



Integrating Arts And Harmony Among Nations

## **Bema Hackney Community Insight Project 2014**

	Page
Contents	1
Introduction	2
Background on Bema	3
Consultation process/surveys/voxpops	5
Challenges faced by the project	6
Analysis of survey questions/responses & voxpops	7
Project delivery team	8
Recommendations arising out of the survey research	8

## Introduction

The Team Hackney Community Insight Group initiated a community dialogue project on the topic of growth, change and cohesion in Hackney.

Bema was one of the twelve community organisations awarded a small grant administered by Hackney CVS, to involve residents in conversations and activities on this theme. Team Hackney would then use the materials and the intelligence they gather at our annual partnership meeting this Summer.

Feedback from the Bema membership suggest that the contribution and needs of local artists - particular in the community and voluntary sectors - is not reflected in the developmental and other opportunities available. In addition, both artists and non-artists alike tell us that the range of arts at available prices, is very limited and that currently there does not seem to be any strategy to address this.

Although evidence suggests that the feeling is not restricted to BAME communities, the indications are that the feeling is more intense in some communities when compared to others. It is generally accepted that Hackney has produced more African heritage creative over the last fifty years than perhaps any other locality in London and the south-east. At least half of the Lovers Rock artists in the country hailed from or lived in Hackney for a significant part of their life.

Bema applied and was awarded a small sum of money to carry out survey and voxpop based research to establish some empirical evidence that would be of use both to the organization and to Team Hackney.

It was agreed to record and edit a minimum of thirty video responses and process at least one hundred and seventy questionnaires. The edited video would then be available to Team Hackney as will copies of the final report and analysis.

The information will be used by BEMA as part of its strategy to help encourage a more equitable distribution of Arts Council of England resources. BEMA is part of a partnership that also includes Voluntary Arts and Voice4Change that is currently in dialogue with the recently appointed head of diversity within that organisation. The BEMA representatives active in these dialogues include our Chief Officer and our Diversity Officer.

The findings are likely to strengthen our case for more funds to support the development of community arts in boroughs and localities like Hackney.

BEMA intends to use the findings as part of its commitment to work even more closely with those sections of the communities that have traditionally benefited least from available resources and to encourage, enabling them to form partnerships and create joint projects with better resourced groups, thus helping influence and shape the cultural landscape of the borough over coming years.

## **Background to Bema**

### **Bema IS...**

Previously known as the Black and Ethnic Minority Arts Network (BEMA) until reformed in March 2014, Bema has been in operation in one form or another since 2001. Still volunteer led, it remains the organisation for those of us who believe that art can change the world for the better. The name *Bema Arts Limited* is less restrictive than the previous one which did not accurately reflect the organisations ethos of diversity and equality.

Bema is an informal alliance of individual artists, arts organisations and others with an interest in improving availability of quality art to the public, as well as developing cultural activity as a means of promoting tolerance, equality and education. Though essentially a network whose main focus are those communities that have traditionally benefited least from available resources, the Bema family is an inclusive organisation that welcomes membership from all sectors and cultural groups. We firmly believe that it is possible and indeed essential, for diverse individual artist and groups of artists to work in harmony and to mutual benefit, regardless of social status, or of racial, ethnic or cultural background; and irrespective of artistic discipline or genre, without compromising the aspirations of one another.

### **OBJECTS**

1. Support the development of community based organisations engaged in arts training, marketing, promotion and / or production
2. Facilitate the development of a range of arts focussed forums, partnerships and consortia comprising artistically and culturally diverse membership
3. Plan, organize and promote art based events, projects, conferences and other activity either as a sole agency, or in partnership with others
4. Represent the interest of the arts community, by engaging with appropriate local and regional structures, strategic and partnerships and with other bodies, institutions and individuals whose activities impact on local arts and on the activities of the organization's members and target group
5. Seek to maximise the financial and other resources accessible to the arts sector

## **Bema Arts Development Forum**

As a means of enabling a broad based programme of artistic projects and activity and to enable mutually supportive development, Bema has established nine forums where organizations focused on particular artforms provide each other with support and develop mutually beneficial partnerships and consortia.

