

**Progress Report
2025-2026**



ARTS & CULTURAL STRATEGY

Inspiration and Opportunity for All

2025-2028



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Peter Pan Pantomime 2025 at the Royal Spa Centre.
Image © Helen Ashbourne



The Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

FOREWORD



I'm pleased to introduce this report and reflect on the progress made over the past year.

The Arts Section plays an important role in supporting the district's cultural life, and this report highlights both the breadth of that work and the conditions it is delivered within. Alongside public programmes, there is significant ongoing work to maintain our buildings, support partnerships and enable activity across the sector.

It is encouraging to see continued development through initiatives such as *Spark* and *Spark Presents*, which are helping to strengthen connections and create new opportunities locally.

There is also clear progress in ensuring that our cultural offer remains accessible, inclusive and relevant to our communities.

This is a solid foundation to build on. My thanks go to the Arts Section team and all those who contribute to this work.

Councillor Ella Billiald

Warwick District Councillor - Leamington Willes
Portfolio Holder - Arts, Culture & Economy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the delivery and impact of Warwick District Council's Arts Section between April 2025 and March 2026 against the priorities outlined in the [Arts & Cultural Strategy 2025-2028](#). It reflects a high volume of activity delivered across venues, partnerships and programmes, alongside the ongoing management of cultural assets.

Headline Performance

- £1,646,928.19 box office income for Arts Section run venues
- £1.59m Arts Council England MEND funding actively delivered
- £30,987.06 total income from Pump Rooms retail area
- £7,511.83 in cash donations
- 457,000 total visitors across Arts Section run venues
- £32,610 distributed through Arts Grants
- £6,980 external funding secured for learning and engagement
- £5,300 estimated in-kind support leveraged
- 158 attendees at *Spark Lite 2026* (100% positive, 96% recommendation)
- 840 participants across *Spark Presents* events
- 1,170 participants in family/intergenerational programmes
- 306 students engaged through formal education activity
- 51% average email open rate (sector benchmark 45.7%)

- 18% email click-through rate (sector benchmark 12-15%)

Cultural Infrastructure

Investment in cultural infrastructure has focused on improving building condition, usability and accessibility while increasing long-term sustainability:

- 297 cubic metres of space recovered at Royal Pump Rooms
- 168 performances supported by hearing loop (100%)
- 236 cinema screenings with accessible units
- 28 artists represented in retail (with waiting list)
- 100% compliance with Environmental Impact Statements

Economic Growth and Regeneration

The Arts Section contributes to economic growth through cultural activity, place-making and partnership working:

- 800+ cultural strategy documents distributed
- 30% first-time visitors to Gallery exhibitions
- 80% of Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum visitors reported changed perception⁴ pilot activities at Leamington Town Hall (c.125 attendees)
- 5 enquiries and 7 sites explored for meanwhile use

Funding and Partnerships

The service continues to secure, distribute and leverage funding to extend delivery beyond core Council resources:

- £32,610 distributed through Arts Grants
- 29 case studies developed to evidence impact
- £1.59m capital investment progressing
- Strong engagement via newsletter (51% open rate) and social media reach

Education, Skills and Sector Development

- 2 apprenticeships and 1 internship delivered
- 8 school visits (306 students)
- 8 postgraduate placements
- 3 work experience placements
- Volunteer Coordinator post established

Community Engagement and Wellbeing

- 66 family-focused events delivered
- 1,170 participants in intergenerational activity
- 14 additional workshops linked to exhibitions
- Schools database expanded to 50+ schools

Key Observations

- High volume of activity delivered relative to team size
- Strong performance in engagement and funding distribution
- Infrastructure investment unlocking future capacity
- Data collection gaps remain in some areas

Next Phase Priorities

- Strengthen data collection and evaluation
- Increase income generation
- Progress development-stage projects
- Expand external funding and sponsorship
- Embed EDI and accessibility metrics



Warwick-based *A Book of Portraits* CIC performance at Spark Lite 2026.
© Michael Bailey

A University of Warwick panel discussion at Spark Lite 2026 at the Royal Spa Centre. Image © Michael Bailey



AI and the Future

Aim: To explore how artificial intelligence opens up a range of possibilities, uncertainties and opportunities.

