

LOVE CAMDEN CULTURAL STRATEGY 2026–2031



DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

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Foreword

Welcome to Camden's new Cultural Strategy. This is an invitation and a call to action to connect, engage, and innovate with us to increase participation by our residents and communities in cultural programmes across the borough. It is based on extensive engagement and research.

Investment in culture is now more important than ever. In an era of rapid technological and societal change, arts and culture have a pivotal role to play in addressing the social, economic and environmental challenges we face.

Camden is globally recognised as a centre of culture. Our borough is home to national and international cultural institutions such as the Roundhouse, the British Museum, Hampstead Theatre and the British Library, alongside creative businesses and grassroots artists. The unique mix of cultural landmarks and contemporary street culture have created an environment for some of Britain's greatest artists and bands to grow and thrive.

We are proud of our diverse communities living and working here who bring a wealth of culture and heritage to Camden. Culture has the power to connect, uplift and unite communities. Our cultural strategy will create opportunities for culture to be more accessible, equitable and engaging, we want every citizen to have the opportunity to develop their creativity and connect with their community and neighbourhood through culture.

The culture and creative sector in the borough are strong and I am delighted that our first cultural strategy has been developed in collaboration with them and our residents. It is a demonstration of our commitment to culture and the place of culture in contributing to the delivery of the Council's priorities. We will continue to act as collaborators and connectors between cultural organisations, artists, residents, businesses and universities to develop skills, the talent pipeline and grow the cultural ecology, from the grassroots to the global stage ensuring everyone can take part.

We remain hugely ambitious for the future of culture in the borough and this strategy provides a pathway for people at all stages in their lives to actively engage in and benefit from creative and cultural activities. We want culture to make Camden the most vibrant, collaborative and connected, healthy and joy-filled place to live, work, grow, visit and invest.

I look forward to working with you in the delivery of this strategy.

Councillor Sabrina Francis

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture

Section 1 – Love Camden Cultural Strategy

Our vision

Culture matters. It makes people feel joyous, happier, inspired and healthier; it provides a sense of identity for residents, communities and places. Culture makes Camden and we have an ambitious vision and plan for the future of culture in our borough.

Camden’s rebellious spirit is inspiring, lifting up and uniting its diverse communities. Culture makes Camden the most vibrant, collaborative and connected, healthy and joy-filled place to live, work, grow, visit and invest.

By 2031, residents will be sharing and celebrating a wide range of culture across neighbourhoods. There will be hubs of creativity where dynamic, relevant, high-quality art and cultural experiences for people of all incomes, ethnicities and abilities take place. We want our communities to be more connected to their neighbourhoods through culture and engaged with our globally recognised cultural venues. Our borough will remain a distinctive cultural destination for visitors.

Residents of all ages will have opportunities to explore their creativity, enhance their wellbeing and develop skills to help progress their careers. We want young people to access work experience; those underrepresented in creative education will be supported to participate in experiential learning opportunities. Cultural organisations will have access to development resources to support them in embracing the opportunities and addressing the current-day issues impacting their sector.

As the home of internationally renowned cultural institutions, artists, makers and creative industries, our strategy will enable new talents to emerge whilst creating the conditions to sustain the cultural ecology, contribute to local economic growth and job creation. We will develop local audiences whilst sustaining interest for cultural visitors and work with partners to support the night-time and experience economy. Through shared endeavour we will seek to increase cultural provision in areas where there is currently a lower level of activity.

Our themes, ambitions and objectives

We have three over-arching themes: People and Place, Learning and Skills, and Grow and Thrive, guided by equity, creative health and wellbeing, and sustainability which contribute to the vision of our cultural strategy.

People and Place

By People and Place, we mean creating opportunities for culture to thrive in neighbourhoods, reimagining public spaces through experiential programmes, and fostering a strong sense of community and civic pride.

Our objectives that will guide us toward achieving our vision are:

- Create cultural experiences that bring new life to places and enable the development of creative neighbourhoods across the borough,
- Create the environment for creative and healthy neighbourhoods to thrive,
- Ensure culture is accessible, affordable, available and inviting to all,
- Empower residents to shape their own environment and encourage a sense of belonging and connectedness through culture,
- Support Communities to develop and share heritage to reveal a shared story and history of the borough and its communities.

Our desired outcomes that will demonstrate the impact or success of our actions are:

- New cultural initiatives are co-created with borough residents and communities,
- Cultural experiences and programmes that enable equitable access for all,
- Participation and engagement by residents in cultural and creative programmes have increased and are sustained,
- Creative practitioners are employed on cultural projects and programmes to contribute to residents' individual and collective health and wellbeing,
- Events, narratives and creative programmes develop a shared story and platform Camden's hidden history and heritage.

Case study: Light-up Kilburn, activating Kilburn Town Centre

Light-up Kilburn (2024) was the first edition of a light festival that took place on and around Kilburn High Road and Grange Park. Light installations were displayed throughout Grange Park, projected onto the pathway and on windows animating the high road and transforming the winter evenings. The council commissioned local artists to create new site-specific artworks and to run creative workshops in the community and with schools to involve residents, children and young people. Through these workshops residents and school children explored their creativity and developed new puppetry performance skills, which were used in the community light festival.

The two-week festival closed with a giant puppet and lantern (made by children) parade and ended in Kilburn Grange Park, which was illuminated and where residents and visitors could enjoy festivities and a night market offering food and local crafts.

The festival celebrated Kilburn and its creativity brokering partnership and relationships with businesses on the high street. It brought light, colour, sound and creativity to Kilburn.



Crispian Blaize Photography

Case study: Regent's Park Estate Story Trail, a community-led creative placemaking

Regent's Park Estate Story Trail is a celebration of the past, present and future of the estate, aiming to promote a sense of community, safety and connection, while amplifying residents' voices and power. It was initiated by residents as part of Community Champions Regent's Park and produced by Old Diorama Arts Centre in partnership with Camden Council Parks and Green Spaces team, University of the Arts London / Central Saint Martins (as part of the EU-funded T-Factor research project), and Fitzrovia Youth in Action.

