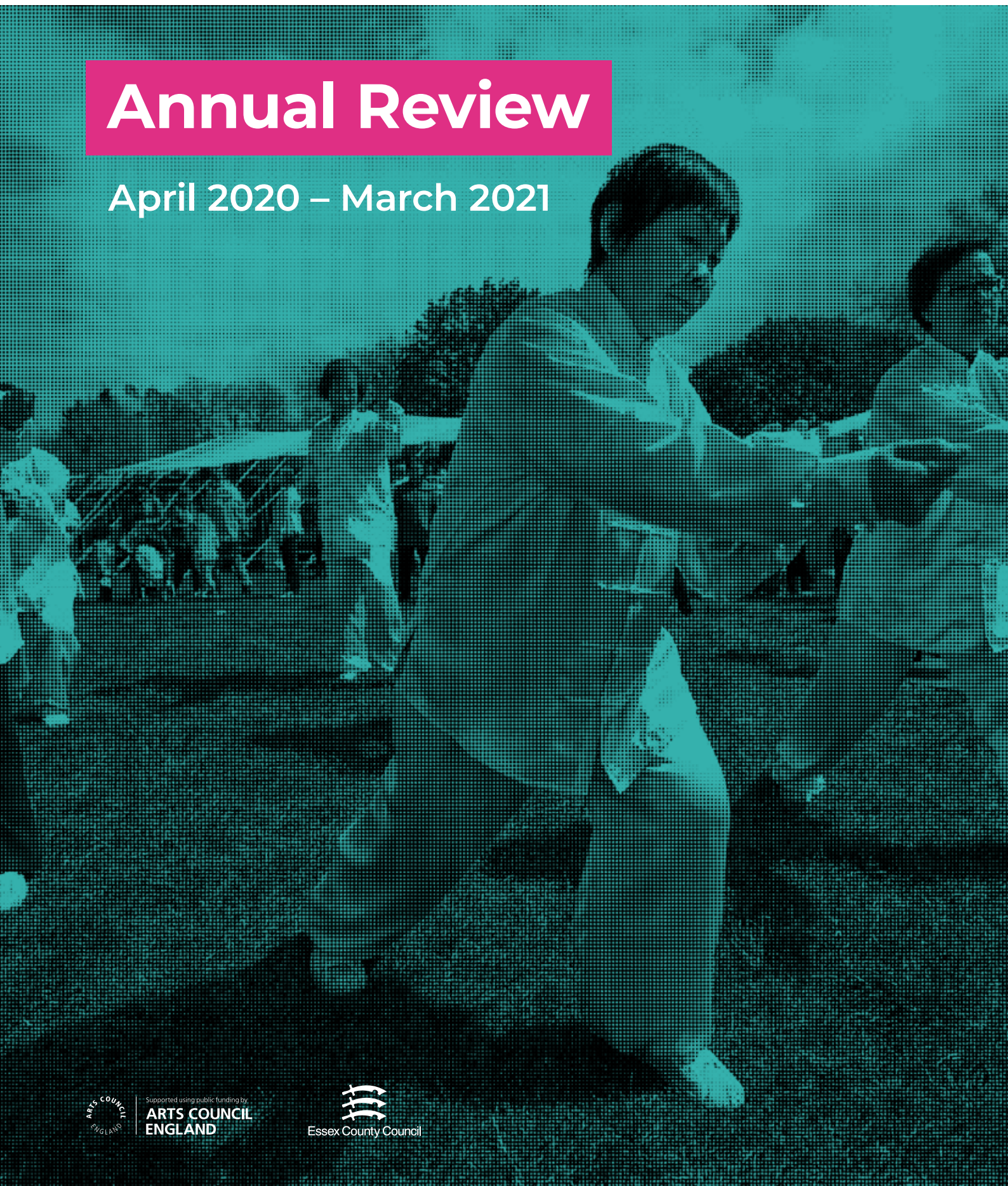


Annual Review

April 2020 – March 2021



Welcome to Essex Cultural Diversity Project's Annual Review

Our Vision: To energise cultural diversity in arts and heritage.

Our Mission: To create opportunities, stimulate participation and provide a focal point for the development, celebration and co-ordination of cultural diversity through arts and heritage activity.