Dave Voss
Musician
Digital Learning Advisor
University of Warwick

Dr Heidi Ashton
Associate Professor in Cultural Ecologies, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies
University of Warwick

sparklite

ENHANCING CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Cultural infrastructure is key to maintaining a vibrant creative economy, fostering community engagement, and ensuring broad access to cultural experiences. It's vital to the district's identity as a centre for tourism, and residents' and visitors' quality of life.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the Arts Section focused on improving the condition, usability, and reach of key assets, alongside strengthening the networks and systems that support their use:

PHYSICAL SPACES

CI1 Royal Pump Rooms Roof

Repair works to the [Royal Pump Rooms](#) roof are nearing completion, ensuring the continued protection of the collection and allowing previously unusable areas to be brought back into use. This includes the reopening of a section of the [main gallery](#), mezzanine, and [conservatory](#) spaces, increasing the building's capacity for exhibitions and public activity. While full financial impact will be realised following completion, these works enable additional hires, expanded programming, and increased visitor use, supporting the long-term sustainability of the building.

- Total space recovered: 297 cubic metres
- Projected increase in hires/bookings: 15%

These projections will be validated through income and booking data in the next reporting period.

CI4 Royal Spa Centre's Cinema

[The Royal Spa Centre](#) cinema was upgraded with a new digital projector, enhanced screen and improved hearing loop system, improving technical quality, and accessibility. Formal audience satisfaction data is not yet in place due to challenges capturing feedback from on-the-day bookers. This is a recognised gap, and a revised approach to data collection will be implemented in the next reporting period to better evidence audience experience and impact.

- Performances supported by hearing loop: 168 (100%)
- Cinema screenings with accessible units: 236
- Total cinema attendance (year): 5,106 admissions
- 100% of accessible provision vs total screenings

CI5 Arts Section Venue Hire

Work has been undertaken to review and reposition the Arts Section's venue hire offer, including the development of a Strategic Positioning document and initial scoping of a new Event Hires Strategy. While [hire activity at the Royal Spa Centre](#) remains well-established, this work has identified opportunities to increase use and income across other venues. Developing a clear, consistent hire offer across all spaces will be a priority for the next phase of delivery.

- Total hires across venues: 322
- Total hire income: £151,699

CI6 Royal Pump Rooms Retail Area

The [retail area at the Royal Pump Rooms](#) has been upgraded to better showcase and sell work by local artists, including the installation of secure display units and improved signage. This has strengthened the building's offer to visitors while providing a direct income stream for both artists and the service.

- Number of artists represented: 28
- Waiting list for new artists: 5
- Total retail income: £30,987.06
- Average income per artist: £353.76

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

CI7 Advocacy and Lobbying

Content from the [Royal Spa Centre](#) website now feeds directly into [regional tourism platforms](#) through partnerships with and the [West Midlands Growth Company](#). This increases the visibility of the venue's programme beyond the district, supporting audience growth and strengthening its position within the regional visitor economy.

- While direct referral tracking from regional tourism platforms is limited, [Shakespeare's England](#) reported significant year-on-year increases in search impressions (+191%) and clicks (+761%) indicate substantially improved visibility and audience engagement. This uplift aligns with the integration of Royal Spa Centre listings into regional tourism platforms, supporting wider reach beyond the district.



The retail area in the foyer of the Royal Pump Rooms

CI8 Spark Symposium

[Spark Lite 2026](#) delivered a focused iteration of the annual symposium, attracting:

- 158 attendees
- 100% rated the event a good use of time
- 96% would recommend

Additional impact:

- Partnership leads generated: 7
- Organisations reporting new work/collaboration: 16+

This demonstrates clear value in supporting the local creative sector and enabling collaboration.

CI9 Creative Town Networks

The Arts Section contributed to four Warwick Town Arts and Culture Network meetings, supporting the development of new ideas and funding proposals. Support has also been provided to [Warwick Town Council](#) and [Royal Leamington Spa Town Council](#) in developing and submitting [Town of Culture](#) bids through active participation in working groups.

