

# Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

## Response from Carmarthenshire County Council

### Questions for organisations

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

*Carmarthenshire County Council Arts and Theatre Services provide three theatres, two galleries, some studio spaces and the Dylan Thomas Boat House providing specialist services to the general population, specialist arts sector and education and community groups. We also provide support for non-venue specific arts development such as support for youth theatres, craft markets, young carers etc;*

**2. a) Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?**

*While we are now having to prioritise venue sustainability as being the most effective way of providing access to the arts for most this is beginning to effect the scope of being able to provide certain targeted interventions. Our venues are currently involved in outreach and community activity and we will be seeking to maintain these services in particular for young people and families.*

**b) Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?**

*As budgetary pressures increase it is possible to see that groups making or presenting arts, from choirs, bands, music clubs, eisteddfodau bro etc; seeking support for one-off events and special activities and to seed start up, will become increasingly affected by our diminishing budgets for this activity.*

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

*Geographically we are concerned that the rural population in the mid and west Wales region is served in a very uneven manner in terms of access to programmed facilities and activity.*

*It is critical for access to activity, across the whole region, that individual enthusiasms are the drivers and provision is therefore highly dependent on these individuals and any abilities to support them.*

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

*It is possible to argue that the appetite grows in accordance to what it feeds upon, so that arts development can never be satiated by funding sources. However, from trust funds to County Council, funding seems to be getting harder to find, although, surprisingly, for certain projects we have achieved a little more commercial sponsorship for next year.*

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

*This is a massive sector ranging from artist co-operatives to knitting clubs and crucial to arts activity, audiences and enjoyment.*

*Our impression is that these groups need affordable well presented, accessible spaces to platform their work and intervention at times to enable aspiration or seeing through a difficult period.*

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

*The main distributing bodies seem to be the Arts Council. Their brief includes, and has to include if they are to have meaning, 'excellence'. In some ways this can preclude support solely because it is good for civic life. Again other bodies may distribute for extrinsic reasons, such as inclusion, ensuring diversity, specialist art forms. These interventions and support are good but can mean supporting the mainstream is overlooked for an example of the first constraint: the scout movement has open access, provides musical experience of*

*variable standards and is a totally open organisation but never seems to seek or raise funds for these activities outside of the organisation. As an example of the second constraint targeting areas of deprivation needs to be considered in terms of overall value for money and longer term strategies. Achieving a balance is probably a holy grail. As a Council we tended to target our participation resources to intervene to encourage activity at places away from the main venues ensuring a wider contact with the arts, for youth activities and intergenerational activities. However, see above, we are having to review our priorities.*

**7. 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?**

*Not in themselves, initially, as they seemingly reflect the 'best practice' approach that tends to be a bedrock in supporting arts practice. In Carmarthenshire the use of Welsh language and the greater use of European languages are also of importance.*

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