



Evaluation of the Cultural Pathfinder Programme

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Summary

The Cultural Pathfinder programme was a two-year pilot which ended in March 2007. It was commissioned by DCMS and the Local Government Association to explore the ways in which cultural services can meet the priority needs of local communities. Emphasising integration and innovation, the twelve action-research projects have demonstrated cross-cutting approaches which bring about a range of benefits through culture and sport.

DCMS commissioned a team from De Montfort University to undertake a thorough evaluation of the programme. This report from De Montfort presents their findings and encompasses the outcomes, lessons learnt and key messages. They have identified not only the successes, but also barriers to success and the strategies used to overcome them. The report includes many examples of good practice both in terms of delivery and measurement.

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the results of the Cultural Pathfinder programme. It presents a series of findings of success factors and challenges that differing local authorities faced in testing their cultural aspirations within Government cross cutting agendas – the Shared Priorities.

This report provides learning for the stakeholders about the benefits of the adaptability of cultural practices to relate to social, economic and quality of life agendas.

The Cultural Pathfinder programme aims to maximise culture's contribution to the Government and Local Government's Shared Priorities of: raising standards in schools; improving the quality of local environments and of life for young people, families at risk and older people; promoting healthier, safer and stronger communities; meeting transport needs, and fostering local economic vitality.

In April 2005 thirteen local authorities in England – located in different regions in the

country and operating in a variety of cultural forms and policy areas - embarked on a pilot two-year programme, which was jointly initiated by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and by the Local Government Association. The aim of the programme was to highlight innovation, learning and transferability in using cultural activities to support the work of partnerships in different Shared Priority areas.

The thirteen local authorities and the twelve Cultural Pathfinders projects are:

Birmingham City Council (Leaps and Bounds project)
Canterbury City Council (At the Heart and Taking Part)
Hampshire County Council (Discovery Centre programme: regenerating libraries and transforming communities)
Herefordshire Council (Enabling creative industries)
Liverpool Culture Company and Liverpool City Council (It's not OK! Violence prevention education programme)
Manchester City Council (Museums for changing lives; working together to raise standards)
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (Culture for Keeps: encouraging participation)
Sheffield City Council (Creative Futures: Southey Owlerton Area Regeneration)
Somerset County Council (Somerset Creative Industries Development agency)
Spelthorne Borough Council (The Sunbury Cross public art project)
Suffolk County Council (Realising the cultural and heritage dividend)
North and South Tyneside Councils (Cultural regeneration through coastal partnership).

This report of the Cultural Pathfinders is organised in six main chapters addressing: the role of culture as a catalyst; the importance of collaboration and advocacy; leadership and skills; evidencing the results; the benefits of Cultural Pathfinder status; and the power of the unexpected.

The **Conclusions** highlight the importance of crosscutting approaches to both cultural policy and practice, and the innovative nature of much of the work carried out by the Cultural Pathfinder authorities, which is often closely related to the adoption of integrated practices; the issue of political advocacy; a range of issues around the evaluation of the multifarious impacts of the Cultural Pathfinders, and about the success, or otherwise, of the projects.

The report, in short, has uncovered plenty of evidence that Pathfinder status worked as an effective catalyst for learning, advocacy and

raising awareness about the role of culture in furthering the strategic goals of local authorities.

The following key points are noted:

- when operating an integrated and cross-cutting approach to both cultural policy and practice, sport and culture can bring real benefits to local authorities in addressing community priorities and needs;
- working strategically in partnership is key to delivering outcomes but without an effective communication and advocacy strategy partners do still not necessarily recognise the benefits. Targeting the message at the policy level has generated success. This has highlighted a need to provide support and improve understanding and competency at every level;
- leadership is critical and needs developing. Projects operate at both the macro policy/national and the micro delivery/partnership levels. Both need to develop in parallel;
- providing evidence for advocacy and to attract investment requires good baseline information and consistent processes in evaluation methodologies at local and national levels.

For further information about the research methods and data analysis in this study please contact Sarah Partridge at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

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For the full report and any associated technical information please visit our website:

<http://www.culture.gov.uk>

