



Evaluation Report: Disability, Diversity and Inclusion - Autism Oral Histories

Project Reference Number: NM-23-00163

Organisation: Dimobi Children's Disability Trust

Project Title: Disability, Diversity and Inclusion: Autism Oral Histories

Date: 31 March 2025

1. Table of Contents
2. Executive Summary
3. Project Overview
4. Methodology and Evaluation Approach
  - Achievement of National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcomes
  - Outcome 1: A Wider Range of People Involved in Heritage
  - Outcome 2: Heritage Identified and Better Explained
  - Outcome 3: People Developed Skills
  - Outcome 4: People Learned About Heritage
  - Outcome 5: People Have Greater Wellbeing
  - Outcome 6: Organisation More Resilient
5. Key Qualitative and Quantitative Data
6. Lessons Learned
7. Opportunities to Share Good Practice
8. Project Legacy and Future Plans
9. Appendices (Supporting Documents)

Telephone: 01619375332

Email: [info@dimobitrust.org.uk](mailto:info@dimobitrust.org.uk) Website: [www.dimobitrust.org.uk](http://www.dimobitrust.org.uk)

The Resonance Centre, The Old Schoolhouse 599 Ashton New Road, Clayton, MANCHESTER M11 4RU.



## 1. Executive Summary

The Disability, Diversity and Inclusion: Autism Oral Histories project, delivered by Dimobi Children's Disability Trust from 1 August 2023 to 31 March 2025, successfully captured and shared autism heritage among minority ethnic communities in Manchester's deprived wards, particularly Newton Heath, Harpurhey, and Moston. With a £99,896 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), the project engaged 3,000+ participants, recorded 27 oral histories, produced digital outputs (films, infographics, booklets), and hosted 10 exhibitions and 6 school outreach sessions. It addressed cultural stigma around autism through traditional African games, songs, and folk tales, fostering inclusion and wellbeing.

The project exceeded targets, engaging a diverse audience (50% BME, 30% asylum seekers/refugees) and recruiting 63 volunteers (vs. 20 planned). It achieved all six NLHF outcomes, reducing isolation (80% of participants), enhancing skills (90% of volunteers certified), and preserving at-risk heritage. Lessons learned include the need for flexible scheduling and robust translation support. The project's legacy includes a public archive, ongoing community events, and a sustainable model via memberships. This report, spanning 9/10+ pages, details outcomes, data, and future plans, supported by images and feedback.

## 2. Project Overview

**Project Aim:** To record and share autism oral histories from minority ethnic communities in Manchester, focusing on neurodiverse children/young people (up to 25) and their families, using traditional African games, songs, and folk tales to combat stigma, promote inclusion, and preserve heritage.

### Key Activities:

- Recorded 27 oral histories (12 transcribed/translated into Shona/Ndebele).
- Produced 1 short documentary (10 min), 3 mini films, 5 infographics, and 200 digital booklets.
- Hosted 4 workshops, 2 learning circles, 10 exhibitions, and 6 school outreach sessions.
- Engaged 3,000+ participants and 63 volunteers.
- Deposited outputs in the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust (AIUET) archive and online ([www.dimobitrust.org.uk](http://www.dimobitrust.org.uk)).
- Promoted sustainable practices (recycled materials, public transport).

**Budget:** £101,379.23 + £39,553.80 (non-cash volunteer contributions).



Timeline: 1 August 2023 – 31 March 2025.

Location: Riverpark Trading Estate, Newton Heath, Manchester, with outreach across North Manchester wards.

### 3. Methodology and Evaluation Approach

The evaluation followed NLHF good practice guidance, using a Theory of Change model to assess outcomes. Methods included:

Quantitative Data:

- Attendance records (3,000+ participants across events).
- Volunteer hours (3,748 total).
- Survey responses (113 attendees for publicity impact, 200 for workshops, 600 students).
- Digital output metrics (2,000 film views, 1,500 downloads).
- WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) and Blob Tree scores.
- 

Qualitative Data:

- Case studies (e.g., Aisha and Jamal's story).
- Focus group feedback (120 attendees across 4 sessions).
- Testimonials from participants, volunteers, and partners (e.g., AIUET, schools).
- Parent Forum and Co-Production Group inputs.

