



BRADFORD
LITERATURE
FESTIVAL

IMPACT REPORT 2024

explore words, discover worlds

bradfordlitfest.co.uk



“ It was terrific to join everyone in Bradford and be part of such an innovative event. While I’ve attended many literature festivals and enjoyed them, it’s rare to find one so actively engaged in invigorating the youth and communities of its city. BLF managed to be entertaining, informative, and creative all at once. ”

Festival Artist

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“

BLF has very much become an international festival drawing audiences from across the globe and is now an important date in my annual calendar.

Festival Visitor

”

DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Bradford Literature Festival (BLF) 2024 celebrated 10 years by delivering an acclaimed international programme to record-breaking audiences, providing a platform to explore, interrogate, and better understand the extraordinary times we live in – politically, socially and culturally.

At BLF, we pride ourselves on creating a world-class programme that is not only eclectic and diverse but also thoughtful and, at times, challenging. BLF was founded as a space to build bridges and cohesion by holding nuanced conversations about the issues that affect us all.

Over the last 10 years, the cultural space has become increasingly polarised, reflecting the political realities of the societies in which we live. This year has been marked by political and cultural turmoil, both nationally and internationally, showing how closely connected these forces are. Each one impacts the other, highlighting the interconnectedness of our global society and the importance of creating shared spaces for dialogue and understanding.

Our programme has not shied away from this. Instead, it has faced these issues head-on,

addressing them through debates and conversations designed to increase understanding and empathy, to unite rather than divide.

In cities like Bradford, the arts and culture are not luxuries but essential components of dialogue between communities and a key rung of social mobility. Regeneration of places requires a focus on both people and place. To create true change, the work needs to be consistent, longitudinal and intergenerational.

Education is the bedrock of this progress and BLF is committed to instilling a love for literature and culture in the next generation. We have always believed in the power of education to change lives and are driven by the belief that without literacy, every part of the curriculum is closed.

For the last 10 years, our mission has revolved around empowering minds with the transformative power of words, ideas and creativity.

We look forward to continuing in this tradition for the next 10 years.

Syima Aslam
CEO & Artistic Director
Bradford Literature Festival

MANAGEMENT BOARD



Sir Richard Lambert
Chair of the Board,
Bradford Literature
Festival



Syima Aslam
CEO & Artistic Director,
Bradford Literature
Festival



Dr William Lawrence
Executive Director,
Bradford Literature
Festival



Ismail Amla
Senior Vice President,
Kyndryl Consult



Dawn Austwick
Former CEO, National
Lottery Community
Foundation



Professor Aaqil Ahmed
Former Head of Religion
& Ethics, BBC and
Channel 4



Shahzad Saleem
Non-Executive Director,
Bradford Literature
Festival

VISION

Creating a fairer society and changing lives through world-class arts and culture.

MISSION

Bradford Literature Festival (BLF) is one of the UK's largest and Europe's most eclectic and diverse literature festivals. Serving as a beacon of global cultural exchange, BLF engages with international partners and audiences, making it a thought-provoking destination for literary enthusiasts and cultural observers alike.

At the heart of BLF is a commitment to artistic brilliance and contemporary discourse. We combine renowned literary figures with up-and-coming voices to curate dynamic and innovative programmes that spark dialogue and delight for both international audiences and local communities.

Our representative programmes give a platform to diverse and marginalised voices and stories, creating a supportive stage for rich, varied perspectives and discussions, even on the most challenging topics. As a thoughtful festival with a point of view and sense of place, our events not only represent our city but also reflect contemporary Britain and the global community.

We are leaders in social inclusion and representation, creating spaces that are welcoming and accessible for all. To make sure everyone can access our work, we have pioneered 'Ethical Ticketing' – this means our events are free for people who otherwise would not be able to afford to attend cultural events.

We do this because we believe culture, literature and education have the power to change lives.

