

Appendix 4: Draft Culture Strategy 2026-31 – Alignment with Key Corporate Strategic Policies

1. Alignment with Brent Borough Plan 2023–2027

The Borough Plan is structured around five key priorities:

1. Prosperity and Stability in Brent

Borough Plan Goals:

- Tackle inequality and reduce poverty
- Support employment and skills development
- Strengthen local businesses and high streets

Cultural Strategy Contributions:

- **Economic Impact:** The cultural sector contributes £38m GVA from charitable organisations alone. Further calculations can be made for the wider cultural GVA contributions.
- **Skills Development:** Programmes at Garden Studios and Fresh Arts offer training, apprenticeships, and career pathways in creative industries.
- **Freelancer Support:** Calls for low-cost workspaces, operational training, and networking platforms directly support Brent's freelance and SME creative economy.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Cultural organisations are engaging underserved groups (e.g. Eastern European, BAME, SEND) in creative employment and enterprise.

2. A Cleaner, Greener Future

Borough Plan Goals:

- Promote sustainability and environmental awareness
- Embed green principles in development and regeneration

Cultural Strategy Contributions:

- **Environmental Impact:** Culture is positioned as a cross-cutting theme in sustainability, with potential for circular economy and community wealth building.
- **Creative Placemaking:** Projects like Fresh Arts & Quintain use cultural hubs to animate public spaces and promote sustainable urban development.
- **Youth Engagement:** Cultural organisations are embedding environmental themes in programming.

3. Thriving Communities

Borough Plan Goals:

- Build civic pride and community cohesion
- Support vulnerable and underserved groups
- Promote equity and inclusion

Cultural Strategy Contributions:

- **Community Building:** Culture is used to reduce isolation, foster belonging, and celebrate Brent's diversity.
- **Inclusive Programming:** Organisations like Unique Community and Deafinitely Theatre engage ESL, SEND, and LGBTQIA+ communities.
- **Civic Identity:** The strategy promotes redefining "culture" to include local heritage, intangible traditions, and grassroots creativity.
- **Co-creation:** Emphasis on lived experience and community-led design ensures authentic engagement.

4. The Best Start in Life

Borough Plan Goals:

- Support children and young people
- Improve educational outcomes
- Address youth disengagement

Cultural Strategy Contributions:

- **Youth Focus:** Programmes like Brent Music Academy support early years, school readiness, and youth development.
- **Mental Health Support:** Cultural activities are used as preventative interventions for children and young people.
- **Career Pathways:** Initiatives like MAMA Youth Project and RPO's Brent Music Academy offer creative career routes and skills training.

5. A Healthier Brent

Borough Plan Goals:

- Address health inequalities
- Promote mental and physical wellbeing
- Integrate health and community services

Cultural Strategy Contributions:

- **Creative Health:** Culture is embedded in wellbeing strategies (e.g. RPO's Sound Sanctuary, UC's therapeutic theatre).
- **Social Prescribing:** Cultural organisations are positioned to partner with NHS and social care providers.
- **Mental Health Impact:** Culture is shown to build resilience, reduce isolation, and support emotional wellbeing across age groups.

Cross-Cutting Opportunities

- **Strategic Partnerships:** The strategy calls for cross-sector collaboration (e.g. NHS, education, regeneration) aligned with Borough Plan ambitions.
- **Evaluation & Impact:** The Theory of Change and Impact Framework provide tools to measure cultural contributions to borough-wide outcomes.
- **Place-Based Investment:** Cultural hubs and CEZs (Creative Enterprise Zones) support regeneration and local identity.

2. Alignment with Brent Youth Strategy 2025–2028

The Youth Strategy outlines a vision for Brent to be a safe, inclusive, and opportunity-rich borough for young people. The Cultural Strategy supports this through:

Creative Spaces for Young People

- Safe, inclusive hubs for expression, learning, and connection.

Pathways into Creative Careers

- Focus on skills development, paid roles, and access to creative industries, especially for underrepresented youth.