Visit us: essexcdp.com



Foreword: Jonathan Curzon, Chair of Essex Cultural Diversity Project

2020-21 was a year of uncertainty. As Covid-19 swept across the world and quickly escalated into a global pandemic, our focus became safety, solidarity and support. We acted swiftly, putting systems in place that ensured core team members, artists, communities and organisations we work with could benefit from the organisation's continued support through these uncertain times.

We developed a strong alliance with funders like Essex Community Foundation and Active Essex, to help diverse artists and organisations gain access to emergency funding, increase capacity and develop the tools needed to keep serving communities online.

Much of this work complimented our increasing focus on achieving wider social outcomes, working in close partnership with third sector organisations to help support communities in Essex and enhance the social impact of their work.

Like many others we were committed to curbing the spread of Coronavirus; we cancelled, postponed and adapted our artistic programmes, in line with the lockdown and government guidelines for social distancing, moving key activity online.

One of our key concerns was to protect people's mental health and wellbeing during the crisis, and to find ways to ease isolation and overcome loneliness caused by the lockdown. We continued to prioritise audiences, embracing 'all things digital' and piloting new ways of working, to keep connected with both artists and audiences.

The national crisis has been difficult for everyone, but these unprecedented times have made us realise how resilient we are as an organisation, how adaptable our artists are to change, and how brilliant the support is from leaders in the arts and heritage sectors, who have weathered the crisis with a sense of togetherness, generosity and sensitivity.

Thanks to Arts Council England, funders and partners who have supported us and our community, and all the artists, audiences and participants who have come together this year. I'd also like to thank ECDP's core team for all their hard work, and our trustees for their continued support.

Front cover image credit: Colchester Chinese Culture Society, One World One Essex

COVID-19 support for diverse communities

"The pandemic has revealed the deep fragilities in our world. To tackle these fragilities, we need to reduce inequality and injustice, and to strengthen the bonds of mutual support and trust."

United Nations Secretary-General
António Guterres

Supporting Diverse Communities During the Pandemic

Essex Cultural Diversity Project's remit has always been to support creative professionals and organisations working in diversity, arts and heritage. We champion work that explores culture, fosters understanding and brings communities together. During the Coronavirus crisis, this work continued to be our imperative. The pandemic triggered an unprecedented emergency across the world, isolating individuals and communities already marginalised and vulnerable.

As an organisation with a solid partnership ethos and strong links to diverse communities, we became a hub from which to broker and strengthen relationships between funders and diverse communities, to help them access advice and emergency funds, acting as conduit for hard-to-reach groups.

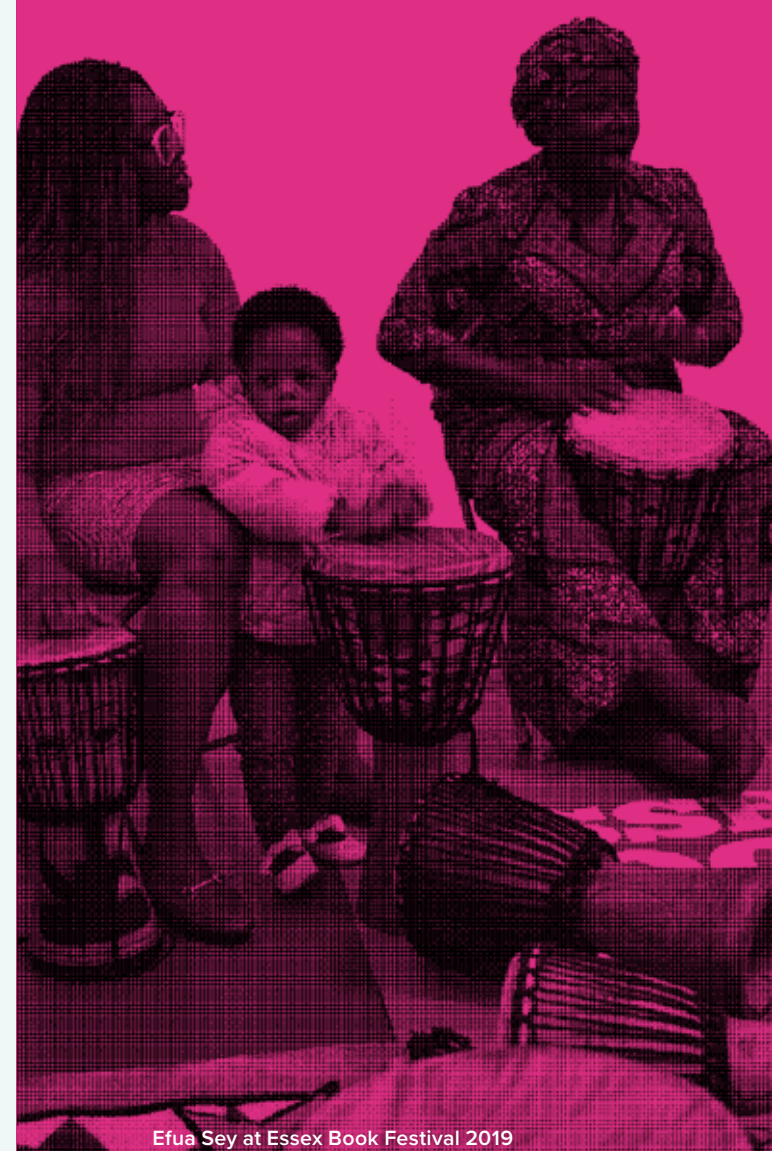
Over the year we worked with key funders to help them reach communities most in need. The overall aim was to help Essex-based diversity led organisations create long-term relationships with funders, and increase their resilience, capacity and confidence. We offered governance advice and training, and helped secure money for extra resources and equipment needed to keep communities connected online.

