City of Westminster

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

CULTURAL STRATEGY 2026 – 2031





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We wish to unlock the transformative power of creativity and culture, ensuring everyone across our city can share in its benefits.

Engaging in culture creates joy, brings people together, builds confidence and helps connect us with our diverse histories and the world around us.Culture and creativity also generate significant economic value, forming one of the UK's fastest growing industries.

Our five-year cultural strategy is an opportunity for us to collaborate with local partners and residents to enhance Westminster's role as a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive cultural hub.

Responding to ideas and suggestions gathered from local venues, partners and residents, we will enable communities to co-create free and inclusive activities, develop a cultural workforce development plan, promote creative health and wellbeing programmes and identify needs for cultural development.

It is our ambition to collaborate with partners to further integrate culture into place-based regeneration, grow creative enterprise and support cultural infrastructure which is so vital to community life and the West End's thriving visitor economy. We want to ensure Westminster's creative industries remain strong and dynamic, continuing to drive London's growth and align with the Government's industrial strategy.

It is important to us that everyone is able to enjoy and make the most of the cultural wellbeing, learning and career development benefits on offer, and by further embedding arts and culture across council delivery, we hope to achieve even greater social, economic and environmental impact.

Together with our partners, we will encourage creativity and artistic excellence to thrive in Westminster, while widening access to its life-enhancing possibilities.

Building on our progress over the past few years, Westminster's Cultural Strategy 2026-31 is focused on four key priorities:

1 BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO CULTURE

Ensure the cultural offer is accessible to people of all backgrounds while supporting co-creation with cultural organisations, Business Improvement Districts and residents.

2 PROMOTE CREATIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Forge stronger links between libraries, cultural partners and health providers, so more residents can experience wellbeing benefits of creative activities.

3 GROW THE CREATIVE ECONOMY AND SKILLS

Widen opportunities and access to creative careers, skills and enterprise, fostering an ecosystem where culture and the visitor economy can flourish.

4 EMBED CULTURE AT THE HEART OF PLACE SHAPING

Bring our city to life through inspiring public art and cultural provision that represent local people in community spaces and major urban renewal projects.



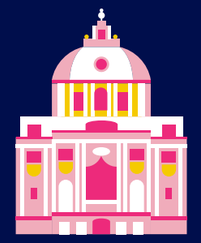
30 MILLION TOURISTS
visited London in 2024



Data from 2021 showed that
45%
of Westminster's population was born outside the UK. Eighty five languages are spoken in Westmkinster.



There are more than
700
cultural venues in Westminster including 54 theatres, 52 music venues, 20 cinemas and 178 museums and galleries.



5 OF THE TOP 20
most visited attractions in the UK in 2024 were in Westminster.



In 2025
30%
of London's jobs in music, performing and visual arts were based in Westminster.



Westminster contributed
£2BN
26% of London's arts, entertainment and recreation economy in 2024.

SETTING THE SCENE

OPPORTUNITIES

London is a global cultural superpower, rich in diverse talent, heritage, and creativity, and Westminster sits at its heart.

Our extraordinary city is home to over 700 cultural institutions, many of which are nationally significant, while 85 languages are spoken here.

The UK's Creative Industries are worth £124 billion, representing over 5% of the national economy and growing at more than twice the pace of other parts of the economy. More than half of this activity happens in London. In Westminster alone, 110,000 people work in creative roles – 13% of all local employment – with 86,000 arts and culture jobs concentrated in the West End. To put this in context, West End theatre attracts 2.5 million more attendees each year than the entire Premier League.

Culture and heritage shape the fabric of our city, creating the unique character that draws so many people to live, work and visit here. 36% of visitors to the UK are inspired by places they have seen on screen, and many of the most iconic locations can be found in Westminster.

Both filming activity and the cultural events that animate the city are only possible with the council's expert support.

Skills developed through arts participation are proven to boost employability, mental health and social mobility for young people. They also provide ways of engaging those who struggle with traditional academic routes through life. With so many inspiring creative jobs, particularly in the West End, there is potential to carve out more local pathways to these opportunities.

Finally, culture plays an important role in wellbeing. The council's City Survey data shows that Westminster residents who attend arts and cultural events have significantly higher life satisfaction scores and feel less anxious. People who attended arts and culture events were 22% more likely to report very low levels of social isolation compared to those who did not, indicating that arts participation helps people to feel connected.

CHALLENGES

Government DCMS Participation surveys show that while attendance at arts activities is higher in Westminster (85%) than across London overall (79%), some groups – including people from certain ethnic backgrounds, older adults, those on lower incomes, and individuals with long term health conditions or disabilities – continue to experience barriers to participation.

Despite the scale of the creative economy in Westminster, local creative and cultural partners report significant levels of strain amid inflationary pressures, reductions in public subsidies and capital upgrade requirements, including those required to adapt to a changing climate.

The creative industries report persistent skills shortages, accounting for 65% of hard-to-fill vacancies. This challenge has been compounded by declining uptake of creative subjects in schools – a trend the current Government aims to reverse through welcome curriculum reform designed to strengthen both employability and life skills.

Greater London Authority (GLA) reports show that while Westminster continues to accommodate the largest share of Creative Industries enterprises, this percentage has declined by nearly 20% between 2012 and 2022. While growth that strengthens other parts of London is something we celebrate, Westminster's historic clustering and global cultural significance means it plays a key role in the capital's creative ecosystem and we must focus on sustaining the infrastructure – the physical spaces, facilities, and resources – that underpin these activities.



Union Dance open air performance

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

We gained input on the role of culture in Westminster by attending Neighbourhood Forums, library community hubs, centres for the elderly, youth clubs, LGBTQIA+ events, a Westminster Together Forum and met with the Youth Council to ensure we have captured a comprehensive view of what culture means to Westminster's communities.

Over 120 cultural institutions, Business Improvement Districts, residents and education providers attended our co-production workshops.

We ran 8 hours of culture focus group discussions with residents in Westminster and received 128 responses on the Cultural Strategy Commonplace online engagement platform.

Stakeholder discussions also took place across a range of council services, including Public Health, Regeneration, Children's Services, Environment, Communities, Economy and Skills, Licensing, Planning Policy, Events and Place Shaping.



Re-create event, Somerset House
Photography credit Oliver Goodrich

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE

During our strategy consultation, residents and cultural partners told us about the importance of recognising how culture is rooted in so many informal aspects of daily life.

In addition to music, visual and performing arts, we use the term 'arts and culture' to refer to multi-cultural community festivals and centres, faith ceremonies, heritage, markets, street entertainment, digital media, libraries and archives, bookshops, as well as all kinds of making.

And not least, our definition of culture embraces the vibrant creative businesses of film, visual special effects, events, fashion, advertising, architecture, marketing, design and gaming, with all their related supply chains.



Steelpan drummers perform at the Maida Hill Market



Meanwhile On Nutford - Place Community Event

OUR COMMITMENT TO CULTURE

HOW WE WILL CREATE CHANGE

Taking inspiration from our community consultation feedback, it is our ambition that every resident, worker and visitor, regardless of background or circumstance, can benefit from, and feel ownership of, the city's cultural life.

We envision a Westminster where culture and creativity are powerful forces for change – breaking down barriers of exclusion and deprivation affecting the life chances of young people and playing a key role in helping to close the 18-year life expectancy gap between our richest and poorest communities. Our ambition is to weave together the vibrancy of the West End with the unique character of every neighbourhood, creating a dynamic cultural ecosystem where opportunity, inspiration, and shared benefits flow across the city.

As part of our Economy plan ambitions, we are committed to maximising employment and skills opportunities for both residents and businesses. This includes prioritising creative career pathways for young people from all backgrounds and building on recent growth in business support, networks and workspaces within the relatively deprived North Paddington Creative Enterprise Zone.