- Number of meetings attended: 4
- Funding bids supported: 3
- Projects influenced: 3

CI10 Creative Mornings

Two pilot [Spark Presents: Artists' Café](#) sessions were delivered at the Royal Spa Centre to test demand for informal, network-led activity. Both sessions were well attended and provided a platform for creatives to connect and share ideas. The format is now under review to determine its long-term role within the [Spark Presents programme](#).

- Number of sessions: 2
- Total attendees: 34

SUSTAINABILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

CI11 Green Agenda

Environmental Impact Statements have been embedded across all relevant activity, achieving 100% compliance with the KPI for this reporting period. This ensures that environmental considerations are now consistently factored into the planning and delivery of events and projects, including decisions around materials, suppliers and delivery methods. While this reporting period has focused on establishing a consistent approach, the next phase will prioritise developing methods to measure and evidence the environmental impact of this work more clearly.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next phase of delivery will focus on:

- upgrading interpretation at [Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum](#) to improve visitor experience and engagement with collections
- ensuring all Arts Section-supported activity is consistently inclusive and accessible across venues and programmes
- embedding inclusivity across programming, partnerships and engagement activity to broaden participation
- developing and implementing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy to provide a clear framework, measurable objectives and accountability



See the [Action Plan](#) for full KPI details.

Delegates at Spark Lite 2026 at the Royal Spa Centre. Image © Jack Turley



Warwick-based Chris Knight from SALT presenting at Spark Lite 2026 at the Royal Spa Centre. Image © Michael Baile



SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH & REGENERATION

The Arts Section contributes to economic growth and regeneration by increasing cultural activity, supporting the use of town centre spaces, and enhancing the district's attractiveness to residents and visitors. While not the lead service for economic development, the Arts Section plays an important supporting role in collaboration with the Council's Place and Economy teams.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, activity focused on developing projects, partnerships and tools that support long-term economic impact, alongside targeted interventions to increase use of assets and public spaces.

MAKING BEST USE OF OUR ASSETS

ECR1 Warwick District Council's Asset Strategy and Management Plan

The Arts Section has developed a Building Operator and Asset Management Guide to support the effective use, maintenance and long-term sustainability of its cultural venues. This work provides a practical framework for managing cultural assets, informing decision-making around use, investment and operational delivery. It also supports alignment with the Council's wider Asset Strategy and Management Plan, ensuring that cultural buildings are considered within long-term planning for income generation and public use.

BOOSTING TOURISM & VISITOR ECONOMY

ECR2 Heritage Trails

Work has been undertaken to explore the development of heritage trails as part of the district's wider tourism offer, building on previous UKSPF-funded feasibility work. This includes initial concept development for a trail linked to the rediscovered Henry VIII painting, alongside early engagement with [Kenilworth Town Council](#) and [Shakespeare's England](#) to explore opportunities for delivery and digital hosting. This activity remains at a development stage, with further work required to progress to pilot delivery. However, it establishes a foundation for future heritage-based tourism activity.

ECR3 Cultural Tourism

The Arts Section worked with the Council's [Marketing and Communications team](#) to promote key cultural initiatives, including [Warwick District Creative Framework](#), [Arts & Cultural Strategy](#), [Public Art Toolkit](#), [Arts Grants programme](#) and [Spark Presents](#). This included the development of campaign content and promotional materials to raise awareness of the district's cultural offer.

Over 800 copies of the framework, strategy and toolkit have been distributed.

BUILDING PLACE IDENTITY & ATTRACTIVENESS

ECR4 Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum Storytelling

[Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum](#) has deepened connections across time, place and communities through a programme of exhibitions and projects that foreground storytelling, reflection and shared histories. Exhibitions such as [Unravelling History](#) and [A Different View](#) enabled audiences to engage with diverse narratives, from contemporary reinterpretations of heritage to the historic contribution of women artists, supported by interpretation, publications and well-attended talks and symposium activity. Visitor feedback and observation demonstrate strong audience connection and engagement, with high dwell times, repeat visits and reflective responses highlighting the impact of storytelling across the programme. This is further evidenced through [Childish Things](#) and its associated [Sonrisa Arts project](#), which successfully engaged new and intergenerational audiences.

