

# Annual Report

April 2018 – March 2019



Essex County Council



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



## About us

**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.

Essex Cultural Diversity Project breaks down barriers and promotes cultural harmony in Essex and the wider region, raising awareness of race equality and positive difference in our communities. We aim to develop skills, build sustainable networks and infrastructures, and create new opportunities for artists.

[essexcdp.com](http://essexcdp.com)



## Foreword: Jonathan Curzon, Chair of Essex Cultural Diversity Project

### 2018-19 has been a great year for Essex Cultural Diversity Project.

As we celebrated our tenth anniversary, we also celebrated our first year as a new Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. This followed on from UPLIFT, a positive period of intense strategic and organisational development supported by ACE's Elevate fund, as part of their *Creative Case for Diversity*. This helped us to up scale up our work and ambitions, and has informed our programme, put in place invaluable partnerships and shaped our vision for this year.

We launched a brand new programme of exciting commissions, artist salons and ambitious projects, engaging over 80,000 people and participants, and supporting 575 artists. We've also increased our audiences online, reaching over 350,000 people via our website and social media channels, and more than 550,000 through local, national and international TV, press and media.

Through our programme we have broadened our range of partnerships, forging new and strengthening existing working relationships with like-minded organisations who want to work with us to support diversity in the region.

Our core team has also grown, with our Creative Director Indi Sandhu being joined by new team members, bringing new skills and expertise to the organisation. We also developed our brand, and launched a new website to help tell our story so far, consolidating our success over the last ten years, whilst also sharing our plans and ambitions for the future.

There are many personal highlights of the year, but one that stands out for me is the *Festival of Thetford & Punjab*, and the pride of being part of the grand finale, a procession through the town which neatly fused Morris Dancing and traditional folk with Bhangra, Dhol drumming and Sikh Martial Arts, in an explosion of colour and noise that was very much welcomed and enjoyed by the people of Thetford.

Essex Cultural Diversity Project continues to grow, and gets better and better. We'd like to thank Arts Council England and Essex County Council for their continued support, the funders and partners who have helped to make projects happen, the artists who have helped us deliver a fantastic year of activity, and all the audiences and participants who have attended and been part of this year's journey.

Front page image: Folk Dance Remixed at Festival of Thetford & Punjab (photographer Maria Cooke)

## Financial Overview

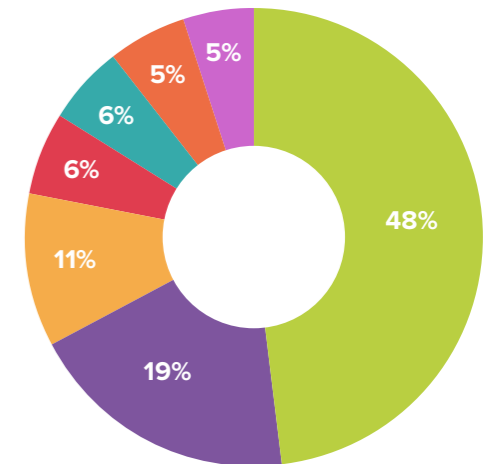
As a result of Arts Council England's National Portfolio (NPO) Funding, agreed from 2018 to 2022, Essex Cultural Diversity Project has become more financially secure. Income has increased approximately 88% since last year, from £166,848 in 2017/18 to £313,601 in 2018/19. This includes our NPO funding, as well as individual project grants from various funding bodies.

This year we have put new financial systems in place, to closely monitor individual budgets and overall cash flow. For the first time, projected income and expenditure have been plotted on a monthly basis and variances analysed. This has helped us manage and pre-empt any challenges in cash flow, monitor potential overspends and plan more accordingly.

We also explored opportunities to generate income via consultancy, something that we'd like to maximise, going forward. We worked with the University of Bedfordshire on a project called Testbeds based in Luton in a consultancy capacity, receiving £5211.30 in fees, providing a stream of additional unallocated funds. There is potential for the organisation to utilise its wealth of experience and skills to generate trading income, resulting in improved cash flow during periods of high activity and enable us to initiate building reserves.