We will maximise the impact of culture grant programmes and develop contributions to deepen our support for cultural organisations – enabling them to extend their impact and enrich the lives of communities across Westminster.

As part of our convening role, we will bring partners together to tackle challenges such as climate change and the need for inward investment. Lobbying for culture with MPs and public bodies will continue, aligning with partners where we share common goals to ensure that pressures experienced by cultural organisations are heard.

Our extraordinary architecture, public spaces and landmark cultural buildings are key to driving active engagement in the city, and we want to draw on all our cultural assets to tell compelling stories of society and place. By commissioning artists and working with local communities as part of the council's capital programme, we will breathe life into public spaces – turning streets into stages and squares into canvases – while strengthening the local visitor economy and creating places that inspire.

The council is committed to ensuring that culture is integrated into place shaping and regeneration programmes, ensuring the arts, in all its forms, enhances the everyday life of our communities, helping to engender civic pride and creating a sense of identity and belonging.

We believe arts, culture, and creativity are powerful forces that shape places, spark investment, and drive inclusive, sustainable growth. That's why we will continue to champion cultural infrastructure – ensuring Westminster remains not just a desirable place to live, work, and visit, but a thriving beacon of creativity and opportunity for generations to come.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

WE CAN ONLY BE EFFECTIVE BY COLLABORATING WITH OUR COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Since launching its first ever Culture Fund in November 2022, the council has delivered many new projects and programmes in partnership with our cultural and community stakeholders.

In response to community aspirations, we have opened doors for local partners to co-create projects with residents – inspiring more people to join in shaping culture. Our cultural partners and community groups have the infrastructure, skills, and deep-rooted relationships needed to connect people and design a cultural landscape that is fairer, richer, and truly representative of Westminster's diverse communities.

We have created new and impactful culture grants and programmes to enable voluntary organisations, charities, Business Improvement Districts, cultural institutions, schools and creatives to widen access to culture, combat isolation and enliven public spaces. For example, Tate Britain used one of these grants to partner with voluntary and community sector organisations across Westminster for the first time – creating six immersive half-day events where residents explored world-class collections, made their own art, and connected over coffee.

Meanwhile, Inside Out grants transformed spaces into creative hubs: The National Portrait Gallery reimagined its main entrance courtyard as a clay portrait-making venue, while residents in the Church Street Triangle vicinity co-created fashion, global fusion music, and theatrical masks, curated by Arbeit Studios, The Showroom and Dende Collective respectively.

This refreshed strategy seeks to increase impact through stronger partnerships, maximising the value of council investment and widening pathways into creative experiences, learning and careers.



Painting at The National Portait Gallery



In 2024 over
171 MILLION
theatregoers attended a West End show, an 11% increase on pre-pandemic levels.



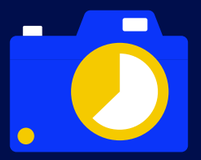
50.8%
of GVA by the creative industries in 2022 was generated in London.



In 2024, the creative industries contributed
£124BN
to the total UK economy, accounting for 5.2% of UK GVA.



93%
of 16-18 year olds reported that creative education fostering self-expression, teamwork and empathy positively impacted on their mental health and wellbeing in 2022.



The estimated annual wellbeing value of day-to-day encounters with cultural heritage in England is
£29BN

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

This renewed cultural strategy seeks to build on successful projects which have been delivered alongside partners. Highlights include:

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO CULTURE

/ Culture and Community Grants have supported resident-led cultural activities and events, engaging 65,000 people since 2023 across neighbourhood and institutional settings, with a focus on ensuring a fairer distribution of cultural opportunities.

/ Inside Out festival funding enabled over 50 cultural partners and community groups to bring free, accessible arts activities into streets and public spaces each summer, helping to remove social and economic barriers to participation.

/ Improved resident and disabled access to West End LIVE, Europe's largest free musical theatre festival, which welcomed 70,000 people to Trafalgar Square for its twentieth anniversary weekend in 2025.

/ Since July 2025, Theatre for Every Child – delivered in partnership with The Society of London Theatre – has enabled up to 1,000 local children from schools and youth clubs to attend award winning West End musicals for free. The council facilitated access for Looked After Children, SEND schools, youth clubs, and pupils eligible for free school meals.

/ Donmar Warehouse received council support to tour theatrical productions to school halls with curriculum materials and behind-the-scenes insight sessions, engaging over 6,000 Westminster Key Stage 3 students since 2023 to ignite interest in theatre careers.

PROMOTE CREATIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

/ The council's Dance Westminster, produced by Step Change Studios, enabled 100 disabled residents to be supported by dance professionals, gain confidence and showcase their talent for a sixth year in 2025.

/ Out and About offered free tickets for older residents for a record 62 cultural events last winter. Tickets were generously donated by Westminster Culture Network members, who worked with the council to promote access and combat loneliness.

/ A new partnership was set up with One Westminster social prescribers to develop micro-grants programme which addressed the health needs of 200 residents in tailored wellbeing activities: comedy on prescription, befriending cultural trips, textiles workshops for women's groups and photographic journalling.

/ The council's Public Health Community Champions support brought residents together in the top five deprived wards through singing, including one Arabic language choir, to improve mental health, combat social isolation and help those experiencing breathing difficulties.

/ English National Opera delivered interactive singing and engagement sessions across Westminster's residential care homes and day centres, bringing world class performances to residents less able to visit cultural venues.



English National Opera interactive singing and engagement session

GROW THE CREATIVE ECONOMY AND SKILLS

- North Paddington GLA Creative Enterprise Zone supported over 60 Westminster creative businesses and provided over £250k in grants for local organisations, enhancing facilities, networking, activations and networking opportunities.
- City Lions engaged over 2,000 young people each year in cultural events, careers events, production opportunities, work experience, mentoring, art competitions and public exhibitions, with a new leadership course launched in 2025, in partnership with Christie's.
- A new partnership established with ATG Creative Learning to create paid work placements and training for unemployed residents in five theatres, with a view to addressing skills shortages and improving access to longer-terms jobs.
- Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) provided four cultural and creative apprenticeship standards including Collections Technician and Cultural Learning and Participation Officer, all achieving 100% post-completion employment.
- 24 cultural organisations signed Westminster's Sustainable City Charter and over £1.9m awarded for environmental sustainability projects, helping business models and future-proofing venues including Royal Opera House, Cockpit Theatre and Institute of Contemporary Arts.

EMBED CULTURE AT THE HEART OF PLACE SHAPING

- Over £5.8m capital funding was invested in vital cultural and community buildings and facilities in North Paddington, including £2.7m to redevelop youth arts centre, Paddington Arts, and accessibility improvements of over £700k for community arts centre, Grand Junction.
- Mural art and urban design, co-designed with residents and youth groups, commissioned for six sites within the North Paddington area to enliven the local environment and reflect local heritage and community identity.
- Paddington-Edgware place shaping team appointed public art agencies, Contemporary Art Society Consultancy and Lacuna, to curate cultural landmarks that enhance place identity and tell stories important to local communities.
- The now pedestrianised Strand Aldwych was illuminated by two major art commissions, exploring the area's past and present, to draw visitors in winter months and activate this new public space for London.
- Business Improvement District and Landowner activities including Art after Dark, Fitzrovia Mural, sculptural installations, seasonal art trails and events brought high streets to life with council support.



141
Green Plaques celebrate the people and places of Westminster.



Westminster's Inside Out free outdoor summer arts festival attracts up to
50,000
visitors annually.



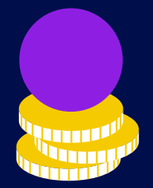
£1.35M
of neighbourhood infrastructure levy funding has been invested in cultural infrastructure since 2021.



