

Healing Arts

↪ Birmingham 22–26 June 2026

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 15 JUNE 2026, 09:00 BST

Birmingham will host England's first *Healing Arts* campaign, uniting culture and public health sectors to shape a more equitable future for the city



Healing Arts Birmingham illustration "Ozzy" by Birmingham based artist, Yasmine Joanna

BIRMINGHAM, UK 15 June 2026 – Birmingham City Council and the [Jameel Arts & Health Lab](#) in collaboration with the **World Health Organization, announced today the launch of Healing Arts Birmingham, a landmark new city-wide programme positioning Birmingham at the forefront of England's thriving creative health movement.**

Taking place from Monday 22 June to Friday 26 June 2026, the week-long initiative will bring together the arts, culture and public health sectors through a diverse programme of research symposia, exhibitions, concerts, community events, policy roundtables, and guided cultural tours exploring the role of arts in shaping healthier and more connected communities.

Building on the success of the Jameel Arts & Health Lab's global *Healing Arts* campaign, including recent iterations in [New York](#), [Barcelona](#), and [Singapore](#), Birmingham will become the first city in England to deliver a dedicated *Healing Arts* programme at this scale, with events taking place across neighbourhoods, cultural venues and community spaces throughout the city.

The programme will include both free and ticketed events, creating opportunities for audiences across Birmingham and beyond to engage with the city's creative health sector in meaningful and accessible ways. Events will be co-led by a coalition of local, national and international collaborators including Arts Council England, Ikon Gallery, University of Birmingham, B:Music, Midland Arts Centre, National Centre for Creative Health, National Arts in Hospitals Network, CULTURUNNERS, New York University, Hospital Rooms, Department of Health and Social Care and Agder Kunstakademi.

At a time of accelerating global interest in the health benefits of the arts, Healing Arts Birmingham proposes culture, and artistic engagement as a core pillar of public health. It will include the launch of a national policy brief, [UK Arts & Health: The Time is Now](#), published by the Jameel Arts & Health Lab in collaboration with the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, and National Centre for Creative Health with support from Arts Council England, and will coincide with the 2026 release of Jameel Arts & Health Lab Steering Committee Chair, Professor Daisy Fancourt's best-selling book [Art Cure: The Science of How the Arts Transforms our Health](#); and [a landmark report](#) from University College London linking engagement in arts with a slower pace of ageing. Against this backdrop, Healing Arts Birmingham will be an important platform for national policy dialogue on creative health.

Daisy Fancourt, Chair of the Steering Committee, Jameel Arts & Health Lab said: *"Prior to the 1990s, nobody wore seatbelts. But it took years of science and policy change to change behaviour. Arts have not been routinely seen as fundamental to human wellbeing — but they can be."*

Thematic Focus: Arts & Health for Social Justice

Art often advocates for social justice to engage the public on issues of equity, shining a light on marginalised voices and championing the 'social health' of underrepresented communities. Healing Arts Birmingham speaks to this with the core theme of 'Arts & Health for Social Justice', inviting dialogue via the arts in order to mobilize diverse communities towards collective action.

Sally Burns, Director of Public Health at Birmingham City Council, said: *"I am really excited that Birmingham City Council is collaborating with Jameel Arts & Health Lab to bring Healing Arts to the city. This five-day festival will showcase how a city can build a social justice movement rooted in creativity, demonstrating how arts, culture, and heritage can contribute to a healthier, fairer and more resilient future for all who live and work in Birmingham. This is about highlighting the healing power of the arts in improving the health and wellbeing of Birmingham's many diverse communities, not just today or tomorrow, but in the long-term as we work together to build and empower a healthier, happier city."*

Global Positioning

Healing Arts Birmingham contributes to a growing international movement advocating for the role of arts in improving health and wellbeing. As conversations around sustainable investment in arts and culture continue nationally and internationally, the programme highlights the health economic value of creativity not only as a cultural asset, but as an essential part of civic life and public health.

Stephen Stapleton, co-director of Jameel Arts & Health Lab and CEO of CULTURUNNERS, commented, *"The Healing Arts model champions the role of culture in curating change, empowering artists and arts organizations to bring their ideas and insights on health from the edges of society to its centre. In positioning the arts as a catalyst for public health transformation, Healing Arts Birmingham will make a valuable contribution to the global movement around evidence-based arts and health innovation."*

A celebratory moment for Birmingham's Creative Health Community

The week will launch with an opening ceremony hosted by B:Music at Birmingham Symphony Hall, bringing together artists, practitioners, policymakers, researchers and civic leaders from across the city and beyond. The event will feature a specially curated programme celebrating the breadth of Birmingham's creative health landscape, including live music, spoken word, poetry, choir and dance performances alongside contributions from leading community voices working across culture and health.

Rachel Cranny, Head of Development & Impact at B:Music said: *"B:Music are extremely proud to partner on Healing Arts Birmingham, and to be hosting the festival's Opening Ceremony. As a charity, we are passionate about breaking down barriers to participation and harnessing the power of music to improve wellbeing and transform lives. This initiative is so important, both locally and nationally, and we hope it will help to raise awareness of the crucial role arts and culture can play in supporting healthy and happy communities."*

Healing Arts across the city

As Birmingham continues to navigate significant social and economic change, the programme offers an opportunity to celebrate the city's cultural resilience while exploring how creativity can support healthier, more connected and more equitable futures. At a time of uncertainty for many communities, the week creates space to recognise Birmingham's excellence on both a national and international stage.

