



The arts debate: Summary and analysis of consultation responses

November 2007

Emily Keaney, Catherine Bunting, Anni Oskala, Jo Saucek, Luke Smith

Arts Council England works to get more art to more people in more places. We develop and promote the arts across England, acting as an independent body at arm's length from government.

Between 2006 and 2008, we will invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and the National Lottery in supporting the arts. This is the bedrock of support for the arts in England.

We believe that the arts have the power to change lives and communities, and to create opportunities for people throughout the country.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Executive summary | 8 |
| Background | 8 |
| Value of the arts | 8 |
| Principles to guide public funding of the arts | 10 |
| Responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation | 11 |
| Funding for individual artists | 12 |
| Public involvement in arts funding decisions | 13 |
| Reflections and next steps | 15 |
| 1 Context and background | 16 |
| 2 Methodology | 18 |
| 2.1 The nature of the sample | 20 |
| 2.1.1 Individuals and organisations | 20 |
| 2.1.2 Gender | 20 |
| 2.1.3 Region | 20 |
| 2.1.4 Respondent background | 21 |
| 2.2 Differences between the written and online responses | 23 |
| 3 Value of the arts | 24 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 24 |
| 3.2 Overall findings | 24 |
| 3.2.1 Key themes | 24 |
| 3.2.2 Differences between respondent types | 25 |
| 3.3 Capacity for life | 26 |
| 3.3.1 What it means to be human | 27 |
| 3.3.2 Expressing self and communicating with others | 28 |
| 3.3.3 Understanding one's place in the world | 30 |
| 3.3.4 Forging identities | 30 |
| 3.3.5 A collective narrative | 32 |
| 3.3.6 Challenge | 33 |
| 3.3.7 A form of politics | 34 |
| 3.3.8 A civilising force | 35 |
| 3.3.9 Spirituality | 36 |
| 3.4 Experience of life | 36 |
| 3.4.1 Emotion and inspiration | 36 |
| 3.4.2 Bringing beauty to the world | 37 |
| 3.4.3 Enjoyment, pleasure and relaxation | 38 |
| 3.4.4 A means of escape | 39 |
| 3.5 Applications of the arts | 40 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 3.5.1 Education and young people | 40 |
| 3.5.2 Health and wellbeing | 41 |
| 3.5.3 Addressing social problems | 42 |
| 3.5.4 Community cohesion | 42 |
| 3.5.5 A sense of place | 44 |
| 3.5.6 Regeneration and economic benefits | 45 |
| 3.5.7 Internationalism | 46 |
| 3.6 Artists and artforms | 46 |
| 4 Principles to guide public funding of the arts | 48 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 48 |
| 4.2 Overall findings | 48 |
| 4.2.1 Key themes | 48 |
| 4.2.2 Differences between response types | 50 |
| 4.3 Principles and outcomes to guide funding providers | 51 |
| 4.3.1 Art for everyone | 51 |
| 4.3.2 Quality | 56 |
| 4.3.3 Innovation and risk | 58 |
| 4.3.4 Challenge | 61 |
| 4.3.5 Artistic development and support | 61 |
| 4.3.6 Cultural heritage | 62 |
| 4.3.7 Social benefit | 63 |
| 4.3.8 Fairness | 66 |
| 4.3.9 Balance and variety | 68 |
| 4.3.10 Need | 69 |
| 4.3.11 Sustainability | 70 |
| 4.4 Strategy and management | 70 |
| 4.4.1 Art, politics and the arm's length principle | 71 |
| 4.4.2 Bureaucracy | 73 |
| 4.4.3 Accountability of the Arts Council | 75 |
| 4.4.4 Partnership | 76 |
| 4.4.5 Leadership | 77 |
| 4.4.6 Calls for more or less funding for the arts | 78 |
| 4.5 Alternative financial models | 79 |
| 5 Responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation | 81 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 81 |
| 5.2 Overall findings | 81 |
| 5.2.1 Key themes | 81 |
| 5.2.2 Differences between response types | 82 |
| 5.3 Responsibilities to the arts, artists, audiences and the wider public | 82 |
| 5.3.1 Accessibility and inclusivity | 82 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 5.3.2 Reaching out | 83 |
| 5.3.3 Diversity and equality | 85 |
| 5.3.4 Quality | 85 |
| 5.3.5 Challenge | 87 |
| 5.3.6 Innovation and risk | 87 |
| 5.3.7 Advocacy for the arts | 88 |
| 5.3.8 Support artists | 89 |
| 5.3.9 Social benefit | 90 |
| 5.4 Organisational responsibilities | 92 |
| 5.4.1 Leadership and governance | 92 |
| 5.4.2 Integrity, passion and commitment | 93 |
| 5.4.3 Management and finance | 93 |
| 5.4.4 Accountability and transparency | 95 |
| 5.4.5 Monitoring and evidence | 97 |
| 5.4.6 Stakeholder engagement and partnership: | 98 |
| 5.5 Responsibilities of the Arts Council | 99 |
| 6 Public funding for individual artists | 100 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 100 |
| 6.2 Overall findings | 100 |
| 6.2.1 Key themes | 100 |
| 6.2.2 Differences between response types | 101 |
| 6.3 Desired criteria for funding artists | 102 |
| 6.3.1 Quality | 102 |
| 6.3.2 Innovation and challenge | 103 |
| 6.3.3 Professional development | 104 |
| 6.3.4 Accessibility | 105 |
| 6.3.5 Reach | 108 |
| 6.3.6 Social benefit | 108 |
| 6.3.7 Need | 109 |
| 6.3.8 Talent and commitment | 111 |
| 6.3.9 Effective delivery | 111 |
| 6.3.10 Longevity | 111 |
| 6.3.11 Unsuitable areas for funding | 112 |
| 6.4 Timing of funding | 112 |
| 6.4.1 Start-up funding | 112 |
| 6.4.2 Ongoing funding opportunities | 113 |
| 6.5 Mechanisms for funding artists | 114 |
| 6.5.1 Loans and payback schemes | 114 |
| 6.5.2 Commissions | 115 |
| 6.5.3 Multi-staged and retrospective funding | 115 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 6.5.4 Limited funding | 115 |
| 6.5.5 Longer-term funding | 116 |
| 6.5.6 Alternative distribution mechanisms | 116 |
| 6.5.7 Other sources of financial support | 117 |
| 6.5.8 In-kind support | 117 |
| 6.6 Arguments against funding artists | 118 |
| 7 Public involvement in decision-making | 120 |
| 7.1 Introduction | 120 |
| 7.2 Overall findings | 120 |
| 7.2.1 Key themes | 120 |
| 7.2.2 Differences between respondent types | 121 |
| 7.3 Arguments for | 121 |
| 7.3.1 Democracy and accountability | 121 |
| 7.3.2 Response to public need | 122 |
| 7.3.3 Reduced bias and fresh thinking | 123 |
| 7.3.4 Support for and engagement with the arts | 124 |
| 7.3.5 Learning and empowerment | 125 |
| 7.4 Arguments against | 126 |
| 7.4.1 Lowest common denominator | 126 |
| 7.4.2 Lack of expertise | 127 |
| 7.4.3 Not feasible | 128 |
| 7.4.4 Not required in a representative democracy | 129 |
| 7.4.5 Sufficient involvement already | 129 |
| 7.5 Striking a balance | 130 |
| 7.5.1 Limited involvement or a combination of views | 131 |
| 7.5.2 Appropriate in certain contexts | 132 |
| 7.5.3 Informed and interested only | 133 |
| 7.6 Approaches and techniques | 134 |
| 7.6.1 General debate | 134 |
| 7.6.2. Regular consultation | 135 |
| 7.6.3 Panels and advisors | 135 |
| 7.6.4 Commissioning, creating and deciding on artistic work | 135 |
| 7.7 Methodological challenges | 136 |
| 7.7.1 Ensuring representation | 136 |
| 7.7.2 Providing sufficient information | 137 |
| 7.7.3 Credible consultations | 137 |
| 7.8 Accountability in other forms | 137 |
| 7.8.1 General accountability | 138 |
| 7.8.2 Representative and knowledgeable decision-makers | 138 |
| 7.8.3 Devolved responsibility | 138 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 7.8.4 Engagement through artists and arts organisations | 139 |
| 7.8.5 Greater professional input | 139 |
| 8 Reflections and next steps | 140 |
| 8.1 Diversity of views | 140 |
| 8.2 Key themes | 140 |
| 8.2.1 Importance of the arts | 140 |
| 8.2.2 Access and reach | 141 |
| 8.2.3 Quality, innovation and challenge | 141 |
| 8.2.4 Fairness and accountability | 142 |
| 8.3 Attitudes and views by sector | 143 |
| 8.3.1 Arts community | 143 |
| 8.3.2 Amateur and voluntary sector | 143 |
| 8.3.3 Stakeholders and community groups | 144 |
| 8.3.4 Special interest groups | 144 |
| 8.4 Next steps | 144 |
| Appendix | 146 |

