

York's Creative Future

A large group of children in school uniforms are holding up colorful ukuleles and smiling. The children are of various ages and are all looking towards the camera. The ukuleles are in various colors including red, blue, yellow, and green. The background is a wooden floor and some musical equipment.

York feels like a city on the verge of a significant move forwards.

Creating the York Culture Strategy

Our city has a compelling and complex past. It has been home to Romans and Vikings, acted as a military fortress and centre for learning, as well as being a site of modern industrial growth in everything from rail travel to chocolate. It has seen so much change yet has always adapted. However, 2020 has brought a new and unprecedented challenge. Covid-19 has caused a global pandemic that has changed the way we work, live and interact beyond recognition.

York's Creative Future, the culture strategy for our city's next five years, is coming to life in a world that is very different from the one that initially planned it.

In 2018, when discussions began, we were facing up to the challenges posed by climate change as well as the post-referendum prospect that access to European funding and partnerships would come to an abrupt end. Yet even while austerity policies led to arts and heritage organisations becoming self-reliant, the City of York Council confirmed the vital role of culture and creativity in supporting wellbeing for the entire community. Encouraged by this endorsement, the Cultural Leaders Group commissioned the consultancy ArtReach to help frame the cultural and creative vision to be delivered in partnership with the Council and Make It York.

Two years on, the cultural and creative landscape is very different. March 2020 saw galleries, museums, theatres, music venues and creative organisations shutting their doors, and thousands of creatives across the city taking to their homes as places of work in order to support the NHS and protect our most vulnerable people from Covid-19.

It saw the army of freelance workers in the creative sector (musicians, actors, technical support staff, designers and many more), put at severe risk of unemployment. In education, it saw creative subjects squeezed out of the curriculum as schools struggled to help their pupils stay on track.

The Covid-19 crisis also laid bare the deep divisions in our society, especially as voiced by the Black Lives Matter movement. York has its inequalities, which were recognised in the drafting of the Culture Strategy before 2020. However, the Black Lives Matter movement has rightly demanded more extensive soul-searching by our cultural leadership; we must recognise that York is not an island and needs to become more overtly anti-racist. In this context, this strategy’s ambitions for inclusion and diversity are yet more urgent.

Far from retreating, we have seen culture and creativity playing an even greater part in many peoples’ lives. Artists and organisations have responded to the crisis with collective and community spirit; launching initiatives online and on social media, in the streets, and through public participation. These projects have kept people’s spirits high and the arts alive. York has seen community choirs go virtual, webcast festivals and digital theatre productions, as well as ‘Bags of Creativity’ delivered to households to support vulnerable and disadvantaged young people’s learning. As the city has begun to reopen, we have seen the creative and cultural sector leading the way, showing resilience, adapting to new challenges and reinventing themselves to enable their practices and businesses to survive, and, in some cases, even to thrive.

The six priorities of this strategy, rather than being swept aside by the crisis, are now more important than ever. By working together we can strengthen the engagement of everyone in our sector, putting York’s cultural offer at the forefront of our recovery, and building the city’s reputation worldwide.

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone across the city who has taken part in the discussions, consultations and whose creativity has helped us shape such a rich and varied strategy.

We ask you now to continue the journey with us, and help make York’s Creative Future our present reality.

Cllr Keith Aspden
Leader of the City of York Council

Cllr Darryl Smalley
Executive Member for Culture,
Leisure and Communities

Reyahn King
Chief Executive, York Museums Trust and
Chair of the Cultural Leaders Group, 2017-2020

Greg Dyke
Chair, Make It York



Priorities in Light of Covid-19

The impact and repercussions of Covid-19 on our society and on our city have been both immediately felt and will have far longer-term consequences. In light of this, the cultural leaders of the city of York have committed to urgently focusing on and advocating for the following bulleted priorities within the Culture Strategy:

- 1 → **Culture is inclusive, relevant and accessible to everybody in York, regardless of age, background or postcode.**
 - Tackling barriers to engagement will be even more important post-Covid.
 - Examining best practice on how to ensure equality and anti-racism is at the heart of engagement.
 - The prominence of digital, both as an enabler of cultural uptake and also in understanding the barriers to accessing culture digitally.
- 2 → **Place-Making: Culture is fully embedded into local investment and city planning developments, with the arts and heritage and cultural wellbeing integral to development processes.**
 - Embedding the creative sector's role in revitalising vacant and under-used property and public space in our high streets and commercial centres.
 - Promoting cultural wellbeing as an objective in local planning processes, to ensure placemaking not only supports economic growth and prosperity, but also health and happiness.
 - Working with partners across York and North Yorkshire to make culture and creativity a key element of the emerging combined authority region's identity and capabilities.
 - Supporting capital projects that provide capacity for the cultural and creative sector, as part of a thriving economy which supports wellbeing, and better connects higher education and professional practice.
- 3 → **Children and Young People: York is the first city to achieve cultural entitlement for all children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and/or disabilities.**
 - Young people face limited access to creative subjects in schools as schools focus on core subjects as they struggle to get pupils to catch up post-Covid, and we must work to mitigate this through inclusive and accessible city-wide cultural engagement.

