



Our Shared Cultural Heritage



Our Shared Cultural Heritage is a youth-led programme exploring the shared cultures and histories of the UK and South Asia. Its ambition is to share ideas and opportunities with the wider heritage and youth sector. Managed by the [British Council](#), in partnership with [Glasgow Life Museums](#) and [Manchester Museum](#), with support from [UK Youth](#), OSCH also partners with museums and heritage organisations in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. OSCH is funded by the [National Lottery Heritage Fund's Kick the Dust](#) programme in the UK and by the British Council for its international collaborations across South Asia.

Young people were involved in the design, decision-making and delivery of museum projects in Manchester and Glasgow, as well as wider cultural programming in the cities, nationally and internationally. Opportunities for young people were around four main pillars: **Working in Museums; Storytelling; Actions and Campaigns; and Thematic Projects**, and the young people's work had impacts on institutions, cities and attitudes.

The programme included **long-term paid opportunities** such as jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships, one-off paid roles such as digital producers, and commissioning young people to design, write, produce graphics and much more. Many **young people received formal training and accreditation**, and **several continue to have employment within the museums** or have gone into other cultural and heritage careers. The collectives formed youth boards and contributed to wider organisational change e.g. **young people being on recruitment panels**.

Young people planned and led their own social action projects and developed social media campaigns. A key outcome of the project was the development – by young people – of **Museum Tests**, including a [decolonisation tool](#) for curators to assess how effectively museum displays handle topics of colonialism, empire, slavery and representation. OSCH participants have co-curated **new permanent exhibitions** in both Manchester and

Glasgow, and made suggestions for systemic change within the heritage sector, shared through the outputs below as well as regularly speaking on panels, at events and at conferences.

In Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, a host of other projects were delivered in museums and heritage spaces. **Cross-cultural relations were fostered through a programme of UK-South Asia collaborations** between young people and institutes. These are detailed below.

The British Council's role was to ensure that young people gained opportunities from the programme and that partners felt supported in systemic change in working with young people from the South Asian diaspora and beyond. By managing the programme, including funding, key partnerships, communications and evaluation, the British Council delivered a transformative youth-led programme with partners. The [OSCH website](#) acts as an archive of the voice of young people, projects, resources and key learnings from the programme to influence wider dialogue within the arts, culture, heritage and youth sectors.

Key Impacts

Youth Employment in Museums and Recruitment Policy

- 12 young people worked across retail, programming and the visitor teams in Manchester
- 22 young people benefited from apprenticeships, work experience or internships in Manchester
- 26 young people contributed to or co-curated ongoing museum content in Manchester
- In Manchester, 23 young people have been on the panel for 139 interviews to recruit 37 jobs, including: Social Justice Manager, Development Coordinator, Curator of Living Cultures and Communications Manager
- 25 young people have benefitted from paid skills development, programming and content development opportunities in Glasgow
- 19 young people co-curated museum content in Glasgow
- Two young people were on 12-month contracts as Learning Assistant and OSCH Project Assistant in the final year of the programme – they have gone on to permanent roles at The Burrell Collection in Glasgow
- The OSCH Glasgow Project Assistant has undertaken a Scottish Vocational Qualification in Museum & Gallery Practice as part of her role, and secured a Gallery Assistant job
- One participant completed a textiles placement working alongside a curator, and led on paid research, acquisition and documentation of a South Asian wedding dress into the collection at Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow Life Museums
- Young people have sat on recruitment panels for OSCH at Glasgow Life Museums
- OSCH young people in Manchester have been involved in the recruitment of the British Council OSCH Senior Programme Manager, have sat on the British Council Design Team Jury, and contributed to decisions on Heritage Activity Packs
- Following OSCH, a number of young people mentored by Dr Sadia Habib have gone on to:
 - Become a Community Engagement Coordinator at Manchester City of Literature
 - Become a Curator at Liverpool Museums
 - Further study, including scholarships and bursaries at Oxford University and University of Manchester
 - Obtain paid internships and work experience opportunities including at the British Museum, Everyday Muslim, Museum of Islamic Arts & Heritage and at Hadrian's Wall Festival. One has set up his own initiative, the Muslim Arts Network

Decolonising Museums

- An OSCH Changemakers group of 12 young people was set up in Glasgow. They met fortnightly to explore, examine and influence how the histories and lived experiences of people of colour are represented within museums. The group has worked on a variety of projects, including creating tools

and resources to critique displays and influence how to actively decolonise museum spaces in order to achieve fair and accurate representation of the legacies of empire and Transatlantic Slavery

