

EIA001053 Birmingham Cultural Compact Culture Strategy 2025-35

About your EIA

Reference Number:	EIA001053
Subject of EIA:	Birmingham Cultural Compact Culture Strategy 2025-35
Description:	<p>The Birmingham Cultural Compact has produced a new Culture Strategy 2025-35 for the city and is seeking Birmingham City Council endorsement. This EIA relates to the proposal for Cabinet to endorse what the Birmingham Cultural Compact Partnership hope to put into place. The Birmingham Cultural Compact Board is a cross-sector partnership designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority. It brings together culture, business, education, healthcare, and allied sectors and is made up of a volunteer board of members from these sectors who make recommendations on Compact initiatives. The Birmingham Cultural Compact has been overseeing the commissioning and development of Birmingham's Cultural Strategy 2025 – 2035, with the aim to help culture thrive in the city and, in turn, increase the City's health, wellbeing, resilience, economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. At the same time, the cultural strategy will help identify how the city council, across relevant Directorates, will be able to support the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector to thrive and grow in the years to come.</p>
In support of:	["New strategy"]
Reviewing Frequency:	Annually
First review date:	31/03/2026

Directorate, Division & Service Area

Directorates:	["City Operations"]
Division:	Neighbourhoods
Service Area:	Cultural Development & Tourism

Budget Savings

Related to budget savings?:	
Budget proposal reference number:	

Officers

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Accountable Officer Email:	chris.jordan@birmingham.gov.uk

Data Sources

Data sources:	<p>["Consultation results", "Interviews", "Relevant reports/strategies", "Quantitative data (please specify in the box below)", "Relevant research", "Surveys", "'Hatch' analysis of demographic data"]</p> <p>Consultation activity included: • Desk Research – Review and analysis of existing research and relevant City policies • Hatch Report – Rapid baselining exercise of Birmingham’s cultural economy by Business Management Consultants, Hatch • Public facing online survey • 20 one-to-one interviews with Arts & Culture Sector representatives and wider stakeholders • 2 x online workshops with Elected Members • 1 x online workshop with Community Leaders • 1 x in person event hosted at The Exchange, with 60 attendees from the Arts & Culture sector in Birmingham • 4 x meetings with Birmingham’s Cultural Compact • Community workshop, hosted at the Legacy Centre with 30 attendees • Face-to-face young people’s workshop, hosted at Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA), with 30 attendees • Online workshop with Youth Leaders, with 25 attendees • Face-to-face workshop with students, hosted by Birmingham City University, with 15 attendees</p>
Data sources Details:	<p>The Cultural Strategy refers to the Data Sources including Birmingham’s Local Plan (Draft), Shaping Birmingham’s Future Together, Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods, A Creative Future - Culture for Children & Young People, Our Future City: Central Birmingham Framework 2045, Heritage Strategy (Draft), Visitor Destination Plan, West Midlands Combined Authority Cultural Framework. Pages 70-79 has a full list of the individuals, organisations, stakeholders and communities consulted. and Pages 70-79 has a full list of the individuals, organisations, stakeholders and communities consulted.</p> <p>The draft Birmingham strategy has been developed following consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and communities within the available budget. This included on-line surveys and various in person sessions with Compact members, culture sector organisations, interest groups, young people, University students, global majority communities and internal council representatives. This followed on from the ‘Big Creative Conversation’ work undertaken with a wide range communities in 2022-23.</p>

Initial Assessment

Impact Age:	Yes
Impact Disability:	Yes
Impact Sex:	No
Impact Gender Reassignment:	No
Impact Marriage and Civil Partnerships:	No
Impact Pregnancy and Maternity:	No
Impact Race:	Yes

Impact Religion or Beliefs:	Maybe
Impact Sexual Orientation:	No
Impact Care Experience:	

Initial Assessment Summary

Initial Assessment Summary:	The initial assessment showed a strong indication that there would be no negative impacts on people - rather that certain Protected Characteristics such as Young People and Race should benefit from Compact interventions, especially regarding training & development of skills and/or improved engagement in cultural activity. The overall ambition and intention of the cultural strategy is to sustain and develop the cultural sector and at the same time, improve peoples opportunities to work, volunteer and participate in cultural activity. Whilst we have identified no significant concerns or, any identified negative concerns have already been addressed, a Full EIA will expand on where the potential benefits to certain Protected Characteristics will be.
Is a full EIA Required?:	yes