The process of conceiving and creating the Trail, and now the journey through the unique art installations, gives residents opportunities to feel their impact on their area, reconnect with their neighbours and look differently at their estate. As a wellbeing-focused project, the Community Champions and community organisations in the ward created a range of activities and events to tackle social isolation, encourage connection to the community and nature, alongside delivering positive actions across the estate. They gathered detailed information encompassing personal and historical stories, local aspirations, as well as identifying issues of concern for residents, and their experiences of living and/or working on the estate. More than 1600 residents attended the 60 collaborative workshops and events, and three paid temporary Neighbourhood Curators roles were created.

Working with artists, residents' ideas, faces, drawings, handiwork, portraits, memories and hopes are now visible in the permanent artworks.



Matt Mahmood Ogston photography

Learning and Skills

By Learning and Skills, we mean residents of all ages have access to a range of learning, skills and work experience opportunities across Camden cultural and creative sector.

Our objectives that guide us toward achieving our vision are:

- Provide internships, placements, mentoring, work experience, other learning and training opportunities and develop pathways in Camden's creative economy for students, graduates and residents from diverse backgrounds,
- Encourage career-development opportunities for residents especially those from under-represented groups,
- Develop and strengthen cultural and creative sector networks, facilitating the provision of learning and development,
- Training for creative practitioners to develop skills to enable them to deliver Creative Health projects and programmes.

Our desired outcomes that will demonstrate the impact or success of our actions are:

- More residents and young people are accessing work experience, apprenticeships and other learning opportunities,
- More residents have paid positions in Camden's creative and nighttime economy,
- Education, learning providers and cultural organisations have created a plan to deliver programmes that meet the needs of the creative and cultural sector and economy,
- Artists have the skills to deliver Creative Health projects and programmes.

Case study: Camden Schools Art Biennale, a large-scale school art programme

The Camden Schools Art Biennale (CSAB) is a fine example of the innovative potential that partnerships between the Council, Camden Learning, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London (CSM/UAL) and schools can bring to young people's lives.

The Biennale project culminated in a week-long exhibition, celebrating art developed by every school and every key stage of learning in Camden – from primary education through to A-Level. Alongside the exhibition, an engagement and events programme provided opportunities for families, young people and teachers to participate in the arts. Prior to the exhibition, a major component of the CSAB initiative was a range of outreach work with schools, particularly those that do not have dedicated art teaching or facilities. This provided opportunities to develop both teacher skills and meaningful links with arts organisations and galleries in Camden to enhance arts education.

Over 1900 young people took part, 350 artworks were presented, and over 5,200 people visited the exhibition, making it one of the Lethaby Gallery's most popular exhibitions since its move to King's Cross in 2012.

Launched in 2024 as a pilot initiative, the project is intended to be a pillar of Camden's cultural and educational calendar, running once every two years.

The project was made possible through funding from Camden Council, John Lyon's Charity and King's Cross Central Partnership.



Jamie Johnson photography

Case study: Steam Work Experience: a ‘carousel’ model

Camden Council’s annual STEAM Work Experience (STEAM WEX) programme gives Year-12 students the opportunity to spend a week with a local employer, with a range of options to choose from.

Since 2021 the council’s Culture Service has worked with the Cultural Education Partnership, Camden Spark, to deliver a programme focused on careers in the cultural and creative industries.

Taking an innovative approach via a ‘carousel’ model, students spend a week visiting a range of creative and cultural organisations, meeting experienced professionals and gaining hands-on experience with a variety of roles across music production, live events, visual arts, TV & film, museums and galleries.

With places for 30 students each year, so far over 100 students have enrolled and taken part, accessing organisations including Universal Music, Ambassador Theatre Group, Roundhouse, Camden Art Centre, Donmar Warehouse, Central Saint Martins, London Film School, October Gallery, Bloomsbury Festival, Celebro Media and Lauderdale House.



Sam Lane Photography

Grow and Thrive

By Grow and Thrive, we mean creating the conditions to enable the borough's cultural and creative industries to sustain and contribute to London and the national creative ecology and economies.

Our objectives that guide us toward achieving our visions are:

- Create the conditions for the arts and cultural sector to be resilient, sustainable and enable sector-wide growth,
- Centre culture in place shaping to support the development and growth of creative neighbourhoods,
- Encourage the protection and growth of creative quarters and neighbourhoods,
- Unlock affordable space that is accessible during the day, evening and night-time to support artists, creatives and makers to establish, develop and sustain their creative practice.

Our desired outcomes that will demonstrate the impact or success of our actions are:

- More types of affordable creative workspace are available to meet the full spectrum of needs,
- New developments across the borough make provision for culture,
- Cross-organisation partnering arrangements deliver co-created programmes in the north and west of the borough,
- Collaborative work amongst cultural producers on programming, promotion and audiences is everyday practice,
- Cultural organisations connecting and sharing best practice has enabled a more resilient cultural economy and growth.

Case study: Museum of Youth Culture, Camden permanent opening space

Museum of Youth Culture is a museum dedicated to the styles, sounds and social movements innovated by young people over the past 100 years. It opened its doors recently in its new home in the Camden Property Holdings Limited (CPHL), NW1 mixed-use development known as St Pancras Campus. Using the 'affordable workspace' provided through the planning obligation process, CPHL engaged with Camden's Inclusive Economy and Culture teams to provide a permanent 'home' for the Museum of Young People, with the premises being made available at 60% of the market value for annual rents charged for comparable spaces within the local area of the Development for the initial 10-year period following occupation. Camden has long been a beacon for youth culture attracting young people from around the country looking for a place to be accepted and belong and the Museum of Youth Culture is a welcome addition to the borough youth scene.



Museum of Youth Culture photography

Case study: Camden High-Street Pedestrianisation Cultural Programme

Culture has been central to the vision for Camden High Street's pedestrianisation from the outset. The traffic-free space has opened up an opportunity for a people-first, place-shaping cultural programme that recognises creativity as a driver of connection, identity and regeneration.

