



CULTURE

for Cities and Regions



Culture on your doorstep : bringing culture to your neighbourhood



- Social cohesion
- Inclusion of marginalised groups
- Citizenship
- Access to culture
- Intercultural dialogue
- Social innovation

Context

Birmingham is the second largest city in the UK, after London, with 1,100,000 inhabitants. Situated in the West Midlands, Birmingham has the youngest population of any major city in Europe. The population is very diverse thanks to a high rate of immigration in the city.

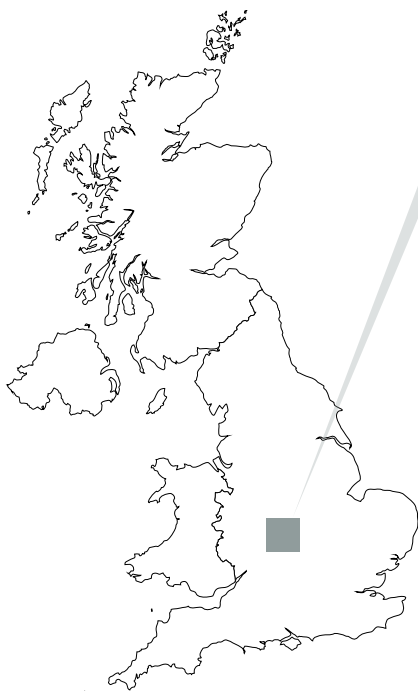
Birmingham has a lot to offer in terms of cultural facilities, but cultural assets remain almost exclusively in the city centre, and the major cultural companies and venues receive the majority of the city council's revenue support for cultural activities.

The 10 administrative districts of Birmingham serve on average 100,000 people each. But they do not have the venues and facilities which would be associated with towns of a similar size. In order to improve access to cultural activities for the inhabitants, the city decided to improve cultural facilities in the outer city and deliver programmes at a neighbourhood level, using facilities in the community.

Priorities of the city in terms of culture have been identified within Big City Culture 2010-15: Birmingham's Cultural Strategy. Big City Culture has been developed as the cultural component of Birmingham 2026 – the Sustainable Community Strategy for the city. This strategy enables effective strategic planning to support the development of the cultural sector and address the needs of local people. Culture on your doorstep is one of the four chapters of this global strategy.

Challenges

Many inhabitants of Birmingham would like to engage more in cultural activities but encounter a range of barriers including time and transport constraints, high prices, access to information and unfamiliarity with culture. The main challenge for Birmingham was therefore to provide infrastructure for culture beyond the city centre, including making best use of central resources and giving people in neighbourhoods more influence over what cultural activities are provided and linking them to other locally neglected priorities, such as those relating to health, literacy and integration.



Culture on your doorstep

Culture on your doorstep is a programme in three components strands that aims to provide and promote good quality cultural activities, relevant for residents and accessible in local neighbourhoods, in order to increase participation. Activities are thought to bring local people together with their neighbours to experience cultural activities and improve the cohesion of the community. The city has identified 31 'Priority Neighbourhoods' with low levels of cultural participation, where a long-term approach is needed and additional attention and resources are required. The three components of the programme are as follows:

Active since 2005, *Arts Champion* is a scheme designed to ensure that 11 city-funded major arts organisations based in the city centre deliver cultural activities in remote districts. Each organisation ('champion') is paired with a new district every three years. Each arts organisation is asked to provide activities for adults and families (other schemes specifically target young people), based on local priorities, in order to reduce social isolation and increase social cohesion. This forms part of their funding agreement with the Council for their revenue grant. An additional sum (£4,000 per district per year) is available to help attract funds from other places, but the organisations are expected to mainly use their core resources to support the work. Working on

a three-year cycle enables strong partnerships to be built and the whole district to be covered.

The Culture Commissioning Service also initiated a *Local Arts Forum* in each of the city's 10 districts in 2011. Local Arts Fora offer a flexible network for advocating the arts at a district level and helping to develop capacity for the arts locally through effective partnerships and ways of working. Each Arts Forum has a respective Arts Champion and a coordinator that has an overview of the cultural offering across their area.

Started in 2014, the *Culture co-design programme* enables residents who previously had no or minimal engagement in cultural activities to become involved in the design of cultural offer in their local neighbourhood. Key stakeholders, artists, arts organisations and residents were consulted in the different districts as to what already existed in terms of arts and cultural activities, what the needs and gaps were, and how residents and groups could contribute to co-designing a cultural programme. The next stages of co-design are gathering information about available activities, identifying those residents not currently participating, and encouraging dialogue about the relevance of provision and barriers to engagement, then providing support for residents to commission cultural activities which speak more directly to them.





Budget and financing



In Birmingham, 53% of the project funding for culture is dedicated to cultural diversity.

Councillor Ian Ward



In 2013-14 £85,903 million (€119,908 million) was spent on cultural and leisure activities to help improve the quality of life of the residents of Birmingham. The City Council is the biggest contributor in the field of culture and leisure activities.

Arts Champion: for 2014-15, the strand secured €146,020.93. Each Arts Champion is paid £4,000 per year.

Local Arts Fora: £30,000 a year (€42,000) – in each of the 10 districts, an organisation is paid £3,000 to facilitate the Local Arts Forum.

Culture co-design programme: £120,000 (€168,000) each year: £40,000 from the city's council, £40,000 from the Department for Communities and Local Governments and £40,000 from the National Arts Council.

Impact

Evaluation reports for Arts Champion show that they have resulted in increased participation in cultural activities, increased employment of artists, and increased outreach to disadvantaged people across the city.

For Arts Champion, audiences have increased from 8,872 in 2011-12 to 18,166 in 2012-13 (a 51% increase). Participation in cultural activities has almost doubled from 1,103 in 2011-12 to 2,297 in 2012-13. Local Arts Fora provide a much improved understanding and coordination of cultural activity provision at local neighbourhood level and their success and membership is increasing every year. Several fora have since become not-for-profit organisations in their own right. The feedback from the co-designing scheme gives important evidence that the approach is working; people are undertaking arts activities, some for the first time. The range of art forms used is highly varied as is the diversity of participating cultural and socio-economic groups. The benefits of engagement contribute to bringing different communities together.

By bringing cultural activities and facilities even to the most remote neighbourhoods of the city, the programme *Culture on your doorstep* ensures a strong cohesion among communities and provides access to culture for all, regardless of their geographical location.

Transferability

Some of the key challenges to overcome when implementing such a programme are as follow:

- Measuring the positive impacts of the programme: the number of participants has been recorded, but there is always a need for more detailed monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensuring audience participation, especially in neighbourhoods with high levels of economic deprivation and low levels of educational attainment.
- Expectations of the programme and its activities need to be realistic and in line with capabilities of individuals volunteering for the different activities.
- Creating effective strategic collaboration between all the organisations involved: the partnerships and contacts between organisations vary, with different levels of collaboration around local priorities and objectives

Tips



The principle and aims of Culture on your doorstep are likely to be universal. Birmingham has developed these low-cost initiatives to improve engagement and participation outcomes across the city and to ensure value is driven from the major investments in large institutions to deliver for a wider range of residents.



The Arts Champions model has been shared with other cities in the UK and Europe, as there is potential for a similar approach to be taken by other local authorities. An alternative is for groups of local authorities to work together: they may not have their own local arts companies, but they may have the potential to draw on the resources of regional companies.

Sustainability

The Arts Champion scheme is fully established and supported by the organisations and locally based politicians. The Local Arts Fora are becoming increasingly important resources, as the capacity to deliver within the local authority is decreasing at a rapid rate. Culture on your doorstep is therefore a strategic and central strand of Birmingham City Council's strategy for culture and will continue and develop over the coming years.

Management level and partners

The programme is managed by Birmingham City Council, together with the major funded arts organisations in the city and the Local Arts Fora established in each district. The Department for Communities and Local Government and Arts Council England are involved in the Co-design programme as they are partly funding it. Culture Officers of the Culture Commissioning Service of the city advise district colleagues in developing Local Arts infrastructure by supporting Local Arts Planning, Local Arts Fora and the sharing of information.

Links :

<http://birminghamculture.org>
www.birmingham.gov.uk/arts

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EUROPEAN AFFAIRS



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