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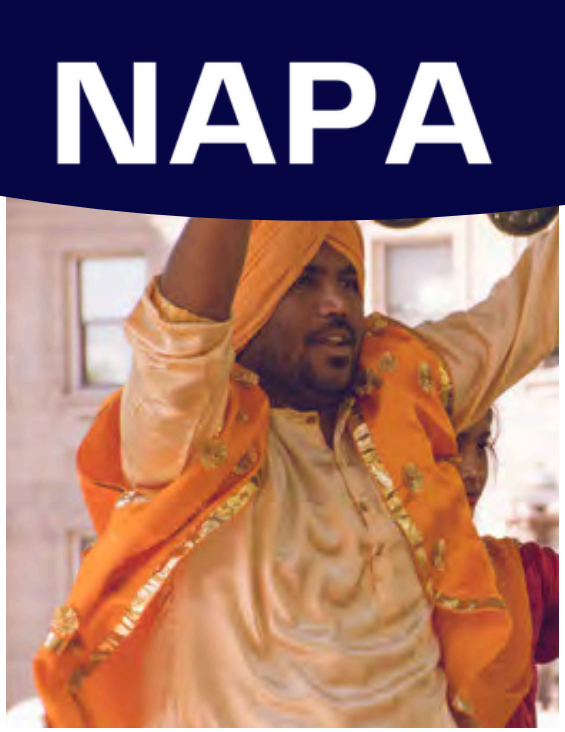

Guidance for **Activity Providers & Care Teams**

NAPA YEAR OF CULTURE

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Foreword

I'm delighted to introduce NAPA's Year of Culture Toolkit for activity providers and care teams.

Culture is part of everyday dignity. It lives in favourite foods and television programmes, in the songs people hum, in family rituals, local history and the places that feel like home. It is also expressed through the arts and heritage we share in museums, galleries, libraries and archives and through the beliefs and values that give many people comfort and meaning, religion, spirituality and faith. When we recognise the full breadth of culture, we see the whole person.

This toolkit has been created to help you turn that principle into daily practice. It offers practical ideas for co-creating activities with the people you support, guidance on accessibility and inclusion and ways to build partnerships with cultural and community organisations. It invites you to map each person's cultural profile, their preferences, stories, identity and traditions, so that activity plans reflect who they are and what matters to them.

Our approach is rooted in equality, diversity and inclusion. Everyone should be able to take part in cultural life. That may mean adapting resources, offering quiet spaces for reflection or worship, bringing the gallery into the lounge with a handling box or virtual tour or celebrating a local landmark alongside a major festival. Small, thoughtful changes can transform confidence, connection and wellbeing.

NAPA is here to help. Alongside this toolkit you'll find training, case studies and resources you can use straight away. We encourage you to share your ideas and outcomes with us so we can amplify good practice across the sector.

Thank you for everything you do, every day.
With appreciation,

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER NAPA

Hilary Woodhead

NAPA CULTURE

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Introduction

Culture is central to human life. It shapes our stories, the food we eat, the music we enjoy, the ways we celebrate, the traditions we follow and the values we live by. For people we support, opportunities to connect with culture, both their own and that of others, can be a vital lifeline to identity, belonging and joy.

The Year of Culture is NAPA's invitation to activity providers and care teams to celebrate culture in its widest sense. Culture is found in everyday routines and personal traditions, in the arts and creativity that bring inspiration, in faith and spirituality that provide comfort and meaning, in the diversity and inclusion that help every person feel valued and in the shared heritage of communities expressed through museums, galleries, libraries, archives, religion and local history.

This guidance explains what culture means in a care context, highlights why access to arts, heritage and spiritual expression matters for wellbeing, links cultural provision to equality, diversity and inclusion and offers practical approaches for planning activities that are respectful, creative and person-centred.

Culture is Personal

Culture is often spoken about in broad terms such as national holidays, religious festivals or art forms that represent entire communities. Yet culture is also deeply personal. Every person in your care service carries their own version of culture, shaped by their life story, beliefs and values.

Two people from the same country may experience culture very differently. One may connect strongly with traditional festivals or faith practices, while another may find meaning in sport or popular music. Culture is not fixed. It evolves over time as people adopt new influences alongside long-standing traditions.

