

5.2.7 Libraries, Heritage and Arts

Libraries Heritage and Arts services have a role in creating and sustaining healthy communities. Walsall's network of 16 libraries offer a centre for people to acquire information, access learning opportunities - both formally and informally, support and develop an interest or past-time or just plain have fun. Libraries cater for all ages and do, literally, offer something for everyone cradle to grave; from Cradle Clubs and Mother and Toddler Clubs for the very young; to reading groups, author visits and 50+ clubs for adults, with homework clubs, job clubs and other activities along the way.

Museums and archives offer a way into Walsall's past; how people and families lived and worked, how industry in Walsall developed from earliest times and how the past can influence the development of the future. It offer people of all ages the opportunity to experience and explore the past and helps to create a sense of place and belonging and an understanding of the communities of which they are part.

The opportunity to explore and participate in Art, in all its differing forms, can enrich people's lives and stimulate their creativity. Walsall is fortunate to have The New Art Gallery which is a National Portfolio Organisation. It is not only the home of the Garman Ryan Collection, but also offers a programme of temporary exhibitions which are of a national standard and are unique in the West Midlands. In addition, Forest Arts Centre has opportunities for people of any age to get involved with music, dance and theatre, either as part of the audience or as a participant, in a group or as an individual.

The Creative Development Team has a reputation at local, regional and national level for delivering high-quality, innovative, programmes which have a positive impact on people and communities with positive outcomes. The Team effectively engages with individuals and groups of people who are often seen as 'hard-to-reach' to fulfil a wide range of partnership aims such as health improvement, more effective service delivery and environmental regeneration.