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Barbican expands arts access for young people across London

- The Barbican announces two new initiatives in response to Centre for London's *Arts for All* report which launched at the iconic arts centre today
- A landmark partnership with The Harris Federation will bring cultural learning to thousands of children in London's most underserved boroughs
- The free Young Barbican programme is expanding with new benefits, helping under-25s access world-class arts and culture

Today, the Barbican announces major new initiatives to widen access to the arts for young people, responding directly to Centre for London's *Arts for All – Tackling Barriers to Arts and Cultural Participation in London*.

The report, launched today in partnership with the Culture Mile BID and Greater London Authority, highlights the urgent need for cultural organisations to break down barriers to participation and calls for stronger integration of the arts into everyday life.

Pioneering partnership with Harris Federation to boost arts education

One key recommendation in *Arts for All* urges government to prioritise arts in the national curriculum and ensure every child – regardless of background – can access cultural learning.

With arts funding in schools at a crisis point and GCSE arts subject entries dropping by 42% over the last decade, urgent action is needed.

In response, the Barbican is launching a ground-breaking two-year partnership with the Harris Federation, a network of 55 schools that educates 1 in 37 London students. Many of these schools serve communities where access to arts and culture is most limited.

The partnership will:

- **Deliver hands-on creative projects** and workshops for thousands of children
- **Collaborate on training teachers**, equipping them to incorporate creative learning into daily lessons
- **Ensure students experience the Barbican firsthand**, including free visits to events, exhibitions and performances, and opportunities to participate in creative programmes

Karena Johnson, Head of the Creative Collaboration team at the Barbican, said: *“We know that exposure to the arts from an early age can have a transformative impact on young people’s lives—sparking creativity, building confidence, and shaping futures. For decades successive governments have deprioritised it - that is until now.*

“The Culture Secretary’s speech in February underscored the government’s renewed commitment to ensuring the arts are for everyone, not just a privileged few. This partnership

with The Harris Federation is a direct reflection of that vision, embedding creativity into everyday learning for thousands of children. This is about expanding and enriching young people's education and nurturing a lifelong connection to the arts. Special thanks to the SHM Foundation for their support of this work."

Jacqui Lomas, The Harris Federation's Director of School Improvement, said: *"At the Harris Federation, our 44,000 pupils benefit from a rich and varied education. Creative learning nurtures confidence, problem-solving, and self-expression and this partnership further strengthens our work in and support of creative and performing arts. This partnership with the Barbican will bring even more high-quality cultural experiences into our academies. We believe this is especially important for the students we educate, many of whom come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and we always foreground opportunities to empower our students to engage with the arts. We are grateful to the Barbican for joining us in this partnership work and we're excited to see the impact it will have."*

Young Barbican relaunch: more free access for more people

The *Arts for All* report calls for the introduction of a '**national Arts Pass for Under-25s**' to ensure every young person regardless of background can enjoy the best of London and the UK's arts and culture scene.

In response, the Barbican's Young Barbican programme, which currently has 77,000 members between the ages 14-25, will expand later this year to offer:

- **More free events** and new subsidised ticket offers
- **A digital membership wallet** to make accessing the benefits simpler
- **A new loyalty scheme** that will reward young people for regular participation
- **A target to reach 100,000 members** by the end of 2026, ensuring even more young people – especially those from lower income backgrounds – can access London's arts scene

Karena adds: *"The expanded Young Barbican programme will remove barriers, making it easier for young people to experience theatre, music, film, visual and immersive arts – we want to make the Barbican a cultural home for young people in London."*

The *Arts for All* report launch, hosted at the Barbican Centre, brought together representatives from organisations across arts and culture, education and tourism, as well from government and funding bodies, to discuss the future of arts access in London.

To read the full report visit: centreforlondon.org/publication/arts-for-all/

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Notes to Editors

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Barbican press room

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional

artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Darbar Festival](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Theatre Productions](#).

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