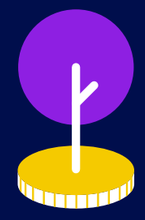
Westminster cultural venues open doors for
85,000
open house visitors every September.



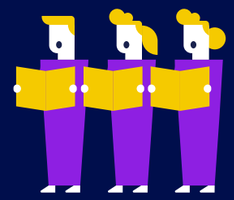
70,000
people visited the 20th West End LIVE anniversary.



Culture and Community Grants worth
£590K
have funded 71 projects since 2023.



Westminster Climate Fund made awards totalling
£1.9M
to cultural venues since 2024.



The Music Hub educated
20,000
pupils in Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham in 2023-24.

1 BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO CULTURE

We will work to ensure that Westminster residents and visitors are able to access and enjoy Westminster's unique and world-leading cultural offer.

While Westminster is one of the most culturally vibrant areas in the world, many residents experience economic hardship, social isolation, low confidence, language barriers, or limited mobility, which can prevent them from fully benefitting from the extraordinary cultural opportunities on their doorstep.

Cultural and heritage organisations are an essential part of social infrastructure with deep roots and relevance to the wider community. They provide unique learning opportunities and space for less heard communities to come together and promote insights, inspiration, and skills. Deepening collaboration with these partners can help more residents of all ages to overcome social, psychological and economic barriers, so they feel able to cross the threshold and consider that creativity is for them.

During engagement forums and focus groups, residents have stressed the need for affordability. Westminster residents have the fourth-lowest disposable incomes in London, and 44% of children live in poverty after housing costs are considered. Several wards are among the most deprived in the country, including Church Street (top 4%) and Westbourne (top 8%).

In response to cost-of-living pressures, there is a need to do more to promote the free and discounted cultural opportunities available in Westminster.

WHAT WE WILL SUSTAIN AND GROW

Libraries and Archives are lifelines for underserved communities and offer cultural programmes that promote inclusion. We support the Library of Sanctuary initiative and actively promote anti-racist practice and decolonisation through collections, programming, and staff development. Continuing to build on community services such as school library support, after-school activities and facilities for the house-bound, we will grow the role and visibility of libraries as inclusive cultural centres.

To build bridges between schools and cultural institutions, we launched the peer-led Artslink Westminster initiative in 2024 to increase access to culture for the 22,000 schoolchildren attending local state schools. Cultural institutions have hosted teacher twilights at Courtauld Gallery, ATG Theatres and the National Gallery, to share learning experiences available to schools. Developing this resource, which brings together school offers in one place, will encourage more student trips and use of institutional learning resources.

It is our intention to lever in more extracurricular opportunities for primary schools as part of a new council programme, 10x10. This recent initiative has created passports for children to chart their progress through enrichment activities and life skills. We will run events that help teachers develop leadership in arts education and understand the creative arts curriculum. Together, we aim to highlight the role of the arts to raise awareness of important societal trends such as the need for environmental action and the impact of social media.

Our Tri-borough Music Hub offered 218 low-income students fully funded bursaries in 2024-5 through innovative partnerships with Royal College of Music and the Royal Albert Hall. In 2026, we aim to wider participation further by introducing accessible and adaptive instruments into SEND schools. Westminster was proud to become the first council in the country to sign up for the Cultural Inclusion Manifesto in 2025, encouraging cultural organisations to collaborate with, and support children and young people with disabilities.



Inside Out Reggae
Photograph by Nadine Scarlett
Courtesy The Photographers' Gallery

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

/ Build on the solid foundation of Community and Culture grant support to inclusive activities in centres for the disabled, social housing estates, special schools, youth centres, community organisations and early years nurseries.

/ Expand the Inside Out summer festival of outdoor activities beyond the West End and into more deprived wards to engage more people on their doorstep.

/ Promote local events, arts and culture listings more effectively alongside free library activities and creative courses offered by WAES.

/ Help people find out about the breadth of grassroots and major events that the council supports, bringing together a seasonal calendar that will include key celebrations of diverse faith, ethnic and socially marginalised groups.

/ Work with partners such as the Exhibition Road Cultural Group to provide more free community events for residents and submit discounted offers for Westminster City Save.

/ Further collaboration with community influencers on popular social media channels such as TikTok and Instagram to extend our reach.

/ Work with Westminster Culture Network of over 700 members to encourage more local venues to increase their visibility and accessibility by using free open platforms, such as Bloomberg Connects and Footways.

/ Through a combination of our Children and Young people initiatives: Theatre for Every Child, Artslink Westminster, 10x10, City Lions and the Music Hub, seek to enable all children in Westminster to have access to culture.

/ Collaborate with partners including special schools, to support best practice guidance that enables more welcoming and accessible environments for all visitors facing barriers to participation in culture.



Strut the Triangle, presented by Arbeit Studios
Photography by Fikayo Adebajo

CASE STUDY //THEATRE IN SCHOOL HALLS

In partnership with Donmar Warehouse, the ‘Our Schools’ tour introduced theatre to Westminster schools to support the curriculum, enriching student learning and enabling them to ask important questions about the world.

Following successful productions of two Shakespeare plays in school halls in 2023 and 2024 – Henry V and Macbeth, Donmar Warehouse presented Frankenstein Dance in 2025, a play written by award-winning playwright Eve Leigh for 11 to 14-year-olds. The play is a modern twist on the classic novel by Mary Shelleyand explores contemporary themes such as the role of AI, mental health and the dangers of toxic masculinity. The tour visited eight secondary state schools in Westminster, reaching 2,000 students.

The programme supports teachers by helping students engage with curriculum texts, as well as introducing them to the world of theatre and the creative industries. 100% of teachers surveyed were overwhelmingly positive about the tour, with one saying: “Our students rarely have the opportunity to see live theatre, if at all so it’s an incredibly valuable and life-changing experience for them. Thank you so much!



Theatre in schools. Macbeth Donmar School Tour
Photography credit Ellie Kurttz

CASE STUDY //THE CONNECTION HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMME

The Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields partnered with The Connection to deliver music sessions for 30 homeless people in Westminster, supported by a council Culture and Community grant. Fostering openness, creativity and curiosity, the programme used music to create new connections between the participants who all found the opportunity to create and record their own original pieces of music richly rewarding.

Early sessions concluded with an informal performance, in which the participants played two new pieces of music they had worked on. The second group of sessions resulted in participants recording two pieces of music at a recording studio which the Academy edited and featured in a digital soundwalk that was set up around St Martin's.

The Connection welcomed the enhanced ability to meet the needs of their clients and noted attendance week by week was exceptionally high, especially given the unpredictability of the participants' lives. Feedback from the participants highlighted a real sense of pride, self-respect, and empowerment in the group, who valued the collaborative spirit of the professional musicians.

Programmes delivered in partnership with organisations like The Connection demonstrate the transformative power of culture for social inclusion.



The connection Homelessness Participants create music at the St Martin's centre
Photography credit John Rees

CASE STUDY //INSIDE OUT SUMMER FESTIVAL

Westminster City Council produces Inside Out, an award-winning free summer arts festival held across the city's streets and public spaces. Delivered in partnership with local cultural organisations, the festival offers free outdoor performances, creative workshops and family-friendly activities throughout August. The programme encourages new audiences to engage with Westminster's cultural offer in familiar, open-air settings.

Since 2023, the council invested £497,000 in small culture grants, with Inside Out partners contributing over double that figure in match funding. The festival welcomed over 128,000 visitors over three summers, with events ranging from classical music by Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields to dance performances by Union Sound Open Air and community celebrations like Baker Street Quarter's Summer in the Square.

