



# **Creative Hackney**

**A Cultural Policy Framework for Hackney**

## 1. Creative Hackney - the cultural policy framework

In 2002 Hackney Council published its cultural strategy *Support for Creative and Cultural Industries*. The strategy articulated the importance of the cultural and creative industries to the economy, environment and cohesion of Hackney. It acted as a framework for the development of our cultural programmes especially Creative Futures - the two-year programme of cultural activity funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

Creative Hackney - the cultural policy framework builds on the cultural strategy and establishes the political, economic and social context for the development of the cultural and creative industries over the next five years.

To build on our cultural strategy we needed to develop a framework that provided the links for culture into delivery of the Mayor's priorities, the Community Strategy *Mind the Gap* and other corporate strategies e.g. the Children and Young Persons Plan, Libraries Development Plan and the Green Spaces Strategy

*Creative Hackney aims to:*

- Set out the aspirations for the vision for culture and creativity in Hackney
- Establish the framework for the long term development of the cultural and creative industries outlining what Hackney provides and what Hackney facilitates and supports
- Link cultural development in Hackney with wider regional and sub-regional strategies
- Identify future funding needs and potential funding sources
- Develop an action plan for cultural development in the borough leading from the key themes of the policy

## 2. What do we mean by Culture?

Cultural activity is at the core of people's lives acting as one of the threads that links people together. But when we talk of culture it has different meanings to different people. As a starting point, this policy follows what is now the widely established two-part definition, or understanding, of culture set out in '*Creating Opportunities*' (DCMS, 2000), the guidance for Local Cultural Strategies.

Culture is seen as having a material dimension encompassing the following types of activities:

- the performing and visual arts
- media, film, television, video and design
- museums and archives
- literature, writing and publishing
- the built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- tourism, festivals and attractions
- craft, fashion and design
- sports events, facilities and development
- parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats and water environments

Hackney Council has complementary strategies produced or planned for libraries, sports and green spaces so Creative Hackney does *not* include those areas.

Culture also has a value dimension and is about:

- relationships - between individuals and groups
- shared memories, experience and identity
- diverse cultural, faith and historic backgrounds
- social standards, values and norms
- what we consider valuable to pass on to future generations

In Hackney this translates as the diversity of communities and their cultural heritage, our green spaces and built environment, local festivals, arts and cultural events and the creative and cultural industries. We see culture as an inclusive concept that embraces a wide variety of activities, places, values and beliefs that contribute to a sense of identity, our form of expression and wellbeing for everyone in our communities. It is about our way of life and our quality of life - it is about what people choose to do - cultural services and activities are the ones people opt for rather than have imposed on them.

Culture can provide communities with both a shared sense of place and a vision of where their community is heading. What is critical is that each community understands and explores the ways in which culture encompasses and expresses what is best about its way of life. The community should also be supported in playing a full and active role in realising its aspirations.

Participation in cultural activities can raise self-esteem, increase life chances, raise aspirations as well as provide positive activities that can contribute to citizenship and divert from anti-social behaviour. Cultural activities can be used to increase educational attainment and contribute to mental and physical health improvements.

The policy explores what kind of future we want for the cultural and creative industries in Hackney and how they can improve the quality of life for residents, workers and visitors. A vibrant cultural economy can change the perception of an area creating a place where people want to live, work and put down roots. One of the strengths of Hackney is that it is a place where many communities have settled and contributed to our communal life. This needs to be reflected in our approach to how culture develops and how we bring people and organisations together.

### **3. Culture in Hackney - the cultural jigsaw**

The cultural offer in Hackney is immense and varied. There is the development of a Cultural Quarter around Hackney Central taking in Hackney Empire, the Technology and Learning Centre incorporating the Central Library and Hackney Museum, Free Form's Hothouse and a wide selection of restaurants stretching through from Mare Street through London Fields to Broadway Market.

