

Classification	Item No.
Open / Closed	

Meeting:	Bury Health and Wellbeing Board
Meeting date:	November 11 th 2025
Title of report:	Bury Culture Strategy – Background on the Bury Cultural Strategy and the role of Culture and Arts on addressing Health Inequalities thorough the Creative Health.
Report by:	Jackie Veal – Head of Wellness
Decision Type:	Information/ Discussion or Decision (<i>delete as appropriate</i>) Discussion and Decision
Ward(s) to which report relates	ALL

Executive Summary

The Bury Cultural Strategy, launched in 2023 after Bury’s recognition as the first Town of Culture in 2020/21 in Greater Manchester, is titled “**Different Cultures, Same Horizons.**” Its vision is to transform Bury’s cultural and creative sector by embedding equality, access, and opportunity across all communities. The strategy aligns with national and regional frameworks, including:

- **Arts Council England’s “Let’s Create”**
- **Heritage Lottery’s Strategic Funding Framework**
- **Bury’s 2030 Strategy “Let’s Do It”**

The strategy is built on five pillars:

- **Stories:** Empowering communities to share and celebrate their narratives.

- **Skills:** Developing creative industry pathways and promoting fair working practices.
- **Strength:** Promoting cultural health and wellbeing.
- **Space:** Creating inclusive venues and public spaces.
- **Support:** Facilitating cross-sector collaboration and sustainable investment.

Bury is home to over 120 cultural organisations and 750+ creative practitioners across five districts, contributing £24.3M annually to the local economy. The strategy's focus areas mirror the Arts Council's "Let's Create" framework: Creative People, Cultural Communities, and a Creative & Cultural Country.

In 2025 Greater Manchester published its second Culture Strategy, CreateGM, which sets out a five-year vision for culture, heritage and creativity in Greater Manchester; Greater Manchester: A place of rich history, innovation and compassion, where the creativity of our people and the distinctiveness of our places can delight, inspire, provoke and change our world for the better

Our vision is to enable every community in Bury to tell their story and for these stories to be shared across our borough and beyond. The Strategy has five strategic pillars (Stories, Skills, Strengths, Space and Support)

We continue to collaborate and work alongside key cultural organisations to further embed culture alongside other key strategies i.e. Health, Regeneration and Economic Strategy.

Recommendations

- **Note the contribution that the Bury Cultural Strategy and Cultural Organisation Group make to health and wellbeing in and across Bury and embed arts and culture using a public health approach to address health inequalities.**

Key Considerations

Background, Engagement, and Impact

- **Alignment with National Priorities:** Arts Council England (ACE) visits and presentations in July 2025 reinforced Bury's alignment with national cultural priorities.
- **Evaluation Frameworks:** Shared frameworks and performance measures (e.g., Active Lives, UKSPF KPIs) are used to track cultural participation and impact.

Investment and Governance

- **GMCA Cultural Strategy and Investment:** Recent DCMS announcement of £25M Creative Industries Investment for Greater Manchester over three years (60% revenue, 40% capital), approved by all 10 GM leaders.
- **New Governance Bodies:** Plans for a Greater Manchester Creative Council, Freelance Task Force, Nighttime Economy Task Force, and Strategic Cultural Partnership.
- **Funding Streams:**
 - **Spirit Fund:** For organisations delivering in multiple GM districts, (up to £200K/year working with several other LA's).
 - **Sustain Fund:** For organisations operating across all ten boroughs (up to £200K/year).
 - **Museum Renewal Fund:** Bury Council Art Gallery secured £67K ACE Revenue for 2025/26 delivery.
- **Strategic Projects:** Creative Infrastructure Plan, Music Strategy, Production Fund, and Screen Office to address borough-level inconsistencies.

Cultural Events Programme

Through UKSPF and other funding the following outcomes have been achieved in the last 12 months. key exhibitions and events

£500,000 of UKSPF money was allocated to support the delivery of Bury's Culture Strategy. The resulting programme has provided opportunities for Bury residents, businesses and community groups to engage with cultural activity. The fund supported 455 local events and activities. The programme of events included Northern Bookshelf Live, Heritage Open Days, the Bury leg of Tour of Britain, Storytelling Festival, Bury Festival of Art, Food and Drink Festival, Comic Con, Bringing it Back to You and Bury Pride. A Cultural Grants programme was funded through the programme, which enabled 15 community organisations to create their own events and programmes of activity.

