Written Evidence prepared for the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee's inquiry into The role of the arts and culture in addressing poverty and social exclusion.

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ProMo-Cymru has a long history of working with young people from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

We deliver/have delivered a wide range of projects that engage young people in cultural activities and provide them with opportunities to include:

- We have delivered theSprout.co.uk Cardiff's online news and info site for young people for 10 years. Young people create their own stories and content, review shows and share their opinions.
- EVI is a cultural centre based in Ebbw Vale, situated in one of the most economically deprived areas in Wales.
- We worked with local artists in Cardiff to set up The Abacus a pop up, community led art and events space in 2014-2016.
- We work with both the WMC and National Museum to support them to engage young people through cultural activities.

We strongly agree that art and culture can play an important role in addressing poverty and social exclusion.

There are some good projects going on that are improving access and participation. We work in partnership with The National Museum and WMC and can see progress in this direction. For example:

o   The WMC have set up a youth led radio station. This is a good example of engaging young people on their level into the WMC. This is a co-produced, community led approach. It's effective because it celebrates and gives prominence to young people's own culture.

o   The National Museum are delivering a National Lottery Heritage Fund project 'Hands on Heritage' which aims to change how the Museum engages with young people.

However more often we see a focus towards encouraging people to take part in the arts, culture and heritage that is already on offer. From my experience, much of what is on offer is not accessible or attractive to many people living in poverty and it does not reflect their culture. In 2017 we held a youth event at

the National Museum of Wales, it was largely attended by BAME young people and many of them asked 'where is the museum?'

There is a place for schemes to encourage young people and their families to visit museums, watch operas etc, but to achieve effective inclusion and participation the focus needs to shift further towards working with young people and their families to create cultural activities that are relevant to them. For something to be truly accessible, people need to recognise their own culture being reflected within these institutions. Both the Abacus and EVI provide excellent case studies of this working in practice. The EVI has a footfall of 5000 visitors a month, engages 'people in poverty' in cultural activities. It generates 85% of its own income, yet receives no WG or Arts Council funding.

From my experience the big institutions are a long way from being able to do this work. They struggle to work out how to effectively engage people at their level and create things that are appealing and relevant to them. It's not about getting more 'people from poverty' to attend an exhibition, but more around supporting their own culture to have prominence.

The work that I see that is accessible to 'people in poverty' is coming from community led grassroots organisations that are very close to these groups of people. These organisations have skills and expertise in community engagement work. Stronger partnerships and collaborations need to be forged with these organisations to achieve equity of access.

I work with young people who have disengaged from mainstream education, yet they spend hours lyric writing, rehearsing and practicing their music and rapping. They perform, collaborate and tell stories through their music. They are deeply involved in cultural activities, yet this often doesn't move beyond a grassroots level.

Effective community engagement work requires a bottom up approach. The first step is engaging people on their level, within their own communities. Listening to them and acting on what they want to do. *We do see projects and programmes that do this and want to see more of this.*

We have no experience of the WG Fusion Programme.