

LONDON'S LOCAL CULTURAL STRATEGIES: PROGRESS AND CASE STUDIES

London's Local Cultural Strategies: Progress to Date

The Government Office for London (GOL) has researched the progress to date by London's local authorities in developing their Local Cultural Strategies (LCS). This established that by October 2002:

- ten authorities had published their LCSs: Newham and Hounslow (the two pilots), Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kingston, Lewisham, Sutton and Wandsworth
- nine authorities were at the final draft stage of their LCSs: Bexley, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Redbridge, Richmond and Westminster
- ten authorities had a draft of their LCS, and only four authorities were unlikely to meet the DCMS deadline of 31 December 2002

GOL's research gives thumb-nail sketches of a number of these authorities' LCSs and sets out the common themes, priorities and approaches. Common themes and priorities include:

- improving access and participation
- provision for young people
- promoting the creative economy
- working in partnership

Some authorities also stress:

- how culture can contribute to wider agendas – health, education, reducing crime
- better use of public buildings and resources
- better marketing – making people aware of the borough's culture
- preserving heritage

The approaches vary, but some generalisations are possible:

- each borough has focused on own area, i.e. no collaborative LCSs
- LCSs took a strategic overview and a wide definition of culture
- the process of developing the LCS tended to be driven via a steering group
- consultation formed a major part
- links with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) were increasingly seen as key, but not all authorities had forged these links

The benefits of LCSs included:

- consultation gave direction to the LCS
- the process helped to make different parts of the Council work together
- there was enthusiasm for the potential of LCS

Some common problems also emerged:

- changes of staff and indecision about whose responsibility it should be to lead the LCS
- changes because of elections
- culture low on the agenda for some senior officers and members
- lack of resources
- difficulties with Action Plans including getting external partners involved and taking responsibility
- keeping the momentum going

In terms of implementation:

- it was still too early to judge LCSs
- most had annual reviews planned
- some boroughs were finding it difficult to approach the right people to be on the Cultural Form or LSP
- there were issues over the balance of Community and Council involvement

Case Studies: Introduction

Phone discussions were held with a number of boroughs which had published their LCSs or were at final draft stage to gain a view of how far the strategies were being implemented. Face to face meetings were held with a smaller number of boroughs and from these Croydon and Hackney were chosen as Case Studies illustrating different approaches to developing LCSs.

As with all Case Studies, the experience of individual boroughs and the means they have adopted to develop and implement their strategies cannot be 'read over' directly to other boroughs. For instance, many boroughs will not be in Hackney's situation of being able to access a wide range of external funding – though nearly all will have some internal funding to fall back on. On another point, though links with LSPs and access to Neighbourhood Renewal resources are important, they are not a panacea – there are concerns, for instance, about the sustainability of often long-term cultural initiatives, which rely on time-limited funding. Also, while most if not all cultural initiatives can and do address the wider social agenda, there are issues around culture being driven solely or mainly by this agenda and by the priorities of funding agencies whose focus is purely on the social agenda.

Case Study: Croydon

Croydon's approach to developing their Local Cultural Strategy (LCS) is unusual in that they first developed a One Year Draft Strategy. While this document, published in June 2001, was internally focused on Council services in the main, it also served the purpose of being a launch-pad for attracting more interest and community involvement.

A Local Cultural Strategy Steering Group was set up which, though officer-led, had representatives from the different sectors comprising culture. The Group oversaw the development of the longer-term strategy and ensured that consultation – which included focus group discussions, street questionnaires and a workshop day – was widespread. Giving people a chance to get involved and going out to as many groups as possible has been a key principle for Croydon in developing their LCS.

The Steering Group helped to guide and influence the current strategy, “All of our Lives – Croydon’s Cultural Strategy 2002 – 2005”. It helped set the strategic aims for the strategy:

- access and equality
- education / lifelong learning
- regeneration / the creative economy
- community development and cultural diversity.

The Group then consulted widely with local people about what they would like developed. From this consultation and based on the aims identified (and against the background of the Government’s cross-cutting themes), the Group developed 13 key objectives which covered the spectrum of interests in culture. The key objectives are set out in the table below.

Key Objectives

Strategic Aim: Access and Equality

1. Improved information on cultural opportunities in the borough
2. Creating a pricing structure to create equality of opportunities
3. Places to go and suitable activities for young people
4. Increased access to indoor and outdoor sport facilities and opportunities

Strategic Aim: Education and Lifelong Learning

5. Encouraging innovative ways of engaging people in the built heritage
6. Artistic performance in public places in district centres. Increased opportunities for the provision and the display of arts during the redevelopment of the town centre.

Strategic Aim: Regeneration / Creative Economy

7. Encouraging and promoting increased diversity in the night-time economy
8. Increasing involvement of local business and organisations from other sectors in cultural activities
9. Refurbishment and preventative design of parks and park buildings

Strategic Aim: Community Development and Cultural Diversity

10. Supporting development of community leadership in cultural activities.
11. Improving diversity of entertainment venues and improvement of ‘Flagship’ venues.
12. Affordable, good quality facilities for local community activity in district area.
13. Affordable and secure space for exhibitions for all forms of cultural activity.

Under each of these objectives Croydon set out a short list of actions coded to show which of the Government's cross-cutting themes each action related to – social inclusion, sustainability, community safety, healthy Croydon. Targets, timescales, partners and links are given for each action in this Action Plan. The Actions for Key Objective 3 'Places to go and suitable activities for young people' are set out below.

Thus, for example, Action 3.1 is 'Develop and create at least one more skating facility and four new games courts around the borough..' with a target of two new games courts being developed at Grangewood and Higher Drive by September 2002. This action involved a range of Council services and partners including Croydon Council Sport, Parks and Recreation Service, Croydon Council Youth Service, Croydon Council Planning & Transportation Unit, the Police Service and Croydon Council's Smarter Croydon Initiative. It linked with a range of strategies including Croydon Council Sports Strategy, the Community Strategy, the UDP, Health Improvement Plan, and the Crime & Disorder Strategy.

Objective: 3. Places to go and suitable activities for young people					
Ref.	Action	Target	Timescale/ Milestones	Partners	Links
3.1	Develop and create at least one more skating facility and four new games courts around the borough and seek resources for project funding.	Two new games courts at Grangewood and Higher Drive complete Skating facility and all four games courts complete	September 2002 June 2003	Croydon Council Sport, Parks & Recreation Service Croydon Council Youth Service Croydon Council Planning & Transportation Unit Police Service Croydon Council's Smarter Croydon Initiative	Croydon Council Sports Strategy Sport, Parks & Recreation Service Community Strategy Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Health Improvement Programme Crime & Disorder Strategy
3.2	Programme a series of dance classes targeting children under 5 and young people over 14 particularly from Black & Asian communities	50% of attendees from Black and Asian backgrounds 30 events for under-fives 30 events for over-14s	By December 2002	Croydon Council's Cultural Services Arts Development team Active Lifestyle team GWI Dance group Healthy Living Centre Network	Arts Service Plan Croydon Council Sports Strategy

London's Local Cultural Strategies: Case Studies

3.3	Research the possibility of developing a mountain bike track and/or go-kart track in Croydon	Completed research report with recommendations	December 2002	Croydon Council Sport, Parks & Recreation Service Croydon Council Planning & Transportation Unit Croydon Council Health & Safety Unit Police Service	Croydon Council Sports Strategy UDP Community Strategy Crime & Disorder Strategy Croydon Council Youth Service Plan
3.4	Improve children's play facilities in the borough	Develop a Play Strategy with funding from Barnardos Implement strategy including upgrading existing playgrounds	Dec 2003 Dec 2004	Croydon Council's Sport, Parks & Recreation Service Croydon Council's Planning & Transportation Department Smarter Croydon	Croydon Council Sports Strategy UDP Crime & Disorder Strategy Croydon Council Youth Service Plan
3.5	Create a cyber café in the borough	Open New Addington Cyber Café	September 2002	Smarter Croydon ESDU Neighbourhood Partnership	Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
3.6	Deliver Reading Re-mix partnership project	Establish teenage reading groups in two libraries	September 2002	South East Libraries Performance Improvement Group Library Service	'Empowering the Learning Community' Annual Library Plan Library Service Plan