- 3 exhibitions
- 24 events
- 30% of visitors were first-time visitors
- 80% reported a changed perception of the Gallery

Private View of Leamington Open2026 at Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.



ECR5 Cultural Branding

The Arts Section has contributed to strengthening the district's cultural identity through delivery and promotion of key initiatives, including the [Arts & Cultural Strategy](#), [Public Art Toolkit](#), and [Arts Grants programme](#). Place-based projects such as the [Priory Pools Sensory Trail](#), alongside programmes including [Spark Presents](#), support the visibility of cultural activity across the district. Practical and financial support, via Arts Grants, for Town of Culture bids has further contributed to raising the profile of Warwick and Leamington as locations for cultural investment and activity.

ECR6 Programming: Diversity and Inclusion

Programming across the [Royal Spa Centre](#), [Town Hall](#), and [Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum](#) reflects a broad range of communities and cultural perspectives, contributing to increased participation and relevance across the district. This includes:

- culturally specific events and partnerships, such as [Diwali celebrations](#), [Warwickshire Pride](#) activity and work with the [Polish Centre](#)
- intergenerational projects, including [Childish Things](#) delivered in partnership with [Sonrisa Arts](#)
- ongoing collaboration with schools, youth groups and local organisations to support access and participation

Exhibitions such as [A Different View](#) (women artists) and [Unravelling History](#) (contemporary textile practice) have further contributed to broadening representation within the programme, alongside inclusive collecting priorities focused on migration and LGBTQ+ histories. While a consistent percentage measure is not yet in place, delivery demonstrates alignment with the Establishing a for tracking and for future reporting.



Sensory Stroll installation at Priory Pools, Warwick

REVITALISING HIGH STREETS & TOWN CENTRES

ECR7 Warwick District Council's Place and Economy Team (Collaboration)

Arts representation within local economic and placemaking discussions has been strengthened through inclusion in [Creative Quarter](#) board discussions. This ensures that cultural activity is considered within wider economic planning and supports alignment between creative sector development and regeneration priorities

ECR8 Warwick District Council's Events and Green Space Team (Collaboration)

The [Priory Pools Sensory Trail](#) demonstrates how creative activity can be used to enhance public spaces and increase engagement with existing assets. The project combines physical interpretation within the park with a [dedicated digital platform](#), providing accessible information on local wildlife, heritage and the history of the area. This extends the visitor experience beyond the site itself and supports deeper engagement with the location. While formal web and visitor data has not been systematically captured, observational and anecdotal feedback indicates that the trail is attracting increased use of the space, particularly from families, and contributing to a more welcoming and engaging environment. By improving the quality of the visitor experience and introducing new interpretive content, the project supports a more positive perception of the area and demonstrates how creative interventions can add value to existing green space assets.

ECR9 Leamington Town Hall

Pilot activity has been delivered to test the potential of [Leamington Town Hall](#) as a creative hub, including workshops, exhibitions, and photography sessions within the ground floor Anchor Space.

- 4 pilot activities
- Attendance: c. 125

This work has demonstrated early demand and informed ongoing discussions with the Assets team regarding future use, including potential development of artist studio space

ECR10 Public Realm Funding

The [Public Art Toolkit](#) was successfully produced and launched, directly supporting the commissioning of public art ([Priory Pools Mural](#), Warwick) and enabling others to enhance the public realm. Promoted through a dedicated session at the [Spark symposium](#) (March), it has been widely circulated to community groups, partners and artists, increasing confidence and capacity to commission murals, installations and other public artworks across the District.

LEVERAGING INVESTMENT

ECR11 Funding Signposting

The Arts Section delivers a [bi-monthly newsletter](#) (circulation: c. 750) and manage [Warwick District Arts News Facebook Group](#) (2,100 members) providing information on local and national funding opportunities, alongside guidance and updates for the creative sector.

