

The Art of Inclusion
Liverpool's Creative Community

This book is essentially a digest of a wide-ranging study into the Creative Communities Programme led by Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Culture Company over a four-month period in early 2005.

Accompanying this book is an executive summary of the research report and a DVD featuring interviews with community participants and Liverpool Culture Company board members.

This book will give an account of how Creative Communities works, where it currently stands and where it's heading. What will quickly become apparent is that ordinary people are the subject and composition of Creative Communities.

The report draws on the experiences of people involved in Creative Communities at all levels. These include the residents, creative people, project teams, Culture Company staff, the City Council, the Liverpool Partnership Group and others, including Department for Culture Media and Sport, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, the Arts Council for England, Mersey Care NHS Trust, the Environment Agency, Sport England, Groundwork Northwest, Arts and Business and English Heritage.

The digest also explains how Creative Communities successfully dovetails with city-wide action plans for regeneration, the aims of Liverpool Culture Company and national government's policies.

Liverpool has stepped out of the 'comfort zone' of conventional thinking, and placed much trust in the creative sector's ability to reach and move people. It's an exciting shift, and one that has won support across the political spectrum.

The Creative Communities Programme is founded on using cultural tools and experiences to promote renewal and regeneration, through people and their communities.

As such, the Creative Communities Programme is crucial to the work involved in making Liverpool's 2008 reign as European Capital of Culture a success everyone can feel part of.

Creative Communities is already delivering on this promise, having directly engaged tens of thousands of Liverpool residents in many inventive ways.

In the wider context, Cultural Communities is a bold – and to a certain extent – untried idea. Liverpool has stepped out of the 'comfort zone' of conventional thinking, and placed much trust in the creative sector's ability to reach and move people. It's an exciting shift, and one that has won support across the political spectrum.

The projects created are very diverse, but they share the basic characteristics of being inclusive, participatory and above all, relevant to the people of Liverpool. These factors have the effect of bringing people together, and that's where neighbourhood cohesion and individual engagement begin to gain their own momentum.

Whilst there's clearly a role for large capital projects, the Creative Communities Programme distributes resources more widely and at ordinary 'street-level'. It is a component in a radically new and holistic approach to regeneration; one which genuinely involves thousands of ordinary Liverpoolians in their local communities.

Capital of Culture adds further impetus to this vision, opening the way for everyone to feel their right to contribute and have their voice heard on the world stage.

The undeniable strength of Creative Communities is that it works for people, and is truly owned by them.



‘To deliver the *best ever* European Capital of Culture & to leave an *enduring legacy* for the *people of Liverpool*’

Liverpool Culture Company Vision



Liverpool has a tendency to produce outstanding creativity; it's almost as though there's a creative gene in the city's DNA. Imponderables aside, the fact is Creative Communities is proving to be wholly in tune with the people on the street.

Ordinary people can do exceptional things...

Through Creative Communities, local residents, artists and sports people have come together and produced visual and performing arts, film, TV, radio and sports activities, along with programmes related to architecture and heritage.

Diversity of approach characterises Creative Communities, but the common thread is that of participation and inclusion for the widest number of people, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. It's all about recognising and investing in Liverpool's strongest asset, the people who live here.

This 'social capital' is clearly the life-blood within the body of regeneration; no progress of any substance can be sustained without Liverpoolians at its heart. It's also true that much of Liverpool's culture is embedded in the traditions, memories and experiences of residents - hence the 'virtuous circle' of people, culture and renewal.

Numerous programmes dating back to the 1960s have inspired Creative Communities. The real difference is that the new initiative has a much wider scope, and as part of the Culture Company programme, it has far-reaching ambitions hand-in-hand with the City Council and other cultural partners. Creative Communities has learnt lessons from what the community has done, and gives voice to what people are doing now. Furthermore, this is all interwoven with mainstream programming.