TRACK RECORD SINCE 2014



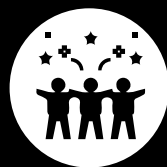
In the **Top 3**
Largest Literature
Festivals in the UK



Over **708,000**
Audiences from
34 Countries



49% Audience
and **45% Artist**
Ethnic Diversity



Over **269,000**
Children and
Young People



80% of Primary and
Secondary Schools
Engaged Across
Bradford District



BLF 2024 IN NUMBERS

669

Events



155,934

Audiences



65%

Below UK Average
Household Income



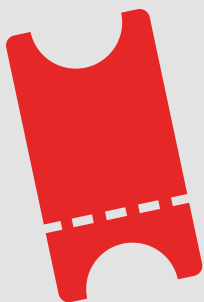
53%

Ethnically
Diverse

89%

Accessed the

**Ethical
Ticketing Policy**



Valued at

£788,000

56% Local

18%

Regional



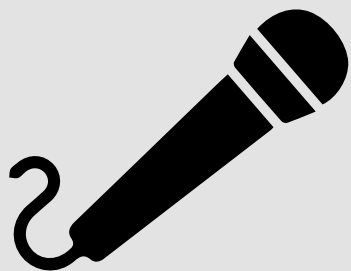
25% National

1%

International

453

Artists



55%

Ethnically
Diverse

59,625

Children and
Young People



89%

Said
BLF improves
wellbeing

72%

Said they
interacted with people from
**different ethnicities
& social backgrounds**

99%



**Recommend
visiting BLF**

95%

Said

BLF Improves
West Yorkshire's
**National
Reputation**

BLF 2024 IN PICTURES





TOP 10 BEST-SELLING EVENTS



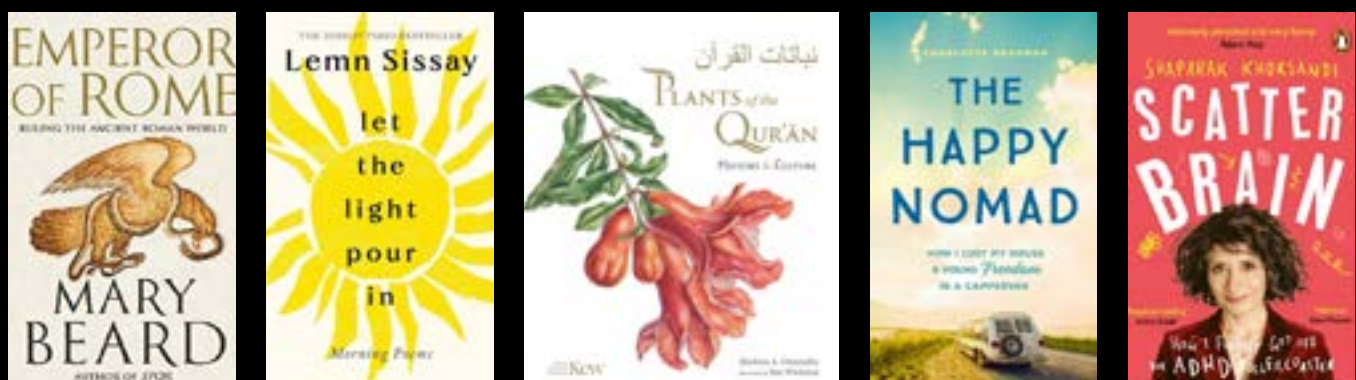
1. **The Hamziyya of Imam al-Busiri** | Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Ian Abdal Latif Whiteman, The Fes Singers
2. **Sufiyana Kalaam** | Orchestral Qawwali Project
3. **Places of Revelation** | Professor Abdullah Alkadi, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Feraidoon Mojadedi
4. **Our Lady Fatima al-Zahra** | Shaykh Yahya Rhodus
5. **Great Books from Great Traditions** | Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Dr Aisha Subhani, Dr Asad Tarsin
6. **Miriam Margolyes in Conversation** with Peg Alexander
7. **Treatises of Imam al-Ghazali** | Shaykh Yahya Rhodus
8. **Husam Zomlot in Conversation** with Secunder Kermani
9. **An Evening of Comedy** | Shaparak Khorsandi, Aurie Styla, Scott Bennett, Tez Ilyas, Priya Hall
10. **Emperor of Rome: Mary Beard in Conversation** with Remona Aly