- Newsletter average open rate: 51% (compared to 45.7% industry average)
- Click-through rate average: 18% (compared to 12-15% industry average)

This is complemented by consistent use of LinkedIn by Arts Section officers to share funding opportunities, project outcomes and sector updates.

- Typical post reach: 2,000–10,000 impressions
- Combined followers across key officers: c.4,000

Engagement through comments, shares and reposts demonstrates active interaction from the sector, extending the reach of opportunities beyond the Arts Section's immediate networks.

In addition, direct feedback from recipients indicates that this approach is increasing awareness of funding opportunities, with individuals reporting that they would not have accessed these opportunities without this communication. Together, these channels provide a low-cost and effective way of supporting access to funding and strengthening the local creative economy

ECR12 Private Sector Investment

The Arts Section plays an active role in connecting creative practitioners with underutilised commercial spaces, supporting meanwhile use and cultural activation across the district. This includes responding to enquiries from artists and organisations, facilitating introductions to landlords and site managers, and supporting early-stage discussions around the use of vacant units and buildings.

- 5 enquiries supported
- 7 spaces/locations explored

This work has contributed to pilot activity within [Leamington Town Hall](#) and supported creatives exploring longer-term use of space, demonstrating demand for affordable and flexible workspace. While outcomes vary and activity is often responsive, this role enables the Arts Section to support the activation of vacant space, increase cultural presence within town centres, and contribute to wider regeneration objectives.



WDC Art Grant funded The Story Gardens of Warwick 2025. Hill Close Gardens, Warwick.
Image © Andrew Crainer

SECURING FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Securing funding and partnerships is critical to sustaining and growing cultural activity, reducing reliance on Council resources, and enabling wider delivery across the district.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the Arts Section has secured new investment, distributed funding locally, and developed partnerships that increase capacity and support future growth.

PUBLIC SECTOR FUNDING

FP1 Warwick District Council's Art Grant Distribution

The Arts Grants Programme distributed £32,610 to individuals and organisations across the district. This increased direct investment into the local creative sector beyond the original commitment, supporting project delivery and organisational development.

- Original allocation: £28,700
- Additional external funding distributed: £4,000

FP2 National Funders

The Arts Section continues to deliver and draw down significant external investment from national funders, including £1,598,675 secured from [Arts Council England](#) through the [MEND](#) (Museum Estate and Development)

programme to support capital works at the [Royal Pump Rooms](#). While this funding was awarded prior to this reporting period, it is being actively delivered and managed during this year, contributing directly to the repair and long-term sustainability of a key cultural asset. In addition, two further applications were submitted during the year:

- £80,000 to the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)
- £16,913 to [Art Fund \(Weston Loan Programme\)](#)

While these applications were not successful, they represent the development of high-quality, fundable projects and a pipeline of activity aligned to national priorities. Learning from these submissions will inform future applications



WDC Arts Grant funded *Dance in the Dark* by Kenilworth-based Sonrisa Arts. Photograph © Keiko Ikeuchi



PRIVATE SECTOR & BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

FP3 Corporate Social Responsibility

Two new Corporate Social Responsibility partnership was secured through engagement with Stepnell, linking their CSR team to a public art project at Priory Pools, Warwick, and a Leamington-based primary school. Their support enabled site preparation of a railway underpass, demonstrating how cross-sector collaboration can unlock additional resource and raise the profile of cultural activity.

FP4 In-kind Support

An estimated £5,300 in-kind support has been secured through a combination of external and reciprocal partnerships, including materials provided by Crown Paints to enable delivery of multiple public art murals across the district. Further value is generated through collaborative working with cultural partners, including equipment loans to and from Warwick Arts Centre to support theatre activity, reciprocal marketing agreements with visiting companies, and the loan of artworks for exhibition, collectively strengthening delivery without additional cost. This reduces delivery cost to the Council and increases the scale of activity.

