



cARTrefu, Age Cymru. Artist: Sophie McKeand

The National Assembly for Wales' Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee inquiry into the role of arts and culture in addressing poverty and social exclusion.

A Response from the Arts Council of Wales



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales



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- **How effective has the Welsh Government been in improving participation in and access to culture for people in poverty?**

The Welsh Government's delivery of culture is largely managed in Wales through the activities of the Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies (WGSBs). With the exception of those responsibilities falling under the remit of Cadw or the Government's Museums, Libraries and Archives Department, responsibility for culture is vested in various "arm's length" bodies.

The Welsh Government sets out its expectations of WGSBs in an annual Remit Letter. Addressing cultural poverty is identified as a priority, and it is the responsibility of WGSBs to reflect that responsibility (see below).

The policy imperative is, we believe, clear but the strategic context is complex. Being excluded from access to the arts is not just a consequence of poverty: it is a fundamental component in what it is to be 'poor'. The lack of opportunity to enjoy and take part in the arts is a significant part of people's experience of poverty.

One of the most important starting points issues is to acknowledge that poor people are neither intrinsically uncultured or disinterested in the arts – they are simply poor. Exposing people to arts and culture is not, on its own, going to eradicate the iniquities of transform the lives of social and economic disadvantage. If cultural deprivation is a feature of poverty, then it cannot be solved without addressing poverty itself. However, efforts to tackle poverty can be helped if art and culture are near the centre of what people do.

This is reflected in the approach adopted by the Arts Council of Wales and explained in our corporate plan, "For the Benefit of All..."

http://www.arts.wales/c_corporate-plans-and-strategies/144097

- **How effective have the efforts of Welsh Government sponsored bodies (namely the Arts Council, National Museum, National Library and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales) and local government been in using culture to tackle poverty?**

Tackling poverty through culture has been an Arts Council of Wales objective for many years. We have supported and delivered a range of projects and programmes that specifically focus on providing opportunities for people

from our most deprived communities in Wales to engage with and participate in the arts.

Prominent examples of our approach include:

- **the activities of our Arts Portfolio Wales** – these are the 67 revenue funded organisations who provide annual programmes of work across Wales. In agreeing that work we place particular emphasis on work with people in disadvantaged communities
- **reaching into specific communities** – we fund specialist organisations such as Head 4 Arts in the south Wales valleys to work specifically in disadvantaged areas. This is also a feature of our Night Out community touring programme which works in partnership with the local authorities to help groups of volunteers across Wales bring the arts to the heart of their communities. In 2017/18 Night Out supported 319 promoters who hosted 511 performances in local communities across Wales. Many of these take place in former Communities First areas.
- **programmes that invest in the development of life chances** – through programmes such as Creative Learning through the Arts and Arts and Health we invest in individuals' creativity, capability and resilience. An important aspect of these programmes is to give people the life skills that will hopefully lead to greater success
- **investing in community-based regeneration projects** – through programmes such as Ideas People Places we aimed to embed the arts in imaginative, ambitious and innovative regeneration projects. The programme comprised seven different projects across Wales and ran for three years until 2018. The programme sought to test new models of regeneration, design, placemaking and community development, through arts based processes. The IPP programme was also designed to reflect the wider goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and Arts Council of Wales's duty to carry out sustainable development. IPP was also seen as part of a wider regeneration strategy that supported the Welsh Government's (WG) regeneration framework, Vibrant and Viable Places.
- **working in partnership with like-minded organisations** – through our involvement in Fusion and cARTrefu Cymru, a partnership programme between ourselves, Age Cymru and the Baring Foundation. cARTrefu Cymru is supporting the delivery of creative arts projects in care homes across Wales and includes the training and mentoring of artist and care workers in social care settings.

However, our research shows that in spite of these interventions, we are still not reaching those people who are experiencing the consequence of economic or social disadvantage. This has led us to question whether the arts are increasingly accessible only to the most affluent in Welsh society. Over the past five years, the gap in attendance and participation between the most and the least well off has remained stubbornly fixed, with participation at around 6 percentage points and attendance widening from around 7 percentage points to 11 percentage points.

Our Council has recently published its new corporate plan ***For the benefit of all – 2018 – 2023***, in which one of only three priorities will be **Promoting Equalities as the foundation of a clear commitment to reach more widely and deeply into all communities across Wales.**

We are also undertaking a piece of scoping work to explore the key factors involved in widening engagement in the arts, learning from our major arts interventions from the last 3 – 4 years and experience further afield. The results of this work will inform the development of a detailed action plan in the new year.

- **What impact has the Welsh Government's Fusion programme had on using culture to tackle poverty?**

The Fusion programme has helped develop closer links and encouraged greater collaboration and networking between the Arts and Heritage / museum sectors. In the spirit of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, working together on Fusion has helped break down silo-working across the sector; led to a greater sharing of knowledge and ideas and enabled our combined limited resources to stretch further in pursuit of shared goals. Arts organisations have also benefitted from some of the training opportunities on offer through the Fusion programme (eg on Volunteering, fundraising).

The Fusion programme has helped arts organisations connect with some of our most disadvantaged communities thereby extending their reach. The Networking meetings have been particularly helpful in providing a space where cultural organisations find themselves across the table from community groups that they might not normally encounter in their usual circles

Much of the Arts Council's involvement has been at a strategic level, through our participation on the project's Cultural Inclusion Board; the Fusion Operations Group; the Learning Group as well as through our Night Out scheme's role as a National Partner.

Our Night Out scheme has worked proactively with Fusion partners, attending regional meetings and delivering Young Promoter projects (and in some cases Arts Award accreditation) in 6 of the 8 Fusion areas. This has provided opportunities for

young people and their families to engage with the arts in areas where these did not previously exist.

Awareness of the arts and cultural activities has increased in these communities and there has been an improvement in disseminating information about the offer to community partners that can spread the word wider. The fact that cultural opportunities are being recommended by trusted community coordinators is often more effective in persuading more people from disadvantaged areas to get involved in cultural activities than a cold approach from arts organisations themselves.

- **How effective the Fusion pioneer programmes have been in stimulating local collaboration?**

The central organisation and leadership of the Fusion Programme through the MALD team has been extremely well-managed and effective. The emphasis on ongoing monitoring and evaluation is a real strength.

In its second iteration, the Fusion model - which involves the funding of a coordinator in each partner region - seems to be the best use of fairly modest funds. The coordinators are increasingly proving effective brokers, able to straddle sectors, spot opportunities and stimulate collaboration.

The national networking days, training and cross-sector working is clearly, in our opinion, a strength of the programme.