

# CITIZENS FOR CULTURE



**SUMMARY  
REPORT**



# SUMMARY

This summary document provides a short overview of the Citizens for Culture Assembly and its outcomes. It draws key statistics, demographic insights, and process highlights from the full report, offering a “dip” into the work.

It is intended for Boards, funders and partners who want a snapshot of the Assembly’s composition, approach, and outputs, while encouraging readers to explore the full ‘Citizens’ Cultural Plan and Citizens for Culture Report’ report for more detail and context.

# INTRODUCTION

*Facts, figures and reflections*

***The Assembly resulted in the Citizens’ Cultural Plan and the Citizens for Culture Report. Available in this 122 page downloadable PDF | [www.citizensforculture.info/report](http://www.citizensforculture.info/report)***



**33**

speakers and contributors

Across the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority

**4** Unitary Authorities

**100**

organisations and freelancers

Produced with

**4** design principles

**9** core methods

created in 2023 by citizens across region

**51**

Citizens

took part in the Assembly

The Assembly met for **52** hours

**+1,500** hours

of citizen deliberation and participants offered up to

**£700** gift

and selected after

**15,100**

invitations

distributed across the region

**CITIZENS FOR CULTURE**

Assembly Members identified as

**51%** women

**49%** men

**25.5%**

16 to 29-year-olds

**21.5%**

Global Majority background

**57%** reported

they had never or rarely taken part in civic participation before

**21** evidence snapshots

Regional Action Plan consists of:

**13** regional priorities

**13** short-, medium- and long-term actions linked to each priority

# CONTENT



page

- 5 1. Citizens' Assembly Purpose
- 6 2. Key stats and facts about the West of England 2025 Citizens' Assembly
- 8 3. How were the 51 Assembly Members selected?
  - Stages of Civic Lottery
  - Assembly Member Demographics
- 13 4. What happened during the Assembly
- 14 5. What citizens produced
  - Place-Based Aspirations
  - Regional Action Plan
- 15 6. Emerging themes across the region
- 17 7. Citizens' reflections on the process
- 18 8. What happens next
- 19 ***Want to know more?***
- 20 ***Contact us***

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THE WEBSITE:**

[www.citizensforculture.info](http://www.citizensforculture.info)



# 1.

## Citizens' Assembly Purpose

The Assembly was brought together to create a Citizens' Plan for Culture for the West of England by answering the following question:

**What would culture and creativity look like in the West of England if they were for everyone?**



# 2.

## Key stats and facts about the West of England 2025 Citizens' Assembly

**51**

**Citizens**

took part in the  
Assembly

The Assembly was  
produced with

**4 design  
principles**

**9 core  
methods**

that were  
created in 2023  
by citizens from  
across the region



**SCAN TO VIEW  
DESIGN  
PRINCIPLES**

[bit.ly/cp-design-principles](https://bit.ly/cp-design-principles)

**6**

### **The Citizens' Assembly was a partnership with multiple "Actors"**

Actors are people or organisations  
who can take action together on the  
Citizens' Cultural Plan:

- The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority
- 4 Unitary Authorities - Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire
- Over 100 organisations and freelancers signed up to support the design and outcomes of the Assembly
- Funders Arts Council England, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation



**16 independent  
facilitators**

received a **3 day**

training programme  
provided by Shared  
Future, LaToyah  
McAllister-Jones and  
Citizens In Power

**51 citizens selected after**

**15,100  
invitations**

were distributed across the region

see page 10 for '**3.1 Assembly  
Member Demographics**'



**The Citizens' Assembly  
combined local deliberation  
with regional decision-making**

While the introductory session brought everyone together, citizens then met in

**4** groups reflecting

**4** Unitary Authority  
regional areas

before coming together to agree  
the final regional Cultural Plan

- The 4 local groups reflected Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire. These groups functioned similarly to smaller citizens' juries exploring local aspirations which provided a foundation for the regional Cultural Plan.

