

# Become an Area Council member



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**Accessible formats of this document  
available on request.**

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# Join an Area Council

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**Are you passionate about the arts and creativity? Do you want to influence how the Arts Council supports artists, organisations and culture in your region?**

Area Councils provide invaluable advice and local insight to the Arts Council, influencing policy and programmes. Covering the North, Midlands, South West, South East and London, they are made up of people from across the cultural and creative sectors, and beyond. They include artists and creative practitioners, administrators and local authority representatives from a wide range of backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of England.

Arts Council England's five Area Councils:

- Work to make sure the benefits of creative expression and culture are available to people throughout the country
- Ensure that the Arts Council invests public money wisely
- Make decisions on organisations joining

our National Portfolio (the group of organisations we fund on a regular cycle basis) and make recommendations to National Council

- Help to make our Strategy, **Let's Create**, a reality<sup>1</sup>
- Advocate for the Arts Council's work and champion the value of public investment in the arts
- Keep an eye on Arts Council England's performance as we work towards our outcomes

This is a voluntary role, typically on a four year basis. Travel and other business-related expenses will be reimbursed in line with our expenses policy.

<sup>1</sup> [www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate)



Candoco Dance Company. Photo © Camilla Greenwell

# About Arts Council England

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We champion creativity and culture across the country, develop talent in every corner of the nation, and support artists, practitioners and cultural organisations to work in partnership and to be world-leading.

Our strategy for 2020-2030, **Let's Create**, is an invitation to those who share our beliefs to come together and create new opportunities for every person in England to get creative and enjoy brilliant culture.

We believe creativity and culture not only inspire us, but they bring us together and teach us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, they make life better.

We support combined arts, dance, literature, music, theatre and visual art, as well as museums and libraries. Through a range of funds, we provide short- and long-term investment for individual artists and arts projects, arts organisations, museums, galleries and libraries.



# Who we're looking for

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Being an Area Council member is an interesting and important role that will allow you to make a real impact to the arts and culture sector. If our mission to nurture individual creativity and widen access to culture appeals to you, we want to hear from you.

We would like to attract people with a mix of skills, experiences and voices who can demonstrate:

- A belief in the value of creativity and culture in our society
- Skills and experience in the arts and culture sector, whether that be as an individual creative practitioner, freelance or within an organisation
- Local cultural knowledge or participation in artistic networks
- A commitment to achieving our **three outcomes**<sup>2</sup>: Creative People; Cultural Communities; A Creative and Cultural Country
- A commitment to championing inclusion and relevance within arts, culture and creativity<sup>3</sup>

- We want fresh perspectives and experiences and would love to welcome more people under the age of 30 to our Area Councils<sup>4</sup>
- We are keen to receive applications from candidates with disabilities, or experience of disability arts

We are looking for people with enthusiasm and cultural knowledge, who are open to new ideas and able to think through policies carefully and fairly.

You'll be supported as you join the Council. You don't need to have been a board member before, and you won't be thrown in the deep end. We don't expect you to come to the role knowing the ins and outs of everything we do.

<sup>2</sup> [www.artscouncil.org.uk/outcomes-0](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/outcomes-0)

<sup>3</sup> [www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/creative-case-diversity](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/creative-case-diversity)

<sup>4</sup> As with all positive action we take to address balances in our recruitment, we will review the makeup of our Area Councils on an ongoing basis and adjust recruitment practices accordingly.



Sean Goldthorpe 11 Million Reasons People Dancing. Photo © Sean Goldthorpe

# How the application process works

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## 1 Application

Send us a copy of your CV with a covering letter outlining:

- Why you're interested in serving as an Area Council member.
- Any relevant skills, interests or experiences (professional and/or personal).
- Details of two referees. These can be employers, teachers, or people you've collaborated with.

Applicants should also complete and return an Equal Opportunities monitoring form, available on the [vacancies page](#) of the Arts Council website. This helps us to monitor the effectiveness of our Dignity at Work policy and Race Equality Scheme.

## 2 Shortlist

The Area Chair, Area Director and an external panellist will shortlist the candidates they would like to invite to an interview.

Disabled candidates who meet the minimum requirements for the role will automatically be invited to interview.

## 3 Interview

This is a relaxed interview, and a great opportunity to learn more about the role from the Area Chair, Area Director, and an external panellist (someone who works in one of the organisations we fund, for example).

We'll send you the topics we'd like to discuss beforehand. We're interested in hearing about:

- Why you've applied for the role.
- What skills, interests or experiences (professional and/or personal) you could bring to the Council.
- The topics that are important to you, and issues you would like to give voice to on the Council.
- How you will contribute to our commitment to championing inclusion and relevance in the arts and culture sector and creative industries.

The interview is your chance to meet us, and ask any questions about the work of the Area Council.

## 4 Selection and Appointment

Preferred candidates will be recommended to National Council for appointment at its next meeting.

