

# Improving culture and sport

The IDeA offer to councils  
and their partners



Culture and sport is vital to the improvement of places and outcomes for people and communities. Contributing through local, regional and national partnerships, the impact of sport and culture can be seen through the success of services for children and young people, community cohesion, older people, health, regeneration and economic development.

### **A passion for excellence, an improvement strategy for culture and sport**

The new strategy drawn up by the sector is intended to support local government as leaders of place, working with their local partners to deliver better outcomes, improve the quality of life in places and improve the delivery of cultural and sport services to local people.

The strategy sets a framework for improvement in the culture and sport sector and includes the mechanisms and tools to support self improvement. It also clarifies the respective roles and responsibilities of all the major stakeholders in the culture and sport sector including the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), in delivering the strategy in line with the National Performance Framework and the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy.

The strategy aims to create a strong framework to:

- improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of culture and sport in the delivery of outcomes for local communities
- improve the performance of the culture and sport sector and to address under-performance.

### **In conjunction with councils and regional and national partners the IDeA will focus on:**

- supporting self assessment through the improvement toolkit
- providing learning and information through IDeA Knowledge
- providing a targeted programme of tailored support to councils delivering Local Area Agreement (LAA) improvement targets
- providing further member leadership academies
- supporting the National Culture Forum (NCF) leadership programme
- strengthening of the sectors response to strategic commissioning
- further developing a library of impact evidence
- supporting councils to position culture and sport in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and sustainable community strategies
- supporting councils and partners on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).



### Our offer to support your improvement

The following are just some of the ways the IDeA can support you.

#### **Self-assessment and self improvement**

To date, many councils have used one of the existing culture and sport self-assessment tools to help them improve.

The new culture and sport improvement toolkit uses an evidence-based approach to self assessment and can also be used as the basis of peer review.

The real benefit from using the toolkit comes in a better understanding of your strengths and areas for improvement and relies on accuracy, openness and objectivity in the process. It enables the user to identify current strengths – and reasons to celebrate success or progress – and priorities for improvement, which then form the basis of an improvement planning process.

The main elements of the toolkit are:

- a benchmark for self-assessment
- 360-degree feedback to identify external perceptions and views about the organisation
- peer-led challenge
- peer-supported improvement
- a validation of the self-assessment process where an organisation wants to check its robustness.

[www.idea.gov.uk/csit](http://www.idea.gov.uk/csit)

Eight councils piloted the toolkit and this is what some of them said about the experience:

**“It has helped identify improvement needs and is do-able and practical. It will also help position culture within the LSP.”**

Liz Borthwick of Spelthorne Borough Council

**“The engagement of our team in the single improvement process was particularly useful in breaking down barriers between services. It is getting people to think creatively about future cross-boundary service development and improvement.”**

Iain Varah of the London Borough of Redbridge

**“The tool definitely helped our positioning with senior managers in the county council, including the chief executive. It brought the family of cultural services together in a helpful way – we are split around the authority – and provided useful feedback from external partners. This reinforced some positive feelings about our partnership working.”**

David Grocott of Gloucestershire County Council

**“The self-assessment process has led to some cathartic discussions between managers in the department. It has got some difficult issues out into the open between us.”**

Kate Davenport of Bristol City Council

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### External challenge

External challenge is recommended as a valuable part of the self assessment process. This can be achieved by using a 'critical friend', but where ambition is high, change is required or performance is below standard, a more robust process of external challenge is perhaps more appropriate.

### Peer-led challenge and support

A number of councils have successfully used peer-led challenge and support. This is available as a package to groups of councils willing to set up a local improvement network. The approach also requires the network to invest in the training and development of peers, as well as maintaining the network throughout the process.

### Validation

Validation is not seen as another accreditation scheme which kitemarks an organisation, but as a key part of the self improvement process. This involves an IDeA consultant and accredited peer independently validating the self-assessment. There is a cost to the process, which will depend on the scope of the assessment, but the use of accredited IDeA peers provides a degree of quality assurance and a significant development opportunity for the individuals involved.

### Peer review

Recognised in the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy as a key vehicle for driving self improvement, peer review has been used with excellent results across the local government sector for a number of years; for example, by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) to help improve library services. Cross-service peer review using the new benchmark will be particularly important where there is significant risk of service failure or significant under performance.