On the final day, a representative  
group of

**40**

from across the 4 areas attended to  
deliberate and agree the regional plan

**8** sessions  
held

**3** in person **5** online

Each Assembly member had  
to attend 5–6 sessions each  
depending if they were in  
the final regional Assembly

The Assembly met for

**52** hours

which represented

**+1,500** hours

of citizen deliberation  
(participants × hours of  
discussion)

- Sessions took place between 14 Sep - 9 Nov 2025
- All sessions held on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) to maximise accessibility

***The Assembly resulted in the Citizens' Cultural Plan and the Citizens for Culture Report that are available in this [122 page downloadable PDF](#) | [www.citizensforculture.info/report](http://www.citizensforculture.info/report)***



# 3.

## How were the 51 Assembly Members selected?

During the Citizens' Assembly, citizens raised many different ideas and insights. Over time, clear themes began to appear. These themes came from the questions that citizens asked speakers and commentators: both when listening to cultural workers and representatives from across the region and when questioning local authorities about their aspirations for culture

### **Civic Lottery** | **Stage One**

Of the 15,100 letters in special envelopes that were distributed:

- 15,000 were posted to randomly selected addresses from the Royal Mail database with a higher proportion of these sent to households in poorer wards across the region;
- 100 invites were by hand working with partner organisations and two Community Mobilisers whose role was to build trust with individuals who either did not have a letterbox or might be less likely to engage with the process;
- Because the topic of the Assembly was about Culture, rather than a topic such as universal Health or Education, a modest target was set, to receive 150 expressions of interest to take part. Statistically, 150 applicants would have a good chance of being able to create a broadly representative 52 via the second lottery.

**SCAN TO VIEW COPY OF  
THE SPECIAL ENVELOPES**



**SCAN TO VIEW  
COPY OF THE  
INVITATION LETTER**

[bit.ly/456AeBL](https://bit.ly/456AeBL)



## Civic Lottery | Stage Two

- Exactly 300 people, double the target, applied to take part and from these a final group of 52 Assembly members was selected to match regional demographic targets as closely as possible;
- Just before the Assembly started, one citizen had to withdraw with no time to replace them, so the final Assembly was made up of 51 people which had a small effect on the final demographics of the Assembly.

**NEXT:**

'Assembly Member Demographics'



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## 3.1 | Assembly Member Demographics

7 demographic criteria were used to try and create a balanced group of citizens to match the overall composition of the West of England area based on 2021 census data.

*The demographic data was as follows:*

### 1. Gender

### 2. Age

### 3. Ethnicity

### 4. Education

### 5. Disability

### 6. Geography

### 7. Cultural participation

#### 1. Gender

the final Assembly closely matched the regional population with **51% women and 49% men** aligning almost exactly with the target split (50.5% women, 49.0% men). While women were over-represented among respondents (60.7%), the second stage lottery rebalanced this.

#### 2. Age

all major age groups were represented.

- **Younger people (16-29) made up 25.5%** of the final Assembly close to the combined target of 24.4%;
- **People aged 30-64 accounted for 55%** close to the 54.3% target;
- While those **aged 65+ made up 19.6%** slightly below the regional target of 21.3%.

#### 3. Ethnicity

the final Assembly was made up of 21.5% of people from global majority backgrounds which was intentionally higher than the regional average to ensure communities who are underrepresented in the cultural sector were strongly represented in the Assembly. This was in line with the design principle created by citizens in 2023 to ensure:

*“inclusivity and diversity are critical principles throughout planning and delivery”.*

### 3. Education

as expected, degree-level qualifications were over-represented among respondents to the first lottery at 48.0% but in the final Assembly:

- **this was reduced to 40.2%** close to regional target of 38.0%
- **13.7% of Assembly members had no formal qualifications** closely matching the 14.0% target.

### 3. Geography

the Assembly was made up of:

- **12 people or 23.5% from Bath & North East Somerset**
- **15 or 29.4% from Bristol**
- **12 or 23.5% from North Somerset,** and
- **12 or 23.5% from South Gloucestershire**

However, when it came to the decision-making stage of the Citizens' Assembly to shape the regional Cultural Plan, the Assembly numbers were adjusted, so that they

were proportionate to the population of each region. This adjustment was made to ensure no area was over or under-represented in the decision-making phase.

During this phase, the Assembly was made up of 15 people or 38.5% from Bristol, 10 or 25.5% from South Gloucestershire and 7 or 18% from Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset.

### 4. Disability

people who declared a disability as part of their application made up **15.7% of Assembly members** compared to a regional target of 17.1%.

### 4. Cultural participation

Arts Council England statistics show that in 2023/24 78% of people attended an art event in person, or participated in an art activity in person, or watched an arts event whether in person or online.

While 85% of respondents reported that they had done this, the final selection of 72.7% meant more than one in four members did not engage. This was important for answering the Assembly question.

Full pie charts to describe the selection process are available [here](#).

**SCAN TO VIEW PIE CHARTS FOR ALL SEVEN CRITERIA**



<http://tiny.cc/wqjx001>

All participants were offered either a £600 or £700 gift for taking part, depending on whether they attended 5 or 6 sessions.

