



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	DAC Operational Update
Report to	Culture & Environment Scrutiny Panel
Date of Meeting	25 November 2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu
Executive Director / Director	Perry Scott – Executive Director for Environment & Communities Alice Davey – Director for Leisure, Culture & Public Realm
Report Author	Wesley Pemberton – Head of Culture
Ward(s) affected	Enfield Town
Classification	<i>Part 1 Public</i>

Purpose of Report

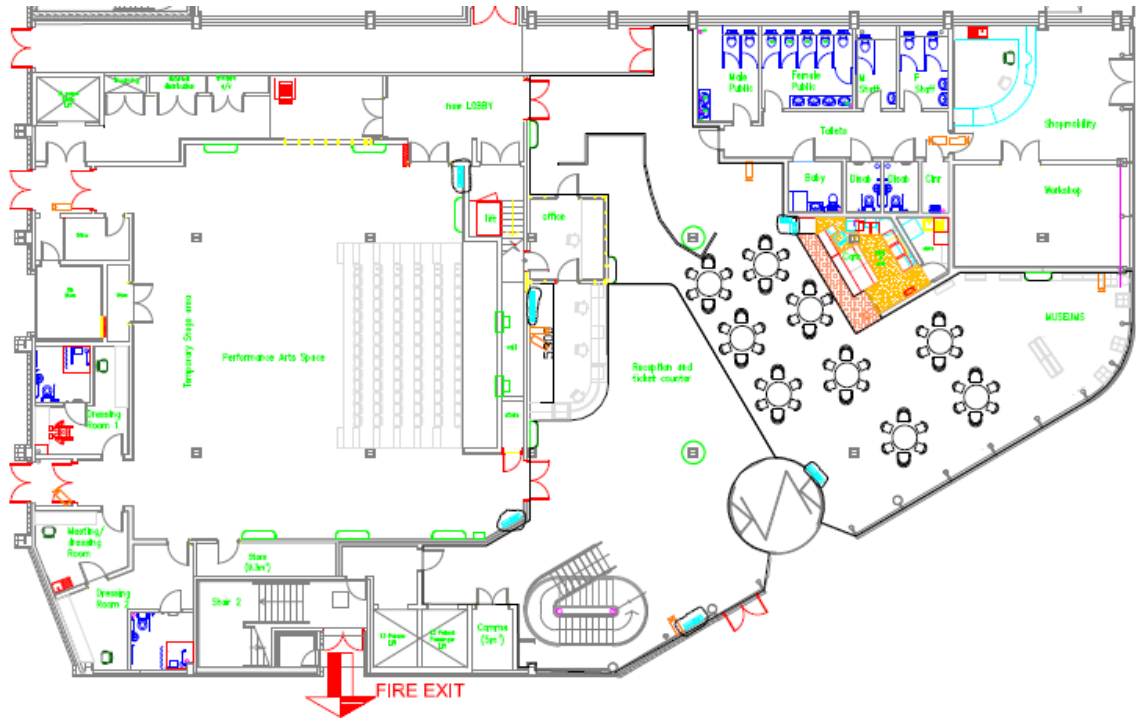
1. This report provides an update to the performance of DAC, after the refurbishment and reopening to the public in Dec 2022.

Main Considerations for the Panel

2. We would like to provide an update on what DAC has delivered and invite feedback on this and future opportunities.

Background

3. Before its refurbishment, the Dugdale Centre was a multi-purpose venue in Enfield, housing a theatre, the Museum of Enfield, meeting rooms, retail spaces, and basic food services. Its programming was inconsistent, with Millfield Theatre being the main cultural provider. The following is the floorplan of the previous layout:



4. The Centre closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was repurposed as a vaccination centre in 2021. In March 2022, approval was given for a refurbishment, which was completed by December 2022, and the venue was rebranded as DAC (Dugdale Arts Centre). The refurbishment aimed to position DAC as the borough's cultural hub, creating more usable space, which features a mezzanine, tiered seating area, temporary exhibition space and a 150-seat studio theatre for performances and events, as shown in the following floor plan:



5. DAC now operates as a key cultural and community space, open Tuesday to Saturday and for evening and Sunday events, with a focus on accessibility and integration of the arts into community life.
6. The redevelopment costs were primarily financed through S106/CIL funds with £39.8k of capital borrowing investment. Colleagues in Finance are currently investigating the opportunity to remove the loan burden through further S106/CIL contributions.
7. The 23/24 budget for DAC was a net cost of £450k. In this period, the venue delivered its programme with an actual net cost for the period of £334k. The DAC net budget for the 24/25 was set at £307k. Further in year efficiencies are supporting the delivery of a net budget of £271k for the current financial year. DAC output continues to develop and grow.
8. This report provides an overview of current operation at the DAC.