Thank you to:

- Essex Community Foundation
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Lockdown Support Fund
- Active Essex
- Essex Council Council's Winter Covid Fund

Organisations supported include:

African Families in the UK, Bangladeshi Women's Association Colchester, Braintree Mosque, Chelmsford Hindu Society, Chelmsford Mosque, Chelmsford Muslim Association, Christ Calls, Colchester Black History Month Organisation, Colchester Chinese Culture Society, Colchester Life UK, Colchester Nepalese Association, Dhamma Centre, Divine Assembly, Dream the Change, Efua Sey Cultural Academy, Essex Multicultural Activities Network, Fresh Beginnings, Girls Empowerment, Ideas Hub Chelmsford, IQRA Learning, Isedale WA CIC, Next Generation Development Agency, Over 50's Black Men's Group, PATACC, She-Unity Support and The Shepherdess.



Efua Sey at Essex Book Festival 2019

This Year's Projects

Diversity Infrastructure Programme

Hands-on support for diverse-led organisations

During the pandemic, we delivered a tailored programme of support for diversity focused organisations and groups in Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

The programme supported 35 organisations aiming to secure funding to develop new partnerships, new projects and services, to help them support their communities more effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We established small micro-grants for emergency funding: £5,000 in total, with £500 grants allocated for small important interventions. Through 1-2-1 sessions and online workshops, we provided hands-on support, helping them with the necessary governance and finance structures, to build strong partnerships and to develop their ideas and projects based on the needs of their communities. Those reached include the Sikh, Muslim, Bangladeshi, Afro Caribbean, Ghanaian, Chinese, Brazilian, Portuguese, Mauritian, Hindu and Polish communities across the region.

The project was funded by the National Emergencies Trust administered by UK Community Foundations, and was delivered in partnership by Essex Cultural Diversity Project and the Cultural Engine CIC.



Let's Get Active

Getting communities moving during and after lockdown

Let's Get Active was a project that encouraged diverse communities to participate in physical activities during, between and after the various lockdowns in 2020-21, through online platforms and live outdoor sessions.

To deliver the project, we collaborated with a range of culturally diverse practitioners who have worked with Essex Cultural Diversity Project over the years.

Activities included cycling on an Indian Rickshaw by artist Lata Upadhyaya in Purfleet; ribbon dancing with the Chinese Colchester Culture Society in Tendring; capoeira and samba classes delivered by BrazilArte in Southend. There was also Bollywood Dance with South Asian communities; Bhangra Aerobics with Hindu and Sikh Punjabi Communities; African Djembe Drumming and Dance; Tai Chi Classes; Jiu Jitsu; Yoga wellbeing classes and walking groups along Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, Jaywick and Clacton. We also promoted online interactive *Nintendo Switch Walkthroughs* sessions, and storyteller Seema Anand launched *3000 Steps*, a bank of stories housed on Spotify designed to accompany people's daily walks or exercise sessions.

