

# GET CREATIVE: ARTS FOR ALL

Promoting investment in creative and cultural activities for people who are homeless.



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Celebrating the value of creative and cultural activities for people who are homeless.

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# GET CREATIVE: ARTS FOR ALL



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Participating in the arts can inspire, motivate and challenge us. It can increase our confidence, self-esteem and skills and provide opportunities for future training and employment.

Drawing on research and good practice gathered as part of our Get Creative: Arts for All project, this short briefing presents and celebrates the value of creative and cultural activities for people who are homeless. We show how they are unique in achieving a range of outcomes, and outline how commissioners, arts and cultural institutions and homelessness services can all play a role to help support investment in these activities in the future.

## WHY ARE CREATIVE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IMPORTANT?

Creative and cultural programmes have proved extremely effective in achieving positive outcomes for some of society's most vulnerable people. For example, the Arts Alliance online evidence library<sup>1</sup> provides numerous compelling case studies, which attest to the positive effects of participation in creative and cultural activities for ex-offenders and prison inmates, many of whom will have had previous experience of homelessness.

The benefits of engaging in creative activity for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness are extensive. Participation can be beneficial from a therapeutic and recreational perspective,<sup>2</sup> as well as helping people to overcome wider issues and develop specific skills.<sup>3</sup>





It can also help people to develop and progress on their wider interests, providing them with something to do in an environment where boredom is a persistent problem. The development of wider interests is especially important in reducing the 'anxiety, loneliness and pessimism' that can often affect people once they moved on to independent accommodation.<sup>4</sup>

Creative and cultural activities offer a unique opportunity for the development of cross-sector partnerships. These can lead to innovative mechanisms to help address shared priorities and achieve significant outcomes. However, making these opportunities available to people experiencing homelessness needs investment and support from a wide range of partners.

Over the past two years Homeless Link, with funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England, has been working to increase creative opportunities for people experiencing homelessness.

From this work we have seen the benefits that the arts can bring to people's lives. But while we have witnessed much enthusiasm and recognition of the value of creative activities amongst homeless service users and front line staff,

there are many barriers that arise when trying to establish high quality and sustainable provision.

Homeless Link wants to see high quality arts and cultural interventions offered as standard within all homelessness services, and recognised as essential elements of a holistic offer of support. We would like to see arts and cultural providers being proactive in forming partnerships with homelessness services, recognising the severe exclusion from the arts that homeless people face.

By sharing our learning with those who commission and provide arts based activity at a national and local level, we hope to encourage commitment and long-term investment for such projects in the future and offer some practical recommendations for taking this forward.

## **WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?**

Through *Get Creative: Arts for All* we can offer support in a range of ways to aid the development of creative projects throughout England. To find out more please visit the *Get Creative: Arts for All* pages<sup>5</sup> on Homeless Link's website.





# INFORMATION FOR **COMMISSIONERS**



"ART IS A BIT SNOBBY,  
WE FEEL OUT OF PLACE."

Bournemouth focus group participant

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## **TACKLING INEQUALITY**

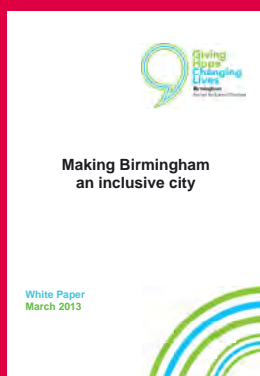
Tackling inequality and promoting social cohesion is a key priority for local authorities and service commissioners. This involves finding new and innovative ways to improve the circumstances of disadvantaged people by allowing them to participate in the social and economic life of their local communities.

Creative interventions can achieve outcomes common to several areas of public service delivery. They can present excellent value for money, especially when considering opportunities for joint commissioning. Common examples include the direct commissioning of specific arts-based projects, and encouraging housing related support services to incorporate the arts into their wider support planning.





## BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL



Changing Lives makes explicit reference to culture and the arts as a means of bringing communities closer together.

