WARWICK UK CITIES OF CULTURE PROJECT

BUILDING TRUST IN POLICING THROUGH ARTS COLLABORATION

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ABOUT THE
FUTURE TRENDS SERIES

THE *FUTURE TRENDS* SERIES—published as part of the *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project*—discusses ways of thinking about the value of culture. culture. It explores the importance of research for understanding the place of culture in everyday lives, its impact on local people, society, the eonomy, wellbeing, and prosperity at large. It does so through a research-informed approach that connects with the needs of policy making.

The intended audiences for the series include cultural workers, organisers of cultural events, funders, policymakers at the national level and in local government, as well as academics. The series aims to provide accessible, research-led accounts of issues related and relevant to the development of the DCMS UK City of Culture Programme and connected initiatives supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Arts Council England and others.

The papers are expected to inform, provoke and engage with place-based ambitions and planning for cultural growth and vitality at all levels. They also offer a practical guide to understanding the range of concepts, methods, data, and evidence that can inform the planning and preparation of proposals and programming.

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The AHRC-commissioned Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project is led by the University of Warwick and highlights the importance of universities and of research in the DCMS UK City of Culture Programme: from the bidding process for the title, through to delivery, evaluation, and legacy of the programme.

The project has a particular focus on increasing the use of arts, humanities, and social science research to match the scale of opportunity for evidence-based learning afforded by the DCMS UK City of Culture Programme.

The project is committed to sharing insights and data that can benefit and inform the UK City of Culture Programme and other place-based cultural investments, mega-events, and initiatives.

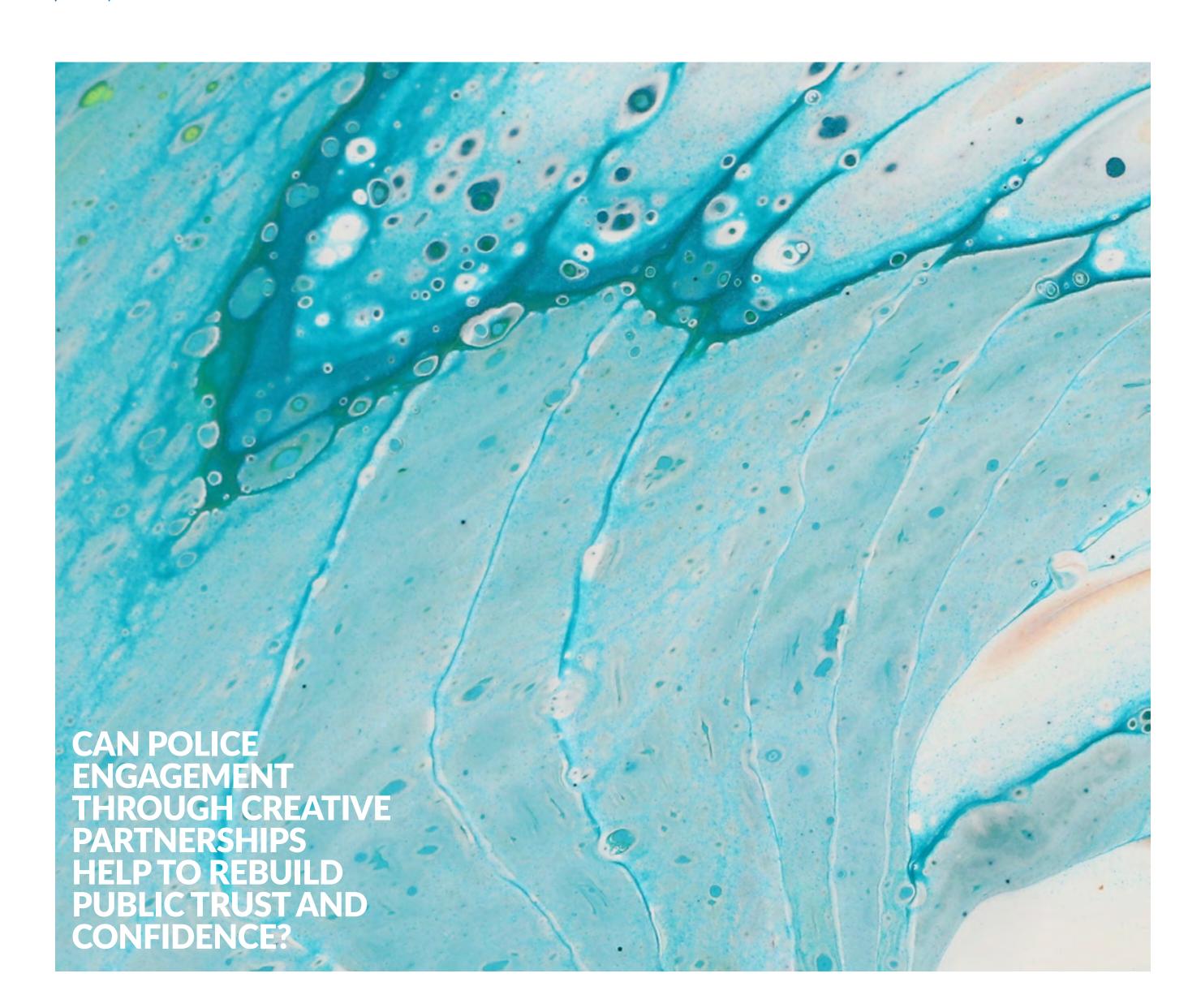**BUILDING TRUST IN POLICING THROUGH ARTS COLLABORATION**

Professor Jacqueline Hodgson – SCHOOL OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
Dr Rachel Lewis – SCHOOL OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

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Each title presents an expert analysis of current and future trends concerning key concepts or ideas, supported by case study evidence from Coventry UK City of Culture 2021. The seven titles in the series cover the following topics:

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BUILDING TRUST IN POLICING THROUGH ARTS COLLABORATION

JACQUELINE HODGSON & RACHEL LEWIS

Can arts and culture play a role in addressing the current crisis in police legitimacy?

Drawing on over 100 interviews and focus groups, this project evaluates the innovative partnership between West Midlands Police and Coventry City of Culture Trust to ask: Can police engagement through creative partnerships help to rebuild public trust and confidence?

It considers how the police can use arts and culture to build positive relationships with vulnerable, at-risk, and seldom heard communities through collaborative working with arts practitioners and 3rd sector organisations. It also notes the suspicion still felt by some members of the public and community organisations, highlighting the ongoing need for a shift in police culture, long-term relationship-building with existing community organisations, and transparency of police objectives.

CAN POLICE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS HELP TO REBUILD PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE?

INTRODUCTION

Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 offered West Midlands Police a unique opportunity to explore the possibilities offered by arts and culture for building positive community relationships.

An innovative and unprecedented partnership allowed an embedded police team to work within the Coventry City of Culture Trust to support and co-design initiatives.

The partnership's aim was two-fold: to ensure safety at events, and to explore ways of using arts and culture as an instrument through which to build positive community relationships between West Midlands Police (WMP) and the Coventry public.