Key achievements enabled by UKSPF funded events:

- 644 Volunteer opportunities supported
- 3 local markets created or supported
- 37,500 attendees to events
- 15,266 improved impressions of culture activity across Bury
- 371, 123 people reached through social media

The Going to the Match exhibition and supporting programme of events was a major highlight for Bury Culture in 2024/25. The exhibition at Bury Art Museum was centred on the LS Lowry painting *Going to the Match*. Between October 2024 to March 2025, over 17,000 visitors came to see the exhibition, many of whom were new audiences. Through the community and outreach programme the BAM team engaged with local schools, colleges, care homes, local families and organisations as well as Bury Music Service.

Local Growth and Flexible Grants activity delivered through Libraries aligned to the cultural strategy during 2025 focussed on engagement and promoting wellness/health

activity to local communities the Radcliffe area to retain active involvement and increase awareness of the opening of the Community Hub in Spring 2026.

Activity formed part of the Proposed Radcliffe Culture Program and Stakeholder Engagement Plan developed by the Radcliffe Hub Operational Group which oversees the build up to the opening of the new Civic Hub from the perspective of services which will operate from the Hub

Health and Wellbeing Activities included:

- GIRLS! "Girls unit in Radcliffe" will focus on improving self-esteem and overall wellbeing. Themes include body image, self-care, healthy relationships and personal safety, and female development including female neurodiversity.
- Crucial Crew Activity- attend a wellbeing session across digital safety, transport safety, exercise, health, mental health
- Wellness programme of events around physical activity and mindfulness
- Archive project based on the digitisation of historic Radcliffe newspapers linking into the Spirit of Place work already undertaken as part of Radcliffe regeneration
- Radcliffe Hub Art Storybook - Schools based project promoting the benefits of libraries, reading and the upcoming Civic Hub in the town
- Family reading projects using storytelling to improve literacy levels in the town
- Commissioning of a series of videos promoting wellness activity in the town and signposting the run up to the opening of the new facility with volunteer support on content creation

£236k has been secured for Culture 25/26 and work has commenced to plan how this investment through grants and events will connect communities and place in Bury.

Other progress during 25/26

- **Discover Bury Website:** Central hub for event promotion and promotion of wider Cultural Offer.
- **Pride in Place Grants:** Supporting community-led cultural activities across all neighbourhoods.
- **Town of Culture Bid:** Plans to apply for UK Town of Culture status.
- **Recent and Upcoming Events:**
 - **Festival of Art:** Eight venues, 100+ artists, 1,000+ attendees.
 - **Winter Culture:** January 2026 event to focus on Blue Monday and supporting social isolation and connecting the community
 - **Ramsbottom Event (Feb 2026):** Community event with live music.
 - **Whitefield Engagement (Dec 2025):** Festive, family-friendly event.

- **Bringing It Back to You:** Care home engagement program for older residents.
- **Wonderbird Project:** Early years creative activities for families.
- **Winter Care Packages:** Wellbeing packages for older generations.
- **Ramsbottom Hoard Project:** Heritage and schools' engagement.

Infrastructure Projects

- **Ramsbottom Library:** Roof project and PR campaign completed October 25.
- **Bury Art Museum Roof Repairs:** MEND ACE investment secured; project to start in early 2026. Investment was also secured for key Cultural Buildings. £589,545 was secured via the MEND (Museum Estate and Development Fund) in 2023 and work is underway to replace the Bury Art Museum Roof during 25/26.
- **MET:** Working to secure additional capital investment from Heritage Lottery and Arts Council.
- **Cultural Walks and Community Engagement:** Delivered in Radcliffe in 2025, with proposals for expanded outreach.

Performance and Monitoring

Collaboration with Arts Council and Bury Council performance team to develop a robust framework for demonstrating cultural impact and outcomes.