It's important to note that the creative and sporting sectors are deeply committed to the Creative Communities Programme. Equally, no other city or region has ever placed as much trust in culture and sport as hardworking tools of regeneration.

Some might say this is a risky policy. Given the City Council's and strong cross-party support, many experienced professionals clearly see Creative Communities as a chance worth taking.

Liverpool Culture Company was set up to bid for European Capital of Culture 2008, and to subsequently deliver 'the best-ever European Capital of Culture and leave an enduring legacy for the people of Liverpool.'

The Creative Communities Programme is crucial in making sure that the promise of 'inclusive community participation' which helped win the bid is now fully delivered. Of course, this drive also has to be maintained over the long term beyond 2008.

The Culture Company is committed to building community enthusiasm, creativity and participation in 2008. The Creative Communities Programme is the way to make this happen right across Liverpool.

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Cities in the future will be differentiated not by their physical environment but by the quality of experience they offer. Liverpool is releasing its latent energies, moving completely away from old-style city governance to a new model where creativity is at the core of innovative regeneration. Ours is a creative city-wide agenda. A liberating agenda, empowering the people of the city and helping to unleash their creative potential. *Liverpool is changing.*



The Creative Communities Programme provides the impetus that brings participation by people in creative activities. This leads to an inclusive, dynamic community and to regeneration and a sustainable cultural infrastructure. In turn, a new urban experience and celebration of diversity make the city whole and strong.

Creative Communities is delivered via a programme team comprising several Creative Managers, working through a uniquely connective structure.

This ground-breaking approach links directly with people at a very local level. It's a new way to bring everyone together – residents, community leaders, artists, Creative Managers, public and private partners, the city council – in an atmosphere of equality and empowerment.

There's a 'Have Your Say' system in place which allows people to be at the forefront of forming specific solutions for their areas. Hidden local heritage is also often revealed, and used as a basis for projects that residents naturally engage with.

It's also worth noting that whilst politics and government seem utterly distant and irrelevant to many of the people Creative Communities touches, this is a direct way in which they can take charge of their own local affairs. The partnerships the programme forges are strong, with the potential to continue well beyond 2008.

Evidence of increased local pride and ownership is already becoming obvious. It's also a measure of Creative Communities' strength that these positives grow beyond a given project; this unique brand of regeneration comes complete with its own momentum.

The creative people involved come from both local and international circles, and there's a palpable excitement and real enthusiasm for Creative Communities amongst them. They recognise they're at the outset of something new and unique: creativity as a powerful lever for changing lives, communities and ultimately, an entire city.

“Liverpool won the Capital of Culture title because the judges saw that the people of Liverpool were broadly enthusiastic about it. This has been acknowledged in the expansion of the Creative Communities Programme.

The Creative Communities Programme is allowing communities (often those which have been through very hard times in recent years; often those who are marginalised) to feel that their experiences, feelings and observations count.

This creates a stepping-off point for the Arts Programme, since many fine international artists are now seizing on the strength and intensity of very local stories and local participation to create new works.

Clearly the 68,000 people and 1,200-plus artists who have participated in 2004 feel great benefit in terms of confidence, spirit, knowledge and sheer exhilaration.”

Robyn Archer AO
Artistic Director, Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008



The Creative Communities Programme is essentially to do with people, and empowering them through culture that's absolutely relevant to the community.

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These are the Programme's objectives:

One To be a grant-giving programme which places citizens and their wishes centre-stage. To develop partnership projects which weave culture into the fabric of regeneration. To utilise the best local, national and international artists in making culture a relevant part of everyone's life.

Two To undertake activities which engage more people with European Capital of Culture and to make the entire city the basis of 2008.

Three To produce cultural activities of high quality, worth and relevance.

Four To give communities of place and interest an elevated profile and prominence in city life.

Five To allow people to express themselves where they cannot at present, with creative activity as a right for all.

Six To create demand for culture amongst people who are not currently motivated, using a co-ordinated approach involving the programme's cultural partners.

