Band on the Wall: World of Song

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Overview

World of Song was a two-year programme delivered by Band on the Wall in partnership with Community Arts North West. It used music, performance and storytelling to celebrate the heritage of refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants in Greater Manchester.

The project brought together six connected strands: Mother Song Father Song, Early Years, Without Borders Youth Band, Spotlight Artist Development, the Songs and Stories Heritage Film and participation in Horizons Festival. Together, these programmes worked with young children and families, adults living in emergency accommodation, young musicians and professional artists.

The evaluation found clear evidence that World of Song created meaningful opportunities for people to share their cultural heritage, develop their creativity and take part in Manchester's cultural life. It also produced an extensive collection of original music, recordings, photography, performances and film that documents the stories and musical traditions shared through the project.

At a glance

World of Song:

- engaged more than 80 men through Mother Song Father Song, including a core group who attended regularly
- brought together 12 young musicians through Without Borders Youth Band
- provided tailored development for three artists and ensembles, with a further 20 musicians taking part in industry masterclasses
- delivered regular creative music sessions with children and families living in emergency accommodation
- produced original multilingual music, professional recordings, photography and promotional materials
- created a professionally produced heritage film and presented participants' work as part of Horizons Festival

Evaluation findings draw on monitoring information, interviews, observations, staff reflections, audience feedback and the creative work produced.

The difference made to participants

The strongest and most consistent evidence from World of Song relates to the difference it made to individual participants, and how the project has supported the Heritage Fund investment principle: 'Inclusion, Access and Participation'

Across the programmes, people developed musical, creative and professional skills. Young people wrote and recorded original music, performed publicly and gradually took on leadership responsibilities. Artists developed their professional profiles, networks and understanding of the UK music industry. Adults became more confident in sharing and

performing music, while children became increasingly comfortable exploring instruments, movement and creative play.

These practical outcomes were closely connected to changes in confidence, wellbeing and belonging. Participants formed friendships, gained a stronger sense of purpose and felt that their abilities and cultural identities were recognised. Some described the sessions as a source of support during periods of isolation and uncertainty. Others gained new ambitions, further performance opportunities or greater confidence in seeing themselves as musicians and artists.

The scale and nature of the change differed between participants, and the evidence was stronger in some programmes than others. However, the examples gathered throughout the evaluation show that the effects could be significant at an individual level. For some people, a weekly music session became a trusted part of their lives. For others, performing on a professional stage, recording their own work or being taken seriously as an artist changed how they saw their own potential.

Heritage and cultural exchange

World of Song treated musical heritage as something living rather than fixed. Participants were not simply asked to learn about heritage. They chose songs, explained their meaning, shared languages and musical traditions, and created new work influenced by their experiences in Manchester.

Music provided a practical way for people from different cultures to communicate and learn from one another, including where spoken language was limited. Traditional songs were remembered and valued, but they were also rearranged, combined with new influences and shared through contemporary performances. This allowed participants to present their heritage in their own words and on their own terms.

Recordings, interviews, photography and the Heritage Film have created a lasting record of this work. Plans for the developing digital heritage archive provide a strong basis for future access, although it is too early to assess the archive or film's longer-term public reach. This legacy supports the Heritage Fund investment principle 'Saving Heritage.'

Delivery in a challenging context

World of Song was delivered during a period of considerable uncertainty for many of the people it aimed to reach. Participants were dealing with displacement, language barriers, changing accommodation, the pressures of the asylum process and limited access to established support networks.

Delivery also took place against a wider public climate that was at times hostile towards refugees and people seeking asylum. This created additional safety, safeguarding and confidentiality considerations for the organisations and practitioners involved. The importance of trust, consistency and careful relationship-building should therefore not be underestimated.

Within this context, the creation of welcoming spaces was an important achievement in itself. Regular practitioners, accessible activities, interpreters, refugee awareness training and informal time spent together helped participants feel safe, respected and able to take part.

Key learning

One of the clearest lessons from World of Song is that flexible delivery was central to its success. The project did not follow one fixed model. Mother Song Father Song changed from a family programme to respond to the needs of men living in emergency accommodation. Early Years delivered more sessions within hotels when families found it difficult to travel. Spotlight support was shaped around each artist, while the Heritage Film changed direction when a clearer story emerged through the Without Borders Youth Band.

These changes did not move the project away from its aims. They made those aims more realistic and accessible. World of Song showed the importance of designing activity around people's circumstances rather than expecting people to fit an original plan.

The project also showed that:

- trusted relationships and continuity are essential, particularly when people are living with uncertainty
- participants engage more deeply when they can influence activities and make creative decisions
- professional venues, recordings and performance opportunities can strengthen confidence and show participants that their work is valued
- practical support, including interpreters, transport considerations and welcoming venue practices, can be as important as the creative activity itself
- creative practitioners need clear boundaries and access to specialist pastoral partners when participants are experiencing trauma, poor mental health, unstable housing or destitution

Legacy and next steps

World of Song leaves a strong creative and personal legacy. Its recordings, original songs, photography, performances and Heritage Film provide a lasting record of the people and musical traditions involved. The developing digital archive offers a way to preserve and share this work with future audiences. The Band on the Wall team have strengthened relationships, gained new skills, and captured organisational learning. This supports the Heritage Fund investment principle: Organisational Sustainability.

The personal legacy is equally important. Participants leave with new skills, relationships, experiences and professional resources. Some have already continued into other musical activity, performances and creative opportunities. The project has also strengthened relationships between Band on the Wall, Community Arts North West, HOME and the artists and practitioners involved.

1. Introduction

1.1. Project summary

World of Song is a collaborative project delivered by Band on the Wall and Community Arts North West (CAN). The project captures and celebrates the heritage stories of refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants in Greater Manchester through song. By sharing stories and music, it highlights the lasting influence of migrant heritage on Manchester's identity while supporting integration, creativity and community connection.

The project comprised six interconnected strands:

- **Without Borders Youth Band**: Weekly workshops for young people aged 12–19 from refugee and newly arrived migrant communities to form and develop a band, create original music, gain experience of the UK music industry and produce professional recordings and film content.
- **Spotlight Artist Development Programme**: A year-long professional development programme supporting three heritage-based ensembles through mentoring, masterclasses, industry guidance and showcase performances.
- **Early Years**: Music sessions delivered within emergency accommodation and at Band on the Wall, supporting young children and families through creative musical play.
- **Mother Song Father Song**: Weekly music sessions bringing together asylum seekers, refugees and newly arrived migrants to share songs, celebrate cultural heritage and develop a digital record of musical traditions.
- **Songs and Stories Heritage Film**: A collaborative documentary combining participant interviews, music, performance and animation to preserve and share migrant musical heritage.
- **Horizons Festival**: A public celebration held during Refugee Week, bringing together participants, artists, audiences and cultural organisations to share the creative outcomes of the project.

While each strand had distinct audiences and objectives, together they created opportunities for refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants to celebrate their heritage, develop creatively, build confidence, strengthen wellbeing and build connections with wider communities. Performances, recordings, film, festivals and public events extended the reach of the project, helping raise awareness of the contribution that migrant communities make to Manchester's cultural life.

1.2. The purpose of this evaluation

This report presents the final evaluation of World of Song, bringing together evidence collected throughout the two-year project. It builds on the interim evaluation completed in September 2025, incorporating additional evidence gathered during the final stages of delivery, including participant interviews, staff reflections, observations, project monitoring data, creative outputs and press coverage.

The report first examines each of the six project strands individually, recognising their distinct aims, participants and approaches. It then draws these findings together to consider the collective impact of World of Song, assessing the extent to which the project achieved its overall ambitions and the outcomes set out by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Alongside evidencing impact, the evaluation identifies key learning for Band on the Wall, Community Arts North West and other organisations delivering heritage, music and community engagement programmes.

1.3. Evaluation Framework

An evaluation framework was developed at the start of the project in partnership with Band on the Wall and Community Arts North West. The framework identified the intended outcomes for each programme and the most appropriate methods for gathering evidence.

Recognising that many participants had experienced forced migration, displacement or trauma, particular care was taken to ensure evaluation methods were proportionate, accessible and non-invasive. Language barriers, differing levels of confidence, and the potential for formal evaluation activities to reduce enjoyment or trigger difficult experiences were carefully considered throughout.

Rather than applying a single evaluation method across all six programmes, the framework was designed to remain flexible. Methods were adapted as delivery evolved and new opportunities for learning emerged, ensuring evaluation activities remained appropriate to the aims, participants and context of each strand of activity.

1.4. Evaluation Methods

Evidence Source	Purpose
Participant interviews	Explore personal experiences and outcomes
Facilitator reflections	Capture participant impact, delivery learning and organisational learning
Activity observations	Assess engagement and participation
Audience feedback	Understand public responses
Project monitoring data	Record participation and outputs
Press and social media review	Assess wider reach and visibility
Review of creative outputs	Review songs, film, recordings, photography and promotional material
Short survey of Band on the Wall members	Introduced late in the evaluation to provide additional evidence about wider reach and awareness.

Evidence collection was tailored to the aims, participants and delivery of each strand. Drawing from multiple sources of evidence provided a richer understanding of participant experiences, programme delivery and project outcomes than would have been possible through any single method alone.

The nature of the project meant that formal or quantitative evaluation was not always appropriate. Many participants faced language barriers, uncertainty or vulnerabilities, and the evaluation sought to avoid creating additional pressures or disrupting activities. This was particularly relevant to the Early years programme, where attempts to gather structured feedback directly from children were not always practical or meaningful. In these cases, greater weight was placed on facilitator observations, informal participant and parent feedback, partner reflections and evidence gathered through the creative activity itself.

