Evidence Review:

UK City of Culture Programme

Paper Two of Two – Technical Paper, Contextual Material, and Standards of Evidence

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Contents

Disclaimer Notice

Although this report was commissioned by the DCMS, the findings and recommendations contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the DCMS.

Glossary of Terms

ACE – Arts Council England

BRES – Business Register and Employment Survey. The Business Register and Employment Survey publishes what are regarded as official employee and employment estimates at detailed geographical and industrial levels.

CHC – Culture and Heritage Capital Framework

DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport (up until February 2023, the department was known as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport).

ECoC – European Capital of Culture

EIA – Economic Impact Assessment

EU – European Union

FTE – Full Time Equivalent, a measure of employment

GVA – Gross Value Added is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry, or sector of an economy.

LEP – Local Enterprise Partnership

NUTS – Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics. NUTS is a geocode standard for referencing the administrative divisions of countries for statistical purposes. The standard was developed and remains regulated by the European Union, and thus covers only the EU member states in detail.

Outcomes – Changes that result from the project outputs over the short, medium, and long term.

SCBA – Social Cost Benefit Analysis

SROI – Social Return On Investment

SWEMWBS – The short version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). WEMWBS was developed to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes, and policies that aim to improve mental wellbeing.

UK CoC – UK City of Culture

VfM – Value for Money Assessment

Introduction

In January 2024, Warwick Business School (WBS) was commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to conduct an evidence review on the impact of the UK City of Culture (UK CoC) title. This second paper, a technical report, provides a detailed systematic review of the current evaluations and research evidence, examining the strengths and weaknesses, host city characteristics, legacy effects, and Value for Money (VfM) of the UK CoC programme. The review aligns with NESTA Standards of Evidence. This report also offers recommendations for maximising future benefits and legacy effects.

Paper One outlined a proposed Theory of Change (ToC) for the UK CoC programme, including recommended impact areas, outcomes, and indicator measures, supported by explanations and evidence.

This paper, the second of two, is a technical report that provides a more detailed systematic review of the current evaluations and research evidence relating to the UK CoC programme and, where appropriate, the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programme. This report tackles the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence for the outcomes and impacts, the characteristics of host places, and legacy effects. It also assesses the sources of evidence/evaluations against the levels detailed within the NESTA Standards of Evidence. Finally, it presents an examination of the Value for Money (VfM) generated by the UK CoC programme based on the available evidence, and makes recommendations for maximising the benefits and legacy effects of UK CoCs in the future.

This paper is a supplement to Paper One, which proposed an overall Theory of Change (ToC) for the UK CoC programme. That paper also recommended impact areas, outcomes, and indicator measures, and presented explanations of the evidence base underlying the proposed ToC.

Contextual Overview of the UK City of Culture Programme

The UK City of Culture competition is a UK-wide programme, held every four years, which invites places from across the UK to set out their vision for culture-led regeneration. Prompted by the success of Liverpool as European Capital of Culture 2008 and developed in collaboration with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the competition awards the winning place the title of UK City of Culture (UK CoC) for one year.

The first title holder was Derry/Londonderry in 2013. Hull followed in 2017, and then Coventry in 2021. Bradford is the title holder for 2025, and the competition has become a recurring fixture in the UK's cultural calendar.

Places compete to become the UK CoC by developing bids that meet criteria set by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which runs the competition. These criteria have evolved over the lifetime of the programme in response to both intense competition from bidding places and changes in national cultural priorities. They have thus evolved from four broad criteria points in 2009 for the initial UK CoC in 2013, to ten detailed criteria points for the UK CoC 2025 round.

The UK CoC aims to be a transformational moment in a place's growth. The success of previous winners (Derry/Londonderry, Hull, and Coventry) demonstrates how the programme can drive positive economic and social outcomes, develop lasting local, national, and international partnerships, and bring people together. Evidence also demonstrates how bidding for or winning the title can strengthen communities, build a sense of place and inspire local pride, celebrate and boost local and grassroots arts and culture, and attract new investment and tourism.

The competition is a key component of the DCMS's broader offer to unlock opportunity across the UK. It uses culture as the catalyst for investment in places; this, in turn, drives economic growth and regeneration, promoting social cohesion, instilling pride in places, and making places more attractive to live in, work in, and visit.

Since the inception of the programme in 2009 there have been:

- 71 expressions of interest in the competition from across the UK;
- 44 full bids submitted;
- 17 shortlisted places (representing a geographic spread covering 9% of the UK population), with the costs of the bidding process for shortlisted places ranging from £50k - £1.5m; and
- and 4 cities awarded the title.

The competition has been increasing in popularity, for the 2025 round, a record 20 places formally submitted expressions of interest to make a bid for the title to the DCMS.[1] Tables 1 to 4, later in this section detail locations that have either formally expressed interest or submitted full bids for the title.

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[1] Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (2021) *Record 20 places bid for prestigious UK City of Culture 2025 title.* Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-20-places-bid-for-prestigious-uk-city-of-culture-2025-title (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

European Capital of Culture

Throughout Europe, the European Capital of Culture programme, established in 1985, stands as a flagship policy of the European Union celebrating the culture of place and promoting wider unity. The initiative aims to showcase the vibrant tapestry of European cultures, emphasising both their individual richness and collective essence. By design, the programme cultivates a profound sense of belonging among Europeans while leveraging cultural assets to drive forward urban development. A new capital is selected to host each year, spotlighting that city's cultural heritage and contemporary artistic achievements. Since 2010, ECoC has embraced a dual-host model, allowing two countries to jointly host the celebrations. This approach amplifies cultural exchanges and extends the programme's impact, enriching the cultural landscape of participating places and fostering cross-border co-operation.

Timeline of the UK CoC Programme

A full timeline of the history of the UK CofC programme is presented in Figure 1; it incorporates an intersection with the ECoC programme.

The timeline has been constructed from a review of press releases issued by the DCMS, and information from the collection *PF 231 Department for Culture, Media and Sport and successors: Bids for UK City of Culture (2013 onwards),* held in the National Archives. Most items are available digitally and can be accessed through the National Archives website.[2]

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[2] Records can be accessed through: https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C16852166 (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

Date	Event
12/12/2008	Sir Phil Redmond CBE submits a proposal to the DCMS relating to the formation of a competition for the UK in the style of the European Capital of Culture model.
07/01/2009	Andy Burnham, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport announces plans for the UK City of Culture programme in response to the success of the European Capital of Culture in Liverpool. A UK city will be appointed as City of Culture for the duration of twelve months every four years.
09/03/2009	A working group for the UK City of Culture programme is convened for the first time. The group is chaired by Sir Phil Redmond CBE.
22/06/2009	After convening three times between March and June 2009, the UK City of Culture Working Group publish their recommendations for the competition. Proposals include that the first UK City of Culture should be held in 2013 and at 4-yearly intervals thereafter.
12/08/2009	The competition for the UK City of Culture 2013 is officially launched with places invited to register interest before having to submit full bids.
11/09/2009	It is announced that 29 locations registered an interest in the inaugural UK City of Culture competition.
15/12/2009	It is announced that 14 places have bid to become the UK City of Culture 2013.
24/02/2010	It is announced that 4 places have made the shortlist for the UK City of Culture 2013 title and will now submit revised bids.
15/07/2010	Derry/Londonderry is announced as the UK City of Culture 2013.
01/01/2013	Derry/Londonderry's tenure as UK City of Culture 2013 commences.
21/01/2013	The competition for the UK City of Culture 2017 title is launched.
06/03/2013	It is announced that 11 places have bid to become the UK City of Culture 2017.
19/06/2013	It is announced that 4 places have made the shortlist for the UK City of Culture 2017 title and will now submit revised bids.
20/11/2013	Hull is announced as the UK City of Culture 2017.
31/12/2013	Derry/Londonderry's tenure as UK City of Culture 2013 reaches its conclusion.
08/12/2014	Consultation launched by DCMS into the future of the UK City of Culture programme. It was acknowledged that the UK was due to host a European Capital of Culture in 2023, which meant that cities would be bidding against each other for various titles in three competitions over a five-year period.
25/03/2015	Consultation response published around the future of the UK CoC programme. DCMS announced they will continue to run the competition and that the bidding process for 2021 will run throughout 2017.
23/06/2016	The United Kingdom votes to leave the European Union through a referendum.

Date	Event
01/01/2017	Hull's tenure as UK City of Culture 2017 commences.
12/01/2017	The competition for the UK City of Culture 2021 title is launched.
02/03/2017	It is announced that 11 places have bid to become the UK City of Culture 2021.
14/07/2017	It is announced that 5 places have made the shortlist for the UK City of Culture 2021 title and will now submit revised bids.
23/11/2017	It is announced by the European Commission that the UK will be ineligible to host the European Capital of Culture in 2023 due to its decision to leave the European Union.
07/12/2017	Coventry is announced as the UK City of Culture 2021 live on BBC One's The One Show.
31/12/2017	Hull's tenure as UK City of Culture 2017 reaches its conclusion.
31/01/2020	The United Kingdom formally leaves the European Union.
23/03/2020	The United Kingdom enters the first national lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on everyday life in some form would legally be in effect until July 2021.
03/07/2020	It is announced that the start of Coventry's year as UK City of Culture 2021 will be delayed by five months because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
15/05/2021	After a delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Coventry's tenure as UK City of Culture 2021 commences.
29/05/2021	The competition for the UK City of Culture 2025 title is launched and places are invited to submit an expression of interest.
19/07/2021	COVID-19 restrictions legally come to an end in the United Kingdom.
20/05/2021	It is announced that a record 20 places from across the UK have put in an expression of interest to become the UK City of Culture 2025.
08/10/2021	Following the expression of interest process, 8 places are announced as being on the longlist for the UK City of Culture 2025 title and will now submit full bids.
19/03/2022	It is announced that 4 places have been shortlisted for the UK City of Culture 2025 title and will now submit revised bids.
31/05/2022	Bradford is announced as the UK City of Culture 2025 live on BBC One's The One Show.
31/05/2022	Coventry's tenure as UK City of Culture 2021 reaches its conclusion.

