

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

Response from Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales

1. What organisation do you represent?

Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales

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

We do not exclude anyone who wishes to participate in our activities but we do make an effort to target people who are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds across Wales

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

I think that budget cuts have had a negative impact on participation in the arts in specific areas

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

Yes. I think that people who rely on community based projects and organisations to access the arts have been affected more than others. People who are on lower incomes have been affected, those in more rural parts of Wales have been affected and young people have also been affected

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

Yes, gaps exist for people who reside in more rural parts of Wales including parts of Gwent, Powys and North Wales (and especially where exclusions exist for non-Welsh speakers). Gaps also exist for people who are deemed deprived with regards to Communities First criteria. Many of these people will be socially, financially, demographically and will feel racially excluded from many activities

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

No, they are definitely not enough and those that are available are not accessible to the grass roots organisations that have the skills, reputation and strong relational ties to traditionally excluded groups and do not provide substantial or sustainable funding streams

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

The voluntary sector is the main driving force. The voluntary sector is the key to ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate in the arts regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion & belief, pregnancy & paternity and marriage & civil partnership and how much money they have in their pockets. The voluntary sector is an advocate for fairness and equality, reaching out to disengaged audiences, creating new jobs and delivering innovative arts and educational projects

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

This relationship should be re-visited. The arms-length policy can be difficult for the voluntary arts sector to understand as arts is indeed included within the Ministerial portfolios. The inability to be more forthcoming leads the sector to believe that the Welsh Government are happy with all decisions made by those who distribute arts funding and that they are also happy to wash their hands of grey area needs or issues where they could have made a positive contribution or resolution

9. 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?

Policies do not create equality, people do