- A group of OSCH Changemakers have co-curated a new permanent exhibition ‘**Glasgow: The City of Empire**’ at Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum in Glasgow
- The OSCH Changemakers developed and presented the **Museum Test, a decolonisation tool for curators**, to international delegates at the ICOM (International Council of Museums) Conference 2023 in Glasgow. [Museums Galleries Scotland](#) and the Museums Association are now sharing and advocating for the Museum Test across the sector
- OSCH participants contributed to the Museums Galleries Scotland roundtable on developing a new strategy for Scotland’s Museums, launched 2023
- 11 young people were involved in the recruitment of designers for Manchester Museum’s new South Asia Gallery
- **Manchester Museum’s South Asia Gallery** contains the contributions, stories, ideas and experiences of four OSCH young people. Since reopening, the museum has welcomed more than 600,000 visitors, and the prominence of the new South Asia Gallery has received a considerable amount of interest
- A group of 10 young people from Manchester participated in a series of **Representation in Media and Museums workshops** in 2022. One outcome of this work is a ‘Belonging’ poem, co-written by young people, part of which is now on permanent display on a prominent wall in the museum alongside a label to describe the work behind it and linking to the full poem
- 19 young people participated in four *Whose Statues? Whose Stories?* workshops in 2021 and, as well as raising interest from the London Mayoral Office who have sought advice on engaging young people in their commission for diversity in the public realm, also saw 4 YP participate in the **From Bristol to Manchester: History and Memory in our Cities event, chaired by Professor David Olusoga**, on 5 October 2021
- OSCH Manchester produced three resources for local schools and colleges: the Manachi book, and two zines: *Whose Statues? Whose Stories?* and *Manifesto for Change*
- **Horrible British Histories publication**: Young people in museums interrogating national identity through principles and practices of critical pedagogy
- Published research: [The Changing Shape of Cultural Activism: Legislating Statues in the Context of the Black Lives Matter Movement](#)
- **‘Being part of a space made up of people of colour, led by people of colour: Young People Navigating Institutional Whiteness in the Cultural Sector’** (Children & Society Special Issue), co-written paper with Dr Sadia Habib and members of the OSCH Collective
- In Progress: **The Riz Test for Young People in Museums** – over the past three years, a number of workshops and activities were held for young people to design The Riz Test for Young People in Museums: this tool asks questions about representation in museums as a basis for the cultural sector to improve equality, diversity and inclusion
- OSCH Manchester has **informed policy makers** at The London Mayoral Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm
- Both groups of young people from Glasgow and Manchester worked on a **Manifesto for Change** as a provocation to partners and the sector

Digital reach:

- Since starting in April 2020, the Manchester OSCH Blog has received more than 50,000 views from more than 33,500 visitors. More than half of the views come from the UK, but 17% from US, 8% from India, 3.6% from Australia, 3.5% from Canada and 2.3% Pakistan
- 17,000 views of Pakistani OSCH participants’ videos on Instagram, with 26,000 followers
- 29,000 views of Facebook content created by young people in Lahore
- Original content produced by young people in Rajshahi, Bangladesh, received almost 292,000 views on Facebook

- Online workshops in Bangladesh were extremely well-received, with 17,000+ online views for a storytelling workshop, 33,000+ for a film-making workshop, 25,000+ for a creative writing workshop and 28,000+ for a baseline survey workshop
- The OSCH project in Bangladesh had 28,000+ listeners on Radio Padma 99.2 FM
- The OSCH project at MAP in Bengaluru garnered more than 20,000 Instagram followers
- The digital Art Is Life festival at MAP received 100,000+ views
- 43,000+ views for *Why Does This Belong in a Museum?* series of short videos made by young people in Bengaluru

International Projects

- International collaborations have been facilitated, exploring the shared cultures and histories of the UK and South Asia with young people in Glasgow and Manchester, and partners in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These include:
 - **Rhythm Exchange**, between young people, Manchester Museum and Indian Music Experience Museum in Bengaluru, culminating in new commissioned music and a festival in both cities.
 - **Crafting Histories**, exploring craft and heritage between award-winning museum, The Burrell Collection in Glasgow, the National College of Arts and the Walled City of Lahore in Pakistan leading to an exhibition, a film, a sharing event and a publication.
 - **Inheritance**, a photography exchange project between young people in Glasgow and Bengaluru, produced exhibitions at Street Level and GoMA in Glasgow and MAP and Kanike in Bengaluru. The exhibition is available to view [here](#)
 - **The Manachi project**, a youth-led exchange between Karachi University and Manchester Museum, led to a food anthology, exchange visits and food festivals
 - The award-winning [Undivided Identities](#) project, led by ReReeti in collaboration with Glasgow Life Museums. Researched and designed by an international team including young people from South Asia and Scotland, it explores the human experiences of the 1947 Partition of India through a digital choice-based interactive game. It is being used by Glasgow teachers to support learning in the classroom