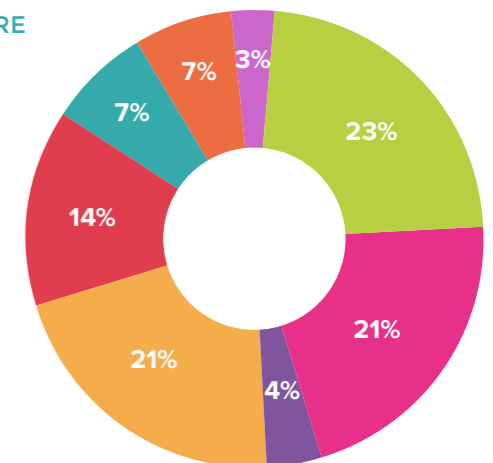
Moving forward, we recognise that more cash reserves are needed in order to manage periods of high delivery and pinch points in the finances. A *Reserves Policy* is now in place, to explore how to maximise this area of income. With a constantly changing political climate, which may affect ECDP's access to funds, more financial stability via additional funding and a stream of unallocated trading income is being addressed.

### INCOME



- Arts Council England NPO & GFTA
- Women's Centenary Fund
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Heritage Lottery Fund 2
- Essex CC Strategic Grant
- Elevate
- Testbeds, Partnership and Other Funding

### EXPENDITURE



- Core Team Fees
- Artistic expenditure
- Activities and Events
- Project Management and professional fees
- Marketing and website
- Accommodation, venue hire, hospitality
- Travel, meeting expenses, subsistence
- Office costs



## This Year's Commissions

Essex Cultural Diversity Project works closely with artists, communities and organisations to enhance the artistic and cultural diversity of the region, to ensure excellence is thriving and that cultural integration and understanding is supported through arts and cultural activity. One of our key strategies to achieve this is through a programme of place-based commissions.

For 2018-19 we focused on five places where community engagement in the arts has been traditionally low: Canvey Island, Harlow, Basildon, Grays and Jaywick Sands.



Days Like These, Close and Remote - Jaywick Sands

## Close & Remote Days Like These: Reclaiming the Beauty of Jaywick Sands

*Days Like These* was a celebration of everyday beauty. Artists Close and Remote (Sophie Mellor and Simon Poulter) explored the locality of Jaywick through seeing, recording and connecting, looking at the natural and built environment using traditional art techniques alongside new technologies.

Working with local residents, they used watercolour painting and sound recording to place themselves and participants directly in the environment, claiming moments of visual and aural beauty, triggering conversations, and exploring what it means to live in Jaywick.

They created a series of 360 degree watercolours of Jaywick Sands, which became a virtual reality tour of the area with a Jaywick Sands soundtrack. The final paintings by the artists and local residents, as well as the VR experience, were exhibited at Jaywick Martello Tower, and the 360 degree tour, a lasting digital legacy for both the commission and for Jaywick, can be viewed at [www.closeandremote.net](http://www.closeandremote.net)

- Key Partners: Jaywick Martello Tower, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council.
- Community Partners: Eldo Bar, Jaywick Community Garden, Creative Net and individual residents of Jaywick.



*"To be able to work in a place like Jaywick is a huge opportunity for any artist. It is a rare and special place that has its own time and energy. To capture the place and work with people there has also been incredibly rewarding. In the sessions we have run there has been a generosity and sense of sharing of being creative together."* Close & Remote

## Canvey Zingt! A Yiddish Song Project

A number of Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Jewish families have recently relocated to Canvey Island from Stamford Hill in North-East London. We recognised a great opportunity for the people of Essex to celebrate and learn more about Jewish music and culture; working in partnership with Essex Music Education Hub and the Jewish Music Institute we commissioned a new project called *Canvey Zingt!*

*Canvey Zingt!* provided workshops for 240 children from four primary schools in Canvey, led by composer Joseph Finlay and musicians from Don Kipper. Students experienced Jewish music played by world-class professional musicians, heard about the cultural context of the music, and learned a number of songs. The project culminated in a community concert for over 200 attendees, when participants performed alongside the award-winning Don Kipper, who play traditional music reflecting the cultural diversity of North-East London, from where the Jewish families have relocated.

*"...the children spoke to me about how much they enjoyed hearing about how other people live .... one of the things that struck the children initially was that this was a culture that existed in many countries around the world and was a tradition that travelled with its people."* Teacher from participating school



## Lu Williams Collaborative Zine Making in Basildon

Artist Lu Williams creates, self publishes and archives zines. Zines are a good way of documenting facts, stories and 'feeling'. They can hold conversations, encourage collaboration, build and celebrate community, and emanate a personal warmth and a tactileness other media often lacks.