Working alongside local artists, communities, and cultural institutions, the programme has been designed to respond to Camden's unique character and heritage from its global influence in music and fashion to its grassroots community spirit.

Each phase of the pedestrianisation has included space for artistic intervention, public engagement and co-creation. Culture has not been an add-on but a golden thread, a way to test how people interact with the street, support local businesses, and invite the public to imagine the future of the high street together.

The cultural programme for Camden High Street allows us to bring these thoughts into curation alongside community engagement and participation to develop a programme which draws on the desires of local people, spotlights Camden's unique cultural identity and aligns with the new cultural strategy. Whether through live murals, fashion catwalks, or music pop ups, the cultural programme ensures the space evolves with and for both residents and visitors alike.



Crispian Blaize Photography

The cultural strategy is grounded in identified need and our aspiration to recognise and celebrate the creative lives of all residents across the borough. Its ambitions are rooted in actions that will help us deliver on some of the most critical challenges of our time:

Creative Health and Wellbeing

We will embed creative activities and approaches as a healthy behaviour that benefits wellbeing, particularly in neighbourhoods where there is evidence of health inequalities and a higher number of residents feeling lonely or experiencing isolation.

Equity

We are committed to expanding equitable opportunities, enabling a broader and more diverse range of residents to lead, participate in, and activate arts and cultural programmes.

Sustainability

We will encourage all partner organisations to put environmental responsibility at the centre of how they work and support them to tackle the climate emergency through their operations.

Governance, delivery and evaluation

The council has invested in culture through a dedicated Culture Service that acts as a connector and collaborator between cultural organisations, residents, artists, and neighbourhoods - ensuring that all communities, especially those underrepresented, can produce and experience meaningful cultural activity. The development of a new five-year Cultural Strategy (2026–2031) reflects the Council's continued commitment to culture as a driver of inclusion, identity and wellbeing. The Council embraces its responsibility as a steward of cultural development - championing equity, nurturing local talent, protecting cultural heritage, and embedding culture into the borough's wider social and economic goals.

The Council's role in culture is multifaceted with a range of Council services contributing to the positioning and delivery of culture and ensuring that residents benefit from a wide spectrum of Culture. The primary role of the Council's Culture Service is to:

- establish and embed the strategic vision for culture and cultural development,
- act as a connector, enabler and build partnerships to establish the conditions in which creativity and culture can innovate and grow,
- develop and build capacity in the local creative and community sectors,
- enable and deliver accessible and inclusive cultural programmes which promote active participation, support placemaking and contribute to growth in the local economy and cultural ecology,
- advocate for investment in culture at local, regional and national levels.

The Culture Service Love Camden Cultural Programme creates moments that celebrate the borough's heritage, platform hidden histories and explore the borough's future identity. We do this by bringing communities together, commissioning new work to animate the public realm, showcase Camden creatives and the everyday creativity of Camden's people.

Camden's Library Service provide safe and inclusive spaces for the local community offering residents opportunities to connect, participate in cultural programmes and engage with our Reading Together Strategy. They are a key partner in the Living Knowledge Network led by the British Library.

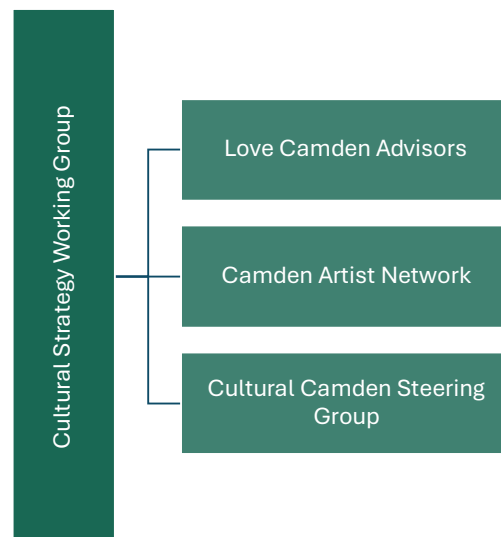
Camden's STEAM movement fosters partnerships between industry, institutions, educators, and young people to build a future where scientific, creative, and digital industries continue to innovate and provide opportunities for Camden's young people.

This cultural strategy is based on the desire to recognise and celebrate the creative lives and heritage of everyone living in our borough. Working equitably and in partnership with residents, artists, cultural providers, educational institutions, council teams and

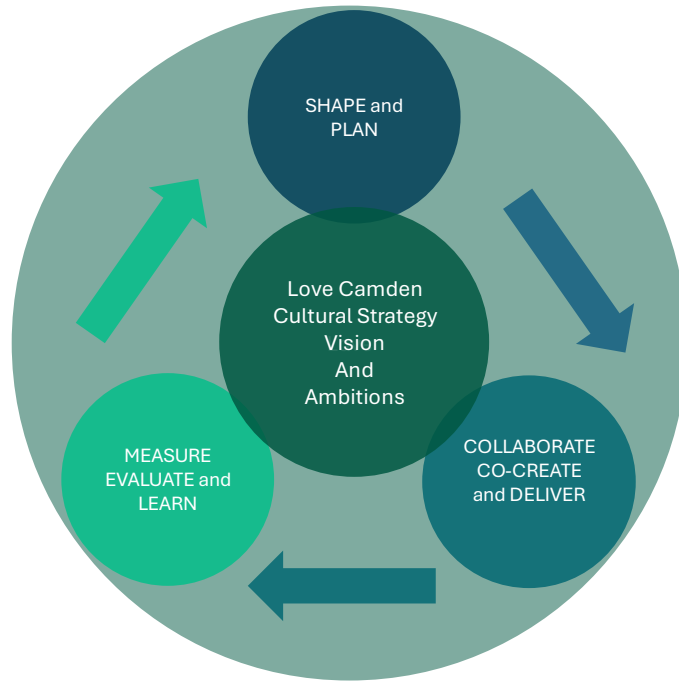
wider stakeholders will ensure that our cultural offer is accessible and sustainable, while making best use of all available resources.