Figure 1: Timeline of the history of the UK City of Culture competition.
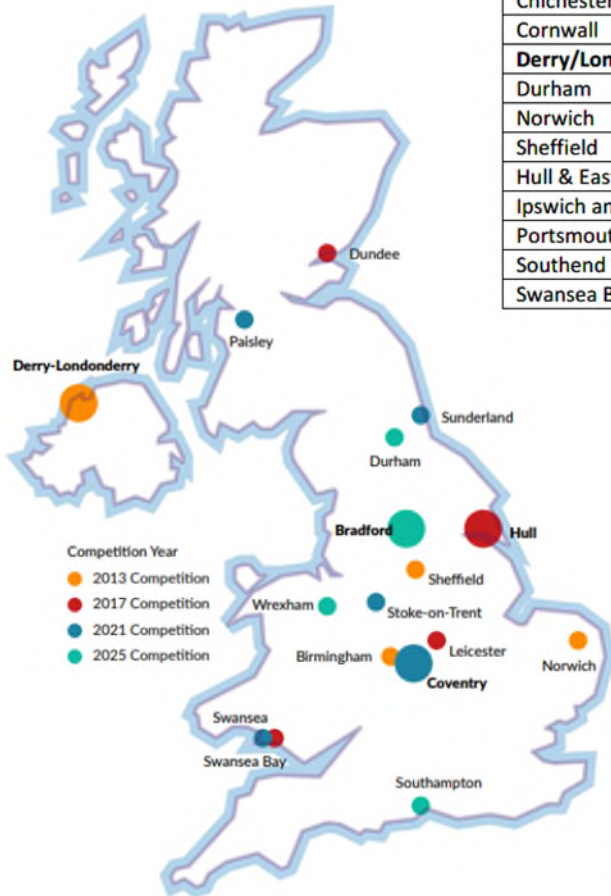
Table 1: 2013 Competition:

Place	Final Stage
Barnsley	Initial Bid
Birmingham	Shortlist
Carlisle	Initial Bid
Chichester	Initial Bid
Cornwall	Initial Bid
Derry/Londonderry	**Winner**
Durham	Initial Bid
Norwich	Shortlist
Sheffield	Shortlist
Hull & East Yorkshire	Initial Bid
Ipswich and Haven Gateway	Initial Bid
Portsmouth & Southampton	Initial Bid
Southend	Initial Bid
Swansea Bay	Initial Bid

Table 2: 2017 Competition:

Place	Final Stage
Aberdeen	Initial Bid
Chester	Initial Bid
Dundee	Shortlist
East Kent (covering Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkstone and Thanet)	Initial Bid
Hastings and Bexhill on Sea	Initial Bid
Hull	**Winner**
Leicester	Shortlist
Plymouth	Initial Bid
Portsmouth & Southampton	Initial Bid
Southend on Sea	Initial Bid
Swansea Bay (covering Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Neath, and Port Talbot)	Shortlist

Table 3: 2021 Competition:

Place	Final Stage
Coventry	**Winner**
Hereford	Initial Bid
Paisley	Shortlist
Perth	Initial Bid
Portsmouth	Initial Bid
St David's	Initial Bid
Stoke-on-Trent	Shortlist
Sunderland	Shortlist
Swansea	Shortlist
Warrington	Initial Bid
Wells	Initial Bid

Table 4: 2025 Competition:

Place	Final Stage
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	Full Bid after EOI
The City of Bangor and Northwest Wales	Formal EOI
The Borderlands Region, comprising Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders, Northumberland, Cumbria and Carlisle City	Formal EOI
Bradford	**Winner**
Conwy County	Formal EOI
Cornwall	Full Bid after EOI
Derby	Full Bid after EOI
County Durham	Shortlist
Lancashire	Formal EOI
Medway	Formal EOI
City of Newport	Formal EOI
Powys	Formal EOI
Southampton	Shortlist
Stirling	Full Bid after EOI
The Tay Cities Region	Formal EOI
Torbay and Exeter	Formal EOI
Wakefield District	Formal EOI
City of Wolverhampton	Formal EOI
Wrexham County Borough	Shortlist
Great Yarmouth & East Suffolk	Formal EOI

Tables 1-4 - The tables above outline the locations that have either formally expressed interest or submitted full bids for the title. Throughout the programme's lifecycle, 56 places have formally engaged with the DCMS around bidding. Additionally, it is worth noting that an additional 15 places registered initial interest in bidding for the UK City of Culture 2013 title but opted out before the formal competition round commenced.

The bids submitted to the four rounds of the competition have come from a wide geographic area that covers all four nations. However, shortlisted places are geographically focused towards the Midlands and the North of England. The only shortlisted place in the south of the country is Southampton, two shortlisted places are in Scotland, one is in Northern Ireland, and two are in Wales (the Swansea area has been shortlisted twice).

Winning places are geographically dispersed, with one in Northern Ireland, one in the Midlands, and two in the North of England.

Roughly 15% of the population of the United Kingdom live within places that have developed and submitted a bid.[3] Seventeen places have been shortlisted across the four rounds of the competition, with roughly 9% of the UK population living in shortlisted places.

Around 2% of the UK population live in places that have won the title. In terms of population size, the winning places are increasing in size, with the population covered therefore increasing from 108,610 for Derry/Londonderry in 2013 to 546,412 in the Bradford district for the UK CoC 2025. As well as growing in population size, winning places are also getting larger with regard to geographic area. Moreover, bids are increasingly looking beyond place boundaries to ensure widest possible coverage.

The cities and regions that reach the shortlist stage tend to be slightly more ethnically diverse than the general UK population, with Derry, County Durham, Wrexham, Sunderland, and Dundee being notable exceptions. The average of the population identifying as other than White across shortlisted places is 17.9%, sitting above the UK overall average identified in the 2021 Census (and other counts) of 16.4%. The areas with the greatest populations identifying as other than White are Birmingham, Leicester, Coventry, and Bradford (the latter two had the highest proportion in their respective competition rounds and went on to hold the title).

% of Population Other Than White - Shortlisted Cities Against UK Average
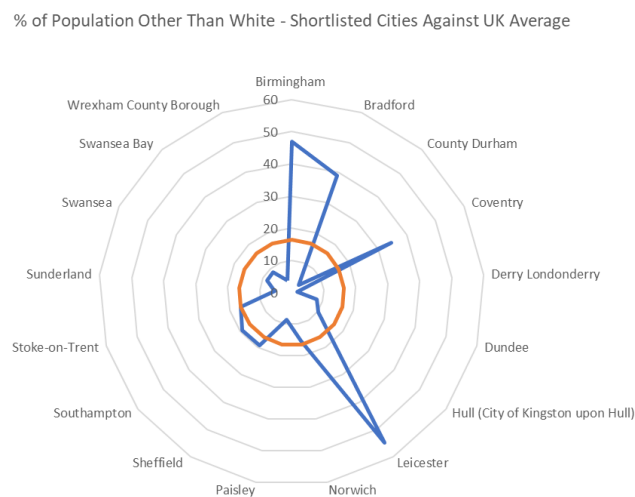
Figure 3: % of population who identify as other than White for shortlisted places compared with the UK average.

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[3] Based on figures from the 2021 Census and similar counts in the devolved administrations.

76% of shortlisted places had a median age that was lower than the UK median age of 41 (rounded from 40.7) as identified from the 2021 Census and other counts.[4] As shown in Table 5, the median age for the winning places is 5 years younger than the UK average.
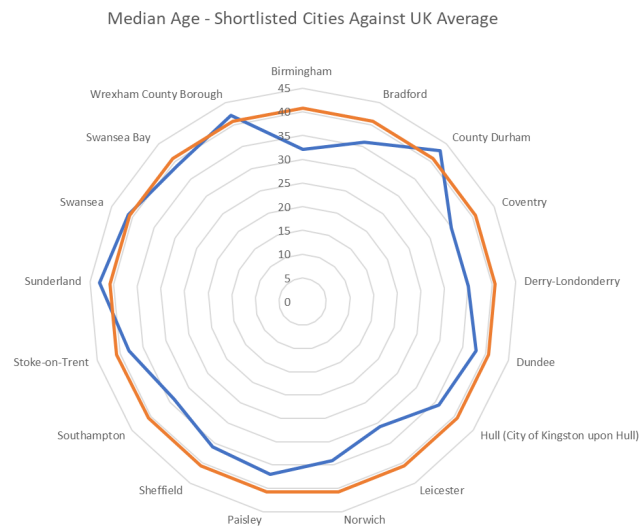
Figure 4: Median age of shortlisted places against UK average.

In line with general population trends, the younger population means that average household income after housing costs for 82% of shortlisted places is below the average UK household income after housing costs.

Figure 5: Average net household income after housing costs for shortlisted places compared with UK average.

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[4] Figures available at:
https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2021 (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

Further to this, all but one of the shortlisted places have a higher score for Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) than the UK average. As highlighted in previous research, this is in part due to the lower annual income and younger population.[5]

Average IMD Score of Shortlisted Cities Against UK Average
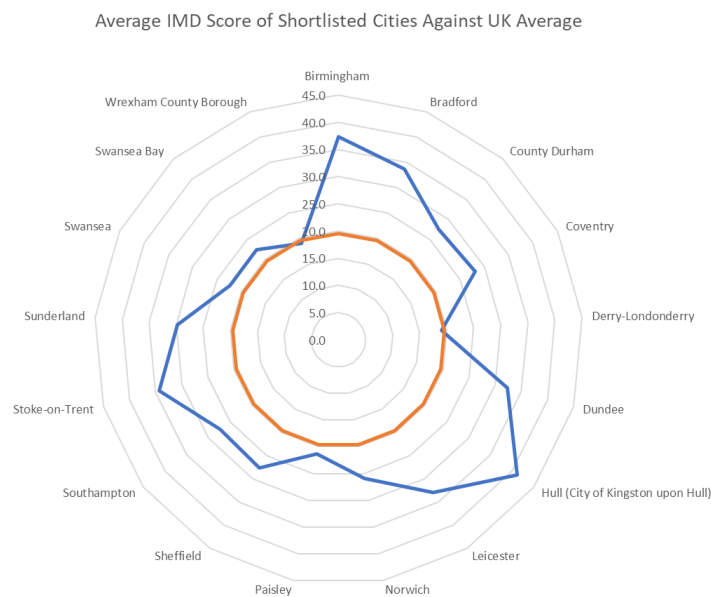
Figure 6: Average IMD score of shortlisted places against UK average.

As of 2021/22, it is estimated that 24% of the total UK population has a disability or long-term health condition that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more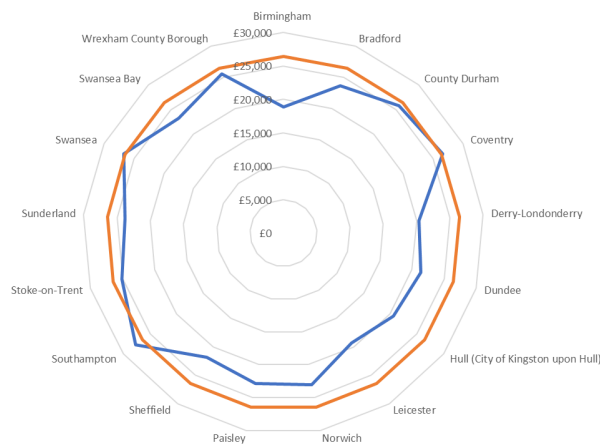.[6] In relation to the shortlisted and winning places, there is no relational pattern in the percentage of the population who identify as disabled.

Generally, shortlisted places and the places that go on to win the UK CoC title are younger, more diverse, and more deprived than the general UK population. Shortlisted places—Birmingham, Sheffield, and Bradford being notable exceptions – tend to have a weaker cultural infrastructure than comparable places. However, it is difficult to make a direct comparison due to the variance in arts funding across the devolved nations.