# Why become an Area Council member?

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- **Help to shape the cultural life in your area**
- **Develop an informed insight and understanding of the Arts Council and its policies and programmes**
- **Ensure that your community has a vital voice in the Arts Council's work**



“Area Councils are a vital link between the arts and the community. The closer we can bring funding to ordinary people, the better the outcomes for culture and creativity. Area Councils are an important part of levelling the playing field and making sure people from ordinary backgrounds can do extraordinary things. As the Leader of one of the country's most deprived boroughs, I know culture is the backbone of aspiration. Area Councils allow diverse communities to express themselves in a way that celebrates talent and creativity without the added pressure of having a commercial element to what they do. I would certainly recommend people who have lived experiences of the power of culture to join an Area Council. ”

**Councillor Darren Rodwell,**  
London Area Council Member



“ Councils are there to give local knowledge to the Arts Council, so it’s important that there are a wide variety of voices represented. The most insightful opinions sometimes come from members who are not involved with the arts on day to day. ”

**Sho Shibata,**  
South East Area Council Member



“ Being part of an Area Council is a way to use my expertise and experience to gently shape and nurture artists and organisations. By being on an Area Council you get the opportunity to build your own understanding, as you engage with the whole cultural eco-system and, in a deeply collaborative manner, get into the complicated business of trying to make sure that there is impact and benefit for all. ”

**Sharon Ament,**  
London Area Council Member



“ Being part of an Area Council has increased my confidence and my ambition for myself, the SE company I had the privilege of running and the building I run now, and the sector. I want more and better for all of us and being an Area Council Member allows me to play my part. I’ve learned that there’s value to things I used to take for granted about myself; my perspective, insight and my experience. ”

**Natalie Ibu,**  
South East Area Council Member



“What do you need to join an Area Council? Curiosity, open-mindedness, enthusiasm and the ability to make informed decisions.”

**Ayub Khan MBE,**  
Midlands Area Council Member



“I’ve been a member of South West Area Council for around 18 months now, and I’ve learnt a huge amount about Arts Council England’s work. I’ve got a deeper understanding of how local governing bodies play their role in supporting culture alongside ACE. I was relatively new to the South West arts scene when I joined (as was Paraorchestra, the NPO I work for, and play for, in my day job) and I’ve become much more embedded within the region thanks to my role as an Area Council member.”

**Lloyd Coleman,**  
South West Area Council Member



“For me it’s a chance to give back to the arts sector, and an opportunity to look at some of the Arts Council’s processes and get curious. How is that determined? Why is that done that way? Have you considered it from this angle?

I get to understand at a much deeper level, various contexts and layers of strategy within the sector and I feel my perspective is welcomed and valued. That surprised me. I thought I’d only ever be an onlooker so to be genuinely looked to for comments and thoughts was a welcome surprise.”

**Jo Verrent,**  
North Area Council Member

# What to expect in an Area Council meeting

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## When and where?

Area Council members attend five Area Council meetings each year. We know that people lead busy lives and juggle lots of different responsibilities, so we send out a list of upcoming meeting dates, times and venues months ahead of time.

Meetings take place in interesting locations, including Arts Venues, Youth Zones and Developer's offices, helping us understand the region we are working in.

Meetings might be preceded by a gallery visit/performance and will generally last 2-3 hours. There'll be plenty of opportunities for you to get to know your fellow Council members outside the meetings.

## What happens in a typical Area Council meeting?

- Agendas include a mix of local and nationally relevant items.
- Area Councils play a vital role in reviewing and influencing National Council decisions.
- The Area Chair **will lead the discussion of each agenda item**. Some meetings start with a big strategic item for the group to get stuck into.

- A senior Arts Council staff member will attend for specific items to present and answer questions.
- On certain issues, the Area Council will be asked to take a collective decision.
- There'll be the opportunity to hear directly from key stakeholders and funded organisations on the impact of the Arts Council's policies.
- During the National Portfolio investment process, Area Councils are tasked to make both investment decisions and recommendations to National Council.

The **Area Director or Executive Director will update** Council on relevant Arts Council business. The Area Chair will also share an update.

At each meeting, all Area Council members will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest in relation to agenda items.

Every meeting ends with a quick wrap up of what we've covered, making sure nothing's been left unsaid. We'll often make time to catch up amongst ourselves.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.artscouncil.org.uk/area-council/area-council-minutes](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/area-council/area-council-minutes)



Apples and Snakes – Crowd at Rallying Cry. Photo © Suzi Corker

# Next steps

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- For more information about Area Councils and their membership, visit our website at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/area-council/area-council-vacancies](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/area-council/area-council-vacancies)
  - Apply by the deadline indicated in the job advert. If you would like to discuss the role further before applying or have any questions about the application process itself, get in touch with the Personal Assistant to the Area Director.
- To find out more about how we'll manage your application data, click here <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/freedom-information/data-protection>
- Let us know if you would like to receive this document in a different format or have any other access requirements you would like to discuss with us. We can provide Easy Read, large print and Braille.
  - All Arts Council England offices are wheelchair accessible, and we strive to always hire external venues with the same accessibility. Please speak to the PA to your Area Director to discuss your access requirements.
  - The Area Council for which you apply needs to be within the geographic area where you normally reside or work.



# Contacts

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