



Museum of Stories

Applied Stories

Independent Evaluation (Full Report)

Mita Pujara, November 2023

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What underpins all Applied Stories projects is a belief that stories can change the world. Not in the sense of a political revolution, but certainly an emotional and psychological one. Stories are a vehicle for encountering one another and seeing places anew. In any story, we walk a mile in someone's shoes - literally in the case of our walking app. And audio through earbuds is surprisingly intimate. Museum of Stories is a 4D machine for empathy. It's an attempt to give an area a collective voice to the outside world, and to invite that world in, to encounter and connect, with their host community and with each other.

Fin Kennedy, Artistic Director, Applied Stories

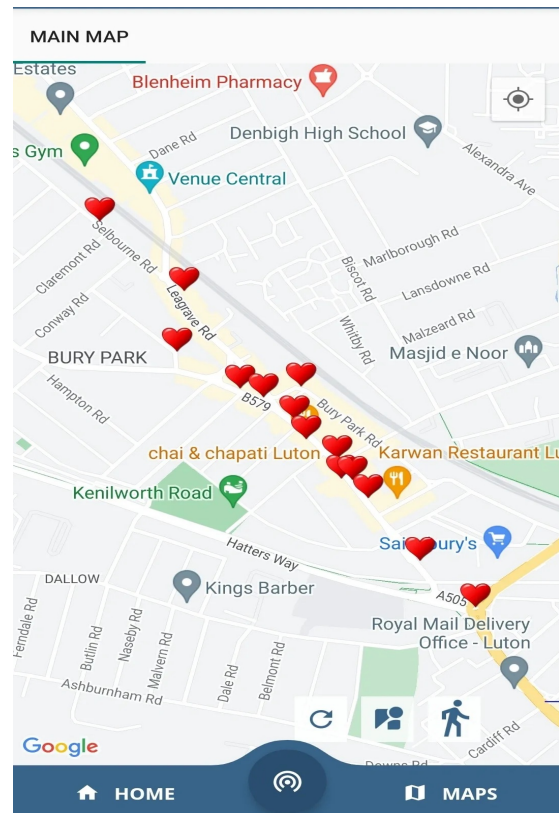
What was the Museum of Stories (MoS)?

Museum of Stories (MoS) was a [geolocated audio walk](#) featuring 12 stories from real people about the Bury Park Area in Luton which launched in September 2023. It was a community-led project funded by Arts Council England and supported both financially and in-kind by Revoluton Arts and Luton Borough Council's *Curating Luton: place-making project*.

The twelve 5-10 minute audio dramas were sourced by setting up a phone line and inviting Bury Park residents past and present to call up and tell a story about the area. This took place from Nov 2021 to April 2022 through a seed commission from Revoluton Arts. Fin Kennedy of Applied Stories teamed up with local creative producer Shemiza Rashid to deliver it, and the play *Seeing Clearly* was made and shared (now a centrepiece of the app). Numerous other story submissions were 'banked' for the future.

The full project received Arts Council England funding less than a year later, and ran from Feb 2023 to October 2023, with the app itself remaining live and in app stores until at least Feb 2024. During this time the phone line was reopened and readvertised, and a Story Box set up in the waiting room of Alexandra Opticians. The project was also able to reconnect with unused stories from the pilot.

Twelve contributors were paired with one of three professional writers, who developed their story into a short script to suit the contributor's voice. Drafts were shared with the contributors for feedback and comment. The finished audio dramas were recorded in a studio at Revoluton Arts within Marsh Farm



House, by a cast of community actors, then edited with music and effects, and uploaded to the app.

Each story was pinned to a map of Dunstable Road, in the place where it happened, like a cross-section of the area from a bird's eye view. Each story was represented by a red heart - because each represents a life. Although it can be accessed from anywhere in the world, it was designed to be experienced through listening with headphones via the Museum of Stories app and walking around Bury Park.

“Luton’s Museum of Stories includes 12 audio tales about the Bury Park area. They have created a "time capsule" of the diverse town.”
Alex Pope, BBC Regional News Website.

The 12 "Audio Tales"

Welcome to Museum of Stories (4 mins)

A welcome from Jackie Gunn, the Museum's resident historian.

2. A Place of Love and Pain (5 mins)

Meet the 19th-century founder of Bury Park, Charles Mees.

4. Double or Quits (6 mins)

Hear about the time Faisal and Itsham nearly lost their dad's car in a pool game in the 1990s.

6. The Girl on the Shelf (9 mins)

True story of a surprising ghost sighting at Alexandra Opticians, 88 Dunstable Road.

8. Haggling for Halaal (7 mins)

Bury Park has the best fried chicken in Bedfordshire. Some people come all the way from St Albans!

10. Winners and Losers (9 mins)

The story of Florence Barford, a former resident of 88 Dunstable Road.

12. The Little Maid (9 mins)

In the darkest days of World War Two, a former maid gets a lucky escape when a V2 rocket falls on Bury Park

1. A Leap Into Faith (9 mins)

A Jewish mother and her young daughter arrive in Bury Park after having to leave Cairo in the 1950s after the Suez Crisis.

