

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

Response from Caerphilly County Borough Council

1. Pa sefydliad/corff ydych chi'n ei gynrychioli? / What organisation do you represent?

Caerphilly County Borough Council

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

Residents of Caerphilly County Borough

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

We have seen a reduction in the level of funding from other Local Authority service areas/directorates and public bodies, coming into the arts budget to be spent on arts activity, for example the More Able and Talented programme for schools (cut of £10,000), Aneurin Bevan Health Board (7% cut for the Inside Out Arts & Mental Health Project). The Arts Service itself has seen small budget cuts over the last couple of years – mostly through vacancy management where posts have been lost. However additional funding has been sought from alternative sources e.g. Legacy and Lottery funding to help deliver specific arts activity (such as the Cultural Olympiad project Cauldrons & Furnaces) meaning that participation numbers have remained stable. We will potentially see further cuts to the Inside Out budget over the next couple of years, and with the end of Legacy funding for the Cultural Olympiad a question remains over the service's ability to sustain participation numbers in the future.

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

Part of the Arts Service's role is to offer support, advice and guidance to any individual organisation or service working in the arts within the County Borough. The Arts Service has seen an increase in the number of enquiries and requests for support from practising professional artists (often soliciting work), which suggests a reduction in available paid work. The Arts Service has also seen an increase in the number of requests for support from voluntary arts groups – which could either mean more awareness of the Art Service's role, or a lack of support from elsewhere.

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

We believe that there are some areas and communities in the Borough that experience more barriers to participation than others. Barriers can include transport difficulties, lack of funding or resources, and deprivation etc. It is also believed (and is noted anecdotally) that some non-Communities First areas or partnerships experience frustration and a lack of support, resources or funding that are allocated to Communities First areas. The Arts Service has identified that the visual arts are underrepresented in the borough, and developing participation in the visual arts is one of our key priorities. The Arts Service is trying to address some of these inequalities by developing an Arts Strategy for the County Borough Council.

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

We feel that there are not enough funding sources available for arts activity. It is noted that funding from the Health Board, Local Authority and Local Education Authority is continually decreasing, and we feel that there is more competition for other sources of funding such as from Trusts and Foundations.

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

We believe that the Voluntary Arts Sector is key to encouraging sustainable participation in the arts, and provide many opportunities for people to part in the activity of their choice. Anecdotally we believe that membership numbers are decreasing especially in more traditional art forms. Voluntary network associations (e.g. GAVO – Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations) play a key role in supporting voluntary arts groups.

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

We believe that the arms length principle between WG and ACW is effective in allowing ACW to distribute funding, but we would prefer to see a more strategic relationship between ACW and Local Authorities, and for them to work in partnership in developing opportunities to increase participation. The role of the local authority should not be underestimated; it is a major funder of arts participation and also identifies gaps and addresses need. The Arts knowledge and expertise at a local level in the LA can help inform and shape ACW policy and strategy, to advocate and champion the arts, and help demonstrate the benefits of active participation in the arts.

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?

Yes – especially if practical and reasonable to implement, and not to the detriment of quality.