Everyday choices, from favourite meals and television programmes to clothing and hobbies, are all expressions of culture. So too are faith traditions, personal rituals and spiritual practices. Recognising that culture is personal helps care teams avoid assumptions, celebrate uniqueness and promote dignity. When people see their preferences and beliefs reflected in daily life, they feel recognised and respected.

Reflection is an important practice. Ask whether you actively invite individuals to share what culture means to them, whether your activities are broad enough to represent different expressions and how you balance personal traditions with group events.

Practical approaches might include creating “My Culture” profiles, hosting conversations about what feels like home or what gives meaning or supporting residents to build a memory box filled with objects, photographs and keepsakes that reflect their unique journey.

What Do We Mean by Culture?

Culture extends far beyond concerts, exhibitions or theatre. It is woven into daily life: the food we cook, the games we play, the clothes we wear, the television we watch, the prayers or meditations we say and the rituals we follow.

Culture is in the arts and creativity that inspire us through painting, dance, drama, storytelling, crafts and music. It is in traditions and heritage — festivals, rituals, customs and beliefs that provide belonging. It is in personal identity and values, including ethnicity, religion, spirituality, sexuality, gender identity, family practices and community ties.

In a care service, culture might mean watching a football match, preparing a childhood recipe, observing Ramadan or Easter, celebrating Pride Month or sharing migration stories. It can also mean exploring the wider world of arts and heritage by connecting with museums, galleries, libraries, archives and local history.
Local history is a particularly powerful form of culture.

Many individuals have deep roots in their towns and regions. Old maps, photographs and memories of local industries or schools can spark pride and belonging. Archives and museums often hold collections that mirror the life stories of residents and help uncover hidden aspects of their cultural background.

Culture is both personal and shared. It is part of everyday dignity and identity, but it also extends to broader networks of heritage and belief that connect people.

Arts and culture provide opportunities for connection, creativity and discovery. Museums and galleries can inspire curiosity and spark memories. Libraries and archives open access to knowledge, local stories and histories, enabling individuals to reconnect with their pasts or explore something new.

Engaging in faith, spirituality or religious observance can also be a vital aspect of culture for many. Access to religious texts, opportunities for prayer or worship and respect for faith-based dietary or lifestyle practices reinforce identity and dignity. For others, personal spirituality, meditation or connection with nature may provide meaning and peace.

Access to arts, heritage and spirituality supports wellbeing. Looking at paintings, handling historic objects or joining a workshop can reduce stress and encourage reminiscence. Music and theatre lift mood and create shared joy. Faith-based and spiritual practices provide comfort, purpose and resilience.

Cultural institutions are increasingly aware of their responsibility to include care communities. Many offer outreach programmes, reminiscence boxes or virtual tours tailored for older people. Where trips are possible, visits to museums, galleries, archives, libraries or places of worship can provide meaningful connections to wider community life.

Local history adds another dimension. Exploring the history of neighbourhoods, industries or landmarks fosters pride and belonging. Residents are often themselves custodians of local history, with stories that enrich the cultural memory of their communities.

Why Culture Matters in Care

Cultural engagement enhances wellbeing by reducing loneliness, promoting joy and stimulating memory.

Culture reinforces identity, helping people feel more themselves when their heritage, ethnicity, preferences, beliefs and traditions are recognised.

Culture promotes inclusion by creating opportunities for acceptance and respect, reducing isolation and prejudice.

Access to culture is also a human right. The Equality Act 2010 places responsibilities on care providers to ensure inclusion and non-discrimination, extending to cultural and spiritual participation.

Culture, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality means ensuring that everyone has the chance to participate in cultural activities, not only those linked to majority cultures or mainstream traditions.

Diversity recognises that each person has their own cultural identity, which may be shaped by ethnicity, faith, spirituality, religion, sexuality, gender, disability and lived experience.

Inclusion means creating environments where all cultures are valued and everyone feels they belong. This involves making adaptations, asking respectful questions and ensuring that no one feels invisible.

Inclusion may mean celebrating Ramadan as well as Christmas, recognising Pride as well as Remembrance or supporting both secular and spiritual residents to explore what matters most to them.