Bangladesh:

- In Rajshahi in Bangladesh, a 30-strong youth board created the **first ever Virtual Reality tour** of a Bangladeshi museum and delivered a 2-day cultural heritage festival which saw record numbers of visitors
- 25 young people had leadership roles as part of this OSCH project
- Young members of Bangladesh Association Glasgow and OSCH in Bangladesh took part in a collaborative letter writing project and Glasgow participants had a workshop on Engaging Public Speaking. They presented their work and shared their experiences at a hybrid Speakers' Forum event in September 2023
- Young people from the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Scotland developed a **documentary 'Nature and Us'** on the environmental effects of global warming. This was created as part of an OSCH Social Action project by Bangladesh Association Glasgow
- Rumpus Room, Glasgow, hosted a series of workshops **'Sticky, Luminous Fruit for All'** with and for young people, using the mango as a focus for knowledge exchange and celebration. The group created an exchange of experiences with Uronto, an OSCH partner in Bangladesh. The workshops culminated in a Mango Community Celebration in June 2023 attended by over 250 people

India:

- In Bengaluru in India, the five paid traineeships funded through OSCH has led to two permanent positions for young people at the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP)
- 160 young people continue to be part of the MAP Youth Collective

- At the Indian Music Experience (IME), the youth advisory boards have led to expanding youth audiences and more diverse programming
- There were 92 applications for six traineeships at IME
- Nearly 40 young people have served on the three Youth Advisory Boards to date at IME
- Of the 64 recommendations for change made by Youth Advisory Board 1, 27 have been implemented and a further 24 are in process

Pakistan:

- In Karachi, a 70 strong group of art students created a **'takeover'** at the **State Bank Museum** bringing a fresh perspective to the collections of coins and stamps with a dynamic programme of exhibitions, films, workshops and tours
- 75% of the young people involved with OSCH in Karachi felt inclined to continue to work in the museum sector
- Instagram content created by the young people received 6000+ views
- 350 people attended a special dance showcase in the Walled City of Lahore, at which 75 young people performed. A further 600 people attended a choir concert
- The Faiz Foundation Trust ran workshops for more than 100 young people and 500+ young people were involved in other events and performances in the Walled City

Key Achievements

- Three OSCH participants in Glasgow are part of a group that won the [Museums Change Lives - Best Project Award, 2023](#), for Scotland's Lascar Heritage project
- Four Glasgow participants were part of an international OSCH collaboration with ReReeti Foundation in India to create [Un.divided Identities: Lesser Known Stories of the Partition](#), an interactive online experience and learning resource, exploring the human experiences of the 1947 Partition of India - this resource was shortlisted for **Best Use of Digital – International Project award** at the 2023 Museum + Heritage Awards. The young people have delivered sessions in Glasgow schools alongside Museum colleagues to share the resource with teachers and pupils
- **The Crafting Histories:** Glasgow x Lahore international collaboration event at the Burrell Collection attracted visitors who had not been to the Burrell before (22%); the youth-led event received a high satisfaction rating (93% rated it as Excellent)
- **University of Manchester's annual Making a Difference Awards:** Outstanding public engagement initiative: Outstanding national/international engagement (shortlisted, winner announced May 2024); Outstanding benefit to society through research: 'Whose Statues Whose Stories?' was commended (2022); Outstanding public engagement initiative - Outstanding Contribution by our Cultural Institutions, highly commended (2022); Outstanding public and community engagement initiative: Outstanding national/international engagement: OSCH South Asian Heritage Month won (2021)
- **Manchester Culture Awards:** Promotion of Equality and Social Justice, Sadia Habib won (2021); Best Exhibition: South Asia Gallery won (4 OSCH young people co-curated the Gallery) (2023)
- **Museums Association: Radical Changemaker:** Sadia Habib was runner up for the Museums Change Lives Radical Changemakers individual awards (2021)

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