

FINDING FRIENDS

21
ARTISTS

FINAL CONSULTATION REPORT
2021

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Test Valley Finding Friends Final Report

21 ARTISTS – DR MEG PETERSON AND SARA RIZZO

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Introduction

Finding Friends was conceived by Test Valley Arts Foundation as one of the **The Borough of Culture's (BOC) Legacy Projects**. These projects are united by four objectives:

1. To extend the impact of Test Valley Borough of Culture.
2. The projects reach people who might otherwise face barriers to participating in creative experiences.
3. To collect evidence from which to build principles and strategies to make TVAF more inclusive in future.
4. To create legacy projects which have a lasting impact in our communities.

Related to these four objectives, the purpose of Finding Friends was to support the Test Valley Arts Foundation (TVAF) in understanding the key needs, customs, challenges, and opportunities with relation to the integration and representation of local ethnic minority groups in the local cultural context. Furthermore, the project aimed to identify the key players at the local level, with whom the TVAF will be able to build partnerships to make changes and achieve a lasting impact. Ultimately, the project intended to be propositional and support TVAF to make evidence-based decisions around developing a strategy to make TVAF and other Test Valley based cultural organisations more inclusive in the future, and to increase representation of culturally diverse communities in the local cultural offering.

For the sake of this report, a broad definition of culture is utilised, to encompass not just arts-based activity but culture in the sense of habits and activities that make up people's daily life. This could be things like theatre and visual art but also dance and food, with the belief that increased levels of cultural participation in this broad sense has the potential to lead to more inclusive communities, increased well-being, and a greater pride of place. Based on the research for this project, there is immense potential in Test Valley for this to be achieved, further outlined in the discourse to follow.

Methodology

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The methodology was designed to be flexible and adaptive to the logistical constraints imposed by COVID-19, as well as by any other factors that might have limited stakeholders' participation in the interviews. The project was delivered in four phases, building on desk review, consultations with key stakeholders, and participatory observation as main data collection methods. In total, we conducted 33 consultations, including key community leaders, individuals and organisations operating within the arts and culture, as well as diversity and

inclusion in Test Valley and Hampshire. A full list of interviewees is included in Annex 1. The team also made a site visit to Romsey Festival on 3 July 2021, and attended an Andover bid meeting on 21 July 2021.

As per data analysis, the team conducted thematic analysis and compiled the research findings and key recommendations into the final report. Draft findings and recommendations were presented during the **Creative Conference** held in October 2021, which served as an opportunity to validate the findings and further develop the discussion. A variety of actors, including representatives of TVAF, Chapel Arts Studio, Andover BID, and several of the stakeholders previously interviewed, were involved in the co-creation of actionable recommendations on how to use arts and culture to enhance inclusion and diversity in Test Valley.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

The Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) is a key source of data to understand the ethnic composition of children and young people in Test Valley, which in turn provides insights into the key ethnic minority groups in Test Valley (TV). According to the Spring 2020 School Census conducted by EMTAS¹, Test Valley has the third highest number and percentage of pupils from Black, Minority Ethnic (BME) and Traveller backgrounds of all the districts of Hampshire in 2020, after Basingstoke & Deane and Rushmoor and slightly ahead of Eastleigh. The percentage and number of BME and Traveller pupils in Test Valley has steadily increased since 2018, with 10.5% of Hampshire's children from BME and Traveller background attending schools in Test Valley. This equates to 2682 children, an increase from 2480 in 2019.

Data on languages spoken provides important insights into the key BME groups inhabiting Test Valley. Based on data from 2020, EMTAS reports that Polish is and has been the top language in Test Valley since 2018, with Portuguese consistently being the second largest group. These two languages represent 31.2% of the total number of pupils with EAL in Test Valley. The Census indeed reveals that the largest ethnic minority groups in Test Valley district are Polish and Portuguese families who have settled in the district, mostly to work in various industries in Test Valley. The number of pupils from these groups has slowly increased since 2018. Nepali, Chinese, Bengali, and Romanian follows, in the list of most widely spoken languages among pupils with EAL. Data from Hampshire is similar, apart from a lower concentration of Portuguese and Bengali speakers. It is important to note that, according to EMTAS, Gypsy and Roma travellers are underrepresented in the data as they usually mar themselves as White British in surveys, but there is a significant community in TV.

All interviewees agreed about the different ethnic and socio-economic composition

¹ Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service. Data Information Booklet for Test Valley 2020. [Link](#).

and backdrop of Test Valley's main cities, Andover and Romsey. The latter is mostly composed of British, White upper middle class, with very few families and individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds. By contrast, Andover shows a greater concentration of minority ethnic communities, mostly working in local factories. Not much exchange is going on between the two cities, or with the villages spread across Test Valley, each with its own identity. Romsey's arts and culture sector is mostly white and characterised by a number of art-related groups and initiatives. In contrast, Andover's great diversity does not manifest itself through artistic and cultural initiatives, unlike in cities such as Basingstoke and Eastleigh, despite the latter being even less diverse than Andover, as per EMTAS data.

Barriers to engagement

HISTORY AND URBAN DESIGN

Interviewees believed that the history, urban design, and attitude of residents towards Andover all contribute to lack of engagement in artistic and cultural practices.

Historically, low-income groups moved to Andover from London, to find a cheaper place to live while working in the capital. Others moved to Andover to work in factories. Many still define themselves as 'being from London', and few feel proud of being from Andover. As one interviewee told us, Andover is experienced as *"a place to sleep rather than to integrate"*, defined by one interviewee as *"a sad town that needs a heart and lacks any vibrancy"* which lacks good colleges and significant cultural attractions which might generate interest either internally or from externals. This is why Andover Business Improvement District (BID), whose role is further explained below, is trying hard to attract people from within and outside Andover to high street shops and restaurants. Also, the urban design of the city is not conducive to integration and exchange, as there are few open, public spaces and no signals marking shops, restaurants, and attractions, which prevent visitors and residents from going. Creating public spaces and adding signals in order to make these shops and restaurants more visible and accessible, are some of the initiatives of the TV Council's Andover Vision project. Interviewees believed that a lot still needs to be done, to make Andover feel more multicultural and desirable for anybody to live in.