In 2025, the programme further expanded to include clay portrait workshops outside the National Portrait Gallery and a youth-led celebration by Queen's Park Bangladeshi Association and the Happy Hub. Regent's Park Open Air Theatre hosted free performances and workshops for over 240 primary schoolchildren. One parent said: "The workshop activity was amazing, my daughter loved it and enjoyed making her crocodile puppet!! The lady running it was great at explaining and really good at communicating with the children and making sure they have what they need. Thank you so much!! :)"



National Portrait Gallery - Head out
Photography credit Jonny Guardiani

CASE STUDY //WEST END LIVE

West End LIVE, Westminster City Council's flagship cultural event featured performances from over 60 of London's most famous musicals in Trafalgar Square in 2025. Its primary purpose is to make theatre more accessible by taking world-class productions into a free and open public space over a weekend.

Produced in partnership with the Society of London Theatre, West End LIVE attracts over 70,000 visitors each year, breaking down barriers to London theatre by showcasing free performances from emerging and long-standing shows, including Hamilton, The Phantom of the Opera, Wicked, Six and Cabaret. For the first time, the event was powered entirely by green energy in 2025, setting a benchmark for large-scale events in Trafalgar Square.

To widen participation, we ran a competition offering fast-track passes for residents and invited Westminster's voluntary sector and foster carers to enjoy the show from a guest enclosure. Partnering with Nimbus Disability, we ensured accessibility with viewing platforms, guaranteed spaces, and a dedicated entrance. One attendee said: "The idea is great! It makes theatre accessible to people who cannot afford it."

The event generated £4.5m for the local economy, with 92% visiting the West End specifically for it and 84% more likely to see a show afterward. Ticket sales via Official London Theatre rose 19% over four weekends, with 65% buying tickets post-event and 27% planning to do so.



Crowds gather for West End LIVE 2025
Photography credit Pamela Raith

Cabaret performance seen from backstage at West End LIVE 2025
Photography credit Pamela Raith

2 PROMOTE CREATIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We will work with our cultural institutions and health partners to enable creative industries to support health and wellbeing for people in Westminster.

As a local authority, we support resident health outcomes across all ages and areas of life in the city. The council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-33 recognises the importance of the wider social determinants of health relating to social, educational opportunities and community connections. Cultural spaces are a vital part of this social infrastructure.

Involvement in creative activities reduces loneliness, supports physical and mental health and wellbeing, and helps to build and reach communities seldom heard. Government (DCMS) research into the impact of creative engagement on health outcomes demonstrates that involvement in the arts has a wider societal benefit worth around £8bn a year, positively impacts quality of life and boosts productivity at work.

In Westminster, social isolation is a growing issue as we have a significantly higher proportion of single-person households (43%) compared to the London average (29%), with one in five residents over 55 reporting loneliness. GP referrals to active engagement in community and cultural activities have proven to be effective in addressing mild depression and social isolation, with research showing this kind of social prescribing activity leads to a 37% drop in GP consultation rates and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions. As many of Westminster's residents are living longer, diseases associated with advanced age are becoming more common and cultural engagement helps alleviate conditions such as dementia.

Although older people are at greater risk of isolation, young people under 35 are more likely to experience mental health challenges from anxiety, depression and self-harm. The Social Mobility Commission reported that arts participation provides important opportunities for relaxation, enjoyment and managing stress, supporting positive mental health outcomes in young people. As Westminster has 6% more young people (aged 16 to 34) than the London average, they are an important group to support through cultural engagement.



West End Arts Library Launch
Photography credit John Orton

WHAT WE WILL SUSTAIN AND GROW

Westminster Libraries and Archives provide safe, trusted and inclusive spaces for vulnerable residents, acting as community hubs for both health information and creative activities. To deepen this role, libraries will strengthen partnerships with council healthcare navigators, wellbeing centres and community hubs to offer cultural experiences in familiar and welcoming settings. In 2025, we launched the flagship West End Arts Library, creating new opportunities for collaboration with cultural institutions and enabling greater community impact.

The council's Serious Violence Task Force also recognises the role of culture in supporting young people's wellbeing and preventing violence. Programmes such as Helping Hands, led by the Young Westminster Foundation and funded by the council and London's Violence Reduction Unit, empower communities and youth advisory boards to co-design meaningful solutions. Extended youth services in schools and access to cultural activities provide safe spaces where young people can express themselves, build skills and develop confidence.

Close collaboration across council teams is essential to embedding creative health within our communities. Active Westminster services will continue supporting Dance Westminster for disabled groups, while Public Health Community Champions enable community choirs that help alleviate breathing difficulties. Adult Social Care officers are working with English National Opera to bring creative programmes into care homes for older residents, with plans next year to extend the offer to learning disability providers.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

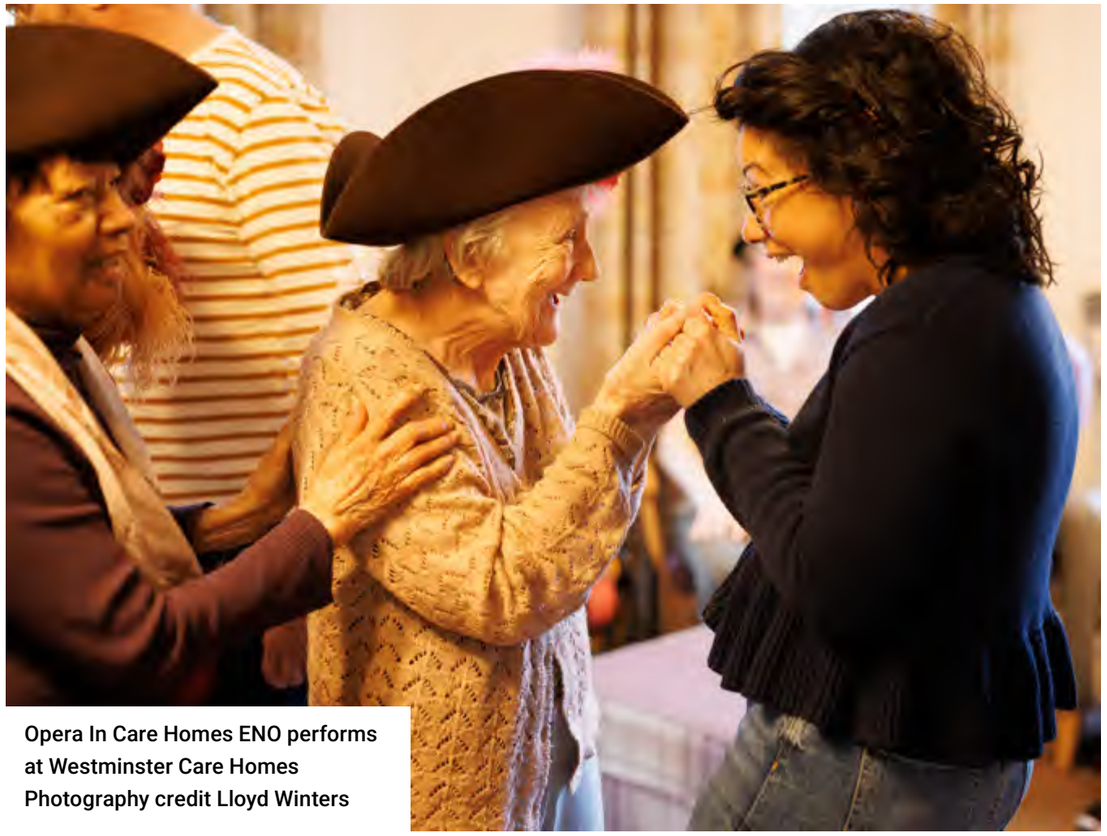
- Encourage more cultural venues to join the GLA Dementia Friendly Venues Charter and support initiatives like Wigmore Hall's partnership with Resonate Arts, for those living with dementia.
- Build on our new creative health partnership with One Westminster social prescribers to deliver grass-roots activities that are designed to benefit residents with health needs.
- Host Creative Health network meetings in libraries to bring primary care networks, cultural partners and community health professionals together in co-design workshops to forge innovative joint solutions and partnerships.
- Support community based cultural activities to improve access for residents with health or mobility impairments, building on successful existing council initiatives.
- Connect across council teams to scope where most impact can be achieved, contributing to the GLA ambition to make London a Creative Health City.
- Develop the role of the West End Arts Library as a flagship creative health venue by strengthening cultural partnerships in the local vicinity and beyond.