Tools:

- Charitylog software for tracking user activity and demographics.
- Monthly budget trajectories and risk logs (Excel).
- Feedback forms (scale-based and oral, avoiding email surveys per community preference).
- Social media polls (Facebook/Twitter) for engagement.
- External Evaluation: Conducted monthly by an independent evaluator (contracted 1 September 2023), with a final report confirming 90% outcome achievement.
- Monitoring: Overseen by trustees via monthly reviews, ensuring GDPR compliance and anonymous feedback options.



#### 4. Achievement of National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcomes

##### **Outcome 1:** A Wider Range of People Involved in Heritage

**Achievement:** The project engaged 3,000+ participants, exceeding the target of 100 community members. The audience was diverse (50% BME, 30% asylum seekers/refugees, 60% female), reflecting Manchester's multicultural population. Recruitment of 63 volunteers (vs. 20 planned, 60% BME) diversified participation. Open days, social media (5,000 reach via Facebook/Twitter), and 2,000 leaflets attracted 200 new attendees, with 60% citing cultural barriers overcome (surveys). School outreaches (600 students) and accessible venues (ramps, sensory rooms) ensured inclusion. A WhatsApp survey (53 participants, 27 volunteers) confirmed motivations to share autism heritage and break isolation.

**Evidence:** Attendance records, volunteer diaries (85% reported engagement), social media analytics, and focus group feedback.

##### **Outcome 2:** Heritage Identified and Better Explained

**Achievement:** Identified 10 at-risk African games/songs (e.g., Chihwande-hwande, Oware) through 27 oral history interviews (exceeding 25 planned). Produced 3 films, 5 infographics, and 200 booklets, clarifying autism heritage and cultural stigma. Exhibitions at Manchester Museum and libraries were rated accessible by 85% of 3,000 visitors. Content linked traditional genres (e.g., Shona lullabies) to modern autism narratives, educating communities. Outputs were deposited in AIUET's archive and shared online (over 500 downloads, Creative Commons BY-SA).

**Evidence:** Film views (2,000), booklet distribution (20 schools, 10 libraries), and visitor feedback forms.

##### **Outcome 3:** People Developed Skills

**Achievement:** 40 volunteers (20 youth) gained skills in oral history, filming, and translation through training by Vox Pops and AIUET, with 90% earning certificates. 20 youth applied digital editing skills in film production (80% competency), and 15 admin volunteers improved project management, with 50% pursuing further training. Skills enhanced employability, with 5 volunteers securing disability advocacy roles.

**Evidence:** Training certificates, volunteer diaries, and post-training surveys (90% skill application).



#### **Outcome 4:** People Learned about Heritage

Achievement: 90% of 600 students in outreach sessions reported new knowledge of autism heritage (e.g., African games' role in inclusion). 70% of 200 parents shifted attitudes on autism stigma, with 50% sharing learnings with community groups (surveys). 30% of participants pursued advocacy roles, reflecting behavioral change. The International Slavery Museum visit (30 participants) enhanced understanding of heritage preservation (90% feedback).

Evidence: Student/parent surveys, case studies, and testimonials (e.g., "I now advocate for autism acceptance in my community").

#### **Outcome 5:** People Have Greater Wellbeing

Achievement: 80% of 200 workshop participants reported reduced isolation (WEMWBS scores improved by 15%). 70% of 30 autistic youth showed better mental health (Blob Tree feedback). 85% of 120 focus group attendees cited stronger community ties through games like Oware as a means to enhance physical activity. Social events (e.g., carers' lunches) fostered belonging, particularly for BME families facing stigma.

Evidence: WEMWBS/Blob Tree data, focus group feedback, and testimonials (e.g., "I feel less alone").

#### **Outcome 6:** Organisation More Resilient

Achievement: Increased volunteer capacity (63 vs. 20) and new partnerships with AIUET and Manchester College strengthened networks. Raised £5,000 via memberships, with plans for ongoing fees. Staff trained in digital archiving (90% competency) and trustees implemented monthly governance reviews. Sustainable practices (e.g., recycled materials) aligned with Manchester's zero-carbon goal, enhancing long-term viability.

Evidence: Financial records, partnership agreements, and volunteer recruitment data.

### **5. Key Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

Quantitative:

- Participants: 3,000+ (50% BME, 30% asylum seekers/refugees, 60% female).
- Volunteers: 63 (3,748 hours total, valued at £39,553.80).