Executive summary

Background

In 2006 the Arts Council launched the arts debate, our first-ever public value inquiry. A large-scale programme of research and consultation, its purpose was to engage a wide range of people in a debate about the value of the arts and the role of public funding. In particular, the arts debate sought to explore how public value is currently created by the arts today and what it would mean for the Arts Council and the individuals and organisations we fund to create greater public value. It also sought to understand how the Arts Council can best balance public aspirations with the needs and priorities of our partners in the arts community and other stakeholders.

A key element of the arts debate was a large-scale, open consultation that gave everyone the opportunity to have a say on the key issues relating to the arts and their funding. Respondents were asked to give their views on five questions that had emerged through earlier stages of research¹ as areas of particular importance or possible tension:

- 1 What do you value about the arts?
- 2 What principles should guide public funding of the arts today?
- 3 What are the responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation?
- 4 When should an artist receive public money?
- 5 Should members of the public be involved in arts funding decisions?

The consultation ran from February to May 2007. A total of 1,251 responses were received. These included 819 comments on the arts debate online discussion forum and 432 written responses. These responses have been collated and analysed by the Arts Council's research team. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of those responses.

Value of the arts

Almost all respondents believed that the arts are extremely valuable. Respondents talked passionately about their personal experience of the arts and also identified the ways in which the arts might have benefits to society more widely. The ways in which respondents value the arts can be grouped into three main areas: the arts have value as part of a fundamental capacity for life; the arts enrich people's

¹ Detailed findings from all stages of arts debate research are available at www.artscouncil.org.uk/artsdebate/research.php

experience of life; and the arts can have valuable applications in other contexts, particularly social or community settings.

The arts were seen as part of a central capacity for life because they help people understand, interpret and adapt to the world around them. For many respondents the arts are a key part of what it is to be human – the ability to create art is what distinguishes humans from animals and allows an understanding of humanity's place in the world. For some respondents the arts are also a central part of their spiritual lives, helping them to explore the multidimensional nature of existence. The arts were seen as part of individual and collective identities, helping to define people and to infuse a sense of pride and individuality into communities, cities and regions. Respondents also valued the challenging nature of the arts – its ability to make people question their assumptions and think about the world in a different way. The arts were seen as a civilising force, something that drives society forward and helps people to develop in positive and meaningful ways. They provide the narrative through which to understand the past and explore the future, and provide a way of connecting with the many different voices that make up our collective heritage. They were also seen as a channel through which people are able to express themselves and communicate with others, gaining a better understanding of who they are and of the world around them.

The arts were also seen an important way of enriching the experience of life. Respondents argued that the arts can be life-enhancing and life-affirming, uplifting, fulfilling and nourishing. They valued the fact that the arts have the power to engage and to provoke an emotional or intellectual response. Respondents felt that the arts bring beauty to the world and talked of the arts' ability to inspire and to provide a refuge from the mundane, the commercial and the work-focused reality of everyday life. They also saw the arts as an important source of enjoyment, pleasure and relaxation.

In addition, many respondents felt that the arts can have powerful applications in other contexts and can make an important contribution to achieving a wide variety of social outcomes and benefits. Respondents talked about the role of the arts in education and the importance of engaging young people with the arts. Others spoke of the contribution the arts can make to health and wellbeing, to regeneration and the economy and to creating community cohesion. The role of art in politics was also discussed, with a number of respondents valuing the ability of the arts to make society fairer and more inclusive and the contribution it can make to strengthening democracy by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to have their voice heard. A number of respondents valued the international nature

of the arts, including their ability to cross cultural boundaries and provide an international platform for an individual, community or place. Finally others valued the arts as a means of reaching out to the socially excluded and tackling difficult social problems such as drug abuse, crime and teenage pregnancy.

Principles to guide public funding of the arts

Responses to this question covered the principles and outcomes that funding providers should take into account when considering the distribution of funds; issues relating to the overarching strategy for public funding or its management and implementation; and suggestions for alternatives to the existing public funding system.

One of the most prevalent themes within the discussion of principles and outcomes was the belief that public funding should seek to make the arts available for as many people as possible, wherever they live and whatever their background. This incorporated the argument that public funding should seek to ensure that the arts are accessible and should reduce barriers to engaging with the arts and that it should support work to raise awareness and understanding of the arts. Some respondents argued that, to ensure the arts are available for everyone, funding should target particular groups who have traditionally been under-served by the arts, and others argued for a focus on active participation for as many people as possible.

Another key theme was the importance of quality. This included both quality of the art and quality of the experience. Respondents also argued for the importance of funding that supports innovation and risk and that seeks to create art that challenges people. In addition there was support for funding artistic development, the maintenance of cultural heritage and a range of social and economic outcomes including a focus on young people, education and community development. Respondents also argued in favour of principles such as fairness, balance and variety, and some considered the need of potential funding recipients and the sustainability of their work.

In addition to discussing outcomes and principles many respondents also commented on the overarching strategy for public funding or the way in which it is currently managed. One of the most common themes in this category was the relationship between public funding and politics. There was deep concern among many respondents that arts funding decisions are currently too focused on delivering the latest political agenda, rather than driven by artistic considerations, and many argued that there is a need to de-politicise arts funding.