Mental Health Support

- Arts-based programmes like those from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Unique Community directly address youth wellbeing.

Youth Voice and Co-Design

- The strategy reflects feedback from young people and promotes community-led cultural planning, echoing the Youth Strategy's emphasis on youth participation.

Examples

Youth Strategy Priorities	Cultural Strategy Examples
Being Heard and Taking Part	The strategy is shaped by community voices, including young people, and promotes youth-led cultural planning and co-creation .
Reaching Goals and Enjoying Yourself	Offers creative career pathways , paid roles, and joyful cultural experiences that build confidence and aspiration.
Feeling Good	Supports mental health through arts-based programmes like Sound Sanctuary and inclusive workshops for young people with SEND or ESL needs.
Staying Safe	Proposes safe, inclusive creative hubs for young people to express themselves, connect, and grow in a supportive environment.

3. Alignment with Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028

The proposed Brent Cultural Strategy outlined in the Final Report (June 2025) strongly supports the ambitions and objectives of Brent’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028 in the following ways:

1. Inclusive Representation

EDI Strategy Goal: Ensure services reflect the diversity of Brent’s population and promote inclusive representation.

Cultural Strategy: Prioritises historically underserved groups including people from BAME, Eastern European communities, LGBTQIA+, and those with mental health conditions.

2. Tackling Inequality

EDI Strategy Goal: Reduce inequalities in access to services, employment, and wellbeing.

Cultural Strategy: Identifies barriers such as low income, lack of access, and digital exclusion, and proposes targeted interventions like free cultural programming, subsidised workspaces, and community-led placemaking.

3. Community Engagement and Co-Design

EDI Strategy Goal: Empower communities to shape services and policies that affect them.

Cultural Strategy: Emphasises co-creation, community-led programming, and authentic engagement with lived experience.

4. Workforce Diversity and Skills Development

EDI Strategy Goal: Improve diversity in employment and leadership across sectors.

Cultural Strategy: Supports freelancers, young creatives, and underrepresented groups through training, apprenticeships, and career pathways in the creative industries.

5. Mental Health and Wellbeing

EDI Strategy Goal: Promote mental health equity and culturally competent support.

Cultural Strategy: Positions culture as a tool for mental health support, with programmes like Kilburn Music Mile Festival and Unique Community’s trauma-informed workshops.

6. Data and Impact Measurement

EDI Strategy Goal: Use data to monitor progress and improve outcomes for diverse communities.

Cultural Strategy: Includes an Impact Framework and Theory of Change to track progress and ensure accountability.

Examples

EDI Strategy Objectives	Cultural Strategy Examples
Inclusive Representation	Prioritises underserved groups including BAME, Eastern European, LGBTQIA+, and those with mental health conditions.
Tackling Inequality	Identifies barriers such as low income, lack of access, and proposes free programming and subsidised workspaces.
Community Engagement and Co-Design	Emphasises co-creation and community-led programming shaped by lived experience.
Workforce Diversity and Skills Development	Supports freelancers and underrepresented groups through training and career pathways.
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Positions culture as a tool for mental health support with trauma-informed programmes.
Data and Impact Measurement	Includes an Impact Framework and Theory of Change to track progress and ensure accountability.

4. Alignment with the Brent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh

1. Healthy Lives

Culture Strategy Contribution: Promotes inclusive access to cultural activities that support mental health, confidence, and community engagement.

Alignment: Cultural participation can encourage healthier lifestyles, reduce isolation, and improve emotional wellbeing—especially for underserved groups.

2. Healthy Places

Culture Strategy Contribution: Supports community-led placemaking and investment in creative spaces.

Alignment: Cultural infrastructure (e.g. creative hubs, public art, events) can transform public spaces into vibrant, safe, and inclusive environments that promote relaxation and social interaction.

3. Staying Healthy

Culture Strategy Contribution: Embeds culture into health and social care strategies, including social prescribing.

Alignment: Cultural activities (e.g. music, art, storytelling) can be part of therapeutic interventions and support mental health recovery.

