

LEADING THE GOOD LIFE

Guidance on Integrating Cultural and Community Strategies

Produced for DCMS Local Government Team

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SETTING THE SCENE

Leading the Good Life argues that integrating cultural and community planning can strengthen the ability of local authorities and their partners to respond to community needs. The Guidance is intended as a vehicle to demonstrate good practice in integration, and to stimulate councils and their partners towards improving local cultural provision.

Why is this document needed?

This initiative of the DCMS initiative was prompted in response to changes to the planning framework in the Local Government Act 2002. These changes, under the provision for Freedoms and Flexibilities, mean that local councils are no longer required to produce free-standing Local Cultural Strategies, but should subsume these within Community Plans.

The Guidance has been produced by the consultancy **Creative Cultures** for the Local Government Team of the DCMS, and has benefited from the active involvement of many in local and central government.

The Guidance is **written for everyone** - whether directly or indirectly - **involved in cultural and community planning**. This will inevitably include a substantial number of people and organisations both within and outside the cultural sector itself.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE AND THE CASE FOR INTEGRATION

Councils continue to play a key role in helping to guarantee the provision of cultural facilities, activities and opportunities to their local communities. This role, whether enabling or supplying, offers councils a unique way of connecting with the quality of life of local people, their activities, values and beliefs.

There is a growing realisation at all levels - from Central Government to grassroots community organisations - that the impact of culture goes much deeper and wider than previously believed. Culture is at the very core of the sort of lives we all want to lead, meeting our profoundest needs for self-fulfilment as well as helping us develop social bonds.

This fundamental, life-enhancing attribute of culture to tackle our very quality of life provides the strongest case for integrating cultural and community planning, by ensuring we meet the needs of the whole individual.

At the delivery level, the path to integration has been greatly smoothed through the provisions of recent **Local Government Acts**, the development of **Best Value** and the establishment of **Local Strategic Partnerships** which provide the practical ways and means for furthering integration.

Despite the lack of widely adopted cultural targets for councils and the removal of the Best Value requirement for a separate cultural strategy, local authorities and their partners are free to seize upon other **policy, organisational** and **resource** opportunities for effective integration. Indeed, we now have considerable scope for justifying action through:

- the power of wellbeing
- contributing to the Shared Priorities
- developments in Comprehensive Performance Assessment from 2005.

These elements are supported by additional freedom to headline culture in Local Public Service Agreements, or to access a wide range of non-cultural funding resources. There is also unlimited potential to link with other bodies and services concerned with well-being, through a common focus on issues such as social inclusion, health improvement and lifelong learning.

As cultural activity is largely a discretionary activity, however, we all need to 'shout louder' if culture is to get on the political radar for local authorities and their partners.

THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATION

Extensive discussion and consultation with local authority officers, government departments and key cultural bodies have played the main determining role in development of this Guidance. The debate and consultation have suggested that opportunities for integration can be grouped under four main headings. These are:

Opportunity 1:	Establish a strong case for the contribution of culture
Opportunity 2:	Put the community into cultural and community planning
Opportunity 3:	Build a strong partnership for culture
Opportunity 4:	Build effective leadership for culture

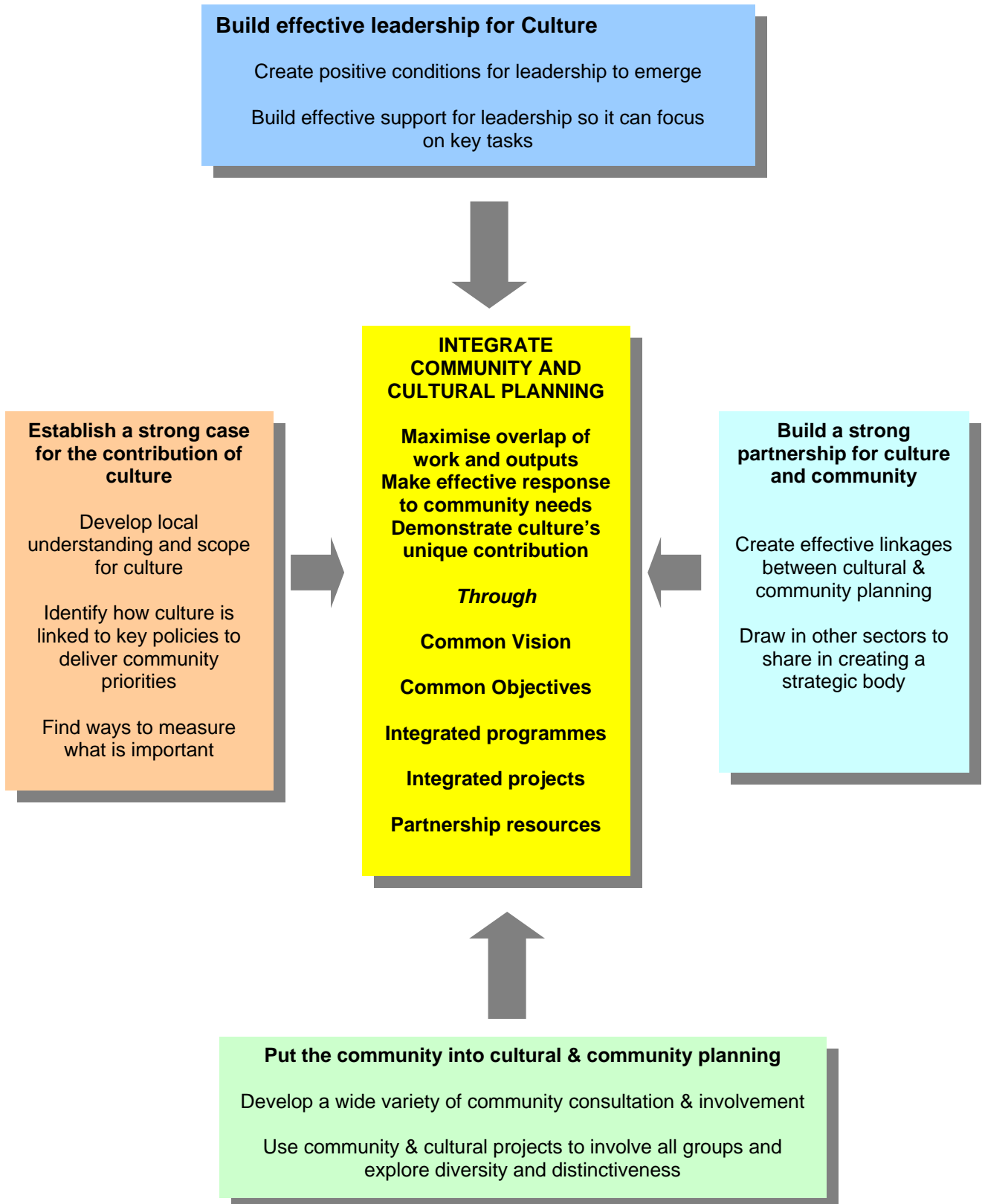
The Guidance sets out:

