

The Cultural Education Challenge - Althea Efunshile speech

Preface with thanks to previous speakers, Nick Gibb, Darren, Ed Vaizey

Thank you for coming here today

This morning I want to tell you about the Cultural Education Challenge: about what it is: why we're launching it, and how it can change the way we work together for the benefit of all our children and young people

About the Cultural Education Challenge

As the previous speakers have highlighted, the Cultural Education Challenge is a response to the disparities of opportunity that exist for many children and young people – disparities that prevent them from benefiting from the pleasures, the happiness and the life-changing skills that art and culture bring.

We know this is problem. It was highlighted in the Henley review of cultural education in 2012, authored by Darren for the Government.

The findings of that report have been echoed in our subsequent research: children and young people often face significant barriers to participation in art and culture - barriers of income, class, geography, race and ethnicity, faith and disability.

We are not reaching all children early enough, when life-long habits are formed.

We know that there are no easy answers to this problem. There are more than 24,000 schools in the country: more than 8 million pupils.

And this at a time when public finances are stretched, both nationally and in local government.

But we cannot accept the situation.

As a country, we shouldn't be leaving it up to those parents who have the financial wherewithal to purchase the advantages of a proper cultural education for their children

All of our children deserve all the chances we can give them in life, irrespective of where they begin their journey.

That's why we're launching the Cultural Education Challenge.

The Cultural Education Challenge and Cultural Education Partnerships

The Challenge recognises that there is no single magic bullet.

Instead, at the heart of the Challenge is a call for arts and cultural organisations, educational institutions and local authorities to come together, to share resources and create locally targeted, coherent, and visible 'cultural education partnerships'

Through the partnerships, not only can we get more out of our local partners, but we can also challenge ourselves to do more – so for example, arts organisations can make their thinking more responsive to the needs of children and young people, and schools.

Through these partnerships we can ensure real, meaningful work and outcomes for children.

Context for the Cultural Education Partnerships – Henley Reviews

Let me give you some context for the Cultural Education Partnerships

The Henley Reviews identified key areas through which overall cultural education provision should be improved.

These included a more rigorous quality framework; better training for those delivering Cultural education; a unifying strategy for public funding; stronger partnerships between providers, and clearer signposting for children and young people and for their teachers, parents and carers about what is available.

In summary, the recommendations were for an improved national cultural infrastructure - and a more developed local delivery.

Over the past three years, I think there's been real progress towards developing that national infrastructure.

And at the Arts Council, we've worked with many others across the cultural and educational sectors.

National structures

We've supported the development of Quality Principles for cultural education: advocated for high quality arts and culture in the curriculum and championed Artsmark.

This important award has now been redesigned, by schools *for* schools. It will be an excellent source of evidence for Ofsted, supporting inspectors to better understand the quality of cultural education within a school.

Artsmark complements Arts Award, which we run in partnership with Trinity College London, and which recognises the outstanding achievements of individual young people.

Work with children and young people is now a part of our funding agreements with some 82% of our 663 National Portfolio organisations and 21 Major partner museums.

We're also fund holders for the Government's national network of Music Education hubs - which emerged from the Henley review of music education, and have been a crucial part of the Government's substantial commitment to cultural education.

And to help bring these structural elements together we invest £10 million a year in 10 Bridge organisations. These play a vital role in building local cultural alliances, increasing provision for children and young people and bringing in more revenue. They are now working with more than 7000 schools - and since 2013 they've levered in more than £11.5m in additional funding.

All over the country, we are seeing new platforms, partnerships and ways of working.

Recent examples include the Times Educational Supplement's online platform that will give teachers access to arts and cultural teaching resources from organisations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the V&A, BFI, and the Royal Opera House, with more to come.

There's also the British Museum, Arts Council and TES Global's live-streamed 'World Biggest History Lesson' – which goes live today – and which will help develop skills in learning history using physical objects.

There is a long way to go yet; but there is certainly progress on creating that national infrastructure.

Local delivery through Cultural Education Partnerships

Now we need to get the other element in play – better local delivery through Cultural Education Partnerships.

In 2012 the Arts Council came together with the Heritage Lottery Fund, the British Film Institute and English Heritage to form the Cultural Education Partnership Group.

We've trialed pilot partnerships in Great Yarmouth, Bristol and Barking & Dagenham, three very different areas.

The priorities in Bristol, which has a rich and diverse cultural offer and education sector, are not the same as those in a rural coastal area such as Great Yarmouth, where young people's cultural participation has tended to be low; or in Barking and Dagenham, an east London borough in which most of the schools are maintained by a local authority that is a strong advocate for the communal benefit of art and culture.

We've learned from these pilots how adaptable Cultural Education Partnerships can be - how responsive to local needs and circumstances. How, to be effective, they should comprise a wide range of arts, cultural and heritage providers, music education hubs, schools, and higher education institutions, local authorities – and employers.

We've seen how they can align cultural programmes to ensure greater effectiveness, using existing funded programmes as pegs for partnership development.

And we have seen how Bridges - our cultural education relationship brokers - have been critical to shaping strategy; coordinating partnerships and providing intelligence.

Rolling out a national Cultural Education Partnerships programme

We are also pleased at the progress of emerging partnerships, such as that in Blackpool, which has developed a Schools' Cultural Programme.

We've identified 50 potential Cultural Education Partnerships across the country. Our Bridge organisations will lead on developing these, prioritising areas of most need.

And our goal is to have these up and running by 2018.

We're publishing the details of these 50 target areas - but we're looking at these as the first 50; we're open to conversations with potential partners elsewhere.

We have a list of more than 30 supporters already – including headteachers, partner national bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and BFI, arts and culture organisations like the British Museum, the Tate, the Barbican, the RSC - and many more across the country.

While Bridges will play a leading role in bringing partnerships together, we need other strong convenors.

We need leadership in schools, arts organisations and the partnerships. Strong, committed leadership at a local level, individually and collectively.

In particular we need the participation and leadership of head teachers in shaping these cultural education partnerships. It is simply impossible for us to deliver what a pupils and schools need, without the input of schools.

Cultural Education Partnerships necessary irrespective of funding

But, as you'll have noticed, I'm not announcing new funds for this initiative.

We know that in this era, significant progress on this scale is possible only through partnership.

But just suppose – suppose – that there was more money.

That investment would still have to be delivered effectively, in ways that demonstrate impact and value at a local level.

So whatever the circumstances, now or in the future, we want these local mechanisms. We need Cultural education partnerships.

Call to action

None of us expect magic overnight.

We know that this will be a journey; and on the way we'll find and explore new ways of collaborative working that will change the lives of children and young people for the better.

We're carrying full details of the Cultural Education Challenge, important information, contacts and first steps on our website. Your local Bridge organisations are ready to speak to you.

I know that those who work in education and in the arts share a passion to make a difference.

We believe that there should be no barriers to talent. It's our job to ensure that children and young people should not be excluded from the advantages of a quality cultural education through the accident of fate, or because of inequality, prejudice, poverty or isolation.

The Arts should not be the privilege of the few, but the right of the many.

Let's come together, get these Cultural Education Partnerships off the ground and give all our children the opportunities they deserve.

Thank you

Introduce the film, and close the panel once the film is over.

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