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[5] It is important to note that direct comparison across the devolved administrations is not possible due to the different variables used by the administrations to generate the indices of deprivation. What is presented here is an indicative comparison using the overall IMD score for each place.

[6] Data available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2021-to-2022 (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

A summary of the average population and demographic data relating to each round of the competition, and averages for all bidding and winning places can be found in Table 5.

	2013	2017	2021	2025	UK Profile at 2021 Census	All Bidding Places	Winning Places
Average Population	365,775	255,491	208,688	324,539	67,596,000[7]	291,435	315,096
Average Index of Multiple Deprivation Score	24.6	28.6	24.2	25.0	21.7 (England)[8]	25.6	30.5
Average % of Population Other Than White	18.1	13.9	10.3	12.9	18.3	14.1	21.4
Average Net Household Income After Housing Costs	£22,163	£23,839	£26,587	£24,291	£32,300[9]	£24,075	£22,799
Average Median Age	38	37	42	39	41	39	36
Average % of Population Aged 16 to 64 (Working Age)	64.8	65.5	62.0	62.8	62.9[10]	63.9	64.8
Average % of Population Aged 16 and Over who are Economically Active	58.3	59.7	58.8	58.6	60.6[11]	58.8	58.7
Average % of Population Identifying as Having a Long-term Health Problem or Disability	19.2	18.5	19.5	20.0	17.7[12]	19.3	18.6

Table 5: Average population and demographic data relating to each round of the competition and in totality for all bidding and winning places.

The full data tables relating to the above can be found in Appendix 1, which contains a breakdown of key demographic and place data in relation to bidding, shortlisted, and winning places across the four rounds of the competition to date. These tables are updated versions of the tables that feature in the AHRC-funded *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project: Towards A Research-Informed Approach* report which was published in 2022.[13] The tables now include data from the 2021 Census, which at the time of original publication was not available, and also revised figures from the Office for National Statistics to better reflect the demographic makeup of the places involved.

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[7] See: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/latest (Accessed: 12 July 2024).
[8] See File 5: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019 (Accessed: 12 July 2024).
[9] See: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/bulletins/householddisposableincomeandinequality/financialyearending2022 (Accessed: 12 July 2024).
[10] See: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/working-age-population/latest/ (Accessed: 12 July 2024).
[11] See: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/economicactivitystatusenglandandwales/census2021 (Accessed: 12 July 2024).
[12] See: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/disabilityenglandandwales/census2021 (Accessed: 12 July 2024).
[13] Neelands, J., Hodgson, J., Scott, M., Kaszynska, P., and Dixon, A. (2022) *Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project: Towards A Research-Informed Approach.* Coventry: University of Warwick/AHRC. Available at: https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AHRC-15062023-warwick_uk_cities_of_culture_-_towards_a_research-informed_approach_web.pdf (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

Characteristics of Successful Bids Across Winning, Shortlisted, and Longlisted Places

The following analysis is drawn from:

- Over thirty interviews (undertaken as part of the Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project) with stakeholders who were involved in bids that reached all stages of the competition;
- Interrogation of (where available) published DCMS assessments of over twenty bids that reached the shortlist stage;
- Research into population sizes, indices of deprivation, and demographic data relating to shortlisted places;
- Findings from roundtables held with funding bodies, event organisers, and local government officers; these were undertaken as part of an additional wider research project. Representation came from all four past or current titleholders and also from a number of unsuccessful places.

In order to reach the longlist or shortlist stage of the various rounds of the UK CoC competition, bids are assessed against the respective DCMS criteria highlighted in the appropriate bidding guidance. A longlist of places and then a shortlist is selected by an independent expert advisory panel using these criteria. The panel then makes recommendations to the DCMS Secretary of State.

Analysis revealed a consistent theme in that the places that perform well in the competition typically began preparing bids prior to the formal announcement of their respective competition round. These places positioned the UK CoC within a broader cultural strategy and planned for potential failure to secure the title by outlining a vision of change. Bidding for the title has served as a catalyst for collaboration and new partnerships within such places. For example, Stoke-on-Trent has seen increased cultural programming as a result of the bid, as well as improved partnerships and networks which have survived post the unsuccessful bid for the UK CoC 2021.[14] Paisley, another unsuccessful contender for the 2021 title, has continued to invest in place-related partnerships, allowing them to deliver projects and contribute to place outcomes.[15] A strong cultural strategy has been crucial for success, influencing funding allocation and bid justification within the various political landscapes. Coventry and Bradford, the winners of the 2021 and 2025 titles, had pre-existing cultural strategies that incorporated contingency plans if they were unsuccessful in gaining the title. Hull developed its strategy in 2016 after winning the title, laying the groundwork and acting as a precursor for legacy planning.

Warwick Business School, while conducting roundtables on major event delivery as part of a further research project, received feedback from event organisers expressing a preference for aligning the UK CoC programme timeline with that of the ECoC. In the European programme, host cities are announced four years in advance – with the announcement

[14] Stoke-on-Trent City Council. (2020) *Together We Make The City: Stoke-on-Trent – Losing the Bid but Winning with Culture.* Stoke-on-Trent: Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Available at: https://artsbank.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CofC-legacy-brochure.pdf (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

[15] Renfrewshire Council (2018) *£500k investment in Paisley 2021 cultural legacy.* Paisley: Renfrewshire Council. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20200926110816/https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/7187/500k-investment-in-Paisley-2021-cultural-legacy (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

preceded by a two-year application period – whereas the UK CoC follows a shorter timeline with places announced three years in advance with often only one year prior being the formal bidding process. It was felt that having additional time in the preparation period would help strengthen eventual outcomes because the additional time could be used for generating behavioural change and encouraging participation.

Table 6 below presents the qualities or characteristics of successful winning and shortlisted bids to date. These characteristics suggest that a compelling vision, a real need for change, a strong narrative, and active engagement of the population are as important to competition success as a credible and realistic budget.

An urban focus and coherent and manageable geography	- Cities or groups of towns with a population ranging from 100,000 to 600,000 - Urban focus with defined public space or a vision for creating it - A clear rationale for engaging adjacent local authorities - Bids that design engagement across outlying communities
A distinctive story and vision	- Places that identify a new creative narrative - A vision that will engage people and lead to transformational change - Places that leverage their heritage assets in a contemporary programme - Programming themes that are distinctive to that place
Places that have captured pride and engaged the whole population	- Places that use the bid to address image or perception problems - Bids that genuinely reach out across communities - Bid with a strong media and social media profile, with the press on board as a partner
A clear narrative of need based on research	- Effective baseline data as a basis for step changes - A theory of change with the clear thematic link to the programme; the theory of change should include causal links, mechanisms, and assumptions, and be fully thought through - Plans for research and evaluation against targets
Clear and achievable step changes	- Realistic change matched to evidence of social and economic need - Places with focus (i.e., not trying to solve everything) - Programming that specifically addresses the identified need (e.g., tourism growth, health) - Analysis of why UK CoC is the right vehicle to deliver transformational change
Cities that can demonstrate why culture is the tool for regeneration	- Places that have a commitment to culture already, with opportunities to grow capacity - Places that embrace culture across all service and planning areas
Strong cultural, civic, and business leadership that transcends hierarchy or politics	- Cross-party political commitment - Senior support across public and private sectors - Cultural and community voices are heard at the top table
Independent governance and artistic decision making	- Clear plans for governance, usually an independent trust - Staffing plans with experienced artistic and producing capacity - Clarity on local authority and delivery agency roles

Honesty about capacity to deliver	• Clarity on the producing, marketing, and organisational capacity of the city • Openness about gaps and weaknesses • Awareness of gaps in cultural expertise and plans for addressing them • Clear plans to develop cultural infrastructure
Planning for legacy from day one	• More recent bids transition from bid to delivery to legacy • A legacy that strengthens the existing cultural sector • Legacy in capacity, skills, engagement, and civic pride
A wide range of partnerships in place, including with higher education	• A wide range of partners (e.g., canals trust, refugee agencies, wildlife trusts) rather than just the usual suspects • Involvement of at least one university as a core partner • Local regional and national cultural partners • Evidence of private sector support • Health and voluntary sector partners
Places that position UK CoC in a longer journey or strategy	• Cultural strategy in place or commissioned during bid • Evidence of links to regional strategies • Places that start their bid 2 or 3 years ahead of decision, and have a solid plan B
Cities that provide benefits or learning for other parts of the UK	• Cultural partners in other parts of UK • Programme that reaches audiences across the UK, whether through touring, broadcast, or digital engagement • A concept or focus that is replicable • Research that can be disseminated to inform cultural practice in other cities
Places with ambitious cultural programme plans	• Cities that innovate with their cultural programme • Programmes with national and international partners • Large scale ('wow factor') programme ideas • Programmes with evidence of being co-created with communities

Table 6: Characteristics of successful bids.

Summary of Evaluation Sources and Methodologies

To date, three UK CoCs have taken place and been evaluated. Table 7 details the release dates of the evaluations and who undertook them.

	Release Date:	Available At:	Undertaken By:
2013: Derry/Londonderry	January 2018[16]	Currently not available, however the Post Project Evaluation Report (except for the appendices) is available through the University of Warwick.[17]	Derry City & Strabane District Council, and external partners
2017: Hull	April 2021 (initial launch November 2019)	http://www.citiesofculture.co.uk	Culture, Place and Policy Institute – University of Hull and external partners
2021: Coventry	November 2023	http://www.coventry21evaluation.info	University of Warwick, Coventry University, Coventry City Council, and external partners

Table 7: Formal final evaluation reports relating to the previous title holders.

Currently, Coventry UK CoC 2021 stands out as the only city to have made its full evaluation, including all supporting documents, publicly accessible. Hull UK CoC 2017's evaluation lacks online accessibility for several hero project focus studies, while only the main report (without the accompanying appendices) is available for Derry/Londonderry UK CoC 2013 via the University of Warwick.[18]

While final evaluation reports provide a comprehensive overview, it is important to acknowledge the extensive monitoring efforts behind them. These efforts include numerous monitoring reports, direct reporting to funders, KPI tracking, and internal reports. Supplementary sources often contain valuable data on direct beneficiaries or individual projects, which may be overlooked in the aggregation to the overarching UK CoC programme that is the focus of the final reports. This Evidence Review primarily relies on final evaluation reports but also integrates insights from these additional reports to highlight specific examples of good practice or impact.

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[16] The evaluation of the UK CoC 2013 was released in 2018, following a delay due to the Derry City and Strabane District Council being established in 2014 before becoming formally into being on 1 April 2015 as a consequence of the 2014 Northern Ireland Local Government Reform.

