

Member Briefing

Cultural Improvement Partnership East Midlands

Culture Providing Quality of Life for All

Giving everyone the chance to benefit from sport and culture

Overview

Culture makes life worth living. It is what we do whether kicking a football around, going to the cinema, or taking a walk in a local park. Cultural activity is the glue that holds communities together and everyone should have access to it. In practice, however, certain groups tend to be underrepresented. It is the duty of local authorities to try and ensure that everyone benefits.

Why it Matters

Executive Members have a responsibility to ensure their services do not exclude certain people. Likewise, scrutiny Members have a duty to advocate on behalf of those whom council services fail to reach. But ultimately, it is Councillors who will have the sharpest view of where cultural services are letting people down.

Key Messages

- **Portfolio holders and scrutiny Members have a special responsibility towards those who are not engaged by what the council's cultural services currently offer.**
- **Participation is going to be a top government priority for culture, and councils will need to show they take equal opportunities seriously.**
- **Cultural services are a powerful mechanism to stimulate people into getting involved and strengthening their community.**

Background

Cultural services make a real difference to people's quality of life. Cultural activity is linked with people's identity, confidence, self-esteem, joy and pleasure. It helps people learn, helps them stay healthy, stimulates the economy through jobs and participation and helps communities grow and develop a sense of identity and place.

Culture provides communities with all of these benefits, yet some cultural services still drop 'below the radar'. This is where Councillors, who are elected to represent all their constituents, and not just those who use their services, come in. Because of the unique contribution that culture makes to social cohesion, a failure to engage certain sections of society can expose some communities to longer-term risks.

For people in black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, those with a mental or physical disability, and social classes C2, D and E, participation is often 10 or 20 % lower than average. But careful targeting is needed: nationally, participation in sport by BME groups is only marginally lower than that of all adults but 10% higher than adults from C2, D and E groups.

National policy is placing increasing emphasis on encouraging people to take part in art, culture and sport and ensuring that the participation of under-represented groups is addressed. For example, Round 7 of the Beacon Council Scheme, which recognises excellence and innovation in local government, included best practice in provision of Culture and Sport for Hard to Reach Groups. For further information visit: <http://tinyurl.com/7jg65>

Making use of existing data is one way of helping councils to make informed decisions on spending and provisions. Your council may already have data from satisfaction surveys which might help. Alternatively, there are various sources of data available including the Office of National Statistics, the Audit Commission, Intelligence East Midlands or the sub-regional Observatories in the East Midlands that will offer a sense of what provision is already available and what communities lack.



Case Study: Changing Lives Through Sport

In 2006/07 Leicester City Council was awarded Beacon Status for Culture and Sport for hard to reach groups. Braunstone is a predominantly white neighbourhood with high levels of deprivation, crime, teenage pregnancy, smoking, heart disease and unemployment, as well as a public perception of poor service provision by all the agencies. With Braunstone Community Association and the Sports Action Zone funded by Sport England Leicester City Council created a partnership across a wide range of agencies and carried out an extensive consultation exercise which included Braunstone residents. Together we listened to what people said and worked closely with them to transform their aspirations into action and build a new £10 million leisure facility.

Our innovative approach includes discounted admission rates for Braunstone residents, a crèche and a SureStart nursery managed by a resident's co-operative, job training to skill up local people (30 Braunstone residents have been successfully recruited to work in the leisure centre), and sustainable transport links.

Activities on offer include 'Fit Active Buddies (FAB)' an award winning sports mentoring scheme, 'Calorie Killers' weight control classes for men, both in partnership with Sport England and the Primary Care Trust, and a NACRO project 'Score for Sport' using sport as a vehicle to discourage young people from offending which has had a real impact in this area. Crime has dropped on the estate by 23% - not the perception of crime but a real reduction in offences. Since opening in 2004 Braunstone Leisure Centre has been used by 400,000 people and has helped Leicester City Council increase participation among people on low incomes as well as other priority groups. It has acted as the catalyst for real change. An estate with a poor reputation now has a housing waiting list of 2 years. In the words of one resident:

"Our leisure centre is the best thing that ever happened to the estate"



Photo: Leicester City Council

Your next steps

- Find out what Active People Survey says about participation in your area and how well it matches with indicators of health and well-being.
- Get a picture of the diversity of your area, for instance which wards have more mixed ethnicity, deprivation, and other social factors – and then compare it with the pattern of provision. How well do they match up?
- Ask what policies exist to widen participation, and how the services are performing against them.