Closely related to this was a belief that the current system is too bureaucratic. There were complaints that the funding system is dominated by paperwork and box ticking and that decisions are often made by bureaucrats who may not know enough about art. Other respondents argued that the Arts Council needs to become more accountable, build better partnerships and develop our leadership role.

Finally, a number of respondents suggested alternative models for funding the arts. For some this was primarily about changes to the Arts Council's funding structures while for others it involved revising all elements of the system, including local authority and central government procedures.

Responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation

The majority of respondents to this question believed that the responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation are to balance commitment and responsibility to the people experiencing their work and/or the wider community with passion for and dedication to the arts. Within these broad aims responses can be divided into two main areas: responsibilities to the arts, artists, audiences and the wider public, and responsibilities relating to the ways in which an arts organisation is managed and run.

Responsibilities to the arts, artists, audiences and the wider public included the responsibility to ensure that both the art and the organisation are accessible and inclusive, the importance of reaching out to those who would not normally engage with the arts and the importance of ensuring diversity and equality in the kind of work the organisation supports, the types of artists that they work with and the way that they treat staff and the public. Organisations should also ensure that the work that they produce and support is of the highest quality and that those who engage with their organisation have a high quality experience. They should aim to challenge people, and should innovate and take risks. It was also argued that publicly funded arts organisations should act as advocates for the arts and should support artists. Finally some respondents believed that organisations should have a responsibility to create some kind of social benefit, including working directly with communities and working in education or with young people.

Many respondents argued that publicly funded arts organisations also have a responsibility to ensure that they are well run, financially competent and accountable. This included the importance of having strong leadership and good governance; maintaining integrity and being passionate and committed; being well

managed and financially competent; ensuring that the organisation is accountable and transparent; and monitoring progress and providing evidence of achievement. Many respondents also talked about the need for publicly funded arts organisations to work in partnership with stakeholders, including audiences, communities, funders, local government, the voluntary sector and other arts organisations.

Funding for individual artists

Respondents to this question considered the desired criteria for funding individual artists, the timing of funding, mechanisms for funding and arguments against funding artists.

One of the most frequently cited criteria for funding was quality: there was a fair amount of consensus among respondents that public funding should go to artists who produce 'high quality' art. Many respondents used the term 'quality' to refer to a work that provides an engaging, enjoyable, exciting and inspiring experience for the audience or participants as well as the artist.

Another major theme in the responses was the requirement for publicly funded artists to produce innovative art that challenges both audiences and society. Other respondents argued that artists should receive funding for training, skills and professional development, while many respondents believed that artists should ensure that their work is accessible to the public or should commit to reach out to those who do not normally engage in the arts in order to justify public funding. In addition, a proportion of respondents argued that artists should provide some specific social benefits, including working with communities, in education and health, and contributing to economic growth and social challenges such as conflict resolution.

Many people expressed views on when in their careers artists should receive public funding. Most respondents focused on funding at the start of an artist's career, although a proportion also highlighted the importance of supporting artists throughout their lives, whenever it can make a positive difference to their artistic development.

Respondents suggested a number of mechanisms to ensure effective funding of individual artists. These included loans and pay-back schemes, commissions, multi-staged and retrospective funding, limits to the amount of funding a single artist can receive from any one public source and the introduction of longer-term funding agreements. A few also felt that it would be more appropriate for public

funding to be distributed to artists via arts organisations rather than by the main funding bodies. A number of respondents felt that funding for artists could be leveraged from many other sources, in addition to or instead of the public purse, with the private sector mentioned most frequently. Finally, several respondents proposed in-kind support to supplement or replace direct funding for artists. This included subsidising facilities or equipment and providing advice and mentoring.

Finally, around a tenth of respondents disagreed with the principle of funding artists directly with public money, including a number of artists themselves. There were a variety of reasons for this, including the belief that it is unfair to subsidise artists and not other professions; that there are more pressing demands on the public purse than support for individual artists; that funding individual artists is not the best way to increase access to art or ensure public benefit; that public funding reduces quality because the conditions attached compromise an artist's integrity; and that the 'dependency culture' caused by the availability of public funding for individual artists can be harmful to artistic production.

Public involvement in arts funding decisions

Around a quarter of respondents argued strongly in favour of involving members of the public in arts funding decisions, and many saw it as a means of strengthening or expanding the process of democracy. Others felt that public involvement in decision-making is an important aspect of accountability and transparency: involvement of the public would ensure that decisions are open and fair and respond well to the needs of individuals and communities. Some respondents argued that involving members of the public would bring fresh ideas and perspectives, resulting in better and possibly more innovative decisions. Many more were in favour because they believed it would lead to increased awareness, understanding and appreciation of the arts, which in turn would stimulate greater participation in a wider range of artforms.

Around a fifth of respondents clearly opposed the concept. One of the most common arguments against greater public involvement in the arts funding process was that policies and decisions would result in 'lowest common denominator' art. Others were concerned that public involvement could limit innovation, diversity and quality and could make it more difficult for artists and arts organisations to take risks and challenge their audiences. A closely related argument was that members of the public lack the skills, expertise and experience to make effective arts funding decisions. Some respondents, particularly in the online debate, believed that public involvement in arts funding decisions is not required as the system of representative democracy ensures that the public interest is represented and

reflected in government policy and the distribution of public funds. Several respondents also felt that members of the public already have considerable influence as audience members, trustees and shareholders of arts organisations, media critics and through the general weight of public opinion.

The majority of respondents could see both strengths and weaknesses in the idea of public involvement in decision-making. These respondents concluded that a degree of public involvement is desirable, but in specific contexts only or as a part of a broader process which incorporates a range of views, including those of experts. One of the most common expressions of this was the idea that there should be a limited amount of consultation and engagement but that members of the public should not be involved directly in day-to-day decision-making. Others argued that members of the public should only be involved in decision-making in certain situations, for instance about community and participatory projects. A third approach was to argue that members of the public should be involved in decision-making but only if they have a sufficient level of knowledge and expertise about the arts.

A number of respondents took the opportunity to suggest some practical ways in which members of the public might be engaged in the decision-making process. These included ongoing debate about the arts and their funding through the use of the internet or local newspapers; the development of a systematic approach to public consultation and research with a commitment to consult periodically on broad policies and processes; involving members of the public in steering groups or panels, particularly at a local level and involving members of the public in deciding on and commissioning artistic work. Respondents noted the importance of ensuring that those involved in the decision-making process are representative of the population as a whole; equipping members of the public with sufficient relevant information to make considered and confident decisions; and making sure that any consultation is genuine and credible.

Finally, around a tenth of respondents recognised the importance of accountability in the publicly funded arts sector, but felt that direct public involvement in decision-making is not necessarily the best mechanism for bringing funding decisions closer to the needs and expectations of the wider population. Instead these respondents suggested a range of alternatives, with a particular emphasis on the need for the Arts Council's decision-making processes to be more transparent and open to challenge.