2. Overall Project Delivery

World of Song brought together six complementary programmes that explored migrant heritage through music, performance, creative development and storytelling. While each strand worked with different participants and had distinct objectives, together they created opportunities for refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants to celebrate their heritage, express themselves creatively and take part in Manchester's cultural life.

Delivery took place within a changing and sometimes difficult context. Access to emergency accommodation took longer to establish than originally anticipated, which delayed some activity. As the project progressed, the wider political climate around asylum accommodation also became increasingly hostile, including protests and attacks linked to hotels. This affected how safely activity could be promoted and required careful consideration of safeguarding, confidentiality and communications.

The project therefore needed to remain flexible in both delivery and use of resources. In some areas, the original approach to marketing was less relevant than direct engagement with participants and partner organisations, and funding was redirected towards areas including communications, Spotlight activity and the developing heritage website.

The table below provides an overview of the activities delivered and the principal outputs produced. More detailed findings and evidence of impact are presented in the programme chapters that follow.

Programme	Key activity	Outputs
Without Borders Youth Band	Weekly rehearsals and music development sessions for young people	Original multilingual songs; live performances; professional recording; photography and film content
Mother Song Father Song	Weekly participatory music sessions with asylum seekers, refugees and newly arrived migrants	Participant-led sharing event; original and traditional songs; musical recordings and heritage documentation
Spotlight Artist Development Programme	Professional and creative development for three heritage-based ensembles	Mentoring and masterclasses; professional performances; promotional materials; commissions and industry connections
Early Years	Music, movement and creative play sessions for children and families in emergency accommodation and at Band on the Wall	Regular family sessions; culturally diverse music and play activities; increased engagement in creative provision
Songs and Stories Heritage Film	Collaborative documentary development and production	Documentary heritage film combining interviews, performances and animation; public screening and digital legacy

Programme	Key activity	Outputs
Horizons Festival	Refugee Week celebration and professional showcase	Live performances by World of Song participants; public audience engagement; opportunities for cultural exchange and industry exposure

Alongside the programme activities, World of Song produced a wide range of creative and heritage outputs, including professional recordings, original music, filmed interviews, documentary footage, photography, promotional content and press coverage. These outputs are explored further in the programme chapters and in the assessment of overall project impact in Section 9.

3. Mother Song Father Song

3.1. Project summary

Mother Song Father Song was a creative music programme supporting people seeking asylum and those with recent refugee status. Through weekly participatory music sessions at Band on the Wall, it aimed to reduce isolation, support wellbeing and create opportunities for participants to share and celebrate their musical heritage.

Although originally envisaged as a family-focused programme, delivery evolved in response to local need and ultimately worked predominantly with men living in nearby emergency accommodation. This adaptation helped the programme to reach a group with very limited access to creative activity, social connection and wellbeing support.

3.2. What happened

Mother Song Father Song was delivered through weekly sessions at Band on the Wall between January and June 2025. More than 80 men took part during this period, with a core group of around eight attending regularly despite changing personal circumstances. The programme culminated in a participant-led sharing event featuring live music, original compositions and personal reflections.

Sessions were led by professional music facilitators and encouraged participants to introduce songs from their home countries, explain their meaning and teach them to others. Music shared reflected a wide range of traditions, including Iranian folk, Kurdish folk-rock, Tuareg music, Egyptian pop, reggae, Eritrean and Ethiopian pop, Sudanese music, South African traditional song and Western folk-rock.

Alongside learning and performing existing songs, participants explored rhythm, melody, harmony and instrumentation, experimented with different musical styles, developed original material and recorded some of the music they had created.

The programme concluded with a participant-led sharing event at Band on the Wall. Facilitators estimated that participants led around 80% of the event, introducing songs, performing original work and speaking about their experiences.

3.3. Key outcomes

3.3.1. A safe space supporting wellbeing and belonging

Mother Song Father Song provided much more than a weekly music session. For many participants, it became a safe and welcoming environment where they could build friendships, reduce feelings of isolation and experience a sense of belonging during an uncertain period in their lives.

Participants were living in emergency accommodation, separated from family and established support networks, and facing the pressures of the asylum process. The weekly sessions provided structure, purpose and an opportunity to connect with others through a shared interest in music.

Band on the Wall also played an important role in creating this environment. Front-of-house and bar staff were briefed to ensure participants felt comfortable spending time in the venue beyond the formal sessions, including when they were not purchasing food or drink. Refugee awareness training also helped staff understand participants' circumstances and respond with greater confidence and empathy.

Facilitators observed that participants increasingly saw Band on the Wall as somewhere they belonged rather than simply a venue for weekly sessions. They noticed people arriving early, staying after sessions had finished and spending time together informally, suggesting the programme had become part of participants' weekly lives and an important source of social connection.

One participant described the difference this made:

"In the first few days I was struggling with depression... every time I came here I went back home with really good energy... It was one of the best things I experienced here."

Facilitators also described the sessions as having a "family atmosphere", where music-making was balanced with conversation, humour, shared meals and mutual encouragement. They felt these informal moments were just as important to participants' wellbeing as the music itself.

For many participants, music was the reason they came, but the friendships, supportive relationships and welcoming environment were equally important to the programme's impact.

Participant Spotlight: Daniel – Music, purpose and wellbeing

Daniel described the positive effect music-making had on his mental health. The sessions provided an outlet for emotional response, reduced feelings of isolation and gave him a renewed sense of purpose and enjoyment.

3.3.2. Sharing and valuing musical heritage

Music provided an accessible way for participants to celebrate and share their cultural heritage. Rather than learning about one another's backgrounds through conversation alone, participants introduced songs from their home countries, explained their significance and encouraged others to sing, play and learn alongside them.

Participants shared music from different countries and traditions while learning about one another's cultures. This allowed people to celebrate their own heritage while gaining appreciation of others. As one participant reflected:

"We are not the same country here, lots of different people and cultures here. I appreciate it here..."

Facilitators observed that music often opened conversations that would have been difficult through words alone. One particularly powerful example was the way Eritrean and Ethiopian participants translated for one another despite the historical and political tensions between their countries. Participants were curious about one another's traditions, frequently asking

about the meaning of songs, instruments and lyrics. Rather than reinforcing differences, these exchanges helped build mutual understanding and respect.

Participants also explored connections between traditional and contemporary music, demonstrating how songs and musical styles continue to evolve and influence one another across cultures. The recordings and documentation created through the programme provide a lasting record of some of the songs, stories and musical traditions shared.

Participant Spotlight: Reza – Sharing and valuing heritage

Reza brought songs and music traditions from Iran to the sessions, explaining their cultural meaning and encouraging others to reflect on and share their own heritage. He was proud that these traditions were being documented and recognised as part of Manchester's cultural heritage.

3.3.3. Confidence, skills and personal growth

Facilitators observed participants becoming more confident as the programme progressed. They developed musical skills by trying unfamiliar instruments, exploring rhythm, melody and performance, recording original work and contributing their own ideas during sessions. Facilitators described a series of "lightbulb moments", including participants recording their own songs, discovering previously unrecognised abilities and taking responsibility for leading music within the group.

For some participants, this interest continued beyond the sessions. Several became interested in instruments they had not played before, particularly guitar, and some obtained their own instruments so they could continue practicing independently outside the programme.

This growing confidence was reflected in participants' willingness to introduce songs, share musical traditions from their own cultures and perform in front of others. The final sharing event at Band on the Wall demonstrated this progression, with participants introducing songs, leading vocals and taking ownership of most of the performance. For some, performing publicly and seeing friends in the audience provided an important sense of achievement and recognition.

Facilitators also reflected that the benefits extended beyond music. They observed improvements in participants' communication, self-esteem and sense of purpose, while several participants went on to join choirs, attend open-mic events or take part in other local music opportunities.

Participant Spotlight: Elias – Building confidence through music

Elias initially found it difficult to engage in group activities because of language barriers and uncertainty. Learning and performing songs in different languages helped him develop confidence and communication skills. Contributing to the final performance strengthened his self-esteem and encouraged him to continue participating in local music activities.

3.3.4. Lasting connections and continued participation

For some participants, the impact of Mother Song Father Song continued beyond the programme itself. One participant has remained involved with Band on the Wall by joining two choirs and continues to travel into Manchester to take part, despite having been relocated to accommodation outside the city. This is an example of the programme creating a pathway into ongoing cultural participation, as well as sustaining friendships and a sense of community beyond the funded activity.

Facilitators also observed that participants encouraged one another to engage with other music and community opportunities, sharing information and maintaining friendships established during the programme.

Participant Spotlight: Ahmed – Finding connection and belonging

Ahmed had experienced significant isolation while living in emergency accommodation. Through the weekly sessions, he began forming friendships with others in similar circumstances and sharing songs from his home country. Performing at the final event allowed him to feel that his contribution was recognised and valued, strengthening both his confidence and sense of belonging.

3.4. Key areas of success

- More than 80 men engaged with the programme, bringing musical traditions from across Africa, the Middle East and beyond into a shared creative space
- A consistent core group developed strong relationships, confidence and increasing ownership of the programme
- Participants reported improved wellbeing, reduced isolation and a stronger sense of purpose and belonging
- The professional venue, welcoming organisational culture and continuity of facilitation helped participants feel recognised and valued
- Recordings, performances and continued involvement in local music activity extended the programme's impact beyond the weekly sessions

3.5. Learning

Mother Song Father Song highlighted the importance of flexibility, trust and continuity when working with people experiencing displacement and uncertainty. Adapting the original family-focused model enabled the programme to respond to a clear gap in provision for single men living in emergency accommodation.

The status and accessibility of Band on the Wall were also significant. Its location close to participants' accommodation made regular attendance easier and enabled relationships with the venue to develop beyond the formal sessions. Delivering activity within a recognised professional music venue also gave participants pride in their involvement, while staff training and an organisation-wide commitment to welcome helped ensure that inclusion extended beyond the workshop itself.

