



Response to The national Assembly Enquiry: participation in the Arts

dawnsibawb

1 / Which groups of people participate in you organisation's arts activities?

SINCE 1989 DAWNS I BAWB (DIB) HAS BEEN THE UMBRELLA ORGANISATION FOR COMMUNITY DANCE IN NORTH WEST WALES COVERING THREE COUNTIES OF CONWY, GWYNEDD AND YNYS MÔN. FROM PWLLHELI TO ABERGELE, FROM HOLYHEAD TO TOWYN, DAWNS I BAWB WORKS WITH LOCAL PEOPLE, WITH AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL DANCE PRACTITIONERS AND WITH CHOREOGRAPHERS TO ENCOURAGE DANCE IN THE AREA. DAWNS I BAWB BELIEVES THAT EVERYONE CAN DANCE AND WORKS WITH PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS AND THOSE LIVING IN ISOLATED AREAS GIVING THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE PART IN A RANGE OF DANCE ACTIVITIES.

We meet on average 25,000 people a year.

As part of our programme we deliver:

- weekly activities for young children and young people aged between 4 and 16 years old.
- weekly activities of adults
- weekly activities for young adults with disabilities and their carers in partnership with Galeri Caernarfon and Disability Arts Cymru)

We work with various organizations / partners to reach other groups:

- specific activities / project in Community First areas targeting most disadvantages groups
- toddlers and carers: specific programmes for carers and very young children offering a skill transfer programme so the activities can be delivered by the carers themselves,
- regular specific activities in residential homes, working with older people who have a limited mobility
- specific project aimed at pre NEETs and NEETS in partnership with Cwmni'r Fran Wen, Pontio, specialized schools, organisations and services working and services working with young people at risk,
- specific projects involving high profile artists and involving local members of the community

We deliver programmes of activities in schools, visiting on average 6 a week. Working in schools is one of the best ways to ensure we reach every child, including the most disadvantages ones. The activities we deliver are very varied. For example:

- In 2011 we delivered developed a programme based on a children show by high profile international artist Tiago Guedes in partnership with Migrations. The children used the themes of the show and similar props to create their own interpretation of the performance, which they then performed for the rest of the school. Thanks to this collaboration with Migrations, we have exposed our dance teachers, school teachers and children to some of the finest international contemporary dance.

- This year, we are visiting schools with the Dance Planet project, introducing them to dances and rhythms from other countries and culture. For example, one of dance practitioners is half Greek and has been working with the children on traditional Greek dances as well as mythology. Another one has South African origins and has introduced the children to Gum Boot dancing which was developed by miners.

With such a project, we are feeding into the schools' curriculum, complementing their work and bringing expertise in dance.

We also support local professional dance artists and practitioners to contribute to develop, attract and retain skills in the area. We provide them with intensive training, performance opportunity or advice more specific to their needs (fundraising, governance, finances...).

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

Dawns i Bawb has not had cut but we have seen the impact of other organizations; we had been working with, losing their funding or part of it.

There is less funding available within Community First so groups / organizations which used to buy our services cannot do so any longer. As a consequence, it has become more difficult to reach people in these areas.

Schools have seen their budgets being reduced which affect as a consequence the amount of activities they can get from us. The same applies to residential homes.

Organisations like Sure Starts used to be regular partners and through them we used to reach parents and toddlers on a weekly basis. This is not possible anymore and we operate on a much shorter basis.

It has generally become more difficult to sell our services.

People losing their jobs due to budgets cuts has also had an impact on our participation figures. Some people cannot afford to do several activities and do not see dance a priority, even though our prices are very low.

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

Community first areas seem to be affected and generally all groups as budget cuts and economic crisis have affected both the public and private sector.

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

In the region we cover and in dance:

- Community First areas

- residential homes
- older citizens (60 +)
- people with mental health issues
- adult with disabilities (when funding comes to and end at the end of this financial year, the current project is not financially viable for us to continue)

For all these groups there is demand for our services but not enough resources within Dawns I Bawb or from them to support it.