Developing confidence in policing is seen as crucial to reducing crime and increasing public safety, and trust-building is particularly important given the current crisis of confidence in the UK's policing.

Our analysis of the partnership finds that it offered notable benefits to both WMP and the Trust in terms of accessing communities, developing creative partnerships with 3rd sector organisations and arts practitioners, and beginning to build relationships with distrustful communities.

We note, however, that some officers are unclear about the value offered by engagement through arts and culture, and some members of the public and community organisations remain suspicious of the police.

We therefore highlight the importance of a shift in broader police culture, the need for long-term relationship-building with existing community organisations, and transparency in terms of police objectives.

There is considerable impact potential for our research into this partnership and the police's use of arts and culture to inform police training and strategy in the West Midlands and further afield, given growing interest in the value of the arts for relationship building.

POLICE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The social, civic, health, and economic values of arts and culture are increasingly well-researched,[1] and there is growing interest from criminal justice practitioners in the potential benefits of engagement with the arts.

Typically, this work is with offenders in a prison context[2] but Coventry UK CoC 2021 provided the impetus for **West Midlands Police (WMP) to enter into an innovative partnership with the Coventry City of Culture Trust (Trust) around safety and prevention.**

This partnership was unprecedented. Although the police have integrated with organisations in delivering sporting mega-events such as the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, a police force has never before collaborated so closely for a cultural mega-event.

Doing so afforded WMP a unique opportunity to explore ways of building relationships with communities in the city.

Building trust between the public and the police through positive community engagement is seen as a central pillar of the contemporary policing mission, and one that is crucial to reducing crime and increasing public safety.

Given the widely publicised accounts of police brutality and malpractice,[3] which have sparked a 'crisis of public confidence' in police institutions, the building of trust is seen as particularly important.

For WMP therefore, a key objective of the partnership with the Trust was to find ways to break down barriers and encourage confidence in the police, particularly from members of the public who are reluctant to engage with the police.

This meant **WMP worked collaboratively with Trust producers to co-design initiatives** that engaged not only those involved or at-risk of involvement in criminal activity, but also those described as socially excluded, vulnerable, and/or seldom heard.

This included people with experience of homelessness, and young people at-risk of exclusion from mainstream education. Mental health conditions, social isolation, and other vulnerabilities are seen as risk factors in people becoming victims or perpetrators of crime, and building confidence between these Coventry inhabitants and the police is therefore seen as crucial to the management of crime and safety in the city.

To examine the impact of this partnership for WMP and the Trust, we conducted over 100 interviews and 4 focus groups.

Our aim was to evaluate the partnership model, and to consider the impacts of police engagement through arts and culture on police-community relations.[7]

1 E.g., All-Party Parliamentary Group. 2017. *Creative Health: the arts for health and wellbeing.* Available at: Creative Health Inquiry Report 2017-Second Edition.pdf (ncch.org.uk).

2 See for example Koestler Arts and the work of Safe Ground.

3 US examples include the killing of George Floyd among others and the subsequent growth of the Black Lives Matter movement. UK examples include the murder of Sarah Everard, and the strip-searching of predominantly young Black teenagers.

4 The Police Foundation, *A New Mode of Protection: redesigning policing and public safety for the 21st Century* (March 2022). Available at: The Police Foundation - the UK's policing think tank (police-foundation.org.uk) [Accessed August 2022], p.5.

5 See Objective 6 in WMPCC, *Coventry City of Culture* (Report to Strategic Policing and Crime Board,15 December 2020). Available at: SPCB-15.12.2020-Agenda-Item-8-City-Coventry-of-Culture.pdf (westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk) [Accessed August 2022]

6 Member of the embedded team, correspondence with Rachel Lewis, July 2022

7 The authors, Professor Jacqueline Hodgson and Dr Rachel Lewis, are both from the University of Warwick School of Law and Centre for Operational Police Research and the research is funded by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account, the Coventry City of Culture Trust, and West Midlands Police.

This research is vital to understanding the potential benefits of arts-based police engagement with communities, not just in the context of Coventry CoC but also with regard to arts and culture initiatives more broadly. The learning from this research will inform training and strategy in Coventry and the West Midlands, and in other force areas where there is growing interest in the value the arts offer to effective collaborative work with communities.[8]

For organisations and creative practitioners working to achieve positive social impacts, it demonstrates some of the benefits and challenges of working with the police and suggests good practices.

WMP-Trust flagship creative projects

In previous CoCs, police forces have engaged reactively, assessing risk and responding to events as they arose.

During Coventry CoC however, WMP worked closely with the Trust to offer collaborative support from the start.

The breadth and depth of the police involvement was significant – through weekly meetings with Trust colleagues over a prolonged period, the police offered advice and input on event planning and delivery across the CoC programme, and also collaborated closely with Trust producers to co-design a number of initiatives.[9]

Their flagship creative projects included: Arts against Homelessness: See the Bigger Picture, Artist-in-residence: Barriers to Bridges, Forest Camp and Positive Choices.

[8] West Yorkshire police, for instance, are particularly interested in the WMP-Trust's artist-in-residence scheme and are keen to understand its potential impacts and benefits for their own practice.

[9] In discussion with us, the police estimated that they initiated or contributed to more than 40 initiatives.

ARTS AGAINST HOMELESSNESS: SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

An initiative in which police officers, members of the council, and people with experience of homelessness collaborated with an artist on the construction of a large-scale mural on the side of a police building in the city centre.

The group came together weekly at a multi-agency drop-in centre over several weeks and explored their feelings and experiences around loose prompts e.g. decision-making processes. The artist then utilised these ideas to construct the mural.

Rules around the safety of the space were agreed at the start of the process, and meetings were informal and did not require regular attendance, although a support worker was always present. One participant described this as 'a really nice opportunity for people who are police officers and people who do have lived experience of homelessness to *just get into the same space and talk and have a think about what their relationship is.'*

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE: BARRIERS TO BRIDGES

In this unique initiative which has been widely reported in the national press, WMP brought in a resident artist, Kay Rufai, to work closely with police officers and young people in the city in order to examine their experiences and to challenge their perceptions of one another.

The artist-in-residence spent time with a wide range of departments in WMP, meeting officers of all ranks including neighbourhood officers, gang units, firearms officers, and offender management teams, and shadowing response teams.

He also worked closely with a group of young people, talking through their experiences with the police and their perceptions of the force. Amongst these participants, he found universal negativity towards the police and an inherent distrust of officers.

In the second stage of his residency, he produced a series of storyboards documenting through photographic portraits and narrative accounts the experiences of the young people with whom he worked, and then took these to a small group of officers to photograph and video record their responses to these videos and images.

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

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

Describing the initiative, one WMP officer asked: 'can we still be empathetic but go into someone's house with guns?'

FOREST CAMP

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

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

Each week, participants met in a range of spaces to take part in workshops and activities including bushcraft, cooking, and music making.

Whilst there, they engaged with questions around safety, representation, and identity.