Consistent facilitators, including those with lived experience of migration, were central to building trust. However, facilitators were sometimes required to respond to complex issues involving trauma, destitution, poor mental health and unstable accommodation. Future programmes would benefit from clearly defined pastoral partnerships with specialist third-sector organisations, ensuring creative practitioners are supported and participants can access appropriate help.

The wide range of musical experience and tastes within the group also required flexibility. Facilitators needed to balance participant choice with opportunities to introduce unfamiliar music and encourage people to try new instruments and approaches.

Facilitators also identified a need for:

- longer sessions and additional planning time
- a balance between structured musical learning and informal jamming
- differentiated support for participants developing more technical instrumental skills
- occasional breakout or one-to-one activity for those struggling to engage
- mid-programme sharing events to welcome new participants and maintain momentum
- opportunities to combine music with dance and other forms of cultural expression.

Demand for continued activity remained strong, indicating that regular, sustained provision is likely to achieve greater depth than short-term or isolated interventions.

4. Early Years

4.1. Project summary

The Early Years programme supported refugee and asylum-seeking families living in emergency accommodation through regular music sessions designed to reduce isolation, encourage creative play and strengthen family wellbeing. Building on Band on the Wall's established *Keep on Moving* programme, World of Song adapted this approach to reach families who faced significant barriers to accessing cultural opportunities.

Children and families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds participated, including Syria, Eritrea, Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Nigeria and Colombia, creating opportunities for shared musical experiences and cultural exchange.

4.2. What happened

The Early Years programme was delivered between March 2025 and March 2026, providing regular music sessions for refugee and asylum-seeking families living in emergency hotel accommodation across Greater Manchester. Led by experienced early years music practitioners, the sessions used music, movement and sensory play to create welcoming environments where children and their families could relax, play and connect with others.

The programme was originally intended to support families in emergency accommodation before helping them transition into Band on the Wall's regular early years sessions. As delivery progressed, the team recognised that transport, school routines and the practical realities of family life made regular travel difficult for many families. In response, more sessions were delivered within hotel accommodation, where participation was significantly higher.

Engaging families within the hotels also required a much more proactive approach that originally anticipated. Band on the Wall did not have a reliable way to communicate directly with families, and hotel staff were managing many competing demands and could not always promote sessions consistently. Attempts to establish a WhatsApp group were not successful, so practitioners and project staff often relied on visiting the hotels on the day, speaking directly to families and inviting children to take part. Partner organisations, including Caritas and Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN), also helped connect the programme with families.

Sessions were based on creative musical play rather than formal music lessons. Children were encouraged to explore instruments independently, move freely, sing, dance and experiment with music at their own pace. Instruments and resources included percussion, chime bars, handbells, scarves, parachutes, sensory equipment and bubbles, allowing children of different ages and abilities to take part together.

The programme welcomed families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, creating opportunities for children and parents to experience music from different traditions while sharing aspects of their own heritage. Participants ranged from babies to older children and teenagers, reflecting the changing needs of families living in emergency accommodation.

Throughout the programme, practitioners worked with many of the same families, allowing sessions to develop over time. As children and parents became more familiar with the activities and the practitioners, participation grew more confident and sessions became more settled. Alongside music-making, families spent time talking, playing and getting to know one another, with the sessions becoming a regular part of weekly life for many.

4.3. Key outcomes

4.3.1. Play, wellbeing and childhood

One of the programme's most important outcomes was creating a safe and welcoming space where children could play, explore and enjoy being children.

Many families were living in emergency hotel accommodation, where bedrooms were often small, overcrowded and offered few opportunities for active play. Practitioners quickly recognised that children did not need another structured lesson. Instead, they needed space to move, make noise, explore and express themselves through play, with music providing the means for this to happen.

As the facilitator reflected:

> "Quite quickly I realised these children didn't need another adult telling them what to do. They needed somewhere safe where they could come in, play and just be children."

Sessions therefore evolved around creative music play rather than formal teaching. Children were encouraged to make their own choices through movement, instruments, sensory resources and imaginative play, enabling children of different ages, abilities and languages to participate together.

Feedback from families was consistently positive, with parents reporting that sessions helped their children feel happier and calmer, while children simply described enjoying the opportunity to play with others.

4.3.2. Building trust, confidence and belonging

Trust developed gradually as practitioners worked regularly with the same families. Early sessions were energetic and unpredictable as children explored the space and became familiar with the activities, but over time participation became more settled and confident.

By the end of the programme, children were waiting excitedly for sessions to begin, greeting practitioners enthusiastically, suggesting activities and confidently exploring instruments together. Relationships also developed with parents, many of whom stayed during sessions, joined activities or enjoyed watching their children play. Practitioners reflected that these small interactions, including smiles, hugs and words of thanks, demonstrated the trust that had developed over time.

The programme also adapted in response to families' circumstances. When attendance at Band on the Wall proved lower than expected, more sessions were delivered directly in hotel accommodation, where participation increased significantly. This flexibility enabled the programme to reach more families by responding to the practical realities of daily life.

4.3.3. Music as a universal language

Music helped overcome barriers created by differences in language, culture and background.

Families came from a wide range of countries, creating opportunities for children and parents to experience music from different cultures while sharing aspects of their own heritage. Rather than relying solely on familiar nursery rhymes, practitioners increasingly encouraged families to introduce songs from their own cultures, creating opportunities for singing, dancing and making music together.

As the facilitator reflected:

> "I realised there was no need to speak the same language. That's the beauty of music."

The programme illustrated how music could support communication where spoken language was limited, while encouraging curiosity, cultural exchange and mutual appreciation between families from different backgrounds. The project team also reflected that language was less of a barrier to meaningful engagement than they had initially expected, although the experience strengthened their awareness of the importance of clear communication, translation and accessible messaging.

4.3.4. Supporting families and inclusion

Although designed primarily for young children, the programme also benefited parents and carers.

Sessions provided opportunities for families to spend time together in a relaxed environment while developing relationships with practitioners and other families experiencing similar circumstances. Parents watched their children become more confident, explore creatively and enjoy opportunities for play during a period of considerable uncertainty.

Practitioners also reflected on the programme's inclusive approach, illustrating how the programme adapted activities to enable children with different needs to take part.

Impact Story – Inclusion through music

One young person with complex physical needs initially observed sessions from their wheelchair. As relationships developed, practitioners adapted musical activities to enable them to participate using a modified mallet and tuned chime bars. Over time they became an active participant alongside the younger children, demonstrating how flexible, participant-led approaches can remove barriers to engagement and create meaningful opportunities for inclusion.

4.3.5. Progression beyond the programme

The original ambition was for some families to progress from hotel-based activity into Band on the Wall's wider early years provision. This did not happen in a clear or measurable way during the project.

Safeguarding requirements meant the project team could not retain families' contact details, and fewer sessions took place at Band on the Wall than originally hoped. Some families attended regularly and later moved into housing in Manchester, but there is currently no evidence that they progressed into wider Band on the Wall activity.

This does not reduce the value of the engagement achieved within the hotels, but it highlights the practical challenges of creating and evidencing longer-term progression when working with families in emergency accommodation.

4.4. Key areas of success

- Successfully adapted delivery in response to participant needs, significantly increasing engagement by taking sessions into emergency accommodation
- Created trusted spaces where children could play freely, supporting wellbeing alongside creative development
- Built strong relationships with families, leading to sustained attendance and growing confidence
- Illustrated the ability of music to overcome language barriers and support intercultural connection
- Embedded inclusive practice, ensuring children with a wide range of ages, abilities and needs could participate meaningfully
- Developed effective relationships with community partners that helped families access the programme

4.5. Learning

The programme showed the importance of responding to participants' circumstances rather than expecting participants to adapt to pre-designed delivery models. Relocating activity into emergency accommodation significantly increased engagement and supported relationships to develop over time.

It also highlighted the need to plan carefully for recruitment and communication when delivering within emergency accommodation. Hotel staff were managing significant pressures and could not always be relied upon to promote activity, while safeguarding arrangements limited direct communication with families. Future programmes should therefore build in a more proactive approach to engagement from the outset, including direct contact where appropriate and strong relationships with trusted community organisations.

Practitioners found that music was most effective when used as a vehicle for play rather than as a structured educational activity. Giving children freedom to explore, make noise and lead their own creative experiences resulted in higher levels of engagement and enjoyment than more formal approaches.

The programme also reinforced the importance of continuity. Regular practitioners, familiar routines and participant-led sessions gradually transformed unfamiliar spaces into trusted environments where children and families felt confident to participate, build relationships and simply enjoy being together.

Finally, the Early Years project highlighted the difficulty of creating and evidencing progression beyond short-term activity when safeguarding prevents continued contact with families. While progression into Band on the Wall's wider provision remained an appropriate ambition, future projects may need to consider other ways of maintaining connections, including closer partnership working, accessible information about ongoing opportunities and occasional follow-up activity within accommodation settings.

5. Without Borders Youth Band

5.1. Project summary

Without Borders Youth Band was a music development programme for young people aged 12–19, with a particular focus on those from refugee, asylum-seeking and newly arrived migrant communities. Through weekly rehearsals at Band on the Wall, 12 young musicians formed a band, created original multilingual music inspired by their cultural heritage, and gained experience of professional performance and the UK music industry.

Alongside rehearsals, participants took part in songwriting, recording, photography, filmmaking and live performance, while gradually taking greater responsibility for the band's creative direction and supporting one another. The programme celebrated participants' musical heritage while developing their musical skills and confidence.