Successes

Cultural Programming

9. DAC offers a year-round, diverse programme of events, including in-house productions and external shows. In-house productions feature curated seasons like *Chroma: A Season of Pride*, monthly events such as *Silver Spotlight* (nostalgic film and music), *Laughter Lounge* (comedy), and *Chef Dom's Happy Hour* (food and drink). The venue also hosts large one-off events like *Nerdverse* (Gaming & Anime).
10. DAC collaborates with commercial producers like Get Comedy and Avalon to host high-quality touring shows, featuring award-winning performers such as Emmanuel Sonubi, Lurine Cato, DJ Spooky, and the London Sinfonietta.
11. Resident artists and companies play a key part in DAC's artistic programme. These include the Reggae Choir, Face Front Inclusive Theatre, Enfield Poets, Nexus, and Talkies Community Cinema. Their shows and events ensure affordable ticket prices for residents while generating income for DAC.
12. The venue's impact is illustrated by a range of events and estimated visitor numbers, though specific data is limited due to the lack of installed people counters during refurbishment.

	Shows, Events, Hires	No. of Visitors
Q4 22/23	163	5095
Q1 23/24	156	6087
Q2 23/24	150	3545
Q3 23/24	180	5515
Q4 23/24	127	4408
Q1 24/25	155	5379
Q2 24/25	148	3293

Community Value

13. DAC plays a key role in supporting local residents and community groups by providing space for meetings, events, and activities that promote social well-being and reduce isolation. Regular community groups include Knit & Natter, Breastfeeding Mums, Peri-Natal Coffee Morning, Dad's Drop-In, Age UK sessions, Sip & Scrabble, and Poetry groups.
14. During school holidays and weekends, DAC offers programs for low-income families, such as Mammoth Movie Meal Deal, Juggling, Rubik's Cube and Circus Skills workshops, and interactive storytelling. DAC also partners with the Schools Music Service to host events like the sold-out London Sinfonietta school concerts, providing many pupils with their first experience of theatre and contemporary classical music.

Cultural Celebrations & Civic Events

15. The team has successfully secured funding through commercial programming and community partnerships to continue to deliver cultural celebrations. For 2024/25, DAC hosted events for *Pride*, *South Asian Heritage Month*, *Black History Month*, and *Christmas*. Additionally, DAC, with support from Parks colleagues, took on the delivery of the *Enfield Town Fireworks* event. The DAC team also hosts the *Holocaust Memorial Day* as part of Culture Services' civic events.

Supporting Culture Strategy delivery

16. The Culture Strategy outlines plans for culture in Enfield from 2020 to 2025, focusing on using arts, heritage, and creativity to boost the economy, places, and opportunities for residents. To support the strategy, Culture Services has secured around £600k in grant funding, with DAC serving as the central hub for various programs.

	Value	Strategy Priorities	Funder
Dynamic Collection	£125k	Culture Everyday	National Lottery Heritage Fund
UKSPF	£200k	Sustainable Culture, Creating Opportunities for Young People Culture Everyday	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
Cultural Education Consultancy	£25k	Creating Opportunities for Young People	Arts Council England
Festival of Industry	£250k	Sustainable Culture, Creating Opportunities for Young People Culture Everyday	National Lottery Heritage Fund

Culture sector development

17. DAC serves as an anchor partner for external organisations delivering cultural projects in Enfield. Many professional creatives seek grant support from funders like Arts Council England (ACE) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)

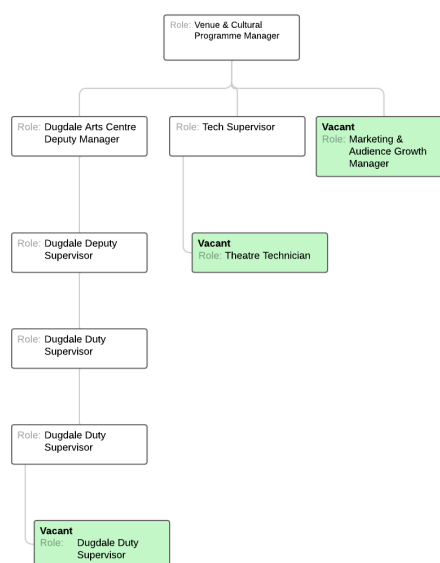
to deliver projects. We provide written support for applications, which are then delivered at DAC, with our venue costs recovered through artists grants.