As part of a detailed onboarding process, all participants were also offered additional financial support in order to take part equitably including childcare or other caring costs, online access and/or devices and training, other access and inclusion costs, all travel costs and support with travel arrangements where required.



# 4.

## What happened during the Assembly

The Assembly was designed around deliberation rather than debate, giving people time, information and support to explore complex issues and reach shared conclusions.

### ***Across the process, citizens:***

- attended creative and cultural events and kept a diary of observations about their experiences which were shared with each other;
- agreed shared principles for working together at the outset, shaping how decisions were made throughout the Assembly;
- heard directly from a wide range of 33 speakers and contributors selected by the Independent Advisory Panel including cultural workers, freelancers, community organisations, funders, public bodies and academic researchers; citizens questioned speakers directly and compared their different perspectives; follow-up responses were also sought outside of Assembly meetings which fed into the next Assembly session;
- examined 21 evidence snapshots in a variety of formats providing overviews or insights into key areas of concern raised by citizens or the sector;
- deliberated in small groups and plenary sessions, supported by 8 independent facilitators and clear principles for respectful, inclusive discussion.



# 5.

## What citizens produced

The main focus for Assembly members was to create a Regional Action Plan. However, the Assembly also produced Place-Based Aspirations.

### *Place-Based Aspirations*

- 4 sets of place-based aspirations, one for each Unitary Authority area
- Each area produced:
  - **a Vision Statement**
  - **key aspirations**
- Total place-based aspirations: 23
- These Place-Based Aspirations are not delivery plans. They set out what citizens in each area said matters most, to inform and influence local decision-making in the future.

### *Regional Action Plan*

- 1 regional Vision Statement
- 13 regional priorities
- 13 short-, medium- and long-term actions linked to each priority
- All the priorities and actions were structured around two of the four pillars:
  - **Economy**
  - **Placemaking**
  - **Skills**
  - **Wellbeing**



# 6.

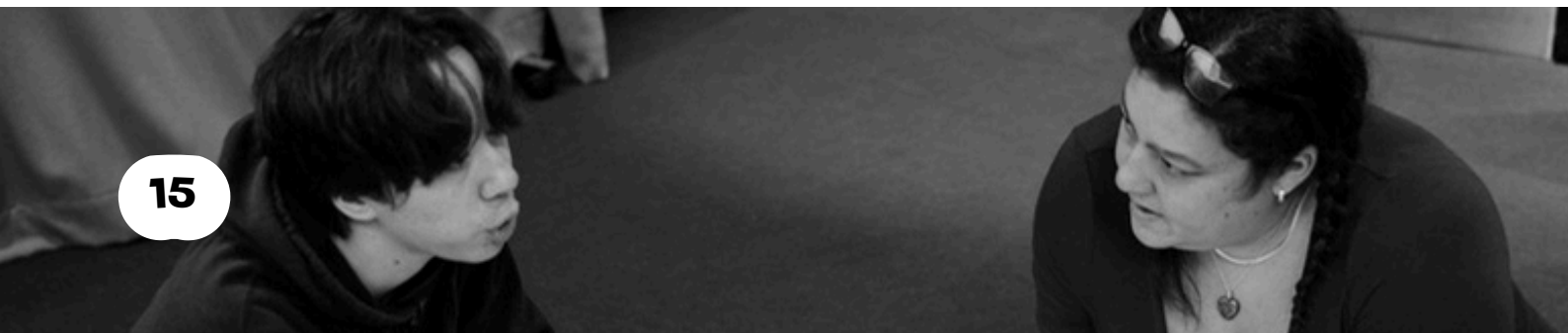
## Emerging themes across the region

Assembly members identified seven cross-cutting themes below. These themes underpin both the place-based and regional priorities and highlight where co-ordinated action is needed.

- 1** **Equity of Access and Inclusion**
- 2** **Funding Transparency and Fairness**
- 3** **Capacity and Staffing Constraints**
- 4** **Strategic Planning and Governance**
- 5** **Balancing Community and Visitor Priorities**
- 6** **Culture as a Social and Economic Lever**
- 7** **Innovation and Independent Approaches**



*Citizens called for clear leadership, accountable cultural strategies and stronger coordination*



## **Equity of Access & Inclusion** 1

A universal concern, though expressed differently: urban areas focused on demographic diversity; rural areas focused on geographic fairness and underserved communities.

## **Funding Transparency & Fairness**

Citizens want to understand how decisions are made, how funds are distributed and whether investments offer equitable benefits..

## **Capacity & Staffing Constraints**

Small teams and volunteer reliance are common across the region, creating barriers to delivering cultural ambition at scale.