TOP 10 BEST-SELLING AUTHORS



1. Professor Abdullah Alkadi, *The Way of the Prophets: The Hajj and The Farewell Pilgrimage; Milestones Of Arabia*
2. Zaytuna College Curriculum, *Combinatorial House of Wisdom; Alfarabi; Book of Letters (Kitab Al-Huruf); Being Muslim; An Introduction to Islamic Theology | Imam Nur al-Din al-Sabuni's Al-Bidayah fi usul al-din*
3. Miriam Margolyes, *Oh Miriam!; This Much Is True*
4. Dr. Asad Tarsin, *Being Muslim: A Practical Guide*
5. Ruby Wax, *I'm Not As Well As I Thought I Was*
6. Mary Beard, *Emperor Of Rome*
7. Lemn Sissay, *Let The Light Pour In and My Name Is Why*
8. Shahina A. Ghazanfar, *Plants of the Qur'an*
9. Charlotte Bradman, *The Happy Nomad*
10. Shaparak Khorsandi, *Scatter Brain*



NATIONAL BLF BRAND PRESENCE



MARKETING, MEDIA AND REACH



15.51 Billion Impressions Worldwide



634,194
Website Visits



77.6 Million
Out of Home Media Impressions



2.1 Million
Social Media Impressions



63.2 Million Reach
Across Train Stations:



1,465.7 Million
Total Press and Media Reach



61,000
Printed Programmes
Distributed Nationally

- London King's Cross
- London Bridge
- London Waterloo
- London Victoria
- London Euston
- Bradford Interchange
- Bradford Forster Square
- Manchester
- Birmingham
- Liverpool
- Leeds
- Halifax
- Saltaire
- Shipley



BRADFORD LITERATURE FESTIVAL 2024

Celebrating our 10th year

Bradford Literature Festival marked its 10-year anniversary in 2024 with 10 days of eclectic and diverse events, sold-out shows, and record footfall. BLF welcomed 155,934 audiences from 24 countries to 699 events, making its 10th year the most successful to date.

Since its inception in 2014, BLF has rapidly grown to become one of the top literature festivals in the UK and a truly international destination for both artists and audiences. Renowned for its innovative approach, BLF forges international partnerships and curates inclusive programmes, embodying the face of the future.

Bradford is a microcosm of the UK and home to diverse international communities, where over 150 languages are spoken, 20% of residents were born outside the country, and 48% identify as ethnically diverse. It was also one of the first UK cities recognised as a 'City of Sanctuary'. By reflecting Bradford's diversity, we instinctively mirror the pulse of modern Britain and the global community. This year, BLF was recognised for this achievement, receiving the title of 'Europe's Most Diverse & Inclusive Arts Festival 2024' from the Global Business Awards.

BLF's commitment to diversity is reflected in both its audiences and artists. In 2024, 53% of our audience was ethnically diverse, and 89% accessed our programme for free, breaking down barriers to

cultural participation. Our 453 artists came to BLF from all over the globe, with 14% being international, 49% national, and 36% regional. They had roots in 70 countries across five continents, and 55% identified as ethnically diverse.

BLF creates spaces for nuanced conversations on issues that impact us all. By platforming a diverse range of voices and perspectives, BLF provides historical context for balanced discussions on topics such as world affairs, the myth of social mobility, homelessness, faith, the Israel-Palestine conflict, global futures, and more.

BLF 2024 featured acclaimed national figures such as Miriam Margolyes, Lemn Sissay, Corinne Bailey Rae, Shaparak Khorsandi, Ruby Wax, Konstantin Kisin, BBC Radio 4 presenter Giles Fraser, and historian Mary Beard. International guests included Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Mahogany Browne, Yahya Rhodus, Feraidoon Mojadedi, William Chittick, and Palestinian Ambassador Husam Zomlot.

