

The Community Arts Offer in Slough

Supporting the arts in Slough: Strategy 2010-2015

Consultation paper



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1. Our vision

The arts bring people together, celebrating the diversity and richness of Slough's community, raising people's aspirations, creating opportunities and nurturing skills and creativity. The arts will be a force for change, making Slough an exciting and vibrant place to work and live.

This strategy sets out how we aim to deliver our vision. We have developed it by talking with, listening to and challenging local people to see what they need to overcome barriers and meet their aspirations. This is how we will shape our service to meet local needs, and why it will evolve over the coming years to meet changing needs.

We welcome your comments on this strategy and have included questions for you to feedback your comments in Section 10.

2. Our values

Our vision is underpinned by the following core values:

Reflecting Slough's community and responding to local needs

The community in Slough is at the heart of everything we do and we will continue to shape our service to meet their changing needs.

Quality

We provide excellent customer service and high quality community arts services, challenging ourselves continuously to meet customer expectations. We model excellence in everything we do to provide the best quality service we can.

Diversity

We value and celebrate Slough's diversity, striving for arts in Slough that reflect the diversity of the town.

Access

We deliver a relevant and accessible service to people living and working in Slough.

Partnership working

We work collaboratively with partners, both internal and external on a local, regional and national basis, maximising resources to meet community needs.

Monitoring and evaluation

We continue to challenge and evaluate our services to move forward and meet the needs of users and to monitor the impact of our work. We continue to develop best practice and set new standards.