CASE STUDY //OPERA IN CARE HOMES

In March of 2025, the council commissioned and organised a pilot programme that brought the pageantry and joy of the English National Opera's performances to Westminster care home residents.

The sessions engaged residents in singing, breathing exercises, dancing and introduced them to the craft of costume and prop making. The ENO team performed well-known operas and songs, engaging their audience and providing an experience many residents cherished. Lucie, a resident at Beachcroft House, said: "The performance was so moving, and I could feel every note in my heart. It brought back wonderful memories from my younger days. I'm so grateful to everyone who made this possible. It was truly a special moment that I'll never forget."

ENO representatives, working with care staff, made every effort to share opera with those who could not access it through usual channels. They made impromptu visits to resident rooms, and their performances also reached those who didn't speak English as a first language. Care staff reported that the memory of the experience stayed in residents' minds for a long time, hearing them singing or humming tunes from the performance long after the troupe had left.



Opera In Care Homes ENO performs at Westminster Care Homes
Photography credit Lloyd Winters

CASE STUDY //DANCE WESTMINSTER

Dance Westminster is a joyful, free dance competition that celebrates inclusive talent and encourages people with disabilities to get active through movement. Open to anyone aged 11 and over who lives, works or studies in Westminster, the event is all about inclusion, creativity and confidence.

In 2025, Dance Westminster marked its sixth anniversary. Supported by Step Change Studios, an award-winning Westminster-based dance company, we have engaged over 1,000 audience members, over 550 disabled participants, and provided almost 700 hours of free accessible dance training and classes.

Each year, participants join free workshops and audition for a chance to perform in the Grand Final at Porchester Hall, with celebrity judges selecting the Dance Westminster Champion. Each finalist receives one-to-one coaching from a professional dancer and performs alongside them in front of a live audience.

Westminster Connects volunteers commented: "It was very moving and a pleasure to volunteer for such a good cause. I am still reflecting about these talented and happy people despite their problems. And the carers, so happy and some even crying, so moved! Wonderful."



Dance Westminster 2025 Finals group shot
Photography John Trigg

CASE STUDY //OUT AND ABOUT

Out and About offers complimentary tickets to Westminster residents aged 65 or above to attend cultural events such as concerts, exhibitions, and film and theatre shows. The programme provides older residents with free tickets to cultural activities and helps them engage with Westminster's cultural offerings. Out and About activities reduce loneliness in older residents through helping them easily access cultural events and experiences in their local area.

Participants have received tickets to a wide array of events such as the Turner Prize Exhibition at Tate Britain, Sinfonia Smith Square Concerts, morning exhibition views at the Royal Academy and English National Opera dress rehearsals.

In 2025, a record of 62 group events was delivered. One attendee described the programme as: "A fantastic opportunity to see (and hear) events that I would otherwise not be able to go to." Other participants highlighted how the programme allowed them to meet new people whilst also engaging in local culture.



Out and About - Westminster Abbey Evening Talks 4th June 2025 Photography credit Brendan Foster

Community Coffee Club - Royal Albert Hall

3 GROW CREATIVE ECONOMY AND SKILLS

We will continue to support the thriving creative economy in Westminster and create pathways to employment and education in the creative sectors.

Creativity, culture and heritage are major engines of the UK economy, recognised in the Mayor of London's Growth Plan and Westminster's own Economy Plan. Creative industries grow at double the rate of the wider UK economy, providing 7.3% of all filled jobs. In 2025, 30% of London's employment in visual arts, performing arts and music was based in Westminster. Soho continues to attract accolades as a crucible of world-leading creative media talent.

Westminster benefits from this dynamism. For every £1 spent on a West End theatre ticket, an additional £1.27 flows into local businesses – from hotels to restaurants and shops. Cultural districts play a vital role in driving the visitor economy and attracting international investment. Major events such as the Chinese New Year Festival, Pride in London, West End LIVE, and Notting Hill Carnival generate substantial economic benefits for the city. The council plays a crucial role in enabling this, providing funding, dedicated resources, and unparalleled expertise in delivering events at the heart of a global capital.

To ensure future generations can develop creative skills we recognise the need to strengthen programmes such as City Lions' enrichment, leadership and work experience opportunities for young people. Our young people initiatives provide behind-the-scenes industry insights and showcase the vital role of creativity in multi-disciplinary sectors. By drawing on successful models elsewhere that integrate the Arts into STEM learning – creating STEAM – we can inspire innovation and equip young people with the skills to thrive in industries where science, technology, engineering, and mathematics meet imagination.



Nelly Ben Hayoun, Art After Dark, Piccadilly Unplugged, 2025 by Art of London

WHAT WE WILL SUSTAIN AND GROW

Creatives often struggle to access support within a delicate ecology of micro-businesses that make up 93% of the creative industries. Building on the momentum of recent Creative Enterprise Zone activities in North Paddington – a priority area for inclusive economic and cultural growth – we will offer creatives more tailored business advice networks and increase opportunities for residents to develop talent and fulfil their potential.

Access to affordable workspace remains a key challenge for Westminster's creative sector. Through our Enterprise Space Programme, we are delivering new, supportive and affordable creative workspaces at 300 Harrow Road, Lisson Grove Studios and at Church Street Triangle. We are also unlocking the potential of vacant and underused spaces across Westminster, including the West End, through temporary or meanwhile uses to support creatives.

Westminster's street markets animate neighbourhoods, nurture new talent, and celebrate our diversity and creativity – and we will build on their potential as a launchpad for creative businesses. One Westminster, funded by the council, provides surgeries to advise grassroots organisations on growing their business models. We will signpost more non-profit cultural organisations to this resource and to the comprehensive business support offered by the council and partners.

It is our ambition to encourage more cultural organisations and creative businesses to sign up to Westminster's Sustainable City Charter, to encourage climate action and decarbonisation to create organisations fit for the future. We are committed to helping the cultural sector develop more sustainable business models through the Westminster Climate Fund, which provides grants for capital and feasibility energy projects.

The City Promotions, Events and Filming team drives Westminster's cultural vibrancy, delivering over 1,200 activities each year that attract more than seven million people. From world-class festivals and blockbuster film shoots to community celebrations, these activities showcase Westminster's unique character, energise communities, and reinforce its status as London's cultural powerhouse. The team supports and champions this work by providing expert guidance and practical assistance – ensuring safe, seamless, and spectacular experiences that make culture accessible and celebrated by all.

We enable filming across iconic locations – from independent productions to global hits like Mission Impossible: The Final Reckoning, Slow Horses, and Black Doves. Westminster remains the home of film – where shoots happen on its streets; sound and effects are mixed in Soho, and premieres light up Leicester Square. To give an idea of scale, 580 shoots took place over a total of 1,069 filming days during 2024.

The council enhances cultural visibility through initiatives such as the Green Plaque scheme, which celebrates the diverse cultural and community heritage of Westminster such as the Windrush arrivals at Paddington Station. It also supports seasonal art trails curated by Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and local landowners. By reducing barriers for creative practitioners, supporting grassroots events, and generating economic benefits for local businesses, the team plays a vital role in community celebrations, cultural engagement, and creative growth across the city.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

/ We will work with Ambassador Theatre Group and other creative businesses to expand their theatre work placement model for the unemployed to address skills shortages, create social value and attract business sponsorship.

