

Arts & Culture for Social Cohesion

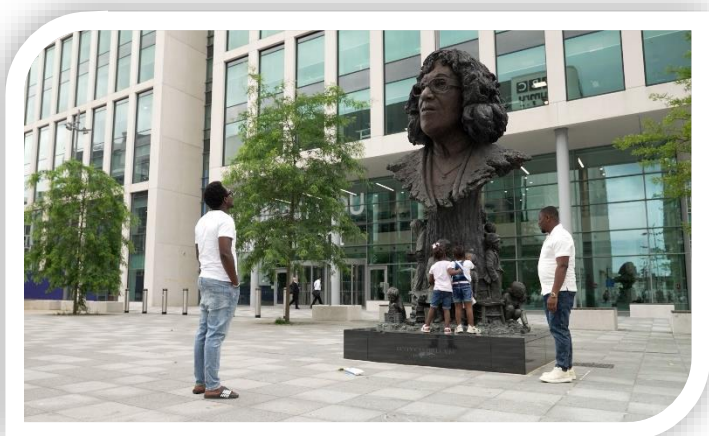


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Executive Summary

The partner councils: Cardiff Council, North Herts District Council, Oldham City Council and Stevenage Borough Council, have been working together throughout the policy lab to demonstrate; how co-operative councils, can use Arts & Culture as a strong drive of development, social cohesion, and vibrancy of town centres. All four councils differ in their size, scope and resources and have been using the term of the policy lab to design and develop better ways of utilising arts & culture to bring communities together, encourage partnerships and increase cultural offerings in town centres.

Cardiff Council has a population of 362,300 according to the office of national statistics Cardiff had the highest proportions of people identifying within the high-level categories “Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh” (9.7%), “Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African” (3.8%), “Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups” (4.0%) and “Other ethnic group” (3.3%) [How life has changed in Cardiff: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) Their project centres around cultural activities during refugee week and celebrating the life of Betty Campbell.

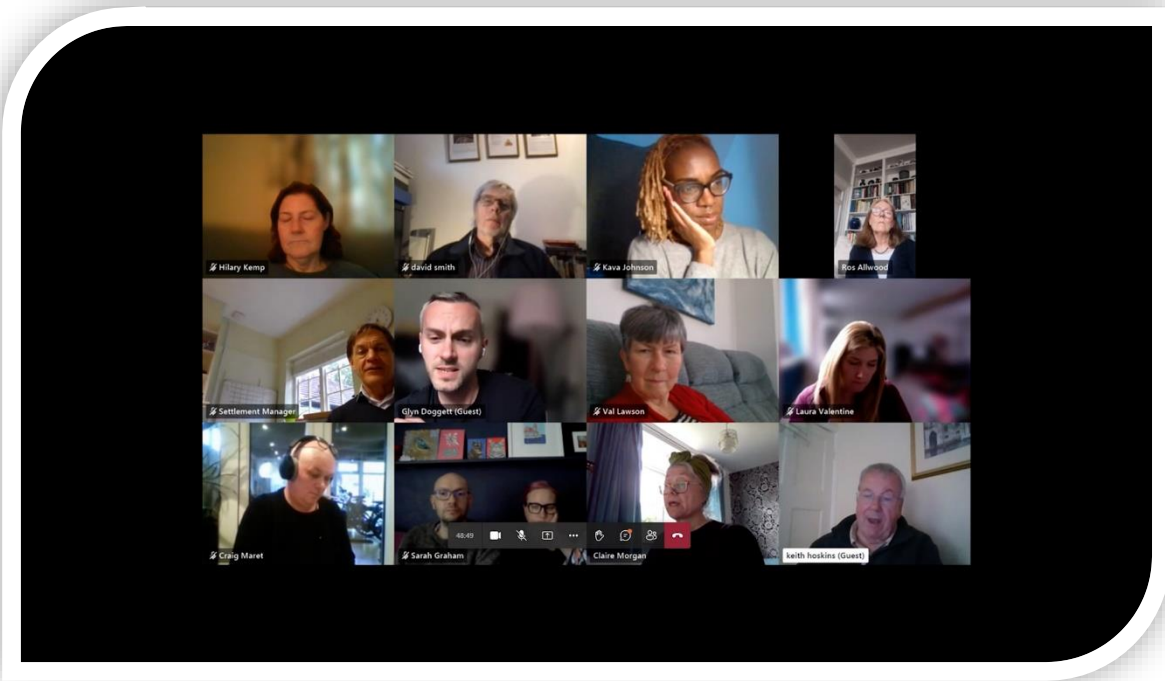
North Herts District Council covers a large area of Hertfordshire including rural and urban areas with an overall population of 134,000. North Herts have set up an Arts & Culture Networking Group the need for this was identified following a Cabinet Panel covering Community & Enterprise. Participants were looking for better ways to network with other creatives and wanted a vehicle to be able to do this. As an authority they were aware that cultural and arts activities held in and around town centres attract visitors and as a result make town centres.