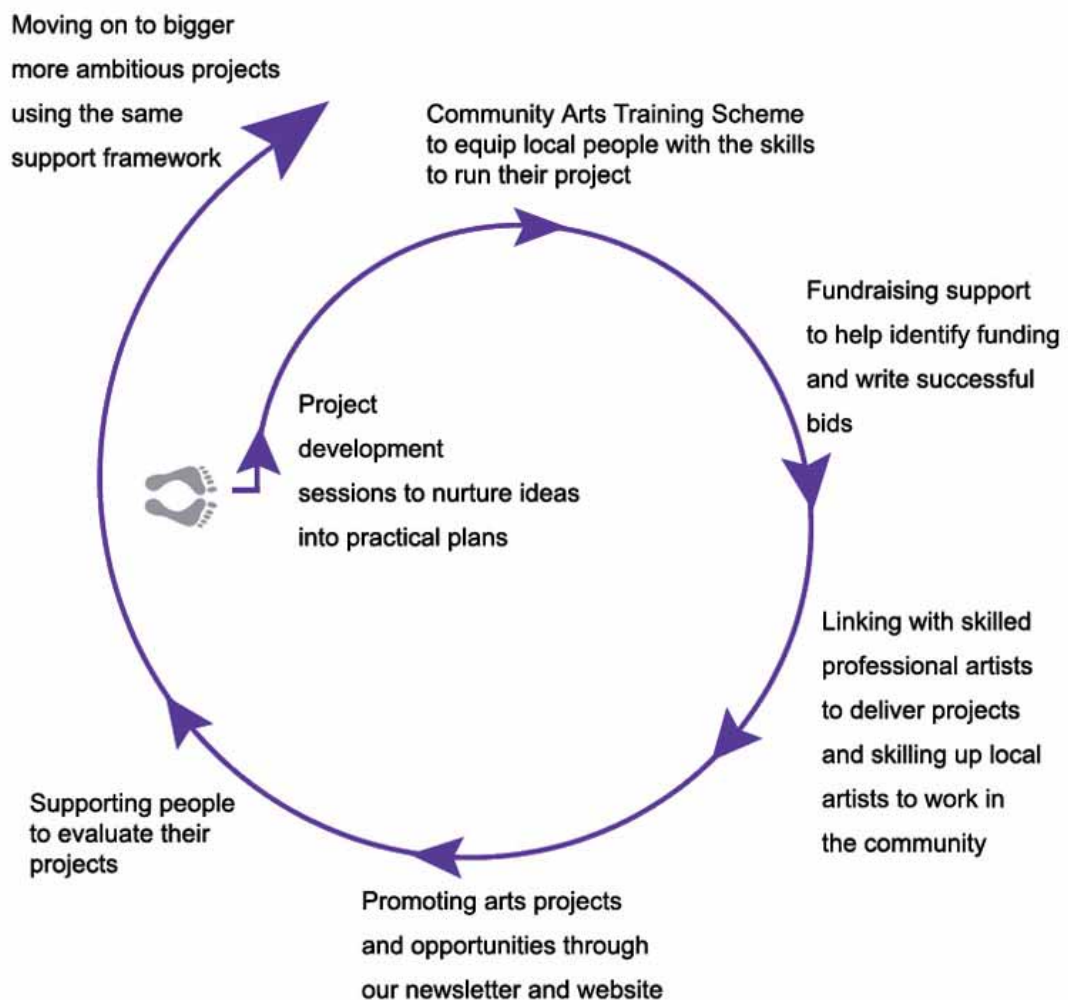
3. Our role

In Slough, community arts are developed by local people for their communities. Our ethos is that our local communities are the experts when it comes to knowing what local residents want for the arts; that they are best placed to deliver many arts activities.

Our role is not to impose our view of what the arts should be but to work with the community to facilitate their ideas. We work with individuals or groups to grow the seed of an idea into a successful arts project, providing

support at key stages of project development. We provide support based on what our users need and have developed key services in response. We have a strategic function not a delivery role, and with this approach the support that we provide reaches many more people in Slough than direct provision would.

This diagram illustrates the process that we have developed to engage and support the community.



4. Why the arts matter in Slough

The arts have a positive impact on all areas of people's lives, and contribute to Slough's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Community Cohesion

The arts in Slough...

- encourage social inclusion, forging links between communities, tackling extremism and preventing isolation.
- help people share cultures and experiences, learn about each other and celebrate the things that make us human.
- bring people together in a way that fosters dialogue, creates understanding, overcomes prejudice and enables people to connect and build foundations for stronger community cohesion.

Health and Wellbeing

The arts in Slough...

- have dramatic and measurable positive effects on both physical and mental health and wellbeing as part of treatment and to complement care.
- bring compassion, understanding and expression and can help people communicate their feelings and conditions when words fail.
- create a sense of self-esteem and a positive desire for life, increasing physical and mental activity and communicating information about healthier lifestyles and attitudes in a way that feels natural and that people can relate to.

Economy and skills

The arts in Slough...

- build a strong creative sector and through it create a more skilled workforce, new opportunities for employment and a more

attractive environment for business investment.

- develop essential skills, creative thinking and problem solving and strengthen people's ability to be creative, innovative and forward thinking.
- help to ensure the creative industries remain a robust and fast growing element of the local economy through nurturing talent.

Environment

The arts in Slough...

- improve the local environment; engage local people in taking ownership and nurture pride in Slough.
- celebrate what is distinctive about Slough, helping shape local identity and change the way people think about where they live.
- provide positive messages and information about the environment and the means to shape ideas through engaging local people in creating a sustainable, greener future.

Community Safety

The arts in Slough...

- help reduce crime and the fear of crime, tackling the root causes of crime and anti-social behaviour, engaging people who are disengaged and bringing together those who may be in conflict by developing understanding.
- tackle individual issues at a local level and address issues in particular community settings.
- create a more welcoming physical environment, encouraging people to take part in shaping an area, change perceptions and engender local pride and ownership.

5. The community and their needs

There is no such thing as a single homogenous community in Slough, which has a very diverse population. Its estimated population is between 120,000 and 130,000 residents. 60% of Slough's residents are aged under 40 with more than a third (36%) of residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. Indian and Pakistani communities are the largest of these groups, each accounting for approximately 15%, with the remainder predominantly from the black community.

The majority of Slough's workforce is concentrated in semi-skilled and low skilled work. The majority of Slough's electoral wards figure in the 30% most deprived wards in the country with a smaller number in the 10% most deprived wards. Over a third (35%) of Slough residents are aged under 16. Black and minority ethnic groups account for approximately 40% of Slough's pre-school and school population and about a third (34%) of Slough's school pupils have English as a second language.

The key national local government indicator for the arts is National Indicator 11 (NI 11). This indicator measures the percentage of the adult population who have attended an arts event or participated in an arts activity at least three times in the past 12 months. Participation only includes activities undertaken for leisure purposes, informal education/learning and

studying or research for personal interests. In Slough, about a third of residents (34%) fulfil the indicator criteria. Socio-economic group is the best predictor of involvement in arts activities. At a national level, those in higher socio-economic groups are more than one and a half times as likely to fulfil NI 11 as those in lower socio-economic groups.

Large numbers of the population of Slough will not relate to the traditional British middle-class definition of culture. They will not see arts as a career, nor as a hobby, but as part of the fabric of their lives. They don't label their participation as 'arts' necessarily, but it meets any broad definition of that term. Many residents would have an aversion to that label yet do engage with arts such as music, comedy and cinema. For this reason the NI 11 indicator does not give an accurate picture of arts participation in Slough.