/ WAES will develop two new creative apprenticeship standards – including one on Hair, Wigs, Makeup, and Prosthetic, further strengthening progression pathways and building specialist skills into creative and cultural careers.

/ Create a Cultural Workforce Development Plan, building bridges between council teams, City Lions, WAES and external training providers, Young Westminster Foundation, employment services, colleges and universities; to map out career pathways for young people and lifelong learners.

/ Support more cultural organisations to implement climate action plans by 2031, embedding sustainability into their operations and positioning them as environmental leaders across Westminster.

/ Seek re-accreditation for the Creative Enterprise Zone with the GLA to develop the next phase of support and growth in North Paddington.

/ Create a Culture Space Register, as part of our Inward Investment work, to identify empty spaces and meanwhile use spaces for potential use, and list cultural businesses, organisations and enterprises seeking spaces.

/ Strengthen Westminster's world-leading role in film production as well as maximising the employment, skills and training opportunities that derive from this and other creative businesses for our residents.

/ Champion cultural activities within the evening and night-time economy, prioritising designated Westminster After Dark opportunity areas to deliver vibrant, safe, and inclusive cultural experiences.

/ Work closely with Planning and Licensing teams to review existing frameworks to ensure they better support and enable the creative economy, both during the day and after dark.



City Lions workshop

CASE STUDY //CITY LIONS

City Lions is removing barriers for 13 to 16-year-olds by expanding their horizons through cultural enrichment. Since 2021, the programme has created opportunities for 7,800 young people, achieving record growth last year with over 2,100 participants engaged.

This flagship programme for the council connects young residents to industries that once felt out of reach, offering experiences that spark creativity and ambition. From free trips to West End theatres, major art exhibitions, and ice skating at Somerset House, to behind-the-scenes access at film sets, Savile Row tailors, VFX studios, and even designing a fashion show at Kensington Palace – City Lions transforms curiosity into opportunity.

Beyond experiences, we invest in confidence and skills. Through mentoring, young people discover their creative potential and prepare for their next steps. In 2025 alone, over 110 work placements provided hands-on experience, built networks, and inspired future careers. Art competitions have enabled participants to explore themes that matter to them and showcase their work in libraries and prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Society of the Arts, and the Saatchi Gallery.

By equipping young people with the insights, skills, and networks they need, City Lions is nurturing the next generation of creative talent – while ensuring Westminster's cultural sector thrives now and in the future.



Dress Codes, City Lions workshop at Kensington Palace
Photography credit Historic Royal Palaces

CASE STUDY //NORTH PADDINGTON CREATIVE ENTERPRISE ZONE

Creative Enterprise Zones are a Mayor of London initiative, designating areas in London that support artists and encourage creative business growth. North Paddington was designated a Creative Enterprise Zone in 2023 recognising the strong cultural heritage and cluster of grassroots cultural venues. North Paddington is growing into a vibrant place where artists, makers and cultural businesses can thrive.

New affordable spaces are on the way including 300 Harrow Road, a 710 sqm new creative workspace. Historic Maida Vale Studios will continue its legacy as a music production hub, with a new lease secured by MVS Partnership. Flamboyan Carnival Arts transformed a meanwhile space into a Notting Hill Carnival exhibition space while it was awaiting development.

Business support programmes have played a key role. Programmes like Re:Create Westminster have helped local creatives build stronger, more sustainable businesses. Through North Paddington Creates, 15 artists and organisations received £120,000 to host 118 events celebrating local culture. A new Creative Network has helped local artists share ideas, find opportunities and collaborate.

We are also helping cultural organisations stay rooted in the area. The North Paddington Capital Grants programme has supported refurbishment and arts facilities at community arts venue, Grand Junction, based at St Mary Magdalene Church and several other local churches. Paddington Arts received £2.7m to upgrade their building and grow their programme.



A showcase event at North Paddington Creative Enterprise Zone

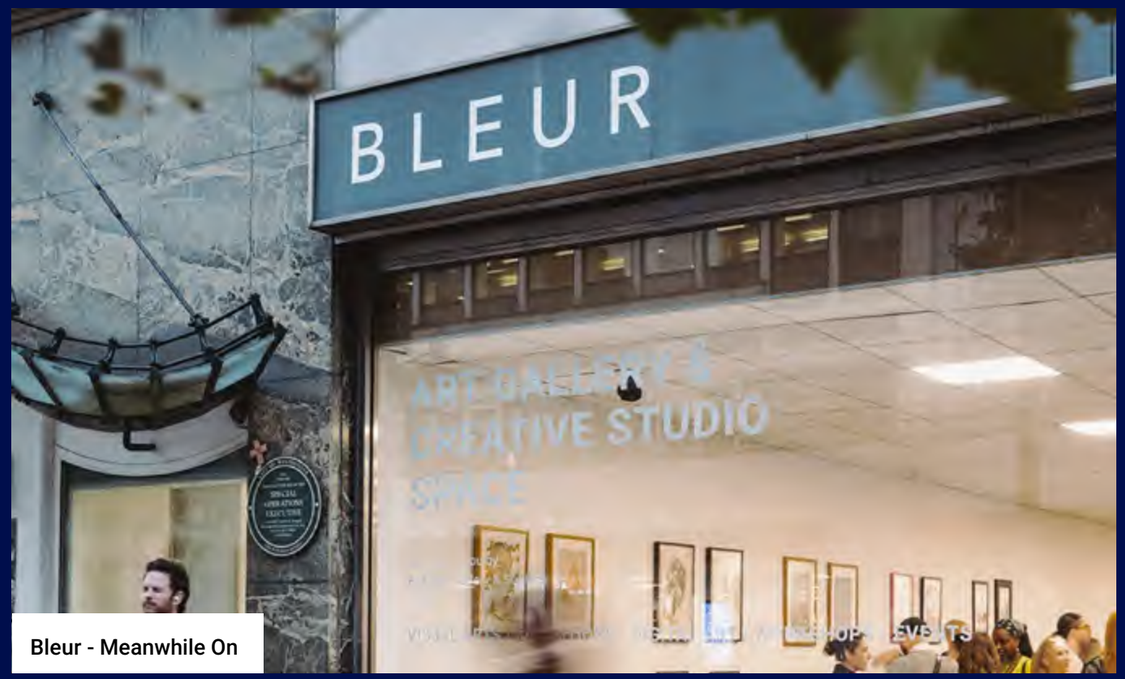
CASE STUDY //MEANWHILE ON

Meanwhile On is Westminster's award-winning programme to revitalise high streets and support inclusive economic growth. By transforming vacant retail spaces into temporary venues for creative enterprises and community initiatives, the programme drives footfall, fosters innovation, and strengthens Westminster's position as a dynamic and resilient economy.

Since 2023, 14 activations have been delivered, supporting over 50 brands, creating 47 jobs and staging 90 events for over 7,000 attendees. Activating previously empty spaces has brought new experiences and audiences, with notable creative activations such as:

- Bleur – an independent art label and talent incubator on Baker Street, supporting emerging visual artists through exhibitions, partnerships and public programming
- By Rotation – introducing sustainable fashion rental to Brook Street
- Sowvital and Yougi – offering workshops on fragrance, ceramics, and design in Connaught Street and Porchester Place.

These projects have created environments where residents engage with new businesses, deepen social connections, and participate in creative learning. Through strategic partnerships with landlords and support services, Meanwhile On ensures Westminster's high streets remain vibrant, adaptable, and fit for the future.



Bleur - Meanwhile On

4 EMBED CULTURE AT THE HEART OF PLACE SHAPING

We will embed culture in public spaces across Westminster, co-creating representative local public art projects alongside residents and businesses.