[17] The evaluation for Derry/Londonderry can be found here: https://warwick.ac.uk/research/partnerships/place-based-research/impact-value/researchresources/derry_eval.pdf (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

[18] Hero project focus studies are deeper examinations and evaluations of certain aspects of a host place's programme. For example, in Coventry, this included specific studies into the volunteering programme, environmental sustainability, civic and business partnerships, and faith groups.

Overview of Utilised Methodologies

Evaluation methodologies for UK CoCs have evolved over time. The assessment of Derry/Londonderry's tenure as UK CoC employed fewer techniques and methodologies compared with those utilised for Hull and Coventry. Table 8 offers a summary of the evaluation methods used for each city, including those proposed for Bradford UK CoC 2025 (based on planning documents as of January 2024, this review was completed prior to the publication of their evaluation framework).

	Derry / Londonderry 2013	Hull 2017	Coventry 2021	Bradford 2025
Framework/Evaluation Plan				
Benefits Realisation Plan	X			
Theory of Change		X	X	X
Population Level Surveying				
Citizen/Household Survey	X	X	X	X
UK-Wide Perception Survey		X		
Local Perception Survey			X	X
Tourism Evaluation/Monitoring				
Tourism Study	X	X	X	
Tourism Visitor Survey	X		X	X
Media/Broadcast Study			X	X
Monitoring Data / Project Reporting				
Capturing of Monitoring Data	X	X	X	X
Hero Project Evaluations/Focus Studies		X	X	X
Individual Post Project Evaluations	X			
Audience Surveys	X	X	X	X
Volunteering Survey		X	X	X
Artist/Producer Survey				X
School Survey	X	X		
Interviews/Focus Groups		X	X	X
Economic Impact Assessment				
Economic Impact Assessment Study		X	X	X
Business Survey		X		
Environmental Impact				
Environmental Impact Monitoring				X
Social Value				
Social Return On Investment Study			X	X

Table 8: List of high-level evaluation methodologies relating to each city's evaluation programme, including proposed methodologies for Bradford 2025.

Citizen/household surveys have been a common evaluation method across all UK CoCs to date, including Bradford (forthcoming). These surveys aim to establish a baseline and track changes in various metrics over time. Coventry's evaluation heavily relies on a representative household survey, which provides reliable data on long-term changes in cultural consumption and perception of the city. Hull's approach involved a specific citizen survey conducted in 2016 and 2018, alongside citizen panels. While the survey was representative, the citizen panels were not; they did however provide insight into how the programme was being perceived. Derry/Londonderry aligned its household survey metrics with the Continuous Household Survey of Northern Ireland, although given the small and non-representative sample sizes, caution is needed when interpreting the data.

All CoCs have gathered monitoring data from various stakeholders, including audiences, beneficiaries, and performers, as well as data related to media and financial aspects. However, not all of this data has been incorporated into the evaluations because the data may not link specifically to outcomes.

Quality of Evidence

As part of any evaluation, it is important to assess the extent to which any changes observed have occurred as a direct result of the intervention, which in this case is the UK CoC taking place within the respective places of the titleholders.

For robustness, this involves ensuring there are, for example, adequate counterfactuals, longitudinal studies, sensitivity analysis, difference-in-differences approaches, randomised control trials, quasi-experimental designs (if a control trial is not feasible), and the implementation of regression discontinuity designs for determining the causal effect.

The evaluation process for the UK CoCs held thus far has followed a progressive trajectory, with each subsequent city learning from the evaluations of its predecessors. This iterative approach allows for the refinement and improvement of evaluation methodologies, drawing on the experiences and insights gained from previous cities.

For example, Hull's evaluation incorporated lessons learned from Derry/Londonderry's experience as the inaugural titleholder. Similarly, Coventry benefited from Hull's evaluation findings. Now, as Bradford prepares for the start of their year, knowledge exchange sessions have been held between the evaluation teams from Coventry and Bradford to pass on methodological challenges and learnings with the aim of progressing learning in this space.

The remainder of this section examines the evaluations published so far against the existing and recognised frameworks of evidence detailed below.

NESTA Standards of Evidence

The NESTA Standards of Evidence model offers a structured approach for evaluating the effectiveness of policies and interventions.[19] The standards, originating in the medical field to differentiate between beneficial and harmful practices, have since been applied within sectors such as education, crime prevention, and community engagement. Achieving the first level of standards begins with articulating a clear Theory of Change, as well as with the outlining of goals and strategies that will generate impact. Subsequent stages involve gathering data to assess impact, including randomised controlled trials for the most rigorous evaluation. The advanced levels focus on replicating success across different contexts. NESTA developed the five levels of evidence to best guide organisations from initial theories to robust replication processes. This framework ensures that evidence gathering aligns with the stage of innovation, promoting credible and measurable impact.

A summary of each of the five levels is below:

- **Level 1**: At this level, it is expected that a logical reason can be provided for why the intervention could have an impact and improve the current situation. This involves articulating a clear Theory of Change.
- **Level 2**: Some change in parts of the intervention should be demonstrated, although causality cannot be proven. Methods for gathering evidence may include pre- and post-event survey evaluations or regular interval surveying.
- **Level 3**: Evidence should show that the intervention is causing the observed impact, potentially through the use of control groups or other rigorous methods that begin to isolate the intervention's effects. Independent evaluations can also begin to validate the nature of the impact.
- **Level 4**: The intervention should demonstrate impact at a reasonable cost, with documented standardisation of delivery and processes. Data should be available with regard to replicability and costs against scale of the intervention.
- **Level 5**: The intervention could be replicated and scaled up elsewhere. This may involve methods like multiple replication evaluations or fidelity evaluations to ensure consistent implementation.

Maryland Scientific Methods Scales

The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) is a five-level scale used to assess the methodological rigour of impact evaluations; it is thus much like the NESTA Standards of Evidence. Use of the SMS helps judge the quality of research methods employed in studies aimed at understanding the impact of various activities, such as health interventions, crime prevention measures, and community engagement programmes.

The five different levels are:

- **Level 1**: Studies are based on simple cross-sectional correlations or before-and-after comparisons of treated groups where there is no untreated comparison group. No

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[19] NESTA (2022) *NESTA Standards of Evidence,* NESTA: London. Available at: https://www.nesta.org.uk/feature/innovation-methods/standards-evidence/ (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

control variables are used to adjust for differences between treated and untreated groups or periods.

- **Level 2**: Studies use adequate control variables and either cross-sectional comparisons of treated groups with untreated groups or before-and-after comparisons of treated groups without an untreated comparison group. Control variables or matching techniques account for cross-sectional differences or macro-level changes.
- **Level 3**: Studies compare outcomes in treated groups post intervention with outcomes in the same group pre intervention. A comparison group provides a counterfactual (e.g., difference-in-differences). Justification is given for the choice of the comparator group, and evidence supports comparability between the treatment and control groups.
- **Level 4**: Quasi-randomness in treatment is exploited, ensuring that treatment and control groups differ only in their exposure to randomly allocated treatment. Instruments or discontinuity in treatment are used, and their suitability is demonstrated.
- **Level 5**: Reserved for research designs involving explicit randomisation into treatment and control groups, such as Randomised Control Trials (RCTs). Extensive evidence confirms comparability between treatment and control groups in terms of levels and trends.

Evaluations of UK Cities of Culture in the Context of Evidence Frameworks

Overall, evaluations of UK CoCs typically fall at Level 3 or below on the NESTA Standards of Evidence and they do not reach Level 3 on the Maryland Scientific Scale. While certain elements, such as externally commissioned economic impact assessments potentially follow guidance laid out in HM Treasury's Green Book, they demonstrate a level of robustness and rigour, though other components vary in their level of thoroughness. For instance, additional economic studies may utilise methods such as difference-in-differences, employing unsuccessful shortlisted places as a controlled counterfactual to assess impact on the host city.

The only evaluation to directly tackle its own standards of evidence is the evaluation for Coventry 2021, which noted:

> *Potential methodologies for establishing a counterfactual in the context of the UK CoC 2021 were explored as part of the development of the Performance Measurement & Evaluation Strategy. However, during the development of the strategy, it was expected that the UK CoC 2021 would have far more reach than was actually the case. It was hoped that the Coventry Household Survey could be used to capture the population change for the city as a whole and also the changes for those who actively participated and engaged with the programme. While this has been achieved, it has not been possible to reach the level of technical robustness needed to achieve Level 3 on the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale.*

> *The pandemic and major societal issues presented a challenge in establishing a counterfactual for this evaluation. However, the evaluation aligns with HM Treasury's Green Book: Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation and HM Treasury's Magenta*

Book: Central Government Guidance on Evaluation. A 'spatial discontinuity model' was proposed which would have helped to achieve SMS Level 3; however, as the UK CoC 2021 did not attract as many visitors from outside the city as anticipated, it was not possible to undertake this approach.[20]

The following details various challenges to evidence standards. These are broken down by the impact areas identified in Paper One.

Economic Impact

Economic Impact Assessments of UK CoCs have to date been undertaken by externally commissioned consultancies. All have relied on guidance from the HM Treasury's Green Book and all examine wider areas as a counterfactual approach. It can be argued that the evidence relating to economic impact falls at Level 3 on the NESTA Standards of Evidence Framework.

Coventry is the only UK CoC which has published in full the entirety of its economic impact assessment. The report, produced by AMION Consulting, was released at the same time as the final evaluation of Coventry's time as the UK CoC 2021. The methodologies behind Coventry's report also began utilising Culture and Heritage Capital (CHC) Framework methodologies and fed back into the wider development of the CHC. Hull's economic impact assessment undertaken by Hatch Regeneris did feed into the final evaluation for the year and its data was utilised in the evaluation undertaken by the University of Hull but it was not published in full. The evaluation of Hull UK CoC 2017 states that it is not possible to fully determine economic impact due to lags in the data. In Derry/Londonderry, Oxford Economic undertook an Impact Assessment into the year in November 2013, the main focus of the report being immediate economic benefit.

During the course of its Economic Impact Assessment for Coventry UK CoC 2021, AMION identified the following research gaps and areas for future development in relation to measuring the economic impact of a major cultural event:

- further research is required to better map the benefits of cultural and heritage projects and programmes against types of intervention in order to assist in the identification of the key benefits to be assessed;
- different approaches are required to ensure that negative and positive externalities are included in the evaluation (and appraisal) of cultural and heritage projects and programmes, including:
  - external costs: for example, in the Economic Impact Assessment of the UK CoC 2021, the Department for Transport approach to assessing marginal external costs was included in the Travel Cost Method assessment.
  - positive external impacts: such as placemaking effects. The original intention was, over longer-term analyses, to use a spatial discontinuity approach to undertake econometric counterfactual impact evaluations. Other techniques such as geographical regression discontinuity could also be explored.

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[20] Core Monitoring and Evaluation Team (2023) *Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 Impact Evaluation,* Coventry: University of Warwick, Coventry University and Coventry City Council, p. 43. Available at: https://coventry21evaluation.info/strategy-reports/final-evaluation-report/ (Accessed: 6 April 2024).