But cultural activities are not limited to Hackney Central. Hidden Art of Hackney opens the rich depth of designer-makers' work to the public across all of Hackney. The Culture House in Dalston hosts the renowned Vortex Jazz club. The Rio Cinema, one of the few independent and community run cinemas in the country, showcases the annual Turkish Film Festival as well as running children's' education events and first-run mainstream films. Dalston and Hackney are known for the range of Afro-Caribbean clubs. Theatres like Chats Palace, Hoxton Hall and Arcola show varied programmes appealing across all communities. There are major festivals like Stoke Fest, Shoreditch Festival and Mare de Gras along with a myriad of music, play and community events held in all Hackney's parks. In addition there are a wealth of individual practising artists who reside in the borough.

Organisations of national importance are located in Hackney. Circus Space trains circus performers, promotes shows and provides offices for circus related businesses. Sutton House restored by the National Trust is located in Homerton. The Geffrye Museum is nationally renowned for its collections of domestic interiors and furnishings. Hoxton and Shoreditch are host to a number of art galleries including White Cube and Inlva, the national centre for photographic arts. Major artist workspace providers like Space and ACME have studio space throughout the borough.

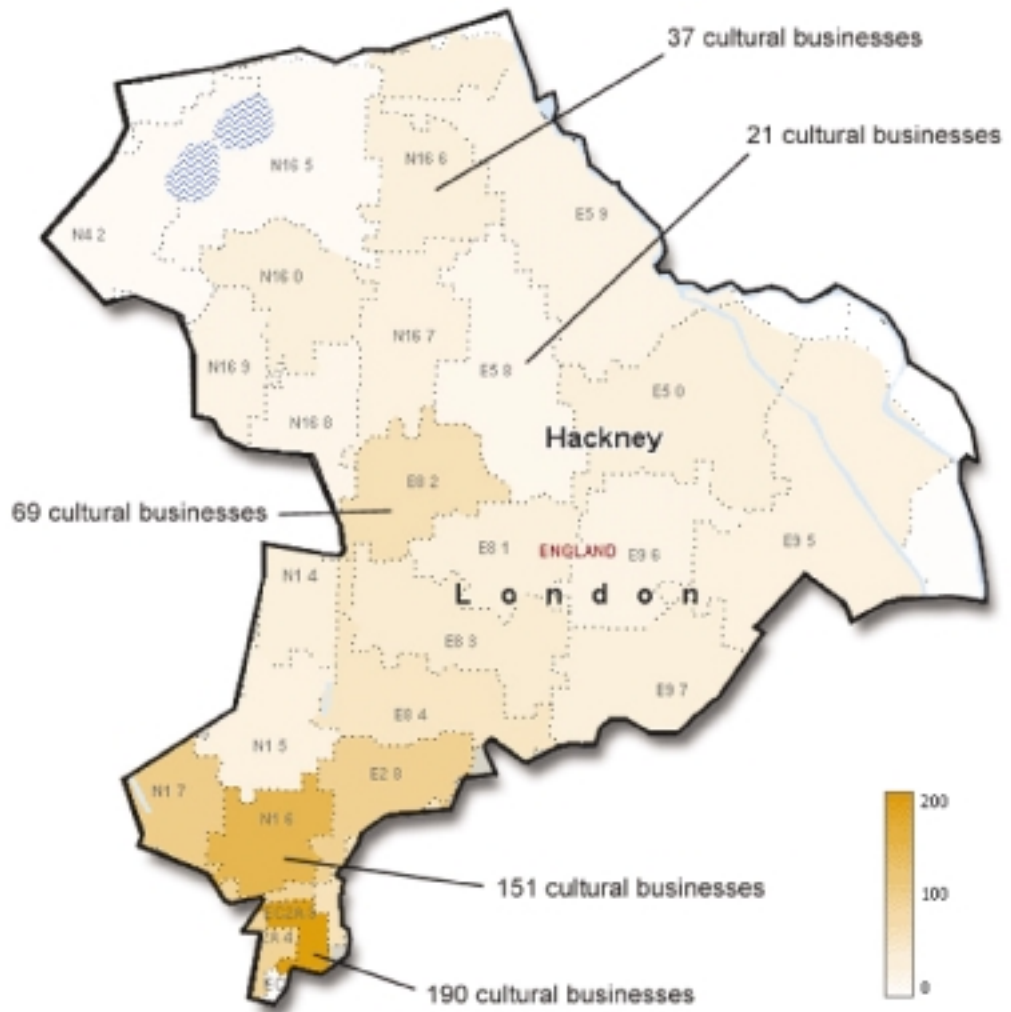
A strength of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in Hackney is the synergies that exist between community arts organisations, artist practitioners and the creative industries. One of the reasons that Hackney became a prime location for the creative industries was the creativity and skills that existed through the high number of practicing artists and community arts organisations; as the creative industry sector grew it provided practitioners and organisations with a local market for their skills. Many of these businesses were small to medium enterprises and as this 'critical mass' of practising artists, arts organisations and creative businesses developed more creative businesses were attracted to the area. This is seen most notably in Shoreditch and Hoxton but location of CCIs is becoming significant in Hackney Central, Kingsland Road and Bethnal Green Road.