The strategy has been developed in collaboration with residents, cultural organisations and other key stakeholders; as such, collaboration and partnering arrangements will be a foundation for the successful implementation of this strategy.

A new Cultural Strategy Group will be formed to oversee the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the cultural strategy aims and objectives. It will bring together the voice of the Cultural Camden Steering Group (sector partnership group), Love Camden Advisors (resident group), Camden Artist Network (creatives forum) to develop, oversee, monitor and evaluate the delivery of this strategy.



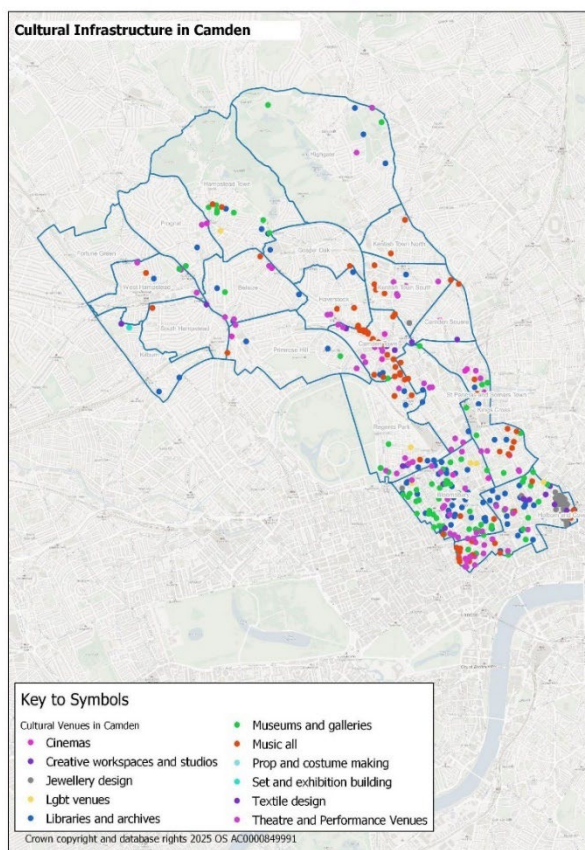
Capturing data and evidence will help us understand how the implementation of the cultural strategy meets its objectives and the impact and outcomes for residents, artists, creative practitioners, creative industries and the cultural sector.



Section 2 - Background and context

Camden is a large historic borough that begins in the bustle of Covent Garden and ends on airy Hampstead Heath and Highgate. It covers 8.4 square miles in the heart of London and has six town centres: Camden Town, Finchley Road/Swiss Cottage, Hampstead, Kentish Town, Kilburn and West Hampstead, as well as many neighbourhoods, cultural venues, parks/open spaces, commercial and business areas. Each of these centres has its own identity.

Camden is a diverse and international borough with its artists, cultural organisations and creative industries making it a great place to live, grow up, study, work, and visit. The borough's population of 274,000 inhabitants is ethnically diverse, with over 140 languages and dialects spoken daily. In 2021¹, 40.5% of residents were from Asian, Black and other ethnic/cultural groups. A further 24.1% were non-British white residents, including those from other European countries and the rest of the world. The largest communities with a distinctive cultural identity are Arab, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian and Somali.



Camden is a relatively young borough, with its large population of students and young people living in the area: 43% of residents are aged under 30, with the median age of 37.2 years. 15.2% have a long-term condition or disability. Camden also has a diverse LGBTQIA+ community, with 17% identifying as LGBTQIA+, higher than the national average of 14%.

Camden's distinctive mix of cultural institutions and vibrant street culture has nurtured and exported some of the UK's most influential artists and cultural brands. These institutions play a vital role in shaping the borough's identity, fostering a strong sense of place and belonging. They not only offer rich artistic experiences for residents but also act as incubators for creative expression and cultural exchange, attracting visitors from

across the region, the UK, and internationally. Thanks to its iconic landmarks and buildings, Camden is also the fourth most popular filming location in London.

¹ Source; Census 2021.

Camden plays a pivotal role within the local, regional and national cultural ecosystem, actively supporting the growth and sustainability of the sector through strategic collaboration and leadership. The borough is home to the sixth highest Evening and Night-Time Economy (ENTE)² in the UK and has one of the country's most vibrant cultural economies. Cultural and creative industries contribute 18.8% of Camden's Gross Value Added (GVA)³ - well above the national average of 6.9% highlighting the sector's central role in local economic performance.

Camden benefits from a concentration of nationally recognised institutions, including 31 Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (as of 2025) and four Department for Culture, Media and Sport-sponsored organisations. As part of a broader commitment to nurturing creative industries, Camden continues to support infrastructure development, such as the proposed film and creative hub in Kentish Town.

Evidence and rationale

Camden's Cultural and Creative Sector: A Vital Force for Growth and Inclusion

Camden boasts a well-established and dynamic cultural and creative ecosystem, comprising organisations, individual artists, and creative enterprises that contribute significantly to the borough's identity, vibrancy, and economic strength. With a rich cultural heritage and a reputation as a national hub of creativity and innovation, Camden plays a vital role in shaping London's wider cultural landscape.

Creative Business Concentration

As of 2024, Camden was home to **40,140 registered businesses** across all sectors⁴. Of these, **3,625 (9%)** operate within the arts, entertainment, and recreation sectors—a significantly higher proportion than both London (7.6%) and England (6.8%). This concentration highlights Camden's distinctive strength in fostering creative enterprise and cultural entrepreneurship.

Creative Employment

In 2023, Camden recorded **411,000 employee jobs**, with **12,000 (2.9%)** in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sectors⁵. This slightly exceeds the averages for both London (2.7%) and England (2.6%)⁶, underscoring Camden's strong creative employment base and alignment with the capital's broader cultural economy. London

² TBR Observatory (2014), Night-Mix League table – Urban LAs 2011, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Trends Business Research Ltd.

³ ONS data as in Culture and Place data Explorer, Camden, September 2024.

⁴ ONS UK Business, activity, size and location, 2024.

⁵ The employment data does not include self-employed or freelancers as a breakdown as this data is currently unavailable at the local level.