Reflections and next steps

The most striking characteristic of the responses to the consultation was the diversity of the views expressed. This variety of perspectives was particularly in evidence in the responses to the questions about the role and distribution of public funding. Nevertheless, despite this diversity of views some key themes did emerge. These were:

- the importance of the arts
- access and reach
- quality, innovation and challenge
- fairness and accountability

While on the whole there was no strong correlation between the type of respondent and their likelihood of holding a particular view, it is possible to identify some broad clusters: strong polarisation of views was most likely to be found within the responses from the arts sector; respondents from the amateur and voluntary sector were particularly likely to stress the importance of amateur participation and of artists working in community settings; stakeholders and community group representatives were more likely than those from other groups to focus on the applications of the arts and to value the impact the arts can have locally or in communities, while special interest groups tended to place particular value on the role of the arts in their particular area of interest, for instance those involved in education were likely to emphasise the important role of the arts in education.

Next steps

The information gathered through this consultation has been incorporated, along with the findings from all of the strands of research, into a report that summarises what we have learned through the arts debate: *Public value and the arts in England: Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate*. This will be published in November 2007.

We will spend the coming months sharing and debating the findings widely and working with our partners to determine how we take forward all that we have learned. A policy paper detailing how the Arts Council will respond will be published in spring 2008.

The Arts Council is also committed to ensuring that the conversation continues. We shall be working hard to continue this important dialogue about the value of the arts, the role of public funding and our own priorities and principles in the future.

1 Context and background

In 2006 the Arts Council launched the arts debate, our first-ever public value inquiry. A large-scale programme of research and consultation, its purpose was to engage a wide range of people in a debate about the value of the arts and the role of public funding. In particular, the arts debate sought to explore how public value is currently created by the arts today and what it would mean for the Arts Council and the individuals and organisations we fund to create greater public value. It also sought to understand how the Arts Council can best balance public aspirations with the needs and priorities of our partners in the arts community and other stakeholders².

A key element of the arts debate was a programme of qualitative and deliberative research. This began in October 2006 with three workshops with Arts Council staff. The second stage was a large programme of qualitative research with members of the public, comprising 20 discussion groups across the country. We then commissioned around 80 in-depth interviews and discussion groups with members of the arts community and our wider stakeholder base. The final stage of the research was a programme of deliberation, where members of the public and arts professionals came together to debate the key issues and to develop shared priorities and principles for public funding of the arts.

Qualitative research, of the type outlined above, provides a rich, in-depth understanding of a representative range of views. However, it is only able to capture the views of a comparatively small number of people and only those who are selected to take part have the opportunity to contribute their opinions. We wanted everyone to have the opportunity to have a say on the key issues relating to the arts and their funding. We therefore conducted a large-scale, open consultation alongside the programme of qualitative research.

To help guide responses we asked people to consider five key questions. These questions reflected the views and concerns that emerged from the early arts debate research with the public. They were broad enough to enable people to consider issues in depth and provide views across a wide range of areas. Respondents were asked to answer all or any of the five questions, or to raise any

² For more information on public value and the background to the arts debate see *Public value and the arts: literature review* and *Public Engagement with the arts: Arts Council England's strategic challenges*, both available at www.artscouncil.org.uk/artsdebate/about.php

other issues that they felt to be relevant that were not covered within the scope of those questions.

The questions were:

- 1 What do you value about the arts?
- 2 What principles should guide public funding of the arts today?
- 3 What are the responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation?
- 4 When should an artist receive public money?
- 5 Should members of the public be involved in arts funding decisions?

The consultation ran from February to May 2007. There were over 1,200 contributions to the consultation in the form of written submissions or posts on the arts debate website. These responses have been collated and analysed by the Arts Council's research team. This report provides a summary of the responses.

Section 2 provides detail on the methodology used to gather views through the consultation. Sections 3 to 7 cover the responses to each question in depth, and section 8 concludes with some overall reflections.

The Arts Council is considering the findings in detail alongside the findings from the different elements of the research programme. Through ongoing dialogue with all our publics these findings will inform our long-term strategy for the arts in England. This report accompanies an account of overall arts debate results and early conclusions³. A more detailed analysis of implications and actions for the Arts Council will be published in 2008.

³ See *Public value and the arts in England: Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate*, available at www.artsdebate.co.uk/summaryandconclusions.php

2 Methodology

The public consultation was conducted to ensure that all those who wished to contribute to the arts debate were able to do so. It was conducted in full accordance with Cabinet Office code of practice on consultation⁴.

The consultation was open for three months, from 12 February to 11 May 2007, although written responses that arrived late were also accepted.

The consultation was widely publicised. In February an invitation to take part in the written consultation was sent to around 28,000 people on the Arts Council contact list (around 1,500 of these were undeliverable). The list included arts organisations, artists, other individuals working in the arts, and contacts of the Arts Council in local authorities and other stakeholder organisations. An email invitation was produced and sent to all Arts Council staff to forward to their networks. Over 768,000 print items (leaflets, postcards and posters) were distributed through a variety of networks, including art colleges, schools (including specialist schools), libraries, Creative Partnership offices, local authorities and regional exhibitions and events. Downloadable links and graphics were available to allow other organisations to link to the arts debate site from their website and over 990⁵ external links were created to the www.artsdebate.co.uk address. Online advertising campaigns were set up to increase awareness, particularly among young people and Black and minority ethnic groups. The debate was advertised on sites such as www.preciousonline.co.uk and www.youareable.com and on the websites of the Mirror and the Voice newspapers. The consultation received national, local and trade (arts) media coverage, including discussion on BBC Radio 4's Front Row and comment in the Independent and on BBC online news. Regional Arts Council offices also ran a series of awareness campaigns, including local events, public relations and the distribution of promotional material. Regions also worked closely with local arts organisations to raise awareness among audiences and participants.

Respondents were able to submit their comments online on the arts debate discussion forum or by filling in the response form available as part of the consultation pack. A few respondents also submitted responses in the form of letters and emails.

⁴ For more details see

<http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/consultation/pdf/code.pdf>

⁵ Calculated through Google link back analysis.

A total of 1,251 responses were received. These included 819 comments on the online discussion forum and 432 written responses. Three-quarters of the written responses (323) were submitted by email, 25 per cent (108 responses) were sent by post and one by fax.

The arts debate discussion forum was accessed through the arts debate website. Respondents were able to post comments on any or all of the consultation questions. Respondents could also read all comments posted by other users. To comment on the 'blog' respondents were required to provide a name and email address. Further personal details were not required⁶. The debate was monitored by the arts debate web editor and defamatory, obscene or irrelevant comments, or any comments that infringed copyright rules, were removed.

The consultation pack could be read online, downloaded from the website or requested from regional offices or the Arts Council England enquiries team. The documents were available in Braille, large print, on audio CD and in electronic formats. Those completing an application form were able to respond either as an individual or as a representative of an organisation. Those who responded as a representative of an organisation were asked to provide details of how the views of that organisation were collected. Respondents were also asked to provide details of their name and address, and if relevant the name of the organisation they represented, although respondents could request that their responses remain anonymous.

