

**Response to consultation:**

## **Priorities for the Sixth Senedd**

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and  
International Relations Committee

September 2021



## Impact of COVID-19 on the youth arts sector

1. For nearly 18 months to date, young people have had their artistic training seriously disrupted by social distancing, which has cancelled almost all face-to-face artistic training. National Youth Arts Wales has worked hard to provide digital training opportunities and workshops, as have many arts training providers, but this will never be the same as face-to-face training, which is essential for the development of a performer.
2. A significant number of young people will have had their confidence damaged by the lack of face-to-face training, or are suffering from poor mental health because of the pandemic's widespread impacts. We have invested time and resource to ensure that our members have access to digital wellbeing sessions as well as practical training.
3. We fear that a large number of young people will lose confidence in their performing abilities, or even drop out of the sector altogether due to lack of confidence, when in fact they have been impacted by exceptional circumstances. We are particularly concerned about how this will affect the talent pipeline not just in the next year, but in the next 5-10 years, as today's beginners progress through to become talented artists. We believe that a national strategy and more resource is needed to ensure that young people who have stopped performing during the pandemic – at all levels – are encouraged and given the confidence to restart and benefit from the performing arts once again.
4. Emergency funding from the Cultural Recovery Fund has been critical to ensuring that our work continues throughout the pandemic. However, the outlook for 2022 and beyond still looks uncertain at this stage, and additional emergency support may still be needed to ensure we can deliver work for young people.
5. We already know that the economic impact of the pandemic will be felt most sharply by lower-income families, and we fear that this will be particularly true in arts training. Young performers with a disability are also more likely to have been affected by physical and mental health problems during lockdown, particularly if they have had to shield. Without specific support for these groups, this could slow down existing work to help diversify the arts sectors.
6. We are aware that some freelance artists and creatives will have left the sector during the pandemic, because of ongoing financial uncertainty. Some additional support will be needed, at a national level, to support freelancers back to work as the sector begins to restart its work.

## Priorities for the Committee's work

7. We are excited to be able to return to live activity but we are acutely aware that the whole arts sector is in a very fragile position. We're particularly concerned for freelancers working in the sector, who have been the hardest hit in the creative industries. The sector needs a bespoke solution to ensure that freelancers can return back to work, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds and under-represented communities.
8. Like many other arts organisations, we believe we need to do much more to ensure that young people from all backgrounds are given opportunities in the creative industries. We will be focusing additional time and resource to support young performers from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse communities, and young performers with a disability. We are also concerned that arts provision is not evenly distributed throughout the nation, particularly in rural areas. We would advocate for a sector-wide approach to ensure that no young person is discouraged from taking part.
9. We are also particularly interested in the proposed National Music Service for Wales, how this will help "level up" music provision across Wales, and how it will encourage young people to restart learning an instrument if they have stopped lessons during the pandemic. Music services are the backbone of youth music in Wales, forming a critical formative role in the development of young musicians as they progress.
10. The creative industries have a huge positive impact on the lives of the people of Wales – on their health and wellbeing, on the economy and skills, and as part of our cultural life. We would like to see further evaluation of the arts and their impact on health and wellbeing, and on the economy, to ensure that the creative industries continue to be regarded as a crucial part of Welsh life.

## Impact of Brexit on the youth arts sector

11. Like many arts organisations, we are keen to work with a pool of talented creatives from across the world – including conductors, soloists, choreographers and theatre directors. We believe young members can gain a wealth of experience from working with a broad range of international artists.
12. Without a flexible visa system for touring performers, our ability to work with these artists is severely limited. We would urge the Committee and the Welsh Government to hold the UK Government to account regarding this matter, ensuring frictionless movement for artists touring to Wales and the UK.

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol /  
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee  
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chwchedd Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd  
CCWLSIR PSS21

Ymateb gan Celfyddydau Cenedlaethol Ieuencid Cymru / Response from National Youth  
Arts Wales

## About National Youth Arts Wales

13. National Youth Arts Wales is the national charity for gifted and talented actors, dancers and musicians aged 16 – 22 throughout Wales. Every year we work with around 800 young people, through exceptional training and performance opportunities in the arts.
14. Since its formation in 2017, NYAW has expanded its work beyond the six national youth ensembles, and now produces a variety of development projects designed to improve access to high-level training. This includes Music Futures, Wales's first national mentoring scheme for rock and pop musicians in schools.
15. NYAW also provides youth employment opportunities, including an annual Trainee Producer scheme, paid at the Real Living Wage, designed to help young graduates from lower-income families to join the creative industries workforce. We also employ hundreds of freelancers each year to help deliver our programme of activity across Wales.