



Passionately serving our communities



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2025



Poetry after Chai event celebrating Bangla Week 2024 at the Midlands Arts Centre.



Jesse Gerald | Chair

“  
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As we reflect on the past 18 months, I am proud to share the remarkable journey of Legacy West Midlands, an organisation steadfast in its mission to celebrate Birmingham's rich heritage and vibrant, diverse communities. This period has been both challenging and inspiring, marked by resilience, innovation and an unwavering commitment to making a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.

Over the last year and a half, we have continued to expand and deepen our programmes, embracing the evolving needs of our community. Our health and wellbeing services have played a vital role in supporting individuals and families, fostering strength and hope in uncertain times.

Our cultural initiatives, including the work of the Bangladeshi Artist Development Agency (BADA), have flourished, providing platforms for underrepresented voices and celebrating the artistic talents within our communities. These programmes not only enrich our cultural landscape but also serve as powerful tools for fostering understanding, inclusion, and pride.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of Legacy West Midlands remains focused on building a more equitable and vibrant Birmingham - one where every individual, regardless of background, has the opportunity to thrive. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, partners, volunteers, and supporters whose passion and commitment continue to drive our success.

Together, we are shaping a legacy that honours our heritage while embracing the future. I am excited about what we will achieve in the coming years and remain optimistic about the positive impact we can create for our community.

Thank you for your ongoing support.



Continued growth has kept us busy once again and we have endeavoured to keep pace with the demands placed on the team. Staff members rose to these challenges and have gone beyond the call of duty and for this I am truly grateful. Birmingham Museum Trust have given us keys to the Soho House Visitor Centre which means we can deliver activities on evenings and weekends – this capability also entails site management. Our aim is to develop the site into a community hub and we now offer coworking space for community partners.

We were successful in our application to create a Cultural Action Area here in Handsworth, and our plans are to develop our site, with an ambitious arts offer. We have purchased equipment to deliver a community cinema and we have food fayres with live music planned during the summer months. We were invited by the West Midlands Combined Authority to become a Social Cluster and we worked with local social enterprises, holding our first ever Dragons’ Den style event to support their ideas. We have created an investment plan and hope to be invited to continue our work beyond April 2025. We also ran a job club with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and this is going well and we held two jobs fairs with the Department of Work and Pensions.

Lessons have been learned in the wake of last year’s recorded deficit and we are on course this year to make a surplus. We have changed our financial year end to the 31st of March, which means we have had an extended accounting period of 17 months for this year and our Annual General Meetings and celebration will move to September.

As ever, no two days are the same at Legacy WM. My love for the job has not diminished and I am grateful for the opportunity to lead and work with a fantastic group of colleagues, volunteers and Board members. I would like to thank each of them for their dedication and, of course, none of this would have been possible without the support of our many funders.

Thank you.



Aftab Rahman | CEO

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”



Young violinist performing at Soho House Museum.





Over a 10-month period we received funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver a jobs provision with community partners Saathi House and Aspire & Succeed.

Here at Soho House, we hosted drop-in sessions and hosted jobseeker appointments enabling Department for Work and Pensions staff to engage service users more readily and outside of the normal schedule of appointments. We also provided added value by signposting service users to the range of support on offer for

personal wellbeing, integral to fulfilling career ambitions. Our provision culminated in jobs fairs with attendance of over 150 people with employers set up in our tearoom.

This work dovetails with our hosting of ESOL sessions throughout the year, helping local people including those newly arrived to gain the critical skills they need. This project garnered positive feedback, and we will continue to do what we can to support local people on skills and employment.

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Recognising our achievements in jobs, skills and employment, in 2024 we were invited by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to apply to form a Social Economy Cluster in Handsworth. This involved mapping enterprises locally, supporting social enterprises and exploring avenues of income generation.

With consultants Development in Social Enterprise (DiSE), we undertook a review of social enterprises in the locality and to our surprise, this investigation revealed a relative paucity when compared to some neighbourhoods. To encourage enterprise, we delivered a Dragons’ Den style initiative with Wade Lynn leading the judges.

Several social enterprises pitched their ideas and we awarded two local enterprises funding to support their idea including a local dance company.

An investment plan has been developed by DiSE and will be implemented along with our own business ideas if funding is forthcoming. This will allow us to employ a dedicated member of staff to support local social enterprises and our own initiatives to generate income and create employment opportunities for local people.

Alongside the cluster programme, we were successful in our application to participate

in the West Midlands Social Economy Business Support – Accelerate programme delivered by Aston University Business School. This support package was intended to help community-focused businesses improve the lives of more local people in some of the region’s most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, funded by WMCA.

This was a training and peer development programme focusing on increasing trading revenue and reducing dependence on grants, growing the number of employees and elevating business skills and confidence. This was attended by our CEO and lessons learned will be applied to our future businesses with the aim of diversifying our income.





## Women's Development Programme



With the generous support of The Tudor Trust this year we have continued our work with women locally, furthering our UN SDG goal of empowering and improving the lives of women and girls.

As an initial point of contact, we held coffee mornings at Soho House where women could meet in a safe space and seek support and mutual empowerment through collaborative partner programmes such as We Bring the Light (with Woolly Mammoth), expressing themselves and recognising what is important to them through textiles and needlework.

We also offered tie-in Chair Zumba sessions at Lozells Recreation Group, enabling women to improve mobility and cardiovascular health at the hyperlocal level. Some of our service users were also involved in preparation efforts for Bangla Week, volunteering their time for the cause of local cultural enrichment that recognises and celebrates culture.

With our wonderful minibus we were able to offer complimentary excursions to locations such as the

Botanical Gardens, fruit picking, trips to the coast and local museums. Many of our service users are homemakers for whom such trips would be otherwise impractical. We also provide a child-friendly service with provision for those who wish to bring their families along.

Our service users also took part in the first Nowka Bais Women's Regatta, a friendly event designed to introduce people to narrow boat rowing competitions held at Edgbaston Reservoir, site of the yearly Nowka Bais. The rich Bengali tradition of

bellboating promotes physical health, collective pursuit with an ethos of friendly competition.

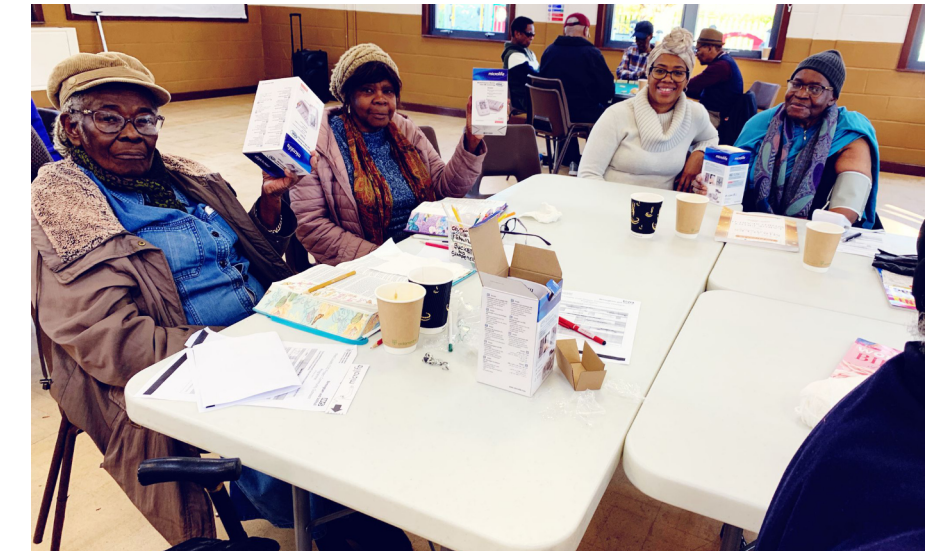
Elsewhere, we aided fitness amongst adult women by continuing to promote our Daily Mile routes which have proven consistently popular. We are also exceedingly grateful to our community partners such as the Hippodrome who have facilitated access to productions for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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*By working closely with 15 partners in the community, we were able to distribute 1,800 machines.*

”

## Million Hearts Blood Pressure Drive



Stark health inequalities were laid bare at the grassroots level by the Covid-19 pandemic, with health indicators worsening for disadvantaged cohorts. If left untreated hypertension and cardiovascular disease can severely limit quality of life and we are committed to helping people engage with their personal health in new ways that improve inter-service connectivity, facilitating onward referral to GPs.

The Million Hearts project involved working with partners in the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board to raise awareness of the importance of cardiovascular health. We trained 42 Blood Pressure Champions to take accurate readings, also distributing blood pressure monitors at each “pop-up” event. By working closely with 15 partners in the community, we were able to distribute 1800 machines. These machines will over their lifetime deliver accurate readings numbering in the thousands, with ongoing benefit. Anecdotal evidence indicates that some severe cases of hypertension have been identified this way as good examples of achieving earlier interventions. We also popularised this provision through the Flourish network, extending the benefits across more of the city. Screenings were also delivered in parks, community centres and as part of Black History Month. By delivering at men's sports fixtures, we also drove up engagement in this hard-to-reach cohort.



## Family Fit Foward



2024 saw the continuation of our flagship health and wellbeing programme Family Fit which was supported in its third iteration by National Lottery Community Fund. The nature of this support enabled us to create a customised programme of activities that suit local people and help to develop community networks that improve service user wellbeing.

We have dedicated two days to facilitate drop-in wellbeing services at Soho House, offering Family Fit content alongside networking, nutrition classes, health awareness programmes, a cycling hub and job

club. In addition, we have doubled the size of our network of trained Community Champions through our blood pressure screening project in partnership with NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB. Through this project we have screened over 2000 BAME citizens, with results followed up where necessary with GPs and health professionals.

We recruited a Men's Health and Youth Worker, which has enabled us to recruit Community Champions to develop and deliver our men's

cycling project. In addition, we have set up an over-40s football league. We have received testimonies from participants on the improvement in their mental wellbeing and a reduction in social isolation for men aged 40 and above. In addition, we now have a very active youth forum that has enjoyed educational excursions in the UK and residential in Spain and India with the Turing School of Coding.

As part of our work incubating the Flourish partnership, we have become key partners and a delivery agent within the

Integrated Neighbourhood Team and West Locality Hub. Legacy WM was commissioned to employ 2 local neighbourhood experts that are part of the West Locality Hub. The INT team, composed of experts, key workers and GPs, have a daily triage meeting and collectively troubleshoot the needs of frequent users of services, determining the appropriate holistic conversations and interventions with priority citizens.

The team has refreshed the Volunteer Policy and accompanying procedures, and we will continue to empower

residents to become Community Champions and future leaders. At a strategic level, our work as a key partner with the NHS to deliver placement programmes for Birmingham City University (BCU) student nurses and other health professionals has enabled us to exceed our targets for enhancing employment opportunities and progression citywide.

In addition, we are the key delivery partner to host BCU student youth workers which has added value to our work. Last year's placement

remains in close contact, and we are supporting them to find suitable employment. In addition, we are seeking funding for a youth worker and if we are successful, we will invite them to apply.

Our UN SDG aims have highlighted our work in relevant areas, such as period poverty and the social impact of the cost of living and prenatal support.

We are also working through our Trusted Charity accreditation at Level 2. Our strapline has been reviewed by our trustees, staff and volunteers and we have decided on '*passionately serving our communities*'.







Group shot with one of our fellow Legacy Veterans football team.



Badminton tournament gr



Badminton



Led by our Men’s Health and Youth Officer, the Legacy WM badminton provision continues to go from strength to strength.

Consistently oversubscribed and with a real ‘buzz’ perceptible at each session, this fixture has grown into something special over the years. We offer a high standard of coaching, with our lead coach Level 2 qualified and several Level 1 coaches on hand catering for around 20 people each week. We maintain communication channels with parents and carers

consistently, giving them peace of mind and getting young people out of the house, away from devices and interacting with their peers in a safe environment.

*“I’ve been attending the Legacy Badminton sessions for just short of two months and I’ve been enjoying it a lot. The coaches are very helpful, and they’ve helped me improve substantially. They’ve helped me from everything from my*

*forehand clear to my backhand clear and its something that I’ve enjoyed. I’ve gone on to play new players that are far above my skill level and at my skill level so I can improve. Overall, it’s been an amazing experience.”*

– Imran, aged 14

Over the past year we have supported our busy Saturday sessions at the Lighthouse for young people with a substantial subsidy, this has enabled us to

deliver additional sessions for an older cohort on Mondays at King Edward VI Aston which regularly attracts over 20 people per week. We have delivered a consistent schedule of skills and drills, tournaments, pick-up games and an overall holistic approach of sporting conduct and inclusion. We have invited badminton players from the older cohort to join our youth forum “Our Legacy”.

*“She’s competed in tournaments and won tournaments. We’ve got cups at home to show you guys. She still enjoys coming every year on so hopefully we will carry on. Thank you, Legacy.”*

– Mohammed, parent

Elsewhere, we received support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver accessible sessions at Doug Ellis Sports Centre. This gave men working unsociable hours in hospitality or as taxi drivers a great opportunity to play friendly matches with peers, improving health outcomes.

Whilst bringing all service users with us on this journey, we must also recognise the sporting excellence of some of our young people, who have progressed to

the county level, with the potential to compete at All England events. We are committed to training the next generation of coaches, beginning with Level 1 Badminton England courses for young people. Decades of sporting pursuit have cultivated an incredibly strong grassroots game in Lozells, Aston and Newtown and we look forward to the next chapter in Legacy WM badminton.

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## Football & Cycling



As a Cycling UK affiliate, we have focused recently on cascading the social benefits of our touring Freedom50 group to the community level, utilising this positive example of a diverse group of people taking the initiative on personal health and transport.

In 2024, Cycling UK delivered the Big Bike Revival, a national initiative designed to get people active, especially those taking up cycling for the first time. By providing a steady schedule with trained ride leaders,

those less confident were able to build the functional skills necessary to navigate roads, without the daunting prospect of venturing out alone.

We then led rides to local parks and trails, utilising our minibus and improving road safety by travelling as a group. We also provided safety equipment and helped service users learn about the all-important maintenance required to keep bikes operational.

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*We will also now be offering community football for young people, completing our array of health and exercise options on offer.*

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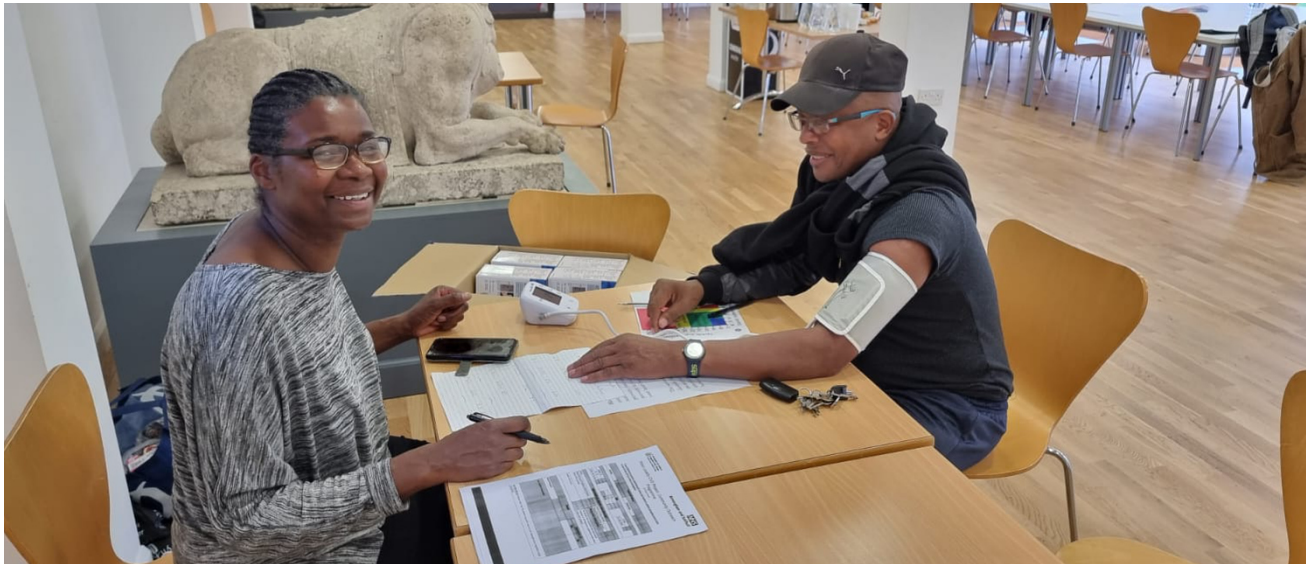
The Legacy WM Football “Veteran’s” leagues for over 35s and over 40s have increased in popularity over the years, marking a decade of continuous competition in 2024. The players themselves have now taken over day-to-day running of the league.

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Flourish



In 2024, Flourish administered the Birmingham Fairer Futures West Locality Partnership Fund, starting with collaborative workshops in February and culminating with the approval of a business plan for West Birmingham in October.

Throughout, Flourish has helped to create the documents and processes now being used by our counterpart VCSFE leads in the other four Birmingham localities. Work to launch and connect all the projects, including those funded by other Fairer Futures Fund (FFF) strands, is ongoing, and Flourish will continue to support project delivery until March 2028.

Alongside FFF, Flourish has:

- Secured extension funding for both the Doula Connectors and Roadmap autism support projects
- Partnered with BVSC, University of Birmingham, Catalyst 4 Change and Community Connexions on two NHS Research Engagement Network Development projects to ensure the voices of underserved people can contribute more to health and care research
- Helped local women in challenging circumstances to engage with the Oxford /

- Nuffield Trust BEAMS project to create better resources for postnatal women
- Helped to determine the accessibility of annual health checks for people with learning disabilities
- Launched projects supporting better cancer awareness among young people from South Asian and Black African / Caribbean backgrounds
- Facilitated and completed a Community & Cultural Immersion Programme by four cohorts – for UHB staff, student midwives, student dieticians and Early Career Researchers

- Collaborated with West Birmingham GPs and community partner YPEC to encourage greater awareness and take-up of childhood immunisations
- With Legacy WM, provided input to the West Birmingham Integrated Neighbourhood Team, offering community-based support to people with high use of NHS and GP services
- Retained a leadership role within the Birmingham Migration Network Health Forum
- Continued work to bring together Birmingham birth workers for greater connectivity and understanding

It's been another busy year for Flourish – one in which the variety and volume of work has introduced growing complexity for Legacy WM. In recognition of this – and with great gratitude for providing such a supportive incubation space – Flourish was registered as an independent CIC in November 2024.

This brings this period to a natural conclusion, and this process has demonstrated the unique capability of the third sector to coordinate and drive change in community healthcare. This

typifies our approach to the incubation of new ideas and support for micro-organisations within our “bring it and share it” model.



Community Health & Wellbeing Support

In recent years, Legacy WM has intervened in new ways to support community health and wellbeing outside of our usual remit. Continued inflationary pressures have called into question the fundamental wellbeing of local people and their ability to cater for the basic needs of their families.

We often receive requests to carry out short-term distribution and awareness-raising activities to generate social value readily. In this manner, we have distributed dental hygiene kits, female hygiene products to young people, board games, arts materials and more. Taking care of everyday needs may not be headline grabbing activity, but we are committed to helping our community maintain quality of life in trying economic circumstances.

This is delivered in combination with our ongoing commitment as members of the Birmingham City of Nature Alliance, building on the success of our Daily Mile routes in parks across the city. We continue to conduct guided walks and popularise these routes via social media. This year we also installed a route at the Panel Croft Retirement Village.



# Community Projects

## Our Legacy Youth Forum



Cuts to youth services in Birmingham have been widely publicised, with funded jobs cut and centres shut. In the wake of the pandemic, these reductions in public provision are keenly felt locally. By providing young people opportunities to interact offline can reduce feelings of isolation and counteract the atomising effects of modern lifestyles.

As part of our commitment to community cohesion and the wellbeing of young people, we have facilitated them coming together in a safe environment to learn and grow as individuals. 30 youth volunteers joined our sessions at Soho House with ages ranging from 13 to 22.

The young people immediately requested assistance with careers and employability, and we helped them search for suitable job opportunities as well as volunteering, internships, further education and vocational options. We also helped young service users connect with local heritage, exploring trails with our Heritage Officer.

We provided training on mental health awareness and disability inclusion, as well as an informative session on the dangers of 'county lines' exploitation to which young

people from disadvantaged backgrounds may be vulnerable.

Alongside our Turing School of Coding trips, we also offered an excursion to interactive games destination The Cube in Manchester, a welcome change of pace from exams and revision for our young people!

We continually seek ways to support this provision, despite intense competition for funding in the wake of the cuts mentioned above. Please consider supporting our work via JustGiving, where your money can go directly to this provision.

# Community Projects

## Photos for Homes

In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal Sustainable Cities and Communities, we are in the final stages of building a house in Bangladesh for a family. Bangladesh suffered from widespread, serious flooding in 2022, and our CEO visited his family home soon after flood waters had subsided. The home

had been inundated but fortunately its brick construction protected it from serious damage. Elsewhere in the region, some rural families with houses made from corrugated iron sheeting fared much worse, with rust and damage to these fragile structures.

Whilst in Bangladesh, the CEO documented his visit in striking photographs that then formed an exhibition at Soho House with all the photos auctioned off raising £3,000 to build a home for a family in the area. There are plans to expand this project to build 1,000 homes across the world, starting with 100 in Bangladesh followed by other countries.





## Every Journey Matters

Every Journey Matters is a heritage education project funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, delivered in collaboration with Handsworth Association of Schools and 10 of its partner institutions over three years. Our overarching goal is to engage children and young people in exploring and sharing heritage and migration stories. We aim to celebrate the diverse community of Handsworth by providing inspiring opportunities for young people to get involved.

This project has been brought to life through interactive and informative workshops, and we have worked with faculty members to reach out to the children and families in the community. The third and final year of delivery is well underway with our focus shifting to preparing schools and teachers to embed these sessions into their curriculum in the future.

To support curriculum delivery, we have focused on the preparation of resources guided by the feedback and suggestions of teachers at peer network meetings and steering group meetings with Handsworth Association of Schools. Such projects can often be 'a flash in the pan' that fail to build on initial momentum - with this in mind, we will provide schools and teachers

with a resource pack that will be readily accessible and provide them with the tools to take EJM forward. Resources provided include online heritage trails which feature images, history and links at each stop. With over 120 stops collectively, the trails focus on local places of relevance and heritage in the local area surrounding each school.

Partner schools are taking part in a set of 8 CPD sessions which cover the urbanisation

of the local landscape, using online mapping tools, finding out about people who lived locally through online resources and directories. Complimenting the trails beginning at each school, we are also recording oral histories with former teachers, residents and people who have lived and worked in Handsworth over the years. We will also create an online collection of lesson plans and primary sources with high resolution photography, forming a comprehensive digital archive.



## St Michael's Church

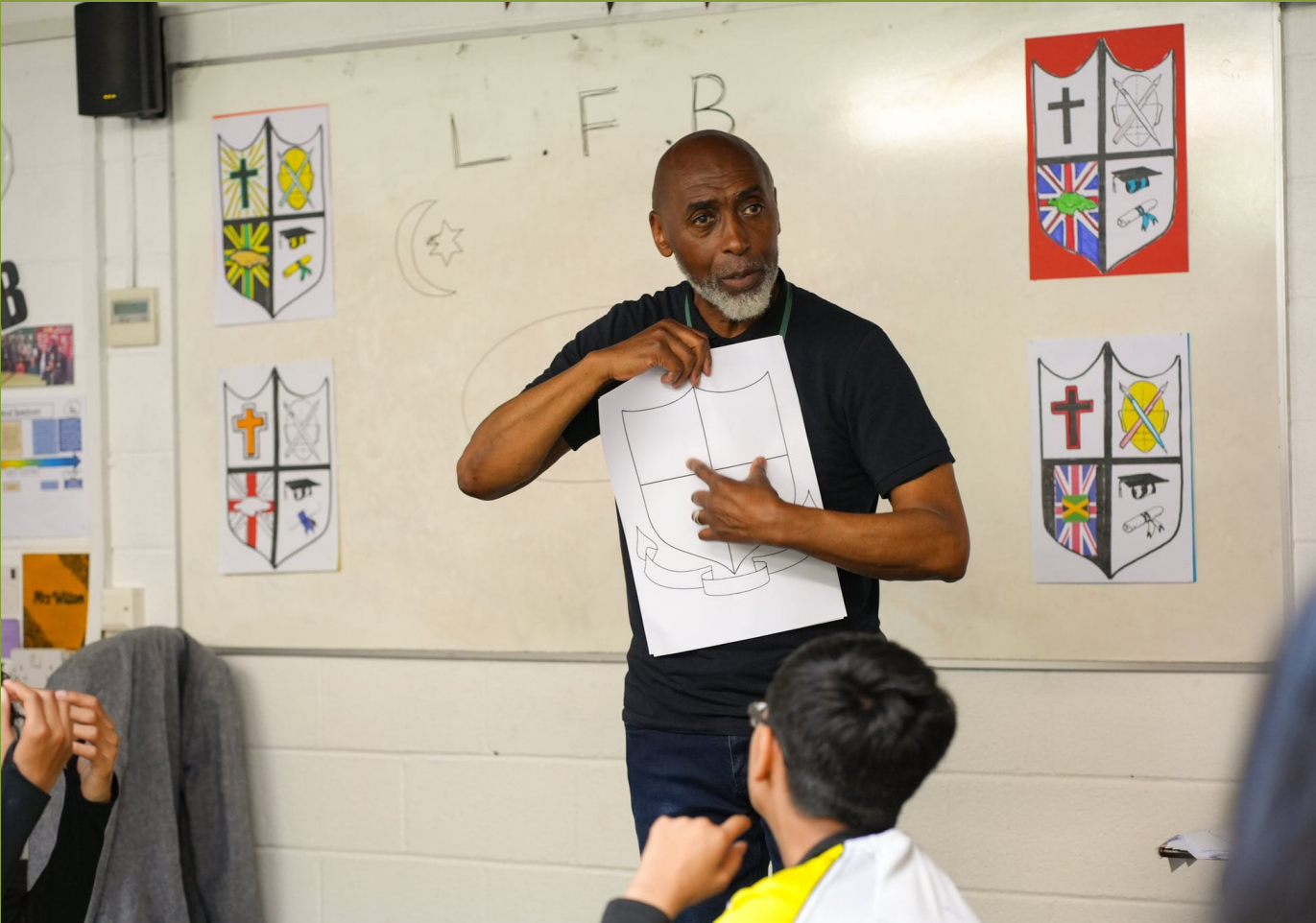
Following our success in obtaining funding from National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) towards a feasibility study, we appointed a firm of architects to draw up plans for the St. Michael's Church site nearby to Soho House. This process has afforded us the opportunity to visualise what the completed works may look like. The plans have been shared with stakeholders which allowed for some further feedback and comments. The steering committee has agreed to call the project St. Michael's Place, with a strapline of 'community - arts - enterprise' being considered.

It is anticipated that we will have a community bakery at the heart of the site and office spaces with performance and conferencing facilities on the first mezzanine floor and the second mezzanine is hoped for an anchor tenant. The grounds will be re-configured to allow for greater accessibility and flow. These plans are very exciting however it may take up to five years before we can complete the project. The Church of England has secured emergency funding from Historic England for the roof repairs which are taking place now and this will make the building watertight. There are wider plans for development of the Bill House opposite and the adjacent buildings and land. A neighbourhood plan is also being developed for the Soho area and the planned redevelopment will help transform the neighbourhood. This work typifies our approach to community cohesion, collaborating with faith and community groups to facilitate wider access to support and opportunities for local people.





A guided tour at GNNSJ Gurdwara.



Every Journey Matters workshop with Gilroy at Holyhead school.



## Journeys

In 2024, Legacy WM delivered an ambitious arts programme to celebrate the positive impact of the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. With support from Heart of England and working closely with community partners Saathi House, Handsworth Creative, Simmer Down Arts, Kalaboration Arts and Nowka Bais, we created a programme of arts events and activities full of the verve and creative passion that suffuses our collective approach.

Welcoming guests from across the region, Legacy WM delivered the inaugural Bangla Week, an exciting series of interactive arts experiences and performances at prestigious city venues. Elsewhere, Saathi House delivered a theatre programme for secondary school children with a performance where families were invited to see Wish Wash Time Machine, a play devised by the young people themselves.

Handsworth Creative offered tours and arts experiences for primary school children and separately for local people, exploring the rich artistic and architectural heritage of Handsworth Park. Simmer Down Arts brought Glory to the stage - beginning life as a short film, this stage adaptation featured live vocal performances of original

compositions alongside rhythm and blues standards charting the monumental impact of Sister Rosetta Tharpe on the course of popular music. Nowka Bais sought to broaden the appeal of their renowned bell boating regatta by inviting women to take part, especially those who had not rowed before.

By improving representation, Nowka Bais facilitated access to guided training and hosted roundtable consultations with local female teams and enthusiasts. Finally, Partition of the Heart, produced by Kalaboration Arts, was a stirring exploration of the Partition of British India through the eyes of those who witnessed it.

Legacy WM were immensely proud of the fantastic achievements of our partners, destined to be remembered as a highlight of the Inclusive Communities programme.





## Roundhouse to Chance Glassworks Arts Trail



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*Doughnut takes its name from 'doughnut economics', a vision of circular local economy distilled in a book of the same name by Kate Raworth.*

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When Roundhouse to Chance Glassworks was initially funded four years ago, few if any of us envisioned the impact and profile the project would go on to have, prompting discussion and introspection in equal measure. We are proud to go on supporting these artworks in situ and working with local stakeholders to ensure they are looked after.

In February 2024 we unveiled Doughnut by Claire Cotterill, a mosaic which was mounted on a wall at the Civic Square site, part of the Port Loop regeneration scheme. Doughnut takes its name from 'doughnut economics', a vision of circular local economy distilled in a book of the same name by Kate Raworth. This vision of 21st century lifestyles asks us to imagine how value and meaning can be channelled within human economies, improving our lives together in the face of global warming and exhaustion of finite resources. Claire carried out community consultation with local people, inviting them to share their reflections on the dynamics of urban living.

The next piece to be unveiled is a fantastic mural depicting Malcolm X by Bunny Bread, featuring augmented reality (AR) features designed by RIVR. This piece will be unveiled in 2025.

## Nowka Bais and Women's Regatta



Nowka Bais CIC was one of the partners in our Inclusive Communities consortium grant from the Commonwealth Legacy Enhancement Fund. Following consultation with women, it was decided that they have their own race four weeks before the main Nowka Bais event. This allowed for a greater number of women and girls to participate with 8 teams taking part and the winners were Ninja Warriors and the runners up were Saheli. Following this enjoyable event female competitors have requested a separate race, and one has been planned for this year.

Meanwhile, the main Nowka Bais race grows more competitive year on year, with 18 teams from across the country participating with winners Zanzibar Dragons followed closely by Shadwell Dragons and Kombans Bolton in third place. In fact, each team had just over one second separating them. The live performance, shobo jatra and mela did not disappoint and we worked with the CBSO and local singers once again to bring a touch of class to the event. We estimate an audience of 20,000 people throughout the course of the day, making a cultural highlight for the city and beyond. 2025 promises to be a bumper year for Nowka Bais, with additional funding support helping the event to grow in profile and reach more people with the verve and colour of this Birmingham cultural mainstay fixture.





*Partition of the Heart performance at the MAC directed by Mukhtar Dar, featuring music by Simon Duggal.*



*SMASH Bengali hosting the closing night of Bangla Week 2024 at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.*



Bangladeshi Artist Development Agency



BADA was conceived in response to the scarcity of opportunities, access and support for artists of Bangladeshi heritage in Birmingham and the West Midlands. We will establish the region as a centre of excellence for Bangladeshi arts, practice, and development.

Since its launch in 2023, BADA has successfully identified several emerging Bangladeshi heritage artists in the region and has created opportunities for them to showcase their artwork in established cultural venues. Introducing these works to

diverse new audiences has been instrumental in raising the profile and recognising artistic achievement within this community.

Thanks to the generous support of the Inclusive Communities Fund, BADA presented Bangla Week in 2024. It was the first ever arts festival in Birmingham that placed Bangladeshi heritage artists at the centre of proceedings. Over a week in November, Bangla Week

celebrated and showcased the creativity of 82 artists (both established and emerging), across mainstream and community venues locally.

Highlights of Bangla Week included:

Family Arts Day at Soho House - Bangla Week premiered a solo exhibition by local visual artist Ruhul Amin, and created a platform for young poets, painters, musicians and designers to showcase their art.

Opening night at the Birmingham Hippodrome featured mime and kathak performances and a devised theatre production directed by Birmingham's only Bangladeshi heritage youth theatre director Fateha Begum, with 20 young people from Prince Albert High School.

Poetry After Chai at the MAC was an intimate night of verse, prose and storytelling. Spoken word poetry artists from all backgrounds joined Bangladeshi heritage poets in sharing narratives through self-expression and creativity.

The closing night concert featured Tara Lilly, performing for the first time with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Performances were opened by Junaid Andrews with a collaboration with Conservatoire students.

Most of the predominantly British Bangladeshi audience had never attended an event at the RBC, demonstrating how projects like these serve to break down social barriers to perceived 'elite' cultural institutions.

BADA has secured 2 years funding from Arts Council England to deliver the artist development component, engaging artists through commissions, masterclasses, creative workshops, skills development and networking events.

Plans for Bangla Week 2025 are underway, this year, the aim is to host Bangla Week across a month, enabling more artists, organisations and communities to participate and enjoy.





## Freedom50 Bangladesh Tour

The final Freedom50 cycle tour took place in Bangladesh in February 2024 with 20 cyclists riding over 200 miles from the capital Dhaka via JamalPur, the site of the school we are supporting, and then onto Sylhet, traversing busy highways and rural roads along the way.

Off to an auspicious start, we were received as guests of the British ambassador to Bangladesh at his residence in Dhaka, where he wished our party well on their journey. The following day we navigated our way out of one of the most populous cities in the world to Tangail, famed for its beautiful sarees. The following day, we cycled to the Sircer Pasha Welfare Trust in JamalPur where we were welcomed by the students and staff with a generous reception including folk music performances.

On our rest day, we visited the nearby Jamuna River and crossed over to temporary land known as chors and you could see the devastating effects of global warming and sea level rise in the region as erosion and shifting water channels threatened local biomes.

Back on our bikes once again, we headed to the historic town of Mymensingh. In the evening, we visited the local bazaar where we

saw the hustle and bustle amidst crumbling colonial buildings.

The next day we headed towards Sunamganj where we boarded a riverboat that travelled through the night and into the following morning down the winding river Surma before 40 kilometres away from our destination of Sylhet. There we were met by a team of journalists and the Mayor of Sylhet who congratulated us on our efforts and wished to collaborate on partnership opportunities in the future.



This journey was the culmination of four years of hard work that started with a national cycle ride from Oldham to London and then a European bike ride from London to Amsterdam. We have managed to raise our target of £100,000 towards the building of an Eco School and we hope the build will start this year. We managed to raise awareness of climate challenges and inspired many older people back here in the UK to start cycling.

## Freedom50 Coast to Coast

In June 2024, 18 Freedom50 riders cycled from the Lake District to Newcastle over a three-day period. Leading up to the ride, cyclists from Birmingham and London trained in preparation for the challenging terrain that they would face with steep inclines and dramatic descent stages. We started our journey from Workington by the Irish Sea and then cycled

through the outstanding beauty of the Lake District and Eden Valley which had lots of hills. These stretches were a taste of things to come as the next day we had a gruelling ride to reach Hartside Pass with an 8.8km climb and situated 575 metres above sea level -the descent made it all worthwhile. However, we had to cancel

the rest of the day due to bad weather. The following day featured more demanding climbs that tested all the riders to their limits, with a real sense of achievement when we reached our destination in Newcastle and dipped our wheels in the sea! The challenges give the cyclists the opportunity to set goals and train to achieve them – our next challenge is likely to be another European ride.





## Legacy WM Housing

For the past few years, we have convened a subcommittee to drive forward our housing plans, appointing Civis consultancy to support our work. We have been given a major boost to realise our plans thanks to funding from the Oak Foundation. We are working with them to consider options including supported living and social housing.

Our plans to become a Registered Provider will take at least two years; we are in the early stages of identifying potential sites and in the meantime, we will consider acquiring property if and when our finances allow, beginning the process of us eventually becoming a housing provider.

***We have been given a major boost to realise our plans thanks to funding from the Oak Foundation.***



“

***Construction is now underway at Rupali Court in Lozells, with residents assigned and consultation taking place...***

”



## Housing 21

Legacy WM has worked with Housing 21 for the last few years, canvassing for prospective residents across Birmingham, engaging local people to learn their views and providing culturally appropriate support for people engaging with this novel form of housing for the first time. Construction is now underway at Rupali Court in Lozells, with residents assigned and consultation taking place on those all-important final touches. Rupali court is centrally located in the neighbourhood, with excellent access to amenities within easy walking distance placing it at the heart of the community. As we begin to reimagine the way we live in the context of an ageing population and dispersal of diaspora communities, providers like Housing 21 will play a crucial role in helping us collectively care for the aged and vulnerable people alike.

Rupali Court



## Legacy WM Team

## Social Impact



**Aftab Rahman**  
CEO



**Apsana Khatun**  
Office Manager



**Charles Mcleod**  
Development Manager



**Mohammed Kalam**  
Health & Wellbeing Manager



**3200  
RESIDENTS**  
engaged in 10 Daily Mile  
walks



**1800  
BLOOD PRESSURE**  
monitors distributed to  
the public



**1344  
SCHOOL**  
community members engaged  
through Every Journey Matters  
workshops and assemblies



**Karmi Bains**  
Arts Consultant



**Beant Singh**  
Heritage Officer



**Sandhya Nandra**  
Marketing Communications  
Officer



**Shahid Miah**  
Men's Health & Youth Officer



**1025  
WOMEN**  
empowered including  
perinatal and postnatal  
support



**121  
ATTENDEES**  
at heritage trails



**42  
YOUTH VOLUNTEERS**  
engaged in our youth forum  
and supporting local  
communities



**Marcia Dunkley**  
Community Outreach Officer



**Shamsun Choudhury**  
Womens Engagement Worker



**Samriti Hans**  
Administrative Assistant



**386  
MEN**  
involved in cycling, football  
and wellbeing activities



**68  
YOUNG PEOPLE**  
involved in organised  
sport



**135  
ELDERS**  
involved in community led  
housing projects



# Plans For The Future – ambitious for our communities

We have refreshed our five-year business strategy mid-way through delivery, this was necessary as we have doubled our income and more people joined our staff team. It has been an exceptional year in which we led three partnership bids with nine different organisations and generated £450,000 to deliver arts programmes and an employment support project. We hope to build on this partnership work, with an ethos of “bring it and share it”. We have supported Flourish to become an independent entity and we will continue to work in close collaboration with them.

Bangladeshi Artist Development Agency (BADA) is presently being incubated by us, and we have managed to obtain a grant of £100,000 from Arts Council England to support a talent development programme. This year, we held our first ever Bangla Week and plans are afoot for a month-long celebration in November 2025 and we believe this has the scope to become a national initiative. This builds on our role as an anchor organisation and we hope that we can attract funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to continue our work.

Arts Council England will soon publish its guidance on the new National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) scheme and we will apply once again. We have a proven track record

of working with local organisations and our aim is to lead a consortium bid. If we are successful this will mean that more local organisations will have the funds to create an arts offer – this will also complement our success as a Cultural Action Area. We are slowly transforming Soho House Visitor Centre into more of an arts venue and this will create artistic opportunities for local visitors, artists and creators.

Our work to develop St. Michael’s Church in Handsworth as community, arts and enterprise hub is progressing slower than we had hoped. We were successful in our application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) to support a feasibility study for the site and we have had first stage designs that we have shared with stakeholders and the local community.

At present, the church roof is being repaired and we have realised that more work to the building will be required to bring it up to a decent standard. Completion of this project may take longer than our initial estimate of five years.

We have adopted five UN Sustainable Development Goals

and they are progressing well. Our plans to build homes for people in Bangladesh is underway as we have now completed the first house and have now set ourselves the target of building 1,000 homes, starting with 100 in Bangladesh and then we hope to focus on Senegal. We are working with Human Appeal as our international partner.

Plans to become a housing provider have also encountered hurdles. We enquired about two potential sites, however, one of them will be difficult to obtain and we are continuing to work on the second site. We are exploring the option to buy houses to get us started and if we make a good surplus this year, we will purchase our first house using social finance.

Whilst we remain heavily reliant on grants, this year we won two direct commissions from Birmingham City Council and being the keyholders for Soho House alongside our minibs, we have generated for the first time an excess of £12,000.

Our ambitions remain to work towards generating a third of our income through trading activities. Our funding from WMCA to become a social cluster has helped us to understand the

potential profits that we can generate if we monetise some of our activities. We are hopeful that WMCA funding will be available post April to take this forward. Our CEO has taken part in the Aston University Social Economy Growth Accelerator programme which was a learning programme for social enterprise development – whilst this has added to our knowledge base, we need dedicated resources to help realise our ambitions.

The aforementioned growth presents challenges as to how we manage our resources, and we will undertake a review of our present organisational structure and ensure that it is fit for purpose. We have further bolstered our governance with a refresh of Board members, and we are extremely grateful to our outgoing Trustees for their dedication over the years.





Legacy WM Funders







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