



**Creative
Lives**

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

September 2022

Creative Lives

Creative Lives / Bywydau Creadigol is a registered charity established in 1991, that champions community and volunteer-led creative activity. We work to improve opportunities for everyone to be creative and, in particular, celebrate and promote people expressing themselves creatively with others, recognising the benefits this brings to both individuals and communities.

Cost of Living

The voluntary arts sector in Wales is extensive, and includes choirs, brass bands, knitting groups, craft clubs, theatre groups, festivals, folk dancing, dyeing and weaving, quilting, sculpting and painting, and many more artforms. Involvement in community-based creative activity can bring considerable benefits to wellbeing and social connection, and the loss of communal arts practice during the pandemic was profound.

Since the lifting of pandemic restrictions, we found that local creative groups were struggling to find suitable venues in which to meet. In order to practice their creativity together, people need affordable and suitable places to meet, to rehearse, to practice and to perform.

The vast majority of creative groups don't own their own buildings, and after a few years of limited activity, many creative groups have experienced a substantial drop in income through the absence of members' subscription fees and ticket sales, whilst incurring increased costs to return to in-person activity.

In our survey of these issues, local creative groups reported difficulties finding large enough venues with adequate ventilation; restrictions on their activities or participant numbers; and finding accessible venues at a reasonable cost.

Prior to the pandemic, creative groups were already experiencing difficulties in finding venues due to cuts to public funding resulting in the closure of public buildings, and commercial hire rates (across sectors) exceeding the budget of many groups.

As we look ahead towards the colder months, we are concerned that further increases in costs will severely inhibit people's ability to meet around shared interests and be involved in regular, life-enhancing creative activities. This in turn will lead to increased isolation and loneliness, with a consequent increase in the risks of physical or mental ill health.

Regular participation in communal creative activity has been shown to provide numerous proven benefits to individuals, including improved health, wellbeing and social connection.

Voluntary arts groups meet in a wide range of venues managed across the public, private and voluntary sectors. The venue requirements for most creative groups are modest: accessible, affordable and flexible, and our research suggests that many venues would like to attract more creative activity to their spaces. One potential solution for these local groups is to facilitate far more collaboration across sectors and make greater use of under-used spaces.



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