Seven To create genuine involvement where it's currently weak, thereby strengthening community cohesion, confidence and identity for individuals and groups.

Eight To positively engage where there is little or no engagement, to ensure the programme is sustained long term and impacts positively on skills development and job creation.

Nine To work with partners in building city-wide cohesion using culture as the driving force.

Ten To develop a model other cities can employ, nationally and internationally.

Capital of Culture celebrations are obviously tied in to these objectives, and they will act as a powerful springboard from which to sustain Creative Communities' work into the future.

‘Culture has an important part to play in defining and preserving identity – of the individual, of communities and of the nation as a whole. We are inventing new forms of dance, of music, of drama that transcend traditional boundaries and help give us a national identity which is uniquely ours. Culture defines who we are, it defines us as a nation. And only culture can do this.’

Rt Hon Tessa Jowell, MP

Many people in Liverpool see 2008 in a regenerative light: ‘...in 2008 the world is coming to Liverpool because now it’s the best city and then it’ll be even better. That’s why the roads and the cranes are up.’

2008 is therefore a golden opportunity to help people rediscover and celebrate pride in their city, communities, cultures and themselves.

All too often in many parts of Liverpool there is a lack of awareness of other people – even amongst near neighbours. The resulting isolation and ignorance allow fear and prejudice to take hold. Traditions and ways of life in differing cultures go unrecognised and are misunderstood; people shut down and turn in on themselves away from the wider world.

People in such communities have been historically difficult to reach. School, employment, sports and cultural attractions and existing neighbourhood services offer connections they’re not inclined to take.

The Creative Communities Programme succeeds in opening up the world for the disenfranchised and isolated. It’s an eminently realistic and practical route with the power to engage residents at a profound emotional level.

This is why Creative Communities has such a strong focus on Liverpool’s priority wards, as identified by the Liverpool Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

Creative Communities explodes the out-moded myth that culture is somehow a middle class luxury: it’s proving itself as a prime regenerative tool and a right for all.

People are inclined to get involved with local cultural events if they’re relevant to them, so Creative Communities’ artists build projects with residents’ participation. Creative Communities gives people ownership of the activities, they are actively involved, and enjoying what is often a totally new and unusual experience.



Whitehall departments, public sector bodies, local, regional and national organisations are tapping in to the unique access the Creative Communities Programme provides. Their faith in its abilities is such that many contribute directly with funding. *The Department for Culture Media and Sport* sees Creative Communities in a long-term context, and is interested in its work as an integral part of regeneration policies on a national basis. Arts Council, Sport England and English Heritage are all part of DCMS. *The Environment Agency* has recognised Creative Communities as being absolutely in tune with its new objectives, which are much more proactive and community-based than previously. *Mersey Care NHS Trust* is exploring how people's well-being is related to culture, specifically in terms of mental health. Clearly, evidence for this link will take time to accumulate, but early indications from the Trust's users and its staff show that working through artists and culture offers many real benefits. *English Heritage* comes to the Creative Communities Programme from the angle of engaging people with their historic environment. Helping people explore their history on a local level helps promote a sense of belonging – an essential facet of viable communities. *Groundwork North West* works very closely with Creative Communities; together the organisations develop initiatives which encompass their respective objectives in regeneration. *Groundwork North West* also supports a post within Creative Communities. *Arts Council North West* is involved in developing the Creative Communities infrastructure, and also helps support Creative Communities' education post. *Sport England* plays the principal role in developing and co-ordinating Creative Communities' many sport-related activities, at grass roots level and at larger events. The organisation collaborates closely with several bodies, such as health and housing partners. *Arts and Business* works to create and maintain many and varied links between communities and business. *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister* supports the Creative Communities Programme through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, as a weapon to tackle deprivation, so that no-one is disadvantaged simply by reason of where they live and so the communities in greatest need are supported to seize opportunities and realise their ambitions.

