

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Communities, Equality and  
Local Government Committee

Task and Finish Group  
Inquiry into Participation in the  
Arts in Wales – Focus Group Report

May 2012



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# Communities, Equality and Local Government Task and Finish Group Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

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This document outlines the contributions of the groups and participants that the Outreach Team has conducted focus groups with. The group's details were provided by arts networks BVSNW, Arts Council for Wales, Voluntary Arts Wales and Disability Arts Cymru.

## Summary

### **Groups names, area and audience type**

- RCT Community Arts - Cofio - South Wales - women (60 - 94 years old)
- RCT Community Arts - Reach the Heights - South Wales - young people (11 - 19 years old) classed as NEET or in danger of becoming NEET
- RCT Community Arts - Flippers - South Wales - young girls (10 - 13 years old)
- Ruthin Craft Centre - Threads in Time - North Wales - older men and women (60 - 70 years old)
- Galeri - Promometheus - North Wales - young adults with disabilities (16 - 25 years old)
- Galeri - Tonic - North Wales - mixture
- Celf o Gwmpas - Mid and West Wales - professionals, variety of ages and ability
- Arts Alive - Mid and West Wales - women from various backgrounds
- Arts 4 Wellbeing - Mid and West Wales - single mums, and people with mental health and learning issues

### **Total number of participants**

195

### **Focus groups with organisations**

- BVSNW
- Celf o Gwmpas
- Arts 4 Wellbeing

# Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales – Participant feedback

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## **Cofio - RCT Community Arts**

A reminisce dance theatre production involving older adults which RCT Community Arts embarked upon in May 2002. This project has involved older adults, whose ages span from 60 to 94 years, living in the communities of Maerdy, Ferndale, Tylorstown, Stanleytown, Ynyshir and Trebanog.

### **Date**

7 March 2012

### **Numbers**

A total of 12 participants took part, all of which are women between 60 and 94 years old.

### **Other comments**

Julie Evans, Artistic Director and Arts Practitioner for RCT Community Arts, wanted to emphasise the difference between the work of voluntary arts organisations and professional community arts organisations. The output and skill levels from professional community projects need investment to continue.

### **Quotes**

“Being involved in Cofio has had a lasting and profound effect - we have developed new skills significantly affecting confidence, physical interaction, intellectual, emotional, social and memory.” (Cofio member/RCTCA)

“The social aspect of Cofio and the creative interaction with others gives you a feeling of well-being and purpose – milestones and memories shared through telling our stories through dance and drama.” (Cofio member/RCTCA)

“I am very shy, but coming to Cofio each week gets me out of the house, meet and get to know people better, and also helps my mobility. The social interaction with others has helped me speak out – not so shy now.” (Cofio member/RCTCA)

Audience Responses to the performance:

“Excellent. I enjoyed every minute. What a grand bunch of ladies. So talented and showed lots of confidence. Keep on going ladies, I want to see the show again.” (Audience member)

“Cheered the hearts of the audience. And promotes sound intergenerational work. So glad I came!” (Age Cymru)

“This performance was amazing. The cast is wonderful! What a change from watching boring telly. 10 out of 10! Congrats!

“A fab performance. I am 14 and I enjoyed learning about the history and how they lived. It’s very funny, too!”



South Wales West Outreach Manager, Kevin Davies with participants from Cofio at the first focus group on Wednesday March 7, in Teifi House, Maerdy.

## **Threads in Time-Ruthin Craft Centre**

This group attend a series of conversational lectures that explores the fascinating story of a century of textile practise organised by Ruthin Craft Centre. Participants pay £5 for a 2 hour talk (Sundays 2-4), and a question and answer session. Participants were from all across north Wales. The audience were predominantly female (only 2 male in the group).

### **Date**

11 March 2012

## **Numbers**

Over 50 participants on the day had a short 5mins introduction on the Committee, background and general terms of reference of this inquiry. 26 completed a questionnaire with some taking extra copies home to send to the freepost address, and 7 people gave extra comments that will be detailed.

## **Reach the Heights – RCT Community Arts**

Reach the Heights is a group of projects aimed at improving the opportunities available to children and young people in Wales. ‘First Footholds’ aims to strengthen the current position for young people aged 11-19 who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

The project is working on new ways to engage young people and to improve their chances and opportunities. They will develop and offer information, guidance and training, and create new learning opportunities and experiences for people across the age range.

‘Reach the Heights’ is partly financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and is part of the Convergence Programme for West Wales and the Valleys.

Up to £27 million of ESF money will be made available to support a range of different activities over the life of the projects. The rest will come mostly from the Welsh Government, and the Joint Sponsors, a group of voluntary and statutory organisations who are managing and providing the activities.

## **Date**

14 March 2012

## **Numbers**

7 boys and 4 girls took part in an informal discussion. They were all between the ages of 11-16. Some of the participants were new to the group, and had only joined in the last few weeks, whereas others had been coming for more than four years.



## **Flippers – RCT Community Arts**

Flippers are a dance class for young girls between the ages of 10 to 13. They meet once a week at the Park and Dare Theatre in Treorci. They have also performed at events such as the Community Dance Night at the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd.

### **Date**

14 March 2012

### **Numbers**

A total of 14 girls between 10 and 13 years old took part in a very informal chat about participation in the arts.



These are pictures taken from a Flippers performance at the Community Dance Night at the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd in November 2011.

## **Prometheus- Galeri, Caernarfon**

Prometheus is a dance group for young adults (16-25 age group) with disabilities from the Gwynedd area. The young people and carers practice weekly on a Wednesday afternoon between 6:30 and 9:15. Due to the funding coming to an end, the 3 year project will be finishing at the end of March 2012.

**Date**

14 March 2012

**Numbers**

3 young people and their carers took part in a session where we held an informal focus group and the carers also completed questionnaires (easy read version) on behalf of the young people. Initially the group had over 15 young people taking part on a regular basis but due to various reasons (discussed further below) the group now has only 4 regular members and their carers.

**Tonic- Galeri, Caernarfon**

Tonic is a group that meets once a month giving participants the opportunity to see a film. The group pay £5 to watch a film followed by cup of tea and socialising opportunity.

**Date**

15 March 2012

**Numbers**

Over 50 people took part on this date but numbers are regularly between 80 and 150 and can reach up to 250.

The information collected below was gathered in informal conversations with participants following the film being viewed.

**Celf o Gwmpas, Powys**

Celf o Gwmpas runs a high quality visual, performing and environmental arts project across Powys. They run a programme of exciting and challenging projects that include filmmaking, animation, sculpture, painting, drama and music for people with learning disabilities and people who are often excluded from society.

**Date**

14 March 2012

**Numbers**

A total of 6 participants took part, all of which are professional artists of varying age, ability and medium. All of the artists in this session experience social exclusion due to mental health issues and learning disabilities.

## Other comments

The group felt strongly that they were in need of support to actually be able to attend sessions in the first place. They thought that many people were excluded from taking part because of problems in their everyday lives. Lack of funding within the various arts programmes meant that these issues could not be tackled. For example one lady said that when dealing with everyday life (trying to claim benefits, deal with officials) then art becomes a very low priority. Inability to participate in arts activities affects health and wellbeing, and contributes to a cycle of sickness, lack of confidence and community participation.

One participant was particularly interested in training to become an arts therapist and wanted to raise the issue that there are no courses available anywhere in Wales for this kind of further education. She would have to move to London to do this.

They also stated that there is little recognition in Wales of art as a profession. This means that professional artists are not funded and unable to start careers and thus able to engage members of the public in workshops etc.



Outreach Manager for Mid and West Wales, Cheri Kelly with participants from Celf o Gwmpas on March 14.

## **Arts 4 Wellbeing – Carmarthen**

Arts4wellbeing is a compact highly professional organization, delivering a wide range of accessible person centered arts activities and courses all over Wales, designed to inspire and motivate children, young people and adults of all ages. Skill building leading to engagement and motivation through the experience of success

They specialize in confidence building, working with identity, building connections with self, society and environment, looking at new pathways forward into training and work through an improved sense of wellbeing.

### Date

15 March 2012

### Numbers

Total of 36 people attended. It was a mixed group who had been referred via Tiny Tots family center including single mums, people with mental health issues and learning disabilities.

## **Arts Alive Wales, Powys – First Session**

This organization is based in Crickhowell and provides high quality arts activities for all people across Powys.

### **Date**

16 March 2012

### **Numbers**

The morning session was attended by 6 people who had been referred by Brecon District Contact Association. Participants have mental health illnesses of varying degrees. They were able to attend the session free of charge as the sessions were funded by Brecon District Contact Association and the Workers Educational Association.

## **Arts Alive Wales, Powys – Second Session**

### **Date**

16 March 2012

### **Numbers**

The afternoon session was attended by 5 ladies who attend a fee class. They have various levels of experience as artists, from professional artist and tutor, to

psychologist using art as therapy. All attended this class for their own personal creative time.

**Other comments**

The group wanted to stress that there are lots of really good things going on around the county but not enough sharing of good practice happens. For example why not look at groups that are successful in attracting participants and more importantly sustaining that activity over time.

Group name	Question 1 – What kind of arts activities do you currently participate in (for example, drama, music, art, writing, crafts, film-making, dancing)?
Cofio – RCT Community Arts	Dancing and keep fit dance classes.
Reach the Heights – RCT Community Arts	Variety of different forms of music, from playing guitar, harp, piano, drums, singing and rapping. They have also done dance, painting and crafts. Recently they performed at the LAC (looked after children) awards.
Flippers – RCT Community Arts	Dance, breakdancing, street dance (some of which is done in School). Some of the groups play instruments such as the violin and piano, and a number of them go to girl guides as well.
Threads in Time - Ruthin Craft Centre	Mostly ceramic and textile arts. Some spoke about concerns other family members had that were involved in other forms -theatre and dance especially.
Promometheus - Galeri	This was the only dance group that the group knew of in their locality specifically for young people with learning difficulties. They felt that being a group that was specifically for this age group was an important factor in them attending.
Tonic - Galeri	The people I spoke to felt that there were a few activities concerning the arts that they could take part in, but most chose to only take part in this group.
Celf o Gwmpas	Visual arts including painting, drawing, photography, recycled art, sculpting.
Arts Alive – 1 <sup>st</sup> session	Pottery, art courses only. Not aware of any other courses that they could access other than ones within the Arts Alive centres which are not free.
Arts Alive – 2 <sup>nd</sup> session	Pottery, recreational drawing, painting, recycled crafting. Work as a tutor teaching crafts, painting and pottery. Work as a psychologist and like to use art as therapy within my sessions
Arts 4 Wellbeing	Most of the group did not take part in any other activities as they were not aware of any. They were aware of a youth theatre and some of their children went there.

Group name	Question 2 - Why do you participate in arts activities?
Cofio - RCT Community Arts	<p>Company is a major factor, encouraging older people to come out of isolation, keep active physically and remain active members of the community. Having a safe place to come and socialise, make friends, build confidence, and simply having a fun place to go to is a big reason.</p>
Reach the Heights - RCT Community Arts	<p>The main reason they like taking part in art activities is to socialise with new people, and talk to people they wouldn't otherwise be in contact with. They think it's fun, and it helps them keep out of trouble, because if they were not taking part in these group activities, they would be hanging out drinking on the streets with their friends. It gets them out of the house and it's a great way of making new friends as there are not a lot of other things to do in the area.</p> <p>Youth workers are available to talk to, and it's easy to discuss personal issues and problems they are experiencing with them.</p> <p>They also gain qualifications such as OCN which they think will help them get work in the future.</p> <p>The group saw arts participation as just another type of activity available to them, like sports teams, outdoor pursuits such as walking, rock climbing, horse-riding and go karting. The girls in the group especially liked the artistic activities, especially the musical element.</p> <p>Benefits from taking part in arts activities over other types of activities they have done in the past included building confidence and learning new things.</p>
Flippers - RCT Community Arts	<p>Like making new friends, and socialising. They said that the Flippers project is fun because they love to dance, they do a lot of different styles of dance, and they are encouraged to use their own ideas that can be used at performances.</p> <p>The Flippers group are also involved in assisting the younger age ranges in their classes. They help with the Tiny Steps group, who are a dance class for those between the ages of 4 to 6. They really enjoy that as they teach them how to dance, value it as good experience for the future, and they said that the group themselves like having people nearer their age range teaching them and showing them what to do.</p>

	<p>The majority of the group have been coming since they were 3 years old.</p>
<p>Threads in Time - Ruthin Craft Centre</p>	<p>Generally to meet like-minded people and socialise. There was also a feeling that it was a form of education within the arts world, and that they could learn from the experts that come and give the lectures.</p> <p>Many felt that participating in this group was a way of keeping their minds active and gave them something new to consider and learn about.</p>
<p>Promometheus - Galeri</p>	<p>The main reason given for attending these sessions was to socialise with people of a similar age and without being made to feel different or be side-lined. It gave them an opportunity to meet new people and make friends.</p> <p>Participating in Prometheus also gave the young people an opportunity to keep fit and keep active which benefitted their physical fitness.</p> <p>The carers I spoke to said that there weren't many opportunities for groups of young people with disabilities in this area, so they were limited in terms of choice and so part of the reason why they participated in this activity was due to a lack of options.</p>
<p>Tonic - Galeri</p>	<p>The main reason for taking part in this activity was to get out of the house on a regular basis, meet friends and have a catch-up. It was something that they looked forward to on a monthly basis.</p>
<p>Celf o Gwmpas</p>	<p>Being part of a group activity allows the participants to build their confidence. They can learn new skills and share experience. This group is part of a programme to learn how to promote themselves as artists, how to run workshops and how to attract their own funding and earning potential. Meeting as a group allows them to share ideas and explore new ways of working with the materials or to explore new avenues. By sharing their skills and helping others it has given them the confidence and opportunity to create a better life for themselves.</p> <p>The group stressed the need to be part of the group as they all live rurally and some of them have no other opportunity to meet people. Rural isolation is a big factor in causing them to sink into depression and creates lack of motivation. Art is therapeutic it gives them a voice and allows them to express their feelings.</p>



Arts Alive – 1 <sup>st</sup> session	Interesting, a sense of community, Wellbeing both mental and physical. “It helps me to overcome agoraphobia and forces me to get out of the house” Meet different people
<b>Group name</b>	<b>Question 3 a) – Has arts provision been withdrawn in your area because of budget cuts?</b>
	management, gives a structure to the day. A purpose to life. Develops artistic skills as well as social skills.
Arts Alive – 2 <sup>nd</sup> session	It allows freedom of expression. It gives a sense of personal wellbeing.
Arts 4 Wellbeing	A lot of people said that they took part in the group activity because it allowed them to “be themselves”. They were using it as a stepping-stone to further education. It gave them the skills to take control of their own lives. It empowered them and was an entry into work. They enjoy the chance to share experiences and learn that others have the same issues as them. This allowed them to meet new friends and likeminded people. It also challenged their prejudices and beliefs about others in the community and thus gave them the chance to build a community feeling. It gave them an opportunity to express their feelings and confront issues in a safe and welcoming environment. It helped them to build their confidence. The group is made up on a mixture of ages and it gave members the opportunity to meet older residents in the community. It allowed an escape from everyday life.

Cofio - RCT Community Arts	They used to take part in computer classes and digital photography classes, which were free to attend, but both have closed in the past two years due to funding.
Reach the Heights - RCT Community Arts	They were not aware of funding cuts, and how it may or may not have affected them.
Flippers - RCT Community Arts	Not aware of any, however one mentioned that she used to go to a street dance class in Ystrad Sports Centre once a week, which stopped 3 years ago. This may or may not have been because of funding.
Threads in Time - Ruthin Craft Centre	<p>The majority claim to have heard of 'budget cuts' in the arts but didn't feel that this had affected them that much.</p> <p>A lot felt that it was communities funding and volunteers that were involved in the majority of projects that they were aware/ participating in and that they were still active e.g. local choir/ dance groups. But felt that maybe some of the larger projects which involved more people were being affected by budgets cuts.</p>
Prometheus - Galeri	<p>Due to the funding of the Prometheus project finishing in a couple of weeks- the group felt that this had a direct impact on the young people that took part as they would no longer have this group to attend.</p> <p>The young people that I spoke to had nothing but praise for the Prometheus project and felt that there would be void in their social life after the project came to an end.</p>
Tonic - Galeri	The group weren't aware of any specific arts provision that had been withdrawn in their area, but thought that was down to their lack of knowledge not because that there were not any examples.
Celf o Gwmpas	They have noticed that there are fewer opportunities to attend projects that would have been available previously. There seems to be more on line promotion of courses rather than paper based newsletters or advertisements for courses that are being run. They have seen the Arts Council putting their money on "safe bets" rather than encouraging new artists who are unknown to them. Some funding had been withdrawn that was to be used to set up a central place for arts programmes to be delivered.
Arts Alive - 1 <sup>st</sup> session	Nothing available in Llandrindod Wells and assume this is because there is no funding.
Arts Alive - 2 <sup>nd</sup>	As a professional it is difficult to attract funding for

session	development of community arts. Particularly difficult for small organizations.
<b>Group name</b>	<b>Question 3 b) - If so, how has this affected you?</b>
Cofio - RCT	This has not affected them a great deal, as all of those who used to attend these classes now attend Cofio. However
	continue.

Community Arts	these courses are not available in the same area
Reach the Heights - RCT Community Arts	
Flippers - RCT Community Arts	It meant that she was not taking part in an arts class before she joined this class around a year ago, after she heard about it through a friend.
Threads in Time - Ruthin Craft Centre	
Promometheus - Galeri	
Tonic - Galeri	
Celf o Gwmpas	Not every participant had access to the internet, either due to financial constraints or their location. This means that they do not have equal access to find out things that are going on and so miss out on opportunities. A couple of the artists had applied for funding and been turned down as there was not enough money available for their type of project/proposal. The central place project was abandoned as funding was withdrawn.
Arts Alive - 1 <sup>st</sup> session	Have to travel a long distance to get to anything, Rely on people to give me lifts or else I cannot attend the course.
Arts Alive - 2 <sup>nd</sup> session	Unable to sustain courses. Funding does not allow a freedom to deliver certain courses due to the restrictions from the criteria. It can be difficult to meet the criteria when wanting to do a course that is a hobby course but can enhance other skills.
Arts 4 Wellbeing	Lost the chance to volunteer on future groups and so build more skills leading to work. They will not be able to build experience. Some have said that once the course finishes they know that they will start to withdraw from the world again.

<b>Group name</b>	<b>Question 4 - Do you think that people have enough opportunity to participate in arts activities in your area?</b>
Cofio - RCT	No - there are not many activities available for this age

Community Arts	<p>range in the area beside Cofio and local choirs.</p> <p>Some people do not have the time to take part in arts projects, and have less money to do so. Some older people do not like leaving the house, and the group saw isolation as being a big barrier, along with a feeling that physical activities are not for older people. Promotion is important to correct this.</p> <p>The group believe there is a responsibility to attract people to take part in the activity they would like to, and that choice is paramount to attract participants. They also make the connection between the options available, to participation, to the skills people can develop (i.e. digital photography and computing – skills that many older people may not possess).</p>
Reach the Heights – RCT Community Arts	<p>When asked what they would do if they did not come here, the group suggested that there would not be anything other than a couple of local youth clubs available for them to attend. Youth clubs had been attended by many of the group, but none of them go there anymore because of the other people’s “stupid” behaviour, and there are not enough arranged activities as there are at Reach the Heights. In their age range they could go twice a week but the majority of them don’t go at all.</p> <p>One of the group suggested that there are lots of police stations in the area, but nowhere for young people to go to. She suggested that there wouldn’t be a need for so many police stations if young people had things to do and places to go to keep them out of trouble.</p> <p>There are local football clubs, but they are extremely popular which means that the majority of young people cannot regularly take part, and there is a large waiting list to join the teams. One of the staff members volunteers as an under 16 football coach in the area, and he has 157 under 16s on his books.</p> <p>Some of the girls felt that girls’ sports teams were too elitist (in and out of School), and were intimidating for girls who didn’t think they were particularly good at the sport.</p>
Flippers – RCT Community Arts	<p>General feeling that there are some things to do in the area, like a choir, the Flippers class, and other types of participation like youth clubs and cheerleading.</p> <p>They were quite critical about local youth clubs, the majority of the group knew where they were, and what nights they can go, but choose not to attend because they</p>

	<p>don't arrange enough programmes and activities for them. One girl mentioned that it's just a bunch of people hanging around, unlike Flippers where they are told what to do; they have specific things to do when they come in and it is generally well structured. They like having that structured environment.</p>
<p>Threads in Time - Ruthin Craft Centre</p>	<p>Feeling that there was a North- South divide in terms of provision was a theme that was echoed from many.</p> <p>Having said this many thought opportunities have improved in the last 20 years- many spoke of the time when they had to visit Liverpool or Manchester to participate in artistic activity as there was no opportunity in North Wales.</p>
<p>Promometheus - Galeri</p>	<p>The group did feel that there was a lack of relevant facilities for groups with severe disabilities to take part in the arts. This ranged from practical facilities such as toilets/ washing facilities to a shortage in qualified instructors and teachers.</p> <p>The group also felt that the numbers participating had dropped significantly mainly due to budget cuts in other areas. An example was given of a young person who used to attend the group regularly and needed the support of 2 carers, but due to budget cuts she now only had 1 carer and so could no longer attend.</p> <p>The group felt that there wasn't enough provision or opportunity for people with complex needs in North West Wales.</p> <p>Having said this the group also commented that they thought there was a general lack of knowledge of opportunities that were available and that groups and organisations should work together to promote</p>
<p>Tonic - Galeri</p>	<p>4. The groups were divided on this matter, with some saying that there was enough opportunity but didn't because they didn't want to take part.</p> <p>Others felt that there were lack opportunities specifically for the older generation. At the same time though they also acknowledged that it might just be a lack of awareness on their part.</p>

	<p>When questioned about where they would go to find out about these opportunities, most were unsure and thought they would probably rely on word of mouth or friends to inform them.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	<p>Whilst there might be opportunities available, they are not always widely promoted (see the note re internet), which means that the opportunity to participate is not always there. The programmes are very fragmented and this creates problems in continuity. There is no central place to go to which can stop people from wanting to attend. People see arts centres as a barrier and as no programmes are run in “normal” every day places this means that people might not take part as they think it is not for them.</p> <p>The group felt strongly that more work needs to be put into delivering programmes in places that people can access them.</p>
Arts Alive – 1 <sup>st</sup> session	<p>No. As this is a rural community it is very difficult to get things up and running. Classes need a certain number of people to attend to make it viable. This means that not enough classes are run for smaller groups of interested people.</p>
Arts Alive – 2 <sup>nd</sup> session	<p>No. Travel costs and infrequent public transport excludes a lot of people from being able to go to arts activities in rural areas. Lots of people don’t meet the criteria for the courses that are being run. For example, a course may be targeted at young unemployed people leaving no funding available for the older members of the community. This is happening more and more. Lots of things are going on but they are not always advertised in the relevant areas to attract certain groups of people. Lots of the art courses are very short and don’t fit the timetables of families etc. Lots of arts activities are perceived as upper middle class and this puts people off joining in.</p>
Arts 4 Wellbeing	<p>Not enough opportunities exist. There needs to be more art activities delivered in school. There are few activities for adults to be involved in, especially this group as they mostly have child care responsibilities that reduce their ability to take part.</p>





Group name	Question 5 – Would anything help you to participate more in the arts?
Cofio – RCT Community Arts	<p>Access to transport – free bus passes are essential to allow them to get about. Removing that would cause major issues and cause many older people to be isolated.</p> <p>People need a range of choices to get them interested in the first place. This group is well established and the members are close friends, but for those who don't currently partake in activities, especially arts activities, they need the choice so that they are encouraged to participate because of their enjoyment of a particular form of art, which will then lead to other benefits as mentioned previously.</p> <p>Some arts classes are seen as being too professional, and are too focused on the end result (certificate/GCSE/Alevel) than the enjoyment of it.</p>
Reach the Heights – RCT Community Arts	<p>More choice. At the moment they do whatever is available, and if more things were available then they would participate more. The girls emphasised that they don't do enough physical activity, so dance classes and so on are seen as a good way of keeping fit and having fun. They would like to do more contemporary things like photography, graffiti art and parkour/free running which is only available in Cardiff.</p> <p>Again, the group saw participation in the arts very much the same as they do any other type of activity, and they would like more choice in general in their local area, such as sports teams, swimming and other physical activities.</p>
Flippers – RCT Community Arts	<p>More choice in general would be welcomed but nothing was particularly highlighted.</p>
Threads in Time - Ruthin Craft Centre	<p>More publicity about event that were happening seemed to be something that they agreed would get more participating and also get new audiences interested and involved.</p> <p>Rural transport schemes were also seen as something which had been trialled in few areas which would offer an opportunity for people to participate more.</p>
Prometheus - Galeri	<p>The group they found this question quite difficult- however they did express that having more activities specifically for 16-25 year olds with learning disabilities would make them want to get involved in more art activities. They didn't want to be in the same group as younger children or older adults.</p>

Tonic - Galeri	Transport was brought up by the group as being an important factor to them participating more in the arts with many relying on friends to pick them up for these activities. Public transport was seen to be an option but often doesn't take them close enough to the venue and so this stops them from taking part.
Celf o Gwmpas	Access to transport – Powys is a very big county and lots of programmes are spread over a very rural area. Buses are infrequent. Often the timetables of the buses do not marry up with the timetables of classes. This means that they may be able to get to a class but not get home and therefore they can't attend. Trains are infrequent and do not connect to the right towns or timetables of classes.
Arts Alive – 1 <sup>st</sup> session	If there were activities going on during the day rather than the evenings. If there was help in childcare for people who could only attend in the evenings. If the activities were inclusive for the whole family. If courses were run in places where I might already be for example, after school clubs.
Arts Alive – 2 <sup>nd</sup> session	If local buildings were shared such as schools or colleges and their facilities were made available such as dark rooms, studios, pottery studios. If there were reasonably priced tester courses – don't want to pay out a lot of money for a 10 week course and then find it's not for them and can't get the money back. If they could move money from one course to another if they find it's not the right one for them. If things were inclusive of the whole family. Accreditations, certificates that would be useful in everyday life.
Arts 4 Wellbeing	More hours, longer courses (this is only 10 weeks), follow on courses, different times, linked to family centre giving crèche facilities. If they were delivered in an area where they already meet.

Group name	Question 6 - What might stop you from taking part in arts activities (for example, accessibility)?
Cofio - RCT Community Arts	Lack of access to public transport. Facilities to hold sessions; they mentioned that Communities First currently pay a portion of rent at Teify House in Maerdy, which is where they hold their sessions. If they decided to stop paying rent, or if the building was shut for any other reason, there would be no other facilities in the area making it impossible to participate.
Reach the Heights - RCT Community Arts	Transport is an issue, and being of the age that the group are, there are issues around parents letting them travel when it's dark, and being out after school.
Flippers - RCT Community Arts	No access issues were mentioned, transport was not specified as an issue. Many of the group had arrangements with the others family members.
Threads in Time - Ruthin Craft Centre	Cost was definitely the greatest barrier the group saw as possibly stopping any participation in the future- transport cost, car parking costs, attendance costs.
Promometheus - Galeri	<p>Transport was seen to be one of the main barriers to them taking part as all members of the group relied on someone to bring them to the activity, be that a family member or a designated carer. Public transport was not seen as being a viable option for this group because of their needs.</p> <p>Another barrier to them attending would be if their carers did not want/ or could not attend the activity as the young people could not attend alone.</p>
Tonic - Galeri	
Celf o Gwmpas	Lack of access to public transport and the cost of public transport. Lack of confidence to go to a formal class. Lack of internet access (most things are published on line now) lack of moral support to make that first meeting. Lack of networking. Without personal networking some people are unaware of what is available. Lack of financial support to run workshops when the numbers are too small.
Arts Alive - 1 <sup>st</sup> session	Additional childcare costs, lack of confidence, travel costs
Arts Alive - 2 <sup>nd</sup> session	Travel costs, travel distances, additional costs to join. Lack of confidence that the course will lead onto other things.
Arts 4 Wellbeing	Public transport - lack of buses, too expensive, timetables don't marry up with times for courses. Courses are too far

	away (lots of rural communities with no facilities). Lack of support from family.
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# Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales – Organisation feedback

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## **BVSNW, Cardiff**

The Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales is an umbrella organisation that actively represents supports and promotes the interests of the BME communities and the BME voluntary sector in Wales.

### **Date**

16 March 2012

### **Numbers**

BVSNW had invited a cross section of organisations and participants to attend the session. A total of 7 people attended the session, all of which represent art groups and organisations. These included the Romani Cultured Arts Company, Respect, Sound Progression, India Dance Wales, BVSNW and Filipino Community

## **Celf o Gwmpas, Powys**

### **Date**

16 March 2012

## **Arts 4 Wellbeing – Carmarthen**

### **Date**

15 March 2012

<b>Group name</b>	<b>Question 1 – Which groups of people participate in your organisation’s arts activities</b>
BVSNW	Ethnic minorities including the Filipino community, Gypsy Roman travellers, schools, local communities. A wide variety of ages, and diverse cultural background.
Celf o Gwmpas	Adults and young people with learning disabilities all across Powys. Special schools and units, artists with learning difficulties and mental health issues.
Arts 4 Wellbeing	A wide range of people. Mostly lower end of the social scale, economically inactive groups including, disaffected youths, NEETS, pupil referral units, probation services, single mums, mental health clients, substance misusers, and social services, elderly.

<b>Group name</b>	<b>Question 2 a) – Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?</b>
BVSNW	<p>BVSNW have received a slight increase in funding this year, but relative to previous cuts they are operating on a lot less money they had in prior years. They will be able to represent people from across Wales much better due to this increase. Tight budgets previously meant they were very Cardiff focused.</p> <p>The changes in budgets this year has been a positive for BVSNW.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	<p>Not experienced cuts personally. They are aware of a group that are unable to bring a group along to classes any more due to budget cuts in other areas (transport costs to bring along to class). This is anecdotal and they find that most people that attend their programmes are supported by family and so are still able to attend.</p> <p>They have had increasing amounts of funding from the lottery funding. They have benefitted from a new fund from the Arts Council known as Creative Steps specifically aimed at addressing gaps in the provision for the marginalised groups.</p> <p>They are well supported by Powys County Council too. They are aware of a local venue that is threatened by cuts and thus reduces the possibility of their participants showcasing their work.</p>
Arts 4 Wellbeing	<p>Yes. There is little funding available now. High arts are attracting funding very easily, whereas arts at ground level are finding it difficult to obtain funding for various reasons. These being: unable to spend the time writing funding bids, and difficulty in making the project fit the funding stream, lack of experience in applying for funding.</p>

Group name	Question 2 b) – Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?
BVSNW	<p>Everyone appreciated that times are tight, and money is not widely available. There was a strong feeling amongst the group that underrepresented groups such as those that BVSNW represent, have been affected from the very beginning, and that these funding changes don't address these issues.</p> <p>One of the group mentioned that they have lost their office, reduced staff and the amount of activities, and are turning down requests for performances due to insufficient funding which hasn't been addressed over the years. Many of them felt that the salaries of senior staff at the Arts Council and other large arts organizations in Wales should be reduced to contribute to the funding deficit.</p> <p>The effect on other organizations outside of those that BVSNW represents also has an effect on ethnic minority groups, as they are sometimes commissioned to perform by other larger groups. They are expected to perform for minimal sums when comparing to other groups from more mainstream ethnic backgrounds. A difficult decision has to be made on a regular basis: do they perform at cheaper rates/free to increase exposure and awareness or do they refuse to perform under the standard rate. Equity has suggested that they should refuse to perform under the set rate.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	
Arts 4 Wellbeing	Youth clubs. The organization had been asked to put on a specific project but they were unable to obtain the funding. The project would have built up a piece of work that would affect the whole of the community in the longer term.

Group name	Question 3 – Are there gaps in provision for people to participate in arts activities, either demographically or geographically?
BVSNW	<p>Lots of people in the sector are reliant on the BVSNW's assistance, so these funding changes should enable them to better represent people in Mid, and North Wales.</p> <p>One of the group mentioned that they get requests from schools in North Wales to perform for them, but they are not always able to do so because of the extra costs for travel and so on, which means that they don't perform there as much as they do in the South. This means that promoting a message of diversity and raising awareness of different cultures isn't effectively done in all parts of the country.</p>

	<p>It was strongly argued that provision is not as widely available for ethnic minorities, as it is in other areas, and equality is too much of a tick box operation.</p> <p>The group stated that there is inequality in funding applications. Big organizations that the Arts Council have prioritized in the funding review have the ability to apply for large pots of funding, as well as smaller funding streams that smaller groups and organizations (like those in this focus group) compete for. They also said that big organizations with bigger budgets employ consultants to assist them in writing applications for funding, which inevitably leads to a higher success rate. Smaller organizations don't have the ability to do so and therefore lose out.</p> <p>Due to the limited resources they work from they don't have the resource to promote what they will be doing in the future, or promote past success, which could lead to an increase of participants.</p> <p>Local authorities can assist art provision greatly by making empty spaces and schools available at cheaper rates for these groups.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	They have no views on this. They get out and about as much as they can. They are not aware of gaps. There are lots of advocacy based organisations.
Arts 4 Wellbeing	There is a lot of funding being put into NEET groups. This creates an overlap and means that funding isn't available for other groups such as elders, single mums (over 25), and health groups. Community based festivals, development of arts projects that don't meet NEET criteria.



Group name	Question 4 – Are there enough funding sources available other than the Arts Council for Wales? Are alternative funding sources accessible?
BVSNW	<p>Many within the group didn't know. They were not sure what funding streams are available, how to access it and who to contact outside of the Arts Council, and felt that the information is not widely available.</p> <p>Others suggested that it was dependent on the art form. There are limited funding sources for dance, but if it involved children there are several different options. One of the group mentioned that she was overwhelmed looking for arts funding online, as there are so many possibilities. However once she tried certain possibilities, it became very apparent that only a tiny proportion was potentially applicable. It spent a lot of time and effort to do so, which smaller groups do not have.</p> <p>There is also a lack of clarity over what the person reading the application, that ultimately makes the decision is looking for. In most cases the individual working for a group representing ethnic minorities may not have the expertise to complete forms effectively, and they don't know what to concentrate on which will make their application more effective. This is not helped by larger organizations (that may have a specialist resource, or employ consultants to write applications competing for the same pot of money. Strong feeling that this is elitist.</p> <p>There is a lack of guidance available for individuals and group for alternative funding sources if they are turned away from the Arts Council.</p> <p>BVSNW has a role to play in assisting these groups with funding allocation.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	<p>No. They are unable to access European Social Funding due to being in the wrong objective. Powys is perceived to be too rich. There are no communities' first areas and so no funding is attracted. They only have access to the Arts Council and Powys County Council. They have accessed some lottery funding.</p>
Arts 4 Wellbeing	<p>Only aware of local government and limited charities and trusts.</p>

Group name	Question 5 – What role does the voluntary arts sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can this be supported?
BVSNW	<p>Huge – especially for this sector. Large arts organizations and the Arts Council can't connect with local communities and ethnic minorities because they don't have the skills, the knowledge or the rapport with the audience. This was argued as a big problem, and many of the people around the table felt that the BVSNW themselves should be an Arts Council department, if they are serious in engaging with underrepresented ethnic groups.</p> <p>These groups need a better understanding of what the priorities of those who distribute funding is, in order for them to know how to prioritize their work, and receive project funding.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	<p>Voluntary arts are community based. Networking with other organisations is easy and so there is less duplication of work going on in the voluntary sector. There is a database Arts Engine, managed by Powys Council, which they can access but have to pay for. A centralised 'What's On' database would help them to ensure that their programmes are promoted and there is no crossover. Local Council provide free translation for their publicity and documents. This is invaluable. Memberships to organisations can be expensive but is vital. However due to the amount of funding they have available they have to be selective as to which groups they join.</p>
Arts 4 Wellbeing	<p>Carmarthen and Ceredigion are very rural communities and people in these communities are isolated, scared and vulnerable. These kinds of activities can help people to connect with their communities, meet new people and build up community values through shared experiences. They can help to build peoples skills as they volunteer to help on the projects.</p>

Group name	Question 6 – Is the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?
BVSNW	<p>No, the group felt that the WG should be more hands on, and that the Arts Council should be more heavily scrutinized. More dialogue is needed with participants and organizations when their policies, aims and objectives are set, and there should be more of an opportunity to challenge them.</p> <p>They felt that their contributions do not carry much weight as they are a minority group and they cannot affect policy as much as larger arts organizations can. There appears to be a big disconnect between the aims and objectives of the Arts Council and these ethnic organizations.</p> <p>There were a lot of comments about the ability of ACW officers. Inconsistency in standard of their support, and the majority of reports they write were positive, but then went on to say that some examples didn't meet the objectives of the funding. Many of the group felt they reached this conclusion because of a lack of understanding and knowledge, and that the ACW should have other systems in place such as obtaining official feedback from participants and the audience. Also certain instances where ACW officers have withheld funding which they had initially agreed up to two weeks prior to an event taking place which effects the success of the project. Differences in attitude, opinion and understanding of the officer towards the work of ethnic art groups plays a major role, possibly down to differences in interpretation of policies.</p> <p>Many of the group mentioned that the Arts Councils systems were out-dated, and the statistics on ethnic participation misleading. They said that presenting ethnic participation and engagement levels in percentages hides the actual numbers, which would reflect more poorly on the Arts Council for Wales. What is classed as ethnic art? Is a black person doing ballet considered ethnic art, or is a white person performing an Indian dance considered ethnic art?</p> <p>The funding process is seen as extremely complicated and many of them felt that the ACW don't fund some ethnic arts projects because they are viewed as any other arts group, which would set a precedent for others to claim they should also receive funding. They felt this was wrong as underrepresented groups should have different funding requirements.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	<p>Yes, Arts Council of Wales works well. As does the lottery funding. They are not clear on how these organisations work with the Government but they think that it seems to be working</p>
Arts 4 Wellbeing	<p>In some areas it has worked as the bodies are now accountable and have to make money available. Not sure that Welsh Government is aware of how the money should be spent when setting criteria. For example there needs to be more money put into schools, youth orchestras, and arts for art's sake.</p>

Group name	Question 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?
BVSNW	<p>Many of the group didn't know what it entailed. BVSNW were involved in the consultation. Lots of scepticism around more policies, more words on paper. They felt that policies have existed for years, but the reality is very different when you see their staff (age, gender, and ethnicity) and how they promote and target their activities.</p> <p>They felt that the dynamics of big arts organizations need to change and that equality doesn't happen on paper. They emphasized the importance of equal gender and ethnic representation being employed within organizations, and how that links with successful implementation of their policies.</p> <p>Policies should be simplified to ensure they are interpreted appropriately and consistently, so that individuals and groups can use them and refer to them accordingly, especially when applying for project funding.</p> <p>Many artists are forced across to England due to lack of opportunities for underrepresented groups in Wales.</p>
Celf o Gwmpas	<p>Yes, once the strategic plans are in place it will help fundraisers to set up projects with the strategic aims in mind. This will help them when applying for funds as they can tailor their projects to the strategic aims.</p>
Arts 4 Wellbeing	<p>No. Having to tender based solely on equality plans can create issues with obtaining funding. It can reduce the ability for voluntary organizations and small companies and individuals to apply for funding as the projects that they deliver are whole person based rather than skill sets targeted. They have little time to research the plans in order to put together a bid based on the criteria.</p>