

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

Response from The Gwent Theatre Company

1. What organisation do you represent?

The Gwent Theatre Company, The Drama Centre, Abergavenny, NP7 5UD

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

Young people of school age and young adults 18–20 years. Members of the general public.

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

The cut in funding for Theatre in Education has been catastrophic. In the region of 20,000 young people have been denied access to TIE services in The Greater Gwent area alone. Similarly there is now no provision for TIE in either Rhondda Cynon Taf or Powys.

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

Children and young people in south east Wales have been particularly affected by ACW's cuts in expenditure in Young people's Theatre which led to the closure of three companies specialising in this work. It's significant that provision in some parts of Wales has been retained and the cuts have been made in some of the most economically and socially deprived areas in western Europe. This is a grossly inequitable situation.

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

As stated above the valleys of south east Wales; the large rural county of Powys and Monmouthshire have been particularly badly affected

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

Funding for educationally based theatre work is nigh on impossible to access in any meaningful amount, it's simply not sexy or high profile enough. This sort of work can be life changing in enriching the lives of our young people; giving them confidence and raising their expectations. It should be funded via the public purse. Sadly the ACW doesn't seem to think it's their responsibility to

maintain equitable funding for this sort of work on a consistent basis throughout Wales.

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 arts sector has an important role to play but it is folly to think they can replace professional artists. The professionals and voluntary sector should work together in order to promote the arts and afford opportunities for all to have the choice to be able to participate in quality arts activities.

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

It seems odd that the ACW's funding decisions don't reflect WAG's stated aims with regard to equality etc. Something is clearly amiss in this particular relationship!

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?

I can only hope so but will the plans translate into action? Perhaps there should be a statutory duty to make arts provision for all.