⁶

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157246/report.aspx?c1=2013265927&c2=2092957699#tabjobs>

hosts over a third of the UK's creative industries⁷, generating significant local economic activity through its venues, creative enterprises and one of the country's largest evening and night-time economies.

Economic Contribution

Creative and cultural industries are a key driver of Camden's economic growth. The borough's **gross value added (GVA)** stands at **£131,283.70 per resident**⁸, with the cultural and creative sectors contributing **£24,684.81 per resident** - accounting for **18.8% of total GVA**. This is more than **double the national average of 6.9%**, reinforcing Camden's role as one of the UK's leading cultural and creative economic hubs.

Building on this position of strength, Camden's overarching ambition is not only to sustain its vibrant cultural ecosystem, but to **create the conditions for inclusive growth**. We aim to expand our creative industries and workforce by enabling residents—especially those from underrepresented groups—to access training, develop skills, find employment, and benefit from targeted investment. This approach will help ensure that the opportunities generated by Camden's cultural economy are accessible to all.

Sector Challenges Since 2020

Despite Camden's strengths, the cultural, arts and heritage sectors have faced considerable disruption since 2020. Insights from our roundtable with cultural-sector partners highlight the following key challenges:

- **COVID-19 and shifting audience behaviours:** Output across the sector collapsed by approximately 60%, and around 70% of workers were furloughed⁹.
- **Brexit-related disruptions:** New visa barriers, customs delays and red tape have impeded international touring, exhibitions and artist mobility.
- **Economic pressures:** Rising inflation, increased energy costs and ongoing supply chain fragility continue to affect operational viability.
- **Funding competition:** Demand for public and trust funding has intensified, with many organisations facing rising operational costs and uncertainty.

Sector Resilience and Recovery (2019–2023)

The sector's resilience has varied significantly:

- **Decline:** The number of evening and night-time venues has decreased, reflecting sustained pressure on the nightlife and hospitality sector.

⁷ GLA Economics, London Creative Industries – Sector Deep Dive, October 2023.

⁸ ONS data as in Culture and Place Data Explorer, Camden, September 2024.

⁹ Centre for Cultural Value - Covid, Furlough and Creative Businesses, 2022.

- **Growth:** Museums, public galleries, music recording studios, theatres and rehearsal spaces have demonstrated moderate growth, highlighting adaptability and strategic recovery.

Table 1 - Change in cultural infrastructure by category, 2019 to 2023

Category	2019	2023	Category	2019	2023
Artists' workspaces	6	7	Making and manufacturing	2	4
Arts centres	1	1	Museums and public galleries	26	36
Cinemas	12	14	Music (office-based businesses)	11	7
Commercial galleries	33	28	Music recording studios	6	10
Community centres	110	110	Music rehearsal studios	10	8
Creatives workspace	1	9	Music venues (all)	61	36
Dance performance venues	27	25	Music venues (grassroots)	14	25
Dance rehearsal studio	28	26	Prop and costume making	1	1
Jewellery design	66	58	Set and exhibition building	1	2
Legal street art walls	1	1	Theatre rehearsal studio	22	29
LGBTQ+ nighttime venues	9	6	Theatres	24	27
Libraries	12	12			

Source: Greater London Authority (GLA) Datastore, Cultural Infrastructure 2023.

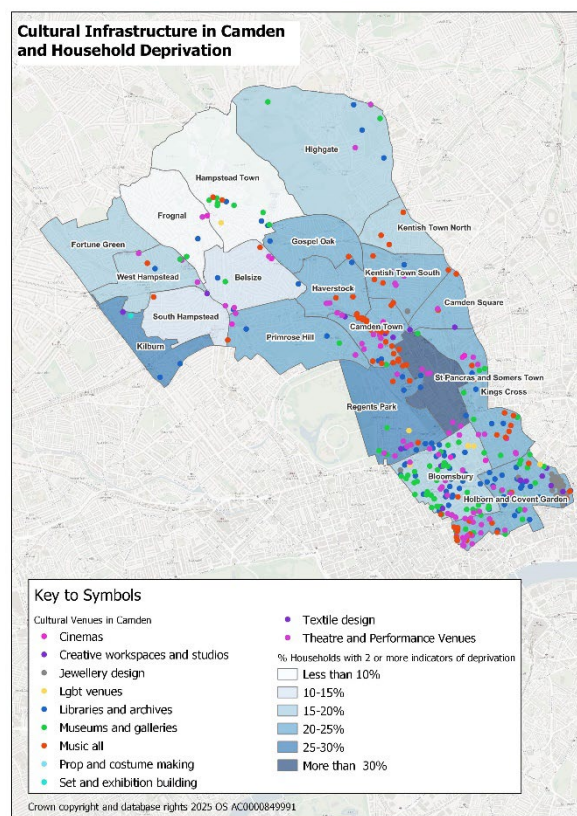
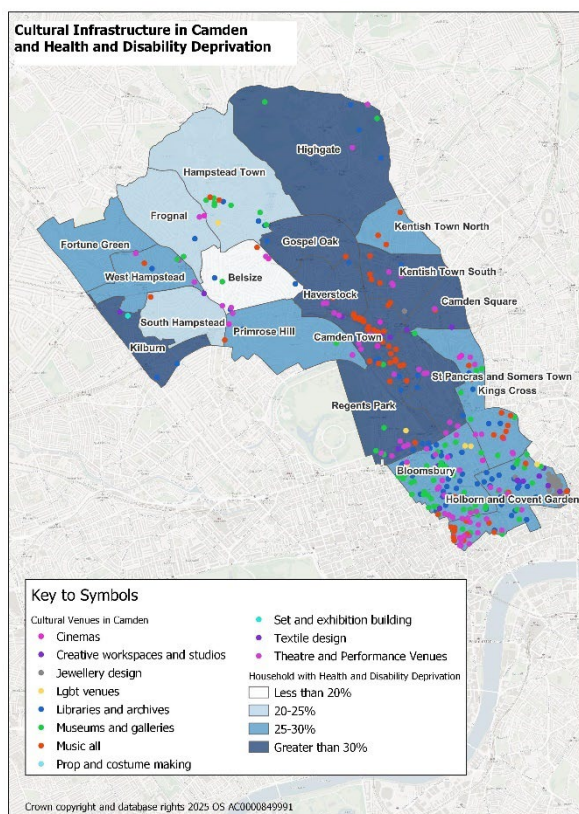
Increase
 Decrease
 No change

These trends underscore the urgent need for **targeted support** - both to protect Camden's remaining night-time economy and to further strengthen cultural sectors that have shown resilience.