5.2. What happened

Without Borders Youth Band brought together 12 young musicians from refugee, asylum-seeking and newly arrived migrant communities to rehearse, write and perform original multilingual music. Participants represented a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including Congolese, Kurdish, Iranian, Syrian, Polish, Mexican-Pakistani, Ukrainian and Bosnian communities, creating opportunities to share and combine different musical traditions.

Early sessions focused on building relationships and developing the band's musical identity through collaborative games, rehearsals and songwriting. As the programme developed, participants worked with a range of professional artists and creative practitioners. Music producer Nikhil Shepherd and singer Rioghnach Connolly introduced new creative techniques, while professional photographer Shirlaine Forrest led a photoshoot and

filmmaker Billy Weaver documented the band's journey. Participants also recorded original music in a professional studio, gaining first-hand experience of the recording process.

Leadership opportunities became an increasing feature of the programme. Participants led warm-ups, introduced songs, supported newer members and contributed to creative decisions. One participant took on the role of Young Producer, working alongside the project team to gain experience of project management, safeguarding, meetings and event planning while representing the views of the group.

The programme concluded with a series of public performances, including an informal performance for family and friends at Band on the Wall's Copper Bar, appearances at Horizons Festival and HOME, the release of the band's debut single *Sun* Moon, and their contribution to the World of Song heritage film.

5.3. Key outcomes

5.3.1. Creative development and professional skills

Facilitators observed the group developing from a collection of individual young musicians into a confident and collaborative band. The programme gave young people opportunities to develop their musical abilities alongside the creative and professional skills involved in making and performing music. Through regular rehearsals, collaborative songwriting, public performances and professional recording sessions, participants created and performed original work together.

The project videographer also observed a clear change in one of the younger participants. Initially quiet and hesitant, he became noticeably more confident over the course of the programme and was enthusiastic about speaking on camera after performing at Horizons. He also appeared increasingly comfortable performing alongside established professional musicians and seemed to feel that he belonged in that environment.

The programme encouraged young people to be creative while drawing on their own musical heritage. Rather than learning existing material, they arranged traditional songs, wrote original multilingual compositions and collaborated to develop new musical ideas.

Group ownership of the music became a defining feature of the programme, with young people shaping arrangements, contributing lyrics and influencing the band's creative direction. Participants valued the opportunity to create music from scratch and combine different ideas so that everyone could contribute to the finished work.

Participants also gained insight into the professional music industry, working with guest musicians, producers, photographers and filmmakers. They also took part in professional recording sessions and developed an understanding of music production, performance and promotion. For some, these experiences opened new career aspirations.

One participant reflected on how bringing music she already performed with her brother into the wider band had changed the way she approached it:

"Most of the time when I do music, I don't really alter it... but now we've got a chorus and different instruments. It's made me think a lot musically."

Parents also recognised these changes. They described noticeable improvements in confidence, musical ability and organisation, explaining that children who had once been shy were now "singing and dancing all the way home" after rehearsals. They also observed improvements in teamwork and collaboration, with young people learning to listen to one another, develop ideas collectively and contribute as members of a band.

Participant Spotlight: Pat – Growing confidence through performance

Pat was initially quiet during sessions and often reluctant to share his thoughts. Following the Horizons Festival performance, he became animated and enthusiastic, speaking openly about the pride he felt in performing on a professional stage. The experience marked a visible change in his confidence and sense of achievement.

5.3.2. Heritage and cultural exchange

Without Borders demonstrated how music can celebrate heritage while creating connections between young people from different cultural backgrounds. Participants shared musical traditions from their own communities, explored one another's cultures and co-created new music that reflected their collective identities.

The band brought together young people with Congolese, Kurdish, Iranian, Syrian, Polish, Mexican-Pakistani, Ukrainian and Bosnian heritage. Rather than treating these traditions separately, participants drew on their individual musical influences to create original songs that blended languages, rhythms, instruments and styles. The programme illustrated how musical heritage can be both preserved and reinterpreted through contemporary collaboration.

Music created opportunities for young people to learn directly from one another. Participants arranged existing material, explored songs such as the Arabic piece *Lamma Bada*, learned lyrics in Arabic, Kurdish and Farsi, and co-wrote two original songs drawing on different musical and cultural influences. For many, this involved performing music outside their own cultural traditions for the first time.

One participant described learning Kurdish lyrics as "like gaining a key to open a little door into something new," and went on to explain how performing in Arabic and Farsi, while learning songs from other cultures, strengthened her appreciation of both her own heritage and that of her fellow band members.

Facilitators observed growing curiosity and respect for different musical traditions as rehearsals progressed. Rather than focusing on differences, participants increasingly recognised shared experiences and collaborated creatively across cultural boundaries. As the group reflected in their original song *Sun Moon*:

> "We have more in common than sets us apart."

Participants echoed this message:

> "There are no borders when it comes to music... we're all learning from each other."

The programme also enabled participants to share their heritage with wider audiences through performances, recordings, photography, film and the release of their original single, helping celebrate musical traditions that are often underrepresented within mainstream music programming.

5.3.3. Belonging, wellbeing and relationships

Many participants were navigating the challenges of settling into life in the UK while adapting to new schools, languages and communities. Without Borders provided a consistent space where relationships could develop through regular rehearsals, performances, shared meals and informal time together.

Group cohesion was not immediate. Some participants initially remained within existing friendship groups, and facilitators deliberately encouraged wider interaction through warm-up games, small-group activities, sectionals and collaborative songwriting. Over time, young

people became increasingly comfortable working across the whole band, developing friendships characterised by kindness, encouragement and mutual support.

Participants described these friendships as one of the most valuable aspects of the programme. Working towards performances and recordings created a shared sense of purpose, while celebrating birthdays, sharing food and supporting one another during rehearsals reinforced the feeling that the band was "like a family". One participant described the weekly sessions as a positive part of their routine. Even when they arrived tired after university, the sessions gave them energy while also providing a calm and enjoyable way to end the day.

The programme also helped young people feel more connected to Manchester and its cultural life. Performing at Band on the Wall, working alongside professional musicians and contributing to high-profile events gave participants confidence that they belonged within the city's music community. One participant reflected:

"I want to be very involved in the music scene in Manchester... it's definitely helped me feel more connected to the city."

Parents also recognised wider social benefits, including improvements in teamwork and social interaction. They commented on the enthusiasm with which young people returned home from rehearsals and the pride they took in being part of the band.

Attendance remained exceptionally strong throughout the programme, including during Ramadan when several young people continued to attend evening rehearsals despite fasting. This reflected both participants' enthusiasm and the value they and their families placed on the programme.

5.3.4. Leadership and progression

Leadership developed as young people became more confident and were given opportunities to influence rehearsals and creative decisions. Participants led vocal warm-ups, introduced songs, demonstrated musical parts, contributed ideas and supported newer members of the group.

Facilitators observed a clear progression over the course of the programme. Early sessions focused on establishing group expectations and encouraging participation, while later rehearsals showed greater creative ownership, independence and peer support. Leadership took different forms across the band, including leading percussion sections, contributing to songwriting and helping others learn new material.

These opportunities allowed participants to build confidence and take greater responsibility within the group, without leadership being treated as a formal part of the programme.

Participant spotlight: Nour - Developing as a performer and leader

Alongside performing as a vocalist, Nour took on the role of Young Producer, gaining experience of project planning, funding, meetings and event delivery while representing the views of other participants. The experience helped her recognise facilitation as something she might pursue in future:

"It was out of my comfort zone, but really fun and affirming... I'd definitely like to facilitate workshops in the future."

Nour's experience shows how greater responsibility within the programme could support progression beyond musical performance, helping participants develop confidence, leadership skills and new ambitions.

5.4. Key areas of success

- Twelve young people from refugee, asylum-seeking and newly arrived migrant backgrounds formed a collaborative band and created original multilingual music together
- Participants developed creative, musical and professional skills through rehearsals, recording, photography, filmmaking and public performance
- Collaborative songwriting enabled young people to celebrate their own heritage while learning from one another and creating new music together
- Regular rehearsals fostered friendships, strengthened teamwork and helped young people feel part of Manchester's music community
- Young people increasingly shaped rehearsals, supported one another and took on leadership responsibilities as the programme progressed
- Professional performances, the release of *Sun Moon* and the World of Song heritage film provided high-quality platforms through which participants shared their work with wider audiences
- Two members of the band have continued their involvement with Band on the Wall by joining its regular Saturday sessions, providing an early indication of progression into wider music activity beyond the funded programme

5.5. Learning

Without Borders demonstrated that successful youth music development depends on balancing creative ambition with relationship-building. Early sessions required time for participants to establish trust, develop shared expectations and become comfortable working beyond existing friendship groups. Warm-up games, sectionals, small-group activities and clear roles helped strengthen cohesion across the band while maintaining engagement.

Practical barriers also affected participation. Some families travelled considerable distances to attend, and the team adapted arrangements where possible, including changing break times, providing additional food during Ramadan and helping with travel where needed. These practical adjustments helped young people continue attending despite fasting and difficult journeys.

Co-creation was central to the programme's success. Young people engaged most strongly when they were able to contribute lyrics, musical influences and ideas from their own cultural backgrounds rather than simply learning material selected by adults. Collaborative songwriting created ownership while providing an accessible way to explore identity and heritage.

Heritage worked best when it came from the young people's own music choices, rather than being set by others. Facilitators also recognised that some music could be linked to difficult personal experiences, so young people needed control over what they chose to share or perform.

Leadership opportunities also supported both individual development and group dynamics. Giving young people responsibility for warm-ups, musical sections, peer support and project

decisions built confidence and helped address challenges relating to focus and behaviour. These opportunities were most effective when introduced gradually and matched to participants' interests and readiness.