Cultural and creative industries have replaced manufacturing as the prime industry in the borough.

Figure 1 (below) indicates this through the number of cultural sector businesses, by postcode. It is not just the number and variety of organisations in the cultural and creative sector that is significant to Hackney. The economic impact of this sector should not be underestimated. In 2003, the cultural and creative sector in Hackney employed 9,510 people in 1,520 enterprises with a turnover in excess of half a billion pounds (£580m) per annum. This accounts for roughly 10% of employment in the Borough and almost 13% of businesses. CCIs are one of the major employment sectors in the borough. This is a relatively recent trend and, although presently concentrated in the south of the borough, we need to ensure the right conditions are in place to maintain businesses and create employment opportunities for Hackney residents as this sector grows.

Micro and small businesses, many of which are black and minority ethnic organisations, dominate Hackney's cultural sector accounting for 86% of all enterprises, including 370 sole traders. Cultural organisations do not always follow the traditional economic growth model so many will continue to operate as SMEs. We need to ensure infrastructure support is in place to provide small businesses with business advice, access to training and funding. The Black and Minority Ethnic Arts Organisation (BEMA) has potential to expand to provide that support in partnership with the Council and other agencies.

Figure 1  
Count of all cultural sector businesses, by postcode



## 4. The bigger picture - new agendas and initiatives

London is an international centre for the arts and creativity with East London acknowledged as a focus for creativity. Hackney is a major provider of the 'cultural offer' in East London through our concentration of practicing artists, major cultural venues and creative industries. Part of our remit as a local authority is to ensure that Hackney remains the creative heart of East London and that our practitioners and organisations are best placed to take advantage of any emerging opportunities.

In 2003 the Mayor of London published the Culture Strategy outlining a ten-year vision for supporting the sector incorporating a wide range of policy activities: tourism, economic development, the environment, social inclusion, crime prevention etc.

The Mayor's Culture Strategy identified a series of key objectives focused on excellence, creativity, access and value, all underpinned by the principle of diversity. This built on the Mayor's manifesto objective for bringing a coordinated approach and greater clarity to the cultural sector in the capital. The implementation of the strategy now resides with the London Cultural Consortium.

Linked closely to the Mayor's Cultural Strategy was the work undertaken through the Mayor's Commission on the Creative Industries, and the subsequent development of Creative London. Creative London is investing in Creative Hubs, highlighted as physically based centres of good practice that have grown-up with local communities and creative economies. They will lie at the heart of many of the activities in the area, providing creative, commercial and learning opportunities for the local community, particularly young people and disadvantaged groups. Creative Hubs have been identified as critical factors in the development of local creative clusters. Both the City Fringe Partnership and the Lower Lea Valley Hub will impact significantly on the CCI sector in Hackney.

Hackney is part of two major regional developments: to the North is the Stansted - Cambridge corridor and to the East the Thames Gateway. Both are set to be key growth areas for an expanding London, economically and geographically. Positioning Hackney as both provider and producer of cultural and creative activities within these regional developments is a key challenge for us. Culture will play a significant role as London expands East with new communities. Culture has always had a strong role in engendering a sense of place and it can act as an integrating force to develop social and cultural tolerance in the existing and new neighbourhoods in that region.

London's hosting of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is the most significant opportunity for cultural practitioners in East London in recent times. The period leading up to 2012 and beyond will heavily shape and influence the development of the cultural and creative industries in our borough. Throughout the run-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games there will be the need to ensure synergy between this cultural policy framework and Hackney's commitment to the cultural action plan.