Culture plays a fundamental role in shaping public spaces. It helps define the identity of a place and brings communities together, ensuring people feel represented and fostering a strong sense of belonging. Heritage, culture, and the creative industries also boost the local economy by creating distinctive destinations and attracting visitors. The council contributes significantly to animating parks and open spaces – for example, through the temporary Arts Theatre opening at Marble Arch in May 2026. Public art commissions further support meaningful civic participation and shared storytelling, encouraging dialogue on important societal issues such as climate change.

Culture provides a powerful way to reflect the diverse histories that make up our city, celebrating place and the built environment. With Westminster's exceptional cultural infrastructure, there is a major opportunity for these assets to become a foundation of place-based regeneration. Our ambition is to embed culture and the growth of the creative industries into planning and place strategies. Culture will help shape local area plans that strengthen neighbourhoods, high streets, and regeneration areas – building on successful community arts hubs at Ebury Bridge Estate and Church Street. Future regeneration and place shaping activity will aim to make arts and culture accessible to all, support creative clusters, grow with the city's ambitions, and, above all, reflect community aspirations.

WHAT WE WILL SUSTAIN AND GROW

With 20 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Westminster benefits from an unrivalled network of place-based partners who play a unique role in supporting culture, animating public spaces and strengthening the identity of our places. We shall continue to work alongside BIDs, landowners and great estates to support their own cultural and place strategies to bring high streets and public squares to life in their respective areas.

Public art has the unique power to explore social issues and create new memories, while revisiting historical narratives. Contemporary art commissions in the newly pedestrianised Strand Aldwych cultural quarter have illuminated winter nights and responded to local heritage. Upcoming cultural programming will invite collaboration with partners such as London Heritage Quarter and King's College London, to promote further debates about important societal issues, such as the role of AI and climate change, with our communities.

It is vital that we take residents on the journey of developing public art. Our Youth Council and youth clubs tell us they want more digital and immersive experiences, as well as a voice in shaping public art in the city. Along the Grand Union Canal, City Lions' young participants, local school and youth groups have been transforming the fabric of the area by working with commissioned street artists to input their ideas and co-produce mural art works.

Resident groups are working with architectural practices and public art agencies to co-create themes and ambitions for new, council-funded urban design and public art projects in Paddington-Bayswater and Edgware Road areas, where we have established public art panels with community groups and resident membership. The North Canalside Paddington Festival programme gave ownership to local community groups and artists through grants to activate what had become a neglected public space.

With heritage agencies, BIDs and community groups we will identify opportunities to invite artists to tell stories about evolving cultural histories. Soho Open House Festival brought cultural partners together to celebrate the locality in 2024, led by a collective of community volunteers and local artists; a model we seek to replicate elsewhere in future years.



City Lions participants painting Grand Union Canal mural by Wood Street Walls artists, Jael and Hatch

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

/ Deepen our understanding of Westminster's cultural landscape by identifying and mapping cultural assets and infrastructure in targeted Opportunity Areas identified for regeneration and strategic growth, building on work underway in North Paddington and Church Street.

/ Integrate creative economy data into planning processes to ensure culture is considered at the earliest stages of development to identify community needs for cultural space and embed creativity into the fabric of future growth.

/ Bring together arts and cultural institutions to co-curate the public art and activation strategies such as the ambitious Regent Street, Haymarket and Piccadilly public space programme being designed in partnership with The Crown Estate.

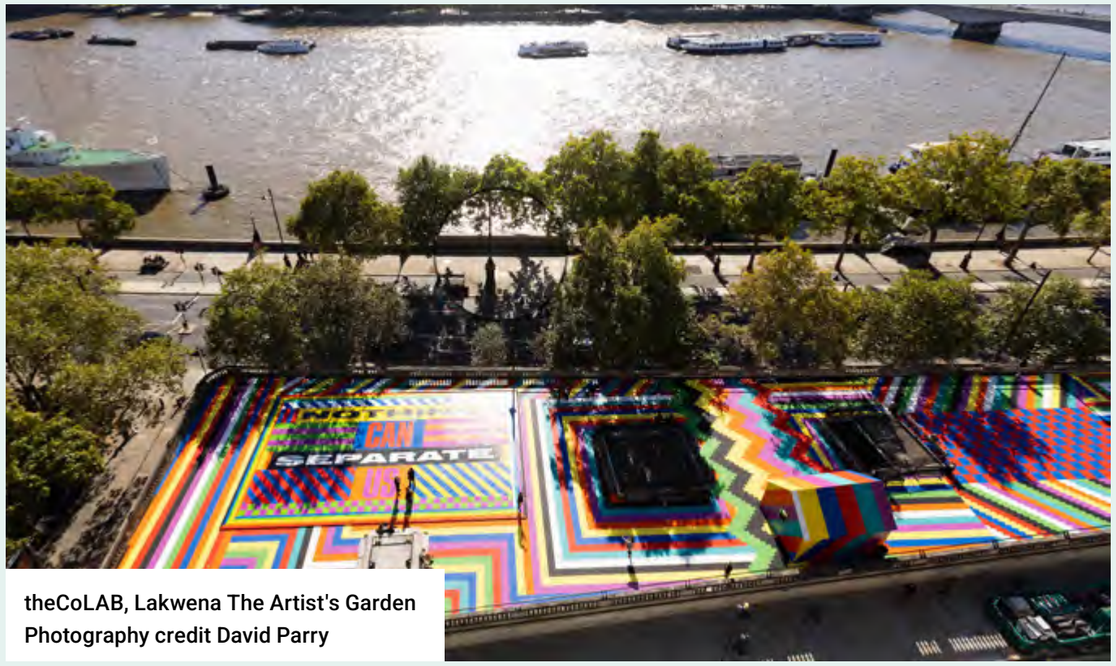
/ Work with cultural and community partners to help us make public space more inclusive and consider opportunities for creative wayfinding.

/ Foster collaboration with BIDs and local stakeholders to improve high streets and by leveraging developer contributions, invest in and strengthen cultural infrastructure.

/ Update our public art policies and guidance to improve our commissioning and community engagement processes, learning from best practice.

/ Explore ways to make public art programmes such as City of Sculpture more representative of our community, building on our collaboration with local public art agency, theCOLAB, to support ambitious work of scale by female artists in Temple Roof Gardens.

/ Support heritage projects and walking tours that highlight the impact of global majority and socially marginalised groups on local monuments, architecture and history.



theCoLAB, Lakwena The Artist's Garden
Photography credit David Parry

CASE STUDY //ART IN EVERYDAY PLACES

The council commissions a variety of public art projects designed to bring creativity into the daily lives of Westminster residents. These initiatives aim to enhance wellbeing, celebrate local heritage, and transform overlooked spaces through co-designed, site-specific artworks.

New commissions have actively integrated art into public spaces in North Paddington. Youth and community groups shaped the themes of murals alongside the Grand Union Canal. This resulted in a 120-metre community canvas by Wood Street Walls artists, reflecting the past, present, and future of canal usage, while Freddie Denton's 'Ebb and Flow' mural celebrated local biodiversity.

The upcoming artwork at Half Penny Steps demonstrates our commitment to inclusive design, incorporating creative engagement workshops with the Learning Disability Network London. Street artist, Andrew Werdna, has drawn on local landmarks important to local people to inform his mural design for the Great Western Road overbridge.

Across Westminster, artists are collaborating with children, youth groups, and residents of social housing estates to co-design public art, enabling local communities to shape the transformation of their neighbourhoods.



Queen's Park Canalside Mural
Artist: Freddie Denton

CASE STUDY //WESTMINSTER NOTES

Westminster City Council commissioned a series of bespoke public artworks as part of a £12.7 million refurbishment of eight public conveniences across the West End. These will all feature interior tiling with screen printed designs by artist illustrator James Lambert. The art programme has been inspired by both local heritage and international exemplar projects such as Tokyo Toilet.