Creating Culturally Inclusive Activity Provision

Inclusive activity provision begins with listening. Asking individuals what matters to them ensures that activities reflect their lives, faith and values rather than assumptions. Co-creating activities alongside residents and families brings meaning and authenticity.

Accessibility is essential. Activities should be adapted for different needs, whether that means providing large print prayer books, captioned videos or quiet spaces for reflection. Respecting traditions means being sensitive to religious or cultural practices, such as dietary needs or times for worship.

Celebrating both difference and common ground builds connection. Applying an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective means always asking who may be missing and who might feel excluded.

Practical Approaches

Culture can be explored in everyday life through favourite programmes, shared meals or hobbies. Cooking clubs, music playlists and storytelling circles can bring comfort and connection.

The arts and heritage expand possibilities. Partnerships with museums, libraries, archives, galleries and faith organisations allow individuals to explore collections and practices that connect with their past or inspire new interests. Virtual tours and digital archives bring the wider world into care settings. Festivals and celebrations provide opportunities for joy.

Planning a cultural calendar helps care teams prepare for key dates such as Diwali, Ramadan, Easter, Hanukkah, Pride Month, Black History Month and St David's Day. Involving families and staff ensures these celebrations feel authentic.

Local history enriches activities by connecting individuals to familiar places. Photographs of local landmarks, visits to heritage sites or sessions with community historians spark memories and pride. Archives and museums often provide handling collections for reminiscence.

Spiritual and faith-based practices can be supported by offering prayer spaces, opportunities for worship, access to religious leaders or quiet time for reflection. For those who are not religious, space for personal spirituality, mindfulness or connection with nature may be equally valuable.

Ensuring Access for All

Accessibility ensures that culture is open to everyone. People with sensory needs may need large print, captions, audio description or tactile experiences. Residents with cognitive needs may benefit from reminiscence resources or activities broken into small steps.

Tokenism must be avoided when representing minority cultures. Cultural activities should be genuine, respectful and inclusive. Trips and visits should be affordable and supported by translation or family involvement where necessary.

Planning and Reflection

Planning begins with cultural mapping. Working with individuals and families to build cultural profiles provides insight into personal preferences, heritage, ethnicity, faith and values. These profiles guide the design of programmes that reflect both personal and shared experiences.

Implementation should involve individuals wherever possible, giving them ownership of cultural life. Activities should be adapted to meet different needs, ensuring that no one is excluded.

Reflection is essential. After activities, ask what worked well, who engaged and who may have been left out. Recording these reflections supports learning and improvement.

Case Studies

During Pride Month, one home hosted a rainbow art display, film screenings and a local choir. Residents who had never spoken about sexuality before shared their experiences, strengthening inclusion.

During Black History Month, residents explored the music and heritage of the Windrush generation. A Caribbean food tasting session sparked conversations and connections across the community.

In another home, one resident's love of Coronation Street became a weekly soap night with tea and biscuits. This simple ritual created comfort and companionship.

At a local museum session, residents handled objects linked to industries from their town. The items sparked memories of work and family life, enriching conversations between residents and staff.

A faith-based activity saw residents gather for a quiet service led by a local chaplain, while others used the same space for meditation and reflection, showing how inclusive provision can honour different beliefs side by side.

Top Tips for Activity Providers

- Think broadly about culture, including everyday traditions, arts, heritage, faith, spirituality and local history.
- Begin with the individual, asking what they love, believe and value. Remember that small gestures are often most powerful. Build partnerships with museums, galleries, libraries, archives and faith or community groups.
- Involve families and staff in shaping cultural life. Always check that activities reflect diversity and inclusion.

How NAPA Supports You

The Year of Culture provides practical resources to help embed culture into care. Toolkits, case studies, training sessions and resources for celebrating cultural dates are all available.

NAPA also encourages teams to share their own experiences so that together we can build a national movement that celebrates culture in care.

NAPA National Activity Providers Association

SUPPORTLINE

supportline@napa-activities.co.uk

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Conclusion

Culture shapes identity, creates joy and builds community. For people in care settings, access to culture is essential.

This includes everyday traditions, arts, heritage, local history, museums, galleries, libraries, archives, religion, spirituality and faith. It also includes celebrating diversity and ensuring inclusion.

NAPA

The Professional Association for Activity Providers and Activity Provision

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