Access to professional musicians, venues, recording facilities, photographers and filmmakers raised expectations and helped participants see their work as having genuine cultural and professional value. However, these opportunities were most effective because they were underpinned by consistent weekly activity and trusted relationships.

Finally, the programme highlighted the importance of allowing creative development to emerge alongside relationship-building. Shared meals, celebrations and informal time together were not separate from the music-making; they created the trust and group cohesion that enabled young people to collaborate, take creative risks and perform with confidence.

6. Spotlight Artist Development

6.1. Project summary

The Spotlight Artist Development Programme was a year-long professional development programme supporting three artists and ensembles rooted in diverse cultural traditions: Hamsaz Ensemble (Iranian), Guacamaya Latin Band (Venezuelan/Latin American) and Xaawo Kiin (Somali). The programme recognised the barriers many migrant artists face in developing sustainable careers in the UK, including limited professional networks, unfamiliarity with the UK music industry and a lack of visibility.

Rather than focusing solely on performance, Spotlight combined artistic, practical and professional development through mentoring, industry masterclasses, commissioned work, professional photography and film, and high-profile performance opportunities. Participants were supported to develop their artistic practice, strengthen their professional profile and build sustainable careers, while celebrating and sharing their cultural heritage with wider audiences.

At its heart, Spotlight demonstrated that supporting migrant musicians is not only about developing careers, but also about ensuring that the diverse musical traditions of Greater Manchester's communities are recognised as an important part of the city's contemporary cultural heritage.

6.2. What happened

Over twelve months, Spotlight provided tailored professional development for three artists and ensembles whose work draws on the musical traditions of Iran, Somalia and Venezuela. Support was shaped around each artist’s ambitions and stage of development rather than following a fixed programme.

The programme included nine main masterclasses across the year, covering areas such as branding, marketing, touring, recording and working within the UK music industry. These were complemented by smaller targeted sessions and one-to-one support, including work on branding, artistic vision and identity.

Participants were also supported to develop a portfolio of professional promotional materials through photography, filmmaking and studio recording. Support varied according to need, with some artists requiring more intensive help with areas such as website development and professional presentation.

Artists developed and performed new commissioned work inspired by their own musical traditions and took part in a series of professional performance opportunities. All three artists performed at Manchester Folk Festival in March 2025 and at Horizons Festival in June 2025, with further opportunities continuing beyond the main programme period.

Beyond the three featured artists, the masterclasses were also opened to other musicians, extending elements of the programme’s professional development offer across Manchester’s wider music community. Attendance varied across the year, with stronger participation at the first session and smaller groups at later masterclasses.

6.3. Key outcomes

6.3.1. Professional development and creative confidence

Throughout the programme, artists refined existing work, created new material and developed greater confidence in presenting themselves within the UK music sector. The evaluation found that the value of Spotlight lay not in applying one model of development, but in responding to the different starting points and ambitions of each artist.

Guacamaya Latin Band were already established performers but had focused largely on cover songs and function-style work. Spotlight supported them to develop and record original material and gave them greater confidence to present themselves as original artists. For the band, this represented a shift in both creative ambition and professional identity.

Hamsaz Ensemble had also been performing before Spotlight, often within community settings. The programme helped strengthen their professional identity and confidence to operate beyond the community circuit. The branding, promotional materials and website development provided a stronger platform from which to present their work and pursue wider opportunities.

Xaawo Kiin required a more individually tailored package of support, including interpretation and practical help with website development. This enabled her to participate more fully and begin building the professional infrastructure needed to promote her work independently. Xaawo's experience shows the importance of this tailored approach. Although she had an established music career before moving to Manchester, she found it difficult to rebuild professional connections in the city and described feeling isolated from other Somali musicians. Spotlight gave her opportunities to meet musicians, work with Band on the Wall's professional team and begin rebuilding the networks and confidence she needed to develop her career locally.

Across the programme, participants consistently described practical support as being as important as musical development. Branding, marketing, networking and funding advice helped address barriers that had previously made parts of the UK music industry feel difficult to access. José described the programme as having "opened a window", giving him access to professional recording, branding expertise and industry knowledge that would otherwise have been difficult to secure.

The professional photography, promotional films and recordings created through Spotlight also have value beyond the programme itself. They provide artists with practical resources they can continue using when approaching promoters, festivals and audiences, strengthening their ability to present themselves professionally and pursue future opportunities.

6.3.2. Heritage, identity and cultural visibility

Spotlight enabled artists to celebrate and share their cultural heritage while developing new creative work. Rather than presenting heritage as something fixed, the programme showed how traditional musical influences continue to evolve through contemporary performance and collaboration.

Each artist brought distinct cultural traditions into the programme. Hamsaz Ensemble explored Iranian musical heritage, Guacamaya Latin Band celebrated Venezuelan and Afro-Venezuelan music, while Xaawo Kiin introduced audiences to Somali music and storytelling through new commissions and professional performances.

José (Guacamaya) reflected that developing as an artist in the UK did not mean leaving his cultural identity behind, explaining that *"it's impossible to lose your roots culturally."* He described how the band combined Venezuelan musical traditions with influences from Manchester and elsewhere, giving him greater confidence to present his heritage while embracing new creative influences.

Xaawo described her cultural heritage as central to her work. Alongside her music, she uses traditional dress and draws on Somali poetry, songs and storytelling, with the aim of helping wider audiences understand and connect with Somali culture.

Across the programme, artists described their musical traditions as continuing to evolve through collaboration and performance. By placing participants' own heritage at the centre of artistic development, Spotlight celebrated individual identities while introducing audiences to the diverse musical traditions that form part of Manchester's contemporary cultural life.

Artist spotlight – José from Guacamaya Latin Band

Spotlight gave José greater confidence to develop as an original artist without losing the Venezuelan identity at the heart of his music. Recording, branding support and performance opportunities strengthened the band’s profile while enabling him to present his cultural heritage authentically.

6.3.3. Belonging and professional networks

Spotlight helped artists feel more connected to Manchester's music community. Participants described feeling more visible, valued and increasingly confident in presenting themselves as professional musicians.

Xaawo reflected that the encouragement, professional opportunities and supportive relationships developed through Spotlight had fundamentally changed how she viewed her future as an artist, renewing both her confidence and her ambition to continue developing her music. Facilitators similarly observed increasing confidence as artists became more willing to share ideas, perform original material and see themselves as professional musicians within Manchester's music scene.

Participants also valued becoming part of a supportive community of artists. Opportunities to collaborate, perform together and share experiences reduced feelings of isolation while creating new professional networks that extended beyond the programme itself. One participant reflected that the project had strengthened their *"sense of belonging and contribution to society."*

Artist spotlight: Hawo Kiin – Rediscovering confidence through music

Hawo had an established music career before moving to Manchester but found it difficult to build networks in the city and described feeling isolated from other Somali musicians. Spotlight gave her opportunities to connect with musicians and industry professionals, share her work and build her confidence. She described the programme as an opportunity she had been looking for “for many years” and said it had renewed her ambition to take her music beyond community audiences and reach wider national and international audiences.

6.3.4. Progression and future opportunities

Spotlight created opportunities for artists to continue developing their work beyond the main programme activity.

Guacamaya Latin Band received two further paid performance opportunities through Band on the Wall. In October 2025 they supported Cuban band Asere in the main venue, performing to an audience of around 210 people, followed by a Latin Christmas bar show in December attended by around 92 people. These were professional engagements, with the band contracted and paid in the same way as other artists.

Xaawo Kiin secured a performance at the High Peak Welcomes Diversity May Day Festival at Glossop Labour Club in 2026 after the organiser approached Band on the Wall for an artist recommendation. Although the booking required additional support around language and performance arrangements, the opportunity demonstrates how the programme helped connect her with wider cultural networks.

Hamsaz Ensemble recently performed at Didsbury Arts Festival. The programme has strengthened the way the ensemble presents itself professionally and the group continue to use the branding and promotional materials developed through Spotlight, giving them a stronger platform from which to pursue future opportunities.

Artist spotlight – Hamsaz Ensemble

Hamsaz entered Spotlight having already performed regularly within community settings. Through the programme, they developed confidence in presenting themselves as professional artists beyond the community circuit. New branding and promotional materials strengthened their profile, while performing to wider audiences helped strengthen their belief that they could hold their own in Manchester's wider music scene.

6.4. Key successes

- Three artists and ensembles from Iranian, Somali and Venezuelan musical traditions received tailored professional development, strengthening both their artistic practice and their ability to navigate the UK music industry
- Participants developed practical promotional materials, including branding, websites, photography, documentary-style promotional films and studio recordings, providing resources they can continue using beyond the programme
- Professional performances, commissioned work and industry networking increased artists' confidence and visibility while creating further opportunities for some participants and introducing wider audiences to diverse musical traditions
- Artists strengthened their confidence in presenting and developing their cultural heritage through original work, demonstrating how traditional musical practices continue to evolve through contemporary performance
- Spotlight created a supportive professional community, helping artists feel recognised, valued and more connected to Manchester's music scene
- The tailored approach enabled artists at different stages of their careers to receive support that reflected their individual needs and ambitions

6.5. Learning

Spotlight showed the value of combining a clear programme structure with support tailored to individual artists. The three artists were at different stages of development, so a fully standardised offer would not have met their needs. However, organising activity too flexibly created challenges around scheduling, attendance and planning. Future programmes would benefit from setting out key dates, expectations and core sessions in advance, while retaining flexibility in the content and one-to-one support provided.

The programme also highlighted the importance of practical industry knowledge alongside artistic development. Participants valued branding, marketing, networking, funding advice and professional materials such as photography and promotional films as much as the musical development itself. These practical tools helped artists present themselves more professionally and navigate parts of the UK music industry that had previously felt difficult to access.

