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Knowsley Secures £650,000 for Youth Culture

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Knowsley is celebrating after receiving £650,000 to expand opportunities for young people in the arts, aiming to break down barriers and increase access to what organisers describe as a “basic human right.”

The funding, awarded by Arts Council England, will support a new initiative called ‘This Place This Stage’ over the next three years. The programme is designed to engage young people in creative activities, provide mentoring, and foster pathways towards careers in the cultural and creative industries.

Knowsley Council is working in partnership with Adlib, Heart of Glass, Make CIC, and Shakespeare North Playhouse to deliver the project. A council spokesperson said the programme aims to empower young voices, nurture local talent, and transform creative futures across the borough.

Cllr Shelley Powell, Knowsley Council’s Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods, emphasised the need to increase youth engagement. She noted that although cultural participation in the borough has grown in recent years, young people under 25 still represent only a small fraction of attendees at events and activities.

Barriers are preventing some young people from getting involved, and we want to break those down,” Cllr Powell said. “This programme will give young creatives opportunity and inspiration, helping them see the creative industries as genuine career options. We also want them at the heart of decision-making, working with them to shape the events and opportunities they want to see.”

The initiative will place children and young people at the centre of Knowsley’s cultural life. It will involve a wide range of partners, including schools, youth groups, and community organisations. The expertise and resources of Culture Knowsley, Shakespeare North Playhouse, Heart of Glass, Make CIC, and Adlib will ensure the delivery of a diverse programme of creative opportunities.

Participants will benefit from projects within schools, mentorship opportunities, networking with other creatives, and active involvement in shaping local cultural activity.

Lisa Allen, Chief Executive of Shakespeare North Playhouse, highlighted the broader impact of the programme. “Creating cultural opportunities in Knowsley is especially important in areas where access to the arts hasn’t always been readily available. We’ll be running theatre projects in schools and providing opportunities for young people to explore their creativity. Most importantly, they’ll use culture as a vehicle for positive change in their communities. Access to culture is a basic human right, and this programme ensures young people have the confidence and opportunity to engage with it fully.”

Lisa Mitchell, Training and Development Co-ordinator at Adlib, added: “Our goal is to help young people see the arts and creative industries as real possibilities for their future. As an organisation rooted in creative work, we understand the incredible potential that exists. Through mentorship and real-world experience, this programme will help the next generation of engineers, technicians, and creative professionals to thrive right here in Knowsley.”

Knowsley is one of Arts Council England’s ‘Priority Places’, a group of 54 areas across England prioritised for support and funding of arts and cultural programmes. The council said ‘This Place This Stage’ builds on Knowsley’s previous cultural development successes, including its legacy as Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture 2022.

By focusing on youth engagement, the programme aims not only to provide creative opportunities but also to cultivate a more diverse and ambitious cultural scene in the

borough. It seeks to inspire young people, develop skills, and ensure the arts are accessible to all communities in Knowsley.

The initiative represents a significant step in promoting cultural participation as a fundamental right for young people, offering a platform for creativity, ambition, and long-term career development in the arts.