One police officer who took part in the initiative said: *'it really has opened my eyes to* [the young people]. I have a lot of respect for them, and I think they did for me.'
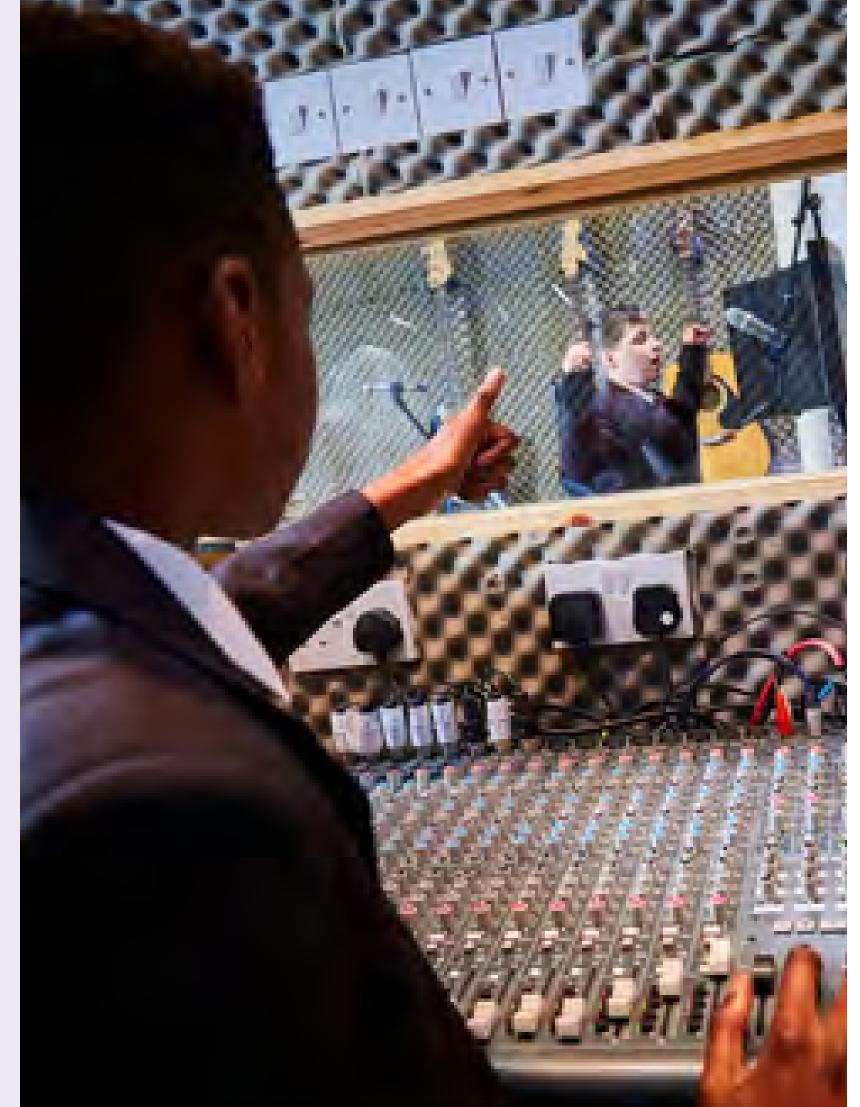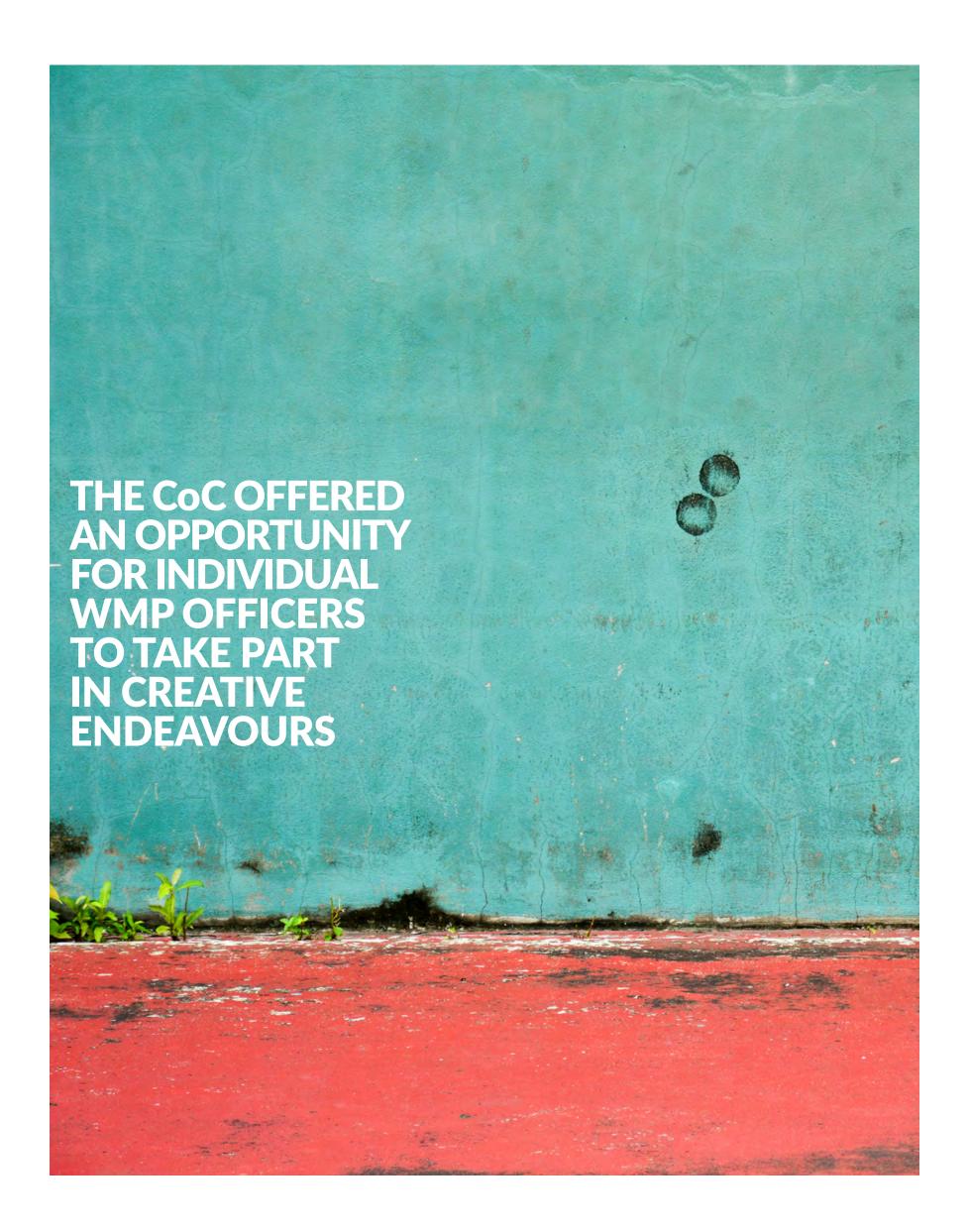

POSITIVE CHOICES

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

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

One participant described WMP as *'very useful allies'* in getting Positive Choices off the ground, and noted that the relationship with the police had helped greatly to strengthen the funding bid for the programme.