The Victoria Embankment commission celebrates local iconography including the sphinxes guarding Cleopatra's Needle. Parliament Street designs reflect themes of power, protest and national identity, referencing Big Ben, Westminster Bridge and the Gunpower Plot. Theatrical heritage is explored in Piccadilly Circus, with all the other five remaining sites due to launch by the end of 2026.

The programme has been delivered by FM Conway with Hugh Broughton Architects and Contemporary Art Society Consultancy. It integrates art with civic infrastructure to create accessible engagement with culture that enhances everyday experiences for both residents and visitors, while celebrating Westminster's unique character.



'Westminster Notes' by artist James Lambert as part of WCC public convenience refurbishment, Victoria Embankment
Photography credit Dirk Linder

'Decades' by artist Louise Giovanelli
Photography credit Damian Griffiths

DELIVERING OUR AMBITIONS FOR CULTURE 2026-2031

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO CULTURE

Ambitions	Actions
Enable cultural and community stakeholders to shape and deliver free and accessible activities.	→ Build on the success of culture grant programmes, the Inside Out Festival and West End LIVE to co-create activities with residents, cultural partners and businesses.
Grow the community role of Westminster Libraries and Archives venues as inclusive cultural centres.	→ Develop community outreach services and engage with Library of Sanctuary, anti-racism and decolonisation initiatives. Increase collaboration with cultural partners to amplify the cultural value of Libraries and Archives.
Improve signposting and promotion of local cultural listings and cross-council cultural opportunities.	→ Promote local listings alongside wider cultural offers, including free library activities, City Save and WAES creative courses, supported by targeted social media activity for less engaged audiences.
Widen participation in the cultural offer to all Westminster communities, including those facing affordability barriers.	→ Create a seasonal calendar celebrating faith, ethnic and socially marginalised groups, and increase free and discounted resident events with cultural partners.
Engage all Westminster young people in the local cultural offer and creative opportunities.	→ Nurture council Children and Young People culture and creativity initiatives, promoting them through parent, teacher and social media networks.
Encourage more welcoming and accessible cultural environments.	→ Work with local partners to develop best practice guidelines on improving access and inclusion, particularly for visitors with disabilities.

PROMOTE CREATIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Ambitions	Actions
Enable networking, joint working and co-design opportunities to support creative health and wellbeing.	→ Host forums for primary care providers, community health professionals, HE partners, residents and cultural organisations to shape collaborative opportunities.
Support targeted cultural initiatives for people with disabilities, older residents and those with mobility impairments.	→ Build on the success of Dance Westminster, Out and About, community choirs and the ENO Opera in Care Homes programme and identify new opportunities with partners.
Enable more local connections between primary care and arts provision.	→ Develop Libraries and Archives as local hubs and connectors for creative health programmes, promoting the West End Arts Library as a flagship venue.
Encourage commitment from cultural partners to support those living with dementia.	→ Advocacy to Westminster Culture Network partners for sign-up to the GLA Dementia Friendly Venues Charter.
Support targeted creative health initiatives in the community to improve wellbeing for vulnerable residents.	→ Collaborate with One Westminster social prescribers and other partners to support grass-roots creative health activities for residents with health needs.
Increase creative health impact across Westminster, contributing to the GLA ambition for London to become a Creative Health City.	→ Work across council services to tackle health inequalities and identify where creative health initiatives can deliver positive impact.

DELIVERING OUR AMBITIONS FOR CULTURE 2026-2031

GROWING CREATIVE ECONOMY AND SKILLS

Ambitions	Actions
Map and develop career pathways for residents and young people entering creative and cultural industries.	Create a Cultural Workforce Development Plan, building on WAES creative apprenticeships, City Lions and ATG theatre placements.
Develop the identity and growth of North Paddington as a Creative Enterprise Zone while supporting key creative hubs in the West End.	Apply for GLA reaccreditation to support future expansion, grow business resources, workspaces and networks, and develop West End creative economy with partners.
Encourage cultural organisations to work with the council to adapt to the challenges of a changing climate.	Encourage cultural organisations to join the Sustainable City Charter, partnering with the council on climate action and resilient business models.
Leverage the social value of filming and other creative economy activities.	Identify where filming partners and creative businesses can offer employment, skills and training opportunities for residents.
Identify empty and meanwhile-use spaces for potential cultural use.	Develop a Culture Space Register to increase accessibility of cultural space and support commercial opportunities.
Maximise the operating environment for creative and cultural activities and public space activations.	Champion the evening and night-time cultural offer and review the impact of licensing and operating frameworks on cultural use and grassroots venues.

EMBED CULTURE AT THE HEART OF PLACE SHAPING

Ambitions	Actions
Explore opportunities for culture to add value to priority areas for regeneration and strategic growth.	Map cultural assets and infrastructure to identify planning recommendations at early stages of development.
Develop partnership approaches to public art and place activations to create inclusive and high-quality programmes.	Convene roundtables and steering groups for cultural partners and landowners to shape Westminster's public art and place strategies.
Work with BIDs and local stakeholders to support local cultural strategies and improve high streets and public spaces.	Provide advice on Westminster area cultural strategies while supporting infrastructure and developer funding bids.
Engage young people and community groups in place-based and public art developments.	Identify co-creation opportunities in public art and public space design to support meaningful community engagement.
Adopt best practice in public art commissioning to enhance community outcomes.	Create public art policy and guidance to improve commissioning and planning processes, ensuring sustainability and positive social impact.
Celebrate the impact of global majority and socially marginalised groups on local places, monuments and architecture.	Work with community partners to create place-based festivals, tours and trails sharing diverse and representative stories of local heritage and culture.

KEY PUBLICATIONS AND SOURCES CONSULTED

/ An Unequal Playing Field: Extra-Curricular Activities, Soft Skills and Social Mobility, Social Mobility Commission, 2019

/ Arts for All: Tackling Barriers to Arts and Cultural Participation in London, Centre for London, 2025

/ Barriers and Enablers to Participation in Youth Activities Research: Final Report, SQW and UK Youth, 2025

/ Beyond the Classroom: The role of enrichment in tackling the school absence crisis, Centre for Young Lives, 2025

/ Creative UK, Cultural and Creative Industries Quarterly Statistical Bulletin, Q3 2025

/ Culture and Heritage Capital: monetising the impact of culture and heritage on health and wellbeing, DCMS, 2024

/ Cultural Infrastructure Map, 2023, GLA

/ Cultural Learning Alliance Report Card, Cultural Learning Alliance, 2025

/ DCMS/Arts Council Participation Survey 23-24

/ Enhancing Creative Education, Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC), 2022

/ GLA, London's Creative Industries – Sector deep dive, 2023

/ London Growth Plan, Mayor of London, London councils, 2025

/ Our City, Our Future: Understanding the needs of young people in Westminster in 2023/24, Young Westminster Foundation, 2023

/ State of the Economy, Westminster City Council, 2024

/ The West End: The Theatre Capital of the World, Society of London Theatre, UK Theare, 2025

/ The power of prevention: the economic and wellbeing impact of library activities for mental health and older adults, Shared Intelligence and Moresight, 2025

/ The Wellbeing Impact of Cultural Heritage on England's Economy, Historic England, 2024

/ Volterra, Westminster Skills Evidence Base, 2025

/ Youth provision and life outcomes: a study of longitudinal research, DCMS, 2024

RELATED COUNCIL STRATEGIES

/ Westminster Strategy

/ Bi-Borough Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2023-33

/ ActiveWestminster Strategy 2024-28

/ Busking and Street Entertainment Policy

/ Westminster After Dark 2025-40

/ City Plan 2019–2040

/ A Greening and Biodiversity Plan for Westminster

/ Anti-Poverty Action Plan

/ Economy Plan

/ Community Equalities Strategy

/ Voluntary Sector and Community Investment Strategy

/ The Strategy for People Seeking Sanctuary

City of Westminster