

## **Arts Council England and Local Government Association Joint Statement (2023-2025)**

**March 2023**

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This statement sets out how Arts Council England and the Local Government Association (LGA) will work together over the period from 2023-2025. Its purpose is to outline our shared vision for the contribution that arts, museums and libraries make to the nation, to places, and for people and how the two partners aspire to work together to realise it. The principles that underpin this partnership will also inform the Arts Council's engagement with local government within places.

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### **1) INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

This statement will cover the period from 2023-2025 and its purpose is to set out the shared vision of the Arts Council and the LGA for the contribution that arts, museums and libraries make to the nation, to places, and for people and how the two partners aspire to work together to realise it. The principles that underpin this partnership will also inform the Arts Council's engagement with local government within places.

Culture, heritage and creativity are essential to our future national prosperity, levelling up, wellbeing, and recovery from crisis. The arts, museums and libraries bring people together at times of crisis and celebration, they provide support and social connection, create jobs, develop new adaptive skills, and underpin empathy and critical thinking.

A strong local cultural offer improves quality of life and supports the health and wellbeing of communities, it enhances learning, builds cultural and social capital and opens up opportunities for children and young people who might otherwise not have access to great cultural experiences. It draws people to the high street and enhances

the visitor and night-time economies, underpins growth in the burgeoning creative industries, supports our international reputation and helps to make the unique and fascinating places that are so fundamental to our country.

Councils are the biggest public funders of culture nationally, spending £2.4 billion a year in England alone on culture and related services. They run a nationwide network of local cultural organisations, which in England includes 3,000 libraries, 350 museums, 116 theatres and numerous castles, amusement parks, monuments, historic buildings, parks and heritage sites. This core funding keeps the civic infrastructure of culture running within places.

Local government also has a vital role to play as shapers of place. As the local democratically elected body, they have local insight into their communities and places, including a strategic role in supporting the cultural offer in a place.

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Its strategic vision, set out in its strategy [Let's Create](#) is that by 2030 England is a country where the creativity of everyone is valued and given a chance to flourish, and where everyone has access to a range of high quality cultural experiences.

The strength of England's cultural sector relies in large part on the partnership between local government in its role as the democratic leader of place, working closely with Arts Council England as the national development agency for the arts, museum and libraries.

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the membership body for local authorities in England and Wales, working on behalf of its member councils to support, promote, and improve local government.

## **2) BACKGROUND TO THE STATEMENT**

This is the third joint statement signed by Arts Council England and the Local Government Association. It not only reflects the ongoing importance of collaboration between the development body for arts and culture and the membership body for local government, but also the strengthening and deepening of the relationship.

The cultural world has experienced significant challenges and changes since the last joint statement was signed in 2016, not least the Covid-19 pandemic. This led to the issuing of an statement on how the Arts Council would work with local government during the pandemic.

The publication of Arts Council's strategy '[Let's Create](#)' and the LGA's '[Cornerstones of Culture](#)' report demonstrate the strong inter-relationship between Councils, the Arts Council and the LGA, and what this can achieve. '[Let's Create](#)' builds on lessons learned over many decades of partnership with councils and recognises their crucial role as strategic conveners, as well as their funding and delivery roles.

Over the past seven years since the last statement was signed the LGA and the Arts Council have collaborated on a number of projects which assist councils to make the most of their cultural assets and investments, develop the skills of officers and

councillors, and enhance partnership working through a place-based approach to investment.

- Leadership Essentials training for councillors and, more recently for officers responsible for culture
- Peer challenges for libraries and wider cultural services
- The Culture Hub case study resource
- Cultural Strategy in a Box guide
- Making the most of your museums guide

This joint working approach has enriched both organisations and informed the support offer we are each able to provide to councils. Please see Appendix A for more details.

### **3) JOINT STATEMENT**

The LGA and Arts Council England believe that strong and responsive local government, working with communities, and allied to the work of an expert national development agency, is vital for the health and future sustainability of the arts, museums and libraries in England.

Local government is the democratically elected leader of place, bringing deep understanding of local places and communities, and is able to lever resources and broker partnerships in order to support the extent and quality of cultural opportunities in a local area. Councils and combined authorities determine local strategic priorities and plans, in which culture can and should play a key role.

