

Member Briefing

Cultural Improvement Partnership East Midlands

Culture on the Strategic Agenda

Local Area Agreements, Sustainable Communities Strategies and community leadership

Overview

Cultural services benefit every aspect of people's lives. The best cultural services forge an alliance not just with other council departments but with local partners in the public, business and voluntary sectors.

Why it matters

Councils are not only responsible for the services they deliver. They are required to provide 'community leadership' in their local authority area as a whole by working with other agencies. Councillors are in the front line of community leadership. This briefing outlines the most important developments where culture needs to play a strategic role.

Key messages

- **Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are set to become the most important mechanism for setting priorities for action and spending in a local authority area – for the council and its partners.**
- **Cultural services do not feature in LAAs as of right – but they can, and should, make an important contribution to all the LAA priorities.**
- **More than any other service, culture can play a part in all aspects of people's lives and in the wellbeing of communities.**

Background

Every local authority area (at district, county or unitary level) is required to have a Local Strategic Partnership bringing together key partners from the public,

business, voluntary and community sectors. The council must work with their LSP to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy. The best community strategies are also the fruit of extensive public consultation.

There is now a more formal arrangement for focusing partnership work and public funds at county or unitary authority level – the Local Area Agreement. An LAA is a three year agreement, based on local Sustainable Community Strategies, that sets out the priorities for a local area. The agreement is made between Central Government, represented by the Government Office (GO), and a local area, represented by the lead local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnerships.

There are currently four blocks in every LAA:

Children and Young People: Cultural Services deliver on all five outcomes of 'Every Child Matters', the framework for children and young people's services - for example through the 'Bookstart' programme in libraries which gives free books to parents and carers, or the curriculum-based educational programmes run by museums, both of which make an important contribution to the Every Child Matters outcome of '**Enjoy and Achieve**'. Sport and physical activity play an important role in delivering '**Be healthy**', as well as encouraging young people to '**Make A Positive Contribution**' through volunteering. Quality play provision can help children to '**Stay Safe**', and arts, particularly the creative industries, provide a career path for young people on their way to '**Economic Wellbeing**'. In almost every consultation young people they say they want 'more things to do' – and culture can provide things which are fun, safe and easy to access.

Safer and Stronger Communities: Better parks and open spaces are an important part of quality of life, and Green Flag/Green Pennant awards are a key way to demonstrate these. Arts, libraries, sport and museums are among the most effective ways of building community cohesion and reaching people who are marginalised or disadvantaged. Cultural services play an important role in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour by providing diversionary activities for young people, or helping with the rehabilitation of offenders.



Healthier communities and older people: There is strong evidence for the benefit of sport to health and well-being. People who are physically active reduce their risks of major chronic illness by up to 50% and their risk of premature death by 20-30%. The economic costs of physical inactivity in England are £8.2 billion annually. LAA's can promote 'regular exercise' using the Sport England target of adults taking part in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport or exercise on 3 or more occasions a week. Cultural activities like art, libraries and museums play an important role in the lives of older people with targeted services to reduce isolation and maintain independence, or to reduce falls. They also help maintain positive mental health and well being, from art classes for people with learning disabilities, to drama work with young people who have been bullied or abused.

Economic development and enterprise: Many cultural services support lifelong learning, from structured programmes in libraries and museums through to self expression in the arts, providing routes through to employment or personal development, increased confidence and self esteem. The creative industries are a rapidly developing part of the regional economy, and festivals, leisure facilities and other visitor attractions play an important part in economic growth.

The Local Government White Paper gives local authorities a stronger local leadership role, to which cultural services will be able to make an important contribution. A separate briefing on the White Paper explains these opportunities further.

"The culture section has a real opportunity to place culture as a key element across LAAs, and as an integral part of Sustainable Community Strategies."
Russell Coughtrey, Culture Media and Sport Manager, Government Office for the East Midlands.



Photo: Leicester City Council

Your next steps

- Find out how cultural services feature in your Local Area Agreement and current Community Strategy
- Discuss with the managers responsible what is being done to achieve the objectives set out in your LAA for culture
- Make sure that cultural priorities feature in the new Sustainable Community Strategy which will underpin the LAA
- Ensure culture has a central role in the development of your new LAA and advocate for culture as a cross-cutting driver across the four themes

Case Study: Health and Learning

Leicestershire 'Active Together'

Leicestershire residents have been reaping the health benefits thanks to £750,000 total funding from Sport England Community Investment Fund, local partner funding for the 'Active Together' project, and a 'stretch target' in Leicestershire's Local Area Agreement. 1,100 Leicestershire residents have been taking part in activities targeted to meet their needs - from guided walks and bike rides to 'Nordic walking' and 'dodgeball'.

The project aims to increase the current levels of physical activity amongst adults to 3x30mins per week, which, according to a survey undertaken on behalf of Sport England, only 22.3% of Leicestershire's adult population currently do.

Leicester City Museums programme for schools

Through resources provided by Renaissance in the Regions, Leicester City Council's Museums Service has been able to increase the percentage of city schools using museums to 90% of schools. This has delivered on a high level outcome in the Children and Young People's Block of Leicester's LAA: to enrich curriculum and recreational opportunities within and beyond the school day. The service has now exceeded the first year target, with a new Education Room opened at Jewry Wall Museum, new active learning sessions, school loans boxes, and a cross curricular learning package for the Learn with Museums website. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker project has worked with schools to develop and deliver an awareness-raising programme which will have worked with over 2,000 pupils.



Cultural Improvement Partnership
East Midlands

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