The regeneration of the site for the Olympic Games is set to bring major new economic investment in Hackney and it is essential that we secure a sustainable legacy for local people and businesses. The opportunity to showcase local talent and provide major marketing opportunities to an international audience is a key opportunity from the Games that we will maximise. Branding and marketing our

cultural programmes as part of Hackney and the five host borough partnership is a priority for the near future.

We cannot underestimate the need to support the sector and pump prime investment to develop talent and build capacity to ensure that local practitioners are well placed to take advantage of the available opportunities. For this to be successful organic processes need to evolve between practitioners and agencies. To date the development of the Five Boroughs Practitioners Forums have provided opportunities for real engagement in the Olympic processes and two-way dialogue with the cultural and creative industries.

At present the driver for work across the five host boroughs is *Transforming the Landscape - a joint cultural action plan to maximise the impact of cultural regeneration*. This cultural framework was produced as collaboration between the five boroughs and Arts Council England London, with Hackney as the lead borough for Culture. The six themes are:

***Leadership and Management*** - to include developing creative/cultural sector leadership and partnership strengths via e.g. Practitioners Forums, recruiting cultural champions and ambassadors and develop regular communications and briefing opportunities and linking national and London cultural initiatives with five host borough programme

***Business, Organisational and Skills development*** - to include procurement structures to pave the way for cultural and social enterprise involvement in 2012 and related planning agreements to help retain affordable cultural workspace

***Education, training, recruitment and employment programmes*** - to include engaging with 2012 Volunteer Strategy to develop cadre of local cultural volunteers, sub-regional cultural workforce development programme, e.g. apprenticeship, mentoring, talent development strategies and large scale events, festival management/skills development programme

***Engaging young people and marginalised communities*** - to include rolling out an Olympic Futures programme following Positive Futures approach in engaging hard to reach young people and develop learning strategies using culture for basic skills delivery and with marginalized groups and communities

***World class cultural facilities*** - to include East Bank as the “park of the future” with substantial cultural and community usage and future cultural uses designed/built into sports infrastructure etc; engagement with the Olympic Institute to ensure local benefits

***Cultural collaboration and change*** - to include programme of jointly commissioned events, cross borough initiatives, International cultural exchange programme, borough programmes working with schools, community groups, cultural agencies and voluntary sector and local history, heritage, cultural and arts celebrations

## 5. Culture now - the local agenda

Practitioner led partnerships, known as Creative Clusters, exist in Hackney for visual arts, theatre, literature, carnival, film, black and minority ethnic arts, music and museums/heritage. Each creative cluster develops according to the needs of the partner organisations/individuals. Development of the clusters across East London's Olympic region is one potential model for building capacity, ideas and developing critical mass. Many funding bodies are encouraging consortia bids in order to avoid local duplication of cultural activities. There is acknowledgement that participants and users of cultural activities do not confine themselves to borough boundaries and consequently our activities should reflect this. An excellent model is the development of the Fusion East programme delivered across Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

One of the opportunities we must utilise is the 'joined-up' approach between Council services. Cultural and creative industries have a major role in contributing to wider agendas in Hackney by adding value and providing fresh and creative approaches. This is indicated in Hackney's Community Strategy 'Mind the Gap' where cultural activities are crosscutting to all six themes. The Community Strategy's aim for culture is:

*To promote Hackney's reputation as a centre for arts, culture and entertainment, to encourage people to live, visit and do business here. To provide support to artistic and cultural activities in the borough and build local pride.*

This aspiration underpins this policy framework and highlights how cultural activities can contribute to other Council agendas like economic regeneration, safer communities and educational attainment. Cultural activities contribute to the Community Strategy themes of: A Good Place to Grow Up; Thriving and Healthy Communities; and Dynamic and Creative Economy; as well as Equalities and Diversity.

For example, arts organisations working with children meet a number of the Community Strategy themes. By enthusing children, developing creativity and raising self-esteem they can contribute to improving educational achievement. Participation in cultural activities provides positive opportunities of engagement for young people and can cut petty crime and vandalism levels.

Engagement with cultural activities has been shown as a way of improving mental health, which is a major health issue in our borough. Public art, properly commissioned and used, improves the local environment, showcases Hackney talent, raises an area's profile as an interesting place to visit and gives a sense of pride and place to local people. This framework is a key component to strengthen and link art and culture across Hackney and for getting our strategic partners to think about how culture can help the way they deliver their services.

