

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
The role of arts and culture in addressing poverty and social exclusion / Rôl celfyddydau a diwylliant wrth fynd i'r afael â thlodi ac allgáu cymdeithasol
CWLC(5)
Ymateb gan Coleg Brenhinol Cerdd a Drama Cymru / Evidence from Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Thank you for the invitation to speak to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee on Thursday March 14 as part of its consultation on the role of arts and culture in addressing poverty and social exclusion in Wales. In advance of the meeting, I am pleased to provide some further detail to the College's written submission (December 2018) in response to the points requested.

A key component which underpins all aspects of the College's evolving five-year strategy is a resolve for the institution more extensively and inclusively to inhabit its role as the National Conservatoire of Wales. Within this context, we are developing new ways to bring the benefits of having a National Conservatoire to all parts of Welsh society, regardless of geographical, economic, social or cultural contexts. We firmly believe that the arts and culture have a leading role to play in addressing poverty and social exclusion in Wales, whether through engaging communities in the creativity of the art forms themselves or by providing genuine routes to employment in the performing arts for those who might otherwise not consider such pathways to be available to them. A key feature of our approach within this developing strategy is, wherever possible, to work in partnership across a range of arts and education providers to maximise the available pool of expertise and experience, drawn fully upon local and regional knowledge and networks, and create a progressive, relevant and authentic experience for all involved.

As an example of our approach, I would be pleased to outline for the committee one of our current projects in creating a regional Hub for the Performing Arts in North West Wales – drawing together key partners in the area to enrich performing arts training and education, as well as enhancing the creative offer for local communities and audiences. This project involves a key regional education provider (Grwp Llandrillo Menai), together with venues, schools, service providers and industry partners. The approach reflects our belief that by working in partnership with a full range of local and regional stakeholders, significant and sustainable impact can be achieved which reaches disadvantaged sections of the community.

The approach of establishing shared goals and working on their realisation with key regional stakeholders, rather than seeking to take a ready-made solution into an environment where we have limited obvious currency or networks has underpinned the College's most successful outreach work over a number of years.

To illustrate this, I would be delighted to talk to the committee about two of our most high profile and effective large-scale projects which have succeeded in bringing the performing arts and performing arts education to diverse communities across Wales. The first is our Orchestradventure initiative (supported by The Prince's Trust and now in its third and final year) which in partnership with local schools has brought high quality orchestral performance and associated workshops to thousands of children regardless of their economic or social background across Wales. The second is our Young Actors Studio (YAS) which through a range of stakeholder partnerships has introduced drama training to successive new generations of young people through centres in Cardiff and Pembrokeshire regardless of their ability to pay. I'll be happy to supply details of the particular funding and staffing models which have supported these schemes, together with our approach to project evaluation and our interest in undertaking further research in this area.