

ARTS POLICY AND STRATEGY REVIEW 2012 DRAFT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This is an Executive Summary of a review of Halton Borough Council's arts policy and strategy. It is a qualitative review, based on consultation with staff and service users, and an independent appraisal of the work of the arts service.

The purpose of the report is:

- to recognise and commend good practice
- to understand the relationship between arts development work and the Council's wider corporate objectives
- to identify areas for service development and improvement
- to suggest areas where cross-service working can be strengthened
- to help the Arts Development Team in developing their action plan and business plan for the next phase of arts development work in Halton.

Overview

The Borough of Halton has some important strengths in the arts, including its award-winning venue The Brindley, the successes of the enthusiastic and dedicated arts team in encouraging so many people to take part in the arts in different ways, the role of the arts in local schools and increasingly with younger children in the Children's Centres, and in the growing contribution by independent artists and practitioners attracted to work here.

Interest in the arts has undoubtedly grown since the Borough Council had the confidence and vision to create The Brindley. Nevertheless in an area without a strong local tradition of taking part in the arts, with relatively sparse public transport links across the Borough in the evenings, and the river crossing even now seen as a barrier by some people, there is a continuing challenge in encouraging people to have the confidence to find out what they're good at and what they might become interested in.

While the value of arts in contributing to the quality of life is increasingly understood and accepted, there are still many people who have unequal opportunities to enjoy taking part in and experiencing the arts. The challenge – and the reward – for the Borough Council is to support an arts development programme which encourages people to develop their creativity, and in doing so to achieve some of the other community benefits, as outlined in this report.

Policy

In renewing its arts strategy the Borough Council's aspiration is that:

- the value of the arts will be recognised right across the work of the Council
- the importance of the arts as a key driver of the quality of life will be acknowledged in corporate strategies
- the Council will support and encourage high quality arts activities which have integrity, and in which imagination, originality and innovation are valued.

The policy of the Council is to develop and support opportunities for everybody in Halton:

- to be able – and encouraged – to take part in and experience high quality arts activity, and
- to be able to share in the social, educational and economic benefits which the arts can offer.

This policy is delivered not only through the Arts Development Team and the work of The Brindley, but also through other services including schools and other services for children and young people, libraries.

Strategic themes

The arts strategy will:

1. contribute to **a healthy Halton**, through arts projects in health-care settings, arts development activities with specific target groups (such as older people) and promoting healthy lifestyles through dance.
2. contribute to **Halton's urban renewal**, through managing The Brindley as a creative focus for the Borough, through outreach and neighbourhood projects which contribute to community regeneration, and through developing a strategic approach to public art so as to promote sense of identity and pride of place and contribute to the quality of design.
3. support **the employment, learning and skills of those within Halton**, through building local talent and nurturing the growth of the independent artists sector and independent arts groups.
4. contribute **opportunities for Halton's children and young people**, through formal and informal learning opportunities and a range of participatory arts activities.
5. contribute to **a safer Halton**, through arts projects which animate the community and promote community cohesion, diversionary programmes for children and young people, and arts projects which contribute to strategies to counter drug and substances misuse or which tackle specific issues of offending behaviours.
6. provide **leadership** and develop **partnerships**, through maintaining and developing a strategic framework for the arts in Halton, developing internal partnerships and collaborations with services of the Council and developing external partnerships and collaborations with other agencies.

The strategy sets out the workstreams to be implemented to deliver each of these themes, and the improvement outcomes that will be expected.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This section introduces the report and summarises the national and regional context.

1.1 What do we mean by 'the arts'?

The arts are understood within this strategy to encompass:

- the **performing arts**, including music, dance, drama and other performance
- the **visual arts**, including crafts and public art
- the **literary arts**, including literature, poetry, reading, writing and the spoken word
- **media arts**, including film, video, broadcasting, digital creativity and the creative use of communications technology, such as creating material for use on social networking sites.

1.2 National and regional policy for the arts

Overall national policy for the cultural sector is led by the **Department for Culture, Media and Sport** (DCMS). The Department's aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries. DCMS aims to maximise the contribution the arts sector makes to its strategic priorities of:

- children and young people
- communities
- the economy
- delivery.

Most of DCMS's support for the arts is channelled through **Arts Council England**, which works "to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives".