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts, museums and libraries, able to bring expertise and a national overview. Arts Council England is able to invest strategically and at scale to maximise opportunities and to address challenges. It can bring expertise and resource to local situations, having regard to issues of quality and of the development of the cultural sector across the nation as a whole. Arts Council England is responsible, taking account of sector and national priorities, for setting a national cultural strategy responding to local, national, and international opportunities.

Bringing together these attributes, capacities and functions in partnership is a strength that the LGA and Arts Council England will seek to build on – and to enable at the local level.

#### **Our shared ambition:**

The LGA and ~~the~~ Arts Council England will work together nationally to deliver a shared ambition for culturally active, prosperous, cohesive, and healthy communities. Our core goal is to build capacity in places.

Arts Council England recognises that local government remains its most important strategic and delivery partnership.

The LGA recognises that Arts Council England's expertise and funding can support local government to achieve its ambitions for culture and that it has a key role as an

expert national development agency. Both partners recognise and respect the other's strategic priorities. Arts Council England wants excellent arts and culture to thrive, and as many people as possible to engage with it.

#### **4) WAYS OF WORKING AND CORE GOALS**

##### **Arts Council England's Let's Create Strategy**

In 2020 Arts Council England launched Let's Create, its ten-year strategy setting out an ambitious vision for the future of creativity and culture:

*'By 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish. A country where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.'*

The Outcomes in Let's Create are focussed on how people can develop personal creativity at every stage of their lives; how culture is created by and with people in their communities, and how it shapes the places in which they live, work, learn and visit; and the development of the innovative, collaborative, and internationally facing professional cultural sector that we believe will be needed over the next decade.

The three outcomes are:

- 1) **Creative People:** Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life.
- 2) **Cultural Communities:** Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
- 3) **A creative and cultural country:** England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

**Children and young people** Over the next 10 years, the Arts Council will focus a large part of their development role on ensuring that children and young people are able to develop their creative potential and interests and access the highest-quality cultural experiences where they live, where they go to school and where they spend their free time.

Arts Council believes in the inherent value of creativity and culture: in their power to delight and move us, and in their capacity to help us make sense of the world. They also recognise that investment in creativity and culture can deliver broad social benefits, through the **skills they offer to young people and workers, the economic growth they generate, and the part they play in building healthy, close-knit communities.**

Over the next 10 years, the Arts Council will work to improve the way they make the case for the social and economic value of investing public money in culture. To strengthen the country's creative industries, which make up one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy, they will promote **research and development**, and support the adoption of **new technologies**. They will push to ensure that the **cultural workforce** is representative of contemporary England. They will take steps to support the cultural sector to set the pace in developing imaginative new approaches to promoting **environmental responsibility**.

At a local level, the Arts Council will work with partners to **support inclusive economic growth** through investment in libraries, museums, and arts venues to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and able to meet the needs of their communities and the people who work and create within them. They will also make the case for investing in appropriate new cultural buildings to **drive local economic regeneration**. In all of this work, the Arts Council will **use data to build and share a more sophisticated picture of local investment**, and to operate effectively as an expert national development agency that is able to invest at scale in order to seize opportunities and deal with big challenges.

The Arts Council is a strategic national agency, able to intervene to maximise opportunity and to address inequity between places. *Let's Create* recognised that some places have not benefitted as they might from public investment in culture. The Arts Council has identified **54 places** across England in which investment and engagement is too low, and opportunity for the Arts Council to support the growth of opportunity in those places. In these [Priority Places](#), the Arts Council will work with local stakeholders, including the Local Authority, to set bespoke objectives, hold themselves accountable for increasing staff time and investment across a range of funds, and track the impact of their investment. Additionally, the Levelling Up White Paper committed the Arts Council to raising investment in 109 local authority areas which have been designated as **Levelling Up for Culture Places**.

Although the Arts Council will have a specific focus on these places, and will work with local partners within them, it remains a national development agency. Organisations and individuals in all areas of the country can apply for Arts Council funding, and the Arts Council will continue to support a universal music education offer, as well advice and support on building capacity for local cultural development.