We believe that all people in Hackney have an entitlement to either produce, participate or access cultural activity at whatever level they choose. Our primary role will be as a facilitator to, and a broker of, cultural activities. Many of the cultural activities that take place in Hackney are provided by voluntary organisations, businesses and individuals. We will commit to work positively in partnership with those individuals and organisations to remove the barriers that currently may exclude access to cultural activity, similarly through partnership we will seek to maximise the role that creative and cultural industries currently play in the social and economic regeneration of our borough.

Culture contributes to wider agendas by:

- Addressing social exclusion by providing shared opportunities for enjoyment, increased understanding, learning and community cohesion. Communities can connect through shared activities and sharing experiences
- Contributing to reducing crime and fear of crime through the involvement of young people in cultural activities
- Raising educational standards through a range of school based activities, out of hours and community learning opportunities and outreach activities, and ensuring that arts and culture are part of the new Youth Offer in Hackney
- Improving health through early intervention and prevention, as well as promoting mental and physical health through participation in cultural activities
- Making Hackney cleaner and greener through enhancing and improving the quality of the urban environment, promoting the use and enjoyment of Hackney's built heritage, green and open spaces, and local areas

## **6. Creative Hackney - what we mean by it**

What do we see as the key priority areas in this cultural policy for enhancing and developing the cultural offer in Hackney? Essentially we will focus our resources in the following four priorities.

### **Theme 1 Inclusion and participation in the arts**

Many Hackney residents experience social exclusion; through poverty, low literacy and numeracy, lack of child care, lack of access to transport, illness and disability, fear and feeling of isolation and marginalization. Social exclusion can lead to a lack of access to cultural activities because of those socio-economic barriers. A key challenge for us is to ensure that we develop programmes of activities and initiatives that remove these barriers.

Equally important to encouraging access to culture is to encourage participation in, and production of, cultural activities by people who may not have seen themselves as creative or artistic. In turn this links with the sense of wellbeing and improvement of self-esteem. Participation in cultural activities, including volunteering, also contributes to the active citizenship agenda.

Our priorities will be to:

- Ensure that access to, and participation in, cultural and creative activities are a basic entitlement for the people of Hackney and a route to active citizenship
- Seek funding for activities that widen audiences through high profile programming and marketing of events
- Programme activities across Hackney venues including libraries, theatres, arts centres, parks, sports facilities, museums and galleries to increase opportunities to access cultural activities
- Encourage the use of open spaces for community cultural events and celebrations

## **Theme 2    Sense of Place**

Hackney has a uniquely rich and diverse cultural heritage which contributes to a strong sense of place and pride in the borough. The vibrant cultural economy and heritage attracts people to Hackney bringing investment and jobs to the area. The borough has a number of significant buildings and heritage sites for example Abney Park Cemetery, Sutton House, Hackney Museum, Clissold House, Geffrye Museum, the Round Chapel and St Johns Churchyard. The vibrancy of the cultural economy is an incentive for people to live, work and visit Hackney. Initiatives like Hidden Art and Open House, venues like the Hackney Empire, Arcola Theatre and the Rio Cinema, events like Stokefest, Shoreditch Festival and Mare de Gras and places like Broadway and Ridley Road markets, Stoke Newington, and Hoxton act as major draws to the borough.

The visitor economy has increased in significance to the overall economy of Hackney in recent years and sustaining and managing that is a priority for the borough. The council recognises that the mix of historic environment, exhibition venues and galleries, markets, festivals and cultural events makes the cultural offer in Hackney unique.