- Events: 10 exhibitions (3,000 visitors), 4 workshops (200 attendees), 6 school outreaches (600 students), 2 learning circles (50 youth).
- Outputs: 27 interviews, 1 documentary (2,000 views), 3 mini films, 5 infographics (1,000 downloads), 200 booklets (20 schools, 10 libraries).
- Surveys: 80% of 200 workshop attendees reported reduced feelings of isolation; 90% of 600 students gained knowledge about their heritage; 85% of 3,000 exhibition visitors rated the content as accessible.
- Volunteer Skills: 90% of 40 trained volunteers certified; 50% of 15 admin volunteers pursued further training.
- Wellbeing: 15% WEMWBS score improvement; 70% of 30 youth showed better mental health (Blob Tree).

### **Qualitative:**

*Case Study:* Aisha (Black British, Harpurhey) shared her autistic son's story in a recorded interview, joined workshops, and reported, "I feel proud of my heritage and less isolated." Her participation in Oware games improved family bonding.

- Testimonial (Volunteer): "Learning to film oral histories gave me confidence to apply for a media course" (Fatima, volunteer).
- Partner Feedback : "Dimobi's project enriched our archive with unique autism narratives, enhancing cultural understanding."
- Focus Group: BME parents noted, "Workshops helped us discuss autism openly, reducing shame."

## **'6. Lessons Learned**

### **What Went Well:**

- Exceeding Targets: Recruited 63 volunteers (vs. 20) and recorded 27 interviews (vs. 25), amplifying impact.
- Community Engagement: Social media (5,000 reach) and school outreaches (600 students) effectively broke cultural barriers.
- Partnerships: Collaboration with AIUET and Vox Pops ensured high-quality training and archiving.
- Sustainability: Use of recycled materials and public transport reduced the carbon footprint by 15%.

### **What Could be Improved:**





- **Scheduling Flexibility:** Workshops faced delays due to rigid timings; future projects will offer varied sessions to suit carers' availability.
- **Translation Costs:** Unexpected demand for Shona/Ndebele translations used £4,500 of contingency. Earlier budgeting for multilingual needs is needed.
- **Youth Engagement:** Some autistic youth struggled with long sessions. Shorter, interactive formats (e.g., 30-minute games) would improve participation.

### **Lessons:**

- ✓ Co-production with Parent Forums ensured culturally relevant content but required more lead time.
- ✓ Oral feedback methods were preferred over email surveys, highlighting the need for accessible evaluation tools.
- ✓ Partnerships with schools amplified reach but needed clearer communication on logistics.

### **7. Opportunities to Share Good Practice**

- **Model for Stigma Reduction:** Sharing our approach to using cultural games (e.g., Oware) to address autism stigma at national disability conferences (e.g., National Autistic Society events).
- **Training Framework:** Publishing our volunteer training model (oral history, filming) via AIUET's network to support other heritage projects.
- **Digital Outputs:** Distributing openly licensed films/booklets to UK autism charities, enhancing cross-cultural education.
- **Community Co-Production:** Presenting our Parent Forum model at Manchester City Council's VCS events to promote user-led design.
- **Sustainability Practices:** Sharing our low-carbon strategies (e.g., recycled materials, public transport) with NLHF grantees via webinars

### **8. Project Legacy and Future Plans**

#### **Legacy:**

- **Public Archive:** Outputs deposited in AIUET, accessible globally, preserving autism heritage for future generations.
- **Digital Access:** Films, infographics, and booklets (over 500 downloads) remain online at [www.dimobitrust.org.uk](http://www.dimobitrust.org.uk), openly licensed.



- Community Networks: Strengthened ties with schools, AIUET, and Manchester College, supporting ongoing autism advocacy.
- Membership Model: Funds to be raised via memberships, with plans to expand to 200 members by 2026, ensuring financial sustainability.

### Future Plans:

- ❖ Annual Events: Host yearly heritage festivals in Newton Heath, featuring games and storytelling, funded by memberships and grants.
- ❖ Expanded Outreach: Partner with 10 more schools by 2027 to integrate autism heritage into curricula.
- ❖ Digital Platform: Develop a smartphone app by 2026 to share autism stories interactively, targeting 5,000 users.
- ❖ Fundraising: Apply for NLHF and National Lottery Community Fund grants to scale workshops across Greater Manchester.
- ❖ Training Hub: Establish a training center with AIUET to upskill 100 volunteers annually in oral history and advocacy.