### **LGA's 'Cornerstones of Culture' report and ways of working**

The LGA's mission is "to promote, improve and support local government". Our values underpin all our work:

**Inclusive** – we ensure that our work is inclusive of all voices.

**Ambitious** – we are ambitious for councils and their communities and are committed to striving for excellence in all that we do to support our colleagues, our membership and the sector to deliver the best possible outcomes.

**Collaborative** –we bring together the expertise and skills needed, working as one team.

These values were used to inform the work of the LGA's independent Commission on Culture and Local Government, which helps to structure our programme on culture. The Commission engaged with local government, the Arts Council's Youth Advisory Board and cultural organisations across England to develop its findings. The final report of the Commission, which was launched in December 2022, identified four 'cornerstones of culture' needed in a place for its cultural ambitions to be achieved:

**Capacity and resilience.** A levelling up of capacity for culture within place, targeting regional inequalities and enabling councils to develop and deliver meaningful place-led strategies for culture.

**Leadership and power.** A power shift towards place-led approaches that enable a greater diversity of communities, cultural providers and practitioners to shape local decision making.

**Funding.** A coherent and transparent approach to funding culture in a place that supports the delivery of place-led strategies and addresses the immediate financial fragility of the sector triggered by the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

**Evidence.** A coordinated approach to developing an effective evidence base for culture and place in order to measure value and shape future investment.

These principles and priorities will inform the work of the LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board as it builds the work of the Commission into its work programme moving forward.

These core goals will underpin the way our organisations work together to support councils and their places.

## 5) ACTION PLAN

This section of the Shared Statement sets out upcoming areas of joint working. It will be updated on an annual basis to reflect the relevant programmes of work on which LGA and Arts Council England are collaborating, in support of local government.

Activity	Timeline
Deliver a shared and evolving <b>improvement programme</b> to support local government, including Leadership Essentials training, a programme of peer challenges, the Library Sounding Board for councillors and support for programme alumni.	Renewed annually
Work together to embed the <b>recommendations of the Commission on Culture and Local Government</b> and to build local capacity, including supporting the work of Compacts and other local strategic partnerships.	To Spring 2024
Meet regularly to <b>monitor intelligence</b> , respond to emerging opportunities and risks, promote ambition and share interesting practice and insight	Monthly meetings
Maintain the <b>Culture Hub</b> as a case study resource for the sector	Renewed annually
Work together to ensure all <b>children &amp; young people</b> can develop their creative potential and interest	Renewed annually
Work together to help make available good <b>data and evidence</b> to local authorities and other partners to help develop local strategy and policy and grow cultural opportunity	Renewed annually

This Shared Statement runs from February 2023 to March 2025. It will be reviewed in 2025 when the Arts Council's current Delivery Plan comes to an end. The action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## **ANNEX A: DETAILS OF PREVIOUS COLLABORATION**

Over the past seven years since the last statement was signed the LGA and the Arts Council have collaborated on a number of projects which assist councils to make the most of their cultural assets and investments, develop the skills of officers and councillors, share good practice and enhance partnership working through a place-based approach to investment.

[The Leadership Essentials for Councillors](#) is now on its 16th cohort and continues to deliver key leadership skills and information for local decision makers. Such is the success of a tailored and responsive programme, that a new pilot version for officers has been developed and is being considered for further rollout.

Over 30 [peer challenges for culture and libraries](#) have been delivered over this period, helping councils to reflect on the work they are doing, develop strategic plans for future delivery, and identify areas of improvement.

Other significant achievements during this period include the [Culture Hub](#), bringing together case studies of interesting and effective practice, the development of a '[cultural strategy in a box](#)' guide to producing a cultural strategy and the councillor's guide to '[Making the most of your museums](#)'.

Other useful Arts Council England and LGA resources on culture and place

- Lets' Create [Our strategy 2020-2030 | Arts Council England](#)
- Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places [Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places | Arts Council England](#)
- [Cornerstones of Culture](#): the final report of the Commission on Culture and Local Government.
- [Culture Commission case study resource](#)
- ['Forget What You Think You Know...about culture' podcast](#)
- [Short films on Commission themes](#)
- [Creative Places: supporting your local creative economy](#)
- [Combined authorities and the creative industries](#): case study report
- [The LGA submission to the DCMS Select Committee inquiry into cultural placemaking and levelling up](#)