Respondents were asked to give their views on the five questions that had emerged through the public and staff research as areas of particular importance or possible tension. Respondents were also able to raise any other issues of importance in the 'other comments' section on the written response form.

⁶ Requests for personal details can deter users from commenting on blogs and online discussion forums. Standard practice is to request the minimum amount of information necessary to ensure maximum accessibility of the site.

2.1 The nature of the sample

Every effort was made to ensure that the consultation was accessible and widely publicised. However, as with any open consultation, views cannot be assumed to be representative of the population. This is because responding to an open consultation is a self-selecting process, and those who are interested in or have a stake in the subject matter are more likely to invest the time and effort required to respond.

In this instance some key groups were particularly likely to respond: those working in or close to the arts and, as part of the consultation was carried out online, those with internet availability and computer skills.

Online respondents were not asked to provide personal details other than their name and email address. However, written respondents were asked to provide their name, organisation and address, which enables us to provide the following breakdown of the 432 written responses.

2.1.1 Individuals and organisations

Respondents were able to respond either in an individual capacity or as a representative of an organisation. Around one-third of written responses (143) were submitted by organisations⁷ and the remaining two-thirds (289) were from individuals, including 11 responses containing views of multiple individuals. Forty-three per cent (125) of those responding as individuals specified their organisation; the remaining 57 per cent (164) of the individual responses provided names only.

2.1.2 Gender

Among the individual responses comparable levels were received from males and females (138 and 131 respectively, excluding nine respondents of unknown gender).

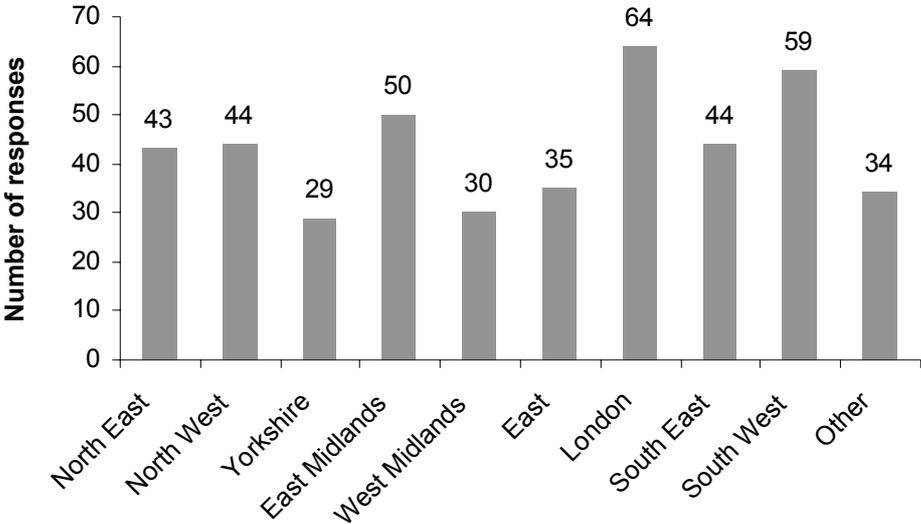
2.1.3 Region

Responses were received from all nine regions in England. The largest number of responses were received from individuals and organisations based in London, the South West and East Midlands (Figure 1).⁸

⁷ See appendix for a full list of organisations responding to the consultation.

⁸ Responses from a number of national organisations were not allocated a region. There were also 22 responses whose region is unknown. There were two responses from Wales and one from overseas.

Figure 1: Regional spread of written responses



2.1.4 Respondent background

Respondents were asked to state whether they were responding as representatives of an organisation or as individuals. Organisational responses were broken down into those responses that were from arts organisations and those from other stakeholder organisations.

Of those responding as individuals, 125 provided the name of the organisation that they worked for. In these cases we were also able to split the responses into individuals from the arts sector and individuals from the wider stakeholder community. The remaining 164 individual respondents who did not provide the name of an organisation with which they were affiliated have been categorised as ‘unattributed’.

We were able to further categorise responses from the arts sector into ‘producing’ and ‘representative’ responses. Responses from arts organisations or individuals working in arts organisations that are primarily concerned with creating, producing or showcasing work fall into the ‘producing’ category, while those that are primarily concerned with representing, campaigning for or providing some other service to the arts sector fall into the ‘representative’ category.

Similarly we have broken down the stakeholder responses into local authorities and ‘other stakeholders’. The latter category includes regional development agencies, charities and campaigning organisations.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of all written responses by respondent type. We also note that 60 written responses were from organisations that receive regular funding from the Arts Council (14 per cent of all written responses).

Table 1: Breakdown of responses by sector

| Sector | Subgroup | Number of responses | % of all attributed responses | % of all responses |
|--|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Arts sector | | 202 | 75 | 47 |
| Responses from organisations | Producing arts organisations | 73 | | |
| | Representative arts organisations | 32 | | |
| Responses from individuals | Individuals from producing arts organisations | 79 | | |
| | Individuals from representative arts organisations | 18 | | |
| Stakeholders | | 66 | 25 | 15 |
| Responses from organisations | Local authorities | 29 | | |
| | 'Other stakeholder' organisations | 9 | | |
| Responses from individuals | Individuals from local authorities | 18 | | |
| | Individuals from 'other stakeholder' organisations | 10 | | |
| Non-attributed responses from individuals | | 164 | - | 38 |
| Total | | 432 | 100 | 100 |

2.2 Differences between the written and online responses

As well as providing different levels of information about the background of respondents, one of the key differences between the online and written responses was the element of debate. The online respondents were able to read and respond to the comments of others. This gave the online debate a more discursive element than the written responses. Respondents often referred directly to comments made by other users, debating ideas and issues and supporting or agreeing with the positions of others.

The tone of the online responses was more intense than the written responses. Views were often expressed in a more polemical and provocative way than in the responses to the written consultation. This was possibly influenced by the anonymity and informal nature of the online debate.

3 Value of the arts

3.1 Introduction

The consultation began by asking people what they value about the arts. The question recognised that people's experience of the arts varies, as does the role the arts play in their lives. Some people are passionate about the arts, going to a wide range of events and exhibitions and taking part in creative activities as often as they can. For others, the arts are a part of the fabric of their lives, something to be enjoyed with friends and family when the occasion arises. Some people don't think of themselves as interested in the arts, even though they might go to the cinema, listen to music and read books.

The first question therefore sought to discover what the arts meant to respondents. We wanted to know what activities they enjoy, what they get from those experiences, and why the arts are important to them. We asked people how their lives are different as a result of their engagement with the arts. We also wanted to know if there is anything people would change about their involvement with the arts.

We also asked whether the arts are important in people's local community – if so, why and if not, why not? We asked what role the arts play in national life and whether respondents would like to see the arts play a different role. Finally, we wanted to know respondents' expectations and hopes for the arts in the future.

3.2 Overall findings

3.2.1 Key themes

Across all written and online responses, the overwhelming theme that emerged was how important most respondents consider the arts to be. For huge numbers of respondents the arts are an integral part of their lives, often the way that they earn their living or spend their free time, or both.