This project offers an example of how local authorities and commissioners can use the arts as a way of responding to local needs and priorities. Having undertaken a study to examine the causes of social exclusion in Birmingham, the City Council published its conclusions in the white paper Giving Hope Changing Lives. In discussing its wider recommendations, Giving Hope

In response to these findings, the City Council's Culture Commissioning Service has set up a programme to offer grants to not-for-profit organisations to run arts activities. Working with a range of partners, the City Council has identified a number of high priority neighbourhoods, which are amongst the most deprived in the city.

As part of the eligibility criteria for funding applications, all proposals were required to:

- "Offer opportunities for residents to participate in high quality arts activities in their local neighbourhoods
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to develop their creativity, skills, knowledge and understanding of the arts."<sup>6</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To support arts provision locally, commissioners can:

- Recognise the value of creative interventions in the support of homeless service users
- Think innovatively about the best ways to inspire change and move away from more traditional methods of key working where appropriate
- Harbour an expectation that services should offer some form of creative activity and take this into account when conducting contract reviews and the tendering process
- Make some funding available for high quality arts provision
- Discuss ways in which the arts can help with other initiatives such as personalisation
- Consider joint commissioning of arts projects with other sectors.





# INFORMATION FOR ARTS & CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS



## BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Homelessness services are constantly searching for new and improved ways to provide people with the support they need to lead independent and fulfilling lives. Much of this work has focussed on efforts to reduce social exclusion by promoting greater involvement with their local communities. Creative and cultural institutions have long been recognised as places that can bring people together and promote community cohesion. Museums, Galleries and Archives for All, a report by the Department

of Culture, Media and Sport, describes how as “centres for change”, creative and cultural institutions have a vital role to play in combating ‘social exclusion’ and fostering “community spirit”.<sup>7</sup>

In developing the idea that art is for everyone, it is imperative that arts organisations continue to establish strong and effective working partnerships with community groups working with homeless people and those at risk of losing their homes. These links will allow the most excluded individuals to explore the world of the arts and the value it can offer them.





"I FEEL TRUSTED TO COME IN AND TOUCH THINGS. SAYING TO PEOPLE THAT I AM PART OF AN ART GROUP IN THE HOLBURN MUSEUM ELEVATES MY STATUS."

Drawing Attention participant



## THE HOLBURN MUSEUM

*Drawing Attention: Art with homeless people*, a project run by the Holburne Museum and Julian House homelessness project in Bath, provides an excellent working example of how arts institutions and homelessness services can work together to improve the relationship between "centres for change" and particularly vulnerable sections of their local communities.

As part of its Learning and Community objectives, the Holburne Museum delivered a weekly programme of creative workshops for homeless men and women across a 15 month period. The project had a range of aims, including:

- To promote and open up arts participation to as wide an audience as possible and break down barriers of social exclusion

- To enable homeless people to acquire new interests, skills and hobbies that can be continued independently
- To provide opportunities for artists to share and develop their skills.<sup>9</sup>

These aims reveal the reciprocal nature of the interaction between the participants, participatory artists and staff members from the Holburne Museum and Julian House.

The Holburne Museum commissioned an independent review to carry out an assessment of the project. In addition to the progress made by participants, such as improved confidence and developing new interests, the report details the museum's successes in strengthening its role as a supporter of local communities through the provision of meaningful activities.



## THE TATE

In 2011, the Tate – a leading public art provider – began to transform its learning programme in an effort to improve its interactions with local communities. As part of this process, Tate has sought to widen participation and access to the arts in partnership with local community groups. Tate Britain and Tate Modern have subsequently chosen to focus on addressing educational and cultural inequality and supporting positive mental health, while Tate Liverpool is actively seeking to involve people who are 'socially, economically, intellectually or physically excluded from the arts in the North West region' in its work.<sup>8</sup>