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3

4

## **Strategic Planning & Governance**

Citizens called for clear leadership, accountable cultural strategies and stronger coordination across towns, sectors and institutions.

## **Balancing Community & Visitor Priorities**

Particularly in heritage-led areas, citizens questioned whether cultural funding and programming primarily serve residents or tourists.

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## **Culture as a Social & Economic Lever**

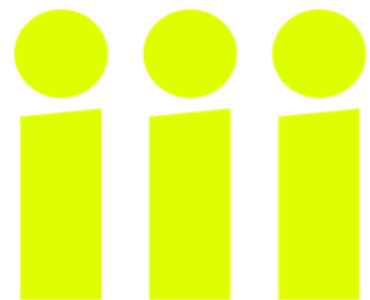
Across all UAs, culture is viewed as a contributor to wellbeing, cohesion, youth engagement, local economies and creative career pathways.

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7

## **Innovation & Independent Approaches**

Citizens value flexible, place-based and independent cultural initiatives, especially where institutional capacity is limited.



## **Cross-Cutting Themes Across the Region**

# 7.

## Citizens' reflections on the process

Feedback collected from Assembly members shows that the process successfully engaged people who are typically under-represented in civic decision-making, while maintaining high levels of trust, confidence and satisfaction with the experience.

- 57% of Assembly members reported that they had never or rarely taken part in civic participation before, indicating that the Assembly reached people beyond the “usual voices” in consultation and engagement processes.
- Over 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable sharing their views during the Assembly.
- Over 90% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt listened to and respected by other Assembly members.
- A large majority of over 85% agreed or strongly agreed that the information and evidence provided helped them understand different perspectives before reaching decisions.
- Around 85–90% agreed or strongly agreed that the Assembly helped them feel more confident about taking part in discussions about culture and decision-making in the future.

In open-text responses, citizens frequently described the experience as welcoming, well-supported and different from previous engagement they had encountered.

Alongside this, some participants noted the intensity of the time commitment and the emotional labour involved in deliberation, highlighting the importance of ongoing support, clear follow-up and visible impact as the work moves into delivery.

# 8.

## What happens next

Citizens for Culture was designed on the understanding that no single organisation can deliver a regional cultural plan.

The next phase focuses on alignment, collaboration and shared responsibility across the sector.

### ***Feb - Jun: a period of dialogue***

From February to Jun 2026, citizens, cultural organisations, freelancers, sector networks and public bodies will take part in a structured period of dialogue to:

- reflect on the priorities set out in the Citizens' Cultural Plan
- identify where work is already happening
- understand where activity could be strengthened or better connected
- explore where new approaches or partnerships may be needed

This phase is intended to support shared ownership of the plan, while recognising the different roles, responsibilities and constraints that organisations and individuals work within.

### ***A practical working framework***

Sector discussions to date have already proposed a simple Share / Grow / Build framework building on the Mayor of the West of England's idea of a matrix to review and track progress. This will be built as follows:

- **Share** — activity already aligned with the Cultural Plan
- **Grow** — existing work that could be strengthened or connected
- **Build** — areas where new approaches or infrastructure are needed

### ***Ongoing citizen involvement***

Citizens will remain involved through a Citizens for Culture Panel and participation in dialogue and reflection sessions, helping to maintain transparency, accountability and citizen voice as the Plan moves into action.

## Want to know more?

This [122 page downloadable PDF](#) includes the Citizens' Cultural Plan and the Citizens for Culture Report which:

From February to Jun 2026, citizens, cultural organisations, freelancers, sector networks and public bodies will take part in a structured period of dialogue to:

- **explains how the Assembly was designed and delivered**
- **sets out how citizens were recruited and selected**
- **documents the evidence considered**
- **records how decisions were made**
- **captures reflections from citizens and observers**

This extensive document is designed to support transparency and learning for anyone engaging with the plan.



**SCAN TO VIEW FULL REPORT:**

[www.citizensforculture.info/report](http://www.citizensforculture.info/report)

### ***About the data and findings***

This report draws on evidence gathered through the Citizens for Culture: Culture West project (2023–26). We have taken care to present the information accurately. It represents the evidence shared within the project's scope and timeframe and reflects the project's intent to serve as a foundation for future action and dialogue.



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**Citizens for Culture** is part of a wider regional programme in the West of England called Culture West, and aims to widen access to creative opportunities, strengthen the cultural workforce and support a more resilient cultural ecosystem.

[www.citizensforculture.info](http://www.citizensforculture.info)

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