While some of these actions had come from, or dovetailed with, other Council strategies (for instance the development of a cyber café in Action 3.5), a number of actions came through from the consultation, e.g. the example above (the creation of a skating park, etc), or the development of a go-kart track (Action 3.3). Partnerships and Links with other strategies and agencies vary from action to action.

Throughout “All of our Lives” aims to be a realistic strategy – and not a wish list. In total, there are about 40 Actions – most of them with deadlines over the first year of the plan, but some extending to the latter years – e.g. Developing, then Implementing a Play Strategy including upgrading existing playgrounds by December 2004.

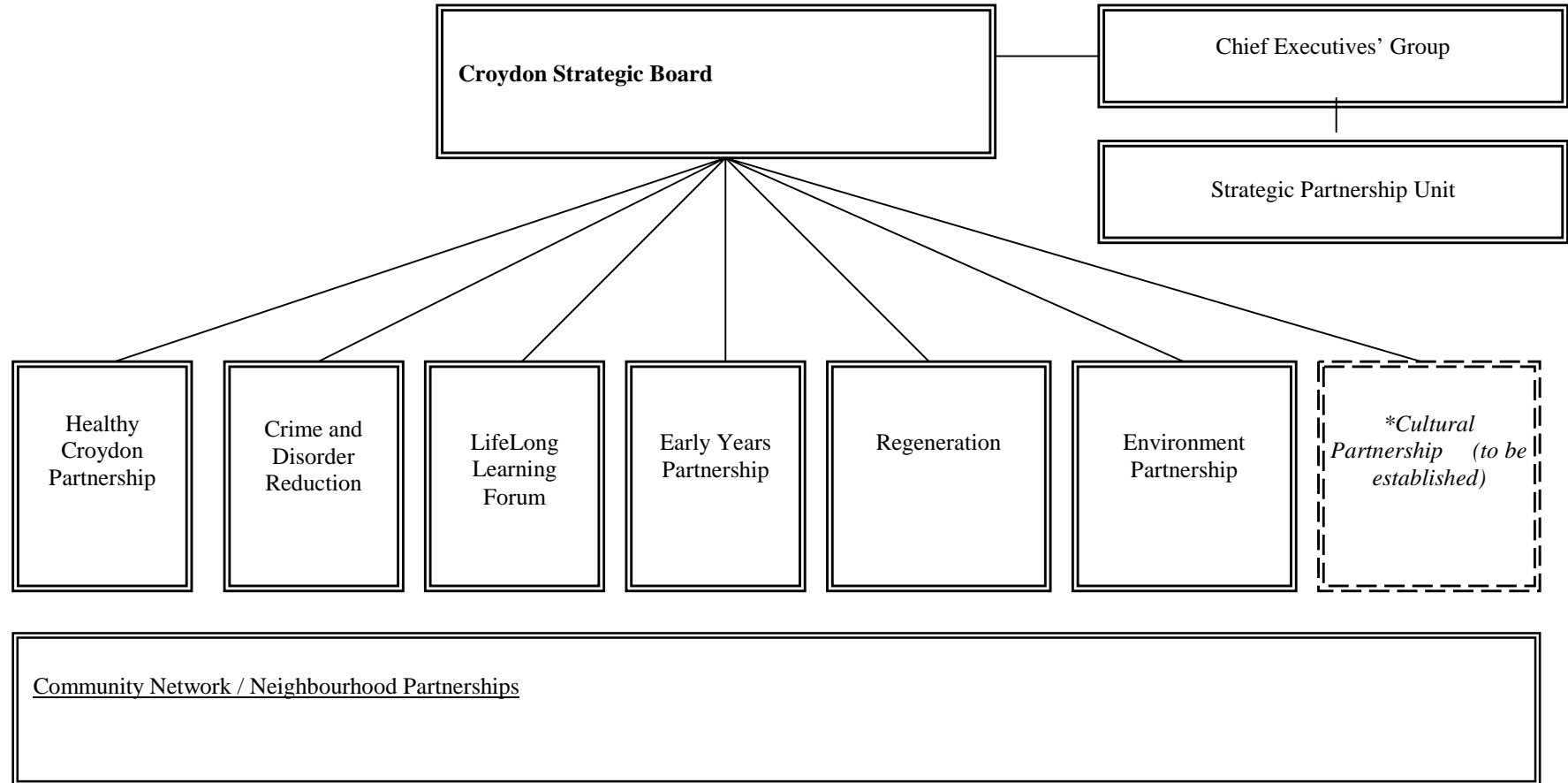
The Draft of the Local Cultural Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2002. The Strategy will be reviewed annually.