The project was funded by Active Essex, which received *Tackling Inequalities* funding from Sport England. Active Essex worked with Essex Cultural Diversity Project to deliver onward grants to diverse community organisations.



GAP: The Global Arts Project

GAP: The Global Arts Project took place in Autumn 2020 and encouraged Year 5 and 6 pupils across Tendring to be active members of their community, learning about different cultures and promoting community cohesion. The programme took place in seven primary schools across the district and focused on the theme of *Cultural Awareness*.

The initiative saw workshops on African storytelling, drumming and singing from artist Anna Mudeka, delivered during Black History Month in October. There was also Bollywood dance, Chinese calligraphy, and an opportunity for children to meet Syrian refugees, as well as sessions delivered by author Anita Belli and artist Claire Driver, who captured the children's experiences and responses using drawing and the written word.

The project was made possible through funding by Essex County Council Virtual Schools and supported by Tendring District Council.



Active Gardens with Marley

Artist Marley worked with a range of diverse communities in Colchester and Tendring to deliver an outdoor project that encouraged people to become more active through gardening.

Active Gardens supported people with their mental health and wellbeing, especially the vulnerable elderly and over 50s who had been self-isolating or shielding at home due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The project aimed to energise participants through daily activities which had many benefits, from physical activity and confidence building, to advocating healthy lifestyles and raising environmental awareness.

Funded by Active Essex, The *Active Garden* project was delivered through online platforms and included a series of short videos which shared ideas and good practice around gardening.



Projects we've supported

Black History Month



For BHM 2020 we pooled together and promoted events organised by friends, partners and collaborators, and worked with BBC Essex to present a series of special BHM themed programmes.

Searching for our Jazzy Souls



An initiative put together by Perry Louis with support from Essex Cultural Diversity Project, TestBeds (University of Bedfordshire), Arts Council England, Focus on Jazz, Luton Bids, and Luton Music Service.

This Year's Commissions

A proportion of our commissioning programme was postponed this year, in the need to protect people from the Coronavirus and comply with the Government's lockdown guidelines. Our remaining commissioned artists skilfully embraced the change, successfully adapting their plans and moving online for a more digital focussed delivery.

We pushed back several projects that had been in the pipeline, such as the final exhibitions for Mike Roberts' commission at National Trust properties in Coggeshall, and the final phase of Lisa Temple-Cox and Nicola Burrell's project at the National Trust's Bourne Mill in Colchester.

We are looking forward to starting a new, fuller programme from April 2021.

Sian Fan

A digital commission for Chelmsford

We teamed up with Chelmsford City Council to commission digital artist Sian Fan, as part of *Essex2020 – Year of Science and Creativity*.

Sian's project *Current* creatively responded to the rich story of Chelmsford and its waterways. Harnessing digital innovation, it culminated in an interactive website that explored key sites along the rivers' path, creating an immersive digital archive for all to enjoy. Sian worked with local diverse communities to collect stories, footage, sound recordings and scans to feed into the website.

As a digital artist from Chelmsford this commission was highly relevant to Sian's work, which explores the space between the digital and the physical. She is interested in what it means to be human in our increasingly digitised and hyperconnected world, and seeks to discover new ways for us to coexist with technology that can enhance our everyday experience.



Lasana Shabazz

I am Wycombe Buckinghamshire Libraries

Lasana Shabazz was appointed for the second Buckinghamshire artist commission, as part of a three-year partnership between Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Farnham Maltings, funded by the Rothschild Foundation.

As a black British queer artist from Caribbean migrant descent, whose family settled in the High Wycombe area when they first arrived in the UK, Lasana's project *I am Wycombe* aimed to put people and community firmly at the centre of the artistic process. Based at High Wycombe Library and Micklefield Library, the project culminated in a series of films, shaped by the stories of participants, staff, volunteers and communities, underpinned by the artist's own family history.



Going Digital

Throughout the pandemic, we continued to develop our digital and online work, to keep connected, push positive stories, revisit past work, and maintain visibility during the Covid-19 lockdowns. This was an opportunity to pilot new ways of working and capitalise on a growing digital literacy and willingness for experimentation among audiences and artists alike. Our digital work helped meet the need for community and connection, counteracting feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Stay In and Play: A Bank of Digital Experiences

A brand new suite of 'digital experiences' brought together activities people could do online, including a virtual version of the Duleep Singh Heritage Trail with interviews along the route; a 360-degree virtual reality tour of Jaywick created by Close and Remote during their past commission; and audio podcasts of family stories and folk tails, recorded as part of our *One World One Essex* project. These 'digital experiences' were promoted through a new campaign called *Stay In and Play*, which ran throughout the first lockdown. It was widely shared by our funders, friends and partners, including Arts Council England.