- 4 → **Talent Development and Retention: York's creative and cultural sectors thrive and contribute to strengthening and diversifying York's economy: through universities and colleges providing clear routes to skilled employment, and creative workspaces attracting and retaining creative talent in the city.**
 - A shortage of creative subjects in schools could have a knock-on effect on the future pipeline of those going on to take creative subjects at university and to become the creative practitioners of the future.
 - Economic difficulties post-Covid might make future generations less willing to take the risk of a creative career – we must consider how to provide opportunities to counter this.
- 5 → **Culture and Wellbeing: York is recognised nationally for its innovative work in culture for health and wellbeing, including social prescribing, which residents can benefit from throughout their lives.**
 - The ability of culture to support wellbeing will be vital following a long period of restrictions and uncertainty – restarting the Cultural Commissioning Partnership and the ability to develop and undertake joint social prescribing projects is crucial.
- 6 → **York's National and International Profile: York's outstanding arts, culture and heritage and its status as the UK's first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts are championed and celebrated, raising the city's profile nationally and internationally.**
 - The ability to position ourselves strongly as culturally innovative.
 - The ability to change the way we work to become more collaborative.
 - The cultural listings guide becomes even more important to promote our offer.



Context

York feels like a city on the verge of a significant move forwards.

York is one of just ten UK cities in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and the UK's only Creative City of Media Arts. In its very first year, York Mediale established itself as the UK's largest media arts festival, with an online audience of 91 million. The City of Media Arts designation has helped to galvanise citywide support to bid for a second UNESCO designation to demonstrate York's outstanding universal value as a World Heritage Site.

York has been the most important location for much of the North of England since the time of the Romans. York's history is founded on the creative genius of the city's people and their pioneering efforts in making, shaping and protecting its assets for the benefit of all. Today, York is a city renowned for its Minster and City Walls; celebrated for its rail and confectionery heritage; and admired for its scientific and cultural innovation, and social reform. However, out of the half a million adults living in the York postcode area¹, less than half of the population (45%) is engaged in doing something creative and around 40% are not regularly attending events, performances, festivals, a museum or gallery.

¹ The York postcode area is larger than the City of York Council remit.

The Culture Strategy aims to address this by creating opportunity and tackling the barriers to cultural engagement in York, in line with Arts Council England's vision² for everyone to have access to a rich and remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. It embraces York's status as a Human Rights City³, by embedding culture in everyday life, so that the people of York have opportunities to be creative and engage and participate with culture at all life stages, regardless of background, ability or disability. Furthermore, it ensures that culture supports wellbeing, and the major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health⁴.

² www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate

³ www.yorkhumanrights.org

⁴ www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry

York is committed to investing in culture to further develop the quality of life for York residents, and to boost the city's profile and economic prosperity for generations to come, through the 2020 – 2025 Culture Strategy.

So, what is culture? For the purpose of the Culture Strategy, it is defined as all activities involving arts and heritage, including collections, combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, music, theatre and the visual arts, as well as people's own creative participation in, and interpretations of, culture. Culture and creativity are also at the heart of a vital economic driver for the UK, the creative industries.

There are at least 62 professional arts and heritage organisations operating in the city and over 140 creative enterprises. Together with York's universities and colleges, they are dependent on developing creative participants and cultural consumers to sustain their businesses. Attracting and developing new talent, reaching non-arts attenders, as well as developing new cultural consumers are all critical to the future growth and prosperity of York.

The Culture Strategy has come together through robust consultation and workshops with York's residents, creatives groups and cultural organisations. It has taken on board what matters most to the people who live, work and study in the city and transformed these views into a plan of action to grow and develop York's creative future.

The Culture Strategy forms part of the City of York Council's Council Plan, supporting the Economic Strategy and the Tourism Strategy, and underpinning development of York's city narrative. It boosts cultural activity and places culture at the heart of activities from regeneration development and major capital developments to residents' wellbeing and cultural entitlement for every child.



By 2025, York is known as a city where outstanding, renowned heritage comes together with a cutting-edge contemporary approach to creativity.

Vision

⁵ www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/draft-strategy-2020-30

The York Culture Strategy will transform York's cultural participation, ambition and reputation. By 2025, York is known as a city where outstanding, renowned heritage comes together with a cutting-edge contemporary approach to creativity, reflecting the city's rich history and its status as the UK's first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts. York celebrates contemporary successes including Mediale, the city's future-focused commissioning festival, and Aesthetica Short Film Festival.

Local people are a key part of the city's cultural life, enjoying opportunities to be creative, and to engage and participate in culture that feels relevant to them, fulfilling Arts Council England's vision⁵ that everyone has access to a rich and remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.

York's children and young people can create, play, learn and make culture, developing the skills and attributes that will help them become happy, healthy, safe and successful members of the community.

York attracts and retains creative talent, inspired by the cultural opportunities and activities in the city, and building on the development provided throughout by universities and through all levels of education.

Through community engagement and community-led cultural activities, all York's residents, irrespective of age, background or postcode, can be creative and will be strong advocates for culture. They appreciate culture's role in wellbeing and many have benefitted from York's joined-up and innovative cultural approach to social prescribing.

Culture is considered integral to place-making and to people's sense of belonging, in both major infrastructure developments and in the city's planning processes.

Culture and creativity, including cultural attractions and its contribution to place-making, help to give York's new Tourism Strategy a competitive edge. York has welcomed 8.4 million visitors from around the world in recent years, and within the Tourism Strategy cultural tourists are core to achieving repeat visits and the £1bn target for the city's visitor economy.

York's Culture Strategy is ambitious. It is outcomes focused. It delivers a fresh and loud statement about the city's cultural offer, its UNESCO designation and its plans to achieve World Heritage status. More than this, it is designed to make a measurable, positive difference to the people of York regardless of age, background and postcode and to everyone who works, studies in, and visits York.