### Peer support

Peer support is important to the improvement process because of the learning it brings to both parties and the ownership the process generates. It is also a highly cost effective approach to self improvement.

### IDeA Knowledge

IDeA Knowledge provides access to a wealth of sector improvement advice.

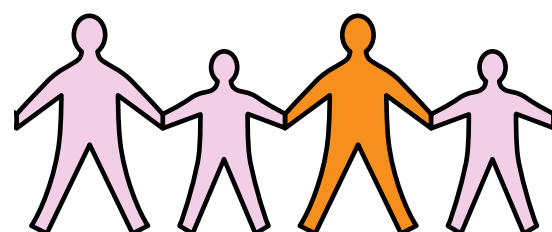
### Make a difference newsletter

This regular email newsletter gives you a personal update on what is new on IDeA Knowledge and what is going on in the sector.

To receive the IDeA's 'make a difference' email newsletter and other occasional updates, email [cultureandsport@idea.gov.uk](mailto:cultureandsport@idea.gov.uk)

### Other opportunities

The IDeA provides a range of leadership development opportunities for councillors and officers. The agency also has the ability to assist with Communities of Practice, Knowledge Exchanges and Accelerated Improvement Consortia.



### How to help deliver the strategy and improve culture and sport services

#### Ten things you and your council can do:

1. Show how culture and sport can contribute to delivering your sustainable community strategy by examining the evidence from other places and making the case in your council.
2. Show how culture and sport can help deliver your LAA improvement targets.
3. If increasing participation in culture and sport would help you improve outcomes for your communities, include one of the participation indicators as an improvement target in your LAA.
4. Invite representatives from the culture and sport sector onto your LSP and thematic partnerships.
5. Commit to using the new culture and sport improvement toolkit to self-assess your organisation and use it to define your improvement priorities.
6. Consider using one of the external challenge processes to help you improve.
7. Carry out a Culture and Sport Strategic Review with your regional agencies and partners.
8. Help support the development of your culture and sport regional improvement network.
9. Identify what you are good at and share it with others. Take the opportunity to learn from your colleagues.
10. Offer to become a peer or support your professional body in making their contribution to delivering the strategy.

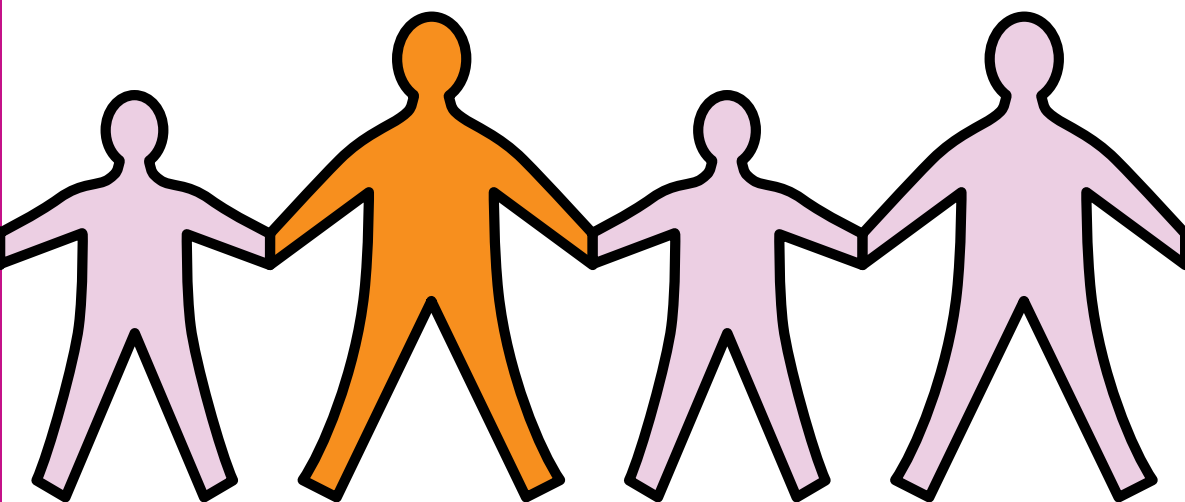
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