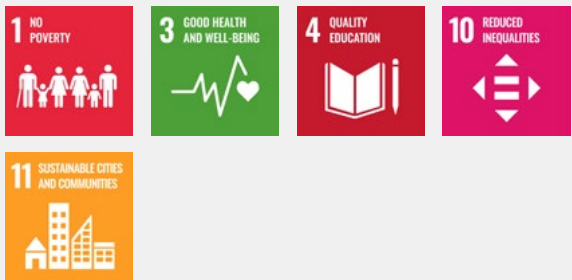


RETURN TO CULTURAL VIBRANCY



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
3. CULTURE AND EDUCATION
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

SUPPORT, PROMOTION, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES,
 COVID, VULNERABILITY, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, DIGITAL,
 EDUCATION, YOUTH



1. Leeds and culture

Leeds is an industrial city in West Yorkshire, Northern England. Administratively, it is a metropolitan borough comprising 33 wards. It is the third largest UK city with the largest economic centre outside London. The population is fast growing – from 751,500 (2011) to 789,786 (2020).

Pre-pandemic, 114 Areas of Leeds ranked among the 10% most deprived nationally and Covid-19 impacts are exacerbating rates of poverty and social need.

Leeds is ethnically diverse, with 19% of population from ethnic minority backgrounds and over 140 different nationalities. To respect and celebrate this diversity, Leeds City Council (LCC) is committed to intercultural principles – diversity, equality and interaction across its work.

Leeds is a compassionate and caring city – proactively tackling poverty and reducing inequality. As a City of Sanctuary, it is part of a national movement to build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in the UK.

The city is a culturally vibrant place – home to a significant breadth of creative organisations and practitioners. Pre-pandemic, over 9,400

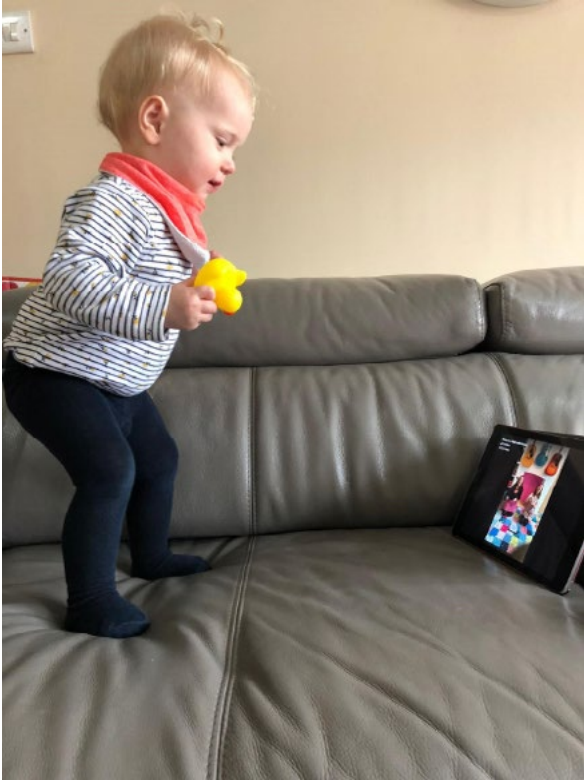
students were studying creative subjects at all 6 Universities in the city and over 35% of visitors to Leeds were attracted by the city's diverse cultural offer.

Leeds City Council (LCC) recognises and values the role that culture and creativity play in all aspects of the life of the city – and through culture, promotes Leeds as a great place to live, work, visit and study. LCC provides broad ranging cultural and creative opportunities for all its citizens to enhance their quality of life, education and work. We do this mainly through:

- Delivering a Culture Service with wide-ranging programmes in LCC venues, museums, galleries, libraries, as well as in schools, communities and public spaces across the city;
- A Cultural Investment Programme, supporting and enabling the city's diverse creative sector.

Return to Cultural Vibrancy sits between two key points in time: the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020) and the launch of LEEDS 2023 (January 2023) when we want the whole city to be empowered to celebrate culture and creativity across Leeds.

THROUGH THE PANDEMIC, LCC DEEPENED ITS COMMITMENT TO HELP SAFEGUARD CULTURE AND CREATIVITY BY QUICKLY ADAPTING IT PROGRAMMES, HELPING TO ENSURE THAT LEEDS COULD RETURN TO CULTURAL VIBRANCY BY 2023 – OUR YEAR OF CULTURE.