The diversity of Slough is a huge asset to the town; taking this into account and the fact that the community arts team can't know in detail about all the community, the most pragmatic approach to increasing engagement with the arts is to provide development and capacity building for the local community.

6a. Where we are now

The Community Arts Strategy recognises that Slough has strengths in the following areas:

Community arts

- The most active area of Slough is community arts, with projects run by local people in their communities
- A strong reputation for community arts regionally
- The Community Arts Training Scheme is now adopted by other local authorities across South East
- The community arts team published *Community Arts Training Scheme: Impact and Toolkit* to share learning with other local authorities
- A wide range of community arts groups reflecting different communities in Slough

Dance

- Dance is one of most popular art forms in the town
- Creative Academy run a foundation dance degree
- The e-survey showed that arts practitioners felt that dance was well catered for in Slough with a range of 'dance' opportunities available.

Film

- The e-survey showed that film was considered well catered for by a minority of practitioners.
- Slough has its own film society, there are several film production companies based in Slough and the town has its own annual film festival.

Public art

- A strong track record in commissioning public art projects
- The Art at the Centre scheme commissioned a £1m public art scheme for high street redevelopment

Arts and young people

- Slough Young People's Centre provides a wide range of regular art activities for young people to engage in
- Creative Junction works with schools to inspire young people through creative learning opportunities
- There are a range of community arts groups with the specific focus of working with young people

6b. Opportunities

Key opportunities we have noted are:

Diverse communities

- The cultural diversity of the community provides a richness and diversity of art forms.
- The arts are embedded in expressions of culture with strong cultural identity, which leads to active participation in the arts in the town.
- Communities are proud of their heritage and actively work to share their culture through the arts.

Even greater audiences

- Slough supports very successful community arts events and practitioners who are able to reach all of their desired audience through word of mouth.
- There are opportunities for increasing marketing to develop wider audiences, to increase participation in the arts and to help social cohesion by encouraging local people to experience arts activities from outside their own community.

Council priorities

- A strong and well-supported community arts scene in Slough provides significant opportunities to deliver council priorities and offer delivery of outcomes through the arts as a resource to council officers.
- The arts have a real opportunity in Slough to show tangible and measurable benefits and how they contribute to improving the lives of people in Slough. The opportunity for the arts lies in finding robust methods to capture and demonstrate this.

The Learning Curve

The Learning Curve proposed as part of the Heart of Slough, will be a new library with a 180 seat performance space, workshop rooms and an exhibition area, and presents the following opportunities:

- A town centre focus for the arts.
- A venue where arts groups can meet and run arts activities, exhibit and experience visual arts, perform or attend performances.
- Links between the arts and other services to increase participation in the arts through engaging other service users such as those who use the library and life long learning.

7. Resources for the arts

An overview of the resources for the arts in Slough includes:

Slough Borough Council

- The community arts team is a team of two full time members of staff, a Community Arts Manager and Arts Development Officer.
- Creative Academy: runs a Foundation Dance Degree and a BA Hons Degree in Dance and provides creative skills development and advice for individuals working in the creative industries.
- A visual arts consultant (p/t) providing advice and support for visual arts teachers.
- Slough Young People's Centre works alongside young people aged 13-25 years of age to give peer-led support. It runs a series of creative courses in many areas of the performing arts and new media.
- Slough Library provides an exhibition space for visual artists and groups working in Slough.

West Wing Arts Centre

The West Wing is Slough's community arts centre, with a 250 seat raked auditorium, rehearsal room, music room, two dance studios, café, outdoor courtyard area, exhibition space and flexible office spaces. The venue is home to a wide range of creative organisations and provides a focus for community arts groups to run their activities for local people to take part in the arts, through engaging in showcases, events, workshops, performances and exhibitions.

Partners

- Creative Junction builds partnerships with and for young people, to develop creativity and to connect powerful, innovative learning across sectors.
- Slough Museum provides opportunities for people to engage in Slough's past, present and future through exhibitions and workshops. A changing exhibition programme provides a showcase of the work of visual artists from Slough.
- RIFCO Arts produces vibrant, accessible, high-quality theatre that reflects and celebrates the contemporary British-Asian experience, with a focus on enticing and engaging new audiences.

Local arts community

Voluntary arts organisations

- There are approximately 30 voluntary arts organisations in Slough, providing a diverse range of arts activities and projects to meet the needs of our diverse communities.

