



IPSWICH

CULTURE & HERITAGE STRATEGY 2026-36

AMBITION 2



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



AMBITION 2

A TOWN SHAPED WITH AND BY YOUNG PEOPLE

Statement of Intent

Young people will be influential within the cultural, social and economic future of Ipswich. They will be able to access meaningful pathways into creativity, leadership, employment, social action and decision-making.

To Note:

At the time of writing, the City of Culture bid was also in development. This bid had a strong Youth co-design element and therefore, to avoid overlap, it was agreed the two processes would complement and not duplicate each other. This strategy draws findings from stakeholders, data and surveys, but does not contain dedicated youth consultation. For that reason, the R&D phase is critical to meaningfully connect existing programmes, consultation outcomes, and youth-led insights before designing further interventions.

How this Ambition came about:

Ipswich is an unusually young town. Over a quarter of residents are under 19, sitting above the national average. At the same time, the town experiences lower higher education participation rates, lower qualification

levels and persistent concerns around aspiration, progression and retention.

Throughout the consultation process, participants questioned whether young people could clearly see themselves reflected in the future story of Ipswich. Stakeholders identified a lack of visible pathways connecting participation in culture to employment, creative careers, leadership and long-term opportunity within the town.

The consultation identified a significant amount of existing work already happening across Ipswich through youth organisations, schools, libraries, social action networks, community groups and cultural organisations. But there was less recognition of contemporary cultural participation as it may be understood by younger people: gaming, digital culture and online creativity can be legitimate cultural engagement and offers routes in for young people the sector often does not see and nurture.

This ambition connects youth participation directly to wider questions of aspiration, belonging, retention, leadership, social action, skills development and creative economic growth.

CURRENT EVIDENCE BASE

CURRENT EVIDENCE INCLUDES:

- Ipswich demographic data
- educational attainment and progression data
- apprenticeship participation data
- consultation findings relating to aspiration, belonging and retention
- freelance ecology consultation findings
- existing youth and education infrastructure
- Youth Social Action and Town of Youth Social Action work
- Local Cultural Education Partnership development
- CPP / IP-Switched development work

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Young people play a visible and meaningful role in shaping Ipswich's cultural future and are able to access clear creative, cultural and professional pathways within the town, with stronger levels of belonging, representation, aspiration and long-term retention.

EVIDENCE GAPS AND EMERGING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

FURTHER EVIDENCE GATHERING IS REQUIRED IN RELATION TO:

- why young people remain in or leave Ipswich
- awareness of creative career pathways
- barriers faced by underrepresented young people
- the relationship between culture, aspiration and belonging
- retention of freelance and creative talent
- youth representation within governance and civic leadership
- the role of trusted community spaces in cultural participation
- creative pathway mentoring and progression opportunities
- the scale and sustainability of the freelance creative ecology
- how culture connects to youth social action, wellbeing and community leadership

AMBITION 2: THEORY OF CHANGE PATHWAY

FUNDED R&D PHASE
INPUTS + SHORT-TERM OUTPUTS

- Focus areas:
- youth consultation and co-design
 - mapping of creative pathways and progression routes
 - freelance and talent ecology research
 - mentoring and careers activity
 - creative skills partnerships
 - mapping of trusted community infrastructure and youth spaces

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES:

- improved understanding of youth aspiration, belonging and retention
- increased visibility of creative pathways
- increased youth participation within governance and decision-making
- stronger connections between education and cultural infrastructure

DISCOVERY PHASE
MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES

- Focus areas:
- stabilised progression and mentoring models
 - creative employment and apprenticeship pathways
 - freelance development and peer networks
 - talent retention initiatives
 - youth social action partnerships
 - neighbourhood-based creative leadership pilots

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES

- increased youth leadership and representation
- increased progression into creative education and employment
- increased awareness of creative opportunities
- stronger retention of young creatives and freelancers
- stronger youth participation within community life

PROGRESSION PHASE
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Focus areas:
- long-term talent retention
 - creative economy growth
 - sustainable progression infrastructure
 - stronger civic participation and belonging
 - long-term community leadership pipelines
 - visible youth influence within civic decision-making

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES:

- increased retention of young people within the town
- measurable growth in creative employment pathways
- increased diversity within cultural leadership
- stronger representation of young voices within civic decision-making
- stronger sense of belonging and ownership amongst young people

EMERGING INDICATORS OF CHANGE
POTENTIAL INDICATORS INCLUDE:

- progression into creative education, training and employment
- apprenticeship positions and participation levels
- retention of young creatives and transition to becoming freelance/ small business owners
- participation in mentoring and leadership programmes
- perceptions of opportunity and belonging amongst young people
- participation in youth social action and community leadership activity
- diversity of young people participating within cultural governance and leadership structures.