This year's festival saw the return of beloved annual events including An Evening of Comedy, Sacred Music, and Poetry with a Punch. BLF also welcomed back the world-famous Orchestral Qawwali Project after its sold-out performance at the Royal Albert Hall, following their BLF debut in 2021. A new highlight showcased gospel choirs from across West Yorkshire, with a special appearance by the Kraków Gospel Choir from Poland.

To bring such different audiences and different themes together under one umbrella is honestly a mark of absolute greatness and a true community success.

Festival Visitor



This year, BLF's programming placed a strong emphasis on mental health and wellbeing, offering a variety of inclusive workshops such as Yin Yoga, Tai Chi, and Emotional Freedom Technique sessions. Discussions on mental health included global perspectives, such as Shaykh Mahdi Lock's exploration of Islamic teachings on depression, addressing the causes and treatments of anxiety according to the Qur'ān.

A new international partnership brought Doha Debates' Town Hall event to the UK for the first time. Chaired by journalist and broadcaster Remona Aly, the panel included Fatima Bhutto, Steve Clemons, and Konstantin Kisin, who engaged in a lively debate with international students from the UK and Qatar as they discussed the media's role in political divides and conflict, free speech, and social media's impact on journalism.

Our Children and Young People programme is at the very heart of BLF. Built on the belief that *"if you can see it, you can be it,"* it raises aspirations and motivates young people to achieve their full potential. In 2024, BLF engaged 59,625 children and young people across 319 events, meaning 47% of our programme was tailored specifically to young audiences.

Our Family Fun Days united generations, offering families a space to connect and explore creativity through live theatre, arts and crafts workshops, and

storytelling. These sessions have always been, and will remain, free, ensuring that everyone has access to arts and culture.

BLF's Education Programme is the largest of any UK festival, having engaged 48,522 children and young people across 178 events. This included 12 themed Education Days with 80 Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 events, granting children and young people access to leading authors, poets, scientists, historians, and journalists through live performances and workshops.

This year, we worked with 57 schools in the Bradford District — 72% from the most deprived wards — and expanded our engagement to schools in Kirklees, focusing on areas with economic and cultural challenges.

BLF works with a wide range of community groups and organisations. In 2024, we engaged 34 community groups across 57 events, spanning exhibitions, family theatre, poetry, dance, film, and music. The popular Zabava returned, celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the Roma community.

BLF is a social intervention, harnessing the transformative power of culture to change individual lives and society. Our renowned Ethical Ticketing Policy continues to play a crucial role in breaking down financial barriers to cultural engagement, and, in our current economic climate, it is needed more than ever. This year, 61% of ticket holders accessed BLF's Ethical Ticketing Policy.

The diversity of the audience is incredibly important in our fractured times, so that we can all come together and discuss often highly-charged and relevant issues.

Festival Visitor



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Building confidence, enrichment and empowerment

BLF recognises the profound impact literature and culture have on young minds, which is why our comprehensive Children and Young People Programme is fully integrated into the festival, providing young audiences with access to world-class literary events.

In 2024, 47% of our programme was dedicated to young audiences, reaching 59,625 children and young people across 319 events. The festival inspires a lifelong love of literature and reading, encouraging young people to explore their creativity, express ideas, and engage with the world through storytelling.

Family Fun Days

Our Family Fun Days in City Park brought families together and sparked imagination through interactive workshops, creative writing activities, performances and storytelling from leading voices in children's and young adult literature.

In 2024, 11,103 children and young people attended 171 events across four days, featuring themes such as superheroes, pirate folktales, woodland adventures, and magical mayhem. These free, drop-in events offered an inclusive space where children and families explored creativity, built stronger connections, and created lasting, positive memories.

Early Years

In partnership with Better Start Bradford, our Early Years Programme offered a range of stimulating activities for children aged 0-5, empowering parents to create literacy-rich home environments with a love for stories, books, and music.

From Baby Raves that stimulated sensory development and Baby Yoga promoting health and bonding, to Rhythm Time sessions that enhanced coordination and communication, the Early Years Programme played a crucial role in supporting children's early development and creating a supportive network for new parents.