- the issues which are addressed by each opportunity
- key actions that can enable local authorities and their partners to take up opportunities for integration
- case studies and useful sources of information.

The Guidance also contains weblinks and references to a host of sites or examples of good practice, and will look to develop further support through IDeA. It concludes with a **checklist** as an aid to assessing strengths and weaknesses and priority areas for attention in creating a truly effective approach to integration.

The following diagram summarises the aims of integration and sets out the four opportunities and key actions within them.

INTEGRATING COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION



Opportunity 1:

ESTABLISH A STRONG CASE FOR THE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURE

Our ability to present a strong case for the role of culture requires us to both create an **understanding of culture as an inclusive and unifying concept** and find ways in which to **measure the impacts and outcomes of cultural activity**.

We can help to seize this opportunity for integration:

- developing local understanding and scoping of what we mean by and include in culture ensuring that non cultural organisations and individuals are involved
- identifying how culture is already, or could be, linked to national, regional, sub-regional and local policies
- finding ways to measure what is important to the local community and to provide a basis for including the contribution of culture.

These key actions go a long ways towards ensuring that culture and cultural planning are meaningful to everyone involved in wider community planning, that opportunities for linking with key priorities are fully addressed and that the need to demonstrate delivery against targets is tackled.

Opportunity 2:

PUT THE COMMUNITY INTO CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Getting communities directly involved from the outset in cultural and community planning is a second opportunity presented by integration. We need to find ways that ensure that **all sections of our communities are given the chance to express what is important to them** and ensure that **community views on cultural and quality of life issues are given the weight they deserve**.

The **key actions** that can promote active community contributions and recognition of the views of local people are:

- developing a wide variety of community consultation activities and approaches
- making use of community events and cultural projects to involve harder to reach groups or tackle issues like cultural diversity.

These key actions can ensure that sections of the community who would not otherwise be involved in community planning are included and offered opportunities to express what is important to them, their families and social groups.

They also offer ways to examine and reinforce positive attitudes to diversity, and explore local distinctiveness and regional characteristics which may otherwise be lost from the community development process.

Opportunity 3:

BUILD A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

We can also help integration through establishing a strong partnership for culture. This can support government policy in **encouraging a wider community leadership function** for local authorities and help **bring together the diverse and disparate cultural sector**. It will offer a basis, too, for **drawing in and involving departments and organisations not engaged in cultural activities** and ensure closer working within and across **two-tier authority areas**.

Building a strong partnership can aid integration through:

- creating mechanisms and opportunities for cultural and community planning to liaise within local authorities
- drawing in the private and not-for-profit sectors into an effective strategic body
- making sure the partnership is geared around actions.

These key actions allow a stepped approach by first ensuring that the local authority itself is working effectively across diverse departments (not all of which will think of themselves as 'culture' or 'community'), then ensuring that key partners outside the authority are involved in effective strategic planning and delivery.

Opportunity 4:

PROVIDE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR CULTURE

Leadership is the key to success: places with an excellent record of cultural development always have strong and effective leaders excited by and committed to culture and its wider linkages. We need to **address two questions**: what kind of leadership **do we require and from where will it come and how can leadership be developed and strengthened?**

Cultural leadership will be helped to emerge and play a vital integrating role if we:

- create positive conditions for effective cultural leadership to emerge from many possible sources
- build effective support for leadership so that it can focus on its key tasks and without getting side-tracked into matters of detail.

These actions allow for the many variations between areas and for differing requirements for leadership to develop successfully to meet local needs. They can help secure positive action on establishing a common vision for community and cultural planning, build wide community, regional body and partner support as well as providing a powerful voice for important community cultural needs.