2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The primary aim of the **Return to Cultural Vibrancy** programme is to position culture to enable and enhance the city's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic – socially and economically.

The programme objectives are to:

- Enable citizens' access to culture and creativity through online and offline activity.
- Maintain and subsequently increase investment in the creative sector (with opportunities open to individuals and to organisations) to ensure their survival and support continued creativity.
- Support the creative sector to deliver city-wide creative benefits – reaching and engaging citizens where they live.
- Promote education and home learning through increased creative learning provision.
- Boost wellbeing through cultural participation and public art.

This programme is focused on actions Leeds City Council needed to take to safeguard culture and creativity, to continue to promote and provide cultural engagement opportunities for its residents and to help ensure that the city would again be culturally vibrant by January 2023 – when the city launches its Year of Culture celebrations.

2.2. Project development

Return to Cultural Vibrancy started organically rooted in the Council's core values and our approach to culture.

The key phases of our programme are aligned with the city's economic recovery framework (aligned with the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy). The three phases are:

- **Respond** – Immediate actions to support the sector and citizens through lockdown.
- **Reset and Renew** – Ensure we understand the challenges and opportunities that we face in recovery and that we have a clear focus and direction on the projects and partnerships that will address them.
- **Build Resilience** – Maintain a long-term view of our aspirations to deliver inclusive growth and ensure that the sector is a central part of the city's recovery.

CULTURE IS A PRIORITY IN THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN – WITH A FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIVES AND GROWING THE ECONOMY THROUGH CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES.



Some of the actions include:

- Increase the frequency of **Leeds Inspired grants** (over £270,000/yr) Reach and support more individual creatives through the period.
- Redeploy Arts Council regular funding for Leeds Museums and Galleries to adapt provision to **create new online resources for citizens and teachers.**
- Recognise digital poverty – create **Bags of Creativity** and distribute to Leeds households.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

Enabled by Leeds City Council's Cultural Investment Programme (CIP), the creative sector increased their public profile through diversifying delivery platforms, including online activity, outdoor events, etc.

The Arts and Digital Inclusion Network was established in response to sector training needs providing opportunities for peer support and sharing good practice.

Demand for activity in local communities has grown throughout the pandemic which will see more people engaging with LEEDS 2023, our Year of Culture.

LCC supported West Yorkshire authorities to survey their creative sectors and has successfully influenced the value placed on measuring the social impacts of culture.

PUBLIC ART PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN LIFTING SPIRITS, CELEBRATING PUBLIC HEROES AND ENGAGING THE PUBLIC. AS A RESULT, THERE IS NOW INCREASED INVESTMENT BY LEEDS CITY COUNCIL AND LOCAL BUSINESS IN PUBLIC ART.

3.2. Assessment

We will evaluate the project:

- based on the criteria of 'Cultural Vibrancy'
- re-survey the creative sector to assess their recovery
- assess the total investment through grants and other areas of the programme
- assess the number and geographical of citizens engaged and capture some case studies of funded activity and their benefits.

Our new public art policy will reflect the broader needs of citizens and explore opportunities for them as audience, creators and commissioners.

3.3. Key factors

- Digital Learning and Access: Legacy resources and enhanced curriculum assets.
- Over 750 museum professionals trained in object-based learning, particularly for young people with additional needs.
- 1,300 'Bags of Creativity' delivered to some of the most vulnerable children in the city in partnership with social services.
- Increased awareness of the Leeds Inspired funding opportunities, with higher numbers of younger or less established artists applying.

3.4. Continuity

Leeds City Council will continue to invest in Leeds' creative sector through our main Cultural Investment Programmes – arts@leeds and Leeds Inspired. The Council is now focused on ensuring that there will a strong legacy following the Year of Culture and that Cultural Vibrancy can be widely shared and owned by Leeds citizens. We will continue to monitor citizens engagement through an annual survey and ongoing research.

4. Further information

Leeds was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" International Award (February– June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by Pam Johnson, Head of Culture Programmes, Leeds City Council, Leeds, West Yorkshire, United Kingdom.

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