Arts Council England wants more people to experience and be inspired by the arts, irrespective of where they live or their social, educational or financial circumstances. Funding streams to enable this are developed and Arts Development's role is to access, apply or identify the appropriate partner / organisation to do so.

Any such funding received and benefitting Halton residents will be matched with an exit strategy, developed by the Arts Team in partnership with participants, to ensure the legacy and transition from public funding is sustainable and expectations and ambitions are reached.

PART 2: REVIEW

This section provides an overview commentary on the arts on Halton.

2.1 Overview: Arts provision in the Borough

The main **strengths** are:

- The Brindley, as a focal point for arts activity across the Borough
- the arts development team, and the passion, integrity, commitment and resourcefulness which they bring to their programme of work
- the role of the arts in the Borough's schools and increasingly in the Children's Centres, with the educational value of the arts firmly on the agenda of the Children & Young People's Service
- the way in which many other Council services use the arts, in partnership with the arts team, as a way of helping them deliver their services
- the growing contribution of independent practitioners, many of whom have been drawn here by the leadership of the arts team and The Brindley
- the commitment by the Borough Council to using the arts as one of the means by which the quality of life is improved for all residents, contributing to corporate objectives such as educational aspiration and achievement, health and well-being and urban renewal.

The main **weaknesses** are:

- the relatively small and under-developed scale of professional arts activity other than that directly managed or supported by the Council
- limited inward investment in the arts, and a limited range of independent partners, meaning there is a considerable dependence on the continuing support of the Borough Council
- a dependence on artists and arts organisations from further afield to complement the contribution made by locally-based artists

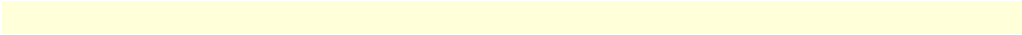
The strategy will build on the existing strengths, and seek to make progress in addressing some of the perceived weaknesses.

The work of the arts development team has enabled many people to take part in creative activities, and the bold stroke of setting up The Brindley has provided an enormous boost to local cultural opportunities, but this needs to be understood within a local context of relatively low levels of activity and a lack of critical mass caused in part by limited local traditions of cultural engagement.

While Halton Borough Council is ambitious and determined to improve opportunities for local people, it is constrained by the relatively small size of the Borough, and a degree of weakness caused both by the physical division by the River Mersey and its ambiguous identity as being aligned to the greater Merseyside conurbation while retaining some residual affinity with the old identities of Cheshire and Lancashire.

2.2 Commitment by the Borough Council

Within Halton Borough Council there is understanding and support at both political and management levels for the role of the arts. There is recognition that the arts provide opportunities to achieve a range of corporate objectives.



2.3 The Brindley

Since its opening in 2004 The Brindley has established itself as one of the best venues of its size in the North West, with a great reputation for the quality and range of its programme, for imaginative arts projects involving local communities and for nurturing and developing artists. It has been a great success from many perspectives:

- it has raised aspirations and become symbolic of a confident future for the Borough, winning awards and raising the reputation of Halton across the region and beyond
- it has provided a creative focus for the Borough, a focus for audience development, and is generally liked by users and is one of the best venues of its scale in the North West region
- arts development work and professional performances and exhibitions are well integrated, so the venue is much stronger than in places where the venue and the arts development work are separated
- the programme serves many different market niches while maintaining an integrity in the originality and quality of work it presents
- it has created new audiences through its programming and participatory events
- the wide range of classes and workshops provide structured opportunities to take part regularly for children, teenagers and older people; for example, young dancers who regularly attend The Brindley for creative dance classes have local, regional and even national opportunities in dance performance
- there is evidence that it is attracting audiences from further afield who are attracted by the programme, the venue itself and its location, and its attractiveness as an alternative proposition to attending large scale venues in Liverpool or Manchester. **INCLUDE STATS HERE**

At the same time it is clear that:

- there is a continuing reluctance by some people in the Borough, especially from the north bank of the river, to travel to Runcorn
- access by public transport, while excellent during the day from all parts of the Borough, is weak in the evenings
- the task of raising The Brindley's profile locally and regionally needs to continue.