"The design of the town is appalling, it is not designed to interact, it's a very old-fashioned town. If you want communities to interact in that environment, you need to knock down the old town to do that." (Community leader)

LACK OF VISIBILITY

According to several interviewees, lack of visibility of minority ethnic groups and lack of opportunities for exchange, are among the key barriers to engagement and integration. In Andover, many of the services in the area are offered by members of minority

ethnic groups, including hairdressers, train and taxi drivers, restaurants and shops, these communities – and their culture and traditions in turn – are still not visible enough to locals. Due to a lack of opportunities to see and get to know each other and to discuss daily, common issues that affect the local area, it leads to separations between groups. Lack of visibility and opportunities for exchange are even greater in Romsey, where an interviewee revealed that *“there’s no platform to reach out to communities”*, festivals and events are mostly linked to Christianity, and the few people from minority ethnic backgrounds prefer to go to the Eastleigh Mela to interact. This often results in racist and discriminatory attitudes.

“People are not racist, but not given the chance to live in different ways.” (Community leader)

“There is no space for people to see Nepalese singing and dancing, so they will not understand who the Nepalese are, what their culture is, if they can’t see it. That would be how they can learn [about Nepalese culture].” (Community leader)

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Racism, discrimination, and language barriers were mentioned by some interviewees as responsible for the lack of engagement of BAME groups. According to an interviewee, as in many socio-economically deprived areas, Andover tends to have a higher incidence of racist attacks than other areas of Test Valley. Fear of becoming object of racism and discrimination leads some minority ethnic groups, particularly Muslim and older people, to try to stay “invisible” and avoid asking for help and accessing basic services, such as healthcare and mortgage support. Many Muslim families in particular choose to keep to themselves more than other groups, a combination of culture and religion, that adds a further challenge to engagement. This is compounded by language barriers, as many BAME community members are not fluent in English. BAME groups composed of few families or individuals – such as Syrian refugees, especially in rural areas – struggle with isolation, and it is difficult to organise initiatives targeting these groups when there is no critical mass. As one interviewee said, *“it is so easy for Syrian refugees to feel lost and abandoned if they can’t communicate with other groups”*. As a result, basic services fail to reach populations that would need them the most. Lack of confidence among these groups is another reason for their limited engagement – including cultural and artistic ones – as it is *“hard to engage people until you build their confidence at a certain level”*.

Interviewees revealed other social issues which minority ethnic communities face in the area, such as hate crime, sexual harassment, and domestic abuse. However, among both adults and young people, these topics are massively under reported. This is also the case among female refugees, which for cultural reasons struggle to discuss with strangers about what happens inside the family.

“There is not much tension in terms of race, but there is definitely hidden bias and microaggressions.” (Community Cohesion and Engagement Officer)

LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR MINORITY GROUPS

These barriers also explain why it is particularly difficult, for members of minority ethnic groups, to take the initiative and organise artistic and cultural events focused on their own origins and traditions. For example, an interviewee explained that the Romsey Business Commerce Network would be a great partner to promote the goals of this project, given their extensive network and interest in reactivating the city. However, when larger events are organised in Romsey, they tend to think about Christmas, Easter, and other festivities and traditions related to Christianity. The same interview explained that *“probably, they have never been approached by someone asking: have you thought about other faiths?”* However, it is more difficult for someone from a minority ethnic group to ask these questions, and they would need support from the majority – including the council – to find the confidence and the resources to advance such questions and ideas and access the necessary networks, infrastructure etc. In Andover, there are some groups such as the Andover Nepalese Community and the Andover Muslim Community Association who represent diverse communities, but they need more investment and a stronger voice in the government and decision-making in the area.

“As minority, you don’t feel comfortable in approaching other communities that are more established. You don’t want to upset and disrupt the routine. You will be the only person of colour there, people will not be used to see that, and you will be very conscious about that. You do feel different, out of the norm, and because there’s less of us, it is very hard to fight through it and find ways to diversify.” (Member of a minority ethnic group)

LIMITED MOBILITY

Limited mobility is another key barrier to engagement. Due to age; lack of good transport links; work commitments; or limited financial resources, many community members cannot afford travelling to artistic and cultural events taking places in other areas in TV and beyond. They are unlikely to participate in the multicultural events in Basingstoke, Eastleigh, and Southampton, or to any initiative taking place in a farther away city or village. Members of the Nepalese community, for example, interviewed wish Andover had a big venue where to host large-scale, indoor events, like Reading, Birmingham, and Bristol, so that elderly and low-income members of the community, as well as other city residents, could attend.

LACK OF IDENTITY

Many cities like Andover have become commuter cities and areas of displacement from London, often leading to a lack of identity for the towns themselves. Areas in Test Valley, Andover in particular, have been impacted by 'London overspill' when communities were moved out of London as the capital grew. Even though some families have lived in the area for decades, many still identify as Londoners, sometimes leading to an apathy, lack of connection or identification with living in the city. As many groups from ethnic minority communities such as the Eastern European community and others want to blend in and not draw too much attention to themselves, this also contributes to the lack of identity for some which also then subsequently leads to a major barrier for engagement in cultural activities.

Engagement strategies

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

The most recurring suggestion made by interviewees to enhance bridges between communities are festivals and events, which are currently lacking and would “kick start things”. Unlike Eastleigh and Basingstoke, and despite its highly diverse population, Andover lacks significant examples of regular intercultural festivals and events. Initiatives such as the Andover Carnival have been mentioned as highly successful in bringing together different communities, *“making people proud of that happening and raising community spirit of the town”*, but do not take place anymore. Romsey is more active from this point of view, but mainly caters to a white, middle-class target audience, as is similar in the villages in the surrounding areas. According to all interviewees, festivals and events represent an opportunity to bring communities together and give them a chance to showcase their culture and traditions – through food, music, dances.

“Food is always the international way of gathering people without any kind of conflict or political view, it’s a nice way to bring people together, at less cost.”
(Member of a minority ethnic group)

These manifestations underpin most communities – including and in particular minority ethnic groups and refugees – and represent an accessible but effective way to increase visibility and create bonds. As noted by one interviewee, *“if you want to build cohesion you need to find commonality”*. These events could coincide with religious celebrations, such as Easter, Chinese New Year, or Eid or centred on shared experience like food or other common interests. For example, one interviewee suggested to organise an

event explicitly focused on the contribution that their community has offered to the life and welfare of TV residents, since their involvement in the British army, through to their role in daily services and facilities, to their crucial contribution during the pandemic as frontline workers.