- additional research is required to assess the user and non-user benefits of events and programmes, including the triangulation and comparison of results using alternative approaches (such as contingent valuation/stated preference and revealed preference).
- research to enhance the Travel Cost Method approach to develop a better-informed profile of user benefits through the use of questionnaires to collect information on issues such as trip purpose and views about the event. The use of other data, such as polygon-level mobile/GPS data, to examine footfall/dwell time metrics could also be investigated and may be more generally useful;
- research to assess the additionality of the user benefits (including wellbeing) of heritage and cultural projects; in other words, to what extent is the increase in user benefits truly additional (i.e., compared with what would have happened anyway);
- research to develop approaches that incorporate distributional weighting in the evaluation (and appraisal) of cultural and heritage projects; and
- the development of DCMS appraisal and evaluation guidance, including the continued development of the DCMS's Culture and Heritage Capital Framework/Appraisal Guidance.[21]

Emerging techniques are becoming more widely utilised. One such technique is a difference-in-differences study, although this is only effective when done over a significant period of time. A difference-in-differences study evaluating the local business growth effects of the UK CoCs 2013 and 2017 has recently been published by the Enterprise Research Centre based at Warwick Business School. The abstract of this paper is also included in Appendix 2.[22]

Sector Development/Stability

The UK CoC programme has proven to be a transformative force, driving the development of creative and cultural sectors in host places across the nation. Through celebrating local artistic talent and heritage, the programme not only stimulates economic growth but also fosters social cohesion and community pride. In cities like Derry/Londonderry, Hull, and Coventry, the programme has left a lasting legacy of cultural vibrancy, marked by sustained engagement, new partnerships, and skills development.

In the Derry/Londonderry UK CoC 2013, legacy is evident through the continuation of cultural events and activities, showcasing the city's rich artistic landscape. Similarly, Hull's UK CoC 2017 saw significant investment in local cultural initiatives, enhancing skills and capacity within the sector. Coventry's UK CoC 2021 continued this trend, with substantial funding directed towards developing artistic practice and supporting community groups, ensuring a legacy of cultural vitality.

Skills development has been a key focus across all host cities, with initiatives aimed at nurturing emerging talent and diversifying leadership within the cultural sector. From mentoring opportunities to apprenticeship programmes, efforts have been made to equip

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[21] See: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/culture-and-heritage-capital-portal
[22] Roper, S. (2024) *Evaluating the local business growth effects of the UK City of Culture 2013 and 2017: A simple propensity score matching-difference-in-difference modelling approach.* Coventry: Enterprise Research Centre, Warwick Business School. Available at: https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/publications/evaluating-the-local-business-growth-effects-of-the-uk-city-of-culture-2013-and-2017-a-simple-propensity-score-matching-difference-in-difference-modelling-approach/ (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

individuals and organisations with the tools needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving cultural landscape post year.

Evidence relating to this impact area ranges from weak to strong depending on the development project taking place. Overall evidence relating to sector development/stability falls at Level 2 or Level 3 on the NESTA Standards of Evidence.

Health and Wellbeing

For UK CoCs it has been important to assess health and wellbeing benefits. This area of measurement has proven challenging across all UK CoCs. While evaluations of titleholders have talked about health and wellbeing, in reality only wellbeing levels have been measured. However, it is understood that these are closely linked to health. At population level, subjective wellbeing levels have decreased over the course of the intervention, and this is by no means an isolated occurrence. For example, in the health and wellbeing evaluation of the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 hosted by Liverpool on behalf of Ukraine, researchers discovered a decline in subjective wellbeing scores (measured with SWEMWBS) from when Liverpool's hosting was announced to the post-event period. The report's authors have attributed this decline to an anticipation effect, where the anticipatory wellbeing associated with hosting Eurovision overshadowed any potential increase in wellbeing observed afterwards. Additionally, they noted a possible post-event slump, reflecting the decrease in wellbeing that is commonly experienced when enjoyable events conclude.[23] Similar effects could have been seen within the population wellbeing scores for UK CoCs.

While there is evidence suggesting that engagement with cultural activities, such as those facilitated by the UK CoC programme, can positively impact individual and group wellbeing, assessing its effects at a population level remains challenging. Evaluation efforts, particularly those utilising surveys, have shown fluctuations in wellbeing scores among the residents of participating cities, with factors such as major societal challenges and the nature of cultural engagement influencing outcomes. At the project/event level, initiatives like volunteering programmes have demonstrated positive impacts on wellbeing, including increased life satisfaction and decreased anxiety. However, further longitudinal studies are needed to better understand the lasting effects of such interventions. Overall, while cultural engagement holds promise for promoting health and wellbeing, continued research and evaluation are essential for optimising its benefits and addressing potential challenges with measurement.

To achieve Level 3 on the NESTA Standards of Evidence a control group or strong counterfactual is required when looking at wellbeing scores. Further work is required in attribution of the UK CoC to any changes at a population level.

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[23] Corcoran, R. (2024) *Community and wellbeing evaluation of a unique international cultural event: Liverpool's hosting of Eurovision 2023 for Ukraine.* Liverpool: University of Liverpool/What Works Centre for Wellbeing. Available at: https://whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/community-and-wellbeing-evaluation-of-a-unique-international-cultural-event-liverpools-hosting-of-eurovision-2023-for-ukraine/ (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

Social Value

Social value is an emerging area of study, especially in relation to UK CoCs. Coventry is the only UK CoC to attempt a full Social Return On Investment (SROI) study, however this had to be scaled back due to methodological challenges. Evidence relating to social value currently achieves Level 2 in the NESTA Standards of Evidence. Pre-, during and post-event surveying is required for the determining of social value outcomes, however thus far, the sample sizes within some studies and evaluations of the UK CoC have been small and unrepresentative. This is particularly the case when the citizen/household surveys are cut by various demographics.

The SROI study that was undertaken for the UK CoC 2021 has identified the following research steps to strengthen the evidence base:

- A literature review on 'levers of change' is required to create a first-of-its-kind database for major events, showing evidence of what interventions create what kinds of changes, and for whom. This is necessary because
    - a wider evidenced understanding of how cultural interventions create change will help in the formulation and delivery of projects/programmes; and
    - such a database can generate a more standardised methodological protocol for how to develop robust social value measures based on existing knowledge.
- Further work is required on closing the gap between an SROI assessment and the Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) that is a key component of an Economic Impact Assessment. Attention should be given to ensuring that this is compliant and in line with guidance from the HM Treasury's Green and Magenta Books via:
    - the development of standardised indicators of value for a wider range of key outcomes, which can then be used in calculations (priorities can be selected based on the literature review identified above); and
    - wider capture of diverse stakeholder values and preferences to support evidence.
- Exploration of methodologies that would enable better participation and engagement with a Theory/Story of Change at the earlier stages (i.e., pre-bidding and bidding), especially methodologies that foster longer-term relationships with funders:
    - developing and embedding a culture of learning using evaluation as an evidence base.

The above recommendations link to work currently being undertaken in the development of the Culture and Heritage Capital (CHC) Framework and this work will fill a vital research gap.

Environmental Sustainability

Evidence in relation to the environmental sustainability impact of the UK CoC programme is the weakest out of the five common impact areas.

Across cities, there is an aspiration to promote environmental awareness and responsibility, and ensuring the UK CoC is delivered in an environmentally friendly way. Strides are being made in relation to the measurement of the environmental performance of major events and any potential behaviour change in attendees and participants. To strengthen measurement

and the evidence in this area, cities/places should make use of established frameworks and standards, thereby allowing comparison with other organisations or similar events. Taking this approach would allow for evidence in this area to reach Level 2 or 3 in the NESTA Standards of Evidence.

The next section of this report details the methodological and measurement challenges which prevent evaluations from reaching a higher level of standard.

Common Methodological and Measurement Challenges

Across the three evaluations of UK CoCs undertaken so far, the following are methodological and measurement challenges that have been common to all the evaluations.

1. **Wide Range of Outcomes and Impacts Sought:** UK CoCs try to capture and evaluate against a wide range of impacts and outcomes. Within the evaluation of Derry/Londonderry in 2013, at least 35 immediate outcomes and objectives were identified in the benefits realisation plan. Hull in 2017 had 27 immediate outcomes, and Coventry in 2021 had 15 outcomes. There is a clear argument for evaluating less but doing so with more rigour and robustness.
2. **Participant Diversity:** The UK CoC attracts a diverse range of participants with varying backgrounds, interests, and motivations. Ensuring that evaluation methods capture the experiences and perspectives of diverse stakeholders can be challenging. Some communities have felt excluded from evaluations because surveys are not in accessible formats or different languages, and combating this requires resource allocation. When conducting evaluations, there may be a need to undertake distributional analysis and the need to apply welfare weightings to better reflect the value placed on participants from lower-income bands in SCBA.
3. **Long-term versus Short-term Impact:** Evaluating the long-term impact of a UK CoC programme on a community or region is challenging because it may take years to fully realise economic, social, and cultural benefits. Short-term evaluations will not capture the full extent of the impact of a UK CoC. Due to resource challenges, evaluations are often delivered within twelve months of the year ending, with little or no resources set aside for capturing long-term impact.
4. **Data Collection:** Collecting accurate and comprehensive data on various aspects of the UK CoC, including attendance, economic impact, participant satisfaction, cultural exchanges, and community engagement, can be resource intensive and logistically challenging. Appropriate resourcing and training are required to successfully achieve this. Also, evaluation tends to sit with the delivery organisation, so data collection typically covers activity and outputs related to that organisation rather than incorporating a city-wide approach.
5. **Attribution:** Determining the extent to which the UK CoC directly contributes to observed outcomes versus other factors such as seasonal variations, external events, or concurrent initiatives is difficult. Establishing causal relationships between the UK CoC and outcomes requires rigorous research design. For example, within the design of Coventry's Household Survey 2022, control questions around participation and engagement with the UK CoC 2021 were included, and these identified patterns for

attendees and non-attendees. However, greater rigour is required to improve attribution claims.

6. **Subjectivity:** Assessing the cultural significance and artistic quality of UK CoC programming is inherently subjective and can vary depending on individual preferences and perspectives. Hull 2017 made use of Quality Metrics that were, at that time, in use across the sector, which allowed for comparison with ACE-funded NPOs. Coventry took a broad approach and utilised questions linked to civic pride and belonging. There are, however, no standard metrics in place relating subjectivity with how a UK CoC is valued. One lens of subjectivity is however perceived value for money – a full and complete VfM assessment at present can't be made in its entirety due to the valuation of benefits identified within the CHC programme needing more research. This is necessary if SCBA is to fully measure the VfM of UK CoC.

7. **Counterfactuals:** Establishing a counterfactual scenario is crucial in any evaluation. This involves determining what would have happened in the absence of the UK CoC. However, identifying a suitable comparison group or setting is challenging, especially due to the specific place-based nature of a UK CoC. Without a proper counterfactual, attributing observed outcomes solely to a UK CoC becomes difficult, and it is made especially challenging by the short-term nature of the evaluations currently taking place.