THE CoC OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUAL WMP OFFICERS TO TAKE PART IN CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS

Alongside these collaborative initiatives, the CoC offered an opportunity for individual WMP officers to take part in creative endeavours. For instance, a Chief Inspector wrote a poem in which she explored her own personal experiences of domestic violence, forced marriage, and homelessness.

She was filmed reciting her poem as she walked through the streets of Coventry, at times dressed in traditional clothing reflecting her Pakistani heritage, and at other times dressed in her police uniform. The Chief Inspector noted that the film had been viewed over 200,000 times and had received an extremely positive response: 'it resonated with people, people were saying "I cried," "I felt liberated." She saw this as evidence that arts and culture can help forge connections and build bridges between police officers and communities that are reluctant to engage with them.

In similar vein, a PCSO who had herself arrived in the UK as a young asylum seeker took part in the visit to Coventry of Little Amal, a giant puppet representing a 10 year old Syrian refugee. The PCSO wore her police uniform as she greeted Little Amal, and her story was aired widely on local news and social media networks. Again, the PCSO noted the overwhelmingly positive public response, and saw the opportunities for connection and mutual understanding afforded by this event: 'This was the first instance where I've only actually received positivity. So I think that just goes a long way to show just how human it makes you seem, whilst also being in uniform. It was really impactful that way I think.'

This is the first instance where I've only actually received positivity.

WIDER RESEARCH AND POLICY EVIDENCE

As this form of police partnership with the Trust is unprecedented, it is unsurprising that there is limited scholarship that directly relates to it. Previous arts-based interventions have tended to be with offenders both in and outside prison. However there is relevant research on arts interventions for vulnerable or marginalised communities, on the importance of building police legitimacy, and on the benefits and complexities of community policing as opposed to traditional law enforcement approaches. Key points are summarised in the table presented over the following two pages.

[10] E.g., Caroline O'Keeffe and Katherine Albertson, 'The Challenges of Outcome Measurement for Arts Practitioners in the Criminal Justice Sector', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 55 (4) (2016), 496-513; Kirstin Anderson and others, *Inspiring Change: final project report of the evaluation team* (Inspiring Change Project Team, 2011); Laura Caulfield, Bozena Sojka, and Yasmin Devi-McGleish, *Follow-on Evaluation of Sandwell Youth Offending Service – a creative approach to working with young people* (Sandwell Youth Offending Service, 2021); Caulfield, Laura S., Dean John Wilkinson, and David Wilson, 'Exploring Alternative Terrain in the Rehabilitation and Treatment of Offenders: findings from a prison-based music project', *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 55 (6) (2016), 396-418

[11] Caulfield, Laura S., Bozena Sojka, and Yasmin Devi-McGleish, *Follow-on Evaluation of Sandwell Youth Offending Service – a creative approach to working with young people* (Sandwell Youth Offending Service, 2021) Available at: Follow-on evaluation of Sandwell Youth Offending Service – A Creative Approach to Working with Young People – Sandwell Youth Offending Service (August 2021) - Youth Justice Resource Hub (yjresourcehub.uk). [Accessed Junbe 2022]

[12] Senior officer, WMP, interview with Rachel Lewis, October 2021.

[13] It is notable that research on the impact of arts interventions on prison staff is far less developed than the work on those imprisoned or convicted of a crime

[14] Dawn Maud Littman and Shannon Sliva, '"The Walls Came Down." A mixed-methods multi-site prison arts program evaluation', *Justice Evaluation Journal*. 1-23 (2021), 237-259

[15] Caulfield and others (August 2021) - Youth Justice Resource Hub (yjresourcehub.uk).

RESEARCH FOCUS	KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SELECT SCHOLARSHIP	RELEVANCE TO THE CASE STUDY
Arts interventions in the criminal justice system	**Benefits for young people engaging with an arts-based scheme in a criminal justice context**[10] • Artistic interventions in Youth Offending Services can give young people an accessible and 'non-judgmental' medium through which to articulate their feelings. • This can have a positive impact on participants' confidence, mutual collaboration, and their future aspirations.[11] **Benefits for criminal justice personnel engaging with arts-based initiatives**[13] • Arts programmes can support 'dynamic security' in prison contexts, fostering positive relationships between prison staff and prisoners, helping to support 'generative' rather than 'adversarial' interactions between the two.[14] • Creative interventions can help to facilitate relationship-building between staff and young people, breaking down barriers and developing trust between participants.[15] Art initiatives can have better success than more traditional methods at enabling those in prison-offenders and staff—to share their thoughts and experiences, thus offering both sides the opportunity to build greater understanding of the other's perspectives and personal challenges.	The primary focus of this scholarship is on incarcerated offenders, making it very different from WMP's preventive focus on populations who are neither offenders nor in prison. However, the research offers useful insights into the potential benefits afforded by arts and culture initiatives for communities who are deemed at-risk of involvement in criminal activity/exploitation and of exclusion from mainstream education, such as the young people involved in the WMP-Trust Forest Camp. The benefits found are significant for WMP given their position that engaging with mental health challenges and the vulnerability of (young) people lacking safe support structures is a 'strategic policing challenge' as well as a broader social issue.[12] The potential of arts interventions for shifting perceptions and developing trust on both sides is clearly significant, given WMP's objectives to build bridges and forge more positive relationships with historically distrustful communities.

[16] Caroline Ross, *Exploring the Ways Arts and Culture Intersect with Public Safety: Identifying Current Practice and Opportunities for Further Inquiry* (Urban Institute/ArtPlace America, LLC, 2016)

[17] E.g., Lyn Hinds, 'Youth, Police Legitimacy, and Informal Contact', *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 24, (2008) 10-21; Tom Tyler, 'Enhancing Police Legitimacy', *Annals AAPSS*, 593 (1) (2004), 84-99

[18] Kristina Murphy, Lyn Hinds, and Jenny Fleming, 'Encouraging Public Cooperation and Support for Police', *Policing and Society*, 18 (2) (2008), 136-155; Lorraine Mazerolle and others, 'Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy: a systematic review of the research evidence', *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 9 (3) (2013), 245-274

[19] Ben Bradford, *Stop and Search and Police Legitimacy* (London and NY: Routledge, 2017)

[20] E.g Bethan Loftus, 'Normalising Covert Surveillance: the subterranean world of policing', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 70 (5) (2019), 2070-2091; Abie Longstaff and others, *Neighbourhood Policing: past, present and future, a review of the literature* (The Police Foundation, 2015); Trudy Lowe and Martin Innis, 'Can we Speak in Confidence? Community intelligence and neighbourhood policing v2.0', *Policing and Society*, 22 (3) (2012), 295-316; Gordon Hughes and Michael Rowe, 'Neighbourhood Policing and Community Safety: researching the instabilities of the local governance of crime, disorder and security in contemporary UK', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 7 (4) (2007) 317-346; Karen Bullock and David Leeney, 'Participation, "Responsivity" and Accountability in Neighbourhood Policing', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 13 (2) (2013) 199-214