Protected Characteristic – Age

Impact Age:	
Age Group Impacted:	0-25
Age Impact Details:	<p>Young people, aged 13–16, attended a workshop organised in partnership with Birmingham Ormiston Academy. Young people in Birmingham face significant barriers to accessing and engaging with the city's cultural scene due to a lack of awareness, affordability issues, and limited career pathways in the arts. Many talked about feeling disconnected from cultural opportunities unless they are part of an existing network. They also felt that the city's rich diversity is not widely reflected or celebrated on a national scale. Training and education in the arts are also lacking, with limited GCSE options, few established arts colleges outside London, and a general perception that creative careers are financially unstable. Representation was also a key concern – many felt excluded from cultural spaces due to high ticket prices and a lack of diversity in performances and audiences. To address these challenges, the group discussed increasing visibility through social media campaigns, youth ambassadors, and more cultural festivals to highlight Birmingham's diverse arts scene. This group also said that expanding arts education in schools, creating more apprenticeships, and establishing a cultural careers service would help young people see a viable future in creative industries. And a stronger cultural identity could be fostered by encouraging investment in local productions, showcasing homegrown talent, and integrating arts education into youth centres. Ultimately, reframing the arts as a valued and respected career path while ensuring accessibility and inclusivity would help Birmingham build a more vibrant and engaging cultural landscape for its young people. Young adults, aged between 18–30, attended a workshop organised in partnership with Birmingham City University. From our discussion with these young adults it became clear that Birmingham's young creatives face significant challenges in accessing affordable cultural spaces. Many independent venues are closing and high costs make it difficult for emerging artists to sustain their work. While areas like Digbeth remain cultural hotspots, gentrification threatens their grassroots identity, pushing out underground scenes like street art and independent music. By contrast, the city centre feels overly corporate and lacks cultural vibrancy. There is a disconnect between students studying in Birmingham and the cultural scene, as many live outside the city centre and struggle to find opportunities after graduation. Limited career prospects and financial instability further discourage young people, particularly from working-class backgrounds, from pursuing arts and culture careers, leading to talent drain to London. The group discussed solutions to address</p>

	<p>these issues, such as creating affordable, rotating cultural hubs in unused spaces, protecting existing venues, and expanding cultural programming into underrepresented areas like Small Heath. Talent retention and increased accessibility could be improved by strengthening connections between creative institutions, businesses, and artists through mentorship programmes and visible city-wide showcases. There is also a need for better wayfinding and guidance to help people navigate Birmingham's fragmented cultural scene. The group thought that embracing street art and grassroots movements as part of the city's identity – rather than pushing them out – could help Birmingham maintain its unique creative spirit, while ensuring culture is both sustainable and inclusive for all communities. Group leaders with a specific focus on young people attended an online workshop. The youth group leaders emphasised the need for greater inclusion and representation in Birmingham's cultural strategy, particularly through the creation of a youth version of the Cultural Compact to ensure young voices shape decision-making. The group commented that many communities, including those classified as 'White Other' and faith-based groups, feel excluded from cultural opportunities, and there is a lack of investment in underrepresented areas like East Birmingham. They suggested a gap analysis to assess where funding has been allocated and identify self-funded grassroots groups that provide cultural activities but lack formal support. They also had a discussion around inconsistent arts funding, which makes it difficult for youth engagement programmes to sustain long-term impact beyond short-term initiatives like holiday activity programmes. It was felt that strengthening Birmingham's cultural ecosystem requires greater collaboration between small arts organisations, developers, and Arts Council NPOs to support sustainable growth and workforce development. Expanding cultural access beyond the city could also help them to build professional networks and new career paths for young people. Leaders highlighted the need for intergenerational cultural literacy, encouraging families to support young people in creative careers while fostering entrepreneurial opportunities in the arts. Grassroots initiatives like Free@Last, Essence Mentoring, and Kings Heath United's Spoken Word project show just how powerful community-driven cultural development can be. Strengthening regional networks, improving access to funding, and embedding youth perspectives in cultural leadership will be key to ensuring a more inclusive and thriving creative sector in Birmingham. As a result, the proposal to endorse the above will have a positive impact on age groups 16 -25yrs by strengthening regional networks, improving access to funding, and embedding youth perspectives in cultural leadership will be key to ensuring a more inclusive and thriving creative sector in Birmingham.</p>
<p>Age Impact Mitigation:</p>	<p>The consultation survey asked how the plan should ensure the younger generation of Birmingham have opportunities within arts and culture in the future. The majority of responses focused in on the role of academia, and access to the arts from a young age: 1. Prioritise arts education in schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Integrate music, art, drama, and creative writing into the curriculum to inspire students from an early age and ensure sustained exposure to the arts. 2. Provide accessible and affordable programmes o Develop free or low-cost arts and culture programmes and make sure they are accessible to young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. 3. Support community arts and youth centres o Invest in youth centres, community spaces, and libraries as hubs for arts activities, workshops, and engagement outside of schools. <p>The need for investment in talent development and career pathways was mentioned frequently, such as providing paid internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship programmes for young creatives. Funding talent development initiatives with cultural institutions was also seen as important for creating clear pathways into creative industries. Whilst the assessment projects have yet to be determined, there will be positive impacts for young people including those between to 16-25 yr age groups. If endorsed, the proposal will be monitored by delivery organisations to ensure that the proposal is having the intended outcomes and reported back to the Compact. If any negative impacts are assessed, this can be reviewed and actioned upon.</p>