18. DAC also supports fringe theatre, and developing or touring shows, including SHEWOLVES, Fox, The Winston Machine, Juniper and Jules, and Learning to Fly. Each year, we host an Edinburgh Fringe preview series, which recently featured local comedian Emmanuel Sonubi, who went on to be nominated for Best Show at the Fringe
19. DAC partners with organisations like Write2Speak, Hype and Genius, and Apples and Snakes to deliver grant funded participatory and talent development programmes for local residents and young people. These initiatives include the Business of Music Programme, Young Producers Programme, and spoken word workshops and provide important development opportunities and potential pathways into the creative sector.

Challenges

Team Resources

20. Since reopening, some key roles were vacant early on including the Head of Service role and Deputy Manager role affecting site operations. Though the venue operated at full capacity from May to September 2023, there has been a high churn of some team members, in particular in the technician team.
21. From December 2023 to June 2024, DAC operated with a reduced capacity at 55% staff. The am worked flexibly for example the Programme Manager covered marketing duties, and freelance technicians were used for events. Recruitment has progressed, and in June 2024, a Tech Supervisor was hired, easing these pressures. DAC now has the following team in place:



22. The recruitment is progressing further with the roles above identified in green

Ongoing facilities issues

23. Since its refurbishment, DAC has encountered a range of ongoing property / facility issues, including:

- Regular cleaning provision – the operating model was that DAC team members undertook cleaning (including toilets etc). The review of this operating model undertaken by Facilities Management in July 24, has resulted in cleaning services being delivered by a cleaning team, not DAC team members.
- Temperature Control: the DAC facility does not have direct access to temperature controls and the system experiences regular critical faults resulting in extreme temperatures, and frequent complaints. Work continues with property colleagues to resolve this position.

Culture Sector conditions

24. In 2024, local venues in London are facing ongoing challenges with ticket sales, with up to 300 smaller venues closing nationally over the post COVID period. Contributing factors include the lasting effects of COVID-19, which disrupted operations and slowed audience return, as well as the UK's cost-of-living crisis, which has reduced discretionary spending on culture.

25. DAC has seen a drop in ticket sales compared to 2023-24, which may be partly due to the absence of a marketing resource. Additionally, grant funding in the cultural sector has declined, and remaining funding being more competitive, with organisations like London Sinfonietta experiencing a 40% cut in core funding. This funding reduction makes it harder for artists to tour and perform locally, affecting cultural offerings for Enfield residents.

Marketing since Dec 2023

26. As detailed above, DAC has not had a dedicated marketing function and capacity for marketing planning since December 2023. This has now been addressed and the role is being recruited to prior to the end of 2024.

27. As detailed below our audience is currently hyperlocal and not fully representative of all residents. Through both programming and marketing the team is broadening and expanding our audiences and increasing the community groups that use DAC. We continue to work in partnership both internally and externally.

Catering

28. In September 2024, management of EnFood, the café and bar at DAC, returned to Culture Services. EnFood is currently not generating a net income due to rising service costs and reduced customer spending. Efforts to improve financial

performance have included reducing staffing costs, streamlining the menu, and expanding evening bar options.

29. The café space was previously advertised on the open market, for a local business to operate a food concession from the space. No suitable offers were made under this marketing exercise. Please see below for the opportunity being pursued.

Future opportunities

Creative Health Hub

30. Creative Health integrates arts and culture into healthcare to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being. This approach includes activities like music, dance, and storytelling, which offer benefits for mental health, physical health, social connections, and holistic healing.
31. Creative health hubs have emerged as spaces where arts and health services combine to support community well-being. DAC is exploring becoming a creative health hub, which would allow access to arts and health funding opportunities, including grants and sponsorships. DAC is in early talks with other North London authorities on a collaborative approach to funding, and it's working with the Enfield Culture Network on an Arts Council Place Partnership bid focused on creative health.