While The Brindley is a magnificent achievement, it is not possible for one single venue to meet all the Borough's needs. In particular:

- *there is a continuing demand for a more informal music venue and for rehearsal spaces – Queens Hall studio*
- *any plans for managed workspaces or artists' studios for fledgling creative industries would need to be developed at other locations – e.g. Hazlehurst studio's*
- *there will continue to be a need for arts activities distributed around the Borough in community locations for people who are unable or reluctant to travel to The Brindley.*

2.4 Arts development work

The Borough has a team of **arts development officers** who work with service users, artists and practitioners and external stakeholders and are well connected with regional and national developments in their fields. They have initiated a wide range of work for many different target user groups. User comments on the team are overwhelmingly positive (see Appendix 3). Core services including advice, information, support of voluntary and professional artists and arts groups, grants schemes and help in securing funding from other sources are all highly valued.

The work of the arts development team is well **integrated** with the programming of workshops, classes, performances and exhibitions at The Brindley, while still having a distinct identity through a range of collaborations and off-site projects. With specialisms in drama, music and visual arts the current team offers a range of expertise and contacts which gives them a solid and respected base for their work with artists, while they have all extended beyond their own core strengths to cover other areas of work.

Although some local authorities have moved away from the model of having an arts team based around areas of artform expertise, in favour of the posts being structured around the target user groups, there is no reason why the present model should not continue to serve Halton well given that the officers as a team focus on the Council's **corporate priorities**.

2.5 Other Council services

The Arts Development Team has excellent links across many other Council services, providing advice and contacts to services which use the arts as part of their delivery.

- **Schools and Children's Centres:** The Borough has the highest proportion of schools holding the **Artsmark** award of all local authorities in England.

Schools in the Borough have benefited from the work of **professional artists** and practitioners enriching the opportunities they provide, through projects such as writers' residencies and workshops by artists visiting the Borough. They are networked through the Arts Education Network; now co-ordinated by the Arts Development Lead.

Each year the Borough's high schools and special schools with secondary provision, and the college have the opportunity to exhibit at the Brindley through the Inspired Responses programme. Managed by the visual arts officer, this project creates artist residency opportunities to develop skills in students and teachers.

The arts team has links with the children's centres, providing expertise and advice on professional practitioners for activities such as early years dance and movement programmes. These centres also provide access to the families as well as to young children and can help open up wider community opportunities.

The Arts Development Team Leader (Claire Bigley) is an EYP (Early Years Professional) with the new national Early Years Framework there are many

opportunities for planned and structured use of arts activities and programmes with early years children.

Youth work: A good percentage of the work of the arts team is focused on young people. In autumn 2011 the arts development team and CRMZ worked in partnership to bring in artists to work with young people at their Widnes venue to create a small exhibition and activities as part of the national Big Draw programme. This work engaged around 50 young people over 5 days in new activities. The arts officers continue to work with the youth service at HRMZ and CRMZ to support work with artists and creative projects.

- **Libraries:** Many library initiatives promote reading, writing, poetry and literature in partnership with The Brindley, events for the National Year of Reading, National Storytelling Week and other such National activities. Libraries are used as venues for reading groups and for arts activities such as exhibitions at Kingsway and elsewhere, regular classes in writing at Halton Lea and in arts, crafts and media at Widnes. The use of the newly opened Runcorn Library (2012) will see this relationship develop further; with an application to Arts Council North West for a Writer in Residence for 1 year. This post will be shared across The Brindley and Runcorn Library; whilst also enhancing Borough wide literature activity.

- **Community Development:** The arts are one of ways in which the Borough's community development officers can engage with their local communities. The work of community development officers provides channels for reaching people who may not be users of The Brindley, through their local contacts and networks, their expertise and the resources of the community centres, and for finding out what people are interested in and how to provide 'entry points' for initial engagement.
- **Social Services:** The contribution that the arts can make to providing high quality experiences for people receiving social care is increasingly understood and documented nationally, and projects are now flourishing in Halton.

Social services are developing a more systematic and strategic role in supporting the use of the arts as a way of improving social care.

2.6 External partnerships

The arts service is well connected locally and across the region. The individual officers are active in various professional fora which gives them a national context for their work.

Regional and sub-regional: Halton has links with Arts Council England at a regional level and with the Merseyside authorities through membership of the Merseyside Arts Partnership.

Art Merseywide, the joint open art exhibition project organised by the Greater Merseyside visual arts and gallery officers is now entering its third season, this year exhibiting 60 works from across the region at the Liverpool Academy of the Arts this autumn to coincide with the Liverpool Biennial.

