

Arts Council of Wales response to Count me in! Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee report on Tackling Poverty and social exclusion through culture, heritage and the arts

We welcome the opportunity to speak to the Committee about this important area of work. We would endorse the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, as outlined in the report published in November.

This response focuses on the report recommendations rather than the detailed commentary.

Recommendation 1. *The Welsh Government should commission a wholesale evaluation of the Fusion programme which assesses the original objectives, funding and evaluation.*

We agree.

We support the proposal to undertake a more detailed evaluation of the Fusion programme. We also agree with the proposed focus for this review, as outlined on pages 16 and 17 of the report. We would stress the importance of exploring a co-production approach moving forward. We believe that a joint approach to defining and delivering programmes of work will more effectively deliver the kind of longer term development that has impact. We also support the view that there should be a better understanding of, and more consistent approach to, the work of the Fusion Co-ordinators. Better clarity through a shared job description would ensure these important posts remain focussed on facilitating the delivery of the programme.

The evaluation methodology would benefit from a review. Assessing the impact of this work and these kinds of interventions is challenging. We would recommend that key partners work together to explore and determine what the objectives and outcomes should be and, in partnership with relevant expertise devise a more bespoke evaluation framework around this.

Recommendation 2. *The Arts Council of Wales should ensure that all members of Arts Portfolio Wales (its revenue-funded organisations) work with the different communities they serve to design their programme of activities.*

We agree.

The organisations that make up the Arts Portfolio Wales vary in the scale and locus of their work. Some are major national and international organisations, others are smaller and operate on a more local basis. All have a contribution to make to this recommendation.

There are organisations within our Arts Portfolio that already work closely with different communities in the design and creation of work. We acknowledged in our presentation to the Committee that there is more that could be done across the portfolio of organisations, as a whole. We are committed to working with them to develop this approach.

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should guarantee funding for the Fusion programme to provide security of tenure for the Fusion Co-ordinators.

We agree.

We support proposals to continue with a Fusions programme and we would be keen to be a key/lead partner in this. However, our vision would be for a revised programme that addresses the key points identified by the Committee and that seeks to develop and embed principles of co-production, ownership and asset-based community development. We would also wish to see any new programme development explicitly embracing the '5 Ways of Working' set out in Well-being legislation.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should work with the Arts Council of Wales to annually review progress against their outcomes in the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 in terms of widening access to the arts. The Welsh Government should report on this to the Committee.

We agree.

We review our progress against the corporate plan and currently report on progress through the monitoring of our annual operational plan. This takes place during quarterly meetings held with Welsh Government officials.

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government, via the Arts Council for Wales, should require all arts and cultural bodies in receipt of public funding to set

out their objectives for tackling poverty and social exclusion in their strategic plans. Those in receipt of funding should also set out how they intend to co-design creative activities and content with these target audiences.

We agree.

Recommendation 6. *Increasing access to the arts, culture and heritage venues for those in poverty or at risk of social exclusion should be considered as one of the strategic objectives of Transport for Wales. The Welsh Government should explore options for Transport for Wales to enter into partnerships with cultural organisations for specific events and/or venues to make accessing their activities free or subsidised. These pilot schemes should be reported on to the Committee.*

We support this recommendation.

Although not directly a recommendation for the Arts Council, we know this to be a significant issue. Suggestions made during our presentation to the Committee that this could be the responsibility of the cultural institutions themselves. The costs to these organisations would be considerable and in our view beyond their remit. Working with communities to create and develop artistic and creative work is a more appropriate way for the cultural bodies to engage people. That said, any other community-based initiatives that could reduce travel costs would, we believe, have a real benefit.

Recommendation 7. *The Welsh Government should increase the funding for the Fusion programme to allow participants to claim incidental costs such as transport.*

We agree.

Recommendation 8. *The Welsh Government should report to the Committee on the proposals for developing a qualitative data set on the Fusion programme and the timetable for incorporating it into the evaluation methodology*

We agree.

We support this recommendation and would refer back to our response under recommendation 1 above.

Arts Council of Wales
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