RESEARCH FOCUS	KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SELECT SCHOLARSHIP	RELEVANCE TO THE CASE STUDY
Arts interventions and community safety	Ross[16] examines arts interventions in US communities that have more involvement with law enforcement. She finds similar benefits to those evidenced in the scholarship on prisons. Arts engagement leads to positive impacts on empathy, mutual collaboration, and a greater acceptance of disparate and conflicting viewpoints. Ross also specifically notes the potential afforded by the arts for strengthening community-police relations. In her research, storytelling and poetry helped to 'humanise' law enforcement agents and increase perceptions of police legitimacy.	The possibilities for 'humanising' police officers and members of seldom-heard communities clearly resonates with the aims expressed by WMP. The potential for the public to 'see past' the uniform, and for officers to look beyond their preconceptions of communities is viewed by many WMP officers as necessary for building positive police-public relations.
Police legitimacy	Scholarship[17] suggests that the public are more willing to cooperate with the police and more inclined to offer them help and support when they view the police as a legitimate authority. This perception of legitimacy is reliant on two key elements: • first, a sense that the police are effective at combating crime; • second, a sense that the police exercise fairness in their processes.[18] The perception of fairness is particularly significant in the context of wide-spread concerns around controversial practices such as stop-and-search, and the potential for such tactics to undermine public trust in the police.[19]	The term 'police legitimacy' was widely used by WMP participants in this research. Ideas around trust and confidence in the police were expressed in all interviews with members of the public, community organisations, and creative practitioners. The legitimacy literature tends to focus on public willingness to comply with the law and to cooperate with the police in a direct encounter, whereas WMP are looking to engage in longer-term, broader relationship-building. However, questions of fairness and police competence remain key concerns, particularly for the young people we interviewed. This scholarship is thus clearly relevant to the case study.
Community policing	Research[20] points to the possibilities afforded by community policing approaches in terms of engagement with communities and trust-building. However, it also notes complexities around covert policing and perceived intelligence gathering.	The literature around neighbourhood/community policing[21] is relevant given WMP's focus on prevention and trust-building through more effective community engagement. Many in this case study—both WMP and members of the public—spoke of a perceived or desired return to neighbourhood policing and the opportunities this approach may offer the police for connecting with communities. However, our case study mirrored the complexities found in the scholarship.

CASE STUDY:
BUILDING TRUST AND CONNECTIONS THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE

More than 100 interviews and focus groups were conducted with representatives from a wide variety of organisations, including WMP, the Coventry CoC Trust, Coventry City Council, and a range of arts, culture, and other 3rd sector community organisations.

We also interviewed members of the public, including adults with experience of homelessness, and young people, several of whom have been excluded or are at-risk of exclusion from mainstream education. A separate Report detailing full findings of this study will be published later in 2022.

The partnership model: close collaboration and relationship-building

The partnership model offered notable benefits to both WMP and to the Trust.

The embedded police team[22] operated as another department within the Trust. They were thus able to access the shared workspace and attend regular, frequent meetings.

This enabled formal and informal interactions to take place over a prolonged period and allowed the police to offer their insights and help to influence and shape many initiatives across the CoC programme.

COVID-19 created challenges for in-person working, which added a layer of complexity to relationship-building. It also exacerbated staff turnover on the Trust side, leading to challenges in ensuring clarity for newer Trust staff on police objectives and the purpose of the partnership. Nevertheless, *a close working relationship developed between WMP and the Trust, which allowed both parties to gain a deeper understanding of each other's working practices and priorities, and informed decision making about initiatives and events.*

This was beneficial for two key reasons:

Safety and security – Given the high-profile nature of the UK Coventry CoC year and the perceived reputational risk to WMP and the city should a major crime occur, the embedded relationship allowed WMP to feel involved and connected, and more confident about event security.

Community engagement – The partnership offered WMP and the Trust opportunities for engaging with communities they may not otherwise have been able to access or forge connections with.

For the Trust, the knowledge and understanding offered by the embedded police team in terms of the needs and complexities of communities in Coventry was seen as invaluable, particularly for those with less familiarity with the city. It allowed producers to identify local areas in which interventions could have a particular impact, and to make contact and build relationships with key figures within communities.

The City of Culture has been 'a really good vehicle to link in with some of the groups we might not have had exposure to previously'.

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

From WMP's perspective, the Trust were able to broker introductions and mediate interactions between the police team and communities and organisations with whom WMP have a more distrustful or combative relationship. They were thus able to engage more positively with vulnerable and seldom-heard communities.

22 The team consisted of a policing lead, a project manager, two officers responsible for partnership working and problem solving, and two responsible for events coordination and operational considerations.

Opportunities for engagement

Alongside the mediation role, the partnership enabled the police to join in with and even co-produce initiatives they would not previously have considered or had access to. While many Coventry CoC initiatives did not actually need policing input on safety and security, the partnership allowed the embedded team to create opportunities for police involvement on the engagement side.[23]

For instance, *the HOME festival,* co-produced with people with experience of homelessness, did not require operational input. However, having a member of the embedded team in the festival's steering group allowed relationship-building between police and a more marginalised community.

Importantly, the principles of respect and democratic participation embedded in the steering group enabled a mutual sense of trust and support between participants, despite historical distrust.[24] Through the HOME festival, WMP could offer their museum as a site for a postcard exhibition, take part in a flash mob, and collaborate on the police station mural. These actions were generally viewed by the steering group as symbolic of police openness to positive community engagement.[25]

Relationships with other organisations

Relationships between WMP and other city organisations were also formed or strengthened during the Coventry CoC, and these are expected to persist even once the Trust has been dismantled.

For instance:

- WMP's previous interactions with the *Belgrade Theatre* were rather formal and transactional. Through the WMP-Trust partnership, relationships were strengthened, with the result that WMP and the Belgrade are now collaborating independently of the Trust to develop and disseminate work produced through the artist-in-residence scheme.

- WMP made links through the *Coventry CoC with Coventry Cultural Education Partnership (CCEP)*, a network of professionals with whom the police had no prior connections. The encounter between WMP and CCEP was fortuitous—a member of the embedded team heard mention of CCEP during a meeting and decided to approach them. From this interaction, WMP made links with Coventry Music Education Hub—who are part of the CCEP network—and subsequently collaborated on the 2-year Positive Choices project, working with young people through after-school music sessions in 4 schools.

This is a clear demonstration of the value of the partnership for enablin connections between WMP and other organisations/networks across the city. It also highlights the importance of the informal interactions afforded by the WMP-Trust's close working relationship.

[23] Member of the embedded team, interview with Rachel Lewis, October 2021

[24] Focus group participant, May 2022. See also Nadine Holdsworth and Jennifer Verson, *A Report on the HOME Festival and Legislative Theatre Initiatives Led by Arts and Homelessness International During Coventry City of Culture 2021* (Warwick University, 2022)

[25] Academic, interview with Rachel Lewis, June 2022; Focus group participant, May 2022

POLICE-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE: MORE THAN JUST KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

Our research suggests that police engagement with the public through arts and culture can have positive impacts on mutual perceptions and on relationships between police and communities.