8. **Small Sample Sizes:** Limited resources, time constraints, or the niche nature of some elements that form the overall programme within a UK CoC may result in small sample sizes for evaluation purposes. Small sample sizes can reduce the statistical power of analysis, making it harder to detect significant effects or generalise findings to the population of the broader place (something that the evaluations to date have attempted to do). Robust statistical techniques and careful interpretation of results are necessary when dealing with small samples to avoid drawing erroneous conclusions.

9. **Contamination:** Contamination occurs when external factors influence the outcomes being measured, confounding the evaluation results. For example, with Coventry UK CoC 2021 concluding in May 2022, there was an overlap with the commencement of wraparound activity for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 and also the activity for the Birmingham 2022 Festival. That contamination could influence any statistical results arising from surveying and other evaluation activities. Controlling for potential sources of contamination through the study design and statistical analysis is essential to ensure the validity of the evaluation findings. Furthermore, Coventry 2021 took place against the backdrop of COVID-19 and the pandemic caused contamination within datasets, particularly within certain variables around social cohesion and civic pride.

10. **Scale and Scope:** Projects and initiatives within a UK CoC vary significantly, ranging from small, community-led events to large-scale productions featuring international artists. Evaluations must account for these differences by using tailored approaches that reflect varying objectives, audience demographics, resource allocations, and wider investments. While existing evaluation methods often capture the breadth of impact, they may struggle to measure depth of impact, particularly for complex outcomes like economic growth. Ensuring a nuanced approach to impact assessment is crucial to fully understanding the diverse contributions of UK CoC programme.

11. **Data Reliability and Validity:** Ensuring the reliability and validity of data collected for evaluation purposes is critical. Data obtained from surveys, interviews, or administrative records may be subject to errors, biases, or inaccuracies, compromising

the integrity of the evaluation. Within the evaluation of Hull 2017 and Coventry 2021, great care was taken to ensure that representative samples that matched the respective populations were achieved with the citizen/household surveys. Data for Derry/Londonderry 2013 is unreliable due to small sample sizes, and while the data presents an indicative picture, generalising the findings to population level would not be valid.

12. **Temporal Dynamics:** The UK CoC unfolds over a long period of time, and its impact may vary temporally. The timeline from bidding to delivery of the year lasts approximately five to six years. Evaluating how outcomes evolve over that time, distinguishing short-term effects from the long-term trends, and capturing seasonal variations all pose methodological challenges. Longitudinal studies that track outcomes before, during, and after the UK CoC can, as well as analysing time-based patterns in the data, provide insights into the temporal dynamics across the lifecycle. At present, evaluations are typically delivered within twelve months of the year's conclusion.

Response to Research Questions

The following are the high-level responses to the research questions identified in the invitation to tender (ITT). It is advised that the following sections are read in conjunction with Tables 1 to 5 of Paper One because these detail the supporting evidence.

What is the overall quality and strength of evaluation evidence related to previous winners of UK CoC?

The overall quality and strength of evaluation evidence related to previous winners of UK CoC is variable. Typically, it falls at Level 3 or below on the NESTA Standards of Evidence and does not reach Level 3 on the Maryland Scientific Scale. While certain aspects, such as externally commissioned economic impact assessments potentially follow HM Treasury's Green Book guidance, they demonstrate a level of robustness and rigour, though other components vary in their level of thoroughness. The evaluation of Coventry UK CoC 2021 attempted to address standards of evidence but encountered challenges, particularly in establishing a counterfactual and achieving technical robustness. This was partly due to the pandemic and societal issues. Despite efforts to align with appraisal and evaluation guidance, methodological and measurement challenges persist, hindering evaluations from attaining higher standards. Budget constraints and resource allocations have also impacted adversely on the strength of evaluations.

Calculating VfM is difficult as further work is needed to fully monetise all identified benefits the title brings. While the CHC Framework is addressing this, the work will take time and further investment. Overall, however, the UK CoC programme can play a part in developing valuation approaches for events.

What are the characteristics of UK CoC host cities? What are the similarities and differences in terms of outcomes and impacts?

The characteristics of UK CoC host cities vary, but generally, they tend to be younger, more diverse, and more deprived compared with the general UK population. Shortlisted and winning places typically have a median age below the UK average, and a higher percentage of their populations identify as other than White. Additionally, these cities often have lower average household incomes after accounting for housing costs, and higher Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scores, indicating higher levels of deprivation.

While shortlisted places may have weaker cultural infrastructure compared with other places, exceptions such as Birmingham, Sheffield, and Bradford exist. Despite variations, these cities offer opportunities for cultural engagement and participation, aiming to address socio-economic disparities and promoting a greater sense of place.

In terms of the desired impact, all host cities have emphasised economic renewal and urban regeneration, with Derry/Londonderry prioritising infrastructure development, Hull seeking to combat long-standing economic decline, Coventry focusing on levelling-up opportunities

and cultural participation within a place to address inequality as a Marmot City, and Bradford seizing the UK CoC title as a means of celebrating cultural heritage with the intent to use the platform to generate new opportunities for the district.[24]

What are the discernible pre-event, immediate, and long-term legacy effects connected with the status of UK CoC in terms of (a) cultural, (b) economic, and (c) social outcomes?

The status of UK CoC has produced discernible pre-event, immediate, and long-term legacy effects in terms of cultural, economic, and social outcomes.

(a) Cultural Outcomes:

Pre-event: The anticipation of the title generates a sense of excitement and cultural intrigue within the communities of the place. This begins during the bidding period for the title and leads to increased collaboration among cultural organisations, artists, charities, and community groups, who learn from one another. This fosters the incubation of new projects and wider organisational/skills development regardless of whether the title is in fact secured.

Immediate: The hosting of the UK CoC brings increased levels of cultural activities, events, and performances, often celebrating the heritage and unique identity of the place. These events attract both local residents and visitors. This immediate impact revitalises cultural venues, promotes artistic experimentation, and fosters a sense of cultural pride and identity. In both Hull and Coventry, cultural venues have slightly increased levels of attendance compared with pre-year.

Long-term: It is hoped that the legacy of the UK CoC endures long after the year has ended through the place's improved cultural ecosystem. It is often hoped that the title will improve partnerships and the way in which local cultural organisations work together. Long-term measures relating to cultural outcomes are currently lacking, but there is anecdotal evidence of improved funding for cultural organisations post year, as evidenced through increased NPO funding in Hull and Coventry, with organisations building on the work begun during their respective years.

(b) Economic Outcomes:

Pre-event: In anticipation of hosting the year, cities leverage the title to generate additional investment in infrastructure development, destination promotion, and wider regeneration projects. In turn this leads to job creation, business growth, and further inward investment. This period often sees increased confidence in the local economy and (anecdotally) a boost in property values.

Immediate: The hosting of the UK CoC stimulates economic activity across multiple sectors, including tourism, hospitality, retail, and creative industries. The influx of visitors and cultural tourists injects revenue into the local economy, supporting businesses and generating employment opportunities. The volume and value of tourism in host cities also increases.

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[24] Description of Bradford's bid can be found in the press release announcing the city as the UK CoC 2025, see: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bradford-crowned-uk-city-of-culture-2025 (Accessed: 6 April 2024)

Long-term: The economic legacy of the UK CoC extends beyond the event year, with sustained growth in tourism, business development, and employment; however, COVID-19 may have had a detrimental effect on any long-term impact in Hull. The UK CoC serves as a catalyst for long-term regeneration, attracting further investment, fostering entrepreneurship, and diversifying the local economy.

(c) Social Outcomes:

Pre-event: During the bidding period, there is a general sense of positive civic pride, community cohesion, and collective identity among citizens of a place, generating a shared sense of purpose and belonging. This period often sees increased civic engagement and volunteering.

Immediate: The hosting of the UK CoC brings together people from diverse backgrounds and communities, improving social connectedness, cross-cultural exchange, and mutual understanding. For example, Coventry had a volunteer programme that was representative of the city's population, while in Hull, the volunteering programme established for the year is still active and continues to bring communities together. Specific programme elements such as the Caring City in Coventry and Back to Ours in Hull focused on underserved groups, giving them visibility and a place in a major cultural programme. This immediate impact strengthens social ties, promotes inclusivity, and builds bridges across divides. The wellbeing of participants also typically increases through engagement, as shown in Table 3 in Paper One.

Long-term: The social legacy of the UK CoC manifests in strengthened community resilience, social cohesion, and civic engagement. The event leaves a legacy of cultural participation, improved outcomes through enhanced skills, and social empowerment.

What is the value for money from investment in UK CoC?

Within this paper, it is not possible to determine a full value for money calculation using the social cost benefit analysis model or other techniques listed in HM Treasury's Green Book. This is due to both methodological challenges and the fact that a number of benefits have yet to be monetised (work on monetising a wider range of benefits is being undertaken through the CHC programme of research). However, it is possible to state that, despite these challenges, a relatively low investment in the host cities can generate significant benefits through the UK CoC title.

The investment in the UK CoC programme, totalling £103.1 million, with £61.7 million sourced from public/National Lottery funding, has proven to be cost-effective, yielding substantial returns and multifaceted benefits. The infusion of this funding has catalysed a profound transformation across host cities, fostering economic growth, cultural vibrancy, and community engagement on a remarkable scale.[25] One of the most significant outcomes of

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[25] Examples of which can be found in the accompanying Future Trends series to the Warwick UK Cities of Culture Project. Reports cover a range of topics including economic impact, social value, co-creation, and addressing inequalities. The Future Trends series is available at: https://www.ukri.org/publications/warwick-uk-city-of-cultures-project/ (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

this investment is the additional investment of over £1 billion into the local economies of host cities. This influx of capital has stimulated business growth, job creation, and infrastructure development; it has revitalised previously neglected areas and provided a lasting economic legacy through an enhanced public realm and improved perceptions of the place. Examples of capital works in Coventry that were linked to the UK CoC are detailed on Coventry City Council's website.[26]

The programme's impact extends far beyond economic impacts however. It encompasses a rich tapestry of cultural enrichment and community involvement. Through the staging of over 3,800 events and activities, ranging from large-scale festivals to grassroots initiatives, the programme has nurtured a sense of pride and belonging among citizens, while attracting millions of visitors from across the UK and beyond.

Titleholders have embraced the use of media, increased place awareness, and storytelling to amplify the unique cultural identities of their respective place, generating a cumulative media/advertising equivalent value of £596 million and enhancing the UK's soft power on the global stage (£19m for Derry/Londonderry, £450m for Hull, and £127m for Coventry, see Table 1 in Paper One).

