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Our Creative Talent:
The voluntary and amateur arts in England

Research findings

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This conference marks the launch of *Our Creative Talent*, which looks for the first time at the scale and nature of the voluntary and amateur arts sector across England. This session will focus on the key findings of the landmark new research and provide the opportunity to discuss it directly with the researchers. This presentation will therefore deliver the key messages emanating from our work with reference to the key objectives of this conference. We hope to encourage discussion around the key challenges and opportunities for the sector going forward.

This session

- Overview of the key findings of the first national study of the voluntary & amateur arts sector
- Discussion of findings

Parameters of the study

Voluntary & amateur arts governed or organised by those also participating in the activities, which members attend for reasons such as self improvement, social network or leisure, but primarily not for payment.

Adult arts learning that does not lead to external accreditation & is undertaken for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation & enjoyment.

What did we want to achieve?

- Provide an authoritative analysis of the size & make up of the sector
- Understand the motivations for participation in voluntary & amateur arts & arts training
- Gain an understanding of the individual, social & economic impact of the sector
- Examine the barriers & enablers of participation
- Understand the size, scale & make up of adult learning in the arts

How did we do it?

- Desk research
- Online survey of 2,200 voluntary & amateur arts groups
- Consultation with national umbrella bodies
- In depth interviews with voluntary arts groups
- In depth interviews with supporting organisations & professionals working in the sector
- Review of national data on courses, training providers & learners
- In depth interviews with training providers, supporting organisations & learners

Primary Objective

- To showcase the Voluntary Arts sector
- So, a run through our headline results….

The scale of the sector - participation

- 49,140 groups
- 5.9 million members & 3.5 million extras/helpers
- 1/5 of all arts participation in England
- 19% of groups located in the South East, 7% in the North East
- Music & theatre most represented artforms

The scale of the sector - learning

- 36,800 courses
- 4,560 providers
- 1.9 million enrolments over 4 years
- 25% of courses in London,
- Craft & visual arts most represented artforms

The scale of the sector - outputs

- 710,000 performances or exhibitions per year
- 159 million attendances
- 220 people to each
- Audiences spent £266 million on tickets

The scale of the sector – finances

- Income = £543 million a year
- 82% is self generated
- Income levels vary
  - £1,600 in craft
  - £27,200 in festivals
- 12% of income sourced from Local Authorities, Arts Council, Lottery Distributors & Trusts & Foundations
- Expenditure of £406 million
- Highest proportion of expenditure (31%) on hiring professionals, then 23% on venues

Secondary Objectives

- To identify & assess;
  - Barriers to participation
  - Barriers to building capacity
  - Assess role in development of place, people & artform
- Our research has contributed here also…

Who participates & why?

- The largest proportion (42%) are employed, then in retirement (30%)
- Diversity tends to be dependent on the local area
- The gender balance across sector is 60:40 female/male
- A third of participants are aged between 45 & 64
- Word of mouth & public events - primary tools for attracting members
- Learners often take part in courses to gain extra skills & boost their CV
- Enjoyment & appreciation of the artform attracts people
- Many groups have mixed skills levels with members support each other’s creative development

Running a group

- Management & governance structures are flexible & fit for purpose
- Difficult to define how much time is actually spent managing
- Management burden is often seasonal
- Groups generally work hard to rotate membership of their management committee
- Some difficulty in finding volunteers for management responsibility
- 22% of groups do not have a constitution
- Securing appropriate & affordable venues is often a key part of group management
- Artistic & creative activity is planned & driven by the members of the groups

Links to the professional sector

- £125 million spent on professionals
- 147,000 people contribute on a paid basis
- Professional artists often employed on an ongoing basis
- Professional artists regularly employed as speakers, tutors & demonstrators for 'one off' events
- 34% of groups say that at least one of their members have become professional in the last five years
- Clear benefits for both groups & professionals
- Some groups raised issues of challenges re: finding & affording professional support

Support for the sector

- Entrepreneurial & self sufficient but still need some support
- Invaluable informal support from family, friends & local community
- 250 umbrella bodies & membership organisations exist to support sector, mainly at a national level
- Local support crucial from Local Authority Arts Officers
- Organisations established to support the broader arts sector also play an important role

The impacts of the sector

- A deep, fundamental & complex impact on developing vibrant & inclusive communities
- Significant value for the individuals involved – personal, social & creative
- Provides critical access to quality arts & creative activity at local level
- High artistic & creative value
- Sustaining cultural traditions & developing new artistic practice
- Significant spending power sustaining local services, venues & facilities

Discussion – Challenges & Opportunities

- What do you see as the;
  - Key challenges facing the sector, &
  - Opportunities open to the sector …

  - … specifically in terms of development & growth?

Our findings - Challenges

- Although the arts & culture are recognised in many policies & strategies, the voluntary arts are often overlooked
- There is a perception that ‘amateur’ means poor quality
- The financial self sufficiency of the sector sometimes makes it difficult for groups to access funding for new activity
- Bureaucracy & compliance with legislation are key challenges

Opportunities for growth

- Higher prioritisation in terms of policy & strategy
- Increased awareness of the contribution of the sector
- Sustained availability of venues
- Supporting access to professionals
- Support for 'risk taking'

Enablers

- Improved press & promotion
- Groups recognised for their artistic value as much as their community & social benefit
- Improved gathering of information
- Support organisations empowered to better engage the sector