We interviewed 20 members of the public and had informal, off-the-record conversations with 10 others. Most interviewees are members of communities with which WMP wish to build trust and break down barriers: adults who have experienced homelessness, and young people who have been excluded from mainstream education or are deemed to be at-risk of criminal activity or exploitation.

Every single interviewee articulated some degree of negativity towards the police as an institution. Some have had or continue to have negative encounters with police officers; others may lack personal experience but nevertheless voice distrust or animosity towards the force due to the experiences of friends or family, or because of wider perceptions of police misconduct or brutality.

For one young person, the image of the police has been 'trashed and ruined and destroyed'[26] by recent high-profile events. Many saw a real divide between the police and the public; as one adult said: 'it's a them and us situation.'[27]

Showing a willingness to engage

Despite these negative perceptions, most of the interviewees who had taken part in an initiative with the police during Coventry CoC gave a broadly positive account of the experience. For several interviewees, the very fact that WMP had shown willingness to engage in the projects, even if the initiatives were not always felt to have been wholly successful, was seen as indicating a broader desire to connect more positively with communities.

that they're willing to listen – that's what I admire... they really did want to listen.

As one interviewee said: 'that they're willing to listen – that's what I admire [...] they really did want to listen.'[28]

Another interviewee, who used to see the police as 'the enemy', explained that through her experience with the mural project, she now had the sense that the police had gained more empathy with her community, and were keen to change the way they engaged with them.

'now, because of [...] doing stuff with [the police] it's a million times better'.
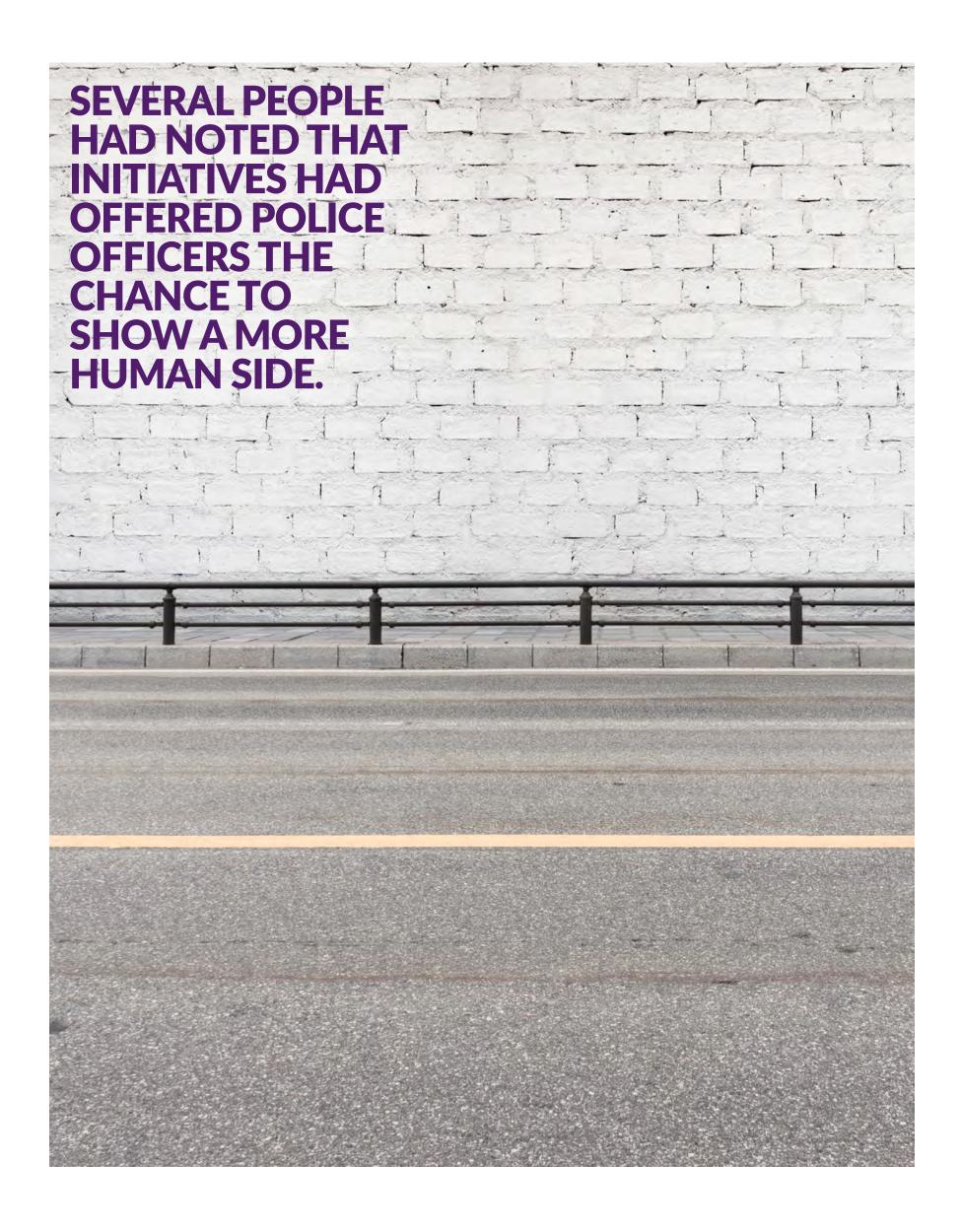
For both these participants, their involvement with the police during an initiative had directly altered their perceptions: 'now, because of [...] doing stuff with [the police] it's a million times better.'[29]

[26] Focus group participant, March 2022
[27] Focus group participant, April 2022
[28] Focus group participant, May 2022
[29] Focus group participant, May 2022

SEVERAL PEOPLE HAD NOTED THAT INITIATIVES HAD OFFERED POLICE OFFICERS THE CHANCE TO SHOW A MORE HUMAN SIDE.

Co-creation: rebalancing power

Given the power asymmetry in most interactions between the public and the police, it was important that the Trust adopted a *co-creation model* to enable a sense of equity and mutual collaboration. For one adult, the process of working collaboratively with the police to co-create an output gave her an impression of *'power sharing'* [30] which she felt was important for breaking down barriers.

Several artists involved in police-Trust initiatives articulated a similar position. For instance, one director of an arts organisation talked about a very 'easy dynamic', where the initiative's police and community participants engaged on an 'equal footing' despite past difficulties. For this director, *the collaboration and trust built during the initiative allowed participants to break 'what is historically a very binary relationship [...] between people in authority and people who [...] don't have any power.'* [31]

Humanising the police and the public

While this sense of equality was partly attributed to the co-production model, it was also deemed by many to be a particular feature of arts and culture endeavours.