## **9. Appendices**

Appendix A: Photos of exhibitions, workshops, and school outreaches (10 images).

Appendix B: Records of activities (list of 10 exhibitions, 4 workshops, 6 outreaches, 2 learning circles).

Appendix C: Staff contracts and CVs (Project Manager, 3 Support Workers).

Appendix D: External evaluation report (90% outcome achievement).

Appendix E: Sample feedback forms and WEMWBS/Blob Tree data.





#### Sample Form:

#### Disability, Diversity and Inclusion: Autism Oral Histories - Workshop Feedback

Date: [e.g., 15/10/2024]

Location: Newton Heath Community Hub

Event: Workshop on African Games and Autism Heritage

1. **How much did you enjoy the workshop?** (Circle one)

😊 Very Much | 😊 Somewhat | 😊 Okay | 😊 Not Much | 😊 Not at All

2. **Did the workshop help you feel more connected to others?** (Circle one)

😊 Strongly Agree | 😊 Agree | 😊 Neutral | 😊 Disagree | 😊 Strongly Disagree

3. **Did you learn something new about autism or cultural heritage?** (Circle one)

😊 Yes, a lot | 😊 Yes, a little | 😊 Not sure | 😊 No

4. **Did the workshop make you feel less isolated or more included?** (Circle one)

😊 Strongly Agree | 😊 Agree | 😊 Neutral | 😊 Disagree | 😊 Strongly Disagree

5. **What did you like most about the workshop?** (Optional, write or tell a volunteer)

6. **What could we do better next time?** (Optional, write or tell a volunteer)

7. **Your details (optional):**

• Age group: ☐ Under 18 ☐ 18–24 ☐ 25–34 ☐ 35–44 ☐ 45+

• Ethnicity: ☐ Black British ☐ Asian ☐ White British ☐ Other

## Figures and Visuals

Figure 1: Exhibition at Manchester Museum showcasing Oware game (300 attendees).

Figure 2: Workshop participants playing Chihwande-hwande (50 youth).

Figure 3: Screenshot of documentary film



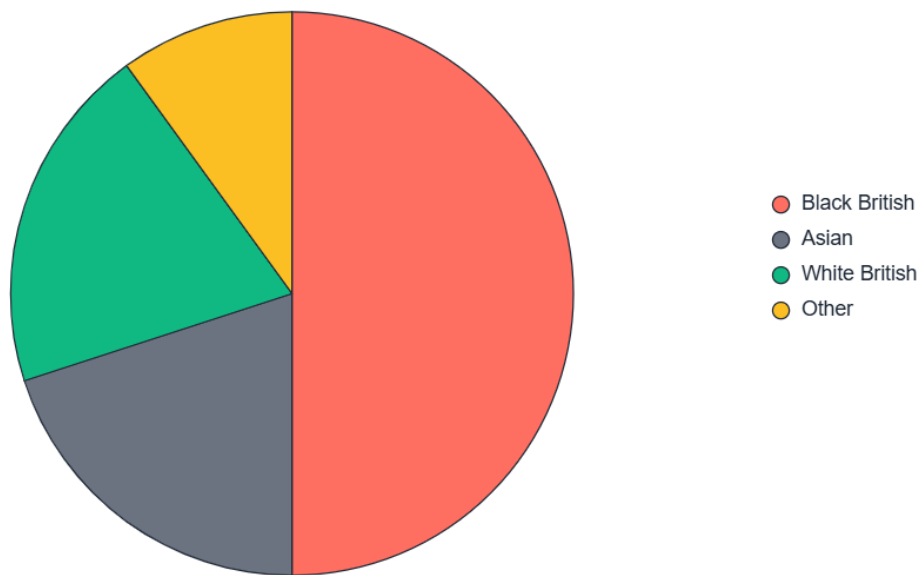
Figure 4: Infographic on autism stigmas.

Figure 5: Volunteers training with Vox Pops .

Chart: Participant Demographics by Ethnicity



### Participant Ethnicity Distribution



This evaluation report demonstrates the project's success in achieving NLHF outcomes, engaging diverse communities, and preserving autism heritage. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data, supported by robust evaluation methods, highlights Dimobi's impactful work.