'The arts are central to my life.'

Mary La Trobe-Bateman

For most of these people the arts are more than just a career or a hobby. They are an essential part of their identity and are what drives, motivates and inspires them.

'In some ways, the arts make life worth living!'

British Association of Art Therapists

'The arts are what makes life exciting for me.'

Sally Givertz (online)

The ways in which respondents value the arts can be grouped into three areas: the arts have value as part of a central capacity for life, building an individual's understanding of the world and their place in it; the arts enrich the experience of life, bringing colour, beauty and enjoyment; and the arts can have valuable applications in other contexts, particularly social and community settings. There was a degree of overlap across these different areas and most responses ranged across all three. Respondents also identified connections between the three, arguing, for instance, that the arts can have valuable social applications precisely because they are a powerful way of enhancing people's experience of the world.

The arts were seen to have an impact at both an individual and collective level. This in itself was considered to be part of the arts' value.

'The arts have the ability to impact both individually and collectively – to engage people in intense personal experiences and reflections, but also to involve them in massive public and community celebrations.'

North Tyneside Council

Respondents talked passionately about their personal experiences of the arts but also valued the fact that the arts appeal to everyone, regardless of their taste or experience. This had a democratic element: the arts are valuable because they act as 'a leveller', bringing people together through shared experience.

'Art is a leveller – education, age, money, gender, faith are irrelevant – shared tastes and appreciation of art transcend these divisions.'

Kathryn Howart

Finally, a few respondents argued that the arts simply have 'intrinsic value'. A couple of respondents explained this in terms of valuing 'arts for arts' sake'; a few linked this to concepts of artistic quality and excellence, while some explicitly set the importance of valuing art for its intrinsic value against the idea of valuing the arts for their social benefits.

3.2.2 Differences between respondent types

There were no strong correlations between particular types of respondents and how they were likely to value the arts. As we mentioned above, most respondents

could see both individual and collective benefits and most saw the arts as creating value in multiple ways across all three areas of capacity, experience and application.

It is possible to identify a degree of clustering. Responses from stakeholders were most likely to focus on the applications of the arts in social and community contexts. However, most also recognised the role the arts play in enhancing the capacity for and experience of life and acknowledged the relationship between these different types of value.

'There is often pressure on the arts to achieve many external objectives, and often they can, but the reason is because the arts have the capacity to reach beyond themselves into so many areas of personal and community life... the arts can simply offer something exciting or life-enhancing, which makes people and communities feel better about themselves.'

North Tyneside Council

Many stakeholders and respondents from community organisations or local arts organisations tended to value the impact the arts can have locally or in communities, with the latter placing particular emphasis on grass-roots activity. These respondents often talked specifically about the value the arts are currently creating in the areas in which they operate.

Respondents from the arts community generally cited a variety of benefits, but there was some polarisation of views. A minority of these respondents believed that the value of the arts lies entirely in their intrinsic qualities and that any discussion of the applications of the arts is misguided and could undermine the creative process.

There were a small number of responses from groups such as children and young people, teachers and prisoners. All of these respondents valued the arts a great deal but tended to place slightly different emphasis on how they expressed that value. Children and young people tended to value active participation rather than consumption. Teachers, as might be expected, tended to place a particular emphasis on education while prisoners valued the arts as a form of escapism, a means of self-expression and a way of dealing with difficult issues and emotions.

3.3 Capacity for life

The majority of respondents saw the arts as part of a fundamental capacity for life. They are part of what makes people who they are, contributing both to individual

identity and collective humanity. They are essential to communication and self-expression; they help people to understand themselves, others and the world around them; they challenge individual and collective perceptions and beliefs and show where society has come from and where it might be going.

3.3.1 What it means to be human

Many respondents believed that the arts are a core part of what defines humanity. They were seen as the expression of the ability to think, to imagine, to contemplate and to create and it is this that distinguishes the human species.

'The arts are the highest expression of what it means to be human and as such, priceless.'

Melbourne Festival

'The ability to express reflections of our existence is fundamental to what distinguishes the human species.'

Dave Pritchard

'For me, art separates us from the animals as it is simply something extra and pleasurable we create ourselves away from the grind of just existing.'

(name withheld)

'Without "art" we are little more than machines.'

Paul Whiteside

Respondents also saw the arts as a vehicle through which people are able to express and understand their humanity.

'Individuals are able to gain a closer understanding of what it means fundamentally, to be a human being.'

Voluntary Arts England

Because of this the arts were seen as a basic need without which people could not survive.

'We believe that access to and an opportunity to create art is more than a right – it is as essential to life as food, drink and shelter.'

Red Ladder Theatre Company

'Art is an inextricable part of life. It is the air we breathe. Without it, we become retarded in every way and ultimately, we die. We may remain as physical beings without the arts, but we are merely shells without souls.'

*British Board of Film Classification,
Yellow Earth Theatre, British Chinese
Artists' Association*

'Being fairly dramatic I might say that without it we're losing our humanity. It's a part of "I think therefore I am".'

Becky (online)

3.3.2 Expressing self and communicating with others

For almost all respondents the arts are central to the ability to express oneself and communicate with others. Many saw communication not just as a benefit of the arts but as inherent and defining quality of what makes something art.

Respondents talked about the arts as a 'language' or group of languages that provide an alternative form of communication.

'The arts together form a group of related languages by which humankind describe, understand and create the world and themselves.'

Magma Poetry

Actively engaging in the arts was seen as an important means of self-expression. Most respondents believed that the desire to express oneself is innate, and is part of being human. This expression can be emotional, intellectual and physical.

'The need to express art lives within every human being and it is as vital to me as air.'

(name withheld)

It was argued that the creative nature of the arts allows people to express feelings or opinions that might otherwise be difficult to air or that are particularly important to them. They also allow people to express themselves without fear of judgement.

'The arts gives you a freedom as an individual – you alone can say what art means to you and there should be no restrictions about "good" or "bad".'

Sue Morris (online)

For a number of respondents the creative nature of that expression was particularly important. They valued the fact that they are able to express themselves creatively, in a way that has meaning or resonance for other people.

'being able to communicate, through our art, with people we meet (or may never meet) in an arena where money, power, practicality do not dominate.'
Tam Tam Tales Trust

Some respondents pointed out that many people find it difficult to explain how they feel and that the arts can be a valuable tool for helping people learn to express themselves.

'way to express feelings in a positive way.'
Prison inmates, HMP Nottingham

A number of respondents focused in particular on the arts as communication that does not need words. This was felt to be especially important for those who are less comfortable with spoken and written language.

'People who express themselves non-verbally can be supported to express emotions and ideas through different art forms.'
Mencap

Respondents also valued the arts as a means of communicating with others. They pointed to the opportunities the arts provide to share ideas and perspectives which can increase respect and understanding. This communication can take place on many different levels and overcome emotional, cultural and practical barriers.