The examples from the literature outlined above suggest that *art interventions can afford opportunities for self-expression, collaboration, and mutual understanding, which may help to foster positive relationships between groups who typically have a more antagonistic relationship.* For our interviewees, the arts (versus, say, sporting initiatives) encouraged equal collaboration and enabled more equal access regardless of gender.

Importantly, the arts were also seen as offering opportunities for participants to begin to shift their perceptions of each other. Several people noted that initiatives had offered police

officers the chance to show a more 'human' side, perhaps sharing some of their own personal experiences through poetry, music, or dance.

Similarly, individuals were able to give the police an insight into their lives, sharing stories in ways that might not be as possible in non-creative pursuits.

One theatre practitioner noted that 'people forget [the police] are people,'[32] while an adult who worked closely with the police during an initiative found the process of shared storytelling powerful; for her, this was a moment in which all participants could say 'I'm human too.'[33]

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[30] Focus group participant, April 2022

[31] Director arts organisation, interview with Rachel Lewis, January 2022

[32] Theatre practitioner, interview with Rachel Lewis, March 2022

[33] Focus group participant, April 2022

LEARNING GOING FORWARD: POLICE CULTURE, LONG TERM RELATIONSHIPS AND TRANSPARENT OBJECTIVES

While some interviewees felt their engagement with the police through arts and culture had built trust and might start to produce stronger police-community relationships, this was not universal.

This section outlines some of the key lessons for police forces and community/arts and culture organisations who are working towards collaborative community engagement.

The importance of police buy-in: shifting police culture

Many interviewees expressed scepticism about how representative the Coventry CoC officers were of the wider force. There was also doubt as to the likelihood of the CoC engagement being sustained longer-term.

One young person, whose interactions with a particular officer during an initiative had been very positive, felt lingering anxiety that his respect and empathy would not be replicated in a normal encounter: 'I couldn't shake the feeling that if we were in a completely different scenario [...] he wouldn't be speaking to me with the respect that he was speaking to me with.'[34]

Several others stated that police engagement through these initiatives would not change their opinion of the wider force. These interviewees spoke of broader concerns around profiling, institutionalised racism, and a perception of police failure to prevent crime in the city. As police legitimacy scholars have found in their research,[35] these concerns undermine a sense of confidence in the police and are intractable obstacles to trust and relationship-building. This was particularly the case for the young people we interviewed, many of whom talked about both feeling unsafe in the city and of being subject to police profiling and unfair stop-and-search tactics.[36]

For many interviewees, including WMP officers, a wider shift in police culture is necessary to begin to change these negative perceptions. While support for this change is apparent among some of the

WMP officers in this case study, particularly newer recruits and officers at more senior levels, others express resistance to change and see engagement with communities through arts and culture as an unwelcome distraction from law enforcement activity. Often, such views are expressed in terms of workload and resource issues: 'we haven't got enough staff to go to robberies in progress and shootings, so to then expect them to go and decorate a police station window...'[37] However, others voice more fundamental resistance to such engagement: 'a lot of people see [engagement through arts and culture] as a waste of time.'[38]
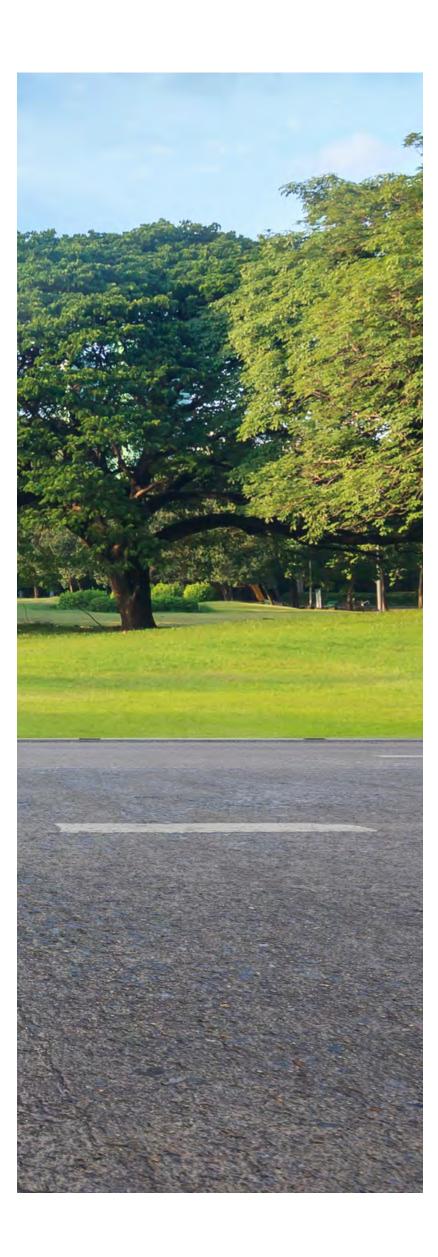
[34] Focus group participant, March 2022

[35] Lyn Hinds, 'Youth, Police Legitimacy, and Informal Contact', *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*

[36] Focus group participants, July 2022

[37] WMP officer, interview with Rachel Lewis, October 2021

[38] WMP officer, interview with Rachel Lewis, January 2022

This resistance is a real barrier to change. Our case study suggests that artists, communities, and community organisations want to see a clear impetus to change, not only from the officers who engage directly in an initiative, but more broadly throughout the whole police force. As one artist noted: 'it has to be institution-wide, it has to be consistent, it has to be deep.'[39]

The importance of strong, long-term relationships with community organisations

Another factor *key to overcoming distrust amongst the public is for police forces to form stronger and longer-term relationships with established community organisations*. These organisations can provide the police with crucial knowledge and understanding of the needs and perspectives of their service users. They are also safe spaces for those who access their services and can thus act as a 'gateway'[40] for police to make contact with a community.

Community organisations can also play a key role in supporting contact with independent artists. This is significant, given that all the artists we interviewed expressed concerns about working with, or being seen to work with, the police. One artist's links with certain of the city's communities rendered collaborating on a police project untenable: 'it's just black and white, do you work with the police or do you not?'[41] Trust producers spoke about encountering artists who refused to take part in an initiative, saying 'I can't, I'm just not prepared to have [the police] involved in any way.'[42]

For those artists that did engage, however, community organisations were crucial intermediaries, effecting introductions to individuals and helping to ensure clear boundaries between participants and police. As one artist explained, his proximity to the police during his project was a significant obstacle for the

young people he wanted to work with, and he thus relied heavily on partnerships with local community organisations to help make connections and build trust.[42]

For the police, this indicates the importance of developing strong relationships with local community organisations. Many of the groups we interviewed had worked with WMP before Coventry CoC and some spoke positively about their interactions. However, there was general frustration with the short-term, 'fleeting'[44] nature of the initiatives and the frequent personnel changes in WMP. As one director of a youth organisation remarked, successful engagement is based on 'sustainability with regard to their relationships.'[45] *All interviewees recognised that funding was an obvious impediment to longer term interaction; however, there was a sense that meaningful change could only occur if relationships were sustained over a prolonged period.*

One further key recommendation from almost all interviewees was that organisations need to be on board at the inception of a project[46] so that initiatives are co-produced rather than imposed by police, and that police should avoid taking the lead in terms of directing the approach and accessing members of the public.