Protected Characteristic – Disability

<p>Impact Disability:</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Disability Impact Details:</p>	<p>Pillar 5 of the strategy prioritises diversity, equity and inclusion in cultural programming including an 'always on' focus on diversity and inclusion for culture in Birmingham. The above relates to the public sector equality duty in terms of a way to advance equality of opportunity for those with the PC of disability by encouraging them to participate in cultural activities and</p>

	have their voices heard, as representation can be disproportionately low for this characteristic.
Disability Impact Mitigation:	The consultation survey asked respondents to describe how the future cultural plans should reflect the diversity of Birmingham in a way that makes sure it's inclusive for all. Here are the top three suggestions: 1. Community representation in decision-making ○ Ensure diverse cultural voices, including underrepresented groups (POC, LGBTQ+, disabled individuals, carers, and older adults), are included in planning, leadership, and funding decisions. 2. Support for grassroots initiatives ○ Invest in smaller, local arts organisations, community-led projects, and underserved neighbourhoods rather than focusing solely on large city centre institutions. 3. Access and affordability ○ Remove financial and logistical barriers by offering free or low-cost events, improving transport links, and bringing cultural activities into local communities. Whilst the assessment projects has to be determined, there will be positive impacts to people with a Disability including a greater voice in the decisions around programming and increased opportunities for access to culture such as improving facilities. If endorsed, the proposal will be monitored by those organisations to ensure that the proposal is having the intended outcomes, and reported to the Compact. If negative impacts are assessed, these can be reviewed and actioned upon.

Protected Characteristic – Sex

Impact Sex:	No
Sex Groups Impacted:	
Sex Impact Details:	
Sex Impact Mitigation:	

Protected Characteristic – Gender Reassignment

Impact Gender Reassignment:	N/A
Gender Reassignment Impact Details:	
Gender Reassignment Impact Mitigation:	

Protected Characteristic – Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact Marriage and Civil Partnership:	No
Marriage and Civil Partnership Groups Impacted:	
Marriage and Civil Partnership Impact Details:	
Marriage and Civil Partnership Impact Mitigation:	

Protected Characteristic – Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact Pregnancy and Maternity:	No
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Pregnancy and Maternity Impact Details:	
Pregnancy and Maternity Impact Mitigation:	

