

Luton Creative Leaders Group: Appendix 1 supporting information

Background information

In 2019, as the town experienced a significant increase in cultural activity and participation, the Luton Arts and Culture Strategy group committed to sustaining a continued improvement in how Luton's super-diverse communities are represented in the town's arts and cultural offer.

The most significant action in this commitment is to diversify the leadership of local arts and culture. The Arts and Culture Strategy Group, made up of representatives of key arts and culture organisations in Luton, seeks to improve its representation of culturally and ethnically diverse, working class and disabled people. The Luton Creative Leaders Group is designed to sustainably address this representation and support a shift in the cultural democracy and diversity of arts leadership in Luton.

It is important for us to identify that this commitment was made long before the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affected the creative industries and our black, Asian, minority, working class and disabled communities. It was made before the Black Lives Matter movement influenced a sector-wide response and evaluation of our equality and diversity. However, these two world-changing events showed us that there was an urgency in this work that could not be ignored. They showed us that in addition to our key aims for the group, we also needed to acknowledge that:

- Only the highest paid arts leaders nationally worked through the pandemic, resulting in an imbalance of power
- Working class artists were more likely to be unable to support themselves through the pandemic, further embedding the inequality already experienced in the sector, and erasing the progress made over the past few years.

So we moved swiftly to secure funding and refine the idea in consultation with leading local and national artists.

Positively, the pandemic reinforced the strength of the creative network in Luton and the peer support and collaboration that exists amongst our local creative community. The Creative Leaders Group seeks to formalise peer support and enable local artists to lead and shape arts and culture in Luton as we realign our practice to a reimagined world.

The group will learn from initiatives of a similar nature but will seek to be something radically different and nation-leading: it will contribute to town-wide arts strategy and directly influence the leaders of key arts organisations in Luton. Not attached to one institution, organisation or local authority, the group will work collaboratively and with senior partners across the town. One of the first groups of this kind, the Leaders will be deeply rooted in Luton as a place.

Harnessing Momentum: Luton's strategy for arts, culture and creative industries 2017-2027

Luton's strategy for arts, culture and creative industries was first published in 2017 and underwent a refresh in 2020. It sets out a vision for a Luton where art, culture and creativity are central to happy, healthy and prosperous lives. Where residents, communities, artists, businesses, partners and visitors have access to creative and cultural experiences that brighten their lives and improve life chances. Where art is ambitious and high quality and democratically developed by, with and for Luton communities.

Vision: A town transformed by vibrant arts, culture and creativity that brightens the lives and life chances of everyone in Luton.

Mission: To enable a diverse cultural offer that empowers people to dream and aspire, supports communities to grow strong and sustainable and develops a vibrant, inclusive creative economy that supports everyone in Luton to thrive.

Outcomes:

1. **A place with a prosperous creative economy** with an inclusive creative industry and an arts and cultural offer that transforms our town centre and brings investment, business, new residents and visitors to the town
2. **A place enriched through diverse cultural activity** that supports residents and communities to be happy, healthy and to thrive and enables the development of social capital, cross-cultural understanding and intercultural collaboration
3. **A place with a robust creative education offer** that supports social mobility, prepares children, young people and adults for the jobs of the future and enables children to grow into innovative, free thinking, imaginative adults.

Priorities:

1. **Artistic quality and innovation:** We will inspire and enable artistic quality and innovation in everything we do. Quality artistic product will be achieved through quality artistic process and an ambition to develop new ideas and take risks.
2. **Climate action:** We aim to achieve climate neutrality across all cultural events, venues and programmes and encourage artists to develop and consider innovative approaches that contribute to the council's ambition to be a climate neutral town by 2040.
3. **A global outlook:** We will utilise our cultural assets to place Luton on the world's stage and promote Luton as a creative town. We will look outside of Luton for inspiration and aspiration and seek to harness the benefits of being an airport town to enable global connectivity and mobility.
4. **Inclusivity and diversity:** We strive for all cultural activity to be inclusive of everyone in Luton, no matter their background or needs. We commit to ensuring the diversity of Luton is represented in our spaces, stages, screens and galleries and to ensure that the lack of culturally diverse, working class and disabled voices in arts leadership is addressed as a matter of urgency

The Luton Creative Forum

The Luton Creative Forum was formed in 2016 and is a network of over 300 artists and arts workers in Luton that enables peer support, artist development and sector-wide communication. Membership is informal and achieved through joining the [Forum Facebook group](#) or emailing the Cultural Partnerships Coordinator. The network meets once every two to three months either in person or online.