Priorities

York’s Culture Strategy is focused on six Key Priorities with specific ambitions for the city:

- 1

Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance

Culture is inclusive, relevant and accessible to everybody in York, regardless of age, background or postcode.
- 2

Place Making

Culture is fully embedded into local investment and city planning developments, with the arts and heritage and cultural wellbeing integral to development processes.
- 3

Children and Young People

York is the first city to achieve cultural entitlement for all children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- 4

Talent Development and Retention

York’s creative and cultural sectors thrive and contribute to strengthening and diversifying York’s economy: through universities and colleges providing clear routes to skilled employment, and creative workspaces attracting and retaining creative talent in the city.
- 5

Culture and Wellbeing

York is recognised nationally for its innovative work in culture for health and wellbeing, including social prescribing, which residents can benefit from throughout their lives.
- 6

York’s National and International Profile

York’s outstanding arts, culture and heritage and its status as the UK’s first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts are championed and celebrated, raising the city’s profile nationally and internationally.



Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance

Ambition: Culture is inclusive, relevant and accessible to everybody in York, regardless of age, background or postcode.

Need and Opportunity: The Culture Strategy focuses on ensuring that York's cultural offer is inclusive and relevant through a joined-up approach with organisations and providers, which engages with and speaks to diverse communities city-wide.

It tackles barriers to cultural engagement in York and provides opportunities for creativity, cultural engagement and participation for residents, including for hard to reach, vulnerable or isolated groups. It makes culture relevant to all, including the LGBTQ community, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, D/deaf or disabled people, and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. It ensures that the cultural offer is purposefully anti-racist as well as supporting the diversification of the cultural sector workforce and creative producers.

The strategy supports community-led cultural initiatives, engages with grassroots community groups working in culture and wellbeing, encourages organisations to highlight existing activities to their local communities, and supports cultural organisations to use their assets to support community-led activities across the wards of the city. Explore York for example, is investing in the delivery of a universal cultural offer across its 14 static libraries and mobile units, three reading cafés and home library support network, as hubs of cultural and creative activity, and supporting local families with creative development opportunities for children.



The strategy focuses on supporting digital and new media arts activity, cultural volunteering, placement opportunities and projects that empower participants to lead cultural activity including ‘take-overs’. The strategy builds on existing good practice, such as York Theatre Royal’s Takeover events and community programming, sharing skills to help cultural organisations ensure deeper levels of participation.

We will work in partnership with the council and a wide range of organisations across the city and surrounding neighbourhoods to deliver this priority. Cultural organisations will be supported to learn from each other as well as from their audiences and participants.

Cultural participation and attendance is compared internationally through the EU Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor⁶.

Recommendations and Actions: Encourage new thinking to ensure that engagement with culture is diverse, anti-racist, relevant and inclusive across the city, and that this is reflected within the structures of cultural organisations themselves, so that people are empowered to use their skills and ideas to lead and co-create with these organisations.

Be the city that reinvents libraries as the heart of local communities, where creativity can be developed and new cultural connections can be forged: for example, within the new Tang Hall Explore Centre and the reimagined Gateway libraries across the city.

Work collaboratively with organisations who can promote opportunities to diverse communities based in the wards and neighbourhoods beyond the city centre, such as Tang Hall Big Local, Accessible Arts and Media, Converge and Arts Barge, and encourage engagement with all kinds of culture, including grassroots initiatives.

Work with existing partners and resources, including York CVS and Live Well York, to identify current levels cultural volunteering and to establish effective volunteer coordination across the city. This activity will culminate in a large-scale project in 2022, which engages city residents of all ages and backgrounds in a celebration of York’s cultural heritage, as well as looking forward to the city’s creative future.

Measure the progress in levels of cultural engagement annually through the national Active Lives⁷ and Taking Part⁸ surveys sponsored by Arts Council England and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Consider the potential for longitudinal research to measure the level of cultural engagement in York.

Key Outcomes

- York’s cultural offer is inclusive and relevant: residents of all backgrounds are creative, can engage and participate in culture in their local communities, and there is local commitment to the Medial and UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts status.
- There is more diversity and intergenerational engagement in arts and heritage, and in volunteering, including people from the LGBTQ community, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, D/deaf or disabled people, and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- City of York Council is positioned as one of England’s top five Local Authorities for cultural engagement.
- Participation in cultural activities in the city will be measured and evaluated to demonstrate inclusion and relevance, and this will demonstrate a measurable increase.
- Arts and heritage organisations benefit from an enhanced volunteer base.



© Accessible Arts & Media

⁶ composite-indicators.jrc.
ec.europa.eu/cultural-creative-
cities-monitor

⁷ www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/
statistics/taking-part-survey-
october-2017-to-september-2018-
provisional

Place-Making

Ambition: Culture is fully embedded into local investment and city planning developments, with the arts and heritage and cultural wellbeing integral to development processes.

Need and Opportunity: Culture plays a central role in place-making and the relationship people have with place, in both major infrastructure developments and in the city's developing fabric.

The provision of culture and cultural wellbeing are included as policy outcomes in the Local Plan (draft), and a consistent and coherent approach will be taken to building a public art ethos into the design of York's new development sites. Culture will be part of planning considerations, and guidance will be available for developers from the city council.