[39] Artist, interview with Rachel Lewis, November 2021

[40] Community organisation, interview with Rachel Lewis, December 2021

[41] Artist, interview with Rachel Lewis, January 2022

[42] Trust, interview with Rachel Lewis, February 2022

[43] Artist, interview with Rachel Lewis, November 2021

[44] Community organisation, interview with Rachel Lewis, March 2022

[45] Community organisation, interview with Rachel Lewis, December 2021

[46] E.g., Community organisation, interview with Rachel Lewis, November 2021

The importance of trust and transparency: tensions between enforcement and engagement

Notably, despite continued animosity towards the police from some organisations, there remained a willingness to continue engaging, and a sense that further collaboration could help to support targeted interventions with the communities with whom the organisations work. However, *many interviewees did voice real anxiety about police objectives, with a particular concern that initiatives may be used as intelligence-gathering exercises.*

This concern was also felt by members of the Trust, particularly those working with more vulnerable individuals. For one Trust producer, this was always in 'the back of my mind [...] what if someone did disclose something in a meeting?'[47] Another producer felt wary about giving the police access to information about the young people they were

working with: 'it's not fully trusting that they're not trying to gather loads of data rather than listening to people.'[48] Other community organisations and artists expressed similar anxieties. One artist described his surprise and discomfort at being asked to provide a police officer with information about a young person involved in his programme. A member of a community organisation was explicit: 'the infiltration of communities through arts and culture' has to be done in 'an incredibly ethical way [...] it needs to be transparent; it can't just be a way for the police to get intel'.[49]

These expressions of concern signpost a key tension for the police, who must navigate two potentially conflicting roles: as a law enforcement agency for whom information from the public is a key asset, and as an organisation striving to build strong, trusting relationships with communities.[50]

Interviewees suggested several key recommendations to combat this complexity:

- police officers in a shared space must avoid enacting law enforcement practices, as far as possible, within that space

- all parties to an initiative must clarify robust ethical guidelines around consent and confidentiality and follow them scrupulously, with the recognition that the police are not subject to the same guidelines of confidentiality as the general public

- all parties must reach clear agreement on shared objectives from the start of a project. As one member of a community organisation explained, it's about 'knowing the strategic aims' of the police and 'not feeling like they are trying to meet their strategic aims by stealth.'[51]

[47] Trust, interview with Rachel Lewis, November 2021
[48] Trust, interview with Rachel Lewis, February 2022
[49] Community organisation, interview with Rachel Lewis, November 2021
[50] This is a tension highlighted in community policing literature, with Bethan Loftus (2019) for instance referring to 'covert surveillance' as normalised in contemporary policing practice.
[51] Community organisation, interview with Rachel Lewis, November 2021

LOOKING FORWARD: CHANGING POLICING THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE

Our case study provides an important insight into future developments in the city that have been precipitated or strengthened by the WMP-Trust partnership.

There is evidence of commitment from more senior WMP officers to a wider shift in policing practice towards a greater focus on community engagement through the use of arts and culture. The embedded police team expressed their desire to see the use of arts and culture become 'business-as-usual' in the force and beyond, so that neighbourhood officers, offender managers, those working in the Criminal Justice System, and other police forces outside the West Midlands will view arts and culture as an important engagement tool.

Some police initiatives are already leading to substantive changes in police practice and city council planning:

KEY CHANGES WITHIN WMP

Through the artist-in-residence scheme, young people spoke of their trauma following the execution of fire-arms warrants and discussed how this was managed by WMP. As a direct result:

- WMP are seeking to review their firearms process to consider whether it is fit for purpose in its current form, and whether, say, liaison roles may be created to try to mitigate some of the trauma caused

- WMP are using the artist-in-residence work to support and inform work streams being undertaken as part of their Race Action Plan delivery, and their Fairness and Belonging strategy

- WMP's Brave Spaces forum already existed as a safe space for police officers and staff to voice their thoughts and opinions. The Diversity and Inclusion lead is now working with the embedded team to run a Brave Spaces session which uses the artist-in-residence work as a prompt to discuss issues around stereotyping and bias.

Other key projects:

- New in-house training on engagement through arts and culture will be rolled out to all Neighbourhood Policing Units in the West Midlands

- WMP's Learning and Development team are building engagement training into their Student Officer Training, thus normalising the use of arts and culture as a tool in policing practice

- There are plans to explore the potential for embedding new schemes (e.g., Virtual Reality, theatre, and role play) as training methods

- Co-creation will now be incorporated into the Problem Orientated Policing (POP) profile

- A wider piece of work is being undertaken to develop a toolkit for use by WMP Schools Intervention and Prevention Officers. As part of this, the learning from CoC will be used to inform some creative packages for officers to deliver in schools to ultimately seek to reduce crime by addressing factors with young people that might lead to involvement in crime, or to intervene for those who might already be on that road.

This case study offers a crucial insight into the impact of the WMP-Trust partnership. But as many of those interviewed have noted, changes in public attitudes to the police force and in police-community relations will not necessarily be visible immediately. As reported by the literature on arts-based interventions in prisons[52] *there are long-term shifts that will inevitably take significant commitment from officers to sustain, and they may not result in observable change.*

Further, any improvement in police-community relations through the use of arts and culture may not be easily evidenced in the terms police forces typically use to demonstrate value. It is difficult to quantify these complex attitudinal or behavioural changes using survey methods or other numerical tools. However, the potential impact of arts and culture can be documented by in-depth qualitative data. This reinforces the importance of the arts, humanities, and social sciences to understanding the potential long-term benefits of Coventry UK CoC, and of how arts and culture can benefit community welfare more broadly.

Given that this is an innovative and relatively un-researched model, it is clear that evaluation must be built into such initiatives so that there is a cycle of 'learning from experience' that can feed back into practice.

Finally, if change is to be effected within the wider police force, then collaboration with the police is necessary when disseminating findings so that researchers can utilise the force's knowledge of the needs, priorities, and practices of officers.

KEY CHANGES OUTSIDE WMP

- Following the initiatives between the Trust, WMP, and people with experience of homelessness, the city's homelessness policy and rough sleeper strategy is currently under review to consider whether it is appropriate for the needs of the homeless community in Coventry

- The learning from Forest Camps is feeding into Coventry City Council's wider Public Places strategy which looks at a variety of issues including access, facilities, and safety, amongst others

- The embedded team are publicising their learning through conferences, roadshows, and expo-style events with other police forces outside the West Midlands

- The embedded team are working directly with West Yorkshire Police in advance of Bradford 2025, Wakefield arts and culture festival 2024, and Leeds arts festival 2023

- The production team, embedded team, and members of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) collaborated to create a matrix to determine the safety of events prior to the SAG meeting. This matrix is now being employed for event planning outside the CoC

- Community safety is now included in the City of Culture Legacy Theory of Change Model

[52] Caulfield and others (2021)

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