'The arts can provide a moment of communication on an immense personal or collective scale, for any and every emotion, across barriers of language, culture, religion and geography – for the artist and the audience.'
Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts

'They communicate and share understandings that cross cultures and communities and can transcend the use of words.'
Norfolk County Council, Children's Services

3.3.3 Understanding one's place in the world

Many respondents spoke powerfully about the way the arts have enabled them personally to understand the world and their place in it. This is because the arts increase self-awareness and provide insight into the thoughts and feelings of others.

'[Art] helps me understand the times I'm living in. It helps me see other perspectives. It makes me feel less alone. It makes me feel more human. It connects me more to the rest of humanity.'

Carol McGuigan

'I put down a good book, stop listening to a piece of music, withdraw from the act of imaginatively reaching towards the experience of another person through their careful art, whatever it may be, and in that moment the world is suddenly more present, more strange, more a source of wonder and respect than it had been when I started.'

John Clarke (online)

Respondents also argued that the arts allow people to understand how they fit into collective human experience, helping to explain the way in which society has evolved and developed.

'It is said that a fundamental step in human development... was when we understood we would die – that we imagined the future, wondered at the world around us and felt inspired by the presence of the past and our ancestors. The arts evolved as a way of engaging with and relating to this wonder – expressing ourselves and our place in the world and human continuity. This is why the arts are so important to everyone.'

Sarah Levitt

3.3.4 Forging identities

The arts were seen to play a central role in personal and collective identities. For many respondents, particularly those from the arts community, the arts are central to who they are. The arts are the way they spend their time and earn their living. For many the arts are also their calling and they value feeling and being creative and artistic.

The arts were also seen as an important part of the process through which identity is formed and personality developed.

'Art helps to define who we are.'

Lara (online)

For some respondents this was because the arts allow people to discover and explore their creative selves and provide a door into the imagination.

'for their capacity to transport me to another part of myself, a wondering, curious, emotional, excited self, in ways that no other single thing on this earth can do.'

Chrissie Godfrey

A number of respondents argued that the arts can also have a powerful transformational effect. Encountering the arts can change a person's life and their sense of themselves.

'Where it has meaning to the artist, participant or a single audience member it has the power to transform lives.'

Sarah Bond

It was suggested that the arts allow people to remake their lives, freeing them from the shackles of others' expectations.

'At their best the arts are our opportunity to fly, to reach far beyond the place given us in the world, to create, to engage, to recreate and remix the world.'

Alan Lane

Many respondents also saw the arts as a means of forging collective identities, believing that the arts help define society and culture.

'Art has been and is an essential ingredient to every human culture on this planet. It has various functions within cultures, nations and societies; in effect art actually defines a culture, nation or society.'

Susanne Barthelmes (online)

Some respondents also talked about the role of art in the rituals and symbols through which a society or culture creates and assigns meaning.

'The arts enable people to celebrate life, commemorate loss, resonate with and reflect on the past and move forward and inspire for the future.'

Breckland Council, Norfolk

The arts were felt to provide an opportunity for individuals to come together and understand each other and it was argued that this can foster shared understanding that can in turn facilitate a sense of collective identity.

'The arts offer a crucial "space" both literally and imaginatively by which individual identity and ideas of our humanity and potential are encountered, shared, understood, celebrated and debated.'

Black Country Touring

Some respondents noted that the arts create a sense of shared identity by reflecting the views and experiences of the various different cultures and groups that make up society.

'They are expressive vehicles for the increasingly diverse range of cultures and interests that make up society. They give people languages to define their social identity and think critically about their own experiences and those of their fellow citizens.'

NESTA

3.3.5 A collective narrative

A number of respondents also argued that, because of the role the arts play in expressing humanity and forging identities, art can be a powerful documentation of humanity through time, a record of existence and narrative of collective human life, experience and achievement.

'The arts serve to document the social circumstances in which we exist.'

Lara (online)

A corollary of this is that not only is the art that is produced now of value, so is the art of the past. Art defined history and was part of the making of it. It allows people to remember and celebrate the past and provides a link to previous generations and societies.

However, almost all respondents were clear that this is not only about the past. Art has meaning both in its own time and for future generations and provides a thread that connects the past with the future.

'The arts provide a society with a mirror in which to see itself; providing perspectives on life and linking an appreciation of heritage with a view to the future.'

Maria Pattinson

The longevity of art was seen as part of this value; not only does the art endure but some element of the society that created it endures with it.

'The longevity, in terms of public appreciation and understanding, ensures that the essence of a given time and place can be preserved as part of a culture which is universal, international and liberal.'

Birmingham Composers' Forum

'As a tangible manifestation of an individual or collective culture, the arts reflect the variety of mankind: They keep cultures alive, and also may preserve them for the future, for history.'

Jaime Gili

Many respondents also emphasised that this collective narrative encompasses the histories and cultures of all the different races and nationalities that live in the UK.

3.3.6 Challenge

A substantial number of respondents expressed the view that one of the most valuable characteristics of the arts is their ability to challenge people. The arts question assumptions, expose people to the views of others and encourage them to think differently. Respondents believed that the arts introduce new ideas, undermine stereotypes and broaden horizons.

'They take me to a place I've never seen before. They make me think differently, see things differently. They give me an experience of the world that I don't expect.'

Wild Gift Ltd

'participation really works when thinking is being disturbed, and a viewer or audience is made to think, differently.'

Imaginative Eyes

Many artists valued the fact that the process of making work could challenge their own perceptions, make them think and take them to new places.

'The challenges of process pushing towards finding a greater outcome that's larger than the original remit or presenting end result that's sparkling with stimulating energy.'

Wise Thoughts

The element of challenge was thought to be particularly important when the ideas in question are difficult or uncomfortable. Respondents saw part of the role of the arts as prompting individuals and society to think about challenging or controversial issues. They can do this because they provide a safe and unthreatening environment.

'But the arts must also be allowed to give voice to the controversial, voice to the voiceless. The arts should not avoid discomfort. The arts need not only to reflect the times they arise in but may also be critical of those times. The arts offer us a vision of ourselves but that vision may not always be complimentary.'

Carol McGuigan

'The arts enable us all to explore areas of discussion that may not be possible otherwise – for example, a powerful fictional drama about the British Army in Iraq is able to generate a wider debate than the extreme reality of war will bear.'

High Peak Community Arts

3.3.7 A form of politics

A number of respondents argued that engaging with the arts can be a form of political action. They believed that because the arts can challenge assumptions and change attitudes, they can and should play a political role.

'The least they [the arts] lighten or heighten a mood – at most they can change the world.'

Caroline Anderson (online)

For some respondents this role includes the responsibility to make society fairer and more inclusive. Others argued that the arts are crucial to the functioning of democracy. It was stated that democracy arises out of culture and atmosphere, and it is the job of cultural practitioners to create such an atmosphere. It was also pointed out that the arts empower their audiences and provide a space in which people can meet in political, social and economic equality and which allows the voices of the excluded and disenfranchised to be heard.

'The arts must also offer the disenfranchised in the world a real voice – not only those who feel locked out of our society but those excluded from free speech or expression in less free parts of the world.'

