

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts

Response from Cwm Taf Local Health Board

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

The **Royal Glamorgan Hospital**, based in Llantrisant is an acute facility providing in, out and emergency patient care. The hospital has an established history of arts projects and events engaging local communities for mutual benefit.

An exhibition programme has continued to provide a diverse range of shows since 2002 in the coffee lounge. The emphasis is largely on local, community participation, facilitating group exhibitions from art and photographic societies, local schools and colleges, hospital staff and currently, prisoners from nearby Parc Prison. The exhibitions are very popular with viewers and participants.

There has also been a performance programme in the main atrium of the hospital since 2003, which aims to provide opportunities for amateur groups to perform for patients, staff and visitors. Bi-monthly performances are conducted by choirs, silver and brass bands, clarinet choirs, flute ensembles, jazz groups and local schools.

Ysbyty Cwm Cynon is a brand new facility due to open in May, replacing Mountain Ash and Aberdare Hospitals. A number of public artworks have been commissioned throughout the construction period of which three have included participatory workshops at local schools as part of the project.

Laura Thomas, a textile artist based in Llantrisant, took 8 small mobile weaving looms to three primary schools for a one day workshop at each school. The participating schools were Abertaf Primary School, Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School, and Pengeulan Primary School. Approximately 16 pupils worked with her in half day sessions, making a total of approximately 96 pupils getting the experience of weaving and working on a loom, something that none of them had ever done before. All the pupils were extremely enthusiastic, both girls and boys, and asked the artist many times when she would come back to their school.

Walter Jack and Paul Chandler, artist designers based in Bristol, worked with a group of year 12 students at Mountain Ash Comprehensive. It was a 3D model making workshop, experimenting with different materials and creating models based on the same brief that the artists had for the hospital, i.e. to create a sculptural feature for the courtyard.

Pascal Dubois, based in Nelson and an artist working with photography as a medium for his hospital commission, worked with both Mountain Ash Comprehensive and year 6 pupils at Cap Coch Primary School. He made two visits to each school, the first to facilitate a photography session where pupils went out with digital cameras to photograph trees and their surroundings. During the second workshop session large scale photographic collages were created with the photos taken during the first workshop, by piecing separate photos together to create panoramic views of 180 degrees and more.

In addition to the public art commissions, a collaborative project was devised with art students at the University of Glamorgan, Treforest campus. The project gave students the opportunity to contribute to the art programme and hospital staff participated in the final selection of drawings, paintings, photographs, textiles and prints for waiting areas and day rooms.

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

To a large extent, the arts programme delivered at Cwm Taff Health Board is independent, as part of its commitment to the quality of patient, staff and visitor care. The only external funding goes directly to performers through the Healthy Sounds budget provided by the Welsh Government and in past we have successfully been awarded lottery funds for specific projects.

The impact of budget cuts may have reduced the number and scope of art projects possible through the Arts Council Lottery funding as this was greatly diminished compared to the situation when building Ysbyty Cwm Rhondda a few years ago.

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

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

In relation to gaps in funding, performing groups can apply for expenses covered through the Healthy Sounds Initiative provided by the Welsh Government (up to £200), but we are not aware of an equivalent for visual arts events in healthcare settings.

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

Furthermore, as the Arts Council's Artist in Residence programme has disappeared (formally organised via Cywaith Cymru. Artworks Wales and latterly Safle), longer term opportunities for community participation in the arts in for instance, hospitals, schools and industry are almost extinct.

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

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

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?

Cwm Taf LHB Board approved its Strategic Equality Plan on 7th March for formal publication by April 2012. A key feature of the new public sector equality duties is that organisations can focus on key objectives – the focus for Cwm Taf LHB is Mental Health/Emotional Health & Well-being, as there is a strong link with experience and outcome relating to each of the protected characteristics.

There is also a need for objectives to be measurable, and consequently the current objectives have been defined in order to be measurable.

These wouldn't have extended to measuring any particular increase in participation in the arts. We would be interested to explore any suggested measures however, which would meet the parameters of the published objectives.