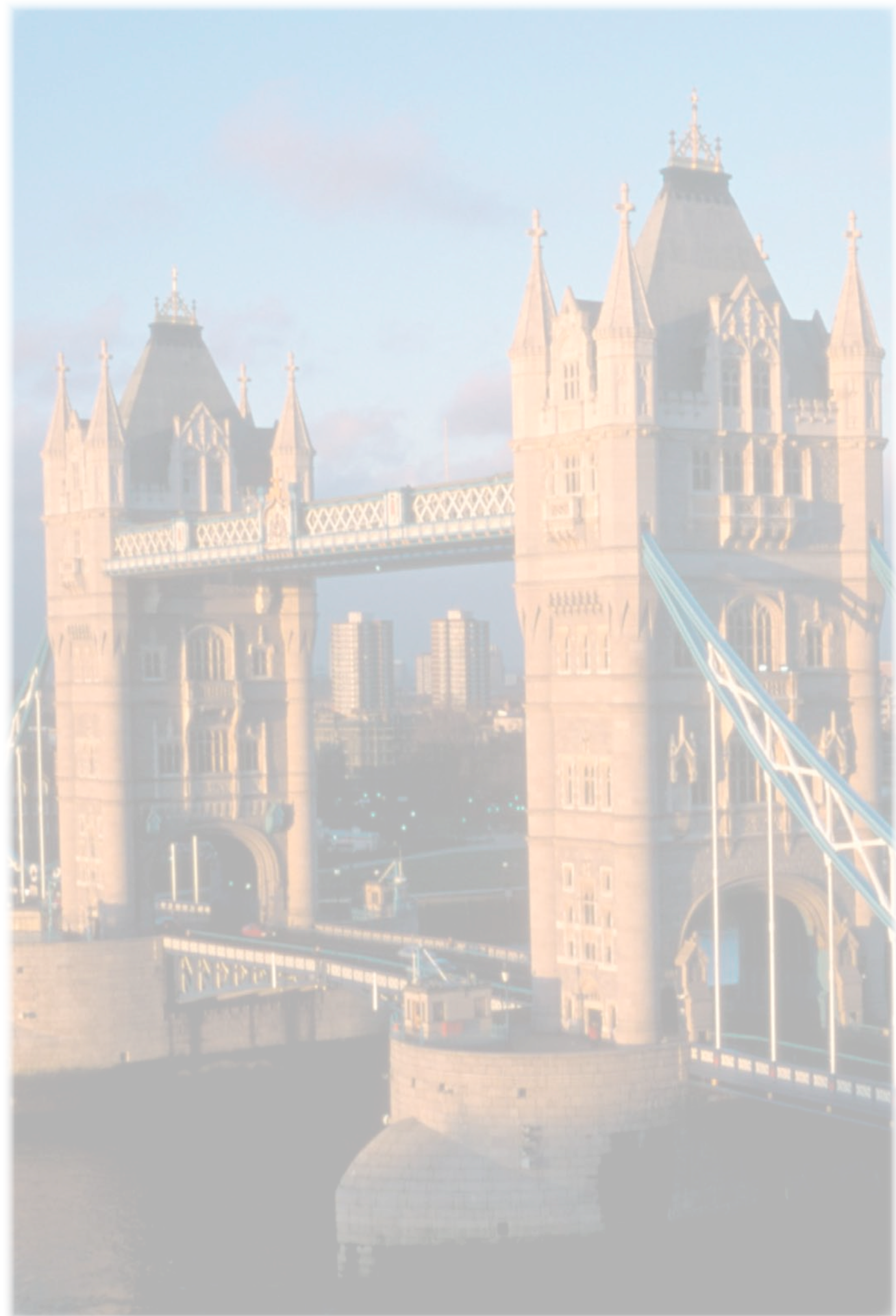


The background of the cover is a photograph of the Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben) in London, viewed from a low angle looking up. To the right, a red telephone booth is partially visible, with the word 'TELEPHONE' faintly visible on its side. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

# London Cultural Improvement Programme Cultural Data Access Review

Summary Report





## London Cultural Improvement Programme Cultural Data Access Review Summary Report

### Foreword

Access to quality data and evidence has long been the Achilles heel of the local authority cultural sector. Although huge strides have been made in recent years, for example through the development of Active People and Culture Map and the recent DCMS CASE review, Cultural Services often find themselves lagging behind other sectors, which have a long tradition of gathering comprehensive data and evaluating impact .

In the post recession context of rapid change and the inevitable transformation of Local Government there are tremendous challenges ahead but opportunities too. The move towards a strategic commissioning model has already begun and if they are to be successful in this context cultural services will need to have the right data and evidence to be “fit” to commission and to be commissioned.

Although many Local Area Agreements (LAAs) do not identify specific cultural outcomes, the IDeA nevertheless reports that culture does contribute directly to the outcomes of over 90% of LAAs. A critical success factor in ensuring that Local Authorities maximise cultural services potential to meet local priorities and make a real difference to people’s lives is being able to effectively position cultural services in the Local Strategic Partnership. Ready access to the right data and evidence is essential for cultural services to be able to plan, target and evaluate their resources, to demonstrate their value and effectiveness and make a real difference to people’s quality of life.

I recognise that it will be difficult for Local Authority Cultural Services to spare the capacity to deliver the recommendations arising from this report, particularly in the difficult times that lie ahead. It is important however that any action plan, compliments the work of the DCMS CASE review, adds value to cultural services, utilises the partnerships built through the London Cultural Improvement Programme and that local authorities and cultural agencies work together to put a sound foundation in place to ensure increased benefit and value is delivered by the cultural sector.

Moirá Sinclair  
Executive Director London, Arts Council England  
Chair London Cultural Improvement Programme Board  
March 2010



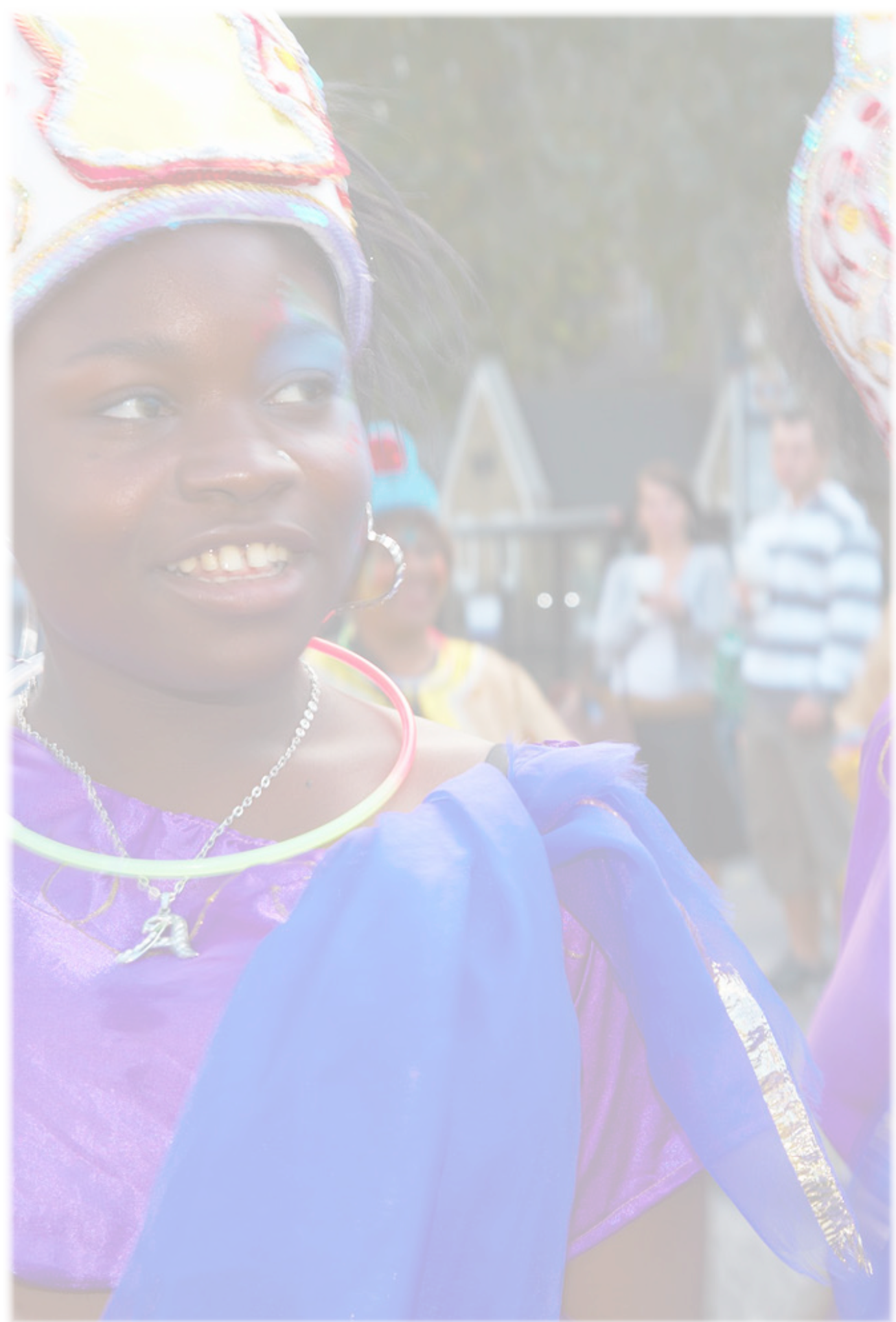
## Background

1. In July 2009, Capita Symonds was appointed by Museums, Libraries and Archives London (MLA London) (on behalf of the London Cultural Improvement Programme board) to undertake a data access review for the cultural sector in London.
2. The project is one element of the wider London Cultural Improvement Programme (LCIP), which has been funded by Capital Ambition, London's cultural agencies and a number of other stakeholders. Overall, the programme is seeking to deliver improvements in local authority cultural services by:
  - tackling underperformance
  - delivering the National Cultural Strategy, A Passion for Excellence (<http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/apassionforexcellence.pdf>)
  - supporting the sector in the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) (<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/audit/caa/Pages/default.aspx>).
3. The need for the project was identified in the London Cultural Improvement Programme's Performance Measures for London's Cultural Services (2007). It identified that, although there is a wealth of historical data available in the cultural sector, much of it is inaccessible and not directly comparable with, relevant to, or compatible with an outcomes-based evidence requirement. These issues of data quality and a lack of a baseline position were also identified in the Lifting the Burdens Taskforce report and the Cultural Improvement Strategy for Sport and Culture report.
4. It concluded that the cultural sector was ill-equipped for the new approach of the CAA and commissioning of services within Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). In the future, funding of the cultural sector will be dependant on its ability to provide evidence on the value it delivers in relation to a range of key strategic outcomes.
5. As a result, the sector will need to be able to access relevant, meaningful and comparable data to support the prioritisation of investment in services and activities and interventions to meet local priorities. It will also have an important role in supporting the growth of the sector through innovation and improvements in performance management.
6. At present, there is still a lack of understanding and appreciation in many authorities of the impact that the current lack of quality data will have on the future of cultural services.

## Key stages of project

7. The key stages of the report were as follows:
  - establishing a baseline position – identification of the current level, access and quality of data available to support the cultural sector, linked to requirements such as CAA, delivery of National Indicators and overall improvement agenda
  - implications for the sector – based on the baseline position research, identification of the implications for the sector of allowing the current state of data access and use to continue
  - improvements to data access and use – recommendations for improving cultural data use and management for service planning and prioritisation, decision making, securing funding and performance improvement.





8. For the purpose of this project, the cultural sector referred to:

- sport and leisure
- parks and open spaces
- play
- museums and galleries
- arts
- archives
- tourism
- heritage.

## Emerging themes

9. In overall terms, the research identified the following common themes for data management and use in London's cultural sector:

- improving access to data
- developing data analysis towards outputs and outcomes
- developing meaningful data benchmarking
- encouraging the sharing of data and partnership working across boroughs and sectors
- identifying and developing common online data tools
- ensuring regular and accurate data collection
- improving the resources devoted to data collection
- developing standard data collection and reporting frameworks
- improving the quality of non-user data
- improving competency and comfort with data at all tiers of management

## Implications for the sector

10. The themes outlined above provide a good summary of the issues that the cultural sector needs to resolve. Clearly, they do not apply in equal extent across the cultural sub-sectors or across boroughs; however, they are relevant to all of them.
11. Most importantly, consideration of them provides clarity of the implications of these not being addressed. In short, without a focus on these recommendations the sector will find it increasingly difficult to achieve the following three key objectives:
- demonstrate their performance and the value they deliver
  - optimise the use of their resources to achieve outcomes
  - support continuous improvement and local government transformation.
12. If this happens, it is likely to have a number of serious impacts:
- funding for cultural services to deliver wider outcomes is more likely to be reduced







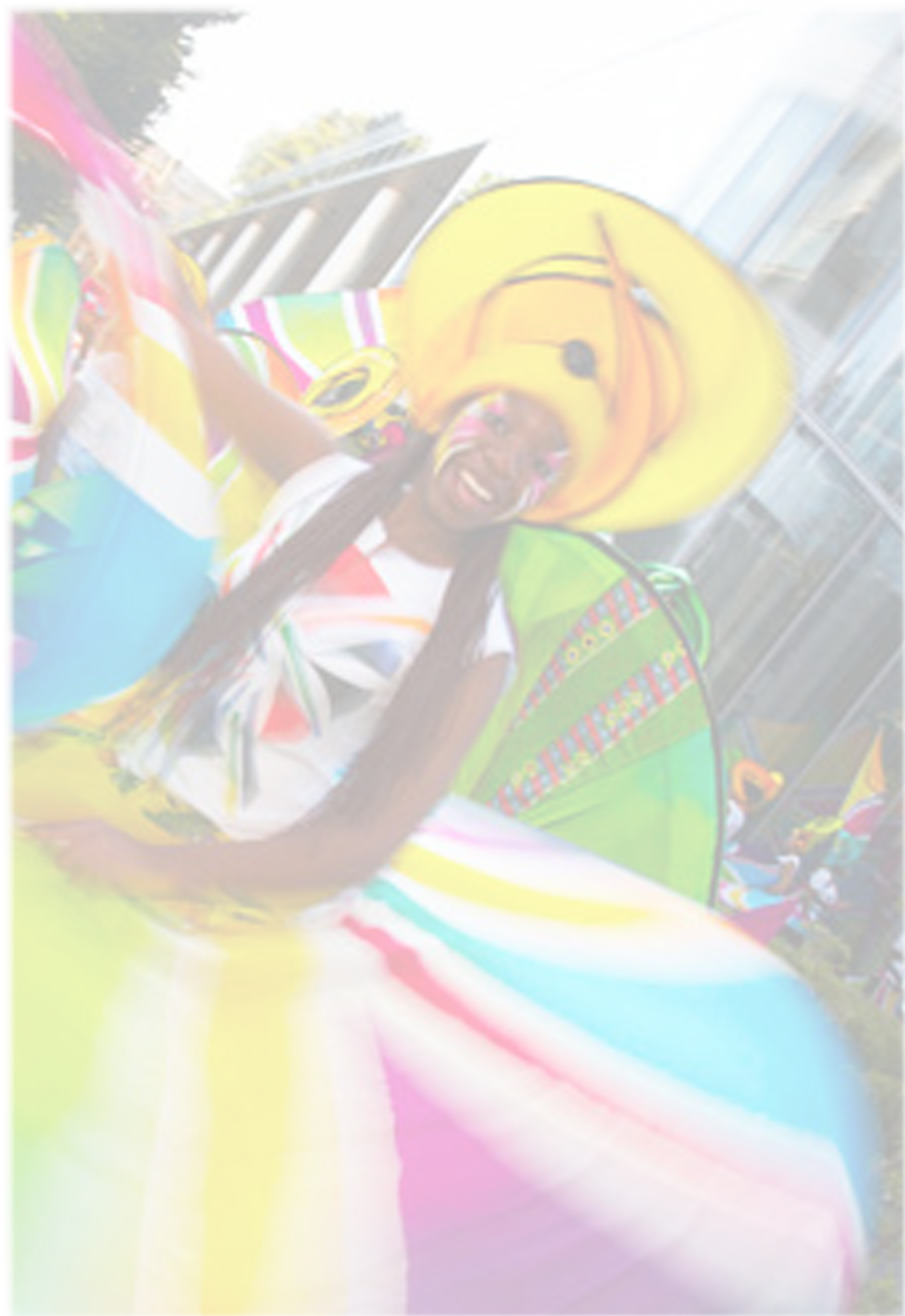
- cultural services will find it increasingly difficult to access funding from other sources for example through commissioning
- cultural services will miss the opportunity to work effectively in partnership with other sectors, such as health, education and social care, in which it can make a significant impact and importantly gain access to funding that exist there.

## Recommendations

13. Based on the themes identified, a series of actions and recommendations were developed. They were refined from an initial long-list to a more focused shortlist, which should provide a framework for the cultural sector in London in the coming year to 18 months. A separate action plan has been developed; however, the key recommendation for the local and national levels are listed below. The national-level actions are those that the London cultural sector can advocate, but not directly influence.

## LONDON

- immediate opportunities:
  - identification of CASE Review co-ordinator
  - identification of 2-3 data repositories to be the focus for data collection and analysis in the sector
  - establishment of a working group to commence identification of benchmarking groups
  - establishment of a working group for identifying best practice in the sector in relation to non-user data
  - undertake a short-term project to review what pricing data is currently accessible, what would be required and what other information could realistically be accessed to ascertain if further investigation into pricing data is feasible and realistic
  - short-term project to map the levels of performance management across London cultural departments
- short-term targets:
  - examine and agree a limited number of online resources around which to focus data collection and analysis for the sector
  - agree a standard framework for defining and collecting core cultural data
  - agree a standard KPI framework for culture
  - as part of developing a standard data collection framework, agree a process for when (and how regularly) data will be collected
  - develop and agree benchmarking groups for London cultural services
  - identify a standard approach to and format for collecting non-user data
- medium-term targets:
  - develop a standard approach to assessing the impact of cultural and creative industries.



## NATIONAL

- immediate opportunities:
    - identification a small number of heads of service to promote the role and importance of data management, analysis and collection in the sector.
  - short-term targets:
    - engage with the DCMS CASE Review to explore how the London cultural sector can benefit from its work, particularly in relation to outcomes-based evidence.
14. Addressing data access and quality issues will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the cultural sector and enable them to deliver more consistent and sophisticated analysis in the future. Facilitating an increased confidence in the cultural sectors ability to deliver improved outcomes for people.
  15. It is important to recognise that many these issues are also relevant in a national context. Therefore, it will be important that the outcomes of this report are used to both influence policy on data management and use at a national level and inform partnerships with the other regional cultural improvement networks.



