

Modernising Commissioning – Arts Council England response:

Many arts and cultural organisations are also civil society organisations and for many years have been commissioned to deliver public services by local authorities and others. Sometimes they are commissioned to provide arts and cultural services, but increasingly, arts and cultural organisations have been commissioned to deliver work with broader social outcomes, including children's services, health, adult social care, community and social inclusion and regeneration.

We are pleased that the Government recognises the potential of civil society organisations (including arts and cultural organisations) to deliver public services and welcome its efforts to support this sector by addressing the challenges outlined in this Green Paper.

In which public service areas could Government create new opportunities for civil society organisations to deliver?

Arts and culture have a unique way of influencing and inspiring individuals and communities and that is why arts and cultural organisations have been commissioned by a variety of organisations including local authorities, NHS Trusts, schools, day care centres and prisons to achieve desired outcomes. We welcome the Government's recognition that civil society organisations are able to contribute to a broad range of services and believe that arts and cultural organisations are well placed to deliver in many service areas.

We recognise the Government's focus on outcomes and consequently the payment by results mode but for arts and cultural organisations, who are often micro businesses and sole traders, payment by results can be challenging. It is difficult for smaller organisations to access the working finance that is necessary ahead of payment. The Government should therefore consider ways to support smaller civil society organisations. One way would be to encourage commissioning contracts that span longer periods of time. This can provide the necessary stability required to both plan effectively, and attract new contracts and sources of funding.

How could Government make existing public service markets more accessible to civil society organisations?

We would agree with the challenges outlined in the Green Paper. Even though the majority of arts and cultural organisations are civil society organisations, and are commissioned to deliver public services, the arts and cultural sector has not always fully engaged with the targeted resources, strategies and mechanisms that are available for Civil Society Organisations. Whilst we recognise that the arts and cultural sector should do more to take full advantage of these resources, we would welcome a more proactive approach by civil society networks and support organisations to engage with the arts and cultural organisations which make up a significant proportion of their sector.

Capacity Building

Arts Council England Yorkshire has commissioned Eventus to carry out a Research and Development project on consortium development and strategic commissioning in the arts. For the past three years Eventus has acted as lead managing agent for a consortium of arts organisations, providing high quality arts activities as part of the Sheffield City Council *Kids Can Do* programme

This project, which includes the creation of Viva South Yorkshire Arts Consortium , a formally constituted consortium, is developing the capacity and skills of smaller arts organisations to bid for large public sector contracts.

The research will explore how these skills can be utilised to meet changes in commissioning so that the arts can continue to adapt and meet the challenges ahead.

We also recognise that although many arts and cultural organisations have been commissioned to deliver public services, there is evidence to suggest that this is often instigated by specialist commissioners themselves who understand the benefits of commissioning from the arts and cultural sector. Arts and cultural organisations themselves are not always used to responding to externally advertised tenders and would require support from commissioners to build their capacity and confidence in this area¹.

The increase in personalisation within Adult Social Care has also led to a significant demand for the micro-commissioning of artists and arts and cultural organisations. Individuals are choosing to spend their personal budgets on cultural activities because of the enjoyment, health benefits and increased access to social

¹ *Outside In: the benefits and issues involved in contracting out local authority arts services*, commissioned by Nalgao, February 2010.

networks they can bring. There are also instances where individuals have pooled their personal budgets in order to commission arts and cultural services. We would therefore welcome consideration by the Government on mechanisms which facilitate the brokerage between individuals and Civil Society Organisations on a micro-commissioning level.

Kirklees Council Adult Services: Out of the Blue

The creative arts organisation Out of the Blue is a formal network of three creative arts organisations offering a range of choices for people as part of their mental health and wellbeing care planning. This network has been commissioned by Kirklees NHS and Kirklees Council's Adult Services to work with people experiencing mental health issues.

The Kirklees joint mental health commissioning strategy helps local people with mental health issues to maintain and improve their wellbeing. The intention is to help those who experience mental health distress to obtain the highest level of independence within their communities through the use of a range of support networks and services. A creative arts service, providing art, drama, dance and music, is part of this service and responds to the personal needs of the people involved with the project, finding ways of ensuring people are closely involved in agreeing the support they need.

The three year project has demonstrated that people who experience mental health issues value creative arts very highly. The project has promoted social networking and prompted individuals to pool their personal budgets to commission artists directly.

adapted from Improving Strategic Commissioning in the Culture and Sport Sector, IDeA
<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/9531345>

How could commissioners use assessments of full social, environmental and economic value to inform their commissioning decisions?

We agree that commissioners need to be enabled to take a holistic approach to understanding the needs of individuals and communities. Although there are various Social Return On Investment (SROI) models available, the arts and cultural sector would welcome the on-going development of measures which attempt to 'price' the value of benefits and outcomes which are less tangible but equally as vital for improving communities and the lives of individuals within them.

DCMS, Arts Council England and many others have undertaken research which starts to 'quantify' the value of culture and identifies the benefits of cultural engagement. Much of this work was brought together by the CASE (Culture and Sport Evidence) programme². We would be happy to work with the Cabinet Office to develop this further.

How could civil society organisations support greater citizen and community involvement in all stages of commissioning?

Arts and culture often provide the catalyst which brings people together and provides aspiration. There are many examples of projects where artists and cultural organisations have facilitated community involvement. Firstly, arts and cultural organisations can find innovative ways to engage those who are hard to reach and help them to communicate their points of view. Secondly, they can help promote a sense of place and civic pride within a community which encourages a greater interest in engagement across the whole community.

Strengthening Youth Participation

The Council wished and needed to strengthen the understanding and engagement of young people in the democratic process. From local knowledge, the arts officer realised that the education department at the local theatre had the capacity to deliver this. They approached the theatre who bid for and won the contract.

This led to a £150k project developing the voice of young people in local democracy. The project included engaging with/developing a youth parliament, schools council days and involvement in the national youth parliament.

The theatre's youth theatre helped young people 'find their voice' and a key outcome was the 'voice and influence' of young people. The local theatre was not the only means of developing a project like this, but the arts officer felt they would be the most appropriate organisation to do this.

'Outside In', Nalgao http://www.nalgao.org/e107_images/custom/outsideinfinalb.pdf

In terms of JSNAs, the arts and cultural sector could help in assessing the needs of a local area. With DCMS and the other cultural agencies, we collect data through the Taking Part survey and until recently, the Active People survey. Both

² http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/research_and_statistics/5698.aspx

of these could contribute to assessing the strengths and needs within geographic areas. Many arts and cultural organisations also have the experience gained through previous commissioned work to advise local areas on creative and innovative ways to improve health and well-being through artistic and cultural engagement.

The work of arts and cultural organisations often reaches beyond a single community and beyond an individual service. We therefore recognise the important role that arts and cultural organisations can play in delivering services within Community Budgets. Commissioners should therefore consider how working across boundaries (both geographic and sectoral) might attract effective Civil Society Organisations, like arts and cultural organisations, who are capable of achieving results across multiple delivery areas.

Although arts and cultural organisations are often recognised as direct deliverers, it is also important to recognise that they are able to offer support services to the delivery of non-arts projects. Artists and creative leaders are not only capable of providing innovative and creative solutions which address multiple challenges but they are able to support community consultation. They could therefore provide an important advisory role in the roll out of Local Integrated Services as well as the development of Free Schools.

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