York Central, one of the largest city centre brownfield regeneration sites in Europe, will take shape in the next 15 to 20 years and power the city's future economy. The National Railway Museum will be the cultural heart of the new development and together the collaborative partnership between Homes England, Network Rail, the City of York Council and the National Railway Museum will encourage further cultural and economic growth and connect the city's residents and visitors.

The Castle Gateway Masterplan⁹ welcomes ideas from local residents to shape the future of the southern part of the city, and York Mediale is bringing artists and communities together through new creative commissions, to define Castle Gateway through technology. The masterplan will raise the profile of the site's nationally important history and create new riverside access to the Foss and Ouse. Clifford's Tower and York Castle Museum are at the centre of the development and York Castle Museum's Masterplan will create a strong sense of place, encourage local participation with culture and heritage and develop a national tourism destination.

⁹ www.york.gov.uk/CastleGatewayMasterplan



York Minster’s Neighbourhood Plan involves the expansion and development of new public green space within Dean’s Park. This includes a new sensory garden and learning centre to support community wellbeing, a dedicated museum to display the Minster’s collection and create opportunities to host temporary exhibitions, and new access to the city walls.

Explore is working on the Transitions project, which will change the footprint of the organisation across York within eight years – creating outward looking, creative spaces that inspire people, widen participation and celebrate the creative diversity of communities. All smaller libraries will be co-located with complementary organisations, to encourage joint-working and a wide range of cultural and creative activity, with £5 million capital funding from the council to reimagine Haxby Library, Acomb Explore and Clifton Explore.

The City of York Council has recognised the importance of York’s live music venues and nightclubs as an integral part of the city’s cultural offer and has agreed to work closely with the York Music Venues Network to assist in supporting and developing this crucial part of the city’s night-time economy.¹⁰

A full restoration of The Guildhall will secure its central role in the life of the city. The Guildhall’s capital development breathes new life into this building, seat of civic governance in York since the 1200s; offering improved public access to one of York’s most historic and prestigious assets.

York has a uniquely open approach to building a brief for future place-making developments. This is delivered by My Future York and based on the belief that being actively involved in your city is both a right and an enormously rewarding act of collective creativity. My Future York goes beyond conventional community consultation by enabling all those interested to become part of a sustained long-term conversation, where influence comes through sharing responsibility for an area or issue and its future.

Recommendations and Actions: Capitalise on the relationship between economy and place by embedding culture as a tool for local planning and decision-making, and in so doing, influence the cultural wellbeing of York. Ensure that planning major developments include arts and heritage infrastructure and considerations, to support future creativity.

Support cultural organisations’ capital aspirations to develop cultural public spaces for the city with national and international profile, ensuring that arts and heritage assets attract cultural tourists. The Culture Strategy will work in tandem with the Tourism Strategy on this action. Reinforce York’s creative aspirations and cultural commissions not only for major capital developments, but also at streetscape and neighbourhood scales, including supporting the development of community-led initiatives that enable creative community engagement with urban projects.

Cultural organisations to work with communities to unveil the full stories of York’s historic places, including currently hidden histories, and to ensure representation of diverse voices in retelling the stories of place. Explore the demand and opportunity for new music facilities in York to enhance the existing provision of small venue locations.

Key Outcomes

- Culture will be at the centre of place-based developments through significant enhancements by York Archaeological Trust, National Railway Museum, The Guildhall, York Castle Museum, York Minster and in York’s public realm. Opportunities will be identified and pursued to enhance the design quality of new developments, such as new riverside access and activity.
- New cultural leadership will deliver effective communication and advocacy in embedding culture into major infrastructure developments as a normal requirement of the city planning system.
- Engagement with residents, heritage research and exploring the meaning of place will result in redefined meanings of spaces, creating briefs for public spaces and using culture to define places.
- Enhanced and new public realm space created, and enhanced music facilities, with suitable infrastructure to support arts and heritage activity. Recognition of York residents’ desire for shared cultural public spaces.
- Enhanced perception of the attractions and opportunities offered by the city, informing tourism marketing and international profile.
- Establishment of new creative workspaces as part of the cultural fabric of the city.

¹⁰ <https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=54025>



© National Railway Museum, York

Engagement with residents, research and exploring the meaning of place will result in redefined meanings of spaces, creating briefs for public spaces and using culture to define places.

Children and Young People

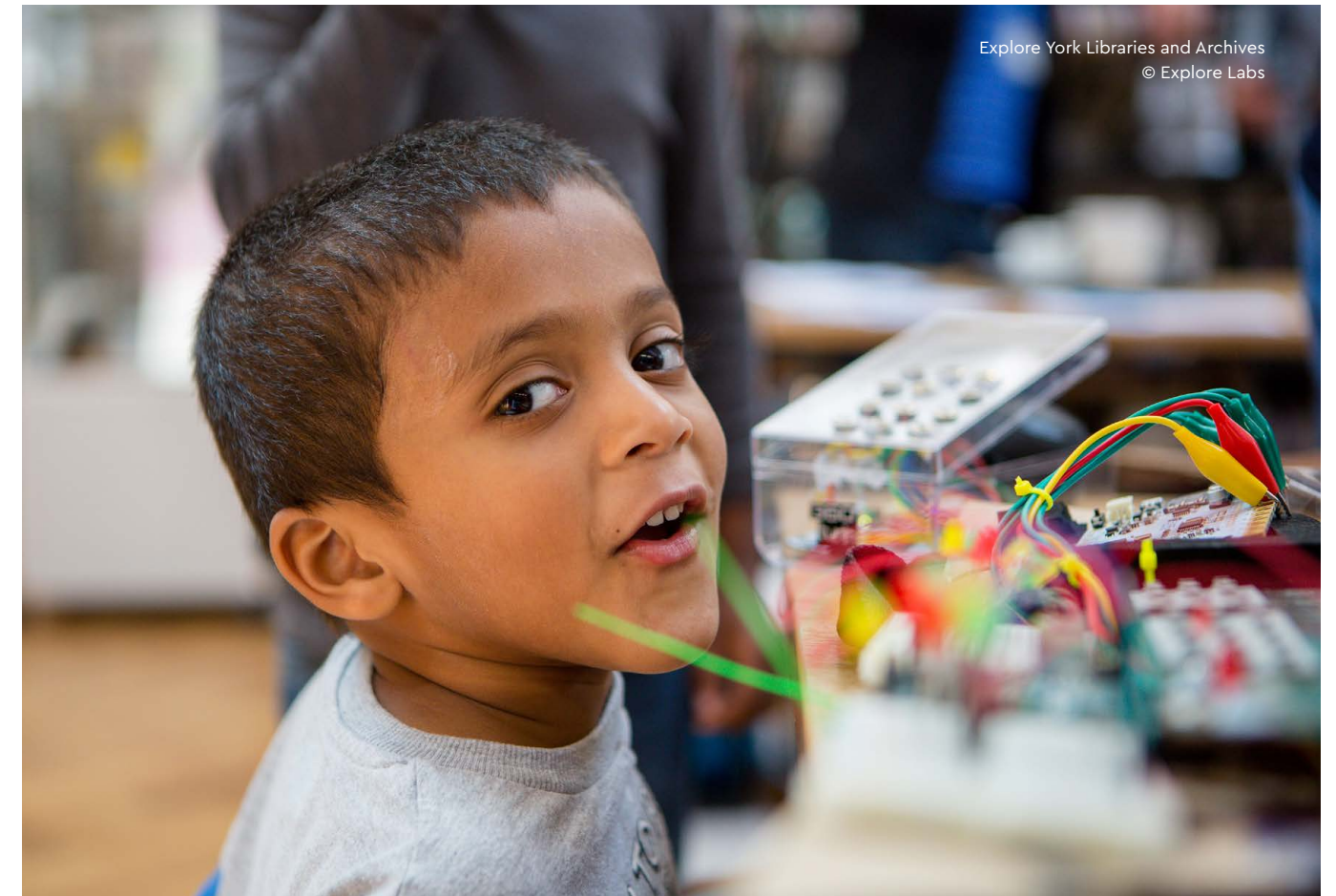
Ambition: York is the first city to achieve cultural entitlement for all children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and/ or disabilities.

Need and Opportunity: The Culture Strategy embraces Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹¹ by placing young people at the centre of designing their cultural experience.

Working with the OFSTED Framework¹², all York's learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) will be provided with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

REACH, the Local Cultural Education Partnership, will lead the development of a joined-up local arts and heritage education offer, securing new investment into shared resources that bring about a more coherent and visible delivery of cultural education involving formal and informal sectors.

Aligned with York Strategic Partnership for Emotional and Mental Health, young people's emotional and mental wellbeing are a key focus within the strategy. Access to creativity and culture will support a 'whole child' approach, developing resilience and supporting wellbeing at key life stages for children and young people. Through this priority, we will work to ensure that children and young people across the city are "able to fulfil their creative potential, and access the highest-quality cultural experiences where they live, where they go to school and where they spend their free time."¹³



Explore York Libraries and Archives
© Explore Labs



Creative Learning Programme Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment Schools project
© NCEM

¹¹ www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights

¹² assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf

¹³ www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate

Recommendations and Actions: Provide the opportunity for every child and young person and particularly the most disadvantaged and those with additional needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to dance, sing, act, perform, design, create, innovate, learn and participate, making creativity, the arts and heritage an entitlement for all children and young people.

Develop creative assets and initiatives for young people and their parents and carers, which raise awareness of the rich heritage, cultural and arts offer in York, including ‘Creative Things to do in the City of York’ guides, a set of ‘golden tickets’ to remove cost barriers to access, and an annual celebration of children and young people’s creativity.

Embed York’s cultural offer within York schools, universities and colleges, enabling young people to go on to fulfil their creative potential throughout every stage of their life. This is key, so that young people can understand what a career in the cultural sector or creative industries could be like, and to ensure they receive the support to make this an achievable aspiration, regardless of background.

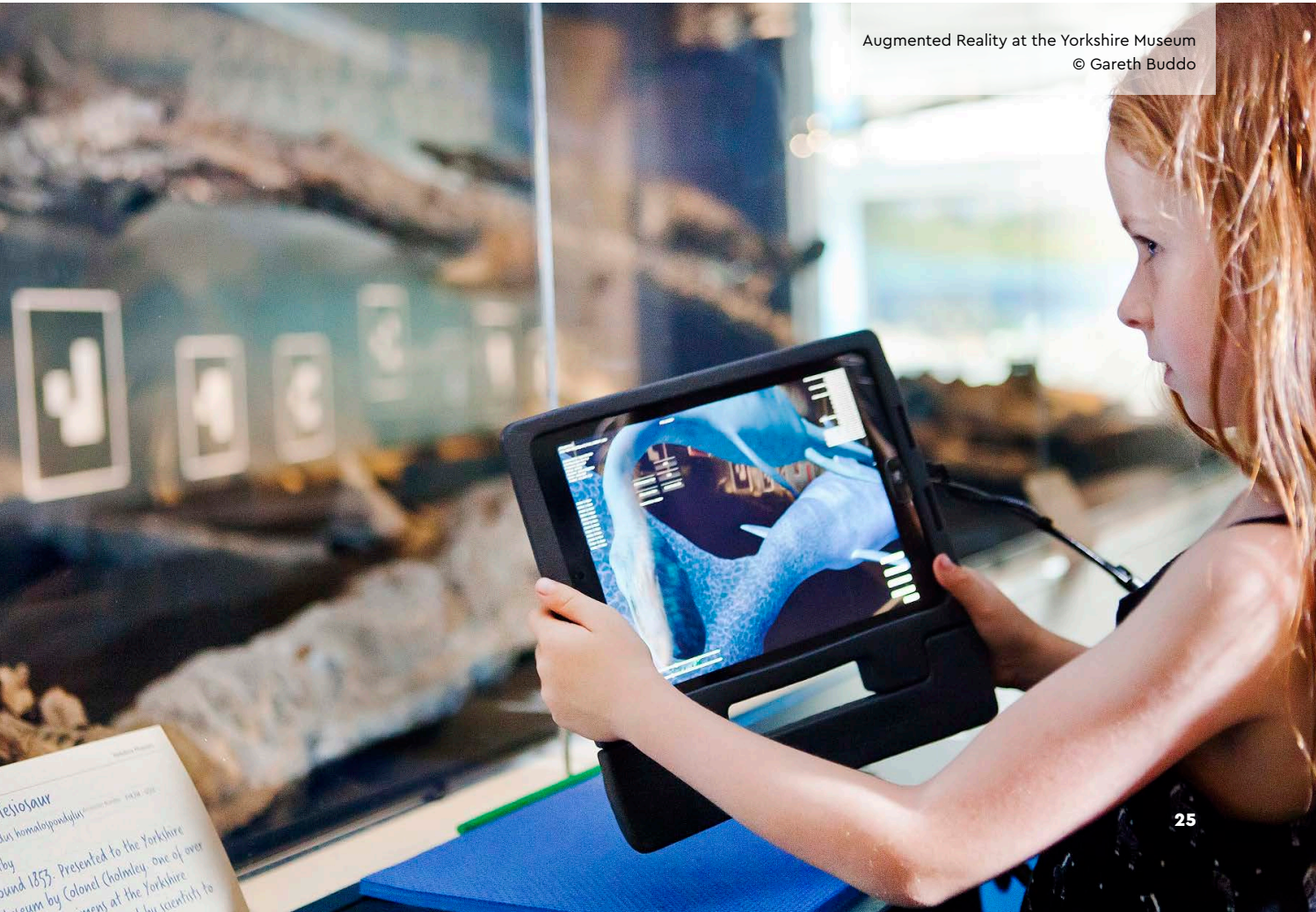
Develop a progressive creative skills-based pathway, with accredited digital badges, linked to the Arts Award, to develop the skills and attributes young people need to thrive and succeed at school, college and university and the world of work and to become happy, healthy, creative and successful adults.

Develop young people’s creative intelligence and invest in family cultural capital¹⁴.

¹⁴ culturallearningalliance.org.uk/what-is-cultural-capital/

Key Outcomes

- Every child and young person will have the chance to create and make culture, helping them develop a wide range of key skills and attributes, which will support their educational outcomes, health and wellbeing, and employment opportunities.
- Creativity, arts and heritage engagement will be part of the core offer within schools and informal learning environments, supported by a creative partnership between schools and learning providers, and cultural and heritage partners.
- The holistic benefits of creativity, arts and heritage engagement for children and young people will be recognised inside and outside the classroom.
- All children and more young people, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with additional needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will participate in, and experience arts and heritage activity and sign up for appropriate arts and heritage learning and accreditation schemes.
- York is recognised as a national exemplar with respect to cultural entitlement for children and young people with every child and young person having opportunities to create, play and participate. The city will use this platform to champion best practice and the importance of creativity and culture on a national scale.



Talent Development and Retention

Ambition: York's creative and cultural sectors thrive and contribute to strengthening and diversifying York's economy: through universities and colleges providing clear routes to skilled employment, and creative workspaces attracting and retaining creative talent in the city.

Need and Opportunity: The creative industries contributed £111.7bn to the UK economy in 2018, growing five times faster than the wider economy. The creative industries now make up 5.8% of the UK economy.¹⁵

With many young people in York going on to study and make a life elsewhere, York's pipeline of graduate and apprenticeship talent is essential to its economic vibrancy. Around 31,000 students attend the University of York, York St John University, Askham Bryan College and York College, making York's universities and colleges vital to the incubation of creative talent in the city. York St John University's new Creative Centre provides new space for community use and has extended its capacity for creative courses to 8000 students. The University of York engages with the city's population, providing creative inspiration through XR Stories and investment in the sector. The University of York's *York Unlimited*¹⁶ campaign strategy plans to unlock some of its 120,000 volunteer hours for cultural volunteering developing future professionals.

¹⁵ www.gov.uk/government/news/digital-sector-worth-more-than-400-million-a-day-to-uk-economy

¹⁶ www.york.ac.uk/york-unlimited/news/2019/york-unlimited-launch



Noughts and Crosses
© Robert Day



York Mediale 2018 Launch
© Sodium

¹⁷ www.york.gov.uk/info/20011/jobs_and_training/2030/york_skills_plan

¹⁸ www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/2165/york-economic-strategy-2016-to-2020

The strategy aims to support young people, regardless of background, to understand what a career in the creative industries or cultural sector could be like, and to achieve their potential in these fields. In tandem with the York Skills Plan¹⁷ and the York Economic Strategy¹⁸, the Culture Strategy focuses on the growth of local creative businesses and on driving income up through quality jobs, ensuring talented people can build a career and make a significant contribution with the skills they have. This will be achieved through harnessing the knowledge capital of York's universities and colleges, as well as supporting retention and growth of graduates and creative start-ups in the city.

It is estimated that around 30% of the potential studio, workshop and office space in the city centre lies unused due to a range of technical and legal constraints. Within the context of the council's My City Centre consultation, groups such as the York Vacant Space Initiative are identifying conversion and refurbishment opportunities and building partnerships to address the current shortage of creative workspaces.

Recommendations and Actions: Embed the universities' communities within the cultural offer, engaging students and research staff to maximise arts education, creative partnerships and cultural programming.

Engage universities, colleges and York's student population in shaping plans for a major 2022/23 participative project.

Conduct a needs assessment of student aspirations for cultural engagement and motivational factors to develop their careers in York after graduation. Develop events to bring students into contact with employers and encourage students to attend culture and creative industry events.

City of York Council to audit existing space provision and space potential to meet creative practitioner needs now and into the future. Collate audit findings to support development of new workspace and cluster initiatives and identify suitable targets.

Address the lack of affordable and fit-for-purpose rehearsal, creative studio and workspace for creative practitioners, by using the City of York Council's Community Asset Transfer policy¹⁹ as one of the mechanisms to support young emerging practitioners to secure working spaces in York and outside the city centre.

¹⁹ www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/3515/community_asset_transfer_policypdf



Key Outcomes

- Increased numbers of creative practitioners based and working in York, supporting the growth and diversity of the local economy and driving up levels of creative activity in the city.
- More empty space brought back into productivity through creative enterprise.
- An increase in levels of creative and cultural export from York.
- Increased levels of student demand for cultural activity and engagement in cultural volunteering.
- Significant collaborations between artists, practitioners and audiences/ participants from the city, with cultural initiatives and events organised by the city's universities and colleges.
- New funding secured to support culture leveraged in response to new collaborations (e.g. UK Research Council funds) and encompassing international partnerships.



The Culture Strategy focuses on the growth of local creative businesses and on driving income up through quality jobs.

Culture and Wellbeing



Communitas Choir
© Mark Gowland for York St John University

²⁰ www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/

²¹ bmj.com/content/367/bmj.l6377

²² www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/

²³ www.healthYork.org/media/68568/health_wellbeing_report_2018_2019-1-.pdf

Ambition: York is recognised nationally for its innovative work in culture for health and wellbeing, including social prescribing, which residents can benefit from throughout their lives.

Need and Opportunity: The arts offer well-evidenced health and wellbeing benefits for people throughout their lives, and engaging with the arts can “improve the humanity, value for money and overall effectiveness of the health and social care systems.”²⁰ Attending arts events has been linked to longer life expectancy²¹ and arts therapies can alleviate anxiety, depression and stress, while increasing resilience and wellbeing.²²

The Culture Strategy commits to supporting people’s health and wellbeing through meaningful engagement with arts and heritage, through social prescribing and community-based cultural initiatives, as part of a joined-up and whole-person approach to healthcare provision. Together, the York Health and Wellbeing Board²³ and York’s Cultural Commissioning Partnership aim to improve health and wellbeing in the city via strategic influence over social prescribing decisions across health, public health and social care, with a particular focus on young people’s mental health and the needs of an ageing population.



Songwriting Tutor Esther Clare with Converge Student Alison Thorpe
© Mark Gowland for York St John University

Social prescribing enables GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services, which address people’s needs in a holistic way to help improve their wellbeing. It includes recommending creative activities, such as arts activities, gardening, sports or volunteering, which can support people with their physical and mental health, or help tackle their sense of loneliness, isolation or lack of confidence – in turn contributing to stronger, more resilient communities.

Linked to York’s Skills Plan, this focus on culture and wellbeing will support Converge and other organisations, by creating cultural volunteering opportunities.

The Culture Strategy builds on the exceptional pilot initiative funded by Arts Council England and City of York Council, delivered by the Cultural Commissioning Partnership and Culture and Wellbeing in York. This group, involving Accessible Arts and Media with IMUSE, Converge, Explore York, National Centre for Early Music, Pilot Theatre and York Dance Space, York Museums Trust, and York Theatre Royal, is expanding its cultural remit for social prescribing to help more residents in York access the full range of artistic and cultural opportunities in the city.

Recommendations and Actions: Head of Culture and Wellbeing to provide city-wide cultural leadership in this area, articulating the case for funding the activity and identifying an outcomes-based approach. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding as appropriate with partners in social prescribing, Primary Care networks and associated sector organisations.

Develop a comprehensive cultural offer for social prescribing by extending the Cultural Commissioning Partnership to include more artists, arts for health and delivery organisations sharing resources. Develop a sustainable investment model for this, incorporating arts and heritage activity to support its longer-term development.

Encourage and enable individual cultural organisations to develop wellbeing projects, ensuring that their evaluation is joined up across the city.