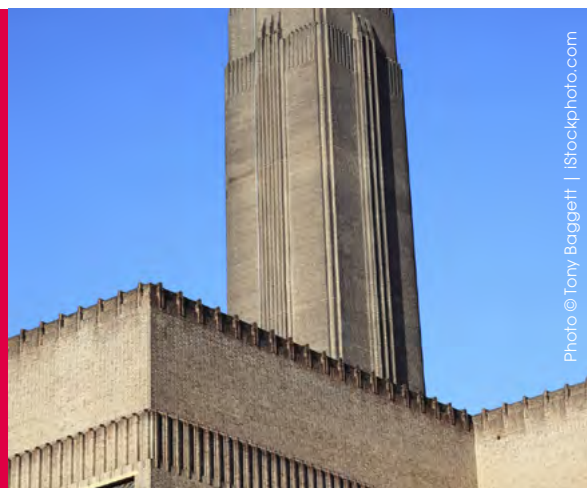


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## RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure homeless people can share in the benefits of the arts locally, creative and cultural institutions can:

- Recognise the levels of exclusion from mainstream arts provision and services suffered by homeless people
- Work in partnership with homelessness organisations to increase the skills and access of homeless people to the arts

- Engage with training opportunities, offered by Homeless Link and others, around how best to engage with homeless people and the services supporting them.





# INFORMATION FOR **HOMELESSNESS SERVICES**



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## **THE BENEFITS OF CREATIVE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY**

In addition to providing clients the opportunity to explore their interests and develop their creativity, the arts can also be used as a form of therapeutic intervention.<sup>10</sup> The following examples describe some of these positive outcomes in more detail and identify good practice.

Although each of the examples have been selected in relation to a specific outcome, it is important to note that is not the sole extent of their work.

### **POSITIVE OUTCOME 1 INCREASING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Homeless people often suffer from a range of complex issues that extend beyond their housing situation and can result in multiple forms of exclusion.

The ability of arts and cultural projects to successfully reduce social exclusion has been explored through

a number of high profile academic studies. Use or ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts, a review of sixty community-based arts programmes, concluded that by virtue of an increased sense of self-confidence and social cohesion, participants were more likely to take advantage of other employment, education and/or leisure activities, which they might previously have avoided.<sup>11</sup>

Public arts and cultural institutions are places where people from different walks of life can come and encounter one another. By coming together to observe prestigious works of art, visitors are invited to participate in a shared and inclusive experience. The ability to participate in these events is crucial to the creation of feelings of belonging and social inclusion. By going to a museum or gallery, we can confirm our status as members of the wider community.

However, despite museums, galleries and theatres ostensibly being open to everyone, visiting one can be an intimidating experience for a homeless person, especially when if they are unsure of the type of reception they'll receive and how much things will cost.<sup>12</sup>



## THE BOOTH CENTRE

The Booth Centre, a day centre in Manchester, offers a weekly activities programme in which creative activity and involvement with local cultural venues has featured heavily. One such activity sought to encourage their clients to visit local museums and galleries by helping them to create 'Back to the Future: The Booth Centre's Over 50's Museum Guide'.

In order to create the guide, the group visited several museums and galleries, allowing participants to challenge their perceptions on how they would be received and answer questions such as would they have to pay, would everyone else be dressed smartly and would they be clever enough to go in?

The guide contains a range of information, including a short summary of the museum or gallery, how to get there using public transport, opening times and whether or not refreshments are available. By having all this in one

place, group members and other Booth Centre clients have access to all of the information necessary to visit any of the sites independently.

Similarly, Booth Centre clients have benefited from a longstanding partnership with prominent Manchester institution, the Royal Exchange Theatre. As well as running a regular theatre group within the day centre, the Royal Exchange has also run its 'Progression Group', encouraging participants to get more involved with cultural opportunities within the city, such as attending mainstream workshops as part of the theatre's adult programme, planning an exhibition for the theatre's hall (with creative support from Manchester Museum), attending performances at the Royal Exchange and being mentored by professional artists. Participants described many benefits in taking their activity out into a community setting. They enjoyed learning and meeting others in a more mainstream creative context.

"I'VE ALWAYS LIVED IN MANCHESTER, BUT I'D NEVER BEEN IN A MUSEUM OR THE ART GALLERY."  
"I NEVER KNEW THERE WAS SO MUCH TO DO FOR FREE."