Economically, the programme has been a catalyst for job creation and sectoral growth, with host cities experiencing significant increases in tourist visits, job opportunities in the visitor economy, and expansion within the creative industries sector (although the long-term sustainability of this is questionable). Moreover, the programme has nurtured social cohesion and community engagement through extensive volunteer training programmes, educational initiatives benefitting thousands of school children, and increased cultural participation among diverse communities who have previously been underserved by publicly funded culture. These efforts have not only enriched the lives of participants but have also contributed to broader societal wellbeing (although attribution is a challenge), improved sense of place connection, belonging, and civic pride.

What are the likely sustainable economic and social benefits arising from this investment?

The investment in the UK CoC programme has yielded a diverse array of sustainable economic and social benefits, contributing to long-term change within host cities. The benefits of being a host city begin the moment the title is awarded. For example, in Coventry the majority of the additional investment into the city was awarded as a result of the title designation, being secured prior to the year taking place. Table 1 in Paper One provides details of the supporting evidence related to economic impact from the title.

Economically, the programme has sparked significant economic growth and development, leveraging the initial investment to attract over £1 billion in additional investment into local economies. This infusion of capital has stimulated business activity, job creation, and infrastructure development, laying the foundation for sustained economic expansion beyond the programme's duration. Most notable within this is the transformation of the public realm within the host cities, which has contributed to changed perceptions of the place. In

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[26] Details of Coventry's Cultural Capital Investment Programme are available at: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccip (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

Coventry, public realm improvements in the city centre led to 63% of citizens agreeing that the changes to the city centre have made it more fun and enjoyable to visit. Improvement of the public realm formed an essential part of the Hull City plan in the years prior to the UK CoC 2017 taking place, with projects being designed to make Hull a destination city for the title year.[27] Additionally, the programme has fostered a thriving cultural sector, generating employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, and enhancing the overall competitiveness of host cities.

Alongside these tangible economic impacts, the programme has also generated enduring social benefits by improving social cohesion, civic pride, and cultural enrichment for citizens. Through community engagement initiatives, volunteer programmes, and educational outreach efforts, the programme has empowered citizens to actively participate in shaping the cultural landscape of their cities. This sense of ownership and belonging has strengthened social bonds, nurtured a shared sense of identity, and fostered a more inclusive and vibrant community fabric.

The programme's emphasis within each host city on cultural diversity and inclusivity has contributed to greater social equity and cohesion, providing opportunities for historically underserved communities to participate in and benefit from cultural activities.

In Derry/Londonderry, ten years on from their year, the improvements to the public realm and infrastructure are clear to see, with the opportunities and new partnerships that were afforded to artists and organisations in the city allowing a strengthened cultural sector to continue despite wider funding cuts in Northern Ireland.

How can the legacy of the UK CoC be maximised for greatest value in future?

Evaluations of UK CoCs are challenging. They lack longitudinal depth and, despite wishing to achieve similar areas of impact, they make use of inconsistent metrics and outcomes. Funding post year has been a challenge in all cities to date and the lack of dedicated legacy funding allocated at the point of title designation has hindered the maximisation of long-term legacy. All host cities have faced funding gaps in the immediate aftermath of their year. While funders are keen to support cities, this is on the basis of a completed evaluation of the year but the scale of evaluation involved means that this is often subject to delay.

To ensure the long-term impact of the UK CoC, strong governance and delivery mechanisms are essential beyond the title year. While work has already been undertaken to strengthen agreements as a result of learning from previous titleholders, presently the responsibility for legacy ultimately lies with the local authority. Further research may be needed to explore how best to support ongoing partnerships and sustainability, but any specific management structures should be determined at the local level rather than through additional contractual requirements from DCMS.

In terms of evaluation, aligning bids with a consistent framework of impacts and outcomes (as proposed in Paper One) will provide a clear direction for the programme to contribute to both local and UK-wide needs and objectives. Robust evaluation strategies must be

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[27] Details of the public realm transformation in Hull are available at: https://cityplanhull.co.uk/index.php/public-realm/ (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

implemented to assess impact effectively, incorporating lessons learned from previous title holders and committing to continuous improvement. Establishing contingencies through collaborative funding arrangements will ensure sustained investment in the outcomes of the programme.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The UK CoC initiative, launched in 2009, has emerged as a significant cultural platform for host cities. There has been substantial interest in the initiative from across the UK, with 71 expressions of interest and 44 full bids submitted. Of these, 17 cities/places were shortlisted, representing 9% of the UK population, and four cities have ultimately been awarded the title.

Despite representing a small percentage of the UK's population overall, the impact of the UK CoC title on the winning places has been substantial. It has catalysed over £1 billion in additional investment into the local economies of the three titleholders so far, comparing favourably with a programme delivery cost of £103.1 million. Furthermore, it has generated a cumulative media value of £596 million, showcasing the unique cultural identities of the titleholders and enhancing the UK's soft power. Tourism in host cities has also improved, with an average 22% increase in visitor numbers across cities from the bidding period to the delivery period. This influx of tourists has led to higher visitor spending and increased the overall value of tourism in these areas.

The cultural impact of the UK CoC is evident in the strengthened cultural ecosystems of the titleholder cities. Artists and practitioners have benefited from mentoring and training opportunities, while organisations have enjoyed increased funding and partnerships. Additionally, volunteer programmes have boosted civic pride, with volunteers expressing higher levels of pride and belonging in their respective cities than the general population.

In terms of cultural participation, the UK CoC has provided opportunities for communities with limited access to publicly funded culture to engage and participate at a new scale, particularly among citizens from deprived areas.

This Evidence Review has focused on the impact and evidence relating to cities that have hosted the title, but there is anecdotal evidence that shortlisted places that were not successful in gaining the title have benefitted from the process.

At present, evaluations of UK CoCs typically fall at Level 3 or below on the NESTA Standards of Evidence and do not reach Level 3 on the Maryland Scientific Scale. While certain aspects, such as externally commissioned economic impact assessments potentially follow HM Treasury's Green Book guidance, they demonstrate a level of robustness and rigour, though other components vary in their level of thoroughness. The following recommendations are aimed at strengthening the overall evaluation and evidence base of UK CoCs moving forward. They will need to be incorporated into the bidding guidance and requirements for host cities.

1. **Make Use of a Standardised Evaluation Framework for the UK CoC Programme:**

   The DCMS should explore the establishment of a standardised common evaluation framework (potentially based on the proposed Theory of Change/Logic Model outlined in Paper One) which includes a comprehensive range of metrics and indicators to assess the impact of the UK CoC programme. This will help in the determination of the overall VfM of the programme, while also strengthening the evidence base around UK CoCs.

At present, evaluations use a range of metrics against outcomes within common impact areas, but the methodologies and the metrics vary greatly, making a clear-cut comparison of host cities impossible. In addition, any standardised framework must make use of national indicators and standardised questions to allow for comparisons with national datasets and facilitate the creation of counterfactual or control areas based on a place's characteristics. A key step change in the evaluations of titleholders to date has been the convening of technical reference groups bringing experts and specialists in evaluation together to help support the development and implementation of frameworks so far. This practice should continue even if a standard framework were to be introduced.

2. **Enhance Data Collection Methods Across the Full Lifecycle of a UK CoC:**

The delivery body and partners should invest in sophisticated data collection methods to gather accurate and comprehensive data on various aspects of the UK CoC programme across the full lifecycle, including during the bidding period. While this happens already, there must be commitment to ensuring that these are appropriate and timed according to a full evaluation plan.

Such data could include audience engagement, economic impact, cultural participation, and social cohesion/perception metrics, as identified in Paper One which accompanies this second more technical paper. Baselining must be undertaken during the bidding period. Citizen/household surveys must be representative with regard to sample size and the demographic makeup of the place.

Metrics must align to national metrics for ease of comparison and the creation of counterfactuals. Where possible, appropriate resources and budget should be allocated for trialling and innovating new methods to further data collection and the evidence base.

3. **Ensure Longitudinal Studies and Counterfactual Analysis are Present:**

Prioritisation of longitudinal studies and counterfactual analysis to track the long-term effects of the UK CoC and establish causal relationships between interventions and observed outcomes should be made. This will require appropriate budget and resource allocation and will also help ensure that the entire lifecycle of a UK CoC can be covered. Most places that have bid for the title have undertaken extensive data collection and research as part of the bidding process, often achieved through place partnership. A relatively low investment from partners within the place can ensure that this continues across the year's lifecycle, including post year.

By collecting data over an extended period and comparing outcomes with similar communities that did not host a UK CoC, evaluators will be better able to isolate the programme's impact and assess its effectiveness.

4. **Increase Stakeholder Engagement in Evaluation:**

One challenge relating to the UK CoC programme is the relationship between the delivery organisation and the evaluation. At present, evaluation is focused on the activities and outputs of the delivery organisation and not on those of the wider city partnerships which contribute to the UK CoC.

Greater collaboration and engagement among stakeholders, including local communities, cultural organisations, policymakers, and funding bodies in relation to evaluation will help alleviate this. The use of a standardised evaluation framework will also ensure that all partners are working towards the same outcomes. If the lead delivery body for the year were to involve stakeholders in the design, implementation, and interpretation of the evaluations, there is greater likelihood of capturing diverse perspectives and ensuring the relevance and applicability of evaluation findings. This process will also lead to a more embedded learning culture within a place.

5. **Capacity Build and Allow Knowledge Exchange Within the Place and Beyond:**

The host places should invest in a programme of capacity-building initiatives and knowledge exchange platforms to enhance the expertise and skills of evaluators, other cities, cultural organisations, policymakers, and others involved in place-based initiatives. Although this already happens (e.g., the mentoring programme from Hull UK CoC 2017 and knowledge-sharing events as part of Coventry UK CoC 2021), there remains potential for these to be expanded at relatively low cost.

Such expansion may include training workshops, seminars, and online resources focused on evaluation methodologies, data analysis techniques, and best practices in cultural impact assessment. Additionally, establishing mechanisms for sharing evaluation findings and lessons learned across cities and regions to facilitate continuous learning and improvement in evaluation practices should be a priority. Taking this knowledge exchange still further, the DCMS could hold a central repository of evaluations and data relating to the programme as an interim step prior to the establishment of a cultural data observatory.[28]

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[28] Commissioned by Spirit of 2012, FRY Creative undertook a feasibility study into an events data observatory and proposed models of how this could work, see: https://spiritof2012.org.uk/insights/events-data-observatory-feasibility-report-events-legacy/ (Accessed: 12 July 2024).

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Data Tables Relating to Bidding Cities

Where possible, the most accurate data from the time of bidding for the UK CoC title has been used. Data is drawn from a geographic level of the Middle Super Output area and aggregated upwards across geography to get data for the place in question.