FP5 BID Leamington

Engagement with BID Leamington has established shared priorities around cultural programming, footfall and town centre activity. This work is at an early stage but provides a basis for future collaboration, with potential to align cultural activity more directly with economic and high street priorities.

FP6 Sponsorship

Work has progressed to scope future sponsorship opportunities, including identifying areas of activity that could offer value to business partners. In parallel, new donation mechanisms have been introduced across digital and in-person channels generating £7,511.83 over the past 8 months. This demonstrates audience willingness to financially support cultural activity and provides an additional income stream to support delivery.

Stepnell contractors supporting BRINK to prepare a mural site in Warwick as part of their corporate social responsibility programme.

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATIONS

FP7 Warwick District Creative Compact

Engagement with [Creative Compact](#) members has continued through ongoing dialogue and representation within the West Midlands Compact Plus network. While local activity remains exploratory, this ensures alignment with regional developments and maintains relationships that can support future collaborative opportunities.

FP8 Sector Alliances

The Arts Section has developed partnerships with higher education institutions including the [University of Warwick](#), [University of Birmingham](#), [Warwickshire College University Centre](#), and [The Open University](#). These partnerships support:

- student involvement in live cultural projects
- collaborative research and exhibition development
- delivery of public events and activity

This has enabled the Arts Section to expand its programme, access specialist knowledge, and provide opportunities for students and emerging practitioners within a real-world setting.

Andrew Higgins at Spark Presents: Scratch Night at the Royal Pump Rooms. Photograph © Andrew Moore



REGIONAL, NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

FP9 Representation on Networks

The Arts Section maintains active involvement across a wide range of regional, national and specialist networks, including the [West Midlands Combined Authority \(WMCA\) Cultural Officers Group](#), West Midlands Compact Plus network, and the [University of Warwick's Warwick Institute of Engagement](#). In addition, officers contribute to specialist networks across areas such as marketing, technical theatre and museums, ensuring that practice remains informed by current sector standards and developments. This engagement provides:

- access to sector intelligence and policy developments
- early awareness of funding opportunities and partnerships
- opportunities to share learning and position Warwick District within wider regional and national conversations
- insights and opportunities gained through this activity are fed back into local delivery, supporting programme development, partnership working and future investment.

FP10 Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development activity has been delivered through the [Spark](#) programme, including a targeted session led by [Earthen Lamp](#) focused on audience development, data and insight for programming and marketing.

- 2 sessions delivered
- 48 total participants:
- 32 sector representation (artists /organisations)

This activity supported artists and organisations to better understand audiences, strengthen programming decisions and improve their ability to develop and position work. This complements wider sector support activity, including [Scratch Night](#) and [Artists' Café](#), providing accessible opportunities for peer learning, testing ideas and professional development. Further delivery focused on areas such as bid writing, evaluation and partnership development is planned to strengthen the sector's ability to secure funding and sustain activity.

FP11 Case Studies

A programme of [29 case studies](#) has been developed through the [Arts Grants Programme](#) to document and evidence the impact of funded activity. These are published via the Council's website and used to support advocacy, demonstrate impact, and strengthen future funding applications. This is complemented by ongoing sharing of project outcomes through LinkedIn, providing regular visibility of funded activity:

- 27 posts showcasing project outcomes
- Typical reach per post: 2,000–10,000 impressions

This combined approach ensures that the impact of funded projects is both documented and actively communicated, supporting sector confidence and future investment.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

FP12 Arts Section Learning and Engagement Funding

External funding totalling £6,980 has been secured to support learning and engagement activity:

- £4,980 from [Museum Development Midlands](#)
- £2,000 from [Culture Coventry](#)

This has enabled delivery of free, inclusive programmes, reducing reliance on Council resources while expanding audience reach.

Spark Presents: Filmmaker Showcase at the Royal Pump Rooms



WHAT'S NEXT?

The next phase of delivery will focus on:

- increasing external funding secured
- developing sponsorship opportunities
- strengthening evidence of partnership value and return on investment



See the [Action Plan](#) for full KPI details.

WDC Arts Grant funded Holly's Project by Anjali Dance Company. Photograph © Andrew Moore



IMPROVING EDUCATION & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Improving education and skills development supports the long-term sustainability of the cultural sector by building pathways into creative careers, developing talent, and increasing access to learning opportunities across the district.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the Arts Section has delivered a range of activity supporting formal education, early career development and sector skills.

CREATIVE APPRENTICESHIPS & INTERNSHIPS

ESD1 Apprenticeships at the Arts Section

The Arts Section supported two apprenticeships over the reporting period:

- 1 Learning and Engagement Apprentice
- 1 Technical Apprentice working across venues

These roles provide hands-on experience within a live cultural environment, supporting skills development in both public engagement and technical delivery. This contributes to developing entry-level pathways into the cultural sector and building local workforce capacity.

VOLUNTEERING

ESD2 Volunteering Opportunities at the Royal Spa Centre

Internal funding has been secured to establish a new Volunteer Coordinator post, which will lead the development of a structured volunteering programme across Arts Section sites over the next 18 months.

- New post created: 1 Volunteer Coordinator
- Programme rollout period: 18 months

This will enable the creation of accessible volunteering opportunities, supporting skills development, community participation and pathways into employment within the cultural sector.



University of Warwick Students.
Image supplied by University of Warwick

EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, & UNIVERSITIES

ESD4 Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum and Royal Spa Centre Schools Engagement

The Arts Section has developed a structured learning programme at [Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum](#), using exhibitions and the collection to support curriculum-linked activity.

- School visits delivered: 8
- Students engaged: 306
- Additional activity: homeschooling sessions and higher education engagement

Partnerships include schools such as [Trinity Catholic School](#) and higher education institutions including the [University of Warwick](#). This programme exceeded its annual target and demonstrates growing demand, strengthening the role of cultural venues as learning environments and supporting creative education across the district.

ESD5 Work Experience for 15+ year olds

Work experience placements have been delivered for 3 students aged 15+, providing insight into curatorial practice and cultural venue operations. This meets the annual target and represents an initial step in developing a more structured programme, with plans to expand into additional roles and settings.

ESD7 University of Warwick Placements

The Arts Section has supported 8 postgraduate students from the [University of Warwick](#) through engagement with live projects. This includes a collaborative project linked to [Interactive Futures](#), where students explored alternative delivery models and contributed to real-world programme development. This work:

- supports skills development
- connects education with industry
- strengthens partnership with higher education

In addition, the Arts Section hosted a [University of Birmingham Internship](#) and further opportunities are being explored, including engagement with Media and Creative Industries students and the [Createch PhD programme](#).

CULTURAL SECTOR CAREER PATHWAY EVENTS

ESD9 Spark Presents

[The Spark Presents programme](#) delivered a range of sector support and development activity, including:

- [Spark Presents: Rankin](#)
- [Spark Presents: Open Studios Roundtable](#)
- [Spark Presents: Makers' Fair](#)
- [Spark Presents: LSA's Mini Print Exhibition](#)
- [Spark Presents: Artists' Café](#) sessions x 2
- [Spark Presents: Scratch Night](#)
- 7 events delivered
- 840 total participants

These events provide accessible opportunities for artists and organisations to:

- share work
- build networks
- develop practice

Collectively, this contributes to strengthening the local creative ecosystem and supporting career development.

ESD10 Interactive Futures

The Arts Section has supported the strategic development of Interactive Futures in partnership with [Warwickshire County Council](#). This includes:

- development of a new event strategy
- scoping of an updated programme model
- securing £7,000 external funding to support delivery in 2026

This work positions the programme for future growth and strengthens its role in supporting creative and digital sector development.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next phase of delivery will focus on:

- establishing a district-wide volunteering programme
- expanding education partnerships and student opportunities
- increasing support for freelance creatives and early-career practitioners
- strengthening pathways into the cultural sector through targeted skills development



See the [Action Plan](#) for full KPI details.



Interactive Futures at the Royal Spa Centre

Spark Presents: Makers' Fair at the Royal Spa Centre. Image © Jack Turley



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & WELLBEING

Community engagement and wellbeing activity supports inclusive participation in cultural life, enabling residents to connect with each other, engage with local spaces, and access creative opportunities that support social and emotional wellbeing.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the Arts Section has delivered a programme of activity focused on accessible engagement, intergenerational participation and community partnership working.

LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

CEW6 Intergenerational Activity

[Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum](#) delivers a sustained programme of intergenerational activity, providing year-round opportunities for families and communities to engage with the collection and exhibitions. This includes:

- [free, self-led activity](#) (trails, sensory resources, interactive spaces)
- facilitated [workshops and events](#)
- dedicated family spaces such as [Haddie's Family Gallery](#)

Delivery has exceeded annual targets:

- family-focused events delivered: 66
- total participants: 1,170
- additional intergenerational workshops (*Childish Things*): 14

This programme supports accessible, low-cost cultural engagement and encourages repeat visits, contributing to the role of the Gallery as a community-focused space. While fully funded free activity is partly dependent on external funding, the programme demonstrates sustained demand and ongoing commitment to inclusive engagement.



CEW7 Schools Engagement

The Arts Section continues to support delivery of the school curriculum through workshops and visits at [Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum](#), aligned with exhibitions and the collection.

This builds on the expanded schools programme outlined previously and is supported by a more strategic approach to engagement:

- schools database established: 50+ schools
- targeted engagement with higher pupil premium schools
- funded visits supported by the Annual FLAG School Award in memory of Graham White

Additional activity includes:

- teacher CPD sessions
- in-school assemblies
- outreach to build relationships and increase participation

This approach strengthens access to cultural learning, particularly for underrepresented groups, and supports long-term engagement with local cultural provision.

PROGRAMMING

CEW9 Cultural Events and Celebrations

The Arts Section supports and amplifies community-led cultural events and celebrations, contributing to a more inclusive and representative programme across its venues. This includes partnerships and activity linked to:

- Diwali celebrations
- [Ukrainian film screenings](#)
- work with the [Polish Centre](#)
- collaboration with local community groups and organisations

These partnerships support access to cultural activity for a wider range of communities and contribute to the relevance of the programme. While this area of work is still developing, it represents an important step towards a broader and more inclusive programme of community-led activity.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next phase of delivery will focus on:

- expanding participation through targeted Arts Grants criteria
- strengthening links between arts activity and health and wellbeing outcomes
- increasing opportunities for community co-production and participation
- improving access to collections and behind-the-scenes activity
- embedding social value measures across the Arts Section



See the [Action Plan](#) for full KPI details.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



As this report demonstrates, the past 12 months have been both productive and demanding for the Arts Section. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank the teams who have made this work possible.

This is a genuinely collective effort. Our Collections & Engagement team at Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum continue to care for and interpret the collection with thought and integrity, while creating programmes that connect meaningfully with audiences. Our Technical and Facilities teams ensure our buildings remain safe, operational and ready to host a wide range of activity, often working behind the scenes in complex and evolving circumstances.

The Marketing and Programming teams play a vital role in shaping and promoting our offer, helping us reach audiences and maximise the impact of our work. Our Front of House and Customer Service teams are central to the visitor experience, ensuring that our venues are welcoming, safe and enjoyable for all. The Projects and Development team continue to identify opportunities, build partnerships and drive new areas of work forward, supporting delivery across the programme and contributing to the long-term sustainability of the service.

This has been a year of operating within a shifting landscape, with both internal and external pressures requiring flexibility, resilience and a willingness to adapt. The way the team has responded to these challenges while continuing to deliver a wide-ranging and ambitious programme is something to be recognised. We are a relatively small team, but one with significant ambition, and that is reflected in what has been achieved over the past year.

I would also like to thank Warwick District Council's councillors and senior leadership team for their continued support. That backing enables us to deliver a programme of this scale and breadth, and to continue developing arts and culture as a vital part of the district's identity, economy and community life.



Dr. Paul Roberts

Arts Manager, Warwick District Council

Peter Pan Pantomime Photoshoot at the Royal Spa Centre. Image © Imagine Theatre