Protected Characteristic – Ethnicity and Race

Impact Ethnicity and Race:	Yes
Ethnicity and Race Groups Impacted:	All
Ethnicity and Race Impact Details:	<p>Respondents mentioned the need for inclusive cultural programming to celebrate all cultural heritages, embracing and listening to the perspectives of the younger generation, and ensuring venues and materials were physically and linguistically accessible to accommodate different needs. Group leaders representing community organisations and underrepresented groups attended a workshop hosted at The Legacy Centre. This group of community group leaders in Birmingham felt that, while the city has a strong cultural foundation, there is a need for more inclusive leadership, improved funding structures, and stronger support for creatives at all career levels. They emphasised the importance of placing artists and creatives in senior decision-making roles and creating a more connected cultural leadership network. They also called for greater collaboration between grassroots organisations and larger institutions, flexible funding that supports creative work without restrictive criteria, and more resilience training for freelancers beyond initial development programmes. This group also highlighted the need to rebrand Birmingham from its industrial past to a thriving creative city, making culture a core part of the city's identity. In terms of inclusivity and representation, leaders feel the cultural sector must better reflect Birmingham's diverse communities, with more opportunities for younger generations and grassroots creatives. They felt the city centre does not adequately represent Birmingham's multiculturalism, and more efforts to break down class and social barriers are needed. This group came up with suggestions for this too, including a dedicated multicultural Birmingham festival, a revitalised ArtFest, and curated cultural displays at major transport hubs to celebrate local identities. Increasing networking opportunities, supporting small organisations with financial security, and establishing a cultural sector working group could also ensure long-term inclusivity and sustainability. By fostering better communication, accessible funding, and a more welcoming approach to community involvement, Birmingham's cultural sector can become more representative and empowering for all.</p>
Ethnicity and Race Impact Mitigation:	<p>The consultation survey asked respondents to describe how the future cultural plans should reflect the diversity of Birmingham in a way that makes sure it's inclusive for all. Here are the top three suggestions: 1. Community representation in decision-making ○ Ensure diverse cultural voices, including underrepresented groups (POC, LGBTQ+, disabled individuals, carers, and older adults), are included in planning, leadership, and funding decisions. 2. Support for grassroots initiatives ○ Invest in smaller, local arts organisations, community-led projects, and underserved neighbourhoods rather than focusing solely on large city centre institutions. 3. Access and affordability ○ Remove financial and logistical barriers by offering free or low-cost events, improving transport links, and bringing cultural activities into local communities. Further to the above, support for international / cultural festivals will help encourage ethnic groups to participate and engage in activity e.g. the Serendipity Festival from India. The proposal will have a positive impact on different ethnic groups because of the measures proposed above including more diverse voices involved in decisions around programming and increase in cultural leadership opportunities.</p>

Protected Characteristic – Religion

Impact Religion:	The proposal is to Establish an 'always on' focus on diversity and inclusion for culture in Birmingham this inevitably includes people involved in religion.
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Religion Groups Impacted:	All
Religion Impact Details:	The proposal is to Establish an ‘always on’ focus on diversity and inclusion for culture in Birmingham this inevitably includes people involved in religion. Consultation survey respondents mentioned the need for inclusive cultural programming to celebrate all cultural heritages, embracing and listening to the perspectives of the younger generation, and ensuring venues and materials were physically and linguistically accessible to accommodate different needs.
Religion Impact Mitigation:	The consultation survey asked respondents to describe how the future cultural plans should reflect the diversity of Birmingham in a way that makes sure it’s inclusive for all. Here are the top three suggestions: 1. Community representation in decision-making ○ Ensure diverse cultural voices, including underrepresented groups (POC, LGBTQ+, disabled individuals, carers, and older adults), are included in planning, leadership, and funding decisions. 2. Support for grassroots initiatives ○ Invest in smaller, local arts organisations, community-led projects, and underserved neighbourhoods rather than focusing solely on large city centre institutions. 3. Access and affordability ○ Remove financial and logistical barriers by offering free or low-cost events, improving transport links, and bringing cultural activities into local communities. Further to the above, support for cultural festivals will help encourage those involved in religion to participate and engage in activity. Ambitions to support increased collaboration and community cohesion between Birmingham neighbourhoods leading to, e.g., cross-cultural activity such as new approaches to music and food festivals – would be positive for fostering good relations between different groups.

Protected Characteristic – Sexual Orientation

Impact Sexual Orientation:	N/A
Sexual Orientation Groups Impacted:	Yes
Sexual Orientation Impact Details:	Pillar 5 of the strategy prioritises diversity, equity and inclusion in cultural programming including an ‘always on’ focus on diversity and inclusion for culture in Birmingham.
Sexual Orientation Impact Mitigation:	The consultation survey asked respondents to describe how the future cultural plans should reflect the diversity of Birmingham in a way that makes sure it’s inclusive for all. Here are the top three suggestions: 1. Community representation in decision-making ○ Ensure diverse cultural voices, including underrepresented groups (POC, LGBTQ+, disabled individuals, carers, and older adults), are included in planning, leadership, and funding decisions. 2. Support for grassroots initiatives ○ Invest in smaller, local arts organisations, community-led projects, and underserved neighbourhoods rather than focusing solely on large city centre institutions. 3. Access and affordability ○ Remove financial and logistical barriers by offering free or low-cost events, improving transport links, and bringing cultural activities into local communities. As a result, the proposal to endorse the above will have a positive impact on people with a sexual orientation by strengthening regional networks, improving access to funding, and embedding LGBTQ+ perspectives in cultural leadership will be key to ensuring a more inclusive and thriving creative sector in Birmingham. Whilst the assessment projects has to be determined, there will be positive impacts to people with a sexual orientation. If endorsed, the proposal will be monitored by those organisations to ensure that the proposal is having the intended outcomes, and reported to the Compact. If negative impacts are assessed, these can be reviewed and actioned upon.