UK City of Culture 2013

City	Nation	Final Competition Stage	Population	Area IMD Score*	% of Population Other Than White	Average Net Household Income After Housing Costs	Median Age	% of Population Aged 16 to 64	% of Population Aged 16+ Economically Active	% of Population Identifying as Having a Long-term Health Problem or Disability
Barnsley	England	Initial Bid	235,757	28.8	3.9	£21,736	41	64.1	58.8	23.4
Birmingham	England	Shortlist	1,092,330	37.3	46.9	£18,846	32	64.4	55.6	18.2
Carlisle	England	Initial Bid	107,949	23.0	5.0	£20,800	42	64.2	60.5	18.6
Chichester	England	Initial Bid	115,301	13.5	7.0	£28,526	46	59.0	56.4	16.7
Cornwall	England	Initial Bid	541,319	22.6	4.3	£21,868	45	61.5	55.8	20.8
Derry-Londonderry	Northern Ireland	UK City of Culture 2013	108,610	19.1	1.7	£20,342	35	64.3	58.9	18.1
Durham	England	Initial Bid	515,957	27.0	3.4	£21,170	42	64.9	54.3	23.2
Hull and East Yorkshire	England	Initial Bid	593,596	25.1	92.9	£21,902	36	67.2	59.9	19.0
Ipswich and Haven Gateway	England	Initial Bid	134,701	24.4	17.1	£22,717	36	65.8	63.6	17.2
Norwich	England	Shortlist	135,900	26.0	15.3	£23,028	34	69.0	58.8	18.3
Portsmouth and Southampton	England	Initial Bid	563,215	25.1	14.6	£23,816	33	68.9	61.8	16.0
Sheffield	England	Shortlist	560,085	27.7	19.2	£21,832	36	66.4	57.0	18.6
Southend	England	Initial Bid	175,798	23.0	13.0	£23,430	40	63.3	60.5	17.7
Swansea Bay	Wales	Initial Bid	240,332	22.0	8.5	£20,263	39	64.8	54.3	22.9

Data for Portsmouth and Southampton is averaged from data relating to Portsmouth, Fareham, and Southampton as per the bid document. Data for Hull and East Yorkshire includes data for the city of Kingston upon Hall and the East Riding area.

Technical Note: * Indices of Multiple Deprivation are calculated differently in each of the devolved nations; however, the overall average score follows the same pattern: the larger the score the higher the deprivation within that area.

Data Sources: 2011 Census, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010, Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011, Office for National Statistics Mid-Year Population Estimates 2013, Office for National Statistics 2011/12 Annual Income After Housing Costs Estimates.

UK City of Culture 2017

City	Nation	Final Competition Stage	Population	Area IMD Score*	% of Population Other Than White	Average Net Household Income After Housing Costs	Median Age	% of Population Aged 16 to 64	% of Population Aged 16+ Economically Active	% of Population Identifying as Having a Long-term Health Problem or Disability
Chester	England	Initial Bid	335,724	18.1	5.3	£27,649	42	63.8	61.3	17.9
Aberdeen	Scotland	Initial Bid	229,848	34.2	10.0	£22,165	36	64.2	60.1	18.2
Dundee	Scotland	Shortlist	148,270	32.4	8.1	£21,321	38	64.1	59.6	17.8
East Kent	England	Initial Bid	111,024	21.6	10.9	£26,379	38	65.8	60.6	16.2
Hastings and Bexhill-on-Sea	England	Initial Bid	92,903	33.1	10.7	£23,536	41	64.2	61.2	21.0
Hull (City of Kingston upon Hull)	England	UK City of Culture 2017	260,035	41.2	10.3	£20,584	36	67.2	59.9	19.0
Leicester	England	Shortlist	349,513	33.1	54.9	£19,314	31	67.8	59.6	17.0
Plymouth	England	Initial Bid	262,355	26.6	7.1	£24,284	38	66.2	58.3	19.9
Portsmouth and Southampton	England	Initial Bid	579,530	27.0	14.6	£24,026	33	68.9	61.8	16.0
Southend-on-Sea	England	Initial Bid	196,735	24.5	13.0	£29,747	40	63.3	60.5	17.7
Swansea Bay	Wales	Shortlist	244,462	22.4	8.5	£23,219	39	64.8	54.3	22.9

Data for Portsmouth and Southampton is averaged from data relating to Portsmouth, Fareham, and Southampton as per the bid document. Data for Swansea Bay includes data for the bay area in addition to Swansea City.

Technical Note: * Indices of Multiple Deprivation are calculated differently in each of the devolved nations; however, the overall average score follows the same pattern: the larger the score the higher the deprivation within that area.

Data Sources: 2011 Census, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016, Office for National Statistics Mid-Year Population Estimates 2016, Office for National Statistics 2015/16 Annual Income After Housing Costs Estimates, 2015 Local Level Income Estimates Scotland.

UK City of Culture 2021

City	Nation	Final Competition Stage	Population	Area IMD Score*	% of Population Other Than White	Average Net Household Income After Housing Costs	Median Age	% of Population Aged 16 to 64	% of Population Aged 16+ Economically Active	% of Population Identifying as Having a Long-term Health Problem or Disability ***
Coventry	England	UK City of Culture 2021	345,328	28.1	34.5	£26,626	35	65.6	59.1	18.4
Hereford	England	Initial Bid	187,034	19.7	3.1	£30,622	48	58.1	58.7	17.0
Paisley	Scotland	Shortlist	179,940	21.4	8.7	£22,899**	37	63.1	61.2	18.5
Perth	Scotland	Initial Bid	153,810	26.5	9.3	£21,108**	39	61.8	60.9	19.3
Portsmouth	England	Initial Bid	208,003	27.1	14.8	£28,040	49	67.3	61.7	19.1
St David's	Wales	Initial Bid	123,360	21.4	2.4	£25,300	48	56.9	54.2	20.3
Stoke-on-Trent	England	Shortlist	258,369	34.4	16.5	£25,153	38	62.6	58.3	22.4
Sunderland	England	Shortlist	274,171	29.7	5.4	£23,822	43	61.9	55.7	23.1
Swansea	Wales	Shortlist	238,490	22.4	8.6	£26,729	41	62.5	54.3	22.2
Warrington	England	Initial Bid	210,974	19.3	6.5	£30,948	42	62.8	62.5	17.8
Wells	England	Initial Bid	116,089	16.6	3.2	£31,214	47	59.0	60.2	16.8

The data for Wells covers the local authority district of Mendip because the whole district would have benefitted from the UK CoC 2021 title. The data for St David's covers the local authority district of Pembrokeshire for the same reason.

Technical Note: * Indices of Multiple Deprivation are calculated differently in each of the devolved nations; however, the overall average score follows the same pattern: the larger the score the higher the deprivation within that area. ** The figures for Northern Ireland and Scotland are taken from a dataset which presents the gross household income after housing costs. The figures presented here have been adjusted to make them comparable to figures for England and Wales. *** At the time of data collection, the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced how people responded.

Data Sources: 2021 Census, 2021 Northern Ireland Census, Scotland's Census 2022, Economic Activity Scotland Statistics 2022, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 - England, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016, Income Estimates for Small Areas - England and Wales: Financial Year Ending 2020, Regional Gross Disposable Household Income: Local Authorities by ITL1 Region (ONS).

UK City of Culture 2025

City	Nation	Final Competition Stage	Population	Area IMD Score*	% of Population Other Than White	Average Net Household Income After Housing Costs	Median Age	% of Population Aged 16 to 64	% of Population Aged 16+ Economically Active	% of Population Identifying as Having a Long-term Health Problem or Disability ***
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Northern Ireland	Full Bid after EOI	218,656	20.8	3.0	£17,098**	38	63.7	59.8	20.6
Bradford	England	UK City of Culture 2025	546,412	33.7	38.9	£23,643	36	62.0	56.8	18.9
Cornwall	England	Full Bid after EOI	570,305	23.3	3.2	£28,411	47	58.4	55.8	19.8
County Durham	England	Shortlist	522,068	27.4	3.2	£25,723	43	61.8	54.3	22.4
Derby	England	Full Bid after EOI	261,364	25.3	26.2	£25,923	37	63.7	59.4	19.9
Southampton	England	Shortlist	248,922	27.3	19.3	£27,669	34	68.3	61.9	19.6
Stirling	Scotland	Full Bid after EOI	93,470	23.4	5.3	£20,329**	37	62.8	61.9	18.2
Wrexham County Borough	Wales	Shortlist	135,117	19.0	4.0	£25,533	42	61.3	59.0	20.4

This table details data related to cities that submitted a full bid for the competition. For 2025, the first stage was the submission of an Expression of Interest. In addition to the above cities, expressions of interest were received from The City of Bangor and Northwest Wales, The Borderlands Region, Conwy County, Lancashire, Medway, City of Newport, Powys, The Tay Cities Region, Torbay and Exeter, Wakefield District, City of Wolverhampton, and Great Yarmouth and East Suffolk.

Technical Note: * Indices of Multiple Deprivation are calculated differently in each of the devolved nations; however, the overall average score follows the same pattern: the larger the score the higher the deprivation within that area. ** The figures for Northern Ireland and Scotland are taken from a dataset which presents the gross household income after housing costs. The figures presented here have been adjusted to make them comparable to figures for England and Wales. *** At the time of data collection, the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced how people responded.

Data Sources: 2021 Census, 2021 Northern Ireland Census, Scotland's Census 2022, Economic Activity Scotland Statistics 2022, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 - England, Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation 2017, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020, Income Estimates for Small Areas - England and Wales: Financial Year Ending 2020, Regional Gross Disposable Household Income: Local Authorities by ITL1 Region (ONS).

Appendix 2 – Abstract, Evaluating the Local Business Growth Effects of the UK CoC 2013 and 2017

Abstract

Evaluation of Cities of Culture (CoC) are typically focused on their cultural and tourism dimensions, with less attention often paid to their longer-term economic impacts. Here, we draw on longitudinal data for businesses across the UK to estimate the local business growth effects of CoC 2013 and 2017. Specifically, we use a firm-level, propensity score matching-difference-in-difference modelling approach to compare business growth in each CoC to a matched control group of firms in the other shortlisted cities. For CoC 2013 among the group of matched firms, employment grew 4.6-4.7 per cent faster on average over 2 years after the CoC, and 19.3-20.3 per cent faster over 4 years than in the other shortlisted cities. We find no consistent evidence of significant impacts on firms' sales growth in Derry over either 2 or 4 years after the CoC. For Hull, we find little evidence of any robust effects on either firm sales or employment growth although it is very likely that any longer-term benefits of CoC 2017 were dominated by impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our results suggest that Cities of Culture can lead to significant economic benefits, however, these are not guaranteed.

The full paper can be accessed via the Enterprise Research Centre's website:

> Roper, S. (2024) *Evaluating the local business growth effects of the UK City of Culture 2013 and 2017: A simple propensity score matching-difference-in-difference modelling approach.* Coventry: Enterprise Research Centre, Warwick Business School. Available at: https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/publications/evaluating-the-local-business-growth-effects-of-the-uk-city-of-culture-2013-and-2017-a-simple-propensity-score-matching-difference-in-difference-modelling-approach/ (Accessed: 12 July 2024).