

Task and Finish Group on Participation in the Arts in Wales

Inquiry into Participation in the Arts in Wales

Response from Pontardawe Arts Centre, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

1. What organisation do you represent?

Pontardawe Arts Centre, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

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

As a local authority our remit is to provide opportunities for all sectors within our borough Extensive opportunities for young people exist – in the venues these include weekly classes in dance, drama, craft, and music and one off workshops in hip hop, djing, ballroom dancing, – in fact anything we think might be timely With community arts and special events ongoing opportunities exist both in schools and communities ranging from photography, film making and craft to dance, storytelling and drama. Adult opportunities are more focused and tend to concentrate on more specialised offers. Script writing, photography, visual arts, choirs – and frankly do require an engagement rather than be something that is for the uninitiated We work with Communities First, the Youth Service, the Third Sector and voluntary groups – including offering free engagement in many areas Current priorities are intergenerational projects and families

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

Standstill budgets and cuts lead to the subsidy to support opportunities dwindling. At present no obvious sign of loss of figures for participation but clearly we are having to work harder with less resources. NPT is an area of significant deprivation. This deprivation is growing – coupled with problematic transport issues means that inevitably cracks will show. The priority for many in this area are not for creative outlets.

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

Impact will inevitably be greater for low income households. If there is a cost associated with opportunities then priorities for some households will prevent engagement.

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

Demographically – 20 – 40 year old participation is poor. Many factors including lack of leisure time for this group, the fact that they are more likely to be Brand led and these high profile opportunities are more costly to provide Communities First(Next) of which there are 12 in NPT are presented with many opportunities which are popular in these areas but also deprivation in non communities first areas which coupled with poor transport links can lead to inequalities of access

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

As local authority cannot access Trust funds which is unfortunate given that in many areas of NPT the only provision available is that from the local authority. There is an identified lack of confidence in community groups to access funds for themselves, something we are seeking to address Poor opportunities for sponsorship in area with Local Authority and National Health being main source of work

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

5 Voluntary arts activity is happening within the borough but sporadic and not broad ranging As already stated we recognise an inherent lack of confidence in our communities and therefore establishing a means of hand holding in order to assist individuals and groups in our communities to establish their own activities would be beneficial – this requires human resources – we are a small team in NPT and struggle to find time for additional activity over and above current work load.

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

to my knowledge this relationship is effective

9. 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?

If the equality plan leads to the need for significant changes to be made in the operation of the service then it will ironically lead to less participation as our limited team's resources will be taken up with implementing those changes rather than providing opportunities. if this strategic equality plan identifies someone to deliver changes and advise on engagement then it will be most welcome