Oldham City Council covers a population of 242,100. There are many people of South Asian decent within the community, especially from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. Oldham council strives to encourage community cohesion between the white British and the ethnic minorities who are part of the town’s heritage. The Linking Schools Programme highlights an initiative to bring school children together from different communities to work on arts activities that encourage learning about each other.

Stevenage Borough Council caters to a population of roughly 89,000.
Have an online arts and heritage forum to encourage a wide range of communities.

Out of the arts and heritage forum came the **CIC Junction 7 Creatives** which allows people to come together and create. Stevenage Day promotes all the communities in Stevenage and is a macro representation of Stevenage.

This report provides a summary of the co-operative models used by the partners as contained within the Policy Lab learning video. <https://player.vimeo.com/video/862469013>



Arts & Culture for Social Cohesion

Culture and arts can be strong drivers of development, social cohesion, and change. At the heart of social cohesion is social inclusion. Communities with low social cohesion often have low involvement or access to civic engagement, economic opportunity, and social participation. Supporting the role of culture is vital to building social cohesion. Culture is essential for avoiding conflicts and for conflict resolution. It is an ideal means of communicating across language barriers, empowering people, and facilitating social cohesion, including among refugees, migrants, and host populations. It prevents marginalisation of people based on their cultural identity, socio-economic status, age, and other factors. Increasing culture offerings in town centres encourages people to use them more with increased footfall and dwell time to retail, hospitality businesses and other high street amenities.

With this policy lab we aim to:

Raise the profile of arts and culture events and activities locally.

- Widen engagement with arts and culture offerings by developing an understanding of how to reach a broader range of the community.

- Understand what other kinds of arts and culture events/activities we could be offering.
- Understand what groups and voices could be better represented within arts and culture activities (for example, this could include more LGBTQ exhibitions, or history events related to a particular culture)

This project demonstrates how to work with partners and other CCIN members collaboratively to establish co-operative working, both within and across local areas. For example, showcasing how creatives are encouraged to work together via arts and culture networks, as well as demonstrate how neighbouring authorities can work together on arts and culture offerings. The project will also identify how to drive change by understanding how we can reach a broader section of the community to engage in our arts and culture offerings and ensure they are represented in the events and activities that occur. In doing so this improves outcomes including social cohesion, social and civic participation, life satisfaction and health, as well as the local economy.

CCIN Values and Principles



Social Partnership

To improve social partnerships.

- Discover the culture you have in your area.
- Engage with creatives.
- Find out where those networks are and bring them together.
- Know your communities recognise the distinctions between them, their history and culture.
- Listen to people and what they want.
- Never make assumptions about what the community needs.



Maximising social value

Being creative is good for the soul, it's good for mental and physical wellbeing.
Arts & Culture is the key to bringing everyone together.
Opportunities can be life changing.



Enterprise and social economy

Don't underestimate the value of Arts & Culture to your communities.

It makes a huge contribution to the overall offer of your town/city centre or even your village.

The creatives community can provide something different and varied to your commercial centres which will in turn increase footfall and engagement. People are realising that commercial centres are no longer dominated by retail. They are being used for leisure. Providing cultural activities for people to be involved in enables people to feel part of the town or city and encourage use of the retail and hospitality businesses available.





Learning

Art is something everyone has an opinion on therefore it's a good way of engaging your communities. Some of the key learning areas for each council are.

- Make use of your resources in terms of art & culture.
- Trust and listen to your communities.
- Immerse yourself in your area to understand the needs of the community.
- Try not to engage with the same organisations all the time, reach out to new groups and emerging creatives.
- Build strong partnerships.
 - work on the relationships and nurture them build trust.
 - Be consistent.
 - Cultivate good communication and a two-way relationship that both parties benefit from.

Arts, Heritage, and Culture should not be seen as passive, make it integral to everyday life as it helps the community to have a sense of place and where they're from.