The Brindley is also a key partner in The North West Children's Theatre Network; currently chaired by Halton's Arts Development Lead. The organisations have signed up to a consortium of promoters in the North West Region, with a commitment to programming high quality children's theatre. The 4 original members is set to grow to 12 by 2014 with the support of ACE funding and guidance.

Heritage: There are good arts links with Norton Priory Museum and Walled Gardens. The recently launched website www.haltoncollections.org.uk is the culmination of a 3 year project, managed by the visual arts development officer and bringing together the local, social and civic collections from Halton Borough Council, Halton Libraries, Norton Priory Museum Trust and Catalyst Science Discovery Centre in one virtual space. Supported by £45k of Heritage Lottery funding this project has ensured access to over 2,500 objects and photographs pertaining to the borough's history.

2.7 Independent practitioners

- **Support for professional artists:** Artists and practitioners have been attracted by the excellent facilities at The Brindley and the supportive and encouraging environment promoted by the arts development team. Practical assistance with issues such as rehearsal space, marketing of events and links with schools has helped develop the viability of a professional freelance career for a number of artists and groups.

Networking: Cultivate is a voluntary network of cultural groups and individuals who want to connect, inspire, share ideas and make things happen in Halton. We are a not for profit group, who want to help to create a real sense of place and a good quality of life for others and ourselves, by getting all ages and abilities together to make and celebrate our area's culture.

- **Support for voluntary sector arts groups:** Local voluntary sector arts groups are supported and encouraged by the Council including using the facilities at The Brindley where appropriate. Ensure that support is given to help organisations improve or become sustainable.
- **Building a career in the creative industries:** The encouragement and advice of the arts team is crucial in the development of the Creative Industries in Halton. Empowering local artists and communities through access to funding, giving a voice on a regional and national scale will also enable an ambitious and thriving sector to grow.

The Brindley has provided a creative focus for practitioners and is the hub of arts activity and programme currently. For the Arts to develop further within Halton their needs to be a greater infrastructure, independent work spaces, studios and creative outlets for businesses to grow. It is hoped the newly formed collective of local artists ' Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC' will be the first stage in this process. A group of artists from Runcorn and Widnes who came together in autumn 2011 to form a Community Interest Company. Their aim is to provide affordable managed workspace for artists / makers from the borough and its environs, but also to encourage the artistic development of individuals and groups from the local community, through workshops, courses and drop-in activities in the studios' community space. Building on their existing links with community art groups, they aim to develop a creative hub in Runcorn Old Town, where they have secured the upper floor of a building on a long term lease from Halton Borough Council Property Services. An initial one year application has been made to Art Council England, who suggested support for a further two years, if the project is successful.

2.8 Constraints and opportunities

The role of local authorities in the arts is discretionary, not mandatory, and therefore the arts tend to be vulnerable, especially when budgets are under pressure. However an arts strategy which both responds to and stimulates local need and demand is essential as part of the community leadership role of local authorities.

The arts are intrinsically valuable, and this has been reaffirmed in recent statements by both Arts Council England and by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, after a decade in which the arts have been promoted largely for their instrumental benefits in delivering some of the great policy themes such as social inclusion, educational progress and economic development. The arts policy needs to recognise both the value of facilitating access to high quality arts provision for all people in the borough, and the importance of utilising the opportunities presented by the arts to help achieve other things.

Some **general constraints** on local authority arts services include:

- the continuing restrictions on local authority finances and the need to find 'efficiency' savings year on year
- the relative weakness nationally for the arts, compared with other cultural services, in terms of an under-developed performance measurement framework, reflecting the great diversity of approaches across the country.

Some **specific constraints** having a local effect include:

- despite its acknowledgement of the value of the arts Halton Borough Council is a relatively small authority with many pressing demands on its budgets
- the independent arts sector in the borough is relatively small
- the limited investment in Halton by the Arts Council, following the expiry of the funding towards the Brindley, with no regularly funded organisations in the borough, and Arts Council three-year spending plans fixed for 2008-2011
- the challenge of securing the sustainability of work of proven value when fixed term project funding expires.

There are also significant opportunities for developing the arts during the next few years, including:

1. For **young people**:

- scope for further work in response to interest by the Arts Council in promoting the *Arts Award* as an accredited award for young people's individual achievements¹
- scope for new patterns of after school hours access to arts and cultural activities in response to interest by Government in promoting the concept of 'cultural entitlement' for all young people
- the opportunity to develop a more coherent policy for youth arts as Halton develops an integrated approach to supporting young people.