The Steering Group, which is serviced by Council officers, has continued to meet quarterly to monitor the progress of the LCS, though it has been difficult to maintain the larger number of community representatives who were initially involved. Throughout, the LCS has been supported by the Cabinet Member for Culture who is a senior member of the administration and a strong advocate of culture.

At the time that it was developing its Local Cultural Strategy, Croydon was also forming its Croydon Strategic Partnership Board. This sets the framework for all the partnerships in Croydon. It aims to improve the delivery of public services and the level of co-operation of different agencies in promoting economic, social and environmental well being. It will also agree the Community Strategy and the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

The Strategic Partnership comprises three main elements: the Strategic Partnership Board, the Chief Executives’ Group and the Theme Partnerships. The Strategic Partnership Unit along with the Theme Partnership Managers support the Strategic Partnership. The relations between the different bodies are set out in the diagram below.

Croydon Strategic Partnership (LSP)



The Board has 15 members with equal representation from public, private and community sectors. It coordinates the work of the 'theme partnerships' which link to it. The Chief Executives' Group comprises the Chief Executives of the main public agencies, business sector and the community sector. The Strategic Partnership Unit, which is funded by the key agencies involved in the partnership, provides policy, communications and administrative support.

The Theme partnerships of the Strategic Partnerships include partnerships reviewing Regeneration, Crime & Disorder, Lifelong Learning, the Environment, and the Healthy Croydon Partnership. Thus, for instance, the Healthy Croydon Partnership comprises health, social care agencies, the police and probation services, business, and others. In each case, the representatives are those in authority in their agency – e.g. chairs, cabinet members, chief executives. Croydon has intentionally pitched membership at board level so that the partnership has authority. In the case of most of these 'theme partnerships', there are sub-groups which work to it on specific issues.

This model is working well for Croydon. Accordingly, to oversee its Local Cultural Strategy, the Council is moving from the current Steering Group to a high level 'Cultural Partnership'. This will be one of the 'theme partnerships' linking with the Strategic Partnership Board. This new 'Cultural Partnership' will have power and an equal say with the Council in decision-making. It will also be a resource for the Council.

There are emerging links between the Local Cultural Strategy and the Community Strategy, a draft of which will be ready in early Autumn. The Community Strategy is building on existing strategies and has around 20 high priorities – one of which is cultural provision. As well as this, a number of the issues raised in the LCS also feature in the Community Strategy, for instance, access, young people. However, the Council is not inserting the LCS as a 'chunk' in the Community Strategy. Instead the themes and issues of the LCS are interweaved throughout with the LCS helping to inform the Community Strategy.

