynotice> or by contacting the Legal and Compliance Team at [GDPR@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:GDPR@warwick.ac.uk).

What will happen if I don’t want to carry on being part of the study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and if you wish to withdraw you may do so within a fortnight of the interview taking place. If you do decide to withdraw, please email either Jackie

Hodgson or Rachel Lewis on one of the email addresses used to set up your interview. Please note that if you withdraw from the study later than this, it will not be possible to withdraw your data as it will have been anonymised.

What will happen to the results of the study?

A research report will be produced and disseminated to stakeholders in WMP, the Trust, and interested community organisations. The research may also be used to inform academic publications in peer reviewed journals and conference papers.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the University of Warwick’s Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC).

Who should I contact if I want further information?

Professor Jackie Hodgson  
– [Jackie.hodgson@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Jackie.hodgson@warwick.ac.uk)

Who should I contact if I wish to make a complaint?

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered

will be addressed. Please address your complaint to the person below, who is a senior University of Warwick official entirely independent of this study:

Head of Research Governance

Research & Impact Services  
University House  
University of Warwick  
Coventry  
CV4 8UW

Email:  
[researchgovernance@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:researchgovernance@warwick.ac.uk)  
Tel: 02476 575733

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter: [DPO@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:DPO@warwick.ac.uk).

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Leaflet



# APPENDIX 1b

## Information Sheet for community participants



### Participant Information Leaflet for Individuals

#### Study Title:

Policing, culture and community:  
WM Police as City of Culture partners

#### Investigator(s):

Professor Jackie Hodgson,  
School of Law, University of Warwick

Dr. Rachel Lewis, Department of  
Sociology/School of Law,  
University of Warwick

#### Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

#### Who is organising & funding the study?

This is an independent study carried out by researchers at the University of Warwick. The study is funded by 3 bodies: the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); West Midlands Police; and the City of Culture Trust.

#### What is the study about?

This year, Coventry is the UK’s City of Culture and is running lots of events and projects throughout the city. West Midlands Police are working alongside the City of Culture Trust to organise and support some of these arts and culture projects. In this study, we will interview people living in Coventry to try to understand a bit more about the police-City of Culture partnership, about police-community relations, and

about the impact arts and culture can have on communities.

#### What would taking part involve?

Taking part means you are happy for our researchers – Professor Jackie Hodgson and/or Dr. Rachel Lewis – to ask you questions about your opinions on the Police-City of Culture partnership. We will also talk about police-community relations and arts and culture projects. This interview will take approximately one hour and will be recorded and saved in a safe place on the university’s IT system. We will type up your interview and delete the recording from the voice recorder straightaway. Your interview will be anonymous – your name will not be used anywhere so no one will know the responses are you. The things you say will only be used for this project and any related research publication.

#### Do I have to take part?

No, you do not need to take part in this study if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part but then you change your mind, you can withdraw from the study without giving a reason. More information about withdrawing from the study is provided later on in this document.

#### What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

By taking part in this study, you are helping us to understand the possible impacts of the West Midlands Police involvement in a large cultural event like the City of Culture. You will also help us to understand a bit more about police-community relations, and about the role arts and culture can play in communities.

#### What are the possible disadvantages, side effects or risks, of taking part in this study?

It is possible that you might want to talk about some sensitive issues or some things that are complicated or difficult to discuss. You might also want to say some things that are negative about West Midlands Police or the City of Culture. We are interested in hearing anything you want to talk about, both positive and negative, but it may make you feel a little bit uncomfortable. All your answers will be treated in confidence, and your words will be anonymous so no one will know the responses are from you. We will not share your interview recording with anyone outside this study.

If you are affected by any of the interview questions, you might want to contact NHS wellbeing support:

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>

#### Expenses and payments

There is no payment or reimbursement offered for taking part in this study.

#### Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Your interview will be recorded and we will transfer this recording straight after the interview onto a secure, password-protected computer. We will then delete the audio from the recording device. After this, we will transcribe your interview and remove your name from the transcription to make it anonymous. Only the researchers involved in this project – Professor Jackie Hodgson and Dr Rachel Lewis – will have access to your transcript. All interview data will be deleted by 2031.

*Continues...*



### Limits to confidentiality

Research data will be stored securely and confidentiality. If, during the interview, some information is raised which suggests that there might be a risk of harm to you or to someone else, then the researcher may disclose this information to the relevant authorities. We would tell you if we needed to do this.

### What will happen to the data collected about me?

As a publicly-funded organisation, the University of Warwick have to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information from people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, such as this, we will use your data in the ways needed to conduct and analyse the research study.

We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. We are committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with data protection legislation. The University of Warwick will keep identifiable information about you until 2031 when it will be deleted.

Research data will be anonymised as quickly as possible after data collection and it will not be possible to withdraw your data after this point.