4) Are there enough funding sources available other than the ACW? Are alternative funding accessible?

There are sources of funding but generally:

- they are decreasing so foundation and trusts do allocate less
- competition to access them has dramatically increased in the past few years following the first cut of RFO by the Arts Council of England and the subsequent one last year. The Investment Review by the ACW has reinforced this.

More and more trust and foundations do put a strong emphasis on legacy and how the project will continue after funding stops which is a very unrealistic approach: many activities we do can only happen because they are subsidized. If we wish to remain accessible we cannot charge high prices.

5) What role does the voluntary sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can it be supported?

In dance in North West Wales, we are only aware of one voluntary group.

Dance is mainly delivered by us (a Charity), private dance schools and private free lancers.

Having talked to the voluntary group, they have serious issues of viability:

- they charge low prices to remain accessible
- they do not generate enough income to cover all costs so have to personally subsidise the activities
- they cannot pay themselves so their time is limited
- they cannot afford to attend training to maintain and develop their skills
- they are not sure how long they can continue this way and say they need funding

We are currently looking into ways of collaborating with them but we are not sure how yet as the discussion has just started.

Part of the support could be done through training / mentoring / coaching so it can be ensured that the provision is of good quality.

We have the skills to offer these services, however this would have a cost as currently our organization does not have the resources to offer for free this kind of services.

6) Is the Strategic relationship between Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?

We are not sure if we know enough about this to offer a proper answer.

The combination of the Investment Review by the ACW and the decision not to cut the Arts Budget was positive.

Us being able to access revenue funding from ACW, local authorities and grants from the Gwynedd and Mon Arts Agency has a positive impact on participation.

Before budget cuts we had a very good way of working with Community Firsts areas as they used their funding to make sure high quality dance provision could be provided in these areas.

We have worked closely with PESS to mentor PE and school teachers. This was successful to increase participation and ensure quality.

In parallel, we have had competition from other schemes such as 5 x 60 and other initiatives by the sports council which have had a negative impact on our activities and sometimes on the quality of the provision. The focus is on numbers rather than on artistic quality.

For some of their programmes, the sports council have been using young leaders, under qualified or far less skilled and experienced than our professionally trained dancers but much cheaper than us, and we are questioning the artistic quality and safety of what is delivered.

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 underrepresented groups in Wales?

The intention is certainly good.

However implementing the plan will have to be done in a considered way and in consultation with arts providers. From past experience, there is a danger that this will increase the pressure on arts organizations to address the new priorities identified by the plan, with no extra resources.

For example we have lately been made aware that one of the next priorities is low income families and the need to put in place schemes so they can access activities for free, and this from next financial year.

This is rather alarming; although we are obviously supporting the fact that low income families should have access to arts activities, and we are already doing work with them, it is not reasonable to expect arts organisations to change their programmes on very short notice to address a new priority.

This is financially and strategically not viable.

Without extra resources, or cutting existing activities we would not be in a position to subsidise a scheme with activities for free for certain groups.

We are convinced of the benefits of the arts, we are also advocating that the arts should exist in their own right.

We, as art organizations, continually have to justify our existence and are increasingly pressured to address or resolve issues which often have more to do with Social Services for example.

Do not get us wrong, we know the arts have the power to improve people's life.

Only this Monday while we were having a meeting with a Uned Bryn Llwyd, an institution working with young people who have fallen out of formal education and NEETS, we had again the proof of it. We had a discussion about the young people we had worked with and what the teachers said was:

'The project you did completely transformed her. Before, she couldn't take a bus before having a panic attack. Your activities improved massively her self esteem and confidence and she is now working.

'The project inspired her so much that she went on a course to train as hair dresser. She is now working and has won a prize in a completion.'

But this shouldn't be the main reason why the Arts should be funded.