“There are a lot of things Andover can celebrate, but they are not celebrating it. The council can celebrate this diversity and communities’ contribution to hospitals, nurses, services.” (Inclusion and Diversity Officer)

Events like this make these communities more visible for majority and other communities, while celebrating what they have to offer. This can have positive reverberations, making community members proud of their own culture and contribution to the local society, and more willing to become “visible” and engage in the future. This is more likely to happen if other organisations and public authorities, such as the mayor of the city, participate in the organisation and implementation of these events alongside community groups, as this helps to legitimise them.

“What is the role of the mayor? Does the mayor celebrate something with the communities/social estates, to make people know they exist and have something valuable to celebrate?” (Inclusion and Diversity Officer)

Importantly, British culture and traditions cannot be forgotten in these events. The majority community need to be provided with the same opportunity to “bring something valuable and valued to the table”, as a way to showcase what they have to offer and feel proud for that and to lay the foundations for a dialogue with other cultures represented in TV. This could also help strengthen a “British cultural identity” that some interviewees believed is being lost. Additionally, not involving the host community satisfactorily, could trigger hostility and animosity.

“Celebrate local people. It doesn’t matter where you are from.” (Inclusion and Diversity Officer)

To be more inclusive, similar events should happen in more than one location in TV, which relates to the issue of limited mobility mentioned above. People living in Andover, Romsey as well as in the surrounding villages and rural areas should all be offered opportunities to engage with the arts and culture closer to home. Although budget constraints and logistics may limit the extent to which similar opportunities can be offered, as much as possible there should be a proactive attempt to animate different locations with cultural and artistic events and initiatives. Instead of expecting these communities to go to them, producers and organisers should actively reach out to these communities. This is even more important in the case of remote and deprived areas, which would benefit from being brightened up and could attract external as well as internal interest as a result. Once initiatives

have been successfully organised in an area, and relationships have been established, it will become easier to convince people to go to other locations to participate in similar activities. One interviewee believed that:

“Otherwise, you will have the same patterns of everything happening in the city, and if you can’t get there, there’s nothing for you, and you are missing people living in other areas, who are on the fringes and don’t think there’s something for them.” (Community Cohesion and Engagement Officer)

ADVISORY BOARD

A key suggestion coming from interviewees is that members of BAME groups, including the most marginalised, should not only participate in inclusive events and initiatives, but help to organise them. This could be done by setting an Advisory Board within TV Council or TVAF, gathering members of BAME communities together with British people, who would have a say on spending priorities and initiatives organised. This would help ensure that, instead of waiting for extra funding that might never arrive, inclusion and diversity initiatives are already incorporated into existing funding, which could be used differently and more fairly. The Advisory Board would have to be a safe and accessible space, open to different views, age, gender, and ethnic groups. It would have to be small, manageable, and inclusive. For example, incentives such as food vouchers might be needed to support participation to the Board of more vulnerable and marginalised groups, whose views also need to be represented. The Board would also serve as an enabler, where BAME groups are shown how their views can be incorporated in the planning of local initiatives and put into practice, and how obstacles can be overcome. For example, the Advisory Group for the organisation of an intercultural event should include representatives from the police, the NHS, fire services, who would provide advice on the logistics of the event; representatives of the Council, Andover BID and TVAF could provide information about funding opportunities available, and feasibility of the activities suggested.

To be successful and sustainable, the Advisory Board should be integrated into existing mechanisms, not acting as a standalone, ad-hoc initiative. Aside from events, the Advisory Board could have a say on different initiatives already happening in the area, and help TV Council, TVAF etc. to spend already existing funding more fairly and inclusively. As BAME members of the Board become more confident, they can start developing new and broader ideas on artistic and cultural initiatives for BAME groups and beyond. Critically, successful engagement of these communities needs to start from their confidence that, if they suggest something, they will be taken seriously by organisations that will help them make their ideas come to life. Community members need to have confidence in the partnerships and in the relationships with these organisations, to be willing to sustainably engage with those. This was eloquently put by one interviewee, as follows: *‘They need to overcome the*

frustration of 'What's the point?' because they have not been listened to before.'

The Advisory Board should also include young people, to be consulted on any events or initiatives that target their age group. Young people will indeed bring a very different perspective in terms of needs, suggestions, and effective engagement strategies. For example, unlike adult interviewees, young people interviewed believed that organising an event would not be successful in engaging their peers, as *'events and dinner parties usually are not a place for kids; they don't accommodate kids' needs. It's usually a space for adults who bring kids with them.'* To be successful with young people, events, initiatives, and activities should be explicitly designed with this target group in mind, not expecting them to stay seated listening to only adults talking, planning for interactive and energising activities, and embedding the concept of relatability in any talk, theatre piece, and exhibition. Actively involving young people in the organisation of the event or initiative is the best way to ensure that they will speak to young people's realities and needs.

USING CREATIVE APPROACHES TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES

Focusing on social, economic and health issues are the priority for these communities and could be an extremely effective engagement strategy if creative approaches are employed. As mentioned by one interviewee:

"You have to touch on people's daily issues to attract them, rather than international issues like the conflicts in the Middle East, you need to connect to their daily realities. If exhibitions were more representative of the community, you would attract more people, it would be easier to understand for them, more accessible." (Inclusion and Diversity Officer)

Accessibility and focusing on issues that matter to them are key to engaging young people as well. A young interviewee who hosts a radio programme revealed that key ingredients to success are to keep the programme light, informal and upbeat; focusing on pieces of information and advice that the audience is interested in such as career advice to get into the videogame industry and creating a bond with the audience by sharing details of his personal life, as well as asking the audience about their personal experiences, making them feel listened to and understood. The same advice can be applied to other artistic mediums. For theatre to become more appealing to young people, for example, the same interviewee suggested to make it more relatable to young people's experiences: actors should be of the same age, and themes should be clearly linked to modern times, for example bullying, drug use, education, insecurities, "something that everybody will have come across". To make theatre pieces even more engaging, actors could be invited to share their experiences and trajectories.