Community Prosperity, Health and Wellbeing

About one in five households in Camden have an income below £30k annually¹⁰, underscoring the pronounced economic inequality amongst residents. This financial situation can restrict access to essential services, quality housing and cultural opportunities, impacting individual and family health and well-being.

¹⁰ Camden State of the Borough Report, 2025.



Poverty is a key determinant of poor outcomes in health and wellbeing and is linked to numerous health problems and unhealthy lifestyles. Residents in lower-income neighbourhoods experience poorer physical health compared to their counterparts across the borough¹¹ and London. Camden has the third highest diagnosed rate of serious mental health illness in London and is in the top 10 London boroughs for the proportion of working age people claiming out of work benefits due to mental health¹². Camden also ranks high for social isolation¹³.

Cultural Engagement and Access

According to data from The Audience Agency (estimate 2022), adults aged 16+ in Camden show **higher levels of cultural engagement** than the Greater London average. Based on the Target Group Index survey, estimated participation rates include:

- **Cinema** – 77% visited at least once; 18% attended monthly or more,
- **Theatre** – 52%,
- **Popular/rock concerts** – 47%,

¹¹ Camden Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

¹² Camden JSNA Executive Summary, Camden and Islington Public Health and Information Team, November 2019.

¹³ Camden State of the Borough Report, 2025.

- **Art galleries** – 44%,
- **Museums** – 30%,
- **Stately homes/castles** – 24%,
- **Flower shows/gardens** – 20%.

However, this engagement varies significantly across Camden. More affluent wards demonstrate consistently higher participation, while more deprived areas experience lower levels of cultural activity. These disparities highlight the need for targeted support and investment to improve access and participation in Camden’s most disadvantaged communities.

What our residents and partners told us

We have consulted widely on the development of this strategy and have carefully listened to the views and ambitions for culture from residents, the cultural sector, community and business groups. Through a series of events, we engaged with:

- Our team of resident Love Camden Advisors
- 200 residents and young people from diverse backgrounds and from across all areas of the borough
- 29 cultural partner organisations
- residents with disabilities through the Council’s Disability Oversight Panel
- Representatives from our Business Improvement Districts
- Representatives Camden Learning, further and higher education providers
- Officers from a wide range of Council services.

Their views and ideas have helped to shape the vision, themes, objectives and outcomes described in this strategy.

The things we heard most that helped shape the People and Place theme were:

- Arts and cultural programmes in localities and neighbourhoods where they live and bring communities together, address social isolation and contribute to individual and collective health and wellbeing,
- Programmes open to all communities, which celebrate identity, diversity and place,
- Affordable access to borough venues and programmes,
- Cultural spaces that are safe and inclusive for all communities,
- Support for residents to develop and manage their own community-led festivals, events and programmes.

The things we heard that brought the focus to the Learning and Skills theme were:

- Opportunities for all, both within and beyond the school/institution environment, for learning, personal development and career change/progression,
- More opportunities for residents to access training, work experience and apprenticeships,

- Opportunities to gain transferrable skills through volunteering programmes and other similar initiatives,
- Increased opportunities for artists to develop their skills and ways of working with and in communities,
- Strong interest in training creative health facilitators to build capacity to deliver creative health programmes,
- Networking and sharing good practice to increase borough-wide capacity.

The things we heard that brought the focus to the Grow and Thrive theme were:

- More affordable work and rehearsal spaces and studios for artists, creatives and small scale/start-up companies,
- More opportunities for the arts and cultural sector to meet, collaborate and support each other to respond to, manage or mitigate the challenges of the time that the sector faces,
- Targeted support to help build sector resilience for grassroots arts and cultural organisations, including audience development, marketing and promotion,
- Support to enable the arts and cultural sector to grow economically and thrive creatively.

Strategy and policy perspectives

Our strong and sustained leadership is demonstrated through the establishment of the dedicated Culture Service embedding cultural development and delivery at the heart of the borough's strategic priorities. Building on the delivery and success of council led cultural programme, community and sector led cultural programmes, our approach to the delivery of this strategy will directly contribute to the ambitions of We Make Camden, in particular delivering against the following priorities:

- Strengthening the local economy by creating the conditions for the arts and cultural sector to be resilient, sustainable and enable sector-wide growth and creating employment,
- Unlocking skills development and leadership opportunities, through the provision of internships, placements, mentoring, work experience and other learning and training opportunities across Camden's creative economy for students, graduates and residents from underrepresented backgrounds,
- Creating the conditions for the next generation of creatives to thrive, protecting our cultural heritage and ensuring development, capacity and long-term sustainability of the sector,
- Building stronger and more connected communities through inclusive and accessible creative health cultural experiences on our estates and in neighbourhoods and celebrating our diverse communities in our open public spaces.

In a national context where local authorities remain the largest public funders of culture, Camden's proactive approach to cultural development—particularly through

unlocking additional investment via Section 106, as well as strategic and local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds—positions us as a leader in driving cultural engagement, resilience and growth.

Camden's first cultural strategy proudly aligns with the ambitions of Arts Council England's *Let's Create* strategy, which envisions a future where everyone in England can access high-quality cultural experiences within their local area. It supports the growth of the professional cultural sector, opens pathways for those pursuing careers in the creative and cultural industries, and recognises the vital role of the voluntary sector in working alongside residents and cultural professionals to shape more inclusive, accessible and high-quality cultural provision in local communities.