ECDP TV & ECDP RADIO New Vodcasts and Podcasts

ECDP TV consolidated all our video work so far, linking people to films and short videos on a new YouTube channel. We also commissioned new programmes, including *The Edge* with Seema Anand, a series of films which explored new and innovative things happening in the arts, featuring interviews with artists from diverse backgrounds. We also launched ECDP RADIO, commissioning broadcaster Nita Jhummu to record a series of interviews celebrating diversity in Essex.



Stand Up for Diversity SU4D Goes Online

Our series of *Stand Up For Diversity* events, delivered in partnership with Essex Book Festival, moved online and continued to bring people to together, when many of us were working from home or on furlough. Two Zoom events gave those working in diversity a platform to talk about their work and make connections, inviting up to ten speakers to give three-minute mini-talks. Moving the events online removed geographical barriers for speakers and audiences, resulting in a wider reach across the UK and abroad, and meant we could record the mini-talks and make them available to watch online, building up our bank of 'digital experiences'.

Productive Partnerships

Bringing Diverse Communities to Lesnes Abbey Woods

Essex Cultural Diversity Project has been working with Bexley Council to deliver their National Lottery Heritage Fund programme at Lesnes Abbey Woods in Kent. The project aims to increase engagement of diverse communities around the park, to raise awareness of its facilities and invite them to shape future event programmes.

The project involved research and engagement with diverse communities in the area, piloting a range of events from family days and tours, to food and taster activities. It has supported local businesses, especially with catering for events featuring Punjabi, Nepalese, West African and Caribbean food, co-ordinated by a local company CC Events.

We have helped establish long-term partnerships with key organisations in the area, including the Peabody Trust, Radio Thamesmead, and Active Horizons, a diverse youth community organisation. An approach to the MP for Erith and Thamesmead led to a successful partnership with the Mason Foundation, and a regular Mason Mile will now take place at Lesnes park to encourage physical activity and wellbeing.



Exploring Dementia, Diversity and the Arts with Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends Programme

We worked in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society to deliver an online event as part of their Dementia Friends Programme in January 2021. The event was entitled *Dementia, Diversity and the Arts* and was in two parts: a webinar with guest speakers to share experiences and inspire discussion, followed by a more interactive session with breakout roundtable discussions.

The event was part of Essex Cultural Diversity Project's focus on arts and health, especially in connection to diverse communities, and helps promotes the work of diverse artists and arts organisations in this area. It is hoped that this will be the first in a series of events in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, helping us make connections with health organisations and bodies such as the local Dementia Action Alliances across Essex.



Supporting diversity on BBC Essex

This year Essex Cultural Diversity Project has continued to cement its productive working relationship with BBC Essex, sourcing guests and appearing regularly on *Essex Voices*, their weekly radio programme that focuses on community.

This has helped us reach thousands of people during lockdown, raising cultural awareness in Essex and growing audiences for our work, as well as helping them diversify their programming. Conversation topics have included shows celebrating religious festival such as Vaisakhi, Ramadan, Diwali, and Chinese New Year; a week of special interviews as part of Black History Month 2020; how we have helped diverse organisations during the Coronavirus pandemic; and the new discovery of an Indian Princess in Doddinghurst.



Elevate Connect with Disability Arts Online

We have been working with Disability Arts Online on *Elevate Connect*, a programme of research to understand how NPOs in the South East area engage with and understand Arts Council England's *Creative Case for Diversity* and increasingly 'Inclusivity and Relevance'.

The aim is to identify improved networking and mutual support opportunities may be required, in relation to increasing diversity in programming, workforce and audiences. We hope this work will lead to stronger networking between organisations, and that we can continue removing barriers, which could prevent diverse representation in the cultural and arts sectors.

Working together on World Religion Day Melfest: Holiday Hunger

This year's *World Religion Day*, which takes place on the third Sunday of each January, gave us an excellent opportunity to forge a unique partnership showcasing the power of inter-faith understanding and harmony.

We worked with Chelmsford City Council to support *Melfest*, the Holiday Hunger February half term event in the county capital; ingredients were kindly donated by Grays Sikh Gurdwara; the Shri Guru Nanak Sikh Darbar in Gravesend also made a generous donation; and Essex Multicultural Activities Network Muslim Women's Group prepared and cooked hot daily lunches over five days at this event at Melbourne Park Estate. A perfect example of community cohesion and charity.



Financial Overview

In 2020/21 Essex Cultural Diversity Project moved into its third year of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation Funding at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside sourcing income from wider schemes, this security enabled us to continue supporting creative practitioners and organisations, both in the context of diversity and the pandemic

Our total annual income was £304,763; 50% was from Arts Council England, with additional income from Local Authority and Partnership funding, Active Essex and the British Council.

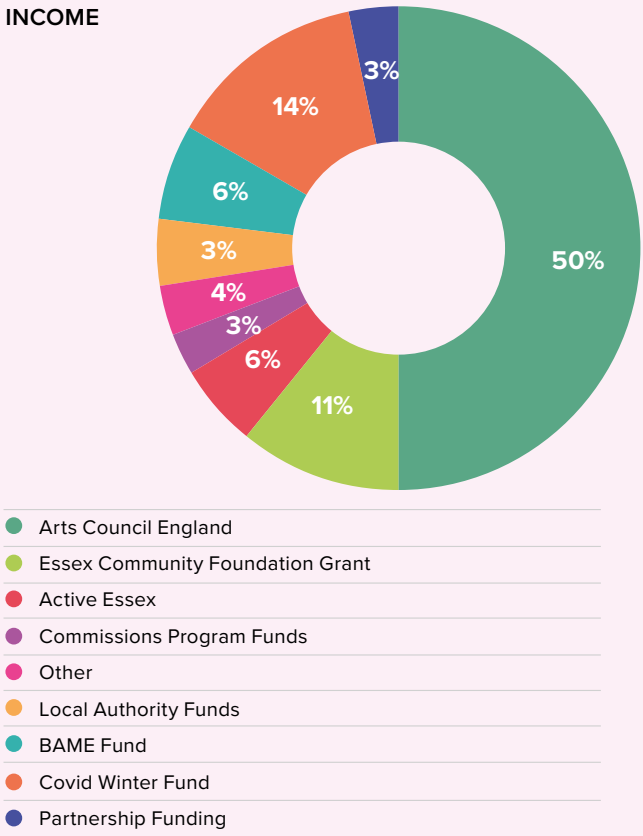
The organisation's financial sustainability through Covid-19 was largely due to the decision for the core team to work remotely. This has saved premises costs such as rent, rates and utilities, and not only operates in line with our Environmental Policy, but also proves to be a model which ensures operations remain nimble whilst not compromising productivity, good practice and financial controls.

This year running costs totalled just 7% of our total expenditure – 35% including core team fees. This meant that 65% of expenditure during the Covid-19 pandemic went into supporting creative practitioners, programme and other organisations. 29% went directly to diverse organisations in the form of small grants through the BAME Infrastructure Fund, and diverse organisations supporting families through the pandemic via the Covid-19 Winter Fund.

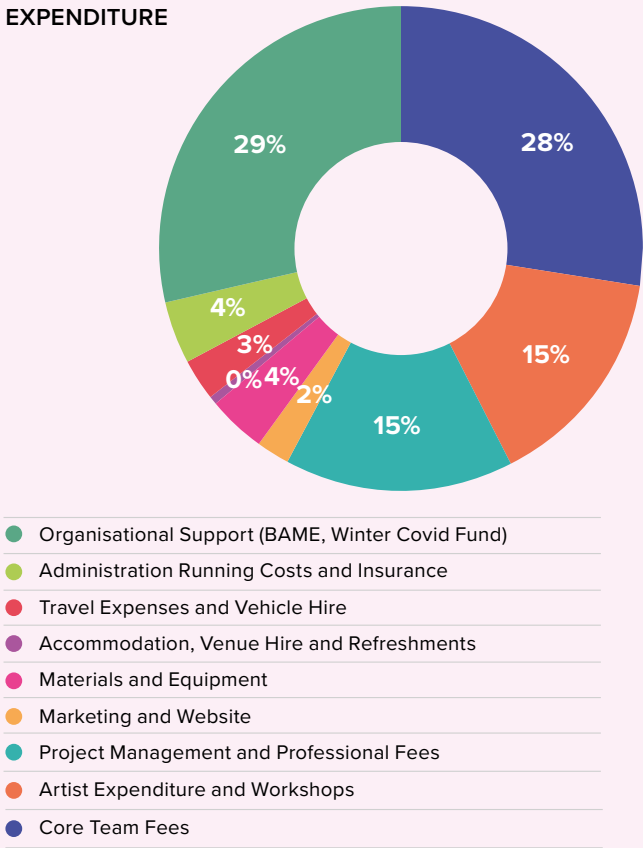
In 2020/21 we also changed accountants to a firm that promotes social responsibility through their business activities, and who will help Essex Cultural Diversity Project refine our financial processes through specialist advice for charities.