One example is Ikon Gallery's exhibition *What are the Odds* at the Library of Birmingham, an immersive installation exploring the conditions in which people live and how creative practice can challenge inequality and advocate for health justice. **Linzi Stauvers**, Artistic Director (Education) at Ikon Gallery said: *"Ikon is excited to be joining this fast-growing network of local, regional and global partners committed to actively researching the role of the arts in public health and community wellbeing. Healing Arts Birmingham shows how, as a city, we have moved beyond population-level statistics towards addressing people's health needs and telling their stories. This festival promises to be a deeply moving event, evidencing the healing power of the arts in all our lives."*

A moment for reflection and connection

Healing Arts Birmingham will formally conclude with a closing day hosted by Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), bringing together local artists, communities and organisations to reflect on the role creativity can play in supporting healthier communities. The programme will include explorations of Cannon Hill Park and the relationship between people, place and the natural environment, alongside discussions focused on young people's mental health, confidence and sense of belonging.

The closing day will also feature a National Centre for Creative Health-led symposium bringing together cultural organisations, health practitioners and academics to explore how creative health can support neighbourhood health services and community-led responses to health inequalities. The day will conclude with live performances in the MAC Outdoor Theatre celebrating the collective journey of the week and showcasing emerging talent from across Birmingham, including AKASHA, Amina and Sing Out of Trouble Choir.

Deborah Kermode, Chief Executive & Artistic Director at Midlands Arts Centre said: *"We are proud to support a festival that reflects MAC's long-standing commitment to Birmingham's communities — creating spaces where people feel connected, cared for and inspired. The festival highlights the importance of wellbeing and public health, and the vital role the arts can play in championing and supporting people's health."*

Additional Quotes:

Professor Sara Jones, Deputy Director of Research and Knowledge Transfer (Impact) & Academic Lead for Culture Forward at The University of Birmingham said: *“The University of Birmingham is very proud to be a core partner for Healing Arts Birmingham. Through the University’s Culture Forward initiative - which draws together local cultural, creative and community sectors with our researchers, academics and students to further research, education and public engagement collaborations - we have coordinated a breadth of events, performances and workshops together as part of the HABrum programme, showcasing how our research across creative health makes a real-world impact to communities, families and the wider public in Birmingham and beyond. Healing Arts Birmingham is a superb vehicle to engage diverse audiences in what creative health means and the forms it takes, and to involve individuals in shaping their own wellbeing, and that of others, through visual arts, collections, performance, film and media.”*

Tom Jones, Director at Number 11 Arts commented: *“Healing Arts Birmingham brings together themes, practices and ambitions with which No 11 Arts has been working for more than a decade. It aligns perfectly with what we aim to achieve through working with residents in Birmingham. We welcome this special opportunity to not only share what we are doing with other arts and health organisations but also to help showcase how this increasingly important field of creative activity is flourishing in our city”.*

Notes to Editors:

About the Jameel Arts & Health Lab:

Launched in January 2023 by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, the Steinhardt School at New York University, Community Jameel, and CULTURUNNERS, the Jameel Arts & Health Lab is a global initiative to measurably improve health and wellbeing through the arts. With a focus on overlooked and underserved communities, the Lab leverages scientific evidence, a global Healing Arts campaign, and capacity building to drive the integration of the arts into mainstream healthcare.

jameelartshealthlab.org

About Healing Arts

Healing Arts is the Jameel Arts & Health Lab's global outreach campaign in collaboration with the World Health Organization. It is realised through city and country-wide activations integrating academic symposia, cultural events, artist commissions, pilot projects, roundtables, workshops, and artist-led communications campaigns. Healing Arts is produced internationally by CULTURUNNERS in collaboration with local partners, and prioritises silo breaking between academic, cultural and policy communities to drive inter-disciplinary innovation, investment and policy uptake in the field.

Success of Healing Arts:

In 2024, the Jameel Arts & Health Lab launched Healing Arts Scotland, the world's first national Healing Arts programme, which brought together 376 events and more than 11,000 participants. The campaign reached over three million people through a nationwide campaign and directly informed the integration of arts-in-health practices into public health Scotland programmes in Scotland, addressing health inequities affecting more than 5.4 million people. In Atlanta, Healing Arts helped convene partners across the arts, healthcare, public health, academia, philanthropy, and policymaking sectors, contributing to the momentum behind Georgia House Resolution 1007 (HR 1007), a bipartisan measure affirming the value of the arts as a resource for mental health. Passed in March 2026, HR 1007 made Georgia the first U.S. state to formally recognise the arts as a valuable resource for mental health treatment and public health.

About the Birmingham City Council:

Local Government for Birmingham, England. Birmingham City Council, based in The Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1 1BB, is the largest local authority in the UK. Serving a population of over a million citizens. Corporate Plan Birmingham and its citizens face significant opportunities and challenges and the council must be bold, ambitious, and confident: Bold in its aspiration, ambitious in setting its priorities, and confident in its ability to delivering them.

www.birmingham.gov.uk

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