Croydon sees the Community Strategy as providing a context and adding weight to the LCS – particularly important because culture is not statutory (in the main) and tends to attract less funding. It believes that it helps to have culture as part of a holistic strategy. Thus, for instance, it can help divert funding from Health to its 'active lifestyles' and 'exercise by prescription' project, or from Housing to establish sports diversionary activities in estates. In this way, there is a two-way relationship between the LCS and the Community Strategy.

Learning Points

- **Involving the community and going to as many groups as possible.**
- **Having a Cabinet Member for Culture – and one who strongly advocates culture.**
- **Establishing a Steering Group with partners from other sectors to develop the strategy's aims, objectives and actions – and then to monitor its progress.**

- **Having a spectrum of actions across all cultural sectors – integrating some from existing strategies and adopting others as a result of consultation.**
- **Developing close links with the Local Strategic Partnership and the Community Strategy and becoming a ‘theme’ partnership of the LSP.**
- **Moving on from a Steering Group of committed individuals to a high-level Cultural Partnership composed of the major, influential cultural partners and with representation from the highest level of these partners – this gives the Cultural Partnership authority and profile.**
- **Investing the Cultural Partnership with real decision-making powers.**

Case Study: Hackney

Hackney's Local Cultural Strategy was approved by Hackney Council's Cabinet at the beginning of September 2002. This was based on the Draft Strategy, published in Summer 2001 after extensive consultation with the community including a poster and ad campaign, focus groups and a series of articles in the local media.

Unlike most, if not all, other local cultural strategies, Hackney's financial crisis means that its strategy needs to be funded through external funding – including Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, Lottery Funding, E-Government, SRB, etc. This includes over £250,000 (in Year One) from the Local Strategic Partnership for a Cultural Development Officer and to help implement the Strategy. (Funding from this source will be £200,000 in Year Two and £300,000 in Year Three.) Also, unlike most local cultural strategies, Hackney has been bidding for funding and beginning implementation since the launch of its Draft Strategy rather than waiting until after the publication of the Final Strategy. This has helped to maintain the momentum of the Strategy.

Hackney's Local Cultural Strategy is organised around six themes:

- **Theme 1. Include everyone in Hackney's culture and its cultural activities**
- **Theme 2. Encourage the sustainability and growth of Hackney's Cultural and Creative Industries**
- **Theme 3. Promote the contribution of culture in urban regeneration**
- **Theme 4. Conserve, enhance and promote access to Hackney's physical environment and heritage**
- **Theme 5. Promote cultural and creative education and opportunities for children and young people**
- **Theme 6. Support skills, talent, excellence and innovation**

For each theme, the Strategy summarises the background and context to the theme and then sets out the Key Issues and the Key Actions for the Council. In terms of Theme 5 these are as follows:

Key Issues

- Consistent policies to encourage safe participation of children and young people in cultural activities.
- Support for sports activities from beginner to competitive level.
- Better siting of park staff near play area.
- Better co-ordination and access for children to safe play equipment.

Key Actions for the Council

1. Ensure the implementation of policy documents encourage children and young people's participation in cultural activities
2. Ensure creative and cultural organisations support Hackney schools.
3. Audit play facilities and plan improved safe play facilities within the Borough

The Action Plan then develops these Key Issues and Key Actions for the Council into more detailed actions. Each action lists which departments or organisations are responsible for implementing the actions, how it will be funded, links to other strategies, its priority in the Strategy and its date for implementation. The Actions for Theme 5 'Promote cultural and creative education and opportunities for children and young people' are set out in the table below.

For instance, under Theme 5, Action 5.2 is 'Co-ordinate the use of play facilities so as to ensure local children, after-school clubs and play groups have access to play equipment'. Although this is a Low Priority, with implementation from 2003 to 2006, much work has already been done including making bids to external funders – in this case the New Opportunities Fund. Around £50,000 has already been awarded, with more in the pipeline. As the officer responsible for developing and implementing the Strategy notes, much of the work of implementation is about making bids or helping others to make bids or co-ordinating bids with other Council departments to a range of external funders.

