

Correspondence from the Romani Cultural and Arts Company to the Arts Council of Wales

Happy new year. Thank you for your message.

I am pleased to hear that you agree that there is much more to do in relation to engagement through the arts with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities, and that the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) is keen to work with the Romani Cultural and Arts Company (RCAC) in a strategic relationship involving resourcing and funding.

In response to a recent FOI request made by the RCAC to ACW regarding budget spend on GRT projects between 2013 and 2023 (see below), I was concerned to note that only two organisations have been primarily providing events relating to GRT communities. These are the RCAC and Head4Arts; Head4Arts seem not to be funded moving forward according to the recent ACW Investment Review 2023 (see attached).

The response from ACW to the FOI request stated that the ACW are reliant upon individual organisations' own recording of details regarding targeted activity with GRT communities. This oversight is unacceptable as it means that organisations are not able to quantify the proportion of activity relating to GRT communities (or any other community) and therefore remain unaccountable in the amount of public funds being made available for specific communities. That this kind of monitoring is not mandatory is of great concern.

The FOI response also states that ACW does not ask for budget value from core funding to be recorded against activity as 'this would be difficult for the Portfolio organisations to calculate accurately'. This should not be difficult to arrange as organisations should be able to track where funds have been spent even in terms of apportionment of running costs, which is what the RCAC currently does.

I am surprised and disappointed by the information arising from the FOI request, specifically that the proportion of budget spend is not required to be broken down into specifics relating to demographics particularly in relation to under-represented communities. Without this information it is impossible to quantify budget spend in real terms therefore placing no accountability on organisations for rates of inclusion within their programming, audience and staffing.

This lack of monitoring and accountability was also revealed by our (ACW/RCAC) Sites of Inclusion Report: https://www.romaniarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/REPORT-Sites-of-Inclusion_Gypsy-Roma-and-Traveller-Participation-in-the-Arts-Sector-of-Wales.pdf

The FOI request looked at a ten year window. It is important to note that some of the organisations covered in the FOI request have been funded for more than thirty years.

The FOI data also makes it clear that there has never been a GRT run organisation that has been core funded by ACW. And this continues to be the case. As the only GRT run organisation, the RCAC stands alone in providing arts activities for GRT communities by GRT communities.

In the light of the lack of funding and the consequent lack of provision made clear through the FOI request we feel that **Welsh Government** needs to intervene immediately in order to hold ACW accountable for their decision making.

We look forward to a fully transparent investigation into the current situation regarding the monitoring of funding by ACW Portfolio clients so that a strategy with clear deliverables can be implemented before the new financial year April 2024. As ACW Portfolio clients begin their new funding round it is crucial that they be made accountable for their budget spend/provision on minority/GRT events, audiences and staffing. **This is tax payers money after all.**

We also feel that there should be a public apology from Welsh Government for their failure in holding the ACW accountable for their decision making and their distribution of public money.

Kushti Bok; be well
Good luck and good health

Isaac Blake (he/him)
Director

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company