Positive 'social capital' is increasingly recognised as a major influence upon an individual's life chances. In reaching the individuals within Liverpool's priority wards, the Creative Communities Programme is directly laying foundations on which to build that all-important positive social capital.

In so-called 'problem areas', the cycle of decline is centred on negative peer cultures, limited interaction between residents and low aspirations. Poor housing and environment, unstable communities, anti-social behaviour, low employability and a host of other issues are both the results and symptoms.

If individuals can be brought together, the mass of problems can be divided and ultimately conquered. Hence Creative Communities' assertion that people are the prime asset in regeneration.

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No one would argue over the fact that renewal is a long road to travel. But with local people on-side with their communities at the outset, the journey has every chance of reaching a successful conclusion.

Liverpool City Council and its partner organisations are of the radical opinion that ordinary people and Creative Communities can and will turn things around.

By starting with promoting a positive peer culture, more interaction and higher aspirations, an almost organic mode of improvement can begin. Anti-social behaviour is reduced, the neighbourhood becomes more popular; the employment rate amongst residents rises, poverty declines; local schools improve, young people are more engaged; property investment increases, the environment improves still further... and it's all driven by people.

Currently this is a paradigm of what can be. But the Creative Communities Programme has already begun to create and sustain the momentum required to make it all work.



“People take part actively; they are not passive recipients.”

Claire McColgan
Head of Creative Communities
Liverpool Culture Company



Creative activity strengthens and empowers communities. Art and culture have been used to break down barriers by letting people work together on creative projects. The resulting interaction of people of different faiths, ages and ethnic backgrounds would previously have been hard to imagine.

Creative activity encourages integration and promotes diversity. Again, art works to highlight the identity of different communities, and to celebrate diversity with understanding in the wider neighbourhood. It has embraced immigrant peoples, faith groups and special needs communities.

Creative activity powerfully empowers individuals. Creative activity is proven to build self-esteem and technical skills. It also gives positive role models for individuals to aspire to. It's an opportunity that's open to all, irrespective of education, skill or amount of talent.

Creative activity effectively engages local people in the regeneration process. Using unconventional approaches to gather information and canvass opinion is proving to be less intimidating and more accessible to residents, particularly those who are traditionally hard to reach.

Creative activity is vital in raising awareness of issues. Art and culture provide a more viable route to people's hearts and minds than conventional channels. Creative projects prove able to get difficult messages absorbed in an effective and engaging way. These kinds of projects have potential to reach a much wider audience.

A further important finding is that continuity of engagement with individuals is essential to avoid the risk of falsely or temporarily raising expectations. Projects and funding streams come and go; the challenge is to ensure that creative engagement becomes a permanent fixture in mainstream ways of working.

There are several key messages and benefits emerging from the Creative Communities projects that have already taken place in Liverpool; and these are reported on in the case studies contained in this book.

Clearly, measuring the ways in which Creative Communities engages and motivates the people it serves is not a straightforward or easily quantifiable process.

It's also important to recognize that to some extent there is a trade off between how innovative the programme can be, and how rigidly we set its strategic targets.

The Creative Communities Programme offers a unique opportunity for researchers to prove that culture works as a tool of regeneration. Yet currently, it's impractical to expect those working with small grants to collect all the monitoring information required to prove this case.

Additionally, this is the starting point of a wide scale, long-term programme of evaluation involving many partners at all levels to ensure ongoing annual assessments, using audit and creative community partners.

However to give an idea of Creative Communities' reach, the following figures show just how many people and events have already been involved. In 2008 it is expected that 400,000 people will participate in Creative Communities activities.

2004* Number of Artists **1344**. Number of others taking part **68031**. Audience Numbers **526940**. Number of performances or exhibition days **712**.

2005* Number of Artists **753**. Number of others taking part **100127**. Audience Numbers **451197**. Number of performances or exhibition days **1288**.

* These figures represent the Creative Communities' small grants programme and the Community Partnership Programme.