Similarly, much work has already been done on Actions 5.4 and 5.5. The strategy had identified that, while some schools had reasonable links with artists and arts organisations, others did not know about the creative talent in the borough nor about the possibilities for working with these groups in an educational setting. Tours and meetings have been programmed, networks and links established. Hackney is one of the pilots for 'Creative Partnerships', funded by the DfES and the DCMS: these actions of the Local Cultural Strategy will help to provide the base for 'Creative Partnerships' while the links between education and culture developed in the Strategy may have helped Hackney in its bid to pilot 'Creative Partnerships'.

<p>THEME 5. Promote cultural and creative education and opportunities for children and young people</p>			<p>2001-2005 Medium Priority</p>
<p>5.5 Establish a forum of key officers, agencies and individuals to ensure that the Education Development Plan, Children's Services Plan and Community Care Plan and Best Value Review for Youth have consistent/complementary policies about encouraging children and young people's participation in cultural activities</p>	<p>Community and Learning Youth Service Manager Social Services Assistant Director, LEA</p>	<p>Best Value Review of Services for Youth Education Development Plan Children's Services Plan</p>	<p>Medium Priority 2002</p>
<p>5.2 Co-ordinate the use of play facilities so as to ensure local children, after- school clubs and play groups have access to play equipment.</p>	<p>Play Service Manager Hackney Play Association Funded through New Opportunities Fund</p>		<p>Low priority 2003-6</p>
<p>5.3 Through Active Communities Funding support club development in the five key sports areas, sport facilities and coaching to support activities. Through an increase in coach education (by X courses) Baseline data to be set. Increase by Y% the involvement of clubs and young people in London Youth Games. Baseline data to be set.</p>	<p>Sports Development Funded through Active Communities and European Objective 2</p>	<p>Sports Strategy 1996-2000</p>	<p>Medium Priority 2003 and ongoing.</p>
<p>5.4 Support Hackney teachers and take them on cultural tours of Hackney, so they can better educate their classes about local resources. Liaise</p>	<p>Assistant Director Education</p>		

<p>with neighbouring schools (in Haringey, Islington, Tower Hamlets, City of London and Waltham Forest) to inform them about cultural activities in Hackney. By conducting “cultural” tours at least once per year e.g. during activities of Discover Hackney and Hidden Art. By producing a teachers’ pack aimed at existing and new teachers.</p>	<p>C+L Marketing and communications manager</p>		<p>Low priority 2002-6 ongoing</p>
<p>Support and improve the effective network which provide support to schools and to artists, musicians and other performers. By holding meeting once per term and by making the list of creative organisation and individuals more accessible to schools.</p>	<p>LEAP Hackney Music Development Trust LEA Music Advisory</p>		<p>Low priority</p>
<p>5.5 Raise the profile of The Hackney Youth Orchestra through public activities and marketing.</p>	<p>Hackney Music Development Trust Funded through: NRF, New Opp Fund</p>		<p>2002-4 Medium Priority</p>

Learning Points

- **Establishing a Cultural Forum with direct links to the Local Strategic Partnership and other 'sub-partnerships'**
- **Using the Cultural Forum and its representatives to lobby the Council about the importance and value of the cultural sector to Hackney's economy**
- **Changing the representation on the Cultural Forum to make sure that it is representative of the sector as a whole and speaks with one voice**
- **Recognising that – for some Councils at least – Councils 'just don't get it', they don't recognise and fully value the importance of culture and the extent to which it can help deliver other agendas**
- **The importance of having champions for the Local Cultural Strategy – at both officer and Member level**
- **Implementing the Strategy as soon as possible so that everyone can see that it is making a difference and so that the momentum and relationships built up during strategy development aren't lost.**

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