3. Crossing Bridges (12 mins)

An unlikely encounter with a traffic warden sends Mussy on a trip down memory lane to her school days in the 1980s.

5. Seeing Clearly (15 mins)

Bury Park, 1963. A young girl goes to Allders Opticians for her first set of glasses.

7. The Days After (9 mins)

Two nights of civil unrest in July 1981 changed Fahim and his friends forever.

9. Leaving Politics Behind (6 mins)

Hear Aneera's story, one of Bury Park's newer arrivals from Pakistan.

11. Grappling for Luton (5 mins)

Brazilian JiuJitsu is massive in Bury Park. For Itsham, grappling is a metaphor for life.

Voicemail montage (3 mins)

A selection of the messages received by the Story Hotline.

The full app can be downloaded from www.museumofstories.co.uk and is free in app stores globally.

What was different?

The Audience said...

“Usually, we hear stories about Bury Park through word of mouth. It felt very different as I listened standing outside each area.”

“It felt very personal because you could see all of the places the stories talk about.”

“I've never seen a story format like this.”

“It was real people's stories voiced by non-actors. Listening to real voices makes it so authentic.”

“MoS is so immersive. It makes you look at a door differently and imagine what was once through there.”



MoS confidently and effectively used digital technology to showcase a different way to tell stories. Audiences found many aspects innovative including the high-quality production, diverse and authentic voices, geolocative storytelling, and the immersive, personal, sensorial experience.

Geolocating and Mapping Narratives Unlike traditional word-of-mouth storytelling, MoS's geolocation feature allowed listeners to stand in story locations, enhancing immersion and prompting a fresh perspective on familiar places.

Diverse Stories A variety of stories spanning a century reflected an array of communities and

delivered a richer understanding of Bury Park, challenging existing assumptions of the area.

Authentic Voices Using real people's stories and voices, rather than actors, made MoS feel authentic. The Luton accent was specifically mentioned as creating a genuine connection to the local community and culture.

Sensorial and Personal The audio drama was described as “tapping into” the listeners' senses, creating a more profound and engaging experience that went beyond just hearing a story creating a very personal and intimate experience.

High Production Values The excellent production values in the recording and the app contributed to a more immersive experience. This was felt to be an aspect which is often compromised in some arts projects and is markedly different from Oral History Recording.



“We would never usually have a director present at an oral history recording. There is usually just a sound technician - this was new, and I thought it was really great.”

Lilly Smith – Heritage Development Manager, Curating Luton, Luton Council

Who did we reach?

“This was an excellent example of what a community project should look like. It didn't focus on one community group but enabled and engaged a broader, diverse one. It was intergenerational and cross-cultural with people from South Asian, Black, White, and Jewish backgrounds.” **Shemiza Rashid, Co-Producer, Co-Writer, and Co-Director**

MoS reached **26 people** (community cast) across a broad spectrum of ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds between Feb 2023-Oct 2023 with **40** others joining in **5** group listening events at the Opticians. **8** participants came on board as actors and story contributors. **15** joined solely as actors and **1** took part as an actor, co-writer, and story contributor (see *Appendices* for names).

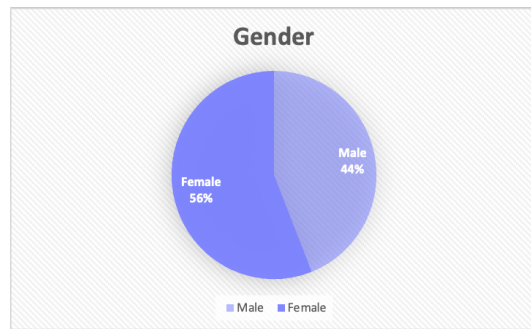
The diverse production team consisted of Fin Kennedy and Shemiza Rashid who acted as co-producers and co-writers, with Titi Dawudu as a third writer, and Fin as dramaturg. They were joined by Ellie Jones for the recording, who co-directed and mentored Shemiza, and sound designer Farokh Soltani.

Demographics

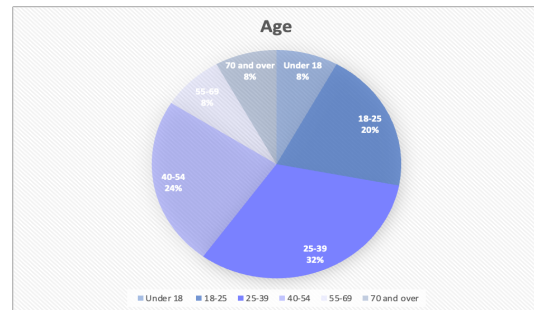
Insights on Participants

MoS attracted a wide spectrum of participants across different ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, which was reflected in the variety of stories on the app. **50%** of participants had not previously taken part in a publicly funded arts project. **84%** of participants were either born, raised, lived, and worked in Bury Park or had a family connection to the area. A few participants travelled from London and St Albans in Hertfordshire. It is worth noting the strength of the intergenerational aspect, with children being cast as their parents in some narratives. Also, MoS successfully engaged and retained participation from groups who are sometimes underrepresented in such projects e.g., White men, men of Colour and the 18-25 demographic. There was also a fair spread of occupations including those who were employed, students, retired and a homemaker.

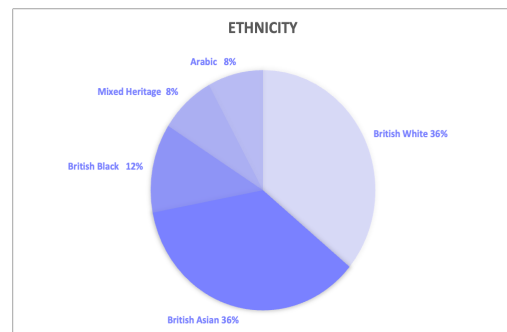
Gender 44% Male, 56% Female



Age 8% U18s, 20% 18-25, 32% 25-39, 24% 40-54, 8% 55-69, 8% 70 plus



Ethnicity British (White) 36%, British (Asian) 36%, British (Black) 12%, Mixed Heritage 8%, Arabic 8%



Meaningful Engagement

Participant engagement was sustained and deep. For some people who joined the pilot in Nov 2021 this was over 22 months as the app launched in Sept 2023. They were offered multiple ways of engaging as a researcher, story contributor, actor, co-writer and in marketing. Story contributors were involved throughout the writing and editing process.



"It brought back so many fond memories of growing up in Luton with my family."
Jacqueline Edelstein, Actor and Story Contributor

Insights on Audience

247 unique users downloaded the app from Sept-November 2023 which was about half of what was expected. However listeners had an average dwell time of 37 minutes, and an average of 2.2 returning visits per user, suggesting high and repeated levels of engagement for such apps. App analytics provide very little demographic data; however,

we can see quite a geographical spread with the vast majority from the UK, with the United States second, followed by Poland, the United Arab Emirates and India, with a handful of users each. In the UK, users' locations are evenly split between Luton and London. The third city after these is Wroclaw in Poland, followed by Sheffield, Bedford, and Birmingham. The survey data also shows people travelled in from Margate, Sheffield, and Dublin although the majority were from Luton (LU2, LU3 and LU4 postcodes). Using the data over 9 weeks we can project that between 600-700 people will engage with the app by the end of February when it closes.

Marketing

MoS was well publicised through word of mouth, flyering, social media, and organisational and event listing websites. It appeared in various local and national features including a BBC Asian network radio documentary, BBC online and local press and a podcast run by Luton's local superhero Deadpool. The survey feedback indicates that word of mouth was the most effective method in prompting people to download the app and the event listing website was the least.



What impact did we make?

Participants

Unleashing and Fuelling Creativity

MoS deeply influenced participants, enhancing skills in writing, storytelling, acting, and directing. It has also offered new experiences like recording and performing audio drama. Tangible outcomes include one participant writing a local history column, another volunteering with Revoluton Arts, others contemplating joining drama groups or actively seeking DYCP funding to elevate their creative practice.

“I had these stories about Bury Park which Fin read and thought were brilliant. He spoke to Laura Hutchinson in *Luton News* and now I have this column to share the stories.”

Jackie Gunn, Story Contributor, Researcher and Actor

“I didn’t think I could work as a professional playwright, but I am now in the process of applying to DYCP to further develop my script writing for audio skills.” **Shemiza Rashid, Co-Producer, Co-Writer, and Co-Director**

“Working on this has made me think about joining a local drama group.” **Lilly Smith, Story Contributor and Actor**



Connection across communities

Most participants at the cast read-through did not know each other, despite the prevailing narrative that the same people consistently participate in Luton's art projects. The project successfully fostered new connections across communities which was strengthened by a shared passion for the history and stories of Bury Park.

Ownership

MoS was embraced by many people as their own, in particular, by Dr Alvi whose Ophthalmic Opticians is based at the heart of Dunstable Road, Bury Park. He welcomed the project from 2021 onwards and continues to open his practice to host meetings, group listening events, story collection, and support flyering. Additionally, anyone who wishes to listen to the story *The Girl on the Shelf* is welcome to sit in the waiting room.

Memories

Participants were deeply moved by hearing their own stories. They brought back painful and happy memories. *The Days After* was praised for its accurate portrayal, emotional resonance, and cultural and historical significance. It was seen as an academically valuable reference of the civil unrest in Luton in 1981.

“It was emotional. The way Titi had written the script was exactly what happened. It’s a docu-drama really.” **Fahim Qureshi, Actor and Story Contributor**

“My story just brought back all the emotions to me: the racism and bullying, you had to stand up for yourself.” **Musarat Jan, Actor and Story Contributor**

“I remember how girls weren’t allowed in the Snooker club, I remember the riots, the pig’s head, and the skinheads. They were terrifying for everybody.” **Aimi Rix, Actor**

Working with a Professional Director

Working with director Ellie Jones was a positive impact on participants who appreciated her honest guidance and ability to calm nerves. This inspired some participants to join a local drama group and others to try more directing.

