



Sheffield



Culture Strategy for 2035

Foreword



I am incredibly proud to introduce our new Culture Strategy, a bold and forward-thinking vision that reflects the rich, dynamic and ever-evolving cultural life of our city. I believe that the Arts have the power to drive positive social and economic impacts, and this strategy is the next step in our journey.

Sheffield's identity is deeply intertwined with creativity, innovation and community spirit. From our industrial heritage to a world-renowned music and arts scene and the many vibrant festivals that happen here, culture has always been at the heart of what makes Sheffield special. It brings people together and creates a sense of belonging.

This Strategy represents our collective ambition to harness the power of culture to enrich the lives of everyone who calls Sheffield home. We will embrace the opportunities that culture provides - not only as a source of enjoyment and inspiration but also as a driver of community cohesion, economic prosperity, and health and well-being. In Sheffield, we believe that culture is for everyone, and this strategy is a commitment to ensuring that culture continues to be inclusive, diverse, and

accessible, no matter where you live in the city or what your background is.

The Culture Strategy has been co-created with a wide range of people and organisations. Freelance artists, our major institutions, local community groups, and commercial businesses have helped shape its ambitions. The priorities reflect the diverse voices and creative energy that make Sheffield unique, some of the challenges we face, but most of all the immense potential of this city to do more.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this work. Your passion, ideas, and commitment have been invaluable, and together we will ensure that Sheffield builds on what we have and remains a city where culture flourishes, where creativity is celebrated, and where everyone can engage with the arts in meaningful and transformative ways.

Sheffield's future is bright, and together we can create a city where culture is at the heart of everything we do.



**Councillor Martin Smith,
Chair of the Economic
Development and Skills
Policy Committee**

Vision

Sheffield's creative, cultural, and community life reflect its identity, history, and stories. It is bold, entrepreneurial, and surprising.

This Culture Strategy will Ignite, Accelerate, and Elevate cultural potential in Sheffield, ensuring the foundations for inclusive growth and impact are in place, that young people and talent development is key to the future, and that everyone hears about our shared ambition and achievements.

This is a moment of opportunity for Sheffield, with all parts of the sector agreed on the need to do things differently. Our culture strategy will support and guide the sector to grow within this city-wide transformation, delivering on the remarkable potential of this city for years to come.

There is a palpable energy in the city, with real confidence and excitement for the future. The next few years will see this energy turn into action.

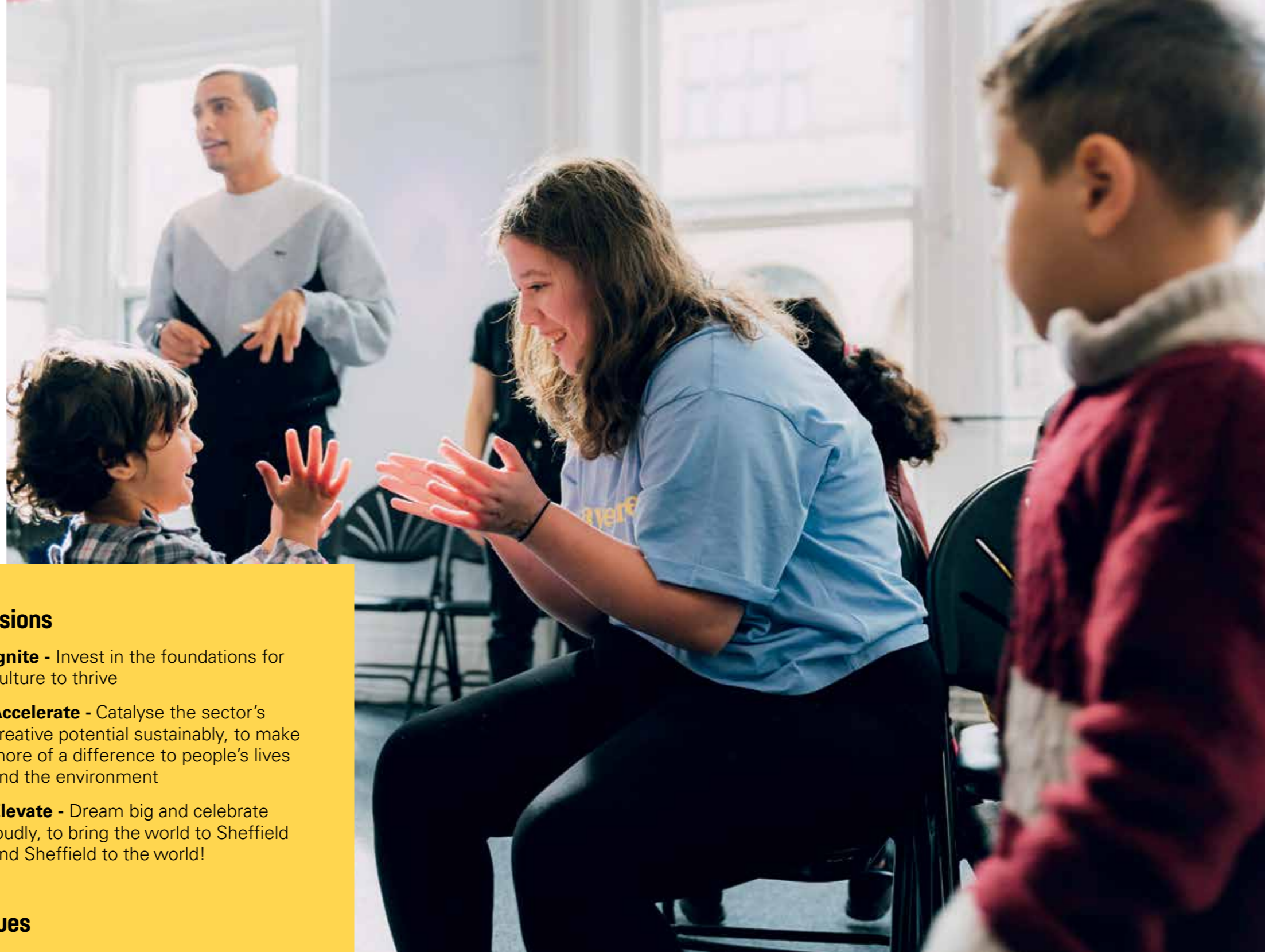
We are ready...

Missions

- 1. Ignite** - Invest in the foundations for culture to thrive
- 2. Accelerate** - Catalyse the sector's creative potential sustainably, to make more of a difference to people's lives and the environment
- 3. Elevate** - Dream big and celebrate loudly, to bring the world to Sheffield and Sheffield to the world!

Values

1. Inclusive and Welcoming
2. Collaborative and Mentoring
3. Open, Transparent, and Accountable



Culture and creativity in our DNA

Sheffield is an independent city rooted in radical change, making and innovation, and creative honesty. Remarkable music and art reflect often-complex histories, grit and determination, and the talents of many creative and diverse communities. International and proudly Northern, Sheffield is the first City of Sanctuary, nurturing people who make a home here and welcoming those who visit.



Sheffield is the heart of South Yorkshire, a powerhouse of the North, and a place where invention has always been present in different ways. From the Steel City and its role in the Industrial Revolution, to Warp Records or the nation's first videogame museum, the city has always innovated and made new things. It is the Home of Football and Snooker, the Outdoor City and the UK's greenest. Sheffield remains the City of Makers. Entire creative supply chains exist here, building the nation's theatre sets and musical instruments, alongside new forms of making at the forefront of digital art and technology.

Sheffield's cultural sector and output is known for having a strongly independent, grass-roots spirit. The ecosystem is cross-art form and organic – work doesn't sit in traditional siloes, instead blurring boundaries and encouraging new thinking and ideas. This spirit echoes the city's working-class roots and its role in social change and radical activism, from prominence in the abolition of slavery to contemporary advocacy for worker, migrant, and LGBTQI+ communities.

Smaller organisations like Welcoming Cultures and Andro & Eve work alongside larger cultural and public institutions of national and international profile, creating a mix with unique flavour. **Creativity is drawn from the everyday lives**

of residents with global roots and influences. Art made here is of Sheffield but connects to the world, from the public art on the streets to the critically acclaimed Standing at the Sky's Edge, the Sheffield Theatres production that transferred to the West End in 2024 and is set and inspired by the city's iconic Park Hill Estate. Roots Mbili Theatre recently co-produced Lines with Sheffield Theatres and the US-based Remote Theater Project. The work explores justice, resistance, and history in Sheffield, Uganda, and Palestine, and transferred to New York in 2024, part of the city's growing international profile.

Culture and Heritage are closely interconnected. Many of Sheffield's historic buildings are in use for creative activities, from education centres to gig venues and galleries, and there are many more assets that can be re-imagined soon. The city's nationally significant museum collections tell the story of Sheffield's past and present. Residents live and breathe their traditions and intangible heritage, and this must be shared, recognised, and celebrated, through the work of research groups and the city's cultural institutions among others.

Music is synonymous with Sheffield. Arctic Monkeys, Bring Me The Horizon, Def Leppard, Pulp and The Human League are household names, while Aziza Jayé and TeeWhy have emerged through artist

Culture and art is embedded into the city's neighbourhoods



development routes such as Pattern + Push and Slambarz. A thriving electronic and live music scene has created countless DJs, bands and club spaces, from Winston Hazel, ToddlaT and K.O.G and the Zongo Brigade to The Limit, Gatecrasher and Hope Works. The Halle Orchestra is resident here, programming the International Concert Series at City Hall, while Music in the Round's annual Chamber Music Festival MayFest turned 40 years old in 2024. Folk music, Morris dancing, jazz and cabaret reflect eclectic tastes and historic traditions. The city brings together professional and community-led culture, facilitating experimentation and a deep sense of place.

Alongside well-known institutions like Sheffield Theatres, the Millennium Gallery, Graves Gallery and Central Library, Site Gallery, the Leadmill, and Weston Park Museum, the city centre is alive with independent offers like SADACCA, Utopia Theatre, Arts Catalyst's venue Soft Ground, Sidney + Matilda, and Gut Level.

Sheffield's festival scene never stands still - celebrating sanctuary and world cultures at Migration Matters Festival, ideas, literature and politics at the Festival of Debate, Festival of the Mind, and Off The Shelf, and countless music festivals from No Bounds to Tramlines.

Visual artists and craftspeople make and exhibit in the city's galleries, studios, and streets. Hundreds of artists, printmakers, digital creators, and artisans are based or educated here, from Phlegm to Mandy Payne to Ashley Holmes to Turner Prize-nominated

Rosalind Nashashibi. Many of these artists have been nurtured in and found homes with organisations like Yorkshire Artspace, Sheffield Museums, Site Gallery, CADS and Arts Catalyst.

The city continues to make important contributions to British cinema. It is home to Showroom Cinema, one of the largest independent cinemas in Europe, as well as Warp Films, renowned for their innovative and boundary-pushing content. Sheffield DocFest is a leading international documentary festival, attracting filmmakers and audiences from around the world. A strong network of local filmmakers are supported by organisations like Sheffield Film and Media Academy and regional Screen Yorkshire initiatives.

Creativity spills across sectors, with designers and tech companies, musicians and gamers, marketing agencies and visual artists collaborating to build new things and try new approaches to solving problems. **Digital work cuts across the creative economy,** with clusters of activity in digital media, animation, visual effects, film and video production, graphic design, and immersive art. The city has been home to a strong gaming industry ever since Gremlin Graphics was established in the 1980s. Today, the industry includes Sumo Digital (1,100+ staff across 16 studios), Bone Loaf, Distinctive Games, and Steel City Interactive.

The city is a national hub for creative education and talent. While nationally arts budgets and curricula are under pressure,

Sheffield is investing in the future. Whether through Harmony Works due to open in Castlegate in 2025, via interdisciplinary study and research at the University of Sheffield's Digital Humanities Institute or Sheffield Hallam's new Creative Industries Institute, or through the fantastic work of Create Sheffield or Sheffield College – young creatives can find their path here.

Culture and art is embedded into the city's neighbourhoods – often physically within its striking built heritage. People have always created and taken part in culture wherever they live in Sheffield, often collaborating with artists, and supported by organisations embedded in their communities, such as RivelinCo, Greentop Community Circus, A Mind Apart, Manor and Castle Development Trust, and Burton Street Foundation.

The city's activity in creative health and wellbeing is growing and increasingly joined up. It is grounded in years of activity led by community arts organisations and health institutions serving people's needs where they

live. Sheffield Teaching Hospitals, for example, have led the way on Creative Health approaches with their patients for many years. A Culture and Health Symposium in 2022 organised by Sheffield Museums and the local authority saw activity accelerate - Creative Health Boards were set up, and strong community level creative health work, such as by Art for Wellness CIC or ArtWorks has supported more residents to better health outcomes as a result.

Culture happens in parks and open spaces all over the city, from Manor to Hillsborough. Lantern festivals have been part of Sharrow and Parkwood Springs life for years, and local social clubs from Crookes to Neepsend are all part of a distinctive cultural make-up. Sheffield's pubs, libraries, churches, mosques, and community hubs are permeated with art and music of an increasingly diverse variety.

There are countless things that make this city's creative scene unique, and now is time for the city to build, connect, and support the sector to grow its positive impact and deliver even more.

Purpose of the strategy

This strategy provides a road map for future development of the creative and cultural sectors in Sheffield, as part of an ambitious Growth Plan that will deliver on our co-created City Goals.



The strategy will directly support our growth mission to celebrate and grow a vibrant, cultural, and creative city, encourage investment, better collaborate, and ensure equal access to opportunity.

This strategy has been developed with and for the creative sector, as well as those working with creativity in communities, businesses, and institutions. It describes a clear set of priorities, values, and actions for the future.

The work is especially relevant to:

- Creative sector institutions, artists and freelancers, including community organisations and groups.
- Current and potential partners and funders of the sector, including education providers, national bodies, the business community, and those working in adjacent sectors.

- Audiences in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, the UK, and internationally.

The strategy is presented across three documents with different purposes:

- This core strategy document
- Engagement Report – paper summarising our co-creative process, including who was involved, how we worked with these groups, and the key messages shared with us.
- Cultural Audit- background research and economic analysis of the cultural and creative sectors in Sheffield and the region.

Audiences

We have chosen a deliberately broad definition of culture and its audiences, including all activities that connect with creativity, heritage, or culture in some way in their work.

You might be a community organisation working with vulnerable people in your neighbourhood, who finds that people connect and are empowered by the arts or craft activities in your sessions.

You could be an individual artist or creative freelancer who works in graphic design, marketing, or architecture.

Perhaps you work in healthcare, video game development, advertising, or engineering in the city, and can see overlap between what

you do and the creative world. You might be a student at one of the city's universities or colleges, studying a creative course or with an interest in culture and the arts.

Or perhaps you are a Sheffield resident who goes to the theatre, cinema, gigs or museums, enjoys food with your family and friends, or paints or writes in your spare time. Culture to you might mean identity, family and friends, or give you a sense of belonging or community.

We know culture overlaps with things like heritage and sport - our work recognises and values these connections, and increased value that creativity across sectors like this can generate.

This strategy is for everyone in Sheffield who has a connection to culture and creativity.

The value of culture

Economic

Nationally, the creative industries contribute more than £100bn of direct economic activity per year - almost 6% of the entire UK economy - greater than human health, and similar to finance and insurance.

They remain some of the fastest growing industries nationally and recovered after the COVID-19 pandemic more quickly than other sectors - growth in the creative industries was 6.9% in the year to September 2022, compared with just 1.2% across the economy¹.

Investment in the creative sector also has broader impact - for every £1 spent in museums, galleries, and libraries across the UK, for example, their supply chain supports a further £4.40 in the wider economy².

Sheffield is home to more than 2,000 cultural and creative businesses, providing around 9,000 jobs and generating almost £1bn of economic impact annually. This forms part of a wider regional economy in South Yorkshire of around 4,000 businesses employing and supporting more than 31,000 jobs and freelancers. Sheffield is central hub for talent and output in South Yorkshire, with ample opportunity for expansion under favourable conditions.

As well as those employed, around 16,000 creative and cultural freelancers live and work in the city. This comprises about 9% of the city's workforce - higher than the same proportion nationally.

Although the city currently has fewer jobs in the creative industries compared to cities like Leeds and Newcastle, Sheffield has seen impressive growth. Between 2017 and 2021, turnover in the creative industries grew by 28% and employment by 18%, outpacing cities like Bristol and Manchester. This growth was driven by strengths in music, performing and visual arts, publishing (notably due to Hachette opening an office in 2021), digital technology, and architecture.

Our culture sector consists mainly of small organisations, many with a big impact. Our



DIY culture gives our creative outputs an edge and an independence that is unique to Sheffield, but it also limits their growth and impact on local job markets - this strategy must support smaller organisations as well as larger institutions to scale.

Cultural events contribute significantly to Sheffield's economy through direct and indirect spending, job creation, and tourism. Major events generate over £25 million per annum, including Sheffield DocFest (£1.8 million in 2023), Tramlines Festival (£3.8 million in 2019), and Off the Shelf (£500,000). Additionally, 11,500 conferences brought 590,000 business visitors, with a combined spending of £74.5 million.

Tourism Sheffield estimated that cultural tourism specifically contributed approximately

£28 million in 2019, while total visitor spending in 2022 reaching £1.35 billion. These events and tourism activities not only boost local businesses but also enhance Sheffield's reputation, attracting further investment and supporting economic growth.

The creative industries have significant spillover effects into other related industries, such as design, digital and innovation, and advertising and promotion - all areas where Sheffield has existing strengths. Creative industries are at the forefront of leveraging digital technologies. They are key players in the increasingly digital world economy, driving adoption and innovation in areas such as AI and immersive technologies.

¹ House of Lords Library, 2022, Arts and creative industries: The case for a strategy

² Developing Economic Insight into the Creative Industries, 2021, Oxford Economics

Social, Health and Wellbeing

Culture and creativity have enormous impact on health and wellbeing, helping participants and audiences be happier, less lonely, and physically and mentally well. It can encourage people to connect with their neighbourhoods, get active and try new things, meet friends or collaborators, or to become artists and creatives themselves.

AgeUK state that creative and cultural activities are the most important factor in wellbeing in older age³. Involvement in the arts is "crucial to imagination, self-expression, and creativity in young people" too, according to Arts Council England. UNESCO recognise the power of culture to transform places and the lives of people - its Education 2030 agenda, working towards its Sustainable Development Goals, includes Culture at its centre:

"Placing culture at the heart of development policies constitutes an essential investment in the world's future and a pre-condition to successful globalization processes that take into account the principle of cultural diversity."

Culture is critical to welcoming and safe cities. It is culture that binds people into more cohesive communities, and can unite neighbours, friends and families around a shared identity or place. Creativity can help us better understand one another, allow us to express what is important to us, explore our heritage, and provide access to new ideas or perspectives on familiar subjects.

Culture is fundamental to thriving high streets, helps make places attractive to live in, and is a significant motivating factor for tourists to visit a place.

In short, culture brings us together, brings us joy, and helps us to live healthier, happier lives.

³ AgeUK, 2018, Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life

⁴ UNESCO, 2023, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Sheffield stands ready

There is a palpable energy in the city, with real confidence and excitement for the future. The next few years will see this energy turn into action.

In 2023, the city's leaders held a conversation with residents about their needs and priorities, helping to shape the new City Goals - a platform for everyone to express what the city means to them, how they can live well in Sheffield, and encourage positive change. The first City Goal is for a Creative and Entrepreneurial Sheffield, demonstrating how culture is central to its story. The city will be a place "where we all have opportunities to invent, make, create, and build in ways that grow shared prosperity, create high-quality jobs, and enrich our communities and ourselves."

Culture is a key regional priority for South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA). Political devolution will increase opportunities in the city and region to drive change and investment directly, through the Sheffield Growth Plan and the City Goals.

In 2020, Sheffield Race Equality Commission highlighted ongoing racial disparities and racism in the city across education, crime, sport, culture, and business. The enquiry led to a city-wide commitment to empower under-represented communities, support diverse leadership, and celebrate Sheffield's vibrant cultures – themes that underpin this strategy directly.

The city recently developed a new Destination Management Plan, to run to 2028. This commits to accelerating the city's visitor economy, highlighting the

rich nature of its tourism and cultural offer, and growing its event offer. This will be developed into a Major Events Plan for the city shortly.

Sheffield is investing in its future in unprecedented ways, with culture at the heart of this rebirth. The £470m Heart of the City will deliver new homes, workspace, hospitality, and cultural space on a remarkable scale, including the recently opened Cambridge Street

Where we all have opportunities to invent, make, create, and build in ways that grow shared prosperity, create high-quality jobs, and enrich our communities and ourselves.



Collective – Europe's largest purpose-built food hall. £20m has recently been invested in Fargate and the High Street, creating new public realm, retail outlets and cultural spaces.

Harmony Works will bring together a broad range of partners, creating an innovative museum education space in Canada House as part of transforming Castlegate. This will also include a permanent home for S1 Artspace – transforming the Grade II listed former Yorkshire Bank Chambers into a new arts and cultural venue for the city. The Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre will shape the future of innovative manufacturing, creating 8,000 jobs in data analytics, AI, sustainable fuels, and digital technologies.

The city hosted the MOBO awards and MOBO Fringe in 2024, celebrating black music and culture across three days of events attended by thousands of people from across the UK and beyond. International operator ASM Global recently signed a new contract to run the Utilita Arena and Sheffield City Hall, a prelude to further investment in these buildings.

Urban Splash have agreed a lease for the Coles Building and are developing plans for its creative reuse to further energise Barker's Pool and the Heart of the City.

This transformation is consistently grounded in the creative industries and sets a blueprint for more culture and heritage-led regeneration to follow. Existing organisations are central to this and willing to do more to collaborate, grow, invest, and create in new ways. To do this, creatives must have access to the premises, investment, networks, and support they need, and feel part of equitable leadership structures that allow them to contribute to change.

This is a moment of opportunity, with all parts of the sector agreed on the need to do things differently. Our culture strategy will support and guide the sector to grow within this city-wide transformation, delivering on the remarkable potential of this city for years to come.

We are ready ...

Creative missions

Sheffield's creative, cultural, and community life reflect its identity, history, and stories. It is bold, entrepreneurial, and surprising.

We know just how much potential there is here, grounded in the remarkable things already happening. Building on the city's strengths, the needs of the sector and residents, and the opportunities ahead, this strategy is built on three Creative Missions. These Missions strive for a sustainable and equitable sector with compassion at its heart.

The Missions will Ignite, Accelerate, and Elevate cultural potential in Sheffield, ensuring the foundations for inclusive growth and impact are in place, that young people and talent development is key to the future, and that everyone hears about our shared ambition and achievements.



1. Ignite

Invest in the foundations for culture to thrive

- We will build an equitable, transparent, collective leadership structure where everyone who wishes can help to drive change and play a part in how the sector is run.

Creative organisations and individuals will have the opportunity access the spaces, skillsets, networks and tools they need to grow and thrive. The cultural ecosystem will be better connected and collaborative.

- We will establish new funding mechanisms through public, private, and co-investment to bring more resource into the sector.
- Our city and sector welcomes everybody, and everyone can grow and shine here. We will be inclusive, anti-racist, and fight prejudice of all kinds, acknowledging, protecting, and sharing our rich cultural heritage in a way that is accessible to all.

2. Accelerate

Catalyse the sector's creative potential sustainably, to make more of a difference to people's lives and the environment

- Our creative economy will be larger, providing more jobs, investment, reach, and profile. This growth will take place across the ecosystem, from the visual art to digital innovation, and community initiatives to our largest institutions.
- All young people and future talent will have broad access to clear pathways to pursue creative hobbies, passions, and careers, in schools, higher education, and in early and mid-career development.
- Growth will have positive social, environmental, and economic impacts across the city, through expanded Creative Health initiatives, equitable investment and partnership, and assertive responses to the climate emergency.

3. Elevate

Dream big and celebrate loudly, to bring the world to Sheffield and Sheffield to the world!

- Everyone in the city should be able to experience the benefits of culture, and feel comfortable to take part, try something new, and develop their own creativity.
- Culture will be the world's window into Sheffield, helping to attract visitors and residents to take part. The city's regeneration will be an exemplar of using creativity to drive transformation.

Our festivals, events, and night-time economy will be ever more famous internationally, more sustainable and successful, and reflect the diversity of our communities.

A strategy with a voice



The strategy has been shaped and co-created with a cross-section of the creative sector. Over 1,000 people engaged with us in different ways, through in-person meetings and workshops, digital surveys, and 121s.

This builds on recent engagement with city residents through the creation of the City Goals, and work with 1,085 people from Global Majority backgrounds who contributed to recent Roots and Futures University of Sheffield research.

The work ensured a “diagonal slice”⁵ of the sector around the table – artists, freelancers, community leaders, young people, the city’s cultural institutions, and educational providers.

Our work foregrounded lesser heard voices, with many attendees heard for the first time. We offered attendance payments to people who would otherwise have lost income, enabling new people to contribute. This mix of views created an honest and vibrant atmosphere with fresh ideas and

energy. In particular, the strategy brought together:

- **A task and finish group** – established at the beginning of our work to help guide and support the cultural strategy’s delivery and hold the project team accountable to the wider sector.
- **Engagement groups** – explored specific topics, e.g. creative health and wellbeing, communication, the climate crisis, partnership with business, cultural education and pathways for children/ young people. The sessions were fully booked and engaged c150 people.
- **Vision workshops/feedback events** – 3 cross-sector conversations with 50-80 people each, seeking to test

core questions such as what was and was not working well, and the city’s potential. Two meetings were held in person at The Workstation and one was hosted online. We held a similar event later to gather feedback on the draft strategy.

- **121 interviews** – more than 20 interviews focused on gaps in our knowledge or low representation from specific areas or communities.
- **Digital surveys** – before, during and after drafts of the strategy were developed. We used SCC’s HaveYourSay Platform to host these and have shared working versions of our outputs throughout the process to ensure transparency and comprehensive feedback.

Through these sessions, several core messages were repeated:

Economy, investment, and profile

- Culture and creativity are critical pillars of the city’s economy, regeneration, visitor offer, and social fabric, and people welcomed SCC’s renewed commitment to it.
- People expressed a desire to see major city centre cultural projects completed after delays, such as Graves Gallery / Central Library.
- Relatively low levels of investment in and support for the sector in recent years was recognised – from the City Council, SYMCA, and Arts Council England (ACE) in particular. There are few ACE National Portfolio Organisations in Sheffield compared to other similar cities.
- Relatedly, the city should more strongly advocate for its cultural strengths, to help support growth in philanthropy and private sector partnership and investment.
- The city produces world-class culture, found on Broadway and the West End, at the Venice Biennale, and in the world’s biggest arenas. This global impact isn’t always recognised as it should be, and the city must celebrate and communicate its brilliance more effectively.

Space and connection

- The sector needs secure, long-term, affordable space, perhaps through re-imagining of the city’s remarkable ex-industrial and heritage building stock into creative facilities and hubs.

- Culture and the business community could be better connected and understand the mutual value they can bring each other through work on skills, sustainability, and innovation.

The climate crisis

- Sheffield faces a skills and knowledge gap in making its cultural activities and buildings environmentally sustainable. To help meet Sheffield City Council’s Net Zero by 2030 goals, the sector needs investment in training and development to adopt effective sustainability practices.

Diverse leadership and community

- There is an opportunity to encourage more diverse creative leadership in the city, amplifying the voices of all communities and ensuring young people can get involved in decision-making.
- Sheffield has a flourishing community-led culture sector, happening across neighbourhoods. It could be especially impactful through investment where health and economic inequalities are high.

Talent and progression

- Young people need support to understand the opportunities that are available to them, through clearer progression pathways and a strong emphasis on culture and the arts in schools.
- The sector would benefit from deeper knowledge sharing, training, and skills networks for artists and creatives, using the expertise of the city’s world class institutions.

⁵ Our engagement convened people and organisations from across art forms, communities, ethnicities, ages, seniority levels, organisation sizes, and previous histories of participation.

Delivering change through collective action

The Creative Missions signal our intent and direction of travel, underpinned by a commitment to a set of shared values (see below). Action will be needed to make these Missions a reality.

The strategy includes an Activation Plan that we describe here. This Plan provides focus for some of the most important priorities for the next five years. It can be refreshed easily in response to change and will include clear accountability and timelines.

Everyone should play a part in ensuring these actions are achieved – responsibility falls to every organisation and individual to find ways to contribute, however large or small. Delivery of key strands of activity will be coordinated through the Collective Leadership model and there will be many ways to get involved.

We will measure progress against the Creative Missions using 10 outcomes, shown on the right. Our Activation Plan includes specific metrics designed to quantify the impact of projects and activities on each outcome.

We invite every creative to consider how they can contribute to delivering these missions through their work – get in touch!

1. Ignite - Outcomes

- 1) A more equitable, collective leadership model is established leading to a better connected and coordinated culture sector
- 2) Greater investment in the sector is secured with public and private sector support
- 3) Businesses and freelancers have the capacity, skills and resources to grow and flourish
- 4) Organisations, events, and venues are more inclusive, diverse and accessible.

2. Accelerate - Outcomes

- 5) Young people's access to and participation in the arts increases with improved pathways into the sector
- 6) The health and wellbeing of residents and visitors is improved through widening access to and participation in culture
- 7) Organisations and individuals are committed to addressing the climate emergency and work collaboratively towards a more sustainable arts sector.

3. Elevate - Outcomes

- 8) Cultural participation grows in all communities in Sheffield
- 9) Culture plays a part in tourism and the visitor economy to increase the positive impact for everyone in the city
- 10) Sheffield's national and international profile is increased by developing and showcasing high quality culture and creativity.



1. Ignite

Activation Plan

Outcomes	Actions for possible development	Rationale	Measures
1) A more equitable, collective leadership model is established leading to a better connected and coordinated culture sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Culture Strategy • Co-create collaborative leadership model • Co-ordinate regular sector meetups and knowledge sharing • Establish Culture Directory to share information about organisations and activities widely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better connected and informed organisations • Improved visibility of and advocacy for the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of creatives who feel supported • Attendance at sector meetups • People accessing centrally held information (users, subscribers, downloads, enquiries)
2) Greater investment in the sector is secured with public and private sector support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Assets Pipeline with view to delivering nationally significant projects quickly • Review trials of seed funding/ revenue support • Collective advocacy with key stakeholders • Strengthen the Culture Collective's role in connecting creative and private sectors • Signpost cultural and creative organisations and freelancers to existing business support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger infrastructure in the right places across city • Increased core investment • Visibility of the sector regionally/ nationally grows • Culture embedded in all city developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural investment increases • No of new creative spaces created/ renovated • Delivery of major projects (e.g. Graves Gallery/ Central Library, HarmonyWorks, S1 Artspace)
3) Businesses and freelancers have the capacity, skills, and resources to grow and flourish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support development of training and toolkits at different levels, from early career professionals to established practitioners. • Bring new artform networks together where there are gaps – e.g., filmmaking forum • Advocate for the national real living wage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector economy grows • Improved peer-to-peer support systems • Creatives more able to work in Sheffield • Improved knowledge base and resilience of the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # businesses, £ turnover, # jobs, # Freelancers working in Sheffield • No of skills sessions delivered • Confidence/ knowledge levels improved in targeted areas
4) Organisations, events, and venues are more inclusive, diverse, and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and adopt Accessibility Charter, committing to working towards universal access and safety in all spaces • Greater platforming, support, and celebration of diverse cultural events across communities • Seed funding pot for new inclusive events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen cultural participation across city • Diversity in our communities is celebrated • Sector contributes to anti-racist and fair city for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More diverse creative leadership • Improved diversity of audiences attending cultural activities • Number of venues made accessible / awards for accessibility

2. Accelerate

Activation Plan



Outcomes	Actions for future development	Rationale	Measures
5) Young people's access and participation in the arts increases with improved pathways into the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in sector support organisations All sector organisations to contribute to See It, Be It to showcase cultural careers Share learning around creative apprenticeships and paid internships Expand opportunities for young people to experience culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New creative talent is supported Culture helps children and young people feel that they can belong and thrive in Sheffield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of young leaders involved in leadership # of young people going into creative jobs Increase young people's access to cultural experiences
6) The health and wellbeing of residents and visitors is improved through widening access to and participation in culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Creative Health Sheffield and connect via South Yorkshire Creative Health Use Health Inequalities data to focus new creative opportunities, engagement and target potential investment. Develop toolkit and datasets to demonstrate the impact that culture can have on health and wellbeing in Sheffield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger case for support for creative health and wellbeing initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of cultural organisations taking part in Creative Health activity Health and wellbeing of residents improves
7) Organisations and individuals are committed to addressing the climate emergency and work collaboratively towards a more sustainable arts sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Sheffield Culture & Climate Network development Signpost cultural organisations to training, advice and networking events around climate action Develop a Carbon Literacy training programme for Cultural organisations in Sheffield Signpost cultural organisations to training, advice, and networking events around climate action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural businesses to contribute to Sheffield City Council's Net Zero strategy by 2030 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations pledge to work towards carbon reduction Arts workers and freelancers supported to undertake carbon literacy training # organisational sustainability plans implemented



3. Elevate

Activation Plan

Outcomes	Actions for future development	Rationale	Measures
8) Cultural participation grows in all communities in Sheffield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of creative communities funding Citywide survey of cultural participation and intangible heritage. Embed culture within the social cohesion community plan Support organisations that help to democratise access to culture across specific communities Increased access to volunteering opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People experience culture in their local community Reduced social inequalities Wider engagement with cultural activity Improved social cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % residents engaging regularly with culture increases #s of volunteers in cultural organisations
9) Culture plays a part in tourism and the visitor economy to increase the positive impact for everyone in the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed culture within role out of City Brand Embed culture within delivery of Destination Management Plan/ Local Visitor Economy Partnership Embed cultural events within the Major Events Plan Profile cultural venues as key contributors to hospitality and events portfolio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised profile of the city's cultural offer Economic impact of culture by bringing visitors to Sheffield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits to Sheffield, dwell time, £ spend increases % of visitors engaging in cultural activities increases Number of cultural events delivered Press and media coverage for culture in Sheffield
10) Sheffield's national and international profile is increased by developing and showcasing high quality culture and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract international events and partnerships Explore potential of Sheffield as a City of Music Better exploit connections to Partner Cities through culture (Bochum, Chengdu, Kawasaki, Khmelnytskyi and Pittsburgh). Invest in venue capacity and capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider recognition of city's contributions to world's cultural stage International partnerships increased and strengthened Acknowledging and celebrating the cultures of diaspora communities living in Sheffield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of national/ international touring productions and exhibitions No of international collaborations or awards won International media coverage for culture in Sheffield

Delivery values

Every institution, partnership, or individual will need to play their part in delivering these Missions. New working groups and collaborations will be established, and existing organisations supported to do more.

Culture plays a vital role in bringing people together and telling stories about how we all live and work together. Everyone must feel able and welcome to take part in this journey, and our journey will be guided by a set of shared values to ensure this. These values underpin our emerging model of collective leadership in the city – we are all allies in this process.

Our values are both aspirations and requirements – things to aim towards but also necessary guidelines underlying our creative missions and delivery. The process of developing the Culture Strategy has embodied these principles, and this vibrant, collaborative atmosphere will continue moving forwards. We are:

- 1. Inclusive and welcoming** – we ensure representative voices around every table. We do not accept discrimination or inequality of any kind and call it out as and when it occurs. Our spaces, stages and workplaces are accessible and safe for everyone to experiment, participate, try, and learn.
- 2. Collaborative and Mentoring** – we dismantle traditional siloes and aren't afraid to do things differently, working across sectors and communities and building partnerships with respect. We care for and develop each other and the next generation, sharing our knowledge and carving out opportunities for young people to shine.
- 3. Open, transparent, and accountable** – we communicate clearly and regularly, share our progress, take responsibility, and deliver.

Our values are both aspirations and requirements – things to aim towards but also necessary guidelines underlying our creative missions and delivery.





Our collective call to action!

The scale of this ambition can only be achieved through a collaborative, cross-sector and community-serving approach. We've seen that the sector already achieves so much, through naturally cooperative and resilient working – this model will build on this success and provide supporting infrastructure to help ensure our potential can be realised.



Our Collective Leadership model will set a new benchmark in inclusive decision-making and delivery, innovating like Sheffield always does.

Our Hub and Spoke approach will invest in and upskill the cultural ecosystem directly. This will build on the “diagonal slice” approach taken to develop the Culture Strategy and our Task and Finish group, to ensure as many voices as possible are involved in and accountable for change.

Hub and spokes

The central Hub will take overall responsibility for co-ordinating delivery of the strategy and monitoring progress. It will work to ensure efficient communication across the ecosystem, advocate regionally to expand impact and secure investment, and provide advice and information to creatives.

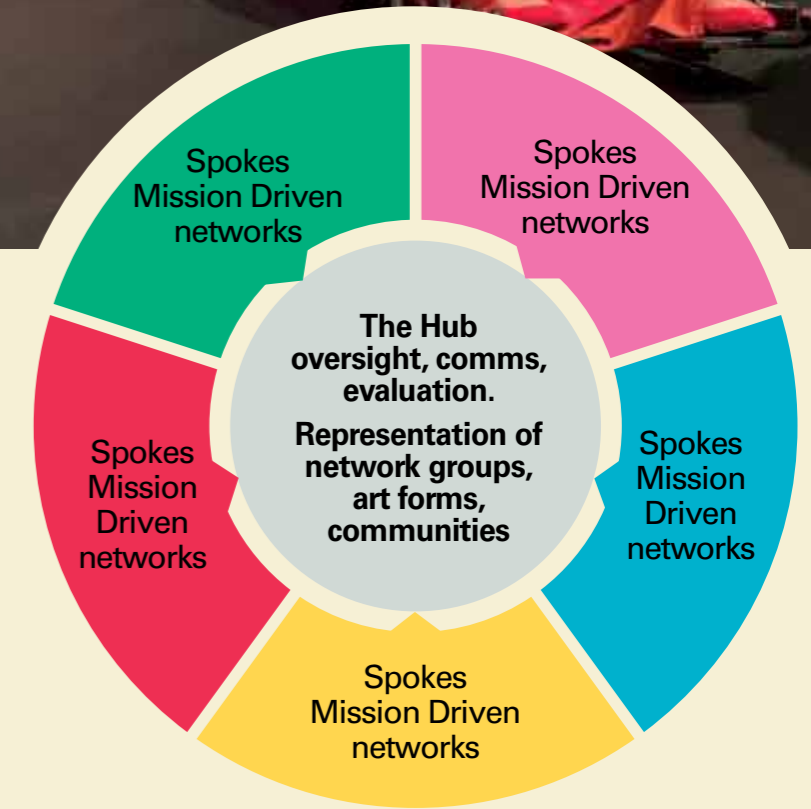
The Hub will convene and connect to several Spokes. These groups could be existing networks, Task and Finish groups, or other partners, from the Culture Collective and Consortium to the Festivals Network.