Our cultural strategy also aligns with the London Cultural Strategy and London Growth Plan. The cultural strategy for London focuses on increasing access to culture for all Londoners, supporting the creative industries and promoting the city as a global cultural hub. Recognising the significant impact culture can have on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, the Greater London Authority - through its health inequalities strategy and cultural policy - has introduced a plan to establish London as a Creative Health City. This envisions a metropolis where cultural activities - such as music, dance, visual arts, and storytelling - are embedded into everyday life and public health systems. This approach involves integrating creative practices into healthcare settings, community spaces, and public health policies to promote well-being and address health disparities. London's Growth Plan incorporates culture and the creative industries as key drivers of productivity, economic growth and global appeal. Here is how Camden Cultural Strategy aligns and contributes:

- Camden Town's music hub and the proposed plans for a film quarter in Kentish Town are helping to create a dynamic cluster of likeminded creative businesses, nurturing innovation, collaboration and sector growth,
- Camden's established cultural institutions and creative industry businesses generate an estimated gross turnover of between £950 million and £1.2 billion, contributing significantly to London's global cultural and creative industries ecology,
- Our aim to focus on internships, placements, mentoring, work experience and training opportunities within Camden's creative economy supports the development of an inclusive and diverse talent pipeline,
- Camden's existing cultural offer, along with ambitious plans for expansion, makes a major contribution to London's experience economy—enriching the lives of both residents and visitors,
- Camden's Evening and Night-Time Economy (ENTE) is significant to Camden, to London and internationally – with an annual turnover of £955.9m, making a valuable contribution to London's efforts to foster a thriving, sustainable night-time economy.

A Vision for Inclusive Cultural Growth

Our key focus is to increase participation in culture for all residents, regardless of where they live. We want everyone in Camden to access cultural opportunities—both in their own neighbourhoods and at the borough’s iconic venues. This includes supporting personal development, building skills and ensuring residents benefit from the economic value culture generates. These priorities are embedded in both our cultural strategy and action plan.

Camden’s cultural and creative sectors are not only central to the borough’s economic success, but also vital to its community identity and social fabric. By building on our strengths, supporting resilience, and addressing inequalities in cultural access, we can ensure Camden remains a beacon of creativity, innovation and inclusion. The borough is well-positioned to lead in growing a creative economy that benefits all residents.

Camden has significant locational advantages at the heart of a global city, hosting many of the UK’s largest cultural and creative institutions. According to data from The Audience Agency (2022), adults aged 16+ in Camden demonstrate higher levels of cultural engagement than the Greater London average - although this varies significantly across the borough.

Despite this, many residents face poverty, inequality, and hardship. More affluent wards consistently report higher cultural participation, while more deprived areas see lower levels of activity. Research shows that children growing up in poverty within wealthy areas often experience worse outcomes than those in more uniformly deprived areas - highlighting that inequality, not just poverty, must be addressed. These disparities reinforce the need for targeted support to improve access and participation in Camden’s most disadvantaged communities.

Investing in culture is increasingly essential to addressing the social, economic, and environmental challenges of our time.

Section 3 – Strategic Action Plan

Implementation of the strategy will be rolled out over the next five years (2026-31). The actions will be implemented based on partnership working, learnings from the monitoring and evaluation process and availability of funding.

People and Place

Objective	Action	By whom
Create cultural experiences that bring new life to places and enable the development of creative neighbourhoods across the borough	Work in partnership with residents, artists, communities and organisations to create and establish a “Neighbourhood of Culture” in Kilburn.	Culture Service One Kilburn Kingsgate Project Kiln Theatre Kilburn Library SHAK Resident groups
	Deliver an arts and culture programme as part of the Camden High Street Pedestrianisation Project. The experiential culture programme will be used as a model for the potential development of other cultural quarters.	Culture Service Regeneration Team Transport Strategy Team
	Develop a new borough-wide Camden Festival that brings the borough together through arts and cultural programmes, attracting visitors to new places and inspiring residents to participate and explore their borough.	Culture Service Partners
	Diversity in the Public Realm – Build on Camden’s Diversity in the Public Realm Strategy by continuing to ensure the public realm reflects and celebrates the diversity of Camden’s communities.	Culture Service Equalities Team

Create the environment for creative and healthy neighbourhoods to thrive	Artists-in-Healthy Neighbourhoods programme – Pilot a new programme where local artists from diverse backgrounds are placed in neighbourhoods to work with residents to improve their health and wellbeing while reducing loneliness and isolation.	Culture Service Public Health Partners
	Work with partners to facilitate a social buddying network which helps those who are facing isolation to connect with others to attend arts and cultural programmes.	Culture Service Partners
Ensure culture is accessible, affordable, available and inviting to all	Continue to deliver the free to access Love Camden arts and cultural programme including The Pitt Lecture, The Windrush Homecoming, Queer Market at Pride and Inverness Street Bloc Party, bringing free culture and art to communities.	Culture Service
	Work with partners to develop a key to Camden Culture Pass, whereby Camden resident will be offered a pass to attend Camden's libraries, museums, cultural and arts venues at discounted rates or for free.	Culture Service Partners
	Safe and inclusive cultural spaces – Ensure Camden's venues are safe, welcoming and inclusive for all, including the diverse communities, LGBTQ+, people with visible and invisible disabilities and women and girls.	Culture Service Inclusive Economy Team Partners
	Improve and increase communication about arts and cultural programmes using the Love Camden	Culture Service Communications Team Library Service

	Website listings, associated social media and increase and distribute printed publicity material.	
	Improve Cultural Data Mapping – Create a comprehensive map that 1. will share and connect local cultural activity and 2. illustrate participation statistics.	Insights, Learning and Impact Team Culture Service Partners
Empower residents to shape their own environment and encourage a sense of belonging and connectedness through culture	Produce - and keep updated - a Camden Arts and Events Toolkit to help citizens and communities organise their own arts and cultural events. The toolkit will help upskill by offering logistical know-how while promoting local suppliers.	Culture Service
Support communities to develop and share heritage to reveal a shared story and history of the borough and its communities	Initiate a partnership co-created programme in neighbourhoods to reveal community heritage.	Culture Service Partners Community organisations