“Ellie was brilliant. I’ve never done anything like this, and I was nervous, but she was so good. It was a fantastic experience.” **Musarat Jan, Story Contributor and Actor**

Blended Narratives

Whilst participants enjoyed stories which were re-told exactly as they had been experienced; they also valued the audio dramas which mixed up different stories to create something new.



Representation

Linked to the idea of authenticity some people felt heard and their culture represented as the quote box below shows. One audience member expressed surprise and delight at the inclusion of Quranic references in “*Grappling for Luton*.”

“I heard the references to the Qu’ran and faith in subtle ways in *Grappling for Luton*. I was so surprised that our stories can be told in this professional capacity. As a Muslim man, I thought our stories couldn’t be in such a place. It was amazing.” **Audience member**

Another young Muslim woman from a traditional background decided to pursue her dream of working in the arts after watching Shemiza and is now volunteering for Revoluton Arts. These changes were unexpected and may seem small but bring incredible meaning to those experiencing them.



Conversations about Change

The stories prompted listeners to think about how far Luton had changed. Conversations considered areas such as women’s rights and gender equality, anti-racism, EDI policy, the police force, and the welcome towards new communities. People had mixed feelings, some feeling that Bury Park had come a long way, and others that the same underlying issues and tensions were present. There would be much scope to use the pp as a catalyst or springboard for further conversation.

“In years to come this will be more than an archive it brings history to life. It is so important for historical legacy. EDI strategies and policies all must thank the people who went through those struggles, young people 14, 15, 16.” **Fahim Qureshi, Story Contributor and Actor**

Audience

Absolutely brilliant day out finding out about the project and the wonderful people behind it. This is the positivity that Luton needs. Well done!" **Audience Member**

Broad Appeal

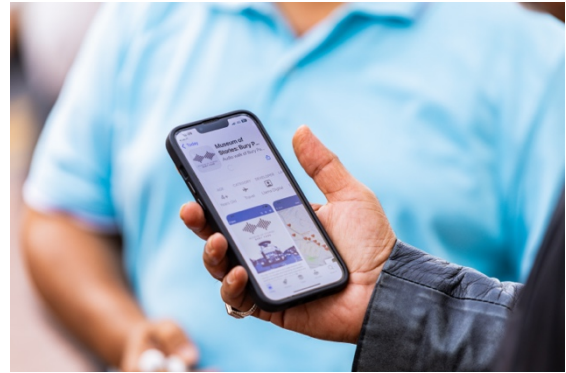
MoS had a wide appeal for audiences both around the format, content, and connection with Bury Park. The most common words were unique, generous, fun, educational as this word cloud shows.



FORMAT

Time and Space

The immersive nature of the walk felt like time travelling for some. The audio was able to transport you to another world, whilst you were still very much in modern-day Bury Park.



The Audience said ...

"I loved how different worlds, stories, people existed simultaneously and how the energy of those worlds, stories, people can echo through a single place and moment in time."

"It was so strange; I was listening to the post office story in WW2 whilst also choosing a salwar kameez!"

Cross-Pollination

The audience gained a real sense of satisfaction when they 'discovered' two of the stories were linked by a character. It was not obvious, or signalled so listeners happened upon them in the same way as you would in a novel or a play.

"What I didn't realise is how the stories would link - that's what I enjoyed about it, that some stories are separate and then there's some which are linked."

Deadpool, Luton

"The ghost girl in the opticians...existed in more than one story. I liked the cross-pollination" **Audience Member**

CONTENT

Something for Everyone

MoS revealed an eclectic collection of previously unheard stories. From tales of rebellious teenage spirit to lucky escapes in the Second World War. They appealed to different people in different ways. Some preferred the 'historical', others the more personal which demonstrates the importance of including both. Favourites from the survey feedback included *The Girl on the Shelf*, *Haggling for Halaal*, *Snooker and The Days After*, *Winners and Losers*, *The Little Maid*, and *A Place of Love and Pain*.



Audiences Said...

"There was such an array of historical stories I never knew existed here."

"What I loved was the rebellious teenage spirit in *Haggling for Halal*."

"I loved *The Girl on the Shelf*. It's interesting in how it's different to the others because there's an element of mystery about it and it spans periods."

"I loved the celebration of food"

"Some worked better than others. Being a history buff, the more personal ones didn't really hit the mark for me, some seemed like political commentary versus Bury Park." **Robert Allen, Ottawa, Canada**

A People's History

There were no stories of famous people from Luton, every story celebrated everyday real people's experiences. Audiences found this refreshing and it also disrupted the narrative around exceptionalism connected to memorialisation, heritage and history.

Audiences Said...

"There are so many real stories that remain untold throughout Luton. So much treasure waiting to be uncovered through apps like this!"

"I never knew about the history of Luton and the secrets hidden within its walls. The different experiences real people had who lived in Bury Park."