The programme also demonstrated that high-profile performances, commissions and recording opportunities were most valuable when they were part of a longer process of mentoring and relationship-building. These opportunities gave artists a chance to test new work, build confidence and develop professional contacts rather than operating as isolated showcase events.

Supporting artists to develop work rooted in their own cultural heritage was also important. Spotlight enabled participants to strengthen their professional practice without asking them to move away from the musical traditions and identities that shaped their work. This helped artists develop greater confidence in presenting their heritage as part of Manchester’s contemporary music scene.

Opening masterclasses to a wider group of musicians extended the programme's reach, but attendance reduced over time. Future programmes could strengthen this wider offer by publishing dates further in advance, setting clearer expectations and making it easier for participants outside the core programme to plan their involvement.

7. Heritage Film: *The Song We Carry*

7.1. Project summary

The Song We Carry was commissioned as a documentary exploring migrant music in Manchester. Award-winning Afghan-born documentary filmmaker Tamana Ayazi was appointed to lead the film, bringing a documentary practice centred on identity, resilience and lived experience that closely reflected the wider themes of World of Song.

World of Song was provided as one possible starting point for the documentary. After observing the Without Borders Youth Band, Tamana identified the group as a particularly strong way to explore wider themes of migration, identity, belonging and cultural heritage. The completed film therefore follows the experiences of the young musicians rather than attempting to document the full World of Song programme.

Through interviews, live performance and observational footage, the film captures the young people's music, relationships and experiences as they developed over time. In doing so, it provides a contemporary reflection of young people from different backgrounds contributing to Manchester's cultural and musical life.

Premiered at Band on the Wall, *The Song We* Carry forms an important part of the project's long-term creative and heritage legacy. Plans are in place to submit the film to festivals before making it publicly available through Band on the Wall's developing digital heritage website.

7.2. What happened

The film was developed alongside World of Song rather than being created retrospectively. Tamana Ayazi attended a Without Borders Youth Band rehearsal early in the process and recognised the potential of the group as the focus for the documentary. Although the original brief allowed for a much broader exploration of migrant music in Manchester, the young musicians provided a clear and immediate way to explore migration, identity, belonging and cultural heritage through lived experience

Tamana continued filming the group over an extended period, capturing rehearsals, performances, interviews and informal moments as their relationships and creative work developed. This approach allowed the film to follow experiences that were still unfolding rather than looking back retrospectively at events that had already happened.

Participants played an active role throughout the filmmaking process, contributing performances, interviews and personal reflections. The completed film combines these with live music and observational footage, allowing the young people to speak directly about their lives, identities and experiences while documenting their development as musicians and as a group.

The documentary premiered at a well-attended launch event at Band on the Wall, bringing together participants, families, partners and supporters to celebrate its completion. At the time of writing, wider public distribution is being intentionally delayed while festival submissions are explored. The film is expected to be submitted to festivals until around the

end of 2026, after which it will be made publicly available through Band on the Wall's developing heritage website.

7.3. Key outcomes

7.3.1. Preserving and sharing migrant heritage

The Song We Carry has created a lasting record of the music, stories and experiences of the young people involved with Without Borders Youth Band. By combining interviews, performances and observational footage, the documentary captures not only the music itself but also the identities, relationships and cultural traditions that shaped the group.

Although the film focuses on one strand of World of Song, it explores wider themes that ran throughout the project, including migration, belonging, resilience and cultural exchange. Through participants' own words and performances, the documentary shows how musical heritage continues to evolve as traditions are shared, reinterpreted and combined within new communities.

Together with the project's recordings, photography and other creative outputs, the film creates a valuable heritage resource that will enable these stories and musical traditions to be shared beyond the funded programme.

7.3.2. Authentic and participant-led storytelling

A particular strength of the documentary is the space it gives young people to tell their own stories. Rather than explaining their experiences through external narration, the film allows participants to speak directly about their lives, families, music and experiences of migration.

Filming took place over an extended period, enabling the documentary to capture not only performances but also changes in relationships, confidence and the young people's circumstances as they unfolded. Project staff reflected that the completed film revealed more clearly the scale of some of the challenges young people were managing, alongside the strong relationships and mutual support that had developed within the group.

The film also presents experiences of migration with greater complexity than is often possible through shorter project documentation. One young person, for example, spoke about missing home and wanting to return, highlighting that children may have little control over the decisions that shape where they live. By allowing participants to describe these experiences themselves, the film challenges simple assumptions about migration while keeping the young people's own perspectives at its centre.

This approach reflects the wider ethos of World of Song: participants are not simply represented within the project, but given opportunities to express their identities, experiences and cultural heritage on their own terms.

7.3.3. Building a lasting legacy

The documentary provides an important creative and heritage legacy for World of Song, with the potential to extend the project's reach beyond its funded delivery.

Its premiere at Band on the Wall provided an opportunity for participants, families, partners and supporters to celebrate the film and recognise the achievements of the young people involved. Longer-term public reach cannot yet be assessed, as wider distribution is still to take place.

However, the film has been produced with a clear route to future access through Band on the Wall's developing heritage website. Together with the project's recordings, photography and other creative outputs, it will form part of a wider collection through which future audiences can engage with the music, stories and cultural heritage developed through World of Song.

7.4. Key areas of success

- Created a professionally produced documentary capturing young people's music, stories and experiences
- Placed participants' own voices at the centre of the film, providing a sensitive and complex account of migration, identity and belonging
- Successfully premiered the film to participants, families, partners and supporters at Band on the Wall
- Developed a valuable heritage resource that complements the project's recordings, photography and performances
- Established a clear plan for future access through Band on the Wall's developing heritage website
- Created opportunities to extend the film's reach through festival submissions before wider public release

7.5. Learning

The Song We Carry demonstrated the value of combining interviews, music and observational footage to create a richer heritage record than documenting performances alone. Filming over time enabled the documentary to capture participants' relationships, reflections and changing circumstances alongside their creative development.

The project also highlighted the value of allowing the strongest documentary story to emerge through the creative process. The original commission offered scope to explore migrant music across Manchester, but after observing Without Borders Youth Band, Tamana Ayazi recognised that the young people's experiences provided a particularly strong way to explore wider themes of migration, heritage, identity and belonging. Giving the filmmaker space to follow that story resulted in a more focused and coherent documentary.

Commissioning a filmmaker whose approach was well suited to the subject matter also proved important. Tamana's sensitivity to lived experience and her ability to build trust with participants enabled young people to speak openly about complex aspects of their lives while retaining control of their own stories. Project staff reflected that the quality and emotional impact of the completed film exceeded expectations.

The project further highlighted the importance of allowing time for distribution as well as production. Delaying wider public release while festival opportunities are explored means the film is not yet available to the widest possible audience, but provides an opportunity to extend its reach beyond Band on the Wall's existing networks before permanent online access is established.

Finally, the film demonstrates the importance of having a clear long-term home for creative heritage. The developing heritage website will ensure that the documentary and wider World of Song material remain accessible after the funded project has ended, although their longer-term reach and use will need to be assessed once public access is established.

8. Horizons Festival

8.1. Project summary

Horizons Festival is a free two-day global arts festival held in Manchester as part of Refugee Week. Curated by HOME and Community Arts North West (CAN), the festival celebrates the city's international cultures and creativity through music, performance, film and discussion.

World of Song formed part of the 2025 festival programme, with the opening night at Band on the Wall featuring performances by the Without Borders Youth Band and artists from the Spotlight Artist Development Programme. Participation in Horizons provided an opportunity for participants to share music developed through the project, celebrate their cultural heritage and perform to public audiences in a professional festival setting.

As the main public showcase for World of Song, the festival brought together different strands of the programme and provided a visible platform for those involved.

8.2. What happened

World of Song contributed performances by the Without Borders Youth Band and Spotlight artists to the opening night of Horizons Festival at Band on the Wall, attended by 104 people. The performances brought together original music developed through the project and the diverse musical traditions that had shaped participants' work.

For many participants, Horizons was an opportunity to perform their work in a professional venue and share it with family, friends, project partners and wider public audiences.

8.3. Outcomes

8.3.1. Showcasing participant achievement

Horizons provided a public platform through which participants could demonstrate and celebrate the progress they had made during World of Song. Rather than creating these outcomes, the festival made visible the confidence, creativity and musical skills that had developed throughout the wider programme.

For many participants, performing on a professional stage represented an important personal achievement and recognised months of creative development and collaboration.

The response during the Without Borders Youth Band performance reinforced this sense of achievement. Young people spoke enthusiastically afterwards about audience members standing, singing along and dancing. One recalled seeing people making heart symbols towards the band, while another described the experience simply as "everything – everyone was dancing".

Spotlight artists also valued the opportunity to perform original work within a professional festival programme, reinforcing their confidence in presenting themselves and their music to wider audiences.

8.3.2. Sharing heritage with wider audiences

Horizons enabled artists and young people to share the musical traditions and cultural influences explored throughout World of Song with public audiences.

Performances by the Spotlight artists drew on Iranian, Somali and Venezuelan musical traditions, while the Without Borders Youth Band demonstrated how young musicians from different backgrounds had combined cultural influences to create original multilingual music.

Participants took pride in presenting their work professionally. Details including coordinated stage outfits and planned introductions contributed to the sense that the performances represented the culmination of sustained creative work rather than an informal project sharing.

By including this work within a professional festival programme, Horizons created an opportunity for audiences to encounter musical traditions and contemporary creative work that can be underrepresented within mainstream programming.

8.4. Key successes

- Provided a professional platform for World of Song participants to share their music and celebrate their achievements
- Showcased World of Song as part of Refugee Week, bringing together artists, young people, audiences and project partners
- Increased the visibility of participants' musical heritage through professional public performances

- Created opportunities for participants to perform within a wider festival programme and connect with Manchester's cultural scene
- Celebrated the creative achievements developed through World of Song while reinforcing participants' confidence and pride in their work

8.5. Learning

Horizons demonstrated the value of providing participants with opportunities to share and celebrate their achievements in professional public settings. For many, performing as part of a recognised festival marked an important point in their creative development and reinforced their confidence as performers and artists.