Cultural Education

32. Culture Services officers are currently undertaking a project to engage both Enfield's creative sector and schools, to develop a network which will support stakeholders towards creating a Cultural Education Action Plan for Enfield, and an outline structure for a CEP.
33. The ambition is, at the conclusion of the project, for Culture Services to lead a funding application, which will provide additional cultural education opportunities for all secondary schools in the borough. Through this programme, we will aim to maximise opportunities for DAC, to host programmes and performances.

Grass Music Grant Funding

34. Enfield Council's Cultural Strategy highlighted a gap in live music venues, particularly for supporting nightlife. Currently, the dedicated music venue in the borough is the 25,000 audience capacity Drumsheds, while Enfield Town has occasional live music at local pubs and bars.
35. To address this gap, DAC has identified equipment limitations that hinder its live music offerings. The team is working on a bid for ACE's Grass Roots Music funding, which, if successful, would provide the necessary resources to develop a performance space and regular live music programming in Enfield.

Potential Partnerships with other organisations

36. Enfield is a priority location for Arts Council England (ACE), which increases the likelihood of success for Enfield-based projects and organisations applying for funding. Through ongoing collaboration with ACE, it has been noted that large organisations are interested in both delivering projects in Enfield and potentially relocating here. This offers opportunities for DAC to be used by these organisations for either one-off events/programming or longer-term projects to benefit the local community.
37. Additionally, the Head of Culture has recently engaged with Broadwick Mews, the owners of Drumsheds, who are eager to deliver community benefits through their 9.8 charity. Discussions are ongoing to explore how they can collaborate to deliver funded projects and provide accessible cultural experiences for Enfield residents.
38. DAC has recently received interest in being used as a performing arts school for young children at weekends. The proposal would require a long-term commitment to ensure the business's growth and sustainability. It could potentially be delivered outside of current operating hours, discussions are ongoing.

Further development of programme and audience

39. During the summer in 2024, DAC undertook a customer survey, to better understand the users of the venue. The majority of survey participants (94.8%) lived in the borough, with the highest numbers coming from Enfield Town, Bush Hill Park, Edmonton, and Winchmore Hill. Of those who had visited DAC, the largest group was from Enfield Town (22.1%), followed by Bush Hill Park (15.7%).
40. When comparing age groups, the survey found that participants aged 60 and over returned the highest number of responses (42). The next highest category was aged 52-59 (15%). In contrast, 25-33-year-olds were notably underrepresented (6.5%) in the survey. There is a clear opportunity to develop our audience based on age and from beyond the local surrounding wards. This strand of work will be started once the Marketing & Audience Growth Manager commences.

Made in Enfield

41. Made in Enfield forms one of the UKSPF grant funded projects at DAC. The key aims of the project are through the engagement of retail specialist, to review and improve the Made in Enfield shop at DAC, engage and support the local maker sector, provide development opportunities for local makers, and showcase them at DAC.
42. The programme has already delivered:

DAC Gift Shop Research: Analysed current shop data, reviewed existing products, and conducted customer research through on-site observations.

Maker Network Evening: A showcase and selling opportunities event, where 46 makers gathered to discuss product supply for the DAC shop.

Maker Support Workshop: Focused on exhibiting at craft fairs and trade shows, particularly how to present work professionally. The workshop was oversubscribed.

Merchandising Training: A session for DAC staff focused on key visual merchandising principles to enhance customer attraction and sales.

43. At the end of the project, the consultant will provide a report with recommendations and with the new network of makers, to enable the shop will develop an increased income stream.

EnFood Opportunities

44. Now under Culture Services management, EnFood is now pursuing additional strategies to boost revenue, including enhancing customer experience, launching a grant-funded pop-up program for local food businesses- including a food festival, and delivering income-generating workshops with DAC.

Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies

Culture Strategy

45. As detailed above, DAC is the cultural hub for Enfield and plays a critical role in delivery the three priorities of the strategy, which are Sustainable Culture, Creating Opportunities for Young People, Culture Everyday

Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy

46. Start well, live well, age well were the three priorities. DAC hosts the community groups supporting these initiatives: Breastfeeding, Perinatal Coffee mornings, Knit & Natter, Age UK, MHA.

Serious Violence Strategy

47. This strategy identified afterschool window as peak times for youth violence. We have programmed afterschool events & built partnerships with local schools and Edmonton Community Partnership. Following the link between exclusion and incarceration, we are building a partnership with Nexus to provide opportunities for young people.

Fairer Enfield

48. The Council's commitment to addressing inequalities between races, genders, ages and health outcomes resonates with our diverse programming and engagement with community groups across the borough.

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