

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

Response from Arts Active – St David's Hall

What organisation do you represent?

Arts Active – St David's Hall

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

Pre-school – Schools – Young People – General Public

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

Yes. Whilst the commitment of artists and group leaders ensures opportunities for participation will find a way to happen somewhere the funding landscape means that emphasis is on numbers and geographic areas rather than a quality experience everywhere. That is not to say that inspiring and fantastic work is not happening in all sorts of places it is just a worry that work can be diluted and the experiences become standardised and deliverable rather than transformational and inspirational.

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

Areas with no resident body of artists or arts organisations. A culture of creativity and creative people in an area creates opportunities and activity. In areas where this is less common then there is less support on the ground for visiting organisations, less context to ensure one off projects leave a legacy and strengthen any existing activity and it requires more resources both financial and human to get projects off the ground.

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

There are gaps geographically as discussed before and also gaps by art form. Some areas may have some strong visual art opportunities but nothing in the way of circus or drama. Demographically a lot of activity is targeted at young people and funding encourages this. Whilst this activity is important it can lead to the perception of arts being a childish activity. A greater amount of appropriate activity for adults would also mean the adults become role models and examples to young people.

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

There are many trusts and foundations but it is a very competitive landscape and hard to get long term sustainable funding. Corporate sponsorship likewise is difficult and firms need greater incentives to engage in longer term partnerships.

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

Massive! It can be supported through training opportunities, collaboration with professional arts organisations and a greater recognition of the huge contribution the sector makes to the arts in Wales. WNO travelled the journey from volunteer choir to internationally acclaimed opera company.

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

It is effective in targeting participation but I'm not sure how effective in increasing participation it is. Are more people learning an instrument or painting or performing or juggling or singing etc than 50 years ago?

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?

To an extent. Though it is organisations and individuals with local knowledge and commitment who increase participation.