Democratic Engagement

Throughout the process, the members worked co-operatively with mutually beneficial relationships built between authorities differing in size, location and make up. Through this process, officers and councillors alike have been able to develop their own understanding and practice, sharing experiences, learning, successes, and failures. This development opportunity has enabled the authorities to better support the communities which they serve. Equally, the values and principles of the CCIN have enabled the authorities taking part in the policy lab to better focus their delivery of services through coproduction, engagement, consultation and sharing of knowledge.

Case Studies

Cardiff Council: Case study comprises of a brief overview alongside a film documenting the project that can be accessed via the link below.

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/863120356>



Cardiff Council

Arts and Culture – how Cardiff use it to promote community cohesion and inclusion.

The Council's role as an enabler is to work with communities and organisations to add value together, to empower the people who live and work in our city and build strong resilient communities. Across the city, artwork represents all the faces of Cardiff and gives people the belief that they can be whoever and whatever they want to be.

As part of Refugee Week, Hamed Amiri talked about his book and subsequent play 'The Boy with Two Hearts' which chronicles his and his family's journey as refugees from Afghanistan to the safety of the UK. Pupils at St Mary the Virgin Church in Wales Primary School also created a poem and a film 'A Zig Zag Journey', a story of hope, love, and compassion for anyone seeking sanctuary. The film starts at the statue of Betty Campbell in the city centre. Betty was from Cardiff and was the first black headteacher in Wales. The statue is the first statue of a real Welsh woman in Wales. A one-woman show, called 'Betty Campbell – A Journey through Butetown', has been performed across the city and takes school children on a historical journey through Butetown, Cardiff, from the building of the docklands through two world wars and onto modern-day Cardiff Bay – all told through Betty's eyes.

Wales Millennium Centre enables people to tell their story in different ways, be that by through plays such as 'The Boy with Two Hearts', displaying artwork or photos or through

‘Platform’, the youth radio station which provides training and skills to young people from the local area.

For further information contact:

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Case Studies

North Herts Council: Case study comprises of a brief overview alongside a film documenting the project that can be accessed via the link below.

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/861228981>



North Hertfordshire District Council

Arts & Culture how NHC use it to regenerate and increase footfall in our Town Centres
Geographically North Herts District Council covers a large area including several large towns as well as many rural and village locations.

Following a Cabinet Panel for Community and Enterprise held in June 2021 we examined how arts and culture might increase footfall within the 4 town centres in the district. Initially inviting several artists, creatives, and community arts groups. From that meeting it was agreed that it would be beneficial to set up an Arts & Culture networking group and the Community Engagement team proceeded to list as many arts & culture organisations they could think of including museums, libraries, galleries, community groups, theatre groups, cinemas, arts venues etc. Approximately 50 creative organisations were invited to the first meeting.

Two years later the North Herts Arts & Culture network are still going strong. It enables groups and individual artists to link up, share limited resources, work in partnership on projects and work with creatives from other disciplines that they might not otherwise be in contact with.

Smaller focus groups have been established such as Hitchin Creatives who are pivotal in organising the Hitchin Festival.

Artists are linked up with local charities and community groups to bring art to the wider community.

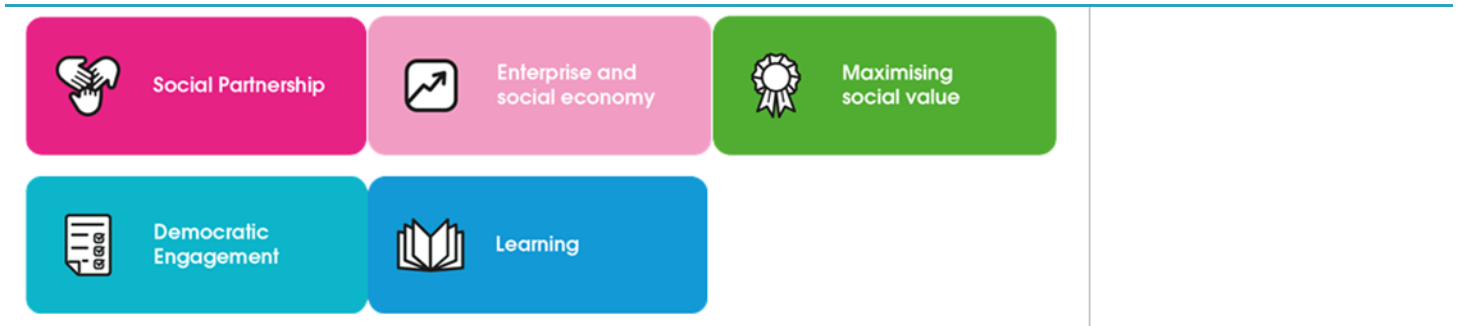
They are also linked up with local businesses such as commercial art galleries, or retail and hospitality businesses to provide a community art trail to bring the public into town and actually into and engaging with the local business community.