4. Understanding, Listening and Improving

Culture Strategy Contribution: Uses participatory arts and storytelling to amplify community voices.

Alignment: Cultural engagement can be a tool for co-production, helping residents shape services and express lived experiences.

5. Healthy Ways of Working

Culture Strategy Contribution: Builds creative career pathways and supports wellbeing in the workforce.

Alignment: Creative industries can offer meaningful employment and wellbeing benefits, especially for young people and freelancers.

5. Alignment with the Health & Wellbeing Board Priorities

1. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Relevant HWB Items:

- Adult Mental Health Workstream Update
- Community Wellbeing Service
- Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs)
- Men United and Music Mile case studies

Culture Strategy Support:

- Strategic Goal: Cultural Health and Wellbeing: Embeds culture into health strategies, supports mental health, reduces isolation, and builds resilience.
- Actions: Creative programmes (e.g. Music Mile), partnerships with mental health services, and social prescribing initiatives.
- Opportunities: Expand creative mental health interventions (e.g. music, storytelling, visual arts) in INTs and community hubs.

2. Children and Young People's Health and SEND

Relevant HWB Items:

- SEND Inspection Update
- Brent Children's Trust Progress Report
- Child Health Hubs

Culture Strategy Support:

- Priority Audience: Children and young people (0–24), including those with SEND.
- Strategic Goal: Inclusive Cultural Access: Focus on underserved groups including schoolchildren.
- Actions: Youth Creative Hubs, creative careers pathways, and co-designed cultural programmes in schools.
- Opportunities: Embed cultural activities in SEND outreach, co-produce arts-based interventions with schools, and support the Welsh Harp Skills Hub with creative programming.

3. Community Engagement and Place-Based Health

Relevant HWB Items:

- Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs)
- Radical Place Leadership (RPL)
- Community Wellbeing Service
- Healthwatch Work Programme

Culture Strategy Support:

- Strategic Goal: Community-Led Placemaking: Empowers residents to shape cultural experiences.
- Cultural Compact: Aligns cultural strategy with civic goals (health, education, regeneration).
- Actions: Vi-Brent network, local cultural leadership, co-location of cultural and health services.
- Opportunities: Use cultural programming to activate INTs and RPL pilots (e.g. Harlesden), support community hubs with arts-based engagement, and amplify Healthwatch's grassroots work through creative storytelling.

4. Health Inequalities and Inclusion

Relevant HWB Items:

- Better Care Fund Planning
- Primary Care Transformation
- Cervical and Bowel Cancer Screening
- Social Prescribing in ASC

Culture Strategy Support:

- Theory of Change: Justice-based approach to underserved communities (BAME, Eastern European, mental health, low-income).
- Impact Framework: Tracks social benefit, mental health, and inclusion.
- Actions: Creative outreach in deprived areas, culturally competent programming, and partnerships with health providers.
- Opportunities: Collaborate on targeted campaigns (e.g. screening awareness), embed cultural activities in social prescribing, and co-design inclusive health messaging.

5. Workforce Development and Skills

Relevant HWB Items:

- Primary Care Workforce Strategy
- Community Champions and Health Educators
- Creative Careers Programme

Culture Strategy Support:

- Strategic Goal: Creative Skills and Careers: Supports pathways into creative industries.
- Actions: Apprenticeships, training, and visibility of creative careers.
- Opportunities: Align with GP SPIN Fellowships, offer creative placements in health settings, and support workforce wellbeing through cultural engagement.

6. Suggested Recommendations for Integration

- Embed Culture in INTs and RPL Pilots: Use arts and heritage to support community power, storytelling, and trauma-informed engagement.
- Support Mental Health Through Creative Programmes: Expand Music Mile, Men United, and similar initiatives borough-wide.
- Co-Design with SEND and CYP Services: Partner with schools and youth hubs to deliver inclusive cultural programming.
- Align Cultural Compact with HWB Strategy: Ensure representation from health partners in the Compact and use it to coordinate delivery.
- Use Impact Framework to Track Cultural Health Outcomes: Align with HWB KPIs and share data across sectors.