Bringing together the Without Borders Youth Band and Spotlight artists also enabled different strands of World of Song to be presented within a single public event. This created an opportunity for audiences to encounter the breadth of music and cultural heritage developed through the project.

Audience feedback from Horizons was limited, so the evaluation cannot draw firm conclusions about how audiences understood or responded to World of Song as a whole. However, participant reflections provide strong evidence of the value of the event as a showcase and celebration of their own development.

Horizons also demonstrated that public performance can support reflection as well as celebration. Post-performance discussions encouraged young people to assess their own work, recognise what had gone well and identify areas they wanted to develop further.

Future showcase events would benefit from continuing to combine public performance with opportunities for participant reflection, while also building in a simple and proportionate way of capturing audience responses.

9. Overall project impact

This section draws together findings from across the six strands of World of Song. It considers the difference the project made to participants, heritage and the organisations involved, while recognising that the nature and strength of the evidence varied between programmes.

The findings in this section are grouped under the relevant Heritage Fund's current investment principles, while also reflecting the outcomes agreed when World of Song was funded.

9.1. Inclusion, Access and Participation

The strongest evidence of World of Song's impact can be seen in the experiences of individual participants. Across the different strands, people described changes in confidence, skills, wellbeing, belonging and their ability to share and develop their cultural heritage. These outcomes varied according to participants' ages, circumstances and starting points, but together they show the value of a flexible programme designed around the people taking part.

9.1.1. A wider range of people engaged with heritage

World of Song engaged a diverse range of participants, including young children and families, men living in emergency accommodation, young musicians and professional artists. By adapting activities to different circumstances, the project reached people who faced practical, social and language barriers to taking part in cultural activity.

Participants engaged with heritage through active creative involvement rather than just learning about it. They introduced songs from their home countries, explaining their meaning, learned from one another and reworked musical traditions through contemporary performance and collaboration. Heritage was performed, discussed, translated, recorded and shared with other participants and public audiences.

Access was supported in practical ways, including taking Early Years activity into emergency accommodation when travel proved difficult, adapting Mother Song Father Song around the needs of men living in hotels, providing interpretation where needed and working through trusted community partners. These adaptations helped remove barriers and enabled people to participate in ways that reflected their circumstances.

9.1.2. People developed skills, confidence and aspirations

Across the main participatory programmes, children, young people, adults and artists developed confidence and a range of creative, musical and professional skills. The nature of this development differed according to participants' ages, experience and circumstances.

Young people in Without Borders developed skills in songwriting, recording, performing and collaborative music-making. As the programme progressed, some also began leading warm-ups, introducing songs, supporting other musicians and contributing more confidently to creative decisions.

Spotlight artists strengthened their professional practice and their confidence in presenting themselves within the UK music scene. They developed practical knowledge, professional materials and clear ambitions for their future work.

Participants in Mother Song Father Song developed musical and performance skills while becoming more confident in sharing songs, leading activities and presenting their work publicly. In Early Years, children became increasingly confident in exploring instruments, moving, playing and interacting with others as their familiarity with the sessions and practitioners grew.

Development also extended beyond music. Participants built confidence in communication, teamwork, leadership and expressing their ideas. For some young people and artists, the programme also contributed to new ambitions and opportunities for continued creative development.

9.1.3. Wellbeing, belonging and connection

Wellbeing, belonging and connection were important outcomes across many strands of World of Song, although they took different forms for different participants.

For men taking part in Mother Song Father Song, weekly sessions provided structure, friendship and emotional support during periods of considerable uncertainty. Participants described reduced isolation, improved mood and a stronger sense of purpose. Regular sessions, shared meals and informal time together helped create a welcoming environment in which friendships could develop.

Early Years created spaces where children could play freely, relax and enjoy time with their families and other children. Regular contact with the same practitioners helped families develop trust, while music and play provided ways of participating that did not depend on shared language.

Young people in Without Borders developed strong friendships through rehearsals, performances, shared meals and collaborative songwriting. Participants described the band as being “like a family”, while performing at Band on the Wall and working with professional musicians helped some feel more connected to Manchester’s music scene.

Spotlight artists described feeling more visible, valued and connected to Manchester’s music community. Professional opportunities and supportive relationships strengthened their confidence and helped reduce some of the isolation experienced while trying to establish themselves within the UK music sector.

The documentary film and Horizons Festival provided further opportunities for participants to see their work recognised and celebrated, reinforcing pride and the sense that their creative and cultural contributions were valued.

Across the project, trusted relationships were central to the changes participants experienced. Consistent facilitators, flexible delivery and welcoming environments created the conditions in which people could build confidence, express their identities and form meaningful connections with others. While the scale and nature of change differed between participants, the consistency of these individual stories provides some of the clearest evidence of World of Song’s impact.

9.2. Saving Heritage

9.2.1. Heritage was identified, celebrated and shared

World of Song created opportunities for participants to identify, celebrate and share musical traditions from a wide range of countries and cultures. Participants chose how to introduce, explain and reinterpret their own heritage through songs, stories, instruments, languages and performance.

In Mother Song Father Song, participants shared music from across Africa, the Middle East and other parts of the world, explaining the meaning and cultural importance of songs to the group. Without Borders brought together musical influences from participants' different backgrounds to create original multilingual work. Spotlight artists developed and performed music rooted in Iranian, Somali, Venezuelan and Afro-Venezuelan traditions.

This approach recognised that heritage is not fixed. Songs and traditions were remembered and valued, but they were also rearranged, combined with new influences and shared in contemporary settings. Participants were able to present their heritage through their own voices and creative choices rather than having it interpreted for them.

Public performances, recordings, photography and film also enabled this heritage to reach family members, festival audiences, cultural organisations and the wider public.

9.2.2. People learned about heritage and from one another

World of Song encouraged participants to engage with musical traditions beyond their own backgrounds. Music provided a practical and accessible way to share knowledge, ask questions and learn across differences in language and culture.

In Mother Song Father Song, participants introduced songs to one another and explored their meanings, instruments and musical styles. Facilitators observed curiosity and mutual respect developing between people from different backgrounds.

Without Borders participants learned lyrics in languages including Arabic, Kurdish and Farsi, explored music from one another's cultures and combined different influences through collaborative songwriting. This helped young people appreciate both their own heritage and the traditions of other band members.

Spotlight artists also showed how heritage could continue to develop through new creative influences. Artists drew on their own traditions while responding to their experiences of living and making music in Manchester.

These exchanges did not remove cultural differences. Instead, they gave participants opportunities to recognise and celebrate those differences while finding common ground through music and creative collaboration.

9.2.3. Wider public reach and visibility

World of Song also reached wider audiences through social media and media coverage. Inner City Music's social media posts about the project received between 628 and 4,748 views. The most viewed included the Spotlight artist announcement (4,748 views), the

announcement of the film project and filmmaker Tamana Ayazi (4,379), a Without Borders recording-session post shared with CAN (2,509), and a participant spotlight on Nour (2,618).

PR around the final event and *The Song We Carry* also secured coverage on BBC radio and BBC Manchester, as well as I Love Manchester, About Manchester, Cheshire Engaged and RADGE Magazine. Figures provided by these outlets suggest that this coverage had the potential to reach large audiences, although they do not show how many people saw or heard each item.

As wider public reach was difficult to quantify, a short survey was sent to Band on the Wall members towards the end of the evaluation to explore whether they had come across World of Song activity. Members were not a specific target audience for the project, so the survey was intended as an additional source of evidence rather than a measure of project success.

Thirty-three people responded. Five said they had definitely heard of World of Song before receiving the survey and a further six thought the name was familiar. Three respondents reported attending World of Song activity in person. While the small number of responses does not allow wider reach to be quantified, it does provide some evidence that the project and its activity had been encountered beyond those directly involved in delivery.

9.2.4. A lasting heritage record has been created

Alongside live participation, World of Song created a substantial record of the music, stories and creative work developed through the project.

Original songs were professionally recorded, performances were documented through photography and film, and participants' experiences were captured through interviews and observational footage. Together, these materials record not only the final creative outputs but also the ways in which traditions were shared, adapted and combined during the project.

The Heritage Film provides an important part of this record. By following the journey of the Without Borders Youth Band, it captures participants' music, personal reflections, relationships and creative development over time. Although the documentary focuses on one strand, it explores wider themes of migration, identity, belonging and cultural exchange that ran throughout World of Song.

Plans to submit the film to festivals and later include it within Band on the Wall's developing digital heritage archive should help extend access beyond the funded programme. However, wider public distribution has not yet taken place, and it is therefore too early to assess the film or archive's longer-term reach and impact.

9.3. Organisational Sustainability

9.3.1. Developing flexible and responsible delivery

One of the clearest organisational lessons from World of Song was the importance of designing activity around participants' circumstances rather than expecting people to adapt to fixed delivery models.

This was evident across all strands. Mother Song Father Song evolved in response to the needs of men living in emergency accommodation. Early Years increased delivery within hotels when regular travel to Band on the Wall proved difficult for families. Spotlight adapted support to reflect the different starting points and ambitions of each artist, while the Heritage Film developed around the story that emerged most strongly through the filmmaking process.

The project also highlighted the importance of using realistic approaches to engagement. Within the hotel-based activity, staff could not always be relied upon to promote sessions because they were managing significant competing pressures. Future delivery would therefore need to build in more direct engagement with participants and stronger relationships with trusted community organisations from the outset.