If we hold your email in order to contact you, this will not be shared outside the research team and will be retained until the study is complete at the end of 2022

### Data Sharing

Your data will be shared with the two researchers named above. Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. The University of Warwick has in place policies and procedures to keep your data safe.

This data may also be used for future research, including impact activities following review and approval by an independent Research Ethics Committee and subject to your consent at the outset of this research project.

For further information, please refer to the University of Warwick Research Privacy Notice which is available here: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/idc/dataprotection/privacynotices/researchprivacynotice> or by contacting the Legal and Compliance Team at [GDPR@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:GDPR@warwick.ac.uk).

### What will happen if I don't want to carry on being part of the study?

If you decide you want to withdraw from the study after your interview, you can do so within two weeks of the interview taking place. If you do decide to withdraw, please contact either Jackie Hodgson or Rachel Lewis via the member of the Trust who helped to set up the interview. Please note that if you withdraw from the study later than two weeks after the interview, it will not be possible to withdraw your data as it will have been anonymised.

### What will happen to the results of the study?

A research report will be produced and sent through to individuals in WMP, the Trust, and interested community organisations. The research may also be used in academic publications in peer reviewed journals and conference papers.

### Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the University of Warwick's Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC).

### Who should I contact if I want further information?

Professor Jackie Hodgson  
— [Jackie.hodgson@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Jackie.hodgson@warwick.ac.uk)

### Who should I contact if I wish to make a complaint?

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered will be addressed. Please address your complaint to the person below, who is a senior University of Warwick official entirely independent of this study:

### Head of Research Governance

Research & Impact Services

University House

University of Warwick

Coventry

CV4 8UW

Email:  
[researchgovernance@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:researchgovernance@warwick.ac.uk)

Tel: 02476 575733

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter: [DPO@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:DPO@warwick.ac.uk).

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

### Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Leaflet



# APPENDIX 2

## Consent Form



**Participant Identification Number  
for this study:**

**Title of Project:**

Policing, culture and community:  
WM Police as City of Culture partners

**Name of Researcher(s):**

Professor Jackie Hodgson,  
School of Law, University of Warwick

Dr. Rachel Lewis, Department of  
Sociology/School of Law,  
University of Warwick

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet (v1, 16 August 2021) for the above study.  
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within a fortnight of an interview, without giving any  
reason and without my legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from The University of Warwick or from regulatory  
authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.

4. I give my consent for my interview to be audio recorded.

5. I understand that the researchers may pass some information to the relevant authorities if something is raised during the interview  
which indicates that I, or someone else, may be at risk of harm. I understand that the researchers would tell me if this happened.

6. I give my consent for anonymised verbatim quotations to be used in relevant research reports, conferences, and publications.

7. I am happy for my data to be used in future research.

8. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please initial all boxes

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent

Date

Signature





# APPENDIX 3

Flagship creative projects:  
specific police aims & objectives

## ARTS AGAINST HOMELESSNESS – SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

### Overall police aim:

to build empathy and understanding between participants, connecting with individuals with lived experience to ‘demystify’ homelessness, its contributory factors, and societal and statutory body responses.

### Key police objectives:

- To build a shared understanding of the complex factors that can result in homelessness and rough sleeping, hearing those with lived experience and their own perspectives and experiences
- To use the findings from the sessions to build understanding of the homelessness sector, and to develop training to upskill staff around homelessness and agency referral mechanisms
- To encourage collaborative working to engender attitudinal change with a view to encouraging longer-term partnerships to shape strategy and city response to homelessness
- To explore how rough sleeping is dealt with by the Criminal Justice System, and what opportunities there are for creative out of court disposals when dealing with associated offences

## BARRIERS TO BRIDGES

### Overall police aim:

to build mutual understanding and empathy between young people and the police, and to understand what needs to be done to improve trust and confidence in the police. For WMP, building more positive relationships with young people would in turn improve safety in the city.



## POSITIVE CHOICES



### Key police aims:

- To provide focus at a high-risk time of day (after school)
- To provide after school provision for those who need a “safe space” after school to explore issues they are facing, through music
- To facilitate engagement with positive adult role models fostering trusted relationships (PCSO, mentors)
- To help develop confidence and self-esteem; to offer diversion; and to build education, training, work experience skills
- To support pathways to other music making activities
- To provide an opportunity to build relationships and break down barriers with police

## FOREST CAMPS

### Overall aim:

Forest Camps was designed to help improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people, to enable them to take ownership of actions and decisions that may put them at risk, and to improve perceptions of the police and partners. Beyond these individual benefits, it also aimed to directly address some of the causal factors that lead young people to becoming at-risk and to explore how Coventry and its green spaces can be made safer.

### Further police aims:

- To provide activity experience with transferable life, education and employment skills
- To broaden the horizons of young people with limited life & environment experience
- To divert at-risk young people away from potential criminal/gang involvement and exploitation
- To improve perceptions of and build trust and understanding with the police and partners, and explore how young people may want to work collaboratively to make the city safer for themselves and others