BURY PARK

A Sense of Belonging and Pride

About a quarter of respondents loved Bury Park before the project having a personal connection to the area. MoS resonated with this and for some, increased a sense of pride of belonging because of the way it was represented. **70%** of survey respondents felt more connected to the area and had a greater appreciation of its unique history and long relationship with migrant communities and displaced people. New visitors described Bury Park as "welcoming" and felt more inspired to discover other parts of the city

"Coming from Luton, I can honestly say I can't be prouder of my town. We have been through a lot over the years, and now I feel like we are finally standing tall and representing our town for the awesome place it is." **Deadpool, Luton**

Audiences Said...

"I feel I am connected to the area and know a little of its soul."

"I listened from Dublin, Ireland. This was my first "visit" to Bury Park and I enjoyed every minute of it."

"I saw Bury Park in a new light - normally it's a part of the town I don't travel through often but apps like this encourage me to walk and explore my town more."

“Museum of Stories has captured the essence of a community which has built up over the last 50 years. It was always a culturally diverse place with waves of immigrants whether they were Irish, Italians, Polish and West Indians, or Afro-Caribbean. It’s always been a centre for new arrivals who contribute to the industry. There are a lot of challenges here but there’s a real human feel underneath all that. The media portray the negatives and social media criticise the South Asian community in racist ways, but they don’t live here. They don’t know the harmony or how people support each other.” **Fahim Qureshi, Story Contributor and Actor**

Most people know about Luton and rioting, crime, or inter-community tension. The optician's story flips that and celebrates Bury Park as an upmarket destination, where everyone is impeccably stylish, subverting people’s assumptions. **Maria Shury-Smith, Revoluton Arts**

Subverting Stereotypes

Bury Park is often associated with negative perceptions perpetuated by the media such as poverty, crime, and antisocial behaviour. However, the audience felt that MoS subverted this, highlighting the support, cohesion, solidarity, and humanity in the communities who live(d) and work(ed) here.



On Partners

Revoluton Arts (RA) had been investing in digital content creation and found that MoS and the reactions to it are valuable in helping to inform their future approach in this area. They found that this format aligned with the ‘nomadic nature’ of the organisation by allowing virtual access to heritage, creativity, and stories.

“The app has been a wonderful way for us to think about what role we wanted digital to play within our work. It’s exciting to have seen what the reception has been to this form. We are a ‘nomadic’ organisation, and the app nicely complements that, in terms of being able to cross into the world of heritage, creativity and stories without needing to cross a physical threshold.”

Maria Shury-Smith, Revoluton Arts



Historically RA was connected to Bury Park but did not have depth of engagement. This was because it was mostly run by freelancers who were often not Luton-based. MoS has aided RA’s post-pandemic efforts to reconnect and build relationships in the area, as well as lay the foundation for long-term and strategic partnerships (for more, see *Moving Forward*).

“MoS has been pivotal, especially post-pandemic, in helping to reconnect, rebuild and in my view, start relationships in the Bury Park area. We had a big street theatre piece which came to Luton last week, we had a few flyers left and were able to just drop into the opticians and ask to stand outside flyering. Being able to have that kind of way into the area has been brilliant.”

Maria Shury-Smith, Revoluton Arts



From January, we’re pivoting to this hub model to deliver sustained impact in these areas. We will use the existing stories as stimuli for groups of participants to create new work that is multi-art form. It will be the light touch end of the participation scale, with people being able to drop in and out monthly. It means that we’ll be in a much better position to receive a project like Fin’s in the future because there will be an existing warm level of engagement and a creative engine that he can connect to.”

Maria Shury-Smith, Revoluton Arts

What did we learn?

What factors drove success?

LOCATION

Dunstable Road in Bury Park was the ideal location because of its diverse communities, vibrant tapestry of independent shops and family-run businesses, each building holding a unique story which enriches the cultural fabric of the area.

“I’ve been wanting to work with Bury Park for years. I was advocating for this since 2002. I knew it would be rich. Diverse communities are at the avant-garde of arts and Bury Park is so vibrant, it’s ripe for arts and culture.” **Fahim Qureshi, Story Contributor and Actor**

RECRUITMENT & RETAINING PARTICIPANTS

The Invitation

The low-stakes phone line and story box, offering anonymity, seemed to tap into people's curiosity and a fundamental desire to share their stories.

Trust Building

The five years of collaboration between Fin and Shemiza since 2019, fostered trust, understanding, and respect within the community about their work which helped recruit and retain participants.



Paying the Contributors

There was a modest budget to pay participants for their time. This helped commitment and a fostered sense of value.

“Farah was a very committed mother whose children have all gone on to extraordinary things. She’s so committed to the community but has not been able to reach where she could have professionally. She has talent and a fire in her belly. This is a chance not only to be paid, but it’s also an opportunity to network, meet other people and reconnect with that little girl’s hopes and dreams.” **Shemiza Rashid, Co-Producer, Co-Writer, and Co-Director**

Consistent Outreach

Co-producer Shemiza Rashid had worked in the community for 20 years and was also connected to the city's creative ecosystem. She was therefore well placed to bring participants into the project.

Agency and Ownership

A community steering group was involved in decision-making, with many joining a community cast to share their stories.

Professionalism

This was a quality mentioned repeatedly and ran from the earliest meetings, through the creative process, to the quality of recording and the heritage week where participants were given T-shirts and banners, which set it apart from other heritage trails run by community groups.

