

Dafydd Elis-Thomas

Deputy Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport

Welsh Government

17 September 2019

Dear Dafydd,

Fusion programme

Thank you for attending our meeting on 22 May 2019 to discuss our inquiry into tackling poverty and social exclusion through the arts and culture.

As part of this inquiry Members of the Committee spoke to the Fusion programme co-ordinators and some had the opportunity to take part in activities they organised.

The Committee also discussed the Fusion programme with Baroness Andrews at our meeting on 10 July. During the discussion Baroness Andrews said that she was impressed by the Fusion Co-ordinators' submissions to the Cultural Inclusion Board and suggested that these case studies should be shared more widely. Please can you let me know how the information to the Board is used and if it can be publicised more widely?

The evidence to the inquiry suggests that there are many ways in which attendance and participation in cultural activities can be increased. For instance, providing additional funding for incidental costs such as transport and childcare. Our Members have suggested that it would be useful to draw on the experience of the Fusion co-ordinators to determine how best any additional funding to the programme should be directed.

Please can you pass on these questions from our Committee Members to the Fusion programme co-ordinators? We would like to know:

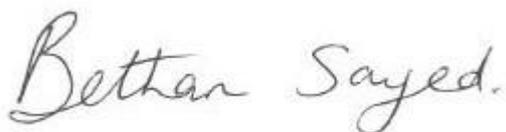
- Given your experience of working in the Fusion programme, how would you prioritise any additional funding?

- In your experience, what is the most frequent barrier to participation in cultural activities for those in poverty or socially excluded?

Can responses be directed to seneddcwlc@assembly.wales by 30 September?

They will be used to inform the report of this inquiry, thank you in advance for facilitating this work.

Yours sincerely,



Bethan Sayed

Chair of the Committee

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P-DET-3377-19

Bethan Sayed AM
Chair, CWLC Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

02 October 2019

Dear Bethan,

Thank you for your recent request for additional information regarding the Fusion Programme.

The Fusion case studies you requested are an integral part of the yearly delivery plan. Additionally, infographics are produced and evaluation carried out by the Welsh Government. This information is all made available on the Welsh Government website <https://gweddi.gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/tackling-poverty-through-culture/?lang=en> and promoted via our Fusion delivery partners. I have asked my officials to promote the Fusion coordinators' case studies that were provided as evidence to the committee via the Welsh Government website.

My officials have also requested that the Fusion coordinators contact you directly to respond to the further questions you have raised.

I hope this provides you with an update. Thank you again for contacting me regarding this matter. I look forward to receiving your report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Dafydd.Elis-Thomas@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Dafydd.Elis-Thomas@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Response from Fusion Coordinator for Carmarthenshire

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1: Given your experience of working in the Fusion programme, how would you prioritise any additional funding?

The priorities for Carmarthenshire would be dependent on the allocations of funding that would be provided from the Welsh Government. From my experience if the level of funding was increased, the programme could be expanded, which would enable the development of additional projects across a wider geographical area. This would encourage the development of additional partnerships and networks in the rural areas, inspiring new partners to embed the principles of Fusion into their current and future delivery models.

Fusion has been very well received by the Communities, Partners and Third Sectors and has been critical in tackling poverty through culture at local community levels. From my experience there was a clear service gap within the area, with many organisations working in isolation, with no or poor linkages to community focussed projects. As a result of this, individuals were not accessing cultural or heritage services, placing them at a disadvantage. To reach out to the individuals that are the most unlikely to access services, working with communities is instrumental. Co-production with communities is essential in the creation of sustainable services and long term change. Fusion has enabled this process, which has led to a multi partner approach to tackling poverty, through working together to develop new and innovative methods, targeting the most deprived areas across Carmarthenshire.

With key strategic Welsh Government Programmes such as Communities for Work, Communities for Work Plus, Legacy, Families First, Flying Start and the Youth Services involved in the process, organisations have been provided with opportunities to identify needs and reach out to individuals that historically felt the services provided by the Cultural and Heritage Sectors were “out of their reach”. The perception of culture and heritage opportunities not being accessible, is now beginning to change. Within Carmarthenshire, we have continued to see new individuals accessing projects that they would not have previously. However, to continue the approaches that have been adopted and contribute towards breaking poverty cycles, funding is essential.

If the level of funding continued at the same current levels, maintaining the partnership and network would be critical. Working in partnership is the main factor contributing to the success the programme. It is this approach that ensures the prioritisation of individuals who are most in need, living in deprived areas, or are feeling excluded due to complex barriers or are within a protected characteristic group. The collaborative approach has ensured the sharing of resources and budgets, joint planning and implementation of projects, progression pathways sustainability of delivery models.

The funding of the part time Coordinator has ensured the creation of a collaborative delivery plan, and implementation of new and creative approaches, which are delivered in line with the Future Generations of Wellbeing Act. The role of the Coordinator is essential in this process, and has been instrumental in supporting organisations to form relationships to targeting the key audiences, that are facing poverty, this is critical to narrow the inequality gap that exists between the most affluent and deprived communities.

Response from Fusion Coordinator for Carmarthenshire

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Within Carmarthenshire the Fusion Programme has become a knowledge hub, with the role of the Coordinator being central to enabling effective communication with communities and informing individuals of the activities that they can participate in, which are of low or no cost. Building up trust through effective community engagement will be key and will help build capacity, encouraging access to services.