Learning and Skills

Objective	Action	By whom
Provide internships, placements, mentoring, work experience, other learning and training opportunities, and develop pathways in Camden's creative economy for students, graduates and residents from diverse backgrounds.	<p>Develop a directory of Creative Learning Opportunities with cultural and community organisations for people of all ages looking to develop their skills, try something fun or improve their health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Compile a list of Camden's creative resources and facilities, such as recording studios, which are available for school group project work and pupil visits.</p>	Culture Service Camden Learning/Schools Apprenticeship Team Community Organisations Cultural organisations

	Make available more cultural education and work experience opportunities through partnerships between Camden Learning, Camden STEAM, Good Work Camden and local cultural organisations.	Culture Service Camden Learning/Schools Camden STEAM Good Work Camden Team Community Organisations Cultural organisations
	Partner with the Camden Film Office to secure training and placements in the film industry.	Camden Service The Camden Film Office
	Promote the Camden Schools Biennale to ensure that every child has equitable access to the Schools Biennale cultural programme.	Culture Service Camden Learning/Schools Central Saint Martin/University College London Cultural organisations
	Support cultural organisations in their development and delivery of their education programmes for children and young people, including Continuing Professional Development opportunity for schoolteachers.	Culture Service Camden Learning/Schools
	Broaden and increase the cultural offer within Camden's school holidays programme (HAF) through the development of partnerships between Young Camden Foundation, local cultural organisations, and community activity providers.	Culture Service HAF Team Young Camden Foundation Cultural organisations Community organisations
Encourage career-development opportunities for residents	Encourage and promote employment opportunities in the cultural sector to residents by connecting them to Job Hubs.	Culture Service Good Work Camden Team Partners

especially those from under-represented groups.	Work with the Councils employability team and partners to develop employment routes into the cultural sector for people with disabilities.	Good Work Camden Team Culture Service Partners
Develop and strengthen cultural and creative sector networks, facilitating the provision of learning and development	Work with Knowledge Quarter partners to develop skills and capacity in the cultural sector to navigate and embrace evolving digital technology such as Artificial Intelligence.	Culture Service Partners Knowledge Quarter
Relationship building, connect, learn and share	Shape cultural development across the borough, share ideas and enable collaboration. Continue to support Love Camden Advisors, Camden Artist Network, Cultural Camden and the formation of other networks as appropriate to the cultural and creative needs of the borough as they are identified.	Culture Service Love Camden Advisors Camden Artists Network Cultural Camden Partners
	Develop Love Camden website to provide an easy-to-find guide to the cultural offer boroughwide and in local areas and neighbourhoods.	Culture Service Communications Team Partners
Training for creative practitioners to develop skills to enable them to deliver Creative Health projects and programmes.	Work with partner organisations to deliver bespoke training programmes for artists and creative practitioners.	Creative Health Camden Culture Service Camden Public Health Service North Central London Creative Health network

Grow and Thrive

Objective	Action	By whom
Create the conditions for the arts and cultural sector to be resilient, sustainable and enable sector-wide growth.	Cultural organisations, artists, residents and the Council will meet regularly at roundtables and a biennial summit to enable collaboration and partnerships to share and test entrepreneurial approaches to business development.	Culture Service Partners Residents
	The cultural sector will be supported to enable them to collaborate and work together to bid for resources, funds and investment and to reduce cross-sector competition.	Culture Service Partners
	Collaborate with partners to increase day and nighttime experiences in town centres to engage greater local and visitor audiences	Culture Service Partners Residents
	Audit existing audience profiles across borough venues, events and festivals to create an overarching Audience Development Plan for the borough	Insights, Learning and Impact Team Culture Service Partners
	Secure creative workspaces for the long term, ensuring affordable studios are available and replacing lost studio space by securing new spaces in parts of the borough where there is a lower level of provision.	Culture Service Community Investment Programme Service Partners

	Unlock affordable space that is accessible during the day, evening and night-time to support artists, creatives and makers to establish, develop and sustain their creative practice	Regeneration Team Culture Service Property Team Property owners/developers
	Establish baseline data – scope to be agreed	Culture Service Partners
	Support growth in the ‘Experience Economy’ by attracting activations and events across the borough through Love Camden programmes and other initiatives.	Culture Service (Events) Communication Team Partners/businesses
Centre culture in place shaping to support the development and growth of creative neighbourhoods.	Ensure that culture investments remain a priority for Community Investment Levy (CIL) and Section 106 funds and that culture is included as a key requirement of Camden’s social value.	Culture Service Planning Service Regeneration and Inclusive Economy teams Communications Team Partners
	Secure creative workspaces for the long term, ensuring affordable studios are available and replacing lost studio space by securing new spaces in parts of the borough where there is a lower level of provision.	Regeneration Team Planning Service Culture Service Property Team Property owners/developers
Encourage the protection and growth of creative quarters and neighbourhoods.	Establish cross sector partnerships to promote and develop creative quarters and neighbourhoods.	Culture Service Neighbourhood Team Communications
	Promote benefits to secure investment and funding.	Culture Service Communications

	Support the growth of the creative industries through the development of the proposed Camden Film Quarter.	Culture Service Planning Service Regeneration Service Place-shaping Service Yoo Capital
	Position new opportunities in areas where there is currently a lower level of cultural provision.	Culture Service Partners Area forums e.g. One Kilburn
	Support growth in the 'Experience Economy' by attracting activations and events across the borough through Love Camden programmes and other initiatives.	Culture Service BID teams Partners
Unlock affordable space that is accessible during the day, evening and night-time to support artists, creatives and makers to establish, develop and sustain their creative practice.	Collaborate with developers and other property owners to unlock meanwhile space.	Culture service Regeneration Planning
	Establish working relationships with development and regeneration colleagues and developers to scope opportunities for grow-on space to provide permanent workspace solutions.	Culture service Regeneration Planning
	Position opportunities in areas where there is currently a lower level of cultural provision.	Culture Service Partner Area forums