There is a similar forum for individual artists. These ten forums have delegated authority to develop their own programmes within the parameters of Bema's overall priorities and objectives. Each forum will include a lead organization with the capacity to act as a mentor for smaller or less developed members.

- Carnival & Costume
- Dance
- Drama & Theatre
- Fashion & Design
- Film & Video
- Graphics & Visual Arts
- Individual artists
- Literature & Spoken Word
- Music
- Venue Operators & Promoters

### ***The forums make it easier to:***

- Offer a better service to member groups and organizations, service users, and clients
- Raise the standards of art-based projects produced by forum members
- Improve the administration systems of forum members by supporting the development of effective policies, systems and processes
- Create networking and information sharing opportunities for forum members
- Encourage and enable forum members and organizations to develop partnerships and collaborative initiatives (including cross sector and multi art-form activities)
- Convene meetings, seminars & conferences in order to highlight issues of interest or concern to forum members and to affect and influence strategic and policy decisions impacting on areas of interest to forum members
- Identify and access sources of capital, revenue and project funding for forum members
- Encourage member groups and individuals to affiliate to appropriate regulatory bodies - providing support where possible.

## Consultation process/surveys/voxpops

We identified fifteen venues and social meeting spots in various communities and engaged a researcher to work with the managers of these venues in order to encourage and assist users to complete a questionnaire. Places and activities that people most value in their local neighbourhood and town centres such as Shoreditch, Dalston and Hackney Central.

We also engaged a filmmaker to film and edit contributions in order to show the range and strength of the comments and ideas put forward. The venues, groups and organisations were to be used to obtain this information were selected in order to best get a wide range of respondents.

The project was intended to focus mainly on those in the fifty plus age group, it being acknowledged that this age group contained many artists that have contributed to rich cultural heritage that is universally acknowledged as being Hackney, yet are in the main unemployed and also have very little influence on the artistic direction of the borough. They also very few opportunities to voice their dissatisfaction.

The Black & Ethnic Minority Arts Network (BEMA) Network has a membership and contact list in excess of 500, most of who either live and or work in Hackney or work for voluntary, community and other organisations based in the borough. The network has been in operation in the borough for more than a decade and is better placed than any other to carry out this essential task. The project will communicate with at least artists, practitioners and art lovers of the above age groups, as to their views on if and how they think that the borough has changed over the last ten years. They will be invited to put forward ideas as to what they believe could be done to improve access to quality arts in the community at affordable rates.

After more than a decade of working with BAME and other artists in the borough the organisation has built up an extensive database and mailing list of potential contributors. It was agreed to send out emails to those on the BEMA mailing as it contains a high percentage of people in the group, inviting them to a facilitated meeting where their views can be expressed and videoed, including individual interviews. Those not wishing to be videoed interviewed were to be encouraged to put forward their views through the completion of a questionnaire.

### Survey questions

- *Are you a resident of Hackney?*
- *How long have you lived in the borough?*
- *What age group are you in?*
- *How regularly - if ever - do you visit any of Hackney's arts venues? (i.e. theatres, cinemas, museums)*
- *Which ones do you tend to use the most and why?*
- *What do you think about the types and degree of choice available?*
- *If you do not use any local arts provision why is this?*
- *What improvements, changes etc. would you like to see in terms of the type of services available?*
- *How would you describe your cultural origin or background?*

## **Challenges faced by the project**

*A number of issues became apparent all of which affected our ability to deliver the project and which resulted in a late and only partial delivery.*

### Budget

Soon after the project was undertaken it became obvious that the funds awarded was insufficient to enable smooth delivery

### Timetable

As with the staffing it soon became apparent that it was insufficient with the personnel available.

### Staffing

The difficulty recruiting staff was grossly underestimated and though four individuals were ultimately employed to deliver the project, they were not all as reliable as they could have been and in some instances illness and personal difficulties mitigated against smooth progress. Most of the work was actually carried out by only two persons. The situation was compounded by the error of making advance payments.

### Volunteers

Again there was disappointment with the performance and reliability of most of the volunteers. A number of those that promised to participate failed to show up.

### Adjustment of the project aims

It was agreed that the amount of venues to be used to obtain completed surveys (15), the amount of surveys intended (150) and the amount of voxpops (30) were unrealistic, particularly with the problems concerning staffing and volunteers. A decision was taken to obtain as much information we could under the circumstances.

# Analysis of survey questions/responses & voxpops

## Survey questions/responses

- A total of sixty-seven surveys forms were completed of which. Fifty three of these were by Hackney tenants and residents
- Of the fifty three, thirty-two were in the North of the borough - mainly Homerton, Hackney Central, Stoke-Newington & Dalston
- Of the fifty three, twenty-five were in the South of the borough - mainly Shoreditch and Haggerston
- Statistically there were no discernable differences in responses between tenants and residents from the North and south of the borough

## Survey forms (responses)

- *Are you a resident of Hackney?*

*Residents tenants - fifty-three of sixty-seven*

*Non-residents/tenants - fourteen of sixty-seven*

*The following data relates only to those that were Hackney tenants/residents and were thirty or over at the time of completing the form (37 of 57 - 65%)*

- How long have you lived in the borough?

*Over 10 years (28=76 %) Less than 10 years (9=24%)*

- How regularly - if ever - do you visit any of Hackney's arts venues? (i.e. theatres, cinemas and museums)

*Paraphrased: very often (7=19 %) quite often, 19=51% seldom 8=22% very seldom 3=8%*

- Which ones do you tend to use the most and why?

*Almost all cited low or free cost, accessibility and interesting activities as the main reasons*

- What do you think about the types and degree of choice available?

*Nearly everyone indicated an unsatisfactory degree of choice and variety*

- If you do not use any local arts provision why is this?

*Limited choice and variety, not much of interest and cost of entry were the three main reasons given. Almost all of those that did not use local arts provision sited cost or ignorance of what is available as the reason, many sited both of those factors*

- What improvements, changes etc. would you like to see in terms of the type of services available?

*Almost all respondents suggested more variety, lower prices and better promotion of what is available*

- How would you describe your cultural origin or background?

*Only twenty-six people answered this question (70%)*

*The responses were varied and with such a relatively small sample did not allow for meaningful analysis.*

*It is acknowledged that the question could have enabled a more specific response. It is further acknowledged that the questionnaire should have addressed gender.*

### Voxpops

- An arrangement was made for five artists to record voxpop comments (preferably in the form of a poem or rap) on the situation with access and availability to local arts, using the survey forms as a prompt. Two of the artists turned up and recorded contributions, both of these were in the form of question and response interviews.

YouTube link to the two responses

Sam Shakes; local author

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7\\_UeMrEdLc8&feature=em-upload\\_owner&hd=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_UeMrEdLc8&feature=em-upload_owner&hd=1)

Sam Berkson; Local poet

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_ZXQquXkk6A&feature=em-upload\\_owner&hd=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZXQquXkk6A&feature=em-upload_owner&hd=1)

### **Project delivery team**

*Coordinator and survey collator*

*Ngoma Bishop*

*Video recording & editing and survey collator*

*Shereen Lawrence*

### **Recommendations**

*It is apparent from the limited research carried out that more could be done to address the perceived lack of variety and choice as regards the opportunities to enjoy low priced art in the borough.*

*The recommendations are that:*

- *funds be made available to carry out a more detailed and wide ranging report into the range variety and access to art based resources.*
- *a cross-sector forum is established to look at what can be done to achieve the perception and the reality of artists, art providers and consumers of art across the cultural spectrum.*