Language was less of a barrier to participation than initially anticipated, particularly where music, play and informal interaction created other ways to communicate. However, the experience strengthened awareness of the importance of clear language, translation and accessible information when working with people who may be unfamiliar with the venue or with English.

Overall, World of Song demonstrated the value of responsive delivery, while also showing that flexibility works best when supported by clear structures, realistic engagement plans and sufficient time to build trust.

9.3.2. Strengthening partnerships and community networks

World of Song strengthened Band on the Wall's relationships with organisations supporting refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant communities and introduced the project team to a wider network of organisations with which they had not previously worked.

Community Arts North West remained an important partner throughout the programme, while organisations including Caritas and Manchester Refugee Support Network helped the project connect with people living in emergency accommodation. The project lead highlighted a collaborative event involving several organisations supporting men living in a hotel as a particularly positive example of partnership working. Although the number of organisations involved could have made delivery complicated, the event worked smoothly and demonstrated the value of organisations contributing different forms of support.

The project has also extended Band on the Wall's connections beyond individual activities. The project lead is now part of a wider network of organisations supporting people living in hotels and intends to remain involved beyond the funded programme. This creates opportunities for future collaboration, including Band on the Wall potentially offering venue space or other practical support where appropriate.

This represents a more lasting organisational outcome than individual project partnerships alone. World of Song has increased Band on the Wall's awareness of the wider support network operating across Manchester and strengthened its confidence in working collaboratively with smaller community organisations.

9.3.3. Developing safe, accessible and inclusive practice

World of Song increased awareness across Band on the Wall of some of the barriers refugee, asylum-seeking and newly arrived migrant participants may experience when engaging with cultural venues.

Around 15 staff took part in refugee awareness training, including front-of-house staff working on zero-hours contracts. Learning from the training is now discussed within supervisor meetings, helping to build a stronger shared understanding of how visitors may feel when entering an unfamiliar venue or taking part in activity for the first time.

The project also encouraged staff to think more carefully about what it means for a venue to feel genuinely welcoming. This included recognising that people attending free activity may still feel pressure to buy food or drinks and making it clear that they are welcome to spend time in the building without spending money.

Experience across the project also strengthened awareness of practical accessibility. Interpretation was important for some participants, while hotel-based delivery reinforced the value of simple language, direct communication and trusted partners. The project has prompted wider thinking about how information could be made more accessible in future, including through clearer messaging, translation and accessible digital content.

The project also identified the need for greater investment in staff and practitioner preparation. Future projects would benefit from a larger and more clearly defined training budget, including appropriate trauma-informed training where staff are working with people affected by displacement, uncertainty or distress.

9.3.4. Connecting outreach, artist development and programming

World of Song has contributed to a closer relationship between Band on the Wall's education, outreach and artistic programming.

Band on the Wall already had a strong track record of diverse and international programming, so this change should not be attributed to World of Song alone. However, the project lead reflected that education and outreach activity had previously sometimes operated separately from the venue's main programme. Alongside wider organisational changes, World of Song, and Spotlight in particular, has contributed to more regular discussion about how artists supported through outreach and development programmes can connect with wider programming opportunities.

This is already influencing practice. Band on the Wall is considering using existing platforms such as Tunes on the Terrace to feature Spotlight artists, giving them continued visibility while also sharing the story of the organisation's development work. A small grant from the Granada Foundation has also been secured to continue an element of the Spotlight approach by creating paid opportunities and exposure for artists who are newer to the city.

World of Song has therefore contributed to a more joined-up approach in which community engagement, artist development and venue programming are less likely to operate as separate areas of activity. This creates greater potential for artists and participants supported through funded projects to connect with Band on the Wall's wider programme over time.

The project has also contributed to wider thinking about how Band on the Wall communicates its charitable role. The organisation is reviewing how it explains the relationship between Band on the Wall as a venue and Inner City Music as the charity behind it. Making this work more visible could help community organisations see Band on the Wall as a potential partner as well as a music venue.

9.3.5. Learning for future project delivery

World of Song has also generated practical learning about how complex partnership projects should be planned, communicated and evaluated.

The project demonstrated that communications and spending needed to reflect the nature of the activity. Some strands required very little conventional marketing because direct engagement within hotels and through trusted partners was more effective. As delivery developed, resources were redirected towards areas where they could add more value. Spotlight overspent against its original allocation because the team expanded work with a branding specialist to strengthen artists' press packs and websites. Contingency funding was also used for documentary-style films about the three Spotlight artists and for substantial changes to Band on the Wall's website.

The wider political climate also affected communications. Promoting work involving asylum-seeking and refugee communities during a period of protests and riots required careful consideration of participant safety and the risk of stories being misrepresented. Specialist PR support helped the team think more carefully about how and where stories should be shared.

The reflection process also identified clear learning around evaluation. Future projects would benefit from agreeing evaluation requirements and responsibilities at the outset and embedding evidence collection throughout delivery. Working across several partners brought considerable benefits but also made it less clear who was responsible for collecting attendance figures, feedback and audience evidence. The limited audience feedback from Horizons is one example of this.

This learning suggests that future programmes should retain the responsive and relationship-led approach that worked well within World of Song, while providing clearer structures around training, engagement, communications, partnership responsibilities and evaluation.

10. Overall conclusions

World of Song set out to celebrate the musical heritage of refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants while supporting creativity, wellbeing and community connection. Across its six strands, the evaluation found evidence that the project achieved these aims, with particularly strong outcomes for individual participants in confidence, skills, belonging and opportunities to share their cultural heritage through music.

A particular strength was the way participants were able to shape how their heritage was represented. Songs, languages, stories and musical traditions were shared directly by participants, then explored and reworked through collaboration, recording and performance. This enabled heritage to be celebrated in ways that reflected participants' own identities and experiences rather than being interpreted on their behalf.

The project also demonstrated the importance of flexible, relationship-based delivery. Activities changed in response to participants' circumstances, access needs and ambitions, helping the programme reach people who might otherwise have found it difficult to take part. At the same time, the experience showed that flexibility works best when supported by clear expectations, responsibilities and timescales.

Trusted partnerships and consistent practitioners were central to this work. They helped create welcoming spaces, supported access to participants and enabled Band on the Wall to respond to a challenging wider context. The project has also strengthened the organisation's relationships with community partners and increased staff understanding of the barriers refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant communities may face when engaging with cultural venues.

The strongest evidence of impact remains at participant level, where there is clear evidence of increased confidence, skills, relationships, belonging and pride in cultural and creative identities. Some participants have already progressed into further music activity, performances and professional opportunities.

The project also reached wider audiences through performances, online content, media coverage and public events, although the overall extent of this wider reach is difficult to quantify. A small survey of Band on the Wall members provided some additional evidence of people encountering the project beyond those directly involved but was not designed as a measure of project awareness. Evidence of wider public impact remains limited, particularly where audience feedback was not collected and because the heritage film and digital archive have not yet reached their full public audience.

Overall, World of Song showed how music can provide an accessible way for people to share heritage, build relationships and participate in cultural life. Its lasting value lies both in the creative work produced, and in the skills, connections and organisational learning that continue beyond the funded project.

11. Legacy

The legacy of World of Song includes the music, recordings, photography and film created through the project, alongside the skills, relationships and learning developed through its delivery.

Creative and heritage legacy

World of Song has created a lasting record of participants' music, stories and cultural heritage. Original songs, professional recordings, live performances, photography and *The Song We Carry* document both the work created and the people and experiences behind it.

Band on the Wall's developing heritage website will provide a longer-term home for this material. Contingency funding was used to make substantial changes to the website and create a dedicated heritage/projects section, responding to the difficulty of finding this material through the existing site. The intention is to make World of Song's digital outputs easier to access, explain each strand of the project and provide a home for future heritage work.

The project has also recorded songs, stories and cultural traditions that are not always well represented in mainstream heritage collections. Through recordings, interviews, photography, performance and film, participants have been able to share these in their own voices and through their own creative work.

Personal legacy

For participants, some of the benefits of World of Song are already continuing beyond the project. Two members of the Without Borders Youth Band have joined Band on the Wall's regular Saturday sessions. One participant from Mother Song Father Song continues to attend the choir each week and has maintained friendships and a sense of community through it.

Spotlight artists have also continued to develop their work using the professional materials, contacts and experience gained through the programme. Some have secured further paid performances, while Band on the Wall is exploring further opportunities for them through its existing programme.

Organisational legacy

World of Song has generated useful learning for Band on the Wall about working with refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant communities, and about linking community activity more closely with the organisation's artistic programme.

Around 15 staff took part in refugee awareness training, with learning from the training now discussed in supervisor meetings. The project also increased staff awareness of some of the barriers people may face when entering an unfamiliar cultural venue. This included the importance of making it clear that people attending free activities are welcome to use the space without feeling expected to spend money.

The project has strengthened relationships with organisations including Caritas and Manchester Refugee Support Network and connected Band on the Wall with organisations

supporting people living in asylum accommodation. Band on the Wall intends to maintain these relationships and explore practical ways of supporting partners in future.

World of Song has also encouraged closer working between education, outreach and artistic programming. Spotlight has prompted more regular discussion about how artists supported through development programmes can move into the venue's wider programme. Band on the Wall is considering opportunities for Spotlight artists through existing platforms such as *Tunes on the Terrace* and has secured a small grant from the Granada Foundation to continue part of the Spotlight approach through paid opportunities for artists newer to the city.

The project has also identified practical lessons for future work. These include the need for clearer arrangements around training, evaluation, communications and partnership responsibilities, while keeping enough flexibility to respond to participants' circumstances.

Overall, World of Song has left Band on the Wall with stronger community relationships, greater staff awareness and a clearer understanding of how community, artist development and artistic programming can work together.