Red Ladder Theatre Company

Many of those who talked about the political nature of the arts are also interested in cutting edge practice or conceptual art. They talked about the excitement of experiencing new work and new ideas and see art as a space for critical interaction and debate.

3.3.8 A civilising force

Many respondents viewed the arts as a civilising force. They argued that the arts develop individuals and societies, and are essential for the spiritual and intellectual health of a nation.

'The emergence of Art in human culture marks the beginning of civilization in our species. Its invention has propelled us forward more so than the invention of fire or the wheel or the plough.'

(name withheld)

The arts were seen as essential for the smooth functioning of society.

'The arts are the lubrication that keeps the "whole machine" running smoothly.'
Beacon Promotions

'The arts are a keystone of our culture and our society, without which we would be deeply unhealthy, disconnected from creativity that questions, inspires and nourishes society.'

Alice Angus

For many people this was an important argument for why society must invest in the arts. The arts allow society to function, to develop and to improve and must be supported in order to create a better world.

'If we desire a better society, a more democratic society, a more secure society, a more just society, we must invest in art and culture. Because when people explore what it is to be human, it enables them to become more humane.'

Border Crossings

3.3.9 Spirituality

A number of respondents valued the arts as a central part of their spiritual lives. For this group, the arts fulfil spiritual needs and are essential for spiritual development.

'Their capacity to stimulate and lift the spirit.'

Roger Jones

For some of these respondents, engaging with or creating art can be an attempt at divine understanding. For a small number of respondents the arts are a way of becoming closer to God, while others valued the ability of the arts to provide a spiritual connection that was unrelated to organised religion.

Other respondents talked about not only their own spiritual fulfilment through the arts but also about how they valued the opportunity to work with others to help them realise their spiritual potential.

3.4 Experience of life

For many respondents the arts not only contribute to the capacity for life, they also enrich people's experience of life. Respondents argued that the arts can be life-enhancing and life-affirming, uplifting, fulfilling and nourishing. They provide a greater depth of knowledge and a deeper understanding of the world. They have the power to move, inspire and provoke an emotional or intellectual response.

'the arts enrich my life and keep me interested, engaged and intrigued with the world.'

Derby Dance

3.4.1 Emotion and inspiration

Respondents valued the ability of the arts to produce an emotional response, including feelings of extreme joy or sadness.

'They provide us with the opportunity to be communal or alone with any emotion, image, sound or idea...'

Tess E (online)

'The Arts allows you to find feelings that you didn't know you could feel.'

nick (online)

'The way it can make me feel, see, think, relax, smile, argue, contemplate, happy, sad, passionate – for all these reasons and more I value the arts.'

Stephanie Barklam (online)

Respondents also valued art that is made with and inspires passion and has the power to delight and surprise both its creators and its audiences.

'Its passion and its unpredictability!'

Voluntary Arts England

Respondents valued the inspirational nature of the arts. Many talked about how they personally felt inspired by the arts and how they valued their ability to inspire others, with many mentioning children and young people in particular.

Respondents described how the arts fire their imaginations, encouraging them to become more creative themselves or to explore new and unusual ideas.

'Art enables the senses to be stimulated and can turn the usual into the unique or the unusual.'

*Royal Borough of Windsor and
Maidenhead*

'Incorporating the life of the imagination into everyday life.'

Kick Start Poets

Some respondents talked in particular about artists as inspirational figures. They valued artists' desire and ability to create something extraordinary that will move people and take them to unimagined places.

3.4.2 Bringing beauty to the world

A large number of respondents valued the arts as a source of beauty and colour. They also valued the way that the arts can express and interpret the beauty that already exists in the world and provoke a sense of wonder.

'Arts is one of the fabrics that are woven to make the world as it is today. Without them, what would we be? The world would be grey, boring, and pointless.'

Floraidh C (online)

'Life without the challenge, beauty and inspiration of the arts would be a drab and impoverished business.'

Sally Givertz (online)

Respondents strongly believed that experiencing this beauty enhances quality of life and is uplifting and fulfilling.

'There is no comparable experience to having your imagination sent on a flight by a beautiful passage of dance or writing or music.'

Peter Shenton

Respondents from the arts community talked about how they valued being able to contribute something beautiful to the world that other people would be able to enjoy or appreciate, hopefully for many years to come.

'[F]rom the simplest workshop to the largest symphony our aim is to add something constructive and perhaps beautiful to the world.'

Geof Armstrong

'the coming together of a like minded group of people each set on producing their very best to produce a beautiful artefact that will give pleasure to thousands of people for many years to come.'

Abergevenny Millennium Tapestry Group

3.4.3 Enjoyment, pleasure and relaxation

For a large number of respondents one of the primary things that they valued about the arts was that they are a source of enjoyment and pleasure in their lives. Respondents believed that the arts make people happy and life interesting. They provide thrilling, amusing, delightful and fun experiences. They also valued the fact that the arts create a space for play in people's lives and provide the joy of the unexpected.

'The pleasure of being involved in creativity and beauty.'

Ashby Art Club

'society without the arts ... would be bereft of creativity, of imagination and of a good deal of pleasure.'

The Society of Authors

Several respondents discussed the value of the arts as entertainment. They argued that the arts can be a great night out, and play a crucial role in leisure time. A few respondents were concerned that this is not sufficiently acknowledged in current debate about the value of the arts. There was a belief that the idea of art as entertainment is frowned upon because it is seen to be synonymous with 'dumbing down'. This was strongly refuted by these respondents, one of whom pointed out that art is inherently about entertainment; after all Shakespeare did not write 'for art's sake'.

'Enjoyable and accessible "fun" work is equally as valid as other work.'

PANDA

Art was also seen as a valuable source of relaxation and stress-relief, helping people forget about the worries of everyday life.

'relaxing & peaceful – takes away frustration.'

Prison inmates, HMP Nottingham

3.4.4 A means of escape

For a large number of respondents the arts are a form of escapism. They are an alternative and more satisfying or exciting world in which to seek relief or solace from mundane or bleak aspects of everyday life.

'The arts are the 4th dimension of life without which all becomes drudgery.'

Lady Cassidi

'They have the ability to liberate us from the restraining logic, practicality and ultimate dullness of every day life...'

Tess E (online)

Respondents valued having a world outside the pressures and tensions of their regular lives to escape to and for many it is this that makes everyday existence bearable.

'Whether directly creating, taking part, or viewing the arts in its broadest sense, the value as I see it, is being taken beyond what we may think of as an 'ordinary' day, an 'ordinary' person, an 'ordinary' experience, and reminds us of the magic, beauty and fragility we should be forever grateful for.'

Louisa Clark

A number of respondents from the arts community saw it as their role to provide this refuge, and were proud of and valued their ability to do this.

'to give audiences an escape from the tensions of everyday life.'

R.G.Hawkins

Others saw the arts as a release from work and an antidote to commercialism. They felt that society is dominated by materialistic concerns and that the arts are important both for individuals and society as a counterbalance to these damaging preoccupations.

'I value the arts as a refuge from the pressure of advertising and commercialism which so skews the culture in which we live.'