Education Programme

The Education Programme is central to BLF's mission, built on the belief that literacy is the foundation stone for accessing all areas of the curriculum. By offering children and young people access to world-class cultural and literacy experiences, we inspire a lifelong passion for learning that goes beyond the classroom.

Our Education Programme complements the curriculum while offering a global perspective on arts, culture, history, health, climate, and literature. It spans a wide range of topics, from Superheroes to Shakespeare and Hitler to Tutankhamun, while also addressing often overlooked subjects like Kashmiri and Caribbean histories, enriching students' understanding of diverse cultures, identities, and stories.

In today's complex world, BLF empowers children and young people to become the next generation of global citizens by building essential skills in communication, reading, social interaction, and critical thinking through our inclusive programmes.

In 2024, BLF engaged 48,522 children and young people, connecting them with renowned authors, poets, scientists, and historians through 178 events as part of the UK's largest festival Education Programme. This included 12 themed days with 80 events for Key Stage 2 and 3 students. We worked with 57 schools — 72% from Bradford's most deprived wards — and engaged schools facing cultural and economic barriers in Kirklees.

BLF's innovative approach to cultural education has been recognised by The Rayne Foundation, which awarded BLF funding to develop a pioneering Digital Education Programme, which is set to launch in 2025.

Supporting Future Leaders

This year, BLF partnered with the Avicenna Foundation, bringing 15 scholars from low socio-economic backgrounds to the festival. Studying at top UK universities in fields including social sciences, humanities and politics, they attended BLF to learn from leading speakers and engaging global topics, furthering their development as future change-makers.



BLF has become a family tradition so the most enjoyable thing is to come and spend time with loved ones.



“ *BLF helps the younger generation expand their knowledge, contributing to a more peaceful world.* ”
Festival Visitor



“ *It was lovely to bond with my baby. I'm on maternity leave so I greatly appreciated that the event was free, as my income has dropped.* ”
Festival Visitor

“ *My daughter could have spent the whole day outside enjoying the theatrics. It's our first time and I was very impressed with how brilliant everything was.* ”
Festival Visitor



“ *BLF helps children understand the wider enrichment possibilities in Bradford. The children felt excited about visiting the university as something they can aspire towards.* ”
Key Stage 3 Teacher

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Enriching lives and nurturing talent

Built on strong community foundations, BLF is the leader in social inclusion, accessibility, and representation. Our model, with communities at its core, redefines the culture sector by uniting all communities, rather than catering to any single one, to promote cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect.

Bradford's 300-year history of migration, from Irish workers and German Jews to South Asian Muslims and the Windrush generation, mirrors the UK's broader history, yet these stories are often overlooked. BLF highlights these histories, challenging the notion that migration is a recent phenomenon. In a city of over 150 languages that's proudly recognised as a 'City of Sanctuary,' BLF continues to champion the rich legacies of migrants, refugees, and diverse communities.

Every community has culture, ambition, and the right to see it celebrated. BLF is deeply committed to showcasing each community's culture with cutting-edge work that reflects their diversity, setting us apart from most other cultural organisations.

BLF works across a wide range of groups, including White working class, British Muslims, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma, South Asians, African/Caribbean, socio-economically disadvantaged communities and conflict-affected communities. Our partnerships are grounded in equality, engaging artists, health professionals, and community organisations to curate high-quality events that are representative and accessible.

This year, BLF worked with 34 community groups and over 150 artists across 57 events, spanning exhibitions, family theatre, poetry, dance, film, and music. Highlights included the popular return of the Zabava, held in partnership with Connecting Roma.

Down T'Allotment: Bloomin' Buds Theatre Company

BLF commissioned Bloomin' Buds Theatre Company to create a site-responsive theatre performance rooted in the Ravenscliffe community.

The production explored allotment life, food sustainability, healthy eating, and wellbeing, while celebrating Yorkshire's working-class voices. Touring Womenzone Community Centre, Keighley Airedale, The Gateway Centre, and The Rockwell Centre, the performance encouraged food-growing, addressed anti-social behaviour, and promoted respect through meaningful activities. Workshops were held at each community centre, inviting participants to join the choir for the performance.

The Spirit of Togetherness: An Evening of Gospel

This memorable event brought together gospel choirs and performers from diverse traditions across West Yorkshire. Joy and unity were at the heart of powerful performances by The Celebration Choir, Huddersfield Community Choir, and the Mussanzi Family Choir. A standout moment came with the Kraków Gospel Choir's performance, joining from Poland alongside artists like Chuks Ukor, Christella Litras, and Emem Archibong.

The evening was a true celebration of gospel music, with exceptional feedback from artists, community groups, and audiences, highlighting the uplifting power of music to unite communities.

If only there were a way to bottle the spirit of that evening! I heard music from different traditions, saw instruments being played which I'd not seen before. There was so much respect between the different religious groups represented. Children to elders were all clearly enjoying themselves. Truly an outstanding event which engaged a cross-section of the community and will have led to greater understanding and respect across diverse groups.

Festival Visitor

“

I am opened up to a new world. I've never been to a literature festival. If I'd known sooner, I'd have signed up to everything.

Festival Visitor

”



“

I always have amazing conversations and encounters with people from entirely different backgrounds to my own. I return home with my faith in the possibility of a better and richer UK affirmed.

Festival Visitor

”

“

It was great to attend a true community-based event at the Rockwell Centre, which is such a great venue and so important for attracting a White working class audience, as well as other people from different ethnic and class backgrounds.

Festival Visitor

”



“

I enjoyed the event as it related to my Irish heritage and that doesn't get much coverage these days. I learnt history that I did not know before.

Festival Visitor

”

IMPACT: SOCIO-ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Bradford Literature Festival is more than a cultural event; it is a driver of socio-economic regeneration that builds both the city and its people.

Through year-on-year engagement, BLF creates lasting impact by reaching socio-economically diverse communities and empowering them with access to arts, culture, and education.

By raising aspirations, creating opportunities, and fostering ambition, BLF contributes to the long-term growth of Bradford's social and economic fabric.

One of the ways BLF drives socio-economic regeneration is through its pioneering Ethical Ticketing Policy, in place since our first ticket was sold. This policy provides free, equitable access to the arts for those who need it most, including individuals in receipt of benefits, students, educators, senior citizens, disabled individuals and carers, as well as refugees and asylum seekers.

In a city where 28% more households experience deprivation in one dimension, and 50% more households face deprivation in four dimensions compared to the national average, BLF's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility is more vital than ever.

This year, 61% of BLF ticket holders used the Ethical Ticketing Policy, with 89% of all audiences

accessing free programming valued at £788,000. BLF has opened doors to cultural enrichment for all, including the 65% of its audiences living in households below the UK's average income.

Bradford Literature Festival's impact extends beyond cultural engagement — it actively shapes perceptions of Bradford. Externally, BLF positions the city as a cultural destination, while locally, it brings communities together.

93% of our audiences agree that BLF contributes to Bradford and Yorkshire's social, cultural, and economic regeneration, while 72% interacted with people from different social, ethnic, and age backgrounds. As a result, 89% reported positive impacts on their wellbeing, and 99% would recommend attending Bradford Literature Festival.

BLF's strategy works on the principle that socio-economic regeneration involves both place and people. To regenerate the city, BLF empowers its residents with the tools and opportunities to thrive.

For true impact, this approach must be longitudinal, intergenerational, and deeply embedded over a long period of time, creating a social mobility ladder that raises ambitions and drives lasting change.

“*The diversity of events and relevance to people of differing backgrounds is exceptional. One of the very few things you can be truly proud of as a Bradfordian.*”

Festival Visitor



IMPACT: INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL PLACEMAKING

Bradford Literature Festival continues to expand its global reach, positioning Bradford and West Yorkshire as a leading international cultural destination. In 2024, BLF welcomed 155,934 attendees from 24 countries, with 1% of the audience travelling internationally and 25% from across the UK. Our programme featured 64 international artists, showcasing diverse perspectives and global conversations that resonated with audiences both locally and internationally.

A standout moment this year was our strategic partnership with Network Rail, delivering a 'takeover' of nine major train stations across the UK. The campaign ran across London King's Cross, London Euston, London Victoria, London Waterloo, London Bridge, Birmingham New Street, Liverpool Lime Street, Leeds, and Manchester Piccadilly. This collaboration provided BLF with unparalleled national exposure, achieving 68.1 million impressions and generating an advertising value of £6 million. This ambitious campaign raised Bradford's profile as a cultural hub, attracting visitors from across the country and beyond.

BLF's growing network of international partnerships further cemented its position on the world stage. This year, we collaborated with Doha Debates, bringing its Town Hall debate to the UK for the first time. The debate addressed critical issues of global

justice, with students from Doha joining UK students and an internationally acclaimed panel. Filmed to TV-studio standards on a custom-built stage — a first for BLF — the event aired on Doha Debates' platforms, where it has already received over 830,000 views worldwide.

Further partnerships included the Islam and Muslims Initiative (IMI), which supported discussions on The Forgotten Crisis in Sudan and engaged audiences through an exhibition stand, fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding. Feedback highlighted the importance of these conversations in breaking down barriers and promoting mutual respect. Other international partners in 2024 included the Islamic Arts Biennale and the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature.

BLF continues to showcase internationally renowned figures such as Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, described by audiences as "a rock star amongst Muslim scholars," and Miriam Margolyes, whose global acclaim further elevates the festival. These events, alongside discussions on global issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict, position BLF as a platform for essential international conversations.

Our influence extends beyond the festival through the Watch & Listen platform, now in the top 50% of global podcasts. In 2025, BLF will launch its Digital Education Programme, further expanding access to high-quality cultural content for global audiences.

“Jaw-droppingly brilliant and overflowing with talent from West Africa, the USA, and the UK. Bradford was breathtaking.”

Festival Visitor



IMPACT: SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Over the past decade, Bradford Literature Festival has been a driving force in the development of the national cultural sector. By providing a platform for artists, writers, and thought-leaders at all career stages, BLF has become central to shaping the future of the creative industries. Through key conversations on important issues, alongside support for emerging and mid-career talent, BLF actively influences the cultural landscape. Our commitment to inclusivity and diversity reflects Bradford's rich heritage while contributing to both national and international cultural development.

The Creative Economic Conference (CEC) is a key event at BLF, bringing together leading voices from business, politics, and the creative industries to explore how collaboration can drive innovation and economic growth. At the 2024 conference, the session *Is EDI Dead?* ignited crucial discussions on the current state of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, with panellists examining their effectiveness and debating the need for deeper changes to address structural inequalities. The CEC connects early-career professionals with industry leaders, offering free access for students and graduates to ensure the creative economy stays inclusive and accessible. This year's conference

reinforced BLF's role as a platform for driving both innovation and inclusivity in the cultural sector.

BLF's impact on the literature sector in 2024 went beyond its events. The festival actively worked to diversify publishing through initiatives like *Meet the Publisher* and *Literary Agent* sessions. These events gave emerging authors, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, direct access to the literary world. By bringing publishers from London to the North, BLF created opportunities for new writers to showcase their work and gain critical insights into the publishing process. These initiatives opened doors and provided emerging talent with invaluable chances to be seen, heard, and supported in their literary careers.

BLF is committed to supporting a broad spectrum of talent, giving a platform to both emerging and established artists. In 2024, 14% of our artists were international, 49% were national, and 36% were regional, ensuring a diverse range of voices and perspectives were represented.

By providing emerging artists with the opportunity to perform alongside established figures, BLF offered vital exposure and networking opportunities, helping

Informative, interactive, flexible, fun and engaging. I left with new ideas and short poems we had written within the session and feel motivated to continue my poetry journey. The range of teaching, performing, and activities exceeded all expectations.

Festival Visitor



to accelerate their careers and enrich the festival experience for audiences.

BLF also recognises the importance of supporting mid-career artists, a group often overlooked as many festivals tend to focus on either new talent or well-established names. Our long-term approach ensures these artists continue to develop and are not lost within the wider cultural landscape. One example is Gav Cross, a storyteller who has become a regular feature in our Children and Young People's Programme. Over the years, he has created new work annually and built a dedicated following at BLF. His ongoing involvement has allowed him to collaborate with other artists and expand his reach, demonstrating BLF's commitment to sustained support for mid-career professionals.