Protected Characteristic – Care Experience

Impact Care Experience:	N/A
Care Experience Impact Details:	
Care Experience Impact Mitigation:	

Other

Any other risks or impacts:	
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Full Assessment Summary

Full Assessment Summary:	<p>This EIA documents any assumptions of what the potential benefits might be to Protected Characteristics. Whilst there is a lack of data on this at the moment, the EIA will be updated in the future once the Compact is progressing with specific actions and data is obtained. Survey respondents mentioned the need for inclusive cultural programming to celebrate all cultural heritages, embracing and listening to the perspectives of the younger generation, and ensuring venues and materials were physically and linguistically accessible to accommodate different needs. Certain proposed actions such as a residents culture pass and improved signposting of cultural opportunities would improve residents participation and engagement. In addition, establishing working groups to better develop health, diversity and sustainability action plans should benefit citizens through a proactive and focused approach from participating organisations. Ambitions to support increased collaboration and community cohesion between Birmingham neighbourhoods leading to, e.g., cross-cultural activity such as new approaches to music and food festivals – would be positive for fostering good relations between different groups. Young people and students looking for a future creative career told us that more affordable workspaces were needed, that a strong independent scene was important to them, and that there's a disconnect between students studying in Birmingham and the cultural scene that if tackled could encourage them to see their future cultural or creative careers in the city. Community leaders are looking for more inclusion, more collaboration, and stronger support to connect art with education, and to map out a career path for creatives. They also strongly support more neighbourhood hubs for culture. Other priorities for people? • Arts education in schools • Accessible and affordable programmes • Community arts and youth centres</p> <p>Survey respondents were overwhelmingly positive to the idea of new developments including spaces for culture. It was seen that Birmingham could continue to grow economically, socially, and creatively, ensuring the city remains a vibrant, livable place for all. Specifically, developments including spaces for culture could help:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster community and belonging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Cultural spaces create social hubs, connect diverse communities, and combat isolation by providing inclusive, accessible areas for creativity, interaction, and engagement. 2. Support artists and creative industries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Affordable rehearsal studios, exhibition spaces, and collaborative hubs allow artists, musicians, and freelancers to work, showcase their talent, and sustain their careers locally. 3. Improve mental health and wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Access to cultural activities and creative expression fosters relaxation, reduces stress, and improves mental wellbeing for residents. <p>Respondents also suggested that this should not be reserved for new developments but should be extended to repurposing existing buildings – for example heritage sites, unused properties and shop fronts could be opened up and used by local groups as cultural hubs. Ways in which the city council can support and help facilitate the strategy (thereby benefitting residents) include • Advocating for and unlocking further funding opportunities for culture and enabling, where possible, existing publicly funded cultural programmes to be available as match for new public & privately funded cultural initiatives. (Pillar 1) • Supporting the development of a City Cultural Attractions Pass, and potentially a Cultural Resident's Pass, plus contributing to developing signposting of the city's main cultural offer. (Pillar 2) • Advocating for, and potentially developing or commissioning, new cultural sector skills programmes and business support; to make it easier to enter, survive and develop a career within the creative & cultural ecosystem of the city (Pillar 3) • Supporting the further alignment of local and national planning mechanisms and funding with the cultural needs and opportunities of our diverse wards. This action potentially leading to an increase in the amount of statutory cultural investment that is embedded across the city, such as through</p>
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	<p>the provision of new value for money maker and participation spaces. (Pillar 4) • Continuing the economic and social development of our local centres through the work of cultural, neighbourhood, community and business improvement teams including, e.g., developing follow-on programmes to Cultural Action Areas and bringing under-utilized heritage buildings back into use. (Pillar 4) • Supporting increased collaboration and community cohesion between Birmingham neighbourhoods leading to, e.g., cross-cultural activity such as new approaches to music and food festivals. (Pillar 5) • Advocating for Birmingham as a global cultural city and supporting work that could establish major new cultural initiatives for the city, such as a new International Cultural Festival or new National Centre for Musical Theatre. (Pillar 6)</p>
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Monitoring

Monitoring Details:	<p>This EIA documents any assumptions of what the potential benefits might be to Protected Characteristics. Whilst there is a lack of data on this at the moment, the EIA will be updated in the future once the Compact is progressing with actions and data is obtained. The Compact Partnership is developing an actions monitoring framework. This will include monitoring of where any protected characteristics have been affected (benefitted).</p>
Monitoring Officer Email:	<p>symon.easton@birmingham.gov.uk</p>