- **Participation Metrics:** Tracking across arts, libraries, heritage, museums, and wider cultural organisers.
- **Creative Economy Indicators:**
 - 5.92% of businesses in creative industries
 - 1.80% of employees in the sector
 - 6.51 creative companies per 1,000 population
 - 89.82% Engaged with the arts in the person
 - 34.98% Engaged with the Arts Online in the past 12 months
 - Bury as a Cultural Place - 9.98m Visits across Culture 21-23 generating over £200 million
- **Reporting and Governance:** Regular updates via the Culture Portfolio and Shadow Cultural Portfolio meetings, integrated with the Corporate Plan and Economic Strategy Delivery Plans.

Culture as a Driver to Deliver Health Outcomes

Strategic Integration

Create GM Strategy: References health 32 times, positioning culture as a tool for improving mental health, resilience, reducing isolation, and enhancing wellbeing.

Bury's Strategy: Embeds creative health into its five pillars, with the "Strength" pillar prioritising support for physical, mental, emotional, and social health.

Creative Health in Practice

Creative health refers to the use of arts and cultural activities to support physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. It encompasses everything from visual and performing arts to literature, crafts, and nature-based creativity like gardening.

Creative health is embedded in Greater Manchester's Live Well framework, which promotes walk-in centres, informal community spaces, and culturally competent services across neighbourhoods.

The Greater Manchester Culture Fund Process 2026 outlines a £1.6 million investment jointly led by GMCA and NHS to integrate culture into health and social care. This strategy unifies health, community, and cultural sectors to deliver equitable wellbeing support across all neighbourhood. The Creative Health Culture Strategy outlines a strategic framework built on three pillars:

- **Strength:** Aligning curated programmes with grassroots activity to support holistic health.
- **Space:** Ensuring inclusive venues for cultural health delivery.
- **Support:** Strengthening governance and investment mechanisms for sustainable outcomes

The WHO's scoping review of 3,000+ studies confirms that arts play a major role in preventing illness, promoting health, and managing conditions across the lifespan. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) highlights benefits such as reduced cognitive decline in older adults, improved emotional resilience in youth, and enhanced quality of life for patients with chronic conditions.

Bury Council integrates arts into wellness strategies, including outreach, nature exploration, and anti-bullying initiatives.

The Art Sessions incorporated into our wellbeing sessions demonstrates practical staff programmes like "Art to Reduce Anxiety and Stress" and wellbeing walks/runs.

Music Therapy reduces agitation and need for medication reduces in 67% of people with Dementia. Art Therapies have been found to alleviate anxiety, depression and stress whilst increasing resilience and wellbeing.

Arts on Prescription part of the wider social prescribing programme, this involves people experiencing psychological or physical distress being referred (or referring themselves) to engage with the arts in the community (including galleries, museums

and libraries). An arts-on-prescription project has shown a 37% drop-in GP consultation rates and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions. This represents a saving of Arts therapies have been found to alleviate anxiety, depression and stress while increasing resilience and wellbeing. Attendance tends to be determined by educational level, prosperity and ethnicity. Cultural engagement reduces work-related stress and leads to longer, happier lives. Within the NHS, some 10 million working days are lost to sick leave every year, costing Music therapy reduces agitation and need for medication. A social return on investment of between £4 and £11 has been calculated for every £1 invested in arts on prescription. A total £216 per patient.

Mental & Physical Health Benefits of Visiting Museums

- **Improved mental health & life satisfaction:** Regular cultural attendance is linked to better mental wellbeing and lower psychological distress.
- **Enhanced quality of life:** Museum visits positively affect happiness and self-reported health.
- **Reduced depression risk:** Adults aged 50+ who visit museums monthly or more have up to a **48% lower risk** of developing depression.
- **Lower dementia risk:** Long-term Museum attendance is associated with reduced dementia risk over 10 years.
- **Less frailty & disability:** Cultural engagement helps older adults stay physically healthier.
- **Reduced loneliness:** Museum visits significantly decrease feelings of isolation.
- **Longer life expectancy:** Frequent cultural engagement is linked to increased survival rates.