For further information contact:

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Case Studies



Oldham Council: Case study comprises of a brief overview alongside a film documenting the project that can be accessed via the link below.

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/862045444>

Oldham Council

How Arts & Culture promote inclusivity in the area highlighting the diversity of population in Oldham

We bring children together from schools that have been paired by the Oldham Linking Schools team. They explore the Gallery Oldham collections and take part in creative activities to encourage the children to think about identity and the many things that they have in common. They work together to make a banner that expresses this shared identity. Over the course of a year, we usually welcome over 20 schools into the gallery to take part in these sessions. At the end of the year, we host a celebration that brings all the banners together.

This follows the work of 26 local primary schools and their involvement in the Schools Linking Project, a national initiative aimed at building relationships amongst younger people who may not otherwise meet. For the past 12 months, children aged 8–11 have had the opportunity to meet pupils from other schools and learn more about their own experiences during visits to different schools, Gallery Oldham and Castleshaw Centre.

Participating pupils have also accessed workshops, physical activities, trails and online resources, with teachers encouraging pupils to develop a sense of belonging in their community and foster a commitment to support their own communities.

At the heart of this work has been the sharing of time, experiences and conversations with other children and young people from different backgrounds.

"Schools Linking enables children to understand the way in which they can unite and influence their own future for the better. It is most certainly a powerful platform for building community cohesion and supporting global citizenship."

For further information contact:

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Case Studies

Stevenage Borough Council: Case study comprises of a brief overview alongside a film documenting the project that can be accessed via the link below.

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/863353663>



Stevenage Borough Council

Arts & Culture – How SBC use it to bring diverse communities together.

Creating Spaces for Art and Culture in Stevenage focusses on the provision of community spaces through events such as Stevenage day and International Day as well as the accessibility of facilities such as our museum. We also look at the development of creative spaces like Junction 7 Creatives, an organisation based in the heart of our town helping local people to access and explore creativity and culture. Our focus on the development of our creative spaces, access opportunities and community led events, showcases a small

sample of the myriad of art and cultural activities in the town. These bring together communities and ensure that everyone has space for expression.

Stevenage Day is a vibrant and historical town wide event with representation from community groups, charities, volunteers, faith groups and local businesses spanning all cultures within Stevenage. Celebrating through music, dance, storytelling and art, the event is co-ordinated and supported by SBC and charitable partners and brings the town together in celebration. It provides a snapshot of cultures and communities in Stevenage as well as the opportunity for community groups to share their culture and stories with everyone.

Stevenage Museum tells the story of Stevenage from pre-history to its development as the first New Town and on to the present day, using objects (both in cases and on open display to touch and explore), text panels, with (hearing loop) sound summaries of key panels, films, and a variety of hands-on activities and computer interactives.

Junction 7 Creatives Junction 7 Creatives is a friendly and passionate community of all ages and experience – working with paint, words, photography, sculpture, music, dance and more! We love making all kinds of creative things happen. It is the place to be for artists and anyone who wants to get creative in Stevenage. They create a space to enjoy art and find community, displaying the artworks of people living in and around Stevenage as well as running various events & activities that invite everyone to express themselves creatively.

For further information contact:

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Conclusion

Arts & Culture are an integral part of every community.

Bringing together the diverse groups that make up our communities allows the use of the arts as a vehicle to share culture and heritage and provide individuals with a sense of place and belonging. It encourages cohesion within the community and enables groups to share their lived experiences with each other, to learn about each other's differences and similarities.

It helps to integrate those that might otherwise be socially isolated, or not engaging with the wider community. For instance, minority ethnic groups, young people, older people, those with disabilities or mental health issues can all engage through the arts and share their culture and heritage with a wider audience.

Bringing arts and culture events and activities into Town Centres encourages visitors in otherwise diminishing High Streets. Local businesses can get involved with artists along with voluntary / charity sector groups.

Facilitating networking between creatives allows them to be part of the communities they work within.

As an artist it can be easy to work in a vacuum, but by reaching out and connecting with other creatives across the disciplines allows a wider audience for their work.

Connection is key.

The local councils, museums, businesses, creatives, and community must connect in order to develop a strong sense of belonging and social cohesion in our areas.