We want everyone to feel able to get involved with these Spokes. These Spokes will be mission-led, helping to deliver our Activation Plan, and will ensure that investment in Sheffield goes into the sector directly rather than management or administrative bodies.

Embodying our values

This collective approach will rest on our values of openness, transparency, inclusivity and mentorship. All groups and networks will be expected to:

- Have a clear purpose, connected to one or more of the strategy missions, consistently advocating for the sector’s success.
- Ensure open and inclusive membership and leadership mechanisms
- Share information from meetings through appropriate channels such as websites or social media, including reporting to the central Hub.
- Work closely with Sheffield City Council and SYMCA and connect to city- and region-wide decision-making processes
- Have a sustainable business model to allow long-term planning
- Build an action plan with clear accountability for delivery.



Following the launch of this strategy, one of the first, foundational initiatives will be to work with the sector to fully design and pilot this inclusive and participatory model.

Making it happen

Delivering these missions will rely on partnership working across the sector and beyond. Many organisations and creatives will be involved in different ways.

We are all committed to a collaborative approach and to making decisions together when identifying priority areas of activity over the coming years.

The Creative Sector

Perhaps the most important partner is the sector itself – from our largest institutions to artist, freelancers, and community workers. This strategy cannot be delivered without the energy of the hard-working sector.

We have already received countless pledges of support to help deliver these aspirations. Organisations have offered space and equipment, committed to running networking and skills-sharing events, and suggested training and mentoring schemes for smaller organisations and individual artists.

Our collective leadership approach will see more people involved and responsible for change, alongside existing organisations like the Cultural Consortium and Collective, creating opportunities for new cultural leaders to emerge, including from the city's young people.

Sheffield City Council (SCC)

SCC is fully committed to supporting the cultural and creative sectors towards these aims, alongside regional partners including South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, and national bodies like Arts Council England.

SCC have formed a new culture team within the Economic Development and Skills Directorate, now joined by highly experienced officers with more to follow. SCC will play a key role in delivering the strategy, through connecting, convening, and communicating with the sector and wider economy, and:

- Facilitating networking across sectors in Sheffield and the region, with SYMCA and Barnsley, Doncaster, and Rotherham Councils.
- Being first contact for help or information, supporting organisations to find innovative routes to funding, resources, training, or premises.
- Advocating for the city and its creative sector on the regional, national, and international stage.

The local authority's many departments work across cultural, creative, and community projects already, whether through work in health, events, libraries, parks, public art, or heritage. SCC will better connect and communicate this work, to ensure everyone knows where to go for support, and that the impact of the work is universally understood.

SYMCA

The arts do not follow local authority boundaries, and the work of many Sheffield organisations spans communities across South Yorkshire. Artists based in Barnsley, Doncaster, and Rotherham work in Sheffield, and vice versa. SYMCA therefore has a parallel convening role at the regional level, and should connect, advocate, invest in and support the creative industries in South Yorkshire. Its vision and capabilities, in line with our Creative Missions, focus on inclusive and sustainable growth in business, education and skills, transport, and housing.

SYMCA run the South Yorkshire Cultural and Creative Industries Network, directly fund regional creative activity (£1m in 2021) and hold policy-making powers that have an impact on the sector. SYMCA's role in delivering this strategy will be especially important in cross-regional initiatives around skills, regeneration, transport, tourism and business growth.



Private Sector, Civic Partners, and Funders

We invite all local, regional, and national partners and investors to work with us for the benefit of Sheffield and South Yorkshire, from local businesses and industry groups like the Sheffield Property Association, to community, education, and health organisations. Partners can get involved by sharing expertise and skills, offering space for creative activities, working with local creatives and artists, or directly funding projects and organisations.

The creative potential of this great city can be realised if we all get involved and work together to deliver our Creative Missions – let's get started!

Maintaining momentum

To ensure momentum continues, partners including SCC, SYMCA, the Task and Finish Group, Collective and Consortium will complete five key actions towards making the strategy happen by spring 2025:

1. Publicly launch the strategy, through several events
2. Agree and establish the strategy's collective leadership model
3. Publish the first detailed action plan
4. Build an asset pipeline clarifying potential for capital projects across culture and heritage
5. Launch Culture Strategy website signposting support and information to the sector

Acknowledgements

This strategy is built on the time, effort, and ideas of so many brilliant people across Sheffield's creative sector, and we are greatly indebted to them all for their energy and passion.

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- Karen Durham, Arts Council England
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- James Green, artist and printmaker
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- Diana Buckley, Director of Economy, Skills, and Culture
- Rebecca Maddox, previous Head of Business Development, Culture
- Sarah Sharp, Service Manager for Culture
- Jo Wingate, Development Manager

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- Sheffield Hallam University
- Sheffield City Council
- Sheffield University
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
- SADACCA
- Sheffield Theatres
- Showroom Workstation
- Live Works
- Utopia Theatre
- VAS (Voluntary Action Sheffield)

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