Professional artists

- There are over 55 professional artists representing a wide variety of art forms working in partnership with Slough's community, including visual arts, dance, drama and film.

8. Priorities

The priorities listed below link directly to our vision and shows the five overarching areas we will focus on over the next five years:

1. **Participation and access:** Extending opportunities for people to take part in a range of arts activities and art forms that reflect the diverse communities in Slough and remove barriers to participation.
2. **Infrastructure for the arts in Slough:** Working with partners across Slough to ensure provision of venues and facilities for people to showcase, exhibit, perform and attend arts events and activities.
3. **Continuity and sustainability:** Supporting the growth and sustainability of the arts community in Slough through fundraising, developing home grown talent, and equipping Slough's arts community with the skills needed to thrive.
4. **Raising people's aspirations:** Working with individuals and groups to develop opportunities for them to be inspired through the arts; to express themselves in creative and meaningful ways. To support professional artists to work in partnership with community groups to develop arts projects that inspire and excite.
5. **Integration:** Weaving the arts into the fabric of Slough ensuring that it is at the heart of agendas, advocating for the use of arts to address non-arts agendas and taking stock of the impact of the arts.

Focus for our work

We have taken into account our vision, values and aims as well as the resources and opportunities for the arts in Slough to develop a focus for work over the next three years.

We will focus on:

a) Community development

- We will focus on working directly with the community to facilitate their delivery of the arts by providing training, project development sessions to shape projects, fundraising support and promotion of arts opportunities. In doing this we will take into account what our partners are providing.
- Integrating culture and arts delivery into the council's approaches.

b) Advocacy for the arts

- Measure and disseminate the impact of the arts to show how the arts add value, contribute to the lives of people in Slough and to council priorities.
- Advocate for the arts through our approach, working to develop arts owned by the local community.

c) Strategic approach to audience development and marketing

- Make visible the arts offer in Slough to raise its profile and increase engagement, through mapping and promotion.
- Provide a context to bring people together who are working in the arts.

9. Implementing the strategy

There is a large network of people, partners, organisations and stakeholders in Slough who make the arts happen. The community arts team will lead on implementing the strategy, with the input from partners and stakeholders key to its success. We realise that we can't be everything to everybody, which is why strong partnerships are so important to the delivery of our work and why we will focus on areas of greatest need.

We will develop a group of arts champions who will provide a forum to share ideas, shape strategic approaches and deliver solutions. The arts champions will provide a forum to ensure that the arts are reaching communities in

Slough, and will be representative of different communities as well as art forms. It is anticipated that as well as informing our work, that the arts champions will also work together to meet agreed priorities.

When planning our programme of work to address our priorities, we will be realistic and pragmatic about our capacity to deliver services to meet community needs. Our action plan identifies services, projects and activities that we will deliver.

It will also be important to identify and secure external investment to ensure the delivery of some of the projects and activities.

10. Have your say

We would like to hear your comments and thoughts about this draft strategy. Please let us know your comments or feedback on this strategy at artsinfo@slough.gov.uk.

Do you share our vision in Section 1?

yes no

Please let us know any comments you have.

Do you share our values in Section 2?

yes no

Do you have any comments?

Do you agree with how we have represented Slough's community in Section 5?

yes no

Do you have any comments?

Do you agree with the strengths in the arts in Slough in Section 6a?

yes no

What other strengths could we include?

Do you agree with the opportunities we have identified in Section 6b? yes no

What other key opportunities could we include?

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Do you agree with the resources for the arts in Slough in Section 7? yes no

What other resources could we include?

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When thinking about the work that we will priorities over the forthcoming years, what do you think we should focus on in Section 8?

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Closing date

We welcome your ideas and are receiving comments on this consultation document up to and including Friday 30th April 2010.

Please send comments to:

Community Arts, Community and Wellbeing,
Slough Borough Council, Town Hall, Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire SL1 3UQ

11. Appendices

Appendix 1

Projects and services: delivering the aims

The following information provides an overview of how our projects and services deliver the priorities within this strategy. A detailed action plan of work is outlined in our team plan.

