

## **Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

### **Inquiry into participation in the arts**

#### **Questions for organisations**

The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee of the National Assembly for Wales is carrying out an inquiry into participation in the arts, and we want your help.

By ‘participation’, we mean taking an active role in arts activities, by doing, making and creating, rather than by watching as an audience member.

In 2011, the former Communities and Culture Committee undertook an inquiry into the accessibility of arts and cultural activities in Wales. This new inquiry aims to build on the recommendations that came out of that report, but concentrate specifically on participation in the arts.

We have been speaking to a number of organisations that told us they are concerned that budget cuts in the arts sector may be having a negative effect on participation in the arts among some groups of people. We want to know what you think.

We would like to hear the views of arts organisations and individuals who participate in the arts. To help us gather the information we need, we have developed two questionnaires, one for participants and one for organisations. It would be really helpful if you could spare a few minutes to fill in the questionnaire below and give us your views.

The consultation is open to any organisation providing arts activities, either funded or voluntary, and anyone who participates in the arts. The inquiry is not focussed on a particular group of people, and we want to hear as many views as possible.

We also want you to be creative in how you respond – for example, you could make a video or put on a play to tell us your views.

To give you a clearer idea of what we'll be looking at as part of this inquiry, below is a list of the areas we'll be covering.

The Committee will:

- assess the impact of budget cuts on participation in the arts in Wales, specifically whether certain groups of people have been affected more than others;
- identify gaps in provision for participation in the arts, both demographically and geographically;
- explore the role of the voluntary arts sector in arts participation and scope alternative funding sources;
- evaluate the policy framework between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding; and
- look at whether arts organisations in Wales are equipped to deliver the equality objectives of their funders.

## Questions

**It would really help us if you could answer the following questions.**

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

Through our art workshops and exhibitions, community arts activities and the provision of performance arts, a diverse and wide range of groups participate in our arts service – local people, visitors, artists, artisans, amateur dramatic companies, professional and amateur theatre companies in Welsh and English, opera companies, ballet companies, local arts clubs, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, schools, colleges and groups that are targeted through specific projects (e.g. mental health, the I Love Art club and the I Love Music club for young people, to name but a few).

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

The arts service has been part of reviews that look to make savings. The results have been varied, mainly concentrating on trying to raise income targets and to consider whether one particular service (Neuadd Dwyfor – theatre/cinema) could be provided in an alternative manner, and those discussions are ongoing. Also, there are discussions regarding provision in Bala, whereby provision might be moved from Neuadd Buddug to the new school. We are continuing to monitor the effect of having to raise

income e.g. by increasing ticket prices in Neuadd Buddug and Neuadd Dwyfor and this could affect the number of people who can afford the provision. In the theatres, fewer schools are participating in activities and events, and with changes to Cwmni'r Frân Wen's grant, the schools of Gwynedd and Anglesey have missed out. Also, there has been a reduction in provision due to the cut to the Hijinx Theatre grant and children in the area have missed out because Theatr Powys has lost its grant. Therefore, there are fewer professional companies that work through the medium of Welsh, which affects provision. Cuts have certainly affected the strategic grant that we allocate to arts bodies and there will be more competition for grants. The Community Arts Unit has received support and further funding to carry out projects and a plan is underway to create new provision in Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery, which depends on grant support e.g. the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Schools Arts Agency scheme now receives less funding from the Arts Council of Wales, which has affected the opportunities that are available to schools. Therefore, even though it is a challenging time, thus far we have protected the services that provide opportunities to participate in the arts, but the future is uncertain and there are further cuts on the horizon.

b) Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?

At present, there have been no substantial changes to the majority of our services, but the Performing Arts Service has seen its provision being affected as is noted in a), particularly as regards the element that relates to the Welsh language and schools. Furthermore, there are fewer opportunities for schools as a result of receiving less money for the Agency scheme. There could be changes in future as a result of cuts and it is a very uncertain period. It will depend on the developments that are in progress for Neuadd Dwyfor, Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery and the Community Arts Unit. The aim is to improve opportunities for participation rather than to reduce them. As is noted in a), the pressure to raise income could affect the ability of some members of the community to afford to attend/use our provision e.g. buying tickets, hiring rooms.

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

We are aware that Gwynedd is a wide county in geographic terms, with very dispersed and rural communities. We are aware that there are gaps in provision, particularly in the south of the county, and we are trying to ensure

that activities are organised there e.g. the I Love Art Club, and retaining a gallery in Blaenau Ffestiniog. We also support the activities of other bodies through our strategic grants and one of the criteria is the area being given the opportunity to participate. The provision of a theatre and cinema service in Pwllheli is also important since there are no similar opportunities nearby without having to travel (e.g. to Caernarfon) and there need to be more activities for young people and in Welsh. Furthermore, Neuadd Buddug in Bala is an important resource for the area but, at present, its future is uncertain and it is predicted that the provision will move to the new school in the future. In light of what is noted in 2, we must keep an eye on opportunities for schools.

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

The Arts Council of Wales is the main source funding source for the arts. However, it is not always appropriate for what we are trying to provide. We have obtained a grant from Cymal (museums) as we have included museum collections as inspiration for art therapy in our Artefact Project. Also, if we organise historic art exhibitions, Cymal is one of the funding sources, not the Arts Council. Other sources are available, such as Esmée Fairbairn, but we have not used them thus far, but we expect to do so over the next few years.

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

We are working in partnership with Mantell Gwynedd. It is, for example, a member of the Gwynedd Arts Forum panel and we include it in any consultation that we undertake.

Gwynedd Council is in the process of preparing a volunteers policy and we are working with Mantell Gwynedd on how to adapt this to our services, trying to identify opportunities for the community to volunteer. This work has just started, so it is too soon to assess this.

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

Following the latest changes to the Arts Council structure, concerns have been expressed that there is no regional overview that could identify gaps or opportunities to increase participation. There is a danger that a gap could develop here that could affect participation. Discussions are on-going between local authorities and other partners to try to respond to this

potential gap and to encourage targeted collaboration to increase participation in the arts e.g. Artefact, I Love Art, Helfa Gelf/Art Trail etc. Other funds are often more “convenient” for projects e.g. Cymal.

As regards the Performing Arts, there are concerns regarding the money that has gone to three main professional companies in Wales and how little of their work involves travelling to theatres e.g. Theatr Genedlaethol, National Theatre and also Coreo Cymru, who receive over £3 million between them.

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?

The Council will publish its strategic equality plan in April. As part of the preparatory work, engagement took place on the regional and local level, and consideration was given to all the protected characteristics, as defined by the Act.

It became clear from this process that ethnic minority groups are particularly eager to know more and to participate more with the arts on a local level. We believe that there is strong potential to build on this: by informing groups about events and also supporting them to engage with the arts.

### **Accessible formats**

Copies of this questionnaire can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print, audio or hard copy from:

The National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff Bay

CF99 1NA