BLF not only supports the development of the cultural sector in the UK but also plays a significant international role. In 2024, our partnership with the British Council strengthened our global impact by building connections between the arts sectors of the UK and Pakistan. This exchange programme brought a cohort of six delegates from Pakistan's literary and cultural sectors to the festival, where they engaged with all aspects of our programming

and delivery to learn best practices. The programme is an example of BLF's leadership in global cultural collaboration, demonstrating our commitment to nurturing talent and strengthening the arts sector across borders.

At the heart of BLF's mission is a deep commitment to diversity, which is reflected across every aspect of our programming. In 2024, 55% of our artists identified as ethnically diverse, and we continue to showcase voices from a wide range of backgrounds and languages. Events like Mushaira, which highlights the beauty of Urdu poetry, are central to our ethos of platforming underrepresented voices. BLF's work in elevating diverse artists is frequently cited in academic papers as an example of best practice in the cultural sector.

By giving space to underrepresented communities, Bradford Literature Festival is setting a new standard for inclusivity at festivals, ensuring that all perspectives are represented and celebrated both nationally and internationally. This commitment to diversity, along with our focus on talent development and global collaboration, continues to enrich the cultural landscape, leaving a lasting impact on Bradford and far beyond.

It's different from other literary festivals that I have attended in the past. They've tended to be middle class, White events, with a fairly predictable programme. I enjoy BLF's variety of themes, the inclusive nature of the programme and the audience.

Festival Visitor



BLF VOLUNTEERS

Developing skills, opportunity and social capital

At the heart of Bradford Literature Festival is our vibrant volunteering programme, which has become instrumental in nurturing skills, fostering opportunities, and enriching the city of Bradford.

In 2024, 126 volunteers contributed 1,582 hours, making a meaningful impact on both the festival's success and the community.

Through our volunteering programme, individuals gained valuable employability skills that bridged gaps in their CV, explored pathways into the arts, built lasting connections, and boosted their confidence.

Volunteers took on roles such as Venue and Stage Assistants, Workshop Assistants, Green Room Assistants, and Festival Runners, gaining first-hand experience in delivering the festival.

Bradford has faced challenges in building a strong culture of volunteering, particularly in the cultural sector. However, BLF supports social capital by engaging volunteers from a wide range of ethnically and socially diverse backgrounds and age groups. Our volunteer community unites individuals from all walks of life, instilling a strong sense of connection and togetherness.

This year, 64% of our volunteers came from ethnically diverse backgrounds and also spanned generations, with 40% aged 16 to 24, 36% aged 25 to 49, and 24% aged 50 and over, fostering intergenerational collaboration.

By engaging with new people and contributing to the festival, our volunteers developed crucial employment skills and formed connections that could lead to future opportunities.

What sets our volunteers programme apart is not just their commitment to the festival; it's also their love for the team and their passion for celebrating the city of Bradford.

Positive feedback from volunteers shows that 88% strongly agree or agree that volunteering at BLF has encouraged them to engage more with arts and cultural activities.

Many of our volunteers go on to become Ambassadors for Bradford Literature Festival, further enriching the cultural sector in Bradford and instilling a sense of pride for the city.

Volunteering gave me the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds, engage with the public, and see a variety of world-class speakers, academics and artists.

Festival Volunteer

I've enjoyed every part of my volunteering experience, from meeting new, inspirational individuals to getting to witness what an incredible asset BLF is to Bradford.

Festival Volunteer

Volunteering alongside skilled and friendly people really made the experience worthwhile.

Festival Volunteer

Volunteering at BLF has opened my eyes to the available opportunities that are out there.

Festival Volunteer

WITH THANKS TO

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**BRADFORD
LITERATURE
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CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

27 JUNE - 6 JULY 2025

Be a part of our journey. Find out how you can support us through sponsorship and partnership opportunities:

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