<p>1: Participation and access</p> <p>Extending opportunities for people to take part in a range of arts activities and art forms that reflect the diverse communities in Slough and remove barriers to participation.</p>	<p>Current work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing www.artsinslough.org.uk, the website for the arts in Slough • Online interactive What's On calendar of Slough arts activities and events • Producing monthly e-artsinfo newsletter to promote local arts projects and opportunities • Promoting services through the Citizen to reach new audiences • Signposting people to a range of information and resources <p>Future work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at gaps in provision and working with partners to address gaps • Developing strong links with partner agencies and council departments to engage their service users • Mapping activity across Slough and working with local communities to address gaps • Focusing on opening up arts activities to disabled users
<p>2: Infrastructure for the arts in Slough</p> <p>Working with partners across Slough to ensure provision of venues and facilities for people to showcase, exhibit, perform and attend arts events and activities.</p>	<p>Current work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping groups to develop their audiences and access opportunities to showcase their work across the town • Brokering relationships between individuals, groups and partners <p>Future work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with partners to map facilities for the arts in Slough • Working with partners to promote facilities for the arts in Slough • Looking at gaps in provision of venues and working with partners to address gaps

<p>3: Continuity and sustainability</p> <p>Supporting the growth and sustainability of the arts community in Slough through fundraising, developing home grown talent, and equipping Slough's arts community with the skills needed to thrive.</p>	<p>Current work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for artists to work with the local community on arts projects • Online pinboard promoting opportunities such as jobs, funding and commissions • Providing the fundraising advice service to artists and groups to include identifying and writing successful applications • Facilitating project development sessions to help individuals and groups shape project ideas and plans • Delivering the annual Community Arts Training Scheme to equip local people to run their arts projects • Expanding local knowledge and skills by creating high quality resources and sharing information with a wide audience <p>Future work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at how support for artists is currently delivered and how we can meet the evolving needs of artists • Creating a stronger network of community groups to work together and learn from each other
<p>4: Raising people's aspirations</p> <p>Working with individuals and groups to develop opportunities for them to be inspired through the arts, to express themselves in creative and meaningful ways. To support professional artists to work in partnership with community groups to develop arts projects that inspire and excite.</p>	<p>Current work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing core community groups to help them develop their capacity and expand their horizons • Brokering strategic links to position community arts groups to achieve their aspirations • Levering external funding to help groups achieve aspirations • Working with arts groups to help shape and develop projects • Working with arts groups to help develop long term sustainability • Supporting local artists who want to work with communities to ensure engaging arts experiences <p>Future work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring new ways to promote and export work developed in Slough on a regional and national basis • Working with artists and arts groups in Slough to export their work nationally by mentoring them and linking them with national venues and agencies

<p>5: Integration</p> <p>Weaving the arts into the fabric of Slough ensuring that it is at the heart of agendas. Advocating for the use of arts to address non-arts agendas and taking stock of the impact of the arts.</p>	<p>Current work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Creative Approaches to Engaging Communities, training for council staff on using the arts to deliver services • The Art at the Centre scheme to re-landscape Slough High Street • Continuing to build links with non-arts partners • Promoting the Community Arts Training Scheme Impact and Toolkit publication • Achieving coverage of the arts in local and national press and journals • Advocating for the importance of local resources for the arts
	<p>Future work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating the impact of local projects and our services through gathering evidence and mapping • Promoting the impact of local projects and our services • Developing community arts champions as a way to engage at the heart of local communities • Exploring opportunities for the arts in the Cultural Olympiad and 2012 Olympics • Developing new strategic partnerships to position the arts as a key service for Slough

Appendix 2: Consultation

The strategy is born from the ideas and priorities of artists, arts groups and groups using the arts, as well as users and non-users of arts services. We have also consulted with key stakeholders and partners.

In October 2009, we ran a focus group at the West Wing to discuss needs and provision for the performing arts in Slough. This was followed up with detailed questionnaires asking about the performing arts activities individuals and groups are involved with and what type of venues they require for these activities.

In June 2009 and summer 2008, we ran consultation sessions with key stakeholders and partners and a focus group session with artists and arts groups from Slough. We asked them to help us develop a vision for creativity and the arts in ten years time. We also asked them to carry out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of the arts and creativity in Slough and then to look at how they could maximise strengths and opportunities and address

weaknesses and threats, to help us develop actions to move from where we are now to where we want to be. We also discussed the partners who we can and should work with. In addition we asked what they valued, what they would like more of, what they would like less of and for new ideas. This led to discussions of their aspirations and support needed to help meet them and services the community arts team can provide to engage more people in Slough in the arts.

All of these sessions have contributed to developing an indication of the community's aspirations for the arts and steps needed to fulfil these.

The strategy will be posted on the community arts website www.artsinslough.org.uk and on the council's website www.slough.gov.uk for anyone to review and feedback their comments.

The strategy will also be publicised in the e-artsinfo newsletter and in Slough's community newspaper the Citizen.

12. Contact

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