2. For **the wider community**:

¹ The Brindley is an approved centre for the young people's *Arts Award*, and the officers in the Arts Development Team have had training as assessors. A pilot project will see a number of young people working for the Bronze level award by April 2009.

- opportunities for more strategic approaches to using arts activities in social care situations such as in improving the quality of life of older people
 - opportunities through the arts to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities or health or mental health issues
3. For investment in **the physical infrastructure**:
- scope to incorporate public art into major new capital investments, especially with infrastructure projects such as Widnes Waterfront, Runcorn Canal Quarter and the £390m Mersey Gateway new bridge

2.9 Building on current achievements

The arts matter, to the people of Halton and to the Borough Council, for the contribution they make to social, educational, economic and environmental aspects of quality of life.

With an increased emphasis for local authorities on *outcomes*, rather than *outputs*, the next phase of arts development in the Borough will need to establish more consistent evidence about *impact* and *'value added'*, especially in helping to achieve:

- **equality**, with the arts contributing to efforts to 'close the gap' and raise the level of aspirations and achievements
- **cohesion**, building sense of place and contributing to pride of place, helping to unify the Borough despite its different neighbourhood traditions, and improving the cultural opportunities available to all people living here
- a **higher profile**, so that people living in the Borough have an increased awareness and appreciation of the arts and creative opportunities that are available, and see them as being accessible, with a lowering of perceived entry barriers and a wider profile across Merseyside and the region for Halton as a borough with a range of high quality arts development work in terms of venue provision and off-site community-based work.

PART 3: ARTS POLICY

3.1 The corporate policy context

The Borough Council's **vision** is that:

"Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality, sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods".

The Council's **key priorities**, as set out in the Corporate Plan, are:

1. a healthy Halton
2. Halton's urban renewal
3. employment, learning and skills in Halton
4. children and young people in Halton
5. a safer Halton
6. corporate effectiveness and business efficiency.

These provide a **framework for the arts strategy** through the following themes, reflecting the Council's key priorities:

1. a healthy community
2. urban renewal and regeneration
3. employment, learning and skills
4. arts opportunities for children and young people
5. a safer community
6. leadership and partnerships

with a focus throughout on **improvement outcomes**.

3.2 Aspiration and Policy

The Council's **aspiration** for the arts is that:

- the value of arts will be recognised right across the work of the Council, both through the work of the Arts Development Team and through other services
- the importance of arts as a key driver of the quality of life will be recognised and represented in corporate strategies
- the Council will support and encourage high quality arts activities which have integrity, and in which imagination, originality and innovation are valued.

The **policy** of the Council is to develop and support opportunities for everybody in Halton:

- to be able – and encouraged – to take part in and experience high quality arts activity, and
- to be able to share in the social, educational and economic benefits which the arts can offer.

This policy is delivered through key services provided by the Arts Development Team:

- strategic leadership of arts development across the Borough
- partnerships with professional and voluntary sector providers, regional bodies and other agencies
- managing The Brindley and its programme, including outreach, as the Borough's flagship arts venue
- commissioning, managing or supporting arts development work
- providing information, advice, support and networking to the arts sector, other services of the Council and to external partners

Arts are also provided or facilitated through other Borough Council services including:

- libraries
- schools, children's centres, the work of the curriculum advisers and other services for children and young people

3.4 Strategic themes and objectives

The strategic objectives are grouped around six themes, with clear objectives and a focus on outcomes:

Theme	Objective	Outcomes
1. A healthy community	To contribute to community health and well-being through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arts projects in health-care settings arts development activities with specific target groups (such as older people and those with mental health issues) promoting healthy lifestyles through taking part in dance encouraging increased participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More use of social and cultural approaches as an alternative to medical or pharmacological interventions. Engaging new users and increased participation by target groups. Increased participation in activities such as dance.
2. Urban renewal and regeneration	To contribute to urban renewal and regeneration through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managing The Brindley as a creative focus for the Borough and for its role in wider community regeneration outreach and neighbourhood projects which contribute to community regeneration developing a strategic approach to public art, to promote sense of identity and pride of place and contribute to the quality of design and urban renewal/regeneration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability and viability of The Brindley. Increased participation in target neighbourhoods. Environmental and public realm improvements.
3. Employment, learning and skills	To support employment, learning and skills in the creative sector through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> building local talent nurturing the growth of the independent artists sector and independent arts groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building and a stronger independent sector. Economic benefits with the growth of a sustainable pool of arts organisations and artists.
4. Arts opportunities for children and young people	To provide opportunities for children and young people through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formal and informal learning opportunities a range of participatory arts activities. Funding opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation by children and young people. Increased aspirations and achievements.

continued...

<p>5. A safer community</p>	<p>Contribute to a safer community through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arts projects which animate the community and promote community cohesion • diversionary programmes for children and young people • arts projects which contribute to strategies to counter drug and substances misuse • arts projects which tackle specific issues of offending behaviours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined-up approach to reaching target audiences, working with other services to focus on identified priority areas. • Increased community cohesion. • More positive attitudes and reduced anti-social behaviour
<p>6. Leadership and partnerships</p>	<p>provide leadership and develop partnerships through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining and developing a strategic framework for the arts in Halton • developing internal partnerships and collaborations with services of the Council • developing external partnerships and collaborations with other agencies. • Empowering local artists to shape arts infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective application of people and financial resources to achieve strategic outcomes. • Effective partnerships internally and externally including the arts having a voice in the LSP. • Raised profile for the arts service.

PART 4: STRATEGY

This section sets out more detail about the strategies to deliver on each of the themes.

4.1 Theme 1: A healthy community

The arts service will contribute to community health and well-being through:

- arts projects in health-care settings
- arts development activities with specific target groups such as older people
- promoting healthy lifestyles through taking part in arts classes
- encouraging increased participation.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- more use of social and cultural approaches as an alternative to medical or pharmacological interventions
- engaging new users, through increased participation by target groups
- increased participation in activities such as dance.

*Specific workstreams will include: **As this is updated annually is it needed in Arts Strategy????***

1. **Arts and health**, including:

- Take part in sub-regional initiatives through the Merseyside Arts Partnership to develop arts and health work as an inter-authority initiative, supported by Arts Council.
- Explore further collaborations relating to the key priorities of mental health, ageing, young people's issues (including teenage pregnancy, sexual health and drugs awareness), men's health and training for arts and health staff.
- More arts projects in partnership with the Drugs & Alcohol Action Team (such as the recent *High Risk* video project).
- Explore the scope for establishing a part-time co-ordinator to develop arts in health opportunities in partnership with the PCT.

2. **Active lifestyles**, including:

- Offer a range of youth dance programmes including regular groups and classes at The Brindley.
- Maintain the dance development programme, at The Brindley, at off-site locations and with other services e.g. Children's Centres.
- Continue to develop programmes such as Fit 2 Dance and Years Ahead projects (for the over 50s), delivered at several locations.
- Develop dance programmes for people at risk of obesity, so that people can choose dance as well as sport, in collaboration with Sports Development and health referrals.

3. **Audience development**², including:

- Use research and market intelligence to identify and understand more about who the users are, who are the non-participants and where the gaps are.
- Devise and implement specific initiatives to encourage first-time audiences and non-participants to attend or take part in events at The Brindley.
- Identify areas of low take-up (evidenced through Active People survey), find out more about needs of specific neighbourhoods, then devise and implement specific initiatives to encourage new involvement, through arts development outreach projects and joint initiatives with Sports Development and Community Development.
- Devise and implement specific initiatives to engage more young adults, including different marketing aimed at the needs of different age groups.
- Further develop joint projects with libraries.

² Note: 'audience development' means engaging people in activities as participants as well as audiences, at The Brindley and at other locations, with the objectives of involving new users, from a broader range of people, and of attracting more frequent and varied participation by people who are already users.

4.2 Theme 2: Urban renewal and regeneration

The arts service will contribute to urban renewal and regeneration through:

- managing The Brindley as a creative focus for the Borough and for its role in wider community arts regeneration
- outreach and neighbourhood projects which contribute to community regeneration
- developing a strategic approach to public art, to promote sense of identity and pride of place and contribute to the quality of design and urban renewal/regeneration.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- sustainability and viability of The Brindley as a creative focus
- increased participation in target neighbourhoods
- environmental and public realm improvements.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **The Brindley**, including:
 - Carry out market research (specific and local, not generalised) to understand the views of users and non-users, to help shape audience development strategies (*as Theme 1 Action i*).
 - Use market research data (e.g. ACORN data and findings of Active People survey) to target people in areas where there are currently low levels of participation (*as Theme 1 Action k*).
 - Promote the venue more strongly within and beyond the Borough both to enhance the reputation of the Borough and to help the venue's sustainability by contributing to earned income. Explore scope for an 'ambassador' style system for local print distribution to neighbourhoods
 - Audience development work (*as Theme 1.3*).
2. **Outreach work**, including:
 - Devise and implement development work, with other cultural services in the borough, through specific interventions in neighbourhoods or localities where there are low levels of participation, e.g. the 'super output areas' identified in the work on Neighbourhood Management (such as the pilot project in the West Bank area of Widnes).
3. **Public art**, including:
 - Work to achieve a strategic influence with the Council's Environment Department (which includes Planning, Economic Regeneration, Major Projects and Highways); this may include the possibility of a specialist post on a part-time or freelance basis to provide expert advice.
 - Advocate for the adoption and implementation of the Planning Guidance Note and Commissioning Guide.
 - Seek to influence the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme with conceptual thinking about the community role of new schools as well as arts interventions in their design.
 - Seek to influence major infrastructure projects such as Widnes Waterfront, Runcorn Canal Quarter, the Mersey Gateway new bridge and new health facilities planned for the Borough.

4.3 Theme 3: Employment, learning and skills

The arts service will support employment, learning and skills in the creative sector through:

- building local talent
- nurturing the growth of the independent artists sector and independent arts groups in the Borough.
- Identifying funding to enable infrastructure / employment opportunities

Improvement outcomes will include:

- capacity building and a stronger independent sector
- economic benefits with the growth of a sustainable pool of arts organisations and artists.
- Enable the draw down of funding; not solely reliant on Arts Team

Specific workstreams will include:

1. Supporting professional and voluntary **artists and practitioners**, including:
 - Continue to offer a small grants and a small training grants programme.
 - Offer advice and assistance to artists, including linking them to other sources of support.
 - Improve networking for artists and arts groups, specifically by reviving and re-launching the Raw Arts website, and extending its range as a platform and showcase for local independent practitioners, to strengthen its value as a resource, including as a source of information to assist other Council services, providing a directory of artists and arts groups (with supporting information such as examples of work undertaken and names of independent referees). Complement this with a regular e-circular to practitioners to channel information, news, commissioning opportunities etc.
 - Strengthen support for the voluntary sector through the development of a DVD and website by the Cultural Partnership to make the voluntary sector more visible.
 - Build on existing links with neighbouring initiatives for the benefit of local artists and venues (e.g. across Merseyside and in Cheshire).
2. Supporting the **creative industries**, including:
 - Develop signposting and advice on progression routes.
 - Offer work experience and mentoring for emerging artists and practitioners.
 - Consider strategic alliance with agencies (such as ACME or CRISP) or with other local authorities, to counter the limited capacity for creative industries support.
 - Develop more formalised links with Riverside College: to collaborate on structured and planned workshops and artists' residencies, placements and practical experience to help local students considering a career in arts, crafts or media work, including technical support work; to facilitate opportunities for more advanced students to gain experience in working on community projects; and to maintain more regular contact between arts team and college staff, contributing the arts team's knowledge of the industry and the arts professions.
 - Look at possible opportunities through Building Schools for the Future to establish creative studios which could host artists in schools and act as incubator spaces for emerging creative businesses.

4.4 Theme 4: Arts opportunities for children and young people

The arts service will contribute opportunities for children and young people through:

- formal and informal learning opportunities for children and young people
- a range of participatory arts activities for children and young people.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- increased participation by children and young people
- increased aspirations and achievements.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **Early years** work, including:
 - Develop the role of the arts team as a resource able to provide specialist advice to staff in CYPANs and the Children's Centres, and advising them on use of artists who are potentially available to deliver work.
 - Work through CYPANs and the Children's Centres to reach families with family learning and inter-generational work.
2. Supporting **education**, including:
 - Develop the role of the arts team as a resource able to provide specialist advice to curriculum advisers, headteachers and schools, advising them on use of artists who are potentially available to deliver work, contributing to CPD and INSET for teachers, and supporting the work of encouraging schools to apply for the *Artsmark* award and helping them to meet and maintain the standards of the programme, especially in areas such as dance where support is especially needed.
 - Plan workshops, residencies, exhibitions and performances which support schools' curricular needs, both through the programme of The Brindley and through links with artists and arts organisations.
3. Supporting **youth arts**, including:
 - Pilot projects to promote the Young People's Arts Award as an accredited award, with the Positive Activities group.
 - Work with the Borough's other cultural services towards the 'five hour offer' and the extended school day.
 - Help to develop a Council-wide Youth Arts Policy as a statement of entitlement and service availability, working with the integrated Youth Service and with young people.
 - Develop further opportunities through which young people can devise their own programming, building on the experience of H208 which included work run and managed by young people.
 - In response to young people's interest, develop film/video/media work and digital creativity, both at The Brindley and in conjunction with venues such as Riverside College with specialist facilities and equipment, and at new school buildings planned through BSF as part of wider community use and access.
 - Support proposals to establish a dedicated youth facility in Widnes which could increase the creative opportunities available to young people in the northern part of the borough.

4.5 Theme 5: A safer community

The arts service will contribute to a safer community through:

- arts projects which animate the community and promote community cohesion
- diversionary programmes for children and young people
- arts projects which contribute to strategies to counter drug and substances misuse
- arts projects which tackle specific issues of offending behaviours

Improvement outcomes will include:

- a joined-up approach to reaching target audiences, working together with other services to focus on identified priority areas
- increased community cohesion
- more positive attitudes and reduced anti-social behaviour.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **Community engagement**, including:
 - Make specific provision for small-scale touring events in rural communities (such as Prestonbrook) by buying into other touring schemes, but discontinue attempts to provide a borough-wide touring network.
 - Support neighbourhood projects which promote a sense of local community, through outreach work such as neighbourhood events, projects and community learning initiatives.
 - Reach non-committed audiences through community animation projects in parks, open spaces and public spaces in town centre locations.
2. **Diversionary programmes** for children and young people, including:
 - Integrate arts and creative activities into Splash programmes to offer out-of-school creative opportunities.
 - Devise and implement projects which promote achievement and positive images and roles for young people.
 - Devise and implement projects which tackle specific offending behaviours e.g. vehicle crime by young people.
 - Continue to offer out-of-school creative opportunities for children and young people at The Brindley.

Arts projects in partnership with the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team and with the PCT (see Theme 1) will also contribute to the theme of a safer community.

4.6 Theme 6: Leadership and partnerships

The arts service will provide leadership and develop partnerships through:

- maintaining and developing a strategic framework for the arts in Halton
- developing internal partnerships and collaborations with services of the Council
- developing external partnerships and collaborations with other agencies.

Improvement outcomes will include:

- effective application of people and financial resources to achieve strategic outcomes
- effective partnerships internally and externally including the arts having a voice in the LSP
- raised profile for the arts service.

Specific workstreams will include:

1. **Advocacy**, including:
 - Work on evidence systems and PIs to ensure that impact and outcomes can be demonstrated and communicated; perhaps commissioned evaluation.
 - Consistent advocacy and profile-raising by the arts team to increase awareness and understanding of the range and impact of the arts development work. Prepare and publish new brochure; implement an improved website with more information about the service offering; more interviews, articles for publications, and presentations at conferences etc.
 - Promote and encourage artistic quality and integrity through the work of the arts team and their imagination, originality and innovation, and nurture artists and alleviate their tendency to isolation.
2. **Working together internally**, including:
 - Develop the arts team's offering as an in-house consultancy resource including sharing information, contacts, ideas and advice with other services. Much of this can be made available on the improved website.
 - Develop the working relationships with the CYPANs in the borough.
 - Ensure that the contribution the arts make to achieving corporate objectives is recognised in the LAA (e.g. role of arts in contributing to health and well-being).
 - Further development of cross-service working, and with improved planning mechanisms.
3. **Working together externally**, including:
 - Explore the potential for links with other nearby local authorities, for joint work on e.g. health, creative industries and in other areas where co-operation or joint action would be beneficial to Halton.
 - Support Norton Priory Museum in its ambitious expansion plans which will offer enhanced arts opportunities as well as strengthening the Borough's heritage offer.
 - Play an active role in Merseyside Arts Partnership and ensure Halton is able to benefit from sub-regional initiatives.
 - Maintain and develop the relationship with Arts Council England North West, and advocate on behalf of artists and arts work in the borough.
 - Maintain and develop the links with other regional and national networks, support structures and professional bodies.