For her commission, Lu hosted multiple zine workshops with a diverse range of Basildon residents, to artistically activate participants through writing, collage and drawing.

Each workshop focused on recalling memories of the New Town: talking about culture, society, architecture and sculpture, as well as the participants' own personal experiences and journeys. Pages were created for a collaborative zine, creating new community connections and a physical legacy of Basildon.

- Partners: Basildon Borough Council and The Foundation for Essex Arts

The intersections between Lu's identity as a queer, working class woman, Essex born and bred, have greatly informed the artist's work and practice.



## Arooj Khan Grays + Me: An Alternative Mapping Project

2019 Arooj Khan hosted a number of community mapping workshops with local residents in Grays, creating a series of alternative cartographies of the local area. The *Grays + Me* project arose from a need to observe and reflect upon the cultural and social diversity of Grays, in the midst of ongoing regeneration, as perceived by residents across all social and cultural groups.



The project consisted of three workshop sessions with diverse groups of residents to co-design an art map, a memory map, a spoken word map and a sound map of the area. This culminated in a final exhibition at Thameside Theatre.

Arooj Khan is an arts practitioner, researcher and impact measurement specialist, with experience of programme design and delivery with and for people facing disadvantage. She is currently completing a doctorate in Human Geography, using creative research and arts focused methodologies in her research.

- Partners: Thurrock Council

*“The project has enabled me to strengthen links between academia and art, given that seminars will be taught utilising the research as a case study to undergraduate Geography students at the University of Birmingham, as well as a stand alone workshop session at the 2019 Doctorate Research Conference”*

Arooj Khan

## Jack Cornell and Nicola Hutchison Talking Points: Working with Young People in Harlow

For their commission, Jack Cornell and Nicola Hutchison worked with young people to design and build portable ‘objects’ inspired by local architecture and the artwork in Harlow, reflecting and responding to its status as an iconic sculpture town. Positioned within public locations, customised chairs and screens acted as a starting point, centre piece and stage, around which young people devised and performed interactive theatre to start the conversations they thought should be happening around diversity in their community. To make the introduction of issues clear and accessible, whilst still allowing young people to take the lead, the sculptures and performances were based on human rights.

The project comprised sculpture, theatre and improvisation workshops, with a final performance at the Harvey Centre shopping precinct and the sculptures on display in Harlow Playhouse’s gallery space, curated by Young Curators.

- Venue Partners: Harlow Arts Trust and Gibberd Gallery, Harlow Playhouse, The Harvey Centre
- Community participants and partners: Livewire Community Youth Theatre, Young Curators, and Integration Support Services



*“It was insightful. It was very interesting to think about all those people that aren’t treated correctly. It was fun because you got to use [other young people’s] art to help you create scenes... after a few performances I felt more confident”*

Talking Points project participant, aged 12

## Talent Development: Sharing good practice and supporting artists

Essex Cultural Diversity Project aims to develop infrastructure to support and strengthen the resilience of diverse arts and creative organisations, artists and individuals. This year we had a number of opportunities, activities and events aimed to further artistic professional development and share examples of good practice with others. Here are some highlights:



### Testbeds

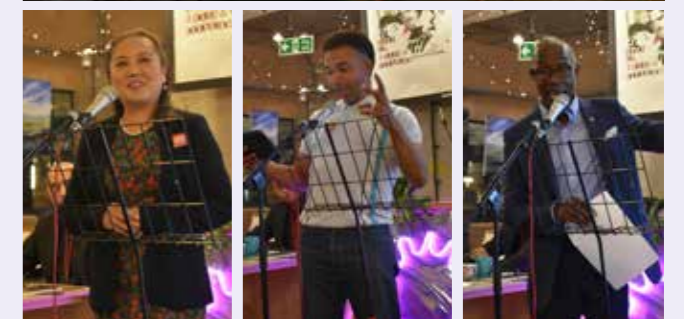
We collaborated with University of Bedfordshire and their Testbeds programme to support the artists and creative practitioners in the new cohort of Arts Elevator, which supports early career diverse artists. This involved mentoring, roundtable sessions, funding workshops and one-to-one advice surgeries.

