

M-Prez

Supporting women and young adults into arts, culture, education, tech and science



Sector: **Arts, heritage and culture**
Location: **Derby, East Midlands**
Grant awarded: **£9,870 through the CCLORS fund**

Award date: **September 2020**

Grant purpose

M-Prez received a grant of £9,870 to establish a new service, Express U, for young people in the community that uses radio to enhance wellbeing by allowing beneficiaries to communicate their feelings, hopes and fears.

Rooted in the community

The organisation supports the BAME community in Derby, identifying and providing support for their changing needs through the Covid-19. The organisation is BAME-led and is able to meet additional needs including mental health support and services.

Accountable to the local community

For the Express U project, local young people were involved in the project's designing and development. M-Prez work closely with the young people they support to ensure that services meet their needs, with regular surveys and feedback sessions.

Broad community impact

M-Prez support the self-development of women and young adults from ethnic minorities who are historically at-risk and traditionally under served population, they also offer services to all local young people and women.

Ordinary girls can achieve great things.

This idea was the starting point for M-Prez, a community organisation in Derby committed to supporting women and young adults to make their dreams a reality. The organisation gives their beneficiaries the support, belief and opportunities to try new things, and carve a career or passion in their chosen subjects: arts, culture, education, tech and science.

M-Prez's latest project, made possible with Power to Change funding, will harness radio as a vehicle to help young people in the community to express their hopes, experiences and fears during the pandemic. Express U is new series of virtual youth radio workshops for 6-18 year olds, run after school with the support of Derby Sound Community Radio. The young participants have the opportunity to share their passion for music, try audio production and interviewing techniques, meet other young people, gain confidence and have fun.

M-Prez support young people from ethnic minorities who are historically at-risk and traditionally under served population, and Express U will help to build young people's self confidence and belief, whilst also creating a peer network.



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How did they do it?

M Prez became incorporated in 2009 but started out as a creative collective of young women: producing radio shows, DJing and rapping, who felt they lacked the self confidence to put themselves forward.

Fast forward to 2015, when M-Prez CEO Tomar Beh noticed an empty community centre and a lack of music provision for local young people. After asking local parents if they would be interested, she set up a music literacy group for 0-4 year olds to try an instrument and listen to stories. With the help of funding from Foundation Derbyshire, Tomar and a group of volunteers ran Singing

Stories as a pilot project.

As the project grew in popularity, so did the provision and with Awards for All funding, M-Prez were able to take on an artist, to run a craft activity session before the music workshop. Over time the offer expanded to include a midday meal for parents and their children to meet and get to know each other.

M-Prez was originally set up to support women, to raise their aspirations and self esteem; and with funding from Staffordshire Foundation, the group were able to continue this work. The organisation began running weekly sessions for women, focusing on a different topic each time, including mental health, self care, raising resilient children and more.

Now, M-Prez have developed their music offer and through a partnership with Derby Sound Community Radio and funding from Power to Change, are engaging three youth groups (aged 6-9, 10-14 and 12-18) through radio production. The group meet virtually for fortnightly sessions, where the group can get creative and try new things, and are set tasks as 'homework' such as choosing their own DJ name.

Express U gives young people a creative outlet, teaching them interview and research skills. The young people are encouraged to share and talk about their experiences through the activity, and will cover the effect of the pandemic on their wellbeing, as well as discussing how to build back better and their hopes and dreams for the future.



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What is their social impact?

The services offered by M-Prez are developed in collaboration with the local community, ensuring that their needs are met. Predominantly working with people from ethnic minorities, the workshops, talks and activities delivered by M-Prez tackle the issues that these communities face including bereavement, mental health issues and more.

The organisation originally worked with young women, but expanded their offer to meet local needs. Recently, M-Prez started a project 'Palava Tree' in response to the pandemic, as research shows that men from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities were the hardest hit by Covid-19. This project received funding from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by National Lottery Community Fund.



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How is it community led?

With multiple local board members from the Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities, M-Prez ensure they are led by their service beneficiaries, including co-developing services and consulting with local youth groups. The organisation has acted swiftly to ensure they are providing support to the whole community and set up Palava Tree as an activity for men and women from the local community as those hit hardest by Covid-19.