To add value to the current delivery, we will analyse the trends in participation, identify non representation and work with the partners on solutions to support individuals to remove the psychological and physical barriers that are preventing active involvement. There will be a focus on labour market needs, identifying current and future career prospects for individuals within the sector. Working with partners to upskill individuals from the most deprived areas, will encourage and enable individuals to access employment opportunities within the Sector.

2: In your experience, what is the most frequent barrier to participation in cultural activities for those in poverty or socially excluded?

There are both physical and psychological barriers to participation in cultural activities. These barriers are individualised and can change radically due to external and internal factors. Individuals' views and opinions can act as a main barrier. Perceptions of "what culture and heritage is" can instil fear. Individuals may feel that they are unable to access the activities, due to their personal status and circumstances. This can prevent individuals from researching and finding out about opportunities and experiences that could benefit them.

For individuals that are living in poverty, cost remains a barrier. With the changes in the benefit systems, individuals are prioritising what they feel are the basic requirements, in order to survive. Cultural and arts activities are often seen as unreachable or perceived as luxuries.

With limited funding or grants available to encourage access, inequality gaps between the most affluent and deprived communities are widening. This can result in young people not having the opportunities to participate in regular cultural activities, which can include music lessons, sports, arts, drama or dance. This can also extend to one off events or activities that take place across Cultural Venues such as the Theatre, National Trust, Wetlands and many more. The skills that are gained through participating in cultural activities are not being acquired by individuals that are living in poverty. This is placing children and young people at a great disadvantage as they are not having an equal opportunity to experience culture and the arts.

Low confidence and self-esteem remains a barrier and can result in individuals not participating in activities. Many of the individuals that we work with have anxiety and depression and only access activities initially if they are supported and encouraged by the team and partner organisations.

Many individuals who are social excluded can live isolated lives and can be reluctant to participate due to low self-esteem and confidence. Many fear being discriminated against, are concerned about language barriers or are worried about access to

Response from Fusion Coordinator for Carmarthenshire

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services. This has negative effects on the family as a whole and creates a generational cycle, which can then be difficult to break.

To support individuals who have complex needs and multiple barriers it is essential to continue and build partnerships. The Fusion Programme has enabled the formation of localised groups that have made real changes and have actively encouraged community cohesion. Bringing together key services with the Cultural and Heritage Sectors has encouraged services to adopt different approaches to engagement. This engagement has supported many individuals to overcome barriers to participation such as; mental health, low basic skills, isolation, low self esteem, no life skills, individuals at risk of becoming NEETs or are NEET, young people within the youth justice system, and children throughout the communities, who are at a disadvantage.

The evidence to date has demonstrated that more individuals are now feeling confident in accessing services and I confidently believe that the Fusion Programme has been central to this movement.

Response from Fusion Coordinator for Gwynedd

Helo 'na,

Dyma fy ymatebion i'r cwestiynau a ofynnwyd i ni ar gyfer sut y dylid defnyddio unrhyw gyllid ychwanegol yn rhaglen Cyfuno. Dwi ond wedi bod yn y swydd ers mis Mai, felly ddim yn gwybod os mae fy mhrofiad i o Cyfuno yn ddigon eang i rhoi sylwadau/ymatebion llawn, ond ers i mi fod yn y swydd dyma be' dwi wedi'i weld. –

• O ystyried eich profiad o weithio ar y rhaglen Cyfuno, sut y byddech chi'n blaenoriaethu unrhyw gyllid ychwanegol?

Fyswn i'n blaenoriaethu unrhyw gyllid ychwanegol tuag at marchnata a trafndiaeth yn sicr, gan fod hyn yn her fawr wrth ceisio denu pobl at unrhyw weithgareddau, gweithdai neu sesiynau sy'n cael ei gynnal.

Blaenoriaethu cyllideb i'r amcanion cymhwyster, ac hefyd yn cynnal asesiadau o lle mae'r angen fwyaf cyn mentro.

Llawer o'r gwaith yng Ngwynedd hyd yn hyn yn pethau mae Cyfuno wedi bod yn rhan ohonynt, nid pethau mae Cyfuno yn cynnal/neu yn arwain ar – fysa'n dda cael fwy o gyllideb i gallu gwneud hyn ein hunain a rhoi fwy o gyfleoedd i bobl ar draws Gwynedd i gyd.

Hefyd, falla'n cyfle gwych cynnig i gymunedau yn ein ardaloedd ni dod atom ni efo eu syniadau, a rhannu unrhyw gyllideb ychwanegol fel yno. Mae'n digon hawdd cynnig gweithgareddau, ond mae'n gweithio'n well os maent yn cael eu cynnig lle bo angen fwyaf.

• Ar sail eich profiad chi, pa rwystr y mae'r bobl sy'n byw mewn tldi neu sydd wedi'u heithrio'n gymdeithasol yn ei wynebu fwyaf aml o safbwynt cymryd rhan mewn gweithgareddau diwylliannol?

Trafnidiaeth, hyder, mae'n anodd iawn cyrraedd nhw, disgwyl iddyn nhw ddod atoch chi yn lle chi mynd i'w gymuned nhw. Llawer o fudiadau yn ceisio dod a mentrau/cyfleoedd gwahanol i gymunedau tlawd/difreintiedig, heb gofyn iddyn nhw beth mae nhw eisiau yn gyntaf.