

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

Response from Federation of Museums & Art Galleries of Wales

Questions for organisations

The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee of the National Assembly for Wales is carrying out an inquiry into participation in the arts, and we want your help.

By 'participation', we mean taking an active role in arts activities, by doing, making and creating, rather than by watching as an audience member.

In 2011, the former Communities and Culture Committee undertook an inquiry into the accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales. This new inquiry aims to build on the recommendations that came out of that report, but concentrate specifically on participation in the arts.

We have been speaking to a number of organisations that told us they are concerned that budget cuts in the arts sector may be having a negative effect on participation in the arts among some groups of people. We want to know what you think.

We would like to hear the views of arts organisations and individuals who participate in the arts. To help us gather the information we need, we have developed two questionnaires, one for participants and one for organisations. It would be really helpful if you could spare a few minutes to fill in the questionnaire below and give us your views.

The consultation is open to any organisation providing arts activities, either funded or voluntary, and anyone who participates in the arts. The inquiry is not focussed on a particular group of people, and we want to hear as many views as possible.

We also want you to be creative in how you respond – for example, you could make a video or put on a play to tell us your views.

To give you a clearer idea of what we'll be looking at as part of this inquiry, below is a list of the areas we'll be covering.

The Committee will:

- assess the impact of budget cuts on participation in the arts in Wales, specifically whether certain groups of people have been affected more than others;
- identify gaps in provision for participation in the arts, both demographically and geographically;
- explore the role of the voluntary arts sector in arts participation and scope alternative funding sources;
- evaluate the policy framework between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding; and,
- look at whether arts organisations in Wales are equipped to deliver the equality objectives of their funders.

Questions

It would really help us if you could answer the following questions.

1. Which groups of people participate in your organisation's arts activities?

All types of people participate in arts activities in museums without barriers.

2. a) Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?

Both – on a positive side it has meant museums have had to work harder to develop existing and new partnerships. They have also had to be more creative in putting funding applications together. These factors could widen the participation base.

Negative side is that with core funding cut there is more reliance on grant aided projects which means staff have to concentrate on funding applications to the detriment of actual delivery (and consequent strain on staff). There may be less opportunities for participation. Another negative is that if ACW cuts revenue funding to a client there is the danger that the relevant local authority will try and replace some of the funding which means core funded LA services such as museums and art services (already under threat) are squeezed further. Activity levels may decrease.

Lack of money also means a lack of variety in activities presented – fall back on the tried and tested not the new and innovative.

2. b) Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?

Yes, at times of pressure less time is spent on hard to reach non users and visitors. Still expected to do this work with no money or capacity and yet it is very costly to meet these objectives. Therefore tend to work with those who you already have contact with.

3. Are there gaps in provision for people to participate in arts activities, either demographically or geographically?

Geographically – especially in rural areas (getting worse due to cuts)

Demographically – preponderance of grant funding targets hard to reach groups, means the mainstream majority are being left behind.

4. Are there enough funding sources available other than the Arts Council for Wales? Are alternative funding sources accessible?

Museums find CyMAL very approachable and they have been able to fund some activity that really should be the responsibility of ACW. Museums can find ACW unsympathetic as they have little experience of the value of arts activity through museums (as was shown in the withdrawal of funding recently to a number of museums)

5. What role does the voluntary arts sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can this be supported?

(no comment on this question)

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6. Is the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?

We find it interesting that CyMAL (a part of Welsh Government) has more understanding of the role of the arts in museums than ACW (an arms length organisation). ACW needs to have a wider view than its current narrow focus on how the arts can be delivered.

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7. All public bodies in Wales will have published a strategic equality plan by April 2012. Do you think that these new public sector equality duties will

help to increase participation in the arts among under-represented groups in Wales?

Planning is fine as long as it is reflected in capacity to deliver otherwise the issues noted above will continue.