Going forward, we find ourselves in a position where the Board of Trustees can consider holding reserves. This will ensure that Essex Cultural Diversity Project remains sustainable, as the organisation considers expansion through wider programming, increased geographical coverage and greater funding opportunities.

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



Looking Forward to 2021/22
Indi Sandhu, Creative Director and CEO

At the time of writing, we're heading towards the end of the 'roadmap' to lift the latest Coronavirus lockdown in England. Everyone is hopeful and confident, looking forward to the world opening up and meeting each other once again, face-to-face.

To date, around 80% of adults have now received their first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, and we are doing our bit with a focused campaign to help overcome 'vaccination hesitancy' within diverse communities. We've called on our wide pool of artists, friends and partners, to create videos, events and resources, which we can take to communities around Essex and beyond.

We are still hosting and promoting online events, building our bank of digital experiences to keep people connected, but we are also pleased that festival and outdoor events are back, for people to meet and spend time with family and friends in person.

We are working in partnership with Colchester Chinese Culture Society to stage the *Festival of Jiangsu & Colchester*, with a mix of online and live events. This is the long-awaited result of visits to China, and conversations with key partners at home and abroad over the last couple of years, supported by the Connecting with Culture Programme with British Council (China).

We can't wait for festivals to return. We are supporting projects with diverse artists as part of Metal's *Estuary Festival* and Kinetika's *Beach of Dreams*; many of the projects started as part of our partnership with Active Essex are now coming to fruition, with outdoor events for all to enjoy happening across the county; and we will be delivering a series of *Global Village* events, set to take place from June, to launch a year-long project bringing carnival, colour and noise to all corners of Essex.

Special thanks to

OUR CORE TEAM: Indi Sandhu, Creative Director and CEO | Giles Tofield, Strategic Lead | Jo Nancarrow, Digital & Admin lead | Nicky Bettell, Finance Administrator | Valerie Tinker, Projects Manager

Our new digital App for the Maharajah Duleep Singh East Anglia Heritage Trail will soon be available for people to download, so you can follow in the footsteps of the last royal family of the Punjab who lived in Elvedon, near Thetford in Norfolk.

We also have some great commissions coming up, with artists creatively responding to people and place, embedding the voice of the community in villages, towns and venues across the South East, including Brentwood's new Garden Village in Dunton Hills and the National Trust's Flatford Mill in Suffolk.

One of our keys themes for 2021-22 is women and diversity; we are excited to be supporting the amazing *Snapping the Stiletto*, a project campaigning for equality and challenging the Essex Girl stereotype; and our second project inspired by Princess Sophia will also be culminating in Autumn 2021, with interviews, activities and events that bring women together to effect positive change. We even have a project sharing the hidden story of Princess Helen Runder Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala, an Indian Princess who lived in Essex and was buried at All Saints Church in Doddington.

We have many stories to share, and are now busy planning and programming for 2021-22. We are always open to new ideas, partnerships and collaborations, so please do get in touch if you want to hear more or would like to work with us in the future.

essexcdp.com
info@essexcdp.com



OUR TRUSTEES: Jonathan Curzon (Chair) | Joanne Webb (Secretary) | David Guy (Treasurer) | Simone Xue | Sean McLoughlin (Vice-Chair) | Miriam Stead | James Wenn | Lora Aziz (Observer)

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Essex County Council

Image credit: Colchester Chinese Culture Society
at Global Village, Village Green in Southend