Organic Development

Various skills and interests from the community were gradually integrated into the project, maintaining long-term engagement. For example, Jackie Gunn, who initially shared 19th-century stories, later researched specific locations like 88 Dunstable Road.

Leadership

Fin's leadership was a major factor in engaging and retaining participants. He corresponded with participants personally and was described as nurturing, listening, comprehending, encouraging, supporting, engaging, and involving everyone with kindness, commitment, and professionalism.

KEEPING IT LOCAL

People, Partners, and Funders The pilot attracted key local participants, funders and partners with shared values, vision and aligned strategic objectives.

A Base at Dr Alvi's: The opticians on Dunstable Road served as a valuable physical base, providing visibility for MoS, hosting meetings, and becoming a community focal point. During Heritage Week, it also served as a hub for distributing flyers and promoting the audio walk.



UNLEASHING CREATIVITY

Ethos Every project from Applied Stories is rooted in the belief that everyone is an artist and is driven to dissolve the boundaries between what is perceived as 'community' and 'professional' arts.

Testing the Ground The pilot was a great opportunity to also test new ways of working with this digital technology so a methodology did not have to be developed.

Nurturing Talent Writers chose the stories that excited them and received guidance and support to infuse their stories with their unique strengths, whilst staying true to the contributors' narrative.

A Wide Creative Offer Everyone who took part was offered professional support in any creative aspect beyond sharing their stories including acting or writing the audio dramas.

Collaborative not extractive

Story Contributors were kept aware of changes to the scripts and had the opportunity to review drafts, providing feedback to the writers and voicing their stories.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE APP

Clarity The app was designed in a visual, light way and was easy to navigate and included scripts of the dramas for listeners to follow if they wished.

Listener Choice Listeners can choose the order of stories by following the map in any direction or at home, fostering a more active engagement, skipping back and forth in time, and not having to adhere to a pre-determined or chronological format.

Audio Drama This immersive but light format creates an immediate connection between the listener and the place, character, or historical event.

Geo-location Real locations in *The Days After* and *The Girl on the Shelf* where listeners could sit or stand added a depth to the overall listening experience.

Authenticity The fact that these stories were real events, written with local language nuances, and delivered by real people's voices (not by actors) gave MoS authenticity which appealed to the audiences.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Celebration, not Oppression

Bury Park is synonymous with South Asian culture, but MoS showcased stories from other communities like *Seeing Clearly* which featured an all-black cast, *A Leap into Faith* was a Jewish migration story and stories of white communities over the last century. It deliberately avoided showcasing "bad news stories" about Luton, aiming to change the

"The focus was on celebrating diverse aspects of the community ..and embracing unapologetic celebrations of cultural identity, including stories about everyday experiences like Halal Fried Chicken, pigeons, traffic wardens, and running in traditional attire (shalwar kameez)."
Shemiza Rashid, Co-Producer, Co-Writer, and Co-Director

area's perception and foster internal dialogue.

What Challenged Us?

Story Hunting

The anonymous phone line, which had been so successful in the pilot straight after Covid in 2021, yielded far fewer stories this time. This could have been because people had returned to their busy lives in 2023, or there were more projects out there and the initial call-out coincided with Ramadan. However, this was addressed by placing a 'story box' with paper and pens in the optician's waiting room and scheduling re-aligned with all religious and cultural festivals. Co-producer Shemiza Rashid also conducted consistent outreach to gather stories from local communities. .

App Engagement



There was lower uptake on the app as had been expected. It seems that Luton often has low audience figures across many funded arts projects. There is also a perception that Lutonians see themselves as artists rather than audiences, which was the case here with residents readily engaged for a long time as participants. However, there were other contributing factors. This included [marketing, publicity and programming public events](#) like group walks/listening parties which finished in September during Heritage week. Some [local shops](#) and business owners were not aware they were featured on the app with a story.

[School workshops](#) were offered at this time, which would have increased app usage in September October however, perhaps due to the short lead in time, this opportunity was not taken up. Another challenge is the city's [lack of infrastructure](#) around digital mapping and

sharing of creative heritage projects (see sustainability for more). This also fed into the [lack of visibility](#) e.g., signage on the street which is needed across the city as well as the length of Dunstable Road. Sustained marketing throughout, programming, and long-term planning in schools should help increase numbers in the future. More implementation of strategic plans to digitally map all heritage projects like this, and create consistent signage across the city would also encourage people to use the app. On a technical note, the app worked very well but one or two people did experience fluctuating audio levels.



