



## Press release

### **Birmingham Homeless Charity Wins Media Trust Award for Digital Inspiration**

A Birmingham-based homeless charity has been recognised with a £500 award for using digital media in an inspiring way within the local community. SIFA Fireside ran a three-month art project entitled 'My Birmingham', which enabled homeless people in the area to explore their own unique and often unheard interpretation of the city through different artistic methods ranging from photography and painting to film. The project has gone on to inspire a homeless agency based in Northampton to create a similar scheme.

The £500 award received by SIFA Fireside marks the first stage of the 'Community Voices' campaign, a two-year project delivered across England by communications charity Media Trust, which aims to inspire, engage and support disadvantaged and isolated communities to get their voices heard through digital media.

Within the film element of the project, participants created, filmed and acted in two short films. 'Reflections' a documentary exploring the issue of homelessness in Birmingham through the eyes of service users, and 'Hot Pot Man' a comedy, which follows an unlikely superhero who can only escape his homelessness through a serving of 'Hot Pot' from SIFA Fireside's drop in centre. Both films have since been used as training aids by police cadets and trainee social workers.

During the photography sessions a group of service users travelled on foot across Birmingham City Centre with disposable cameras taking a variety of images that represented their view of Birmingham. The photographs were used as part of three public exhibitions, which took place at St Martin's Church in the Bullring, The Custard Factory and Birmingham Voluntary Service Centre.

Marie Dennehy, a project worker at SIFA Fireside, said: "We are extremely happy to have received recognition from Media Trust for providing digital inspiration. For many of the service users involved in the 'My Birmingham' art project it was their first experience of using digital media and they really put their heart and soul into the three-month project, producing artwork, which is inspiring, exciting and thought provoking".

Media Trust's Director of Marketing and Communications Services, Gavin Sheppard, says "We know that there is a wealth of great digital media work already going on in the community, but we were particularly impressed by how the SIFA Fireside project encouraged members of the homeless community in Birmingham to be directly involved in creating this project, getting their voice heard amongst the broader community and helping to raise awareness of the issues surrounding homelessness."

Media Trust is offering one £500 award every week up until March 2010, to individuals or community groups whose work is helping to give the community a voice through digital media. Projects could range from a digital photo exhibition or a social media initiative to podcasting or a short film on mobile. So long as it has been led by the community with a view to addressing their specific conditions of isolation or deprivation through digital media, and could serve to inspire other communities.

Selected projects will be showcased on Media Trust's website, will receive a complimentary place at a Media Trust training event plus a wealth of additional communications support.

Next year in the second stage of the project, Media Trust will open up a range of new grants designed to engage and equip groups who feel unheard or voiceless, with the tools to express themselves.

Communities will be able to apply for one of these grants from early 2010.

To find out more about Community Voices and how to apply for an award visit: <http://www.mediatrust.org/communityvoices>

To find out more about SIFA Fireside and the 'My Birmingham' project visit <http://www.sifafireside.co.uk> or contact Marie Dennehy on 0121 6667023 or [MarieDennehy@sifafireside.co.uk](mailto:MarieDennehy@sifafireside.co.uk).

**Images:** During the 'My Birmingham' project, service users travelled on foot across Birmingham City Centre with disposable cameras taking a variety of images that represented their view of Birmingham. A selection of these is below.





## Ends

### Notes to editors

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### Media Trust

Media Trust is a national charity that believes everyone should have a voice and the opportunity to be heard. We work with media organisations and charities to enhance their communications and enable communities to find their voice. We own and run Community Channel, the UK's only national channel to be run by a charity. Our corporate members include BBC, Channel 4, Daily Mail and General Trust, Disney Channel UK, Guardian Media Group, IPC Media, MTV Networks UK & Ireland, News International, Newsquest Media Group, OMD, Sky, Virgin Media TV and Warner Bros. Go to: [www.mediatrust.org](http://www.mediatrust.org)

### Community Voices

Community Voices is an England-wide programme funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly DIUS) and delivered by Media Trust. It aims to engage and empower communities who feel disadvantaged or isolated with the inspiration, confidence, skills, and access to resources and funding to help them find their voice and make it heard, using digital media. <http://www.mediatrust.org/communityvoices>