Members of the Booth Centre's Over 50's Group

"I FIND THE DRAMA VERY THERAPEUTIC, IT BRINGS YOU BACK INTO SOCIETY AND IS A CONFIDENCE BOOSTER."

Progression Group participant





## POSITIVE OUTCOME 2 IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Government Office for Science's Foresight Review on Mental Capital and Wellbeing defines wellbeing as "a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community."<sup>13</sup>

According to the Government's current mental health strategy, No health without mental health, people who fit this definition are likely to experience a range of positive outcomes, including "improved physical health and life expectancy, better educational achievement, increased skills..., reduced risk of mental health problems and suicide..., reduced anti-social behaviour and criminality, and higher levels of interaction and participation."<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, people with poor mental health and wellbeing will often have "fewer qualifications, find it harder to both obtain and stay in work, have lower incomes, are more likely to be homeless or insecurely housed, and are more likely to live in areas of high social deprivation."<sup>15</sup>

With around 70% of homeless people experiencing one or mental health need,<sup>16</sup> incidences of poor wellbeing are high amongst the homeless population. One of the main ways in which services have attempted to combat this is by engaging individuals in activities that promote self-esteem, confidence and resilience.

Although numerous activities have the potential to promote these outcomes, the arts have proved especially effective in engendering these qualities in people. A 2007 study by the Department of Health, Report of the Review of Arts and Health Working Group, drew numerous connections between active participation in the arts and improvements to individual's mental health and wellbeing.<sup>17</sup>



### OPEN CINEMA

Open Cinema is a social enterprise that facilitates community film clubs and film making programmes for homeless, vulnerable and socially excluded people. Working in conjunction with homelessness services, they establish weekly film clubs, where service users can watch films and take part in post screening discussions with special guests from the film and other related industries.

In March 2013, Open Cinema published a national pilot evaluation documenting the experiences of thirty nine film club members from nine separate projects in four different regions of England.<sup>18</sup> In attempting to increase member's confidence, Open Cinema aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment where participants can meet new people and discuss their ideas with each other and industry professionals. When asked whether attending a

film club had given members more confidence, 65% felt that it had.<sup>19</sup> Respondents were also keen to highlight the benefits of meeting members of the film industry and the positive effect this had had on their self-esteem.

An important indicator of increased confidence is a willingness to try new things. This in turn can help to improve people's resilience as it allows them to consider different opportunities when a favoured option is unavailable. When asked whether attending a film club had inspired them to develop new interests or learn new things, 74% of respondents said 'yes'.<sup>20</sup> In a related question, 55% of people felt that attending a film club had inspired them to try new things in their own lives. Others cited an increased willingness to join additional projects and activities as a result of their experiences with Open Cinema.

"THE FILM CLUB BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER  
AND MAKES THEM FEEL MORE HUMAN."  
"IT GIVES YOU SOMETHING POSITIVE TO TALK  
ABOUT ... RATHER THAN JUST THE PROBLEMS  
YOU ARE FACING."

Open Cinema film club member



## POSITIVE OUTCOME 3 DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR WORK

A high percentage of homeless people are unemployed and, therefore, often lack the income, status and sense of satisfaction that a job can provide. According to a recent study by Homeless Link, 94% of homeless people are unemployed, as opposed to around 30% of the general population.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, homelessness services have

long focused on initiatives designed to improve their clients' chances of finding work.

As we have already seen, creative activity has the potential to make a significant contribution to improvements in homeless people's mental health and wellbeing. This in turn can lead to a variety of positive outcomes, which will contribute to a person's ability to find work. A number of organisations are successfully using the arts to help people develop a specific set of job related skills.



### STREETWISE OPERA

As part of its training package, Streetwise Opera has piloted a workshop using performance techniques and singing to help build confidence and skills for the work place, with a particular emphasis on interview techniques and preparation. The sessions cover a range of topics, which participants can explore through a series of role play exercises, including:

- Giving a confident first impression when meeting new people
- Awareness of body language and positive body language in particular
- Making eye contact
- Using your voice confidently
- Communication skills.