Partnership

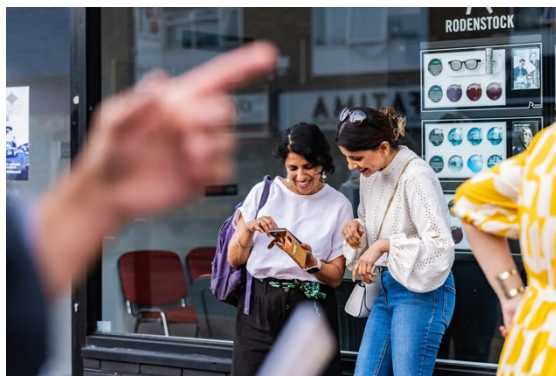
The partnership between Revoluton Arts and Applied Stories was seen as mutually beneficial and will continue. This being the first time they had worked in this way there were a few points of learning. The light partnership agreement concerning IP and the payment schedule could have been stronger and clearer around marketing, publicity and co-producing roles. However, RA were undergoing significant organisational change when this project began so this was not possible. Moving forward partnership agreement with RA will ensure press and publicity messaging is consistent with RA's existing strategy, that [volunteer payments](#) align with the standard rates at RA, co-producing roles are clear and [more clarity around legacy expectations](#). At the time of writing this report, RA was unclear on who would be gathering new stories left on the phone line and [tracking user data](#) from the

app. For Revoluton Arts to continue to promote the app, Applied Stories will be giving them access to the app's analytics so they can [track app usage](#) for themselves.

Sustainability

MoS was a one-off project which has grown over 3 years. However, web-based projects often have a short shelf life due to the several challenges. The most obvious is the [short termism of project funding](#) which inevitably limits legacy/ long tail planning. Once funding runs out, websites go down, people try scanning the QR codes to find they are no longer operational. Such projects can only be sustained long term through the council implementing a cohesive [digital strategy for heritage](#) based, place making stories. Otherwise, all the material from projects like this risk being lost. That said, there is tangible enthusiasm from the [community to continue](#) to promote the app and wider project, but this cannot be left to individuals and volunteers, it needs funding and local support.

“I would like to promote it more because a lot of people spend their time and patience on it. Let's not forget it, let's try and pursue it and move forward but we would need support.” **Jackie Gunn, Story Contributor, Researcher and Actor**



Safeguarding

At certain times, the co-producer faced challenges working in Bury Park. This was due to inappropriate male behaviour and attention which is often encountered. Whilst she was safe and felt supported by the team, there was a level of internal discomfort. This raises an

important consideration on safeguarding participants and tuning into local sensitivities which may arise when engaging in public-facing activities.



Hopes for the future

At present Revoluton Arts will be taking ideas from this forward. However, there is no denying the considerable desire and appetite for MoS to continue. The following ideas are offered for consideration from people across the project.

Creative Hubs with Revoluton Arts

RA is strategically reconnecting with three specific locations in Luton, including Bury Park to deliver sustained impact. Starting in January, they will adopt a hub model and plan to use existing stories from the app as inspiration for groups to create new multi-art form works. Fin and Shemiza have been asked to deliver a workshop here. The hub model will offer a light-touch drop in participation approach. RA also wish to access new stories from the phone line and connect more with the shops and businesses that they are featured in the App.

Engaging With More Communities

Story contributors, actors, audience, and the local co-producer were keen to extend this out to other communities. Specific groups include: the Irish community, 40+ women and the local elder Asian community sometimes known as the 'BOAC' generation.¹

¹ British Overseas Airways Corporation, originally a British state-owned airline used by Indians migrating to the UK in the 1950's, 60s and 70s

“I would love to find out what their history was around the 1900s in India and compare that with what was happening here. What were their great grandparents doing around the time when Florence was alive? I don't know anything about Indian culture which is why it interests me. This I think is the way forward for Museum of Stories Bury Park... whether the community are prepared to release their history to me is questionable but not impossible.”

Jackie Gunn, Story Contributor, Researcher and Actor

This is linked to a desire for stories to be in [multiple languages](#). This would be an aspiration for the future especially into Urdu. However, that would require substantially more (double) the funding as scripts, actors and app would all need to be translated. It would also offer [skills training](#) in areas which can lead to employment.



Engaging With Luton Football Club There was a strong desire to include football stories as the club is based in Bury Park. Fin contacted them and was passed the details of the supporter's society, who failed to respond. Due to a lack of capacity, this could not be chased further. If this project should happen again, gathering football stories would be a priority but this will need concerted time and energy to find the right person from the FC's side.

“Since Luton was promoted to the Premier League, football has increased and every two weeks we have hundreds of people who literally walk-up the road on their way to the match. Would be great if they engaged with the app on their walk up.

Maria Shury-Smith, Revoluton Arts.

Engaging with Schools There is so much scope to embed this work across History/ Drama/ English curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. Potential outcomes include increasing knowledge around heritage, enriching arts provision and fostering dialogue, increasing sense of pride, and belonging. Potential intergenerational storytelling workshop involving parents and children (targeting EAL/ESOL families) could be devised ultimately. This may also increase audience figures from diverse, local backgrounds but would need planning from the outset and adequate resourcing.

More stories These 12 narratives have highlighted how many more stories could be told. A variety of political, personal and historical stories to cater for diverse interests are essential and locations suggested including Bury Park, The Football Club, Luton Airport, Vauxhalls and more stories which challenge assumptions and offer [counter provocations](#) like *Seeing Clearly*.