Our priorities will be to:

- Develop a marketing strategy to provide signposting and access to the Hackney cultural and creative offer
- Take the opportunity of sub-regional partnerships to attract audiences and customers beyond the borough to our rich cultural and creative economy
- Encourage the re-use and re-development of historic buildings to maintain their use within the public realm as suggested in the State of Hackney's Historic Environment report
- Through regeneration funding and partnerships with other agencies, develop funding opportunities for cultural venues to improve both their facilities and their offer

### **Theme 3    Developing a sustainable infrastructure for the cultural and creative industries**

Hackney is home to numerous large and small cultural organisations across all art forms. There are a number of cluster areas - the cultural quarter at Hackney Central, the concentration of printing/publishing at Hackney Wick, the galleries of Hoxton and Shoreditch to name a few. However, large parts of the existing cultural base are coming under increasing pressure from demands for higher rents. The result is a large number of existing practitioners and organisations facing property pressures and new practitioners finding affordable studio space almost impossible to obtain. Indeed significant numbers of practitioners operate from their domestic premises because space is not affordable in their early development days.

The Council will work with the cultural and creative industries to identify and support the needs of providers and consumers. We also must identify sites where alternative land use is low, and which offer a potential location where cultural industries could relocate.

Our priorities will be to:

- Work in partnership across the authority to develop a strategic approach through supplementary planning guides to support the cultural and creative industries
- Provide business support and capacity building to small and medium enterprises especially black and minority arts organisations that disproportionately suffer the problems outlined above
- Develop access to appropriate and affordable workspace through identification of alternative land use sites and accommodation
- Support the development of incubators for new cultural and creative businesses
- Build a stronger base of cultural activity in the borough, in particular developing the cultural quarter in Hackney Central
- Facilitate the development of the Creative Clusters to enable them to develop capacity and access funding

#### **Theme 4 Developing and encouraging creativity in young people**

Hackney has one of the youngest populations in London and this is set to rise with the influx of new communities to the borough. At the same time the borough's economy is changing with the growth of creative industries as a significant sector for employment.

Employment opportunities range from music, film and video, fine and applied arts through to publishing and new media. Building awareness of the range of careers and opportunities is a priority if we want young people to find employment in the borough. We will seek to develop the appropriate skills training to equip young people for jobs in the creative industries. However, it is not just about developing skills in post-school age young people. Young people have different needs at different stages of their lives. It is equally vital to nurture the creativity of young people both within formal education and through access to creative activities. Hackney will need to work in partnership with cultural organisations that focus on work with all young people.

Our priorities will be to:

- Encourage the creative and cultural industries to assist actively in raising the educational achievement of Hackney school children and to provide lifelong learning opportunities for adults.
- Work with partners, e.g. Youth Services, The Learning Trust and Creative Partnerships, to ensure that all young people have access to constructive creative activities
- Provide networking opportunities to assist artists to work with schools and community groups
- Develop a co-ordinated approach across relevant partners, including the Further and Higher education sectors, to raise educational achievement through the arts
- Work with Hackney Economic Exploratory to develop pathways to employment in the creative industries through vocational and customised training, work experience and job placements to fit with the demands of employers
- Develop an 'incubator environment' for nurturing the creativity of young people

## 7. How to implement Creative Hackney

We have indicated our strong support for the cultural and creative industries throughout this policy. It is important that we articulate our role in their development - as a facilitator to provide the opportunities for the sector to flourish, as an enabler to nurture and support the sector and as a broker of partnership working. There are a number of action areas for Hackney Council to ensure that the cultural policy framework has solid foundations and forms the basis of the action plan that arises out of this policy framework. As part of the development of the Creative Hackney cultural policy we will explore these actions in further depth with practitioners and stakeholders to arrive at a shared understanding of how Cultural Services will be delivered in future.

To undertake that role Hackney's Cultural Services Team will:

- Facilitate new Cultural Stakeholder conferences to inform the development of the Cultural Policy Framework and its subsequent implementation
- Develop on-going consultation with the cultural and creative sector in Hackney to ensure that we respect and meet needs
- Broker investment opportunities and collaborative working across the sub region with key partners including the Arts Council, the LDA and other agencies to facilitate and consolidate the growth of the sector
- Ensure Hackney's cultural contribution arising from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is a key element of sustainable regeneration and neighbourhood renewal in the borough
- Enter into discussions with the LDA regarding the Creative Hubs initiative (build infrastructure, nurture new talent, showcase and promote, networking etc)
- Work with the LDA and Arts Council England, workspace providers and arts venues to build a stronger cultural sector in Hackney
- Seek to commission suitable research into the skills and capacity gaps of the cultural sector in Hackney to inform the development of future funding and capacity building initiatives

