

CASE STUDY:

PIONEER PROGRAMME AWARD

OUR BAUL HERITAGE PROJECT

MANNINGHAM HOUSING ASSOCIATION



HOW DO YOU USE COMMUNITY CREATED ART TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR HERITAGE?



ABOUT THE PROJECT:

Our Baul Heritage Project is run by Sadar Uddin, Community Partnerships and Investment Manager at Manningham Housing Association in conjunction with tenants.

Through conversations, Sadar discovered tenants had been drawing on Baul Folk Music and other south Asian cultural and musical heritage to write poems and songs about their culture and life in the UK. The Baul were originally mystic minstrels who travelled through Bangladesh and West Bengal.

The tenants felt that this heritage needed to be preserved for the future generations in Bradford and all over the UK. Thus, the Project turned the songs into sheet music and produced a book called 'Baul and Mystic Songs of South Asian Heritage' (subtitled 'Celebrating UK City of Culture Bradford 2025').

This includes songs and poems selected by a writer's panel, written in Urdu, Bengali and English, as well as artwork and calligraphy by tenants. It comes in two volumes and the 500 copies are free, and will be shared with schools, colleges and community venues.



People Involved

8 core participants, 200 live audience, many thousand via video and books to be shared nationally and internationally



Amount Funded

£5,000

"If it wasn't for this project, then all the writers and the artists and the calligraphers, their work would probably would have been hidden away on a shelf somewhere within their own home."

"If a new generation of people don't learn, or if the songs don't get documented in a book, it will get lost."

Sadar Uddin

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EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES

Preservation of hidden, oral histories

The Our Baul Heritage Project has been able to record and preserve a great number of Baul works created by members of the local community.

Community-led decision making

Sadar left the group of writers to decide which songs should be included in the project and played at the final event, so that the writers would feel pride in what they had achieved.

Recognition of artistic talent

Sadar says "Baul music writers who live and work in Bradford district class themselves as ordinary people. At Manningham Housing Association, we see them as talented people who deserve recognition." Having their work included in this book enables people to recognise and share their own artistic skills, knowledge and experience.

Awareness increased

Promotion of the book to local communities has increased awareness of Baul heritage amongst new audiences – it was featured in several different housing journals, and there was also a radio interview on Bradford Community Broadcasting (BCB) Radio.

Good practice

The Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT) will be attending the book launch and Sadar hopes the project will serve as an example of good practice so that it can be replicated elsewhere by other Housing Associations.

Next steps

The Housing Association hopes to have the songs played live and recordings made. They are also looking to provide a place where young people can come to learn the traditional musical instruments used in Baul music.

LEARNINGS



Sadar found The Leap's approach and processes very helpful - 'Certainly we'll recommend The Leap because the application process is good; the support from Leap staff is excellent.' In addition, Sharing Events were great for networking - they helped with knowledge sharing between organisations and offered possibilities to develop joint projects in the future.