More supported research opportunities Local history expert Jackie Gunn conducted a great deal of desk-based research for MoS. Her work ignited a considerable interest from the younger generation, so there could be scope to develop this strand of work in future iterations of the project.

“I loved every part of the project which is why I have the incentives to do more. I could do research about things anywhere but I'm not a young person but haven't got an awful lot of energy to do it all on my own.” **Jackie Gunn, Story Contributor, Researcher and Actor**



Other ideas from audiences for local cultural organisations would be to include [more events](#) like group walks, listening parties, workshops related to the app. More [public art in the sites](#) which connect to the stories both of which would increase access and visibility to MoS.

Partnering with Luton Council

Lilly Smith was the Heritage Manager for Curating Luton (an NHLF project based at the Council) and a strong advocate and supporter of this project. Fin spoke to Luton Council's Heritage Steering Committee about the project, which included elected councillors and Chief Exec of Culture Trust. There is clearly an interest in heritage based, digital place-making stories however, there is an urgent need to implement some coherent infrastructure which includes creating citywide signage, connecting MoS to Luton's public transport/bus app and creating an online space to both to capture digital content, measure engagement and assess its impact.

National Links

There is scope for Revoluton Arts and Ideas Test (Kent) who are both funded Creative People and Places organisations and commissioned two Applied Stories project *Museum of Stories* (Luton) and *Highway of Dreams* (Kent) to be in touch with each other for peer support and legacy ideas. Both work with similar multi-lingual communities whilst one project looks back to the past and the other looks towards the future.

Concluding thoughts

The *Museum of Stories* was an impactful project which clearly captured the hearts, minds and imaginations of the participants, partners, and audience. It clearly showed the potential for reshaping people's relationship to and engagement with the public realm through unravelling untold histories in creative, accessible, exciting, and engaging ways. It brought innovative geolocated audio technology to the city but also became a beacon for community engagement and artistry. It appealed to a broad spectrum of the community, drawing local, national, and international interest. *Museum of Stories* celebrated the vibrant beating heart of Bury Park, subverting traditional perceptions of the area. The overwhelming message is that it should grow, extending its impact across the city.

"I hope this grows and there are more of them because we could do this all over the city" **Amy Rix (Community cast)**



Appendices

COMMUNITY CAST AND STORY CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Nizam Alvi, Ahsam Arshad, Daysha Badu, Elizabeth Badu,, Tiarnan Doherty, Jackie Edlestein, Saudra Glenn, Jackie Gunn, Tooba Iskander, Musarat Jan, Remi Kennedy, Ruby Kennedy, Naila Mansour, Shahj Miah, Annera Pahat, Martin Palmer, Tom Pike, Fahim Qureshi, Hamza Qureshi, Amina Ramzan, Aimi Rix, Muslima Sikdar, Lilly-Rai Smith, Prashant Tailor, Katie Watling.

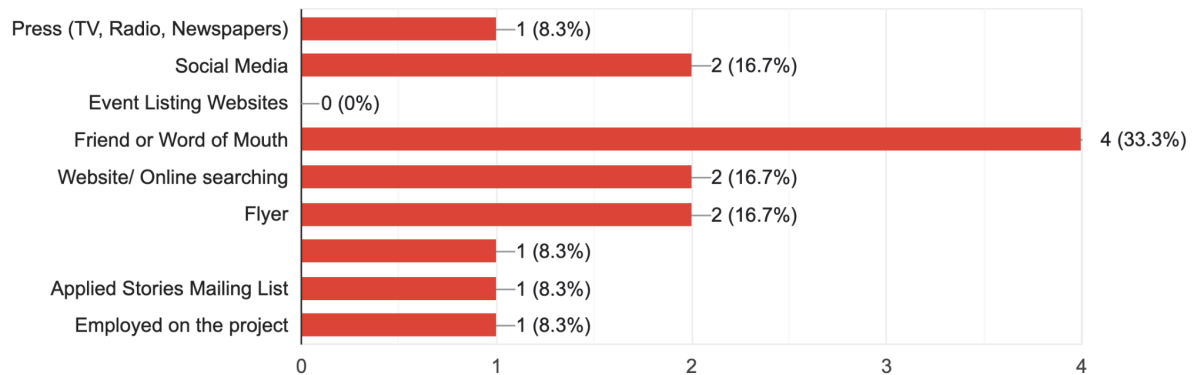
PRODUCTION TEAM

Fin Kennedy - co-producer, co-writer
Shemiza Rashid - co-producer, co-writer , co-director
Titiola Dawadu -co-writer
Ellie Jones - co-director
Lee Bowman - co-writer, actor
Farokh Soltani - sound designer

SURVEY EXCERPT

How did you find out about this audio tour? (Tick any that apply)

12 responses



MUSEUM OF STORIES MEDIA COVERAGE:

[Luton Today](#)

[BBC News](#)

[BBC Three Counties / iPlayer](#)

[Luton's Deadpool](#)

JACKIE GUNN'S COLUMNS:

[88 Dunstable Road](#)

[Luton's Jewish community](#)

[German V2 rocket](#)

[Chai and Chapati](#)

[Telford Way footbridge](#)