Use Live Well York as a tool to map cultural assets, providing easier access for users, partners and other providers.

Design and implement a standard evaluation framework for measuring the outcomes and impacts of arts and heritage for health and wellbeing.



Creative Movement Class
© Nick Small for York St John University

Key Outcomes

- York establishes an innovative and comprehensive system for social prescribing using arts and heritage engagement, to improve the health and wellbeing of York residents.
- Social prescribing provides a support route for young people facing mental health issues and evidence indicates improved outcomes and wellbeing.
- Evidence indicates improved engagement and less isolation for vulnerable older people.
- Enhanced data collection demonstrates the impact the arts and heritage have on people’s health and wellbeing.
- There is increased leverage of external investment to support the arts and heritage for health and wellbeing.
- York is recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in the field in the arts and heritage for health and wellbeing arena.



© Accessible Arts & Media

York's National and International Profile

Ambition: York's outstanding arts, culture and heritage and its status as the UK's first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts are championed and celebrated, raising the city's profile nationally and internationally.

Need and Opportunity: The UNESCO Creative Cities Network enables York's international relationships and cultural touring opportunities to flourish, especially where connections are forged with the city's population.

The Guild of Media Arts, formed in 2015, consists of around 200 creative practitioners across the sector, and represents York as the Focal Point for the UNESCO designation: coordinating international collaboration and reporting at national and Network level.

As a key contributor to the objectives of UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, York's Mediale festival creates world premiere commissions from leading artists, presenting a showcase for the best emerging global talent.

The city's agencies, including Make It York and City of York Council, integrate and maximise the profile of the arts and heritage as part of the city's brand, to raise its national profile as a cultural destination.



Going forward, the city’s narrative and profile will be raised through recognition of national and international achievements by York’s cultural organisations and through key events such as the Mediale. Through mobilising the Culture Strategy, the Head of Culture and Wellbeing will create a strategic focus to ensure more impact for potentially high-profile events and festivals.

By 2025, the city will secure UNESCO World Heritage Site status, further raising its international profile.

Recommendations and Actions: Implement a citywide Marketing and Communications Strategy for arts and heritage, promoting the key priorities of the Culture Strategy and the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts designation. This will ensure an effective and joined-up approach, so that both residents and visitors can benefit from opportunities to be creative and to engage with and participate in culture.

Establish a high visibility website promoting cultural event listings and information about new cultural participative projects, to increase and diversify audiences and their participation.

Develop an action plan for cultural exchange and international touring through the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts designation and the Creative Cities Network.

Secure citywide support in developing York’s application for UNESCO World Heritage Status designation. Invest in, develop and deliver the forthcoming editions of York Mediale in 2020, 2022 and 2024.

Key Outcomes

- Clear positioning of York’s cultural offer within the York city brand achieves a wide awareness of York as a place where outstanding internationally renowned heritage comes together with a cutting edge, contemporary approach to creativity.
- The city has a joined-up strategic approach to delivering the Culture Strategy and the wider promotion of York; with residents feeling proud of their city’s cultural heritage and contemporary arts offer; national and international visitors regularly engaging with the cultural offer; and the artist and practitioner community having greater sense of shared purpose within the arts and heritage sector.
- Additional leadership capacity attracts in the region of £3.5m new inward investment to fulfil the ambitions of the Culture Strategy.
- The Culture Strategy is supported by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership and North Yorkshire and East Riding Enterprise Partnership as part of City of York Council Plan.
- Evidence of a tangible increase in the media profile of York’s cultural offer nationally and internationally.
- Economic benefits linked to UNESCO World Heritage Status, dependent on the success of the bid.



Vespertine Festival
© NCEM

Delivering the Culture Strategy

The Culture Strategy will be achieved through the many cultural organisations and activists in the city, and in full collaboration with them and with the people of York. Aesthetica Film Festival, Explore York, Guild of Media Arts, Jorvik, Mediale, National Centre for Early Music, National Railway Museum, Pilot Theatre, York Barbican, York Minster, York Museums Trust, York Theatre Royal and York's festivals including the Mediale are just a handful of the city's headline acts, working together to drive forward York's cultural ambitions.

The new Local Cultural Education Partnership, REACH, will help to generate York's audiences and creative pioneers of the future. It supports the strategic development of cultural provision in the city, working together with education providers and cultural and creative industry organisations to deliver cultural education more effectively.

Working with the new Culture Forum and York Creatives, representing arts, heritage and creative industry organisations and practitioners, Make It York is the organisation leading the delivery of the Culture Strategy.

The Culture Forum, a citywide network of arts and heritage organisations, works in tandem with the new body of creative practitioners in the city, the York Creatives. This enables 'Task and Finish Groups' to focus on specific elements of strategy delivery and ensures that shared interests between individual organisations and practitioners are aligned to the six Key Priorities.

The Executive Group of the Culture Forum will provide the citywide leadership, advocacy, direction and oversight for the strategy, including establishing a diverse investment portfolio to realise the city's cultural ambitions.



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City Screen*	National Centre for Early Music*	York Dance Space*
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Explore York Libraries and Archives*	Raindrop Digital	York Musical Theatre
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IVE	Voluntary Arts	
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* Denotes a member of the Cultural Leaders Group

The Culture Strategy is the first step in a significant movement towards enhancing York’s wider wellbeing through culture. Keep up-to-date with York’s cultural transformation at www.makeityork.com/culture