### Artist Salons

We ran a programme of events offering professional support, insight and training to artists and representatives of arts and cultural organisations, in collaboration with Arts Council England, Essex County Council, district authorities, and sector support organisations and specialists. This year we hosted six *Salons* across Essex. Sessions included accessing funding and writing effective applications; partnerships and working cross-sector; working with schools and young people; use of digital media and engaging with audiences.

### Stand Up For Diversity

*Stand Up for Diversity* events provide regular opportunities for artists working with diverse and hard-to-reach audiences, or planning projects and programmes, to come together and talk about their work to peers and like-minded organisations. These are informal evening events embracing the Pecha Kucha style of three-minute mini-talks and presentations, engendering partnership working and mutual sector support focused on diversity, delivered in collaboration with Essex Book Festival.





## This Year's Projects

Essex Cultural Diversity Project is a partnership-driven and collaborative organisation, delivering projects that aim to tackle challenging issues, tell hidden stories, and give audiences a chance to engage with and explore the cultural heritage of their region.



Baba Fateh Singh Gatka Akhara at Festival of Thetford & Punjab, photographer Maria Cooke

## Festival of Thetford & Punjab

In Summer 2018, we organised the *Festival of Thetford & Punjab*, marking the 125th anniversary of the death of Duleep Singh, the last Maharajah of the Punjab who lived in Elvedon, Norfolk. The festival was a cultural celebration, as well as an exploration of the story of Duleep Singh and his legacy. This included the story of Duleep Singh's family, the political and cultural context of the time he was living, and how this has influenced Thetford and the surrounding area today.

The Festival was also an opportunity to further explore the under-appreciated links between Thetford and the Punjab due to this shared heritage.

The programme comprised a rich mix of history, music, food, dance, talks, drop-in family events, cultural exchanges with local craft groups, an exhibition, a cricket match, and a Festival Finale, linking in with Thetford River Festival.

The *Festival of Thetford & Punjab* was a partnership project between Essex Cultural Diversity Project, working with Norfolk Museum Service, Norfolk Library Service & Norfolk Arts Service, funded by Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund. We also worked with a wide range of local partners, venues and event organisers.

*"A truly wonderful experience with some real wow factor"*  
Festival attendee

*"Speaking with others at the [Festival] events, they came away inspired, educated in a friendly and encouraging environment. You couldn't help but be changed. The finale of the procession through the town centre and displays on the green were amazing! I have never seen so many people attend an event in the town. Thank you!"*

Thetford Resident and Festival attendee



## Suffragettes and Women's Votes A project inspired by Princess Sophia Duleep Singh

Essex Cultural Diversity Project successfully obtained a grant from the Women's Vote Centenary Grant Scheme through the Government Equalities office, which supported projects that encouraged women to become leaders in their communities, celebrated the lives of prominent suffragettes and increased young people's engagement with democracy.

Our project focused on the life and achievements of Princess Sophia Duleep Singh, a member of the Women's Social and Political Union, who campaigned for votes for women. Our project told Sophia's story as a starting point to explore the role of women in democracy, and to celebrate 100 years of votes for women.

The project engaged hundreds of people. We had a pop up exhibition tour to schools, Sikh temples, galleries and museums; roundtable discussions in Ipswich, Southend, Chelmsford and Colchester to discuss issues that affect women from BAME backgrounds and communities; a women's conference, *Sophia's Assembly*, to bring together women for positive change; family storytelling sessions at libraries across Norfolk; workshops for young people; a talk with Yasmin Alibhai-Brown as part of Firstsite's exhibition about fellow Suffragette Millicent Fawcett; and a *Special Assembly on Sophia Duleep Singh* at the House of Commons, hosted by Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesei MP.



## Projects we've supported

We also partner with and promote projects that celebrate diversity, creating platforms for new work, helping artists and community organisations write funding applications, and brokering relationships with galleries, funders and others who can help make their projects happen. Here are a few highlights for 2018/19:

### Jiangsu Performing Arts Puppet Troupe, Jaywick



Working with Colchester Chinese Culture Society to bring part of China's largest performing arts company to the UK for the first time.

### Black History Month, Colchester



Supporting planning and helping fundraise for a programme of exciting events

### Lata Upadhyaya's Transit: The Identity of a White Van



Helping artist Lata Upadhyaya show her work at Firstsite in Colchester, before touring the van around Essex



## Productive Partnerships: Making local, national and international connections

### International research visits to China and India

With funding from the British Council's UK-China Connections through Culture Grants, we visited China to develop our work with the Changzhou Museum, Arts and Cultural Centre in Jiangsu Province, who had visited us earlier in the year as part of a Chinese cultural delegation. Our visit enables us to develop links, collaborations and opportunities for Essex based artists, and create a festival celebrating Chinese culture in Essex with Colchester Chinese Culture Society in 2020.

We attended the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa, India, to explore opportunities for Essex based artists to showcase work in the 2019 festival. We also met with Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Kerala, India, the biggest contemporary art festival in Asia, to talk about collaborating with the next biennale, linking to the Estuary Festival.

### Supporting diversity within Essex Book Festival

Every year we work with Essex Book Festival to support diversity within their programme. Highlights from this year's festival included *the Human Library*, which challenged prejudice and discrimination through empathy and conversation; *Oh, The Places We'll Go!* a day of storytelling from around the world at Grays Library, with African Drumming, bilingual storytelling, Chinese and Arabic Calligraphy; and Chinese calligraphy and flower-making workshops led by Colchester Chinese Culture Society, part of The Mothership Project that exchanged messages of friendship between children in Essex and China.



### An Indian Summer at Essex County Cricket Ground



Over the years, Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Essex Cricket Club have developed a strong relationship, working together to engage and participate with the diverse communities in Essex through the medium of cricket and linking with cultural activities. To mark the Essex v India cricket match in Chelmsford in July, we celebrated Arts and Sport with a colourful mix of Bhangra, Gidha and Dhol Drumming. There were performances by the Jugnu Bhangra Group, Virsa Punjab and DEA Dhol Drummers. India's cricket players enjoyed the dance and music - Virat Kohli, captain of the Indian Cricket team, joined the bhangra dancers. The game was a warm up test match for India, before their five international test matches against England, and many of the Indian community in Chelmsford attended the event.

## Looking Forward to 2019-20 Indi Sandhu, Creative Director

**We are very much looking forward to building on our new NPO status, with another year of exciting activity and more creative collaborations lined up, in the region and beyond.**

We already have some fantastic projects in the pipeline: we will be celebrating the Windrush generation and their descendants, with a small grant from the Government's Windrush Day Grant Scheme. Watch out for our series of special events in Summer 2019, including a Windrush Day special event in Chelmsford on 22 June, a touring pop-up exhibition and a legacy film.

We are working with Norfolk Museum Services on the *Festival of Norfolk & Punjab*, building on and extending our exciting event in Thetford. Heritage Lottery Fund is also supporting a continuation of our recent Women's Centenary project, an opportunity to further explore the life and achievements of Sophia Duleep Singh.

A brand new commissions programme will continue to explore 'diversity' through a place-based approach, and for this coming year we will be looking at developing projects in rural areas of Essex.

2019 also sees the start of a three-year project working in partnership with Farnham Maltings, funded by the Rothschild Foundation, to deliver activity across Buckinghamshire, when we will be working with the library service to remove geographic and social barriers to seeing and participating in the arts. The programme includes a performance programme and three artist commissions.

Our work with festivals will also continue, with our *Bollywood Tent* at *Fling* in Chelmsford, as well as *Village Green*, working alongside the team at *Metal* in Southend on the *Global Village* tent and on their *Next Generation* project for school children to engage with musicians and performers from all around the world. We will also be supporting Arts La'Olam's *Art Eat Festival* in Ipswich, a two-day free visual art and street food festival celebrating creativity and community. We will also be developing the festival links that we've forged abroad, in China and in India, to create even more opportunities for artists and audiences to engage in different cultures through the arts.

We are still planning and programming for 2019-2020, and are always open to new ideas, partnerships and collaborations, so please do get in touch if you want to hear more about our activities next year, or would like to work with us in the future.



essexcdp.com  
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Thanks special thanks to

OUR CORE TEAM: Indi Sandhu, Creative Director | Giles Tofield, Strategic Lead | Jo Nancarrow, Digital & Admin Lead | Nicky Bettell, Finance Administrator

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

OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS: Chelmsford City Council | Firstsite | Norfolk Museums Services | Norfolk Arts Services | Culture and Green Spaces at Essex County Council

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**“Arts and Culture should reflect the talent and stories of all our communities in the work we commission, curate, produce and present on our stages, in our concert halls and across our galleries and museums”**

Arts Council England:  
Creative Case for Diversity

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