Other local examples and impact.

- **Programme Delivery:** Venues activated as shared spaces for storytelling, heritage, and creative expression—key for mental and emotional wellbeing.
- **Creative & Community Multiplier Fund:** Training communities in project development, fundraising, and event management, empowering residents to lead cultural health initiatives.
- **Health-Focused Cultural Events:** Examples include Perfect Pitch (ENO), Breathe Easy (Bradford), and support for Long COVID through online courses and music therapy.
- **Civic Pride and Engagement:** Victoria Wood Statue unveiling and Fire Choir performances foster civic pride and intergenerational engagement.

Creative Health addressing Health Inequalities

The National Centre for Creative Health supports the approach because it brings together communities, neighbourhoods, the voluntary sector, local government and health systems in support of the shared goal of tackling health inequalities. Access to

creative health opportunities can help mitigate the negative impacts of the wider determinants of health. In areas experiencing high levels of deprivation, initiatives which increase community engagement, social cohesion and social capital can help to mitigate some of the detrimental impacts of the social determinants of health.

Creative health implemented at community or place-level can achieve this. Creative initiatives can provide people with a sense of agency, power and control over their circumstances, which can improve individual and community health and wellbeing. Mobilising existing creative, cultural and community assets through the provision of a supportive infrastructure will lead to stronger, more resilient communities with less reliance on public services in the long-term.

Governance and Public Health Alignment

- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Close work with GM NHS Partners, Public Health, and Adult Care to align cultural programming with health objectives.
- **Place Health and Care Partnership Agreement:** Sets shared frameworks for integrating cultural principles into health service design and delivery.

Wellness Strategy and Live Well Ecosystem

- **Bury Wellness Strategy:** Aims to upscale creative health delivery across all townships, pivoting from leisure to wellness, supported by GMCA and GM Integrated Care.

Monitoring and Impact

- **Social Value and Health Impact:** Cultural programs tracked using frameworks like TOMS (Themes, Outcomes, Measures).
- **Health and Safety:** Meetings include analysis of incident data, training compliance, and wellbeing initiatives to ensure safe and supportive cultural spaces.

Community Impact and Links with Community Strategy

- **Cultural Organisers Group (COG):** Includes The MET, Bury Music Service, Bury Fusiliers, East Lancashire Railway, Bury Art Gallery, Libraries, and Archives. Facilitates collaboration, supports funding applications, and ensures strategic alignment among Bury's cultural stakeholders.

Key Recommendations and Proposals

Embed arts and culture using a public health approach to address health inequalities.

To adopt the practical recommendations in the Creative Health Strategy and engage with the broader Culture Organisers Group and Public Health to implement.

1. Embed Arts in Public Health Strategy

- Use creative health as a core component of wellness and prevention frameworks.
- Align with initiatives like the GM Menopause Network and #FeelGoodYourWay to target specific demographics.

2. Strengthen Evaluation

- Apply frameworks like TOMS (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) to track social value and health impacts of cultural programmes.
- Encourage qualitative and quantitative research, including case studies and controlled trials.

3. Expand Access and Inclusion

- Ensure venues are welcoming and accessible.
- Partner with community organisations to reach marginalised groups through place-based work.

4. Support Workforce Development

- Address barriers to apprenticeships and placements in creative industries.
- Promote intergenerational engagement and diversify entry pathways.

5. Leverage Social Prescribing

- Work with Public Health and Integrate arts into social prescribing pathways, connecting individuals to non-clinical supports like music, dance, and nature-based activities

Background Documents



Bury Cultural
Strategy FINAL April

Equality Impact and considerations:

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

Equality Analysis	<i>Please provide a written explanation of the outcome(s) of either conducting an initial or full EA.</i>

**Please note: Approval of a cabinet report is paused when the 'Equality/Diversity implications' section is left blank and approval will only be considered when this section is completed.*

Legal Implications:

To be completed by the Council's Monitoring Officer – None

Financial Implications:

To be completed by the Council's Section 151 Officer- None

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Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning