

Positive Realities

XR for Youth Wellbeing,
Coventry UK City of Culture in 2021

StoryFutures /ACADEMY/
National Centre for Immersive Storytelling



BACKGROUND:

In the UK, one in four adults and one in ten children experience some form of mental illness.¹ Globally, almost one billion are estimated to suffer from a mental health condition.² Numbers of those seeking help are soaring while healthcare providers struggle to cope with demand. In this context, approaches that promote good mental health practices, and/or prevent the development of mental health conditions are increasingly important.

The World Health Organisation defines mental health broadly as "...a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community".³

There is a growing recognition that virtual, augmented and mixed reality experiences with their potential to immerse users in different contexts and influence feelings, behaviours and perceptions could play an important role in supporting mental health alongside other approaches.

A recent review commissioned by the UK's innovation foundation Nesta identified a gap in prototype and experimental mental health focused projects employing creative and art-based approaches to using immersive technology to address mental health challenges. StoryFutures, the Creative Industries R&D catalyst, recently partnered with NESTA to develop a brand new immersive economy and [wellbeing initiative](#).

Now in partnership with Coventry City of Culture Trust and Create Central we want to examine the value of immersive experiences in supporting better health and wellbeing for young adults in Coventry. Working with the young population of Coventry and the agencies who serve them we will be exploring how recreational or educational experiences in VR, AR or MR could have a positive impact on resilience, reduce the potential of isolation and support young people to live fuller and more active lifestyles.

¹ [NHS England](#) (2019)

² [IHME, Global Burden of Disease](#) (2017)

³ [Mind UK website](#)

THE PROGRAMME:

Through this programme, we would like to explore how creative storytelling and new forms of experiential content could help people develop new skills, behaviours or attitudes, or promote positive everyday experiences to support better mental health and wellbeing. We would welcome innovative approaches to meditation and relaxation, ways to untap the creativity of young audiences and ways in which social connections could be improved or that might have educational or behavioural benefits. These experiences could be developed for a variety of different technologies and take a number of different forms. Games, Stories, Musical Educational and Relaxation experiences are all in scope.

We are most interested in ideas that would indicate potential to *prevent* the development of certain types of mental health conditions, or ideas that help *maintain* good mental health. We are not looking to address current sufferers or people in a state of crisis as part of this programme. We do not, therefore, expect a clinical approach to health and wellbeing.

WHAT IS ON OFFER:

Upon a successful application we would invite 6 eligible SME's to attend a workshop facilitated by StoryFutures Academy and Coventry City of Culture Trust. Over this workshop companies would;

- Be up-skilled and immersed in the landscape of AR/VR/MR storytelling
- Experience a variety of health and well-being immersive experiences
- Meet and engage with young audiences from Coventry
- Hear from youth agencies working in Coventry about the wellbeing initiatives they already run and the challenges they face
- Hear about the StoryFutures/NESTA Health & Wellbeing programme and the psychological value and lessons learnt.
- Engage with an experienced audience facing immersive company around issues including; editorial development, production workflow, budget distribution etc ...

Upon completion of the workshop SME's would have a short window (two weeks) to submit a proposal for a new immersive experience that could be produced and piloted with young audiences throughout Coventry City of Culture in 2021.

A number of proposals would then be shortlisted and put into a short period of tight turn around paid development which would deliver; wireframes, a technical specification, a risk register, an editorial storyboard, an audience insight and testing plan and a line by line budget. These developed projects would then be invited to interview.

This process will conclude with a selected SME being invited to pilot their proposal and to deliver a testable prototype experience for showcasing during Coventry 2021.

The cash budget on offer to produce this experience would be cc £120,000 (incl. VAT) as well as considerable R&D and training support from StoryFutures Academy.

The StoryFutures team will bring the following areas of expertise to the project, with staff in the following areas being able to work collaboratively with the winning company:

- Editorial and storytelling expertise
- Immersive audio design
- Psychology of mental well-being

In relation to the above list, companies should make clear in their application where their strengths and experience lies, and in which areas they feel they would most benefit from StoryFutures Academy R&D support.

The Goals

The objectives of this training and R&D programme are:

- To enable creative companies in the WMCA region to explore and understand the potential of immersive technologies for their businesses;
- Provide a live training-in-action opportunity for 3 companies to develop active treatments against a brief that has a clear route to audiences;
- To create one audience-facing pilot that demonstrates the innovative use of next generation technologies that can engage young audiences and demonstrably impact their mental well-being;

Measurable KPIs for the final winning prototype will include.

- Reach – the number of audiences able to experience the final prototype;
- Engagement – the number of specified youth demographics experiencing the final prototype;
- User experience ratings;
- Bespoke audience engagement measures that draw on the opportunities of immersive to offer richer insights into changes in audience's behaviour or emotional states;

Timeline and how to apply

From expressions of interest we will shortlist up to 6 SMEs to participate in a workshop in early October 2020. At the workshop you will meet with other SME's and with teams from StoryFutures Academy, Coventry City of Culture Trust and Create Central. Due to current Covid-19 restrictions the workshop is planned to run online, with participants provided with access to relevant VR equipment

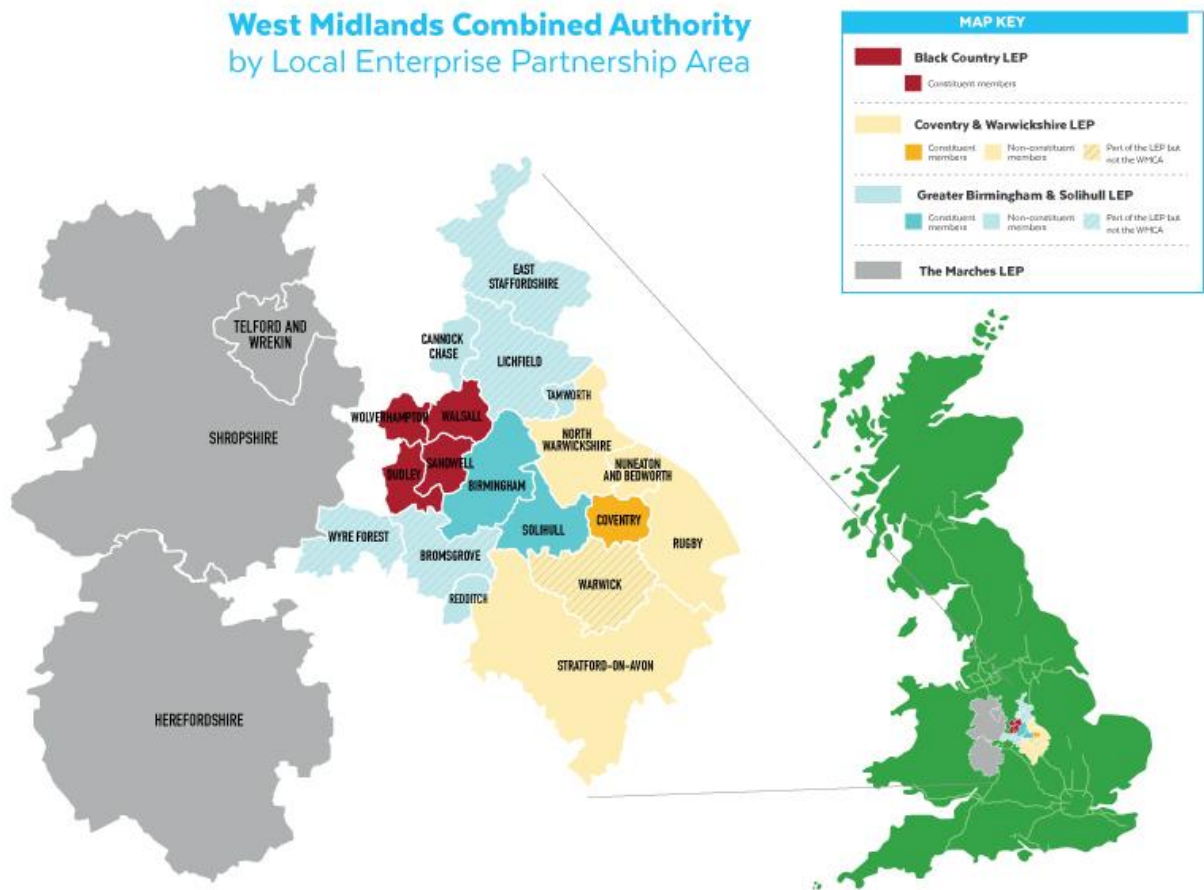
Upon conclusion of the workshop you will have a further two weeks to submit a pilot proposal for a new immersive experience for Coventry City of Culture. Throughout these two weeks you will have access to StoryFutures Academy Technical, Editorial and Audience Insight support to develop your proposal. You will also be invited to focus group test and to actively develop your idea with young audiences in Coventry.

If your idea subsequently goes into paid development you will have another short period of approx. two weeks across November 2020 to develop the idea further and to deliver a series of documents and assets we will use to assess the proposal in more detail. You will then be invited to present your idea to relevant stakeholders online or in person subject to Covid-19 restrictions.

If your idea proves successful we would then anticipate a production period running from December 2019 through to end of March 2020. Your project will need to be delivered by March 31 2021 in order to showcase as part of Coventry City of Culture later that year.

To be eligible:

- The named applicant must work at a Small to Medium Enterprise (SME), with more than 4 but less than 250 staff;
- The SME must be based within the WMCE region – (see map below)
- The SME must be a Creative Content Business (Film, TV, Games, Animation, Branded-Content, Digital Media, VFX etc.)
- The SME must be a new entrant to immersive production
- You must agree to the reporting terms of our funder, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and that non-commercially sensitive insights will be published in industry and academic reports as part of the research collaboration;
- Complete the application form [here](#).
- Deadline for applications: 31 August 2020.



Initial Expressions of Interest will be judged against the following criteria

- Eligibility
- Track Record;
- Training and R&D opportunity;
- Research Collaboration;
- Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility
- Company Robustness.

Access and Support:

We are committed to removing barriers to this opportunity. The workshop, subsequent interviews and any meetings will be tailored according to any specific disability support requirements of your team.

Therefore, if you or any of your team members applying for or taking part in this project have specific disability support requirements, please get in touch using the details below to discuss how we can meet your support or adjustment needs.

Any Questions?

If you have any questions about this brief or would like to discuss further, please contact:

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UK Research
and Innovation



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