86% of those attending the workshop found it to be useful to their needs, whilst 64% commented on feeling more confident when approaching interviews after the session.<sup>22</sup> Participants also recorded that they would appreciate more regular help with developing these types of skills.

A further element of Streetwise Opera's work involves facilitating a work placement scheme offering participants the opportunity to experience work within local arts and cultural venues across England and Wales. Placements involve a wide variety of roles within a range of prestigious institutions. In the project's 2010-11 evaluation 1 in 5 placement participants went on to secure paid employment.

"THE WORKSHOPS HAVE GIVEN ME CONFIDENCE THAT I CAN ACTUALLY DO SOMETHING. INSTEAD OF SAYING A NEGATIVE NO, I CAN'T DO THAT, I'M GOING TO GIVE IT A GO!"

Streetwise Opera workshop participant

"I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT BUT ALSO APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF PRACTISING AND PREPARATION."

Streetwise Opera workshop participant



## POSITIVE OUTCOME 4 CHALLENGING PREJUDICE

People experiencing homelessness are often subject to negative assumptions and stereotypes. This can result in the potential talent and skills of such a diverse group being overlooked.<sup>23</sup> Homelessness services are working to improve their practices, ensuring that each person they work with is treated as an individual with their own interests, skills and ambitions.

The provision of arts activities reflects this approach, promoting celebration of talent and aspiration rather than focusing simply on need and want. Art offers a means by which homeless people can become visible and have a voice. Whether work is of marketable quality or not, it can allow homeless people to contribute positively to their local communities, stimulating a sense of pride and improved public perception.



"THE ARTWORK  
IS BRILLIANT AND  
MY CUSTOMERS  
LOVE THEM."

Café owner



**CAFÉ ART**

With many homelessness services now providing in-house art classes, it is important to consider what happens to the art produced. Perhaps they are displayed in the service itself, hung in a participant's accommodation or given to a family or friend. Despite this range of options, there remains limited scope for the work to be seen and enjoyed by the general public.

Café Art is a social enterprise that works with front line service providers to display the work of homeless artists in a series of independent cafes, as well as at unique pop-up exhibitions across London and now, internationally. The organisation also coordinates an annual photography contest, supported by the Royal Photographic Society, where homeless people are invited to take photographs of London with the resulting exhibition displayed in Spitalfields Market. A calendar is produced using the photographs and is sold by the

artists involved. Café Art has plans to introduce an art rental scheme for businesses that will generate revenue to continue its operations across London, with the view to expanding its model to other parts of the country.

One of the major advantages to this type of approach is that the work can be displayed all year round in a public setting. Rather than creating a special context in which to show the pieces, the work forms a part of the café's normal, everyday life. Artworks are available for sale with 100% of the proceeds going to the artists themselves.

By having the opportunity to display their work in a community setting, the artists involved with Café Art are presented with the opportunity to publically challenge some of the negative perceptions that exist around homelessness. This remains true whether the work is sold or not. The value is not necessarily in selling the work itself, but in showing the artists and the wider community that there is a place for it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the evident power of creative and cultural activity to encourage positive change, Homeless Link recommends that homelessness services:

- Recognise the value of the arts throughout the organisation
- Seek to offer creative opportunities both in-house and externally
- Engage with artists and creative/cultural organisations to offer high quality creative projects
- Encourage clients to develop their interests and skills by building creative elements into support plans, wherever possible
- Offer a flexible approach and allow staff to take time out of their usual rota to facilitate involvement in the arts, including running classes and visits.



# OUR OFFER



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Homeless Link is keen to build on the work that is already being undertaken as part of its Get Creative project. If you would like to find out more, receive support or get involved, please contact:

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## END NOTES

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## WHAT WE DO

Homeless Link is the national, membership charity for organisations working directly with homeless people in England. With over 500 members, we work to make services for homeless people better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

# LET'S END HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER

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