Interviewees believe that art has an important role to play in raising awareness and triggering discussions on the social and health issues mentioned above, through a range of different mediums, and through the artistic process itself. Art as a method and a process can indeed help people see things differently, and engage with social issues in a playful, thoughtful way, often leading to sudden realisations and unexpected outcomes. For example, a project in Battersea, LemonAID Response Unit, paired an artist and a police officer together, using creativity as a process to address negative perceptions of police. They designed a creative, fun, playful lemonade stand for the police officer to engage with the public in a more accessible way. The provocation was that anyone passing by could get free lemonade in exchange for asking a police officer anything they wanted. This led to a transformative way of engaging in more meaningful ways for both the police and the public, with some who engaged even reporting serious offences and asking about potentially life-threatening issues. Another example is the Common Ground project, further described in the section below, which uses digital art to make Syrian refugees and local community think about topics such as a sense of belonging towards the area, or by contrast, isolation refugees felt as they got resettled in rural areas of TV.

Theatre and performance can be a powerful tool to raise awareness about sensitive issues, but events with food, music, dances, and other cultural manifestations can also present opportunities for informal chats, focus groups and presentations about these topics (e.g., with and from the Police Community Cohesion Officers); for referrals, provision of information, and access to basic services for hard-to-reach groups (e.g. referrals to GP, blood pressure and diabetes test, COVID-19 tests and vaccination) as well as chances to creatively co-design solutions. For instance, HIAS has been using art to enable children and young people to express their views and concerns around climate change and the need for unity to find a common solution, as described below. In terms of artistic mediums to sensitise children and young people around sensitive topics, memes, for example, are highly effective, as accessible, appealing, and able to reach a wide audience through social media. Visual arts could be utilised and produced for schools, as posters to be placed in corridors as a reminder for kids. Theatre workshops organised in schools, in turn, can be effective to start the conversation about hate crime, sexual harassment, mental health etc.

“There are so many people in the community who have a lot of skill, a lot of skill that is completely untapped.” (Community leader)

TAKING OVER UNDER-USED OR PUBLIC SPACES

As the cultural offer in Test Valley is currently lower compared to other surrounding areas which leads to lower cultural engagement, one starting point can be taking cultural activity to places people already go, rather than expecting they will go to the cultural offer. The Andover town centre, for example, lacks vibrancy and could therefore

benefit from cultural activity that could happen in that public space. This would, over time, bring more people to the town centre and also help to engage more people in cultural activity. There are also a number of spaces such as the shopping centre or high street storefronts that are not currently being used which could be utilised for temporary art exhibitions or ‘take overs’ by artists or even one-off events to animate those spaces. There are also tax breaks² available for building owners who allow their spaces to be used by charities and voluntary organisations that can be explored to incentivise the meanwhile use of spaces and to provide free or low-cost usage.

“There are so many spaces in Andover that are empty, or people don’t use that much. Why not turn them over to artists and creatives to reimagine those spaces?” (Cultural Leader)

TAPPING INTO EXISTING AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

A number of funding opportunities already exist, including those provided by the Council, which TVAF could tap into to actively involve communities in their activities, giving them ownership over how and why they want to engage. For example, the Test Valley Borough Councillors Community Grant Scheme³ aims to encourage community-led initiatives benefiting the local area and its communities, with support from local councillors. Voluntary groups, charities, Parish or Town Councils, Schools and Borough Councillors (where there is no external sponsoring organisation) can apply for grants up to £1,000. Among the initiatives funded, there are consultations with local communities to inform further planning of events and regeneration activities. The Community Asset Fund⁴, in turn, supports projects that provide or enhance important community infrastructure, by building or refurbishing existing buildings, delivering play and recreation equipment, or realising public art. Grants from £2,000 to £25,000 can be provided to voluntary groups, charities, Parish or Town Councils, Management committees of community buildings, and Schools (for facilities with formal open community access). Other funding sources are available for communities to apply, and these are all listed on Test Valley 4 Community is a funding portal which allows individuals and organisations to search both local and nationally across a range of funders including, lottery, charitable trusts, statutory, landfill trusts and many more.

The aim with obtaining these smaller pots of funding is that projects are initiatives will then lead to larger funding bids over time with more sustained engagement. Some of the projects that obtain the smaller funding amounts can be viewed as tests or pilots that can then be improved or scaled based on success at a smaller scale.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meanwhile-use-lease-and-guidance>

³ Test Valley Borough Councillors Community Grant Scheme. [Link](#).

⁴ Community Asset Fund. [Link](#).

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

When it comes to children and young people, establishing trusted relationships, using channels that suit them, deploying cultural competence, and overcoming language barriers have proved key to successful engagement. Time, dedication, and a tailored approach to individual young people are required to build relationships, which are likely to improve the level and quality of youth engagement and their willingness to engage in surveys, consultations, and other initiatives. Technology in general is a powerful tool, when trying to advertise initiatives with young people and engage them. Young people themselves could advise on how to use technology and social media to reach out to their peers. Apps and social media, for example, are tools young people are very comfortable with. They work best when conducting surveys, while focus group interviews work best face-to-face than remotely, and with single sex groups. Getting meaningful insights might be easier if children and young people are engaged in another activity in the meantime, for example walking, as they are more relaxed in these situations than in a traditional interview setting. When conducting focus groups, it is important to create a safe space where young people can express their opinions openly and without fear of being judged, by adults and their peers alike. It is equally important to offer young people different ways to articulate their thoughts, such as talking, writing, drawings, videos, photography, being mindful that each young person has different needs and will feel more comfortable with different means of expression. Other barriers to address concern language and cultural sensitivity, avoiding stereotypes and prejudices when talking to young people and being mindful of where each young person is rooted, in terms of cultural identity and heritage, how this affects their views and approach, and how this mediates how they engage with discussions and activities. Cultural sensitivity should also inform how questions are framed, to make sure they are meaningful and respectful. Finally, when trying to engage young people, it is even more important to 'go to them' instead of assuming they will come and take advantage of opportunities offered. Initiatives must be advertised in the locations that young people frequent, be that the school, football fields, or public places like a skate park.

As for groups such as refugees, successful engagement strategies include developing trusted relationships, building their confidence, for example through volunteering opportunities, and creating a safe space where they can interact with the host community. Developing relationships with these groups is key to gaining their trust. Many times, this requires having one-to-one interactions with family members, separating males and females, rather than working with the entire family. Creating a safe, friendly space where refugees feel welcome and understood – including by someone who speaks their language – is equally critical to increase chances that they will come back, as explained in the quote below.

"Families go to some initiative, and unless there's someone from that project that is going to help those families and make them feel welcome and take the time during the first meeting, which is the most important one, they won't come back."

(Member of a local NGO)

Currently, not many opportunities exist for refugees to get involved in volunteering initiatives. However, volunteering has been mentioned as very important for refugees to learn the language, expand their networks, learn new skills, and build their confidence. For example, organisations like Ugly Ducklings involve refugees in renovation and rebuilding of furniture. The Andover Museum, in turn, has involved refugees as volunteers in activities such as marketing, management of artifact donated, admin, maintenance of the botanic garden, building confidence and learning new skills. Importantly, this should be accompanied by training to staff on diversity issues, to make sure that activities are implemented in ways that are culturally sensitive, and that refugees receive the support and understanding required. Favouring interactions between refugees and host communities is critical to facilitate integration and engagement in the longer term. This means that projects targeting refugees should also target the host community, which is also a way to reach the numbers needed to run a project over the long term.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Test Valley Borough Council is undoubtedly a critical partner when it comes to implementing local initiatives, involving local communities, and accessing funding.

Spread across Test Valley, endowed with critical networks, and above all, well known by and trusted partners of a number of community leaders, the Council's Community Engagement Officers are natural partners for TVAF in its attempts to engage local communities. Through consultation, surveys and community conversations, Community Engagement Officers understand the needs and priorities of the different communities in the borough and how best to assist them in meeting these needs. Community Engagement Officers play a key coordinating role with services targeting local communities and are key entry points to local ethnic minority groups, which they have managed to involve in relevant initiatives such as Andover Vision⁵, Romsey Future⁶, and a recent video aimed at encouraging local communities to get vaccinated⁷. As such, Community Engagement Officers can provide TVAF with contextual knowledge, insights into local needs, opportunities and initiatives, and effective engagement strategies, as well as with contacts of ethnic community leaders and other strategic stakeholders.

Other natural partners of TVAF, in its attempt to develop an inclusive engagement strategy, are civil society organisations which already work with local ethnic groups on a variety of issues. First of all, Unity⁸ is a non-profit incorporated UK charity part-funded by

⁵ Andover Vision. [Link](#)

⁶ Romsey Future. [Link](#)

⁷ Test Valley Borough Council - Let's get vaccinated. [Link](#)

⁸ Unity. [Link](#).

Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council, with offices in Andover and Romsey. Its role is to encourage, help and support voluntary and community groups in Test Valley, enabling them to deliver services that meet the needs of vulnerable groups through the provision of information, signposting, social prescribing, home support and a range of other community-based services. By partnering with Unity, TVAF can have access to and better understand the needs of different age groups. For example, Unity worked with Dmitrijs Meiksans MYP, from Polish origins, to launch a new service⁹ of the charity that aims to enable young people in Test Valley to express their voice on what themselves and their communities need, and how these needs should be addressed. This initiative represents an opportunity for TVAF to understand young people's needs, and how to adjust the offer accordingly, including by involving young people in programme design and implementation. Through organisations like Two Saints, in turn, TVAF could access more vulnerable populations, such as Syrian refugees that the organisation assists through initiatives which aim to improve their health and wellbeing and reduce poverty and exclusion. For example, TVAF could offer refugees volunteering opportunities. Through the Asian Welfare Association, TVAF could have access to older Asian men who are among the most difficult groups to reach out to. The Andover Nepalese Association, Silk Road, and Andover Muslim Community Association, for example, are crucial partners to access the respective communities and are keen to get involved to give visibility to their culture and traditions.

"We want everybody to recognize there is a Nepalese community, and we have our own traditional culture that we want to pass down, so we want to get involved as much as we can." (Community leader)

An equally strategic partner for TVAF is Andover Business Improvement District (BID), a not-for-profit company gathering businesses which agree on improvements that could be made in their town or city centre, and how to implement those. Our consultations revealed strong interest from the Andover BID to capitalise on arts and culture as a way to reactivate Andover High Street and increase visibility of local shops and restaurants, most of which are owned by members of minority ethnic groups. Andover BID could be a key source of data, providing TVAF with a list of shops and restaurants owned by BAME groups, as well as churches where these communities gather. Andover BID's website¹⁰ and Facebook page¹¹, in turn, list several events planned by the organisation with the aim of highlighting the diversity of businesses within the Town Centre. Events like the Andover Artisan Market, theatre shows in pubs and restaurants, fusion food nights, the Pop-Up Indoor Market, the Cycling Festival, as well as a number of Christmas events are all opportunities TVAF could take advantage of, to strengthen its engagement strategy.

⁹ Unity Youth. [Link](#)

¹⁰ In Andover website. [Link](#)

¹¹ In Andover Facebook page. [Link](#)

Museums and libraries are natural partners for TVAF to implement more diverse and inclusive initiatives. Opportunities exist to link up with “Asking Andover”, a project organised by Andover Museum and focused on tours of the city during which the public hear about Andover’s history. The project had tried to reach out to BAME groups, without much success, and there is scope to partner on this to make it more inclusive, by implementing some of the engagement strategies outlined above. The story-telling component of the project also resonates with the Test Valley Tales project and opens up for collaboration opportunities. Furthermore, the museum organises poetry and writing competitions for children, and already holds partnerships with organisations such as CAMS and Mind, to implement art therapy projects that young people with mental illness get referred to. There is scope for TVAF to get involved in similar initiatives.

Churches, mosques, and multi-faith spaces represent a strategic partner and key gatekeeper for some of the minority ethnic communities. These communities trust the church and faith-based spaces, regularly gather there, and would be more likely to participate in initiatives that are advertised or co-organised by the church. In addition, faith-based often bring together the artistic and the social component, involving community members in artistic manifestations and helping them to access services and fulfil their basic needs, as demonstrated through several initiatives led by churches during the pandemic. Finally, churches can contribute through venues these communities feel familiar with and would be more likely to go to.

Schools are crucial partners in the attempt to engage children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in artistic and cultural initiatives. School kids are often involved in bands and orchestras which can serve as effective entry points. Several organisations are working with schools in Hampshire, to remove barriers and inequalities in attainment and achievement for children and young people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and Traveller groups. These organisations can serve as entry points for TVAF to access schools, and as such are strategic partners in the development of an inclusive engagement strategy targeting children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Among these organisations, the Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) works alongside Head Teachers to close the performance gaps and improve educational outcomes for children and young people from BME and Traveller groups. EMTAS provides expert advice, guidance and training to school staff, in-class support for children and young people, as well as training and support for families. A similar role is played by the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) – Education and Inclusion, which sits within the Children’s Services Department of the Hampshire County Council. The Service includes an Arts Officer and a Rights, Diversity and Social Justice Education adviser, whose role is to ensure that rights, diversity, and social justice are embedded in the school curriculum, ethos and environment, by providing technical advice, training school staff and governments officials on these topics - including race, sexual orientation, gender, sexual harassment promoting initiatives that give voice to marginalised young people. HIAS officers could be ideal partners

for TVAF, through the Climate Unity project described below, as well as to access schools with arts initiatives, including those focused on social issues (e.g. using art to raise awareness on hate crime and sexual harassment).

Other important partners, when organising initiatives that involve young people, are local scout groups which kids are already part of. Scouting movements are renowned for their international, inclusive focus, conduct a number of outreach activities, and would therefore be open to initiatives focused on diversity and inclusivity promoted by TVAF. Kids who are part of scout groups, as well as their parents, are likely to be equally open.

The Police Community Cohesion Officers are equally important partners. Their role is to understand communities, identify barriers that communities are facing and opportunities to address those. They work on issues of community engagement, sensitisation towards hate crime, sexual harassment, domestic abuse and how to reduce underreporting, as well as facing extremism, tensions, and discrimination. Particularly related to the present project, the Officers have been trying to reduce barriers to engagement for minority ethnic groups, starting from the collection of data on these groups' composition, who they are and where they live. Going beyond the 2011 Census, Community Cohesion Officers have begun to conduct community mapping in partnership with local officers, with whom they would like to improve information sharing, coordination, and collaboration, thus filling knowledge gaps. TVAF would highly benefit from these data and contacts, while the Police could in turn benefit from being engaged in artistic and social initiatives that could increase community trust towards them.

LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT

Building trusted relationships with BAME community groups also requires a long-term engagement strategy. Organisations which want to reach out to these groups, such as TVAF, should have an engagement/outreach officer keeping regular contact with them and developing a good understanding of their needs. Ideally, the officer would be someone from the same communities s/he engages with, who is known and respected, speaks their language, and can act as a bridge channelling community's needs and priorities to the organisations s/he works for. The officer could have a specific focus, depending on the organisation s/he belongs to (e.g., focused on arts and culture, if belonging to TVAF), but according to one interviewee, should still be open to welcome and incorporate views from the communities on what issues are key (e.g., healthy eating, diabetes, mental health, how to access basic services such as housing benefits and pensions) and should shape the organisation's agenda. Organisations working with these communities should indeed deal with communities' priorities first – including to make the communities understand that their interests and views are heard, respected, and acted upon – to then move to other things, rather than imposing the organisation's agenda on these communities. Also, many times

socio-economic issues are so burdensome and essential for some of these communities – especially the most vulnerable and marginalised ones struggling with basic needs – that it is unrealistic to expect them to participate in any artistic or cultural event until those issues are sorted. Once basic needs are met, community members will be more likely to take part in and contribute to other initiatives.

EXISTING LOCAL INITIATIVES

Successful events TV could learn from, include the Eastleigh and Southampton Mela, and the World Day in Basingstoke. The Eastleigh Mela, for example, is an annual, free event that happens in Eastleigh community centre, gathering up to 5000 people from different communities and representing different cultures and traditions. This includes Irish, Chinese and Nepalese dancers, Indian and British music, as well as food from many different ethnic groups. The event includes activities for different age groups, from the elderly to the kids. Fundraising for the event runs through the whole year, and partnerships with the Council, other communities, the police, are crucial to ensure funding, volunteers, a full schedule, as well as safety and security measures in place. The Eastleigh Mela began small with no funding initially and grew iteratively over time to being a much more large-scale event. The 'Test Valley Celebrates – A Day of Cultural Fusion' event, which should have happened in November 2020 and did not take place because of Covid-19, was very similar to these other events in terms of structure, schedule, and objectives, and could be built upon for the purpose of this project. Similarly, TVAF could capitalise on smaller scale events such as the Fun Fridays, or those already organised by local BAME communities to strengthen bonds and cultural ties and celebrate their traditions, such as the annual event organised by the Andover Nepalese Association. Endowed with a bigger venue, event organisers would be more than happy to open the event up to other BAME as well as host communities and showcase their culture and traditions.

As for existing initiatives using arts as a medium to address social issues and promote diversity and inclusion at the same time, HIAS Rights, Diversity and Social Justice Education adviser and Arts Officer organised a Climate Crisis project in 2020-21, which will be followed by a Climate Unity project in 2021-22. Both projects were informed by young people's voices, as they were involved in consultations over how life in Hampshire should look like in 2050. Environment emerged as a key issue and as such, became the core of the two projects, which use arts to raise awareness about climate change and develop young people's skills. Artists conducted workshops in 28 schools across Hampshire, which resulted in installations featured at Winchester Cathedral and the Southampton City Art Gallery in the summer of 2021. Embedded in the installations were QR codes which enabled members of the public to access information about the meaning of each installation, as well as children's and young people's views and concerns about the environment. As for the Climate Unity project, it builds on the success of the former initiative, using arts as a medium

to express a range of different perspectives on climate change, including from marginalised communities such as children and young people, minority ethnic communities, faith communities, LGBTQ+ groups, disabled and SEND communities, as well as the Elderly (e.g., Men in Sheds, craft groups). For example, both Art Asia in Southampton and Nepalese communities will be involved. Installations will comprise of circular work using recycled materials to be symbolic of the planet and ideas about eternity and inclusion, expressing the idea of climate change as a challenge that face us all, and will again include QR codes to allow the public to access the views of the creators about the climate crisis.

The Agency running in Southampton through Hampshire-based Energise Me is another example of an existing initiative that uses a creative process to help address social issues, working with 15–25-year-olds in the local area to address needs they have identified in their local communities. The Agency uses a creative methodology to teach young people about entrepreneurship, using the local resources already present in these communities, or an asset-based approach, as a starting point for young people to begin thinking about the change they want to make. With foundations in the favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, The Agency helps young people to create their own opportunities in some of the most deprived areas of Rio and has since been adapted to a UK context, initiated by Battersea Arts Centre and Contact Theatre in Manchester. Some of the projects developed by young people are still running 7-8 years after the first iteration in the UK and while some are arts-based, the projects are centred around the passions of local young people so there are projects about cooking, football, dance, theatre, boxing, music and many more.

Common Ground is another initiative aligned with the goals of TVAF in terms of promoting inclusion and diversity in the area. The project originally worked with Syrian refugees resettled in Hampshire's rural areas, as well as with host communities, and used digital art (e.g., photographs, animation) to get project participants to talk about topics that mattered to them. Participants were taken through a tour of the town, and by taking pictures with high quality microphones and filming equipment, they *'got into the habit of seeing things differently'*. The process was facilitated by two artists who are experts in community engagement strategies. The artists encouraged people to bring objects that were important to them, that represented safety and freedom, and take pictures of these objects in unknown, sometimes uncomfortable locations outside of their home. On the one hand, focusing on objects was a way to address the hesitancy refugees often feel to be represented. On the other hand, this was a way to encourage them to engage with the world around them starting from a 'safe' object, incentivise them to think about the new place where they live, how they feel about it and engage with it, and learn to look at the world around them through different lenses. Importantly, the result of the creative process was unknown, as project organisers were *"interested in people taking charge of what they are doing, instead of project leads imposing something"*, thus resulting in people's greater empowerment and self-expression. The project also represented a way for people to learn digital skills and express their creativity with something as affordable and accessible as a mobile phone, which allows them to create

outputs that are also sophisticated and appealing. Indeed, the process would have resulted in an exhibition of the digital outputs, including through a partnership with the Andover Museum, if not because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The quote below refers to the way art can allow us to see a daily place through different lenses, including through conversations with people from different backgrounds, something that is relevant to the objectives of Finding Friends as well.

"The creative process allows you to become more aware of the place, instead of taking it for granted. You learn to see it in new ways and see how you respond to it, you engage with other people about how you see it, and once we involve people in a project like that, what happens to people once they start looking at their place differently?" (Community Cohesion and Engagement Officer)

Recommendations

"If this is another piece of work that doesn't lead to anything, communities will be disappointed. There has to be a real commitment to act upon these recommendations. This requires more than a vision, this requires action."
(Community leader)

- 1. Develop partnerships with like-minded individuals and organisations** that are already working with minority ethnic groups and have easier access to them and a better understanding of their needs, the barrier they face, and potential opportunities for engagement. Many of these potential partners are listed in the section above.
- 2. Exploit existing funding opportunities to kickstart smaller scale projects and initiatives, preferably co-designed with minority ethnic groups.** Several funding opportunities available have been listed in the section above, and could be used to pilot and test small scale projects (e.g. up to £2,000) that, if successful, could then be expanded by attracting more funding.
- 3. Start small and build up larger initiatives over time.** It can be overwhelming thinking about planning bigger events and interventions so it's best to start small and host more smaller events rather to test ideas and build up a following over time, rather than spend too much time, money and resource planning a very large event.
- 4. Incentivise local people to take part, at least at first.** This could be through paying participants but also could involve providing free meals or childcare to make it easier for local people to participate in arts-based initiatives.

5. **Increase chances for exchange, interaction, and visibility between members of minority ethnic communities and with British residents of TV.** Once again building on some of the partnerships outlined above, for example the TV Council and the CAS, TVAF could help facilitate the creation of a network between representatives of these communities, similar to the Business Network that has long existed in Romsey and is however mostly composed of White British. Such a network could meet on a regular basis to discuss topics similar to the ones discussed in this report, as well as other pressing issues for members of these communities. This would help members become familiar with each other and develop the confidence and mutual support needed to become more active in the suggestion and organisation of initiatives related to art and culture.
6. **Exploit partnerships and funding opportunities to organise festivals and events in the local area.** As mentioned above, festivals and events are crucial to increase visibility and sense of pride of these communities and allow them to showcase their culture and traditions. These initiatives should be organised in local venues, to make it easier for groups to attend; co-created with members of the minority ethnic groups; and centred not on just one culture's traditions, but as much as possible inclusive and integrating British culture too. According to all interviewees, focusing these events on food is an easy, entertaining, non-controversial way to gather different groups of people (including refugees) and encourage them to mingle and share. At first, they could be centred around holidays and celebrations but could grow to also include:
- An event to celebrate these communities' contribution to the local area, for example through their participation in the army, as doctors and nurses during Covid-19, or through their daily work as bus drivers, restaurant owners, shop keepers etc.
 - Tours around the city, for example guided by the Andover Museum with the help of members of minority ethnic groups telling their stories and memories of and in the city. Tours could then go to different restaurants, where people can sample traditional food and music and learn about a culture and its history through immersive theatre, storytelling (including by involving Test Valley Tales) and slam poetry.
 - 'Fusion' events and competitions, for example about how different groups cook the same or a similar dish, or what could one culture add to another, for example, what spice or ingredient a Nepalese or a Chinese would add to a Sunday Roast, an English Breakfast or an afternoon tea.
 - All these events could include playful quizzes and activities centred around people's relationship with the local area, with the aim of increasing their sense of belonging and highlighting commonalities between groups. For example, encouraging people to take pictures of or discuss what their favourite places are in Andover, and why.

7. **Start planning and organising inclusive cultural initiatives in an already more diverse location in TV, such as Andover, where it might be easier.** In Romsey, these initiatives are more likely to face backlash, whereas Andover is already a diverse city composed of several minority ethnic groups, and people there might be more open to similar initiatives. This might start attracting people from nearby villages and Romsey, as it happened with Basingstoke and Eastleigh events, and overtime might lead to further changes in less diverse towns and villages as well.
8. **Set up an Advisory Board, including representatives from minority ethnic groups, and consulted over existing and potential opportunities.** Involving these groups as advisors, including the over 65, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, young people, Muslims, can start to develop their confidence that if they suggest something they will be taken seriously by organisations that will help them make their suggestions happen. This will also ensure that initiatives respond to the needs and priorities of these communities, as the latter ones are directly involved in planning and implementation. This Board should be integrated into pre-existing mechanisms to make it sustainable through regular engagement and meetings and taking advantage of funding available.
9. **Help ethnic minority groups that are not already incorporated into associations or charities to set these up with the correct systems in place.** One of the key challenges facing many groups is that they do not have the formal structures in place so that they can apply for funding on their own and receive other charitable benefits. For some groups, this needs to be supported by the council or other agencies but will ultimately allow these groups to be autonomous and have access to more resources.
10. **A documentary could be produced out of the process of event co-creation,** showcasing the process, examples, and results of collaboration between different groups, and including interviews with members of different communities, about their own experience of the process, what they love about the area, their personal stories and memories, why they are proud of being from there and what makes it special. An exhibition of the documentary could then be organised, allowing other residents to assist and become aware of collaboration possibilities.
11. **Use arts to address social issues that matter for the communities of interest.** Art and creativity - for example theatre, movement, and visual art - should not be interpreted only as products, but instead as a process, including to raise people's awareness and get them to discuss sensitive topics, such as social, health and economic issues that minority ethnic communities face in the local area. For example, the Festival Home Theatre organised theatre pieces in the houses of favela dwellers, or abandoned buildings, addressing residents' restricted mobility and limited access

to recreational opportunities. Theatre was used to represent stories of the residents of the area, therefore making them relatable, increasing visibility and sense of pride. This provided opportunities to raise awareness and discuss about sensitive topics, such as dyslexia, sexual harassment, and domestic abuse - issues that are relevant to TV as well - and grow familiarity with theatre as a medium.

12. **Take over underused or public spaces.** Transforming local spaces, such as the public square, shopping centre, barber shops or places of worship, into spaces for exhibition, performance and coming together. These places could be animated through immersive theatre, storytelling, music and dance, and exhibitions of visual art. It is important to involve the press in showcasing these initiatives, as this will help increase visibility of the local area and its multi-cultural and artistic scene.

13. **Ensure consistent, longer-term engagement with these communities, to achieve sustained impact.** This could be done by:

- Developing and consolidating the network mentioned above, by setting up regular meetings
- Supporting Andover Vision and Romsey Future in the improvements of the urban design, for example by enhancing public spaces and carving into pavements and walls stories and symbols of inclusion, including by involving children and young people via schools, as done by the Climate Unity project.
- Offering refugees volunteering opportunities, for them to learn the language and new skills, build their confidence, and develop useful networks.
- Giving voice and space to these communities within the local radio station, where they could broadcast traditional music, stories, talk about issues that matter to them and conduct interviews with relevant people.
- Following through with starting up initiatives where local people can be involved and have agency over those programmes being developed.

List of Interviewee Roles

The following is a summary of the contacts the Project Leads were able to interview over the past two months. The names have been anonymised for confidentiality purposes.

Interviewee name	Role
Rebecca Maddox	Test Valley Arts Foundation
Islam Jalaita	Inclusion and Diversity Officer. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Imogen Colley	Community Engagement Officer
Louisa Rice	Community Engagement Manager
Kyla Hare-Foster	Force Community Cohesion Officer
Zaliha Paraiso-Alli	Positive Action officer who focuses on recruitment with underrepresented groups
Shelley Coburn	Events Manager Andover Bid
Terry Bishop	Chief Executive Unity
Anna Vickers	TV Capsule project
Peter Thompson	TV Capsule project
Faye Perkins	Arts Officer for Test Valley Borough Council
Ram Kalyan 'Kelly'	Unity 101 (radio station) owner
Kumar Gurung	Chairperson - Nepalese Community
Narayan Bhandari	Previous Chairperson - Nepalese Community
Sarah Cole	Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Consultant, EMTAS, Ethnic Minority and Achievement Service
Dmitrijs Meiksans	MYP - Founder and Chief Executive Officer- DMK Potential
Nicola Hopkins	Romsey Library
Maija Liepins	Engagement Lead Chapel Arts
Susanne Hasselmann	Director Chapel Arts
Aysha Mustafa	Andover Muslim Cultural Association
Ronnie Hoo	Andover Chinese community
Redwan El-khayat	Romsey Silk Route Muslim group, Chair of the group

Aiman Alzetani	Romsey Silk Route Muslim group, one of the founding trustees
Mo Alzetani	Romsey Silk Route Muslim group, son of Aiman and host of youth radio station
Suzanne Feak	Deals with legal refugees
Mohammed Mossadaq 'Moss'	Asian Welfare Association
Louise Mackay	Community Lead Andover Museum
Heidi Armbruster	Digital Arts Project
Jody Phelvin	Andover Mind
Rita Kohli	THE MORTGAGE STOP LTD
Minnie Moore	Rights, Diversity and Social Justice Education adviser. HIAS Education and Inclusion. Childrens Services Department, Hampshire County Council
Roy Chatfield	Playwright who made a play about Andover and London overspill
Roy Perry	Former Test Valley councillor

About **21 Artists**:

21 Artists is a values-driven company facilitating, hosting, documenting and evaluating art and social change on an international scale. In addition to offering creative approaches to social impact evaluation, community consultation and creative business development, 21 Artists runs place-based arts interventions and research projects in collaboration with local communities and organisations. Recent projects have worked with organisations around the UK such as Battersea Arts Centre, Contact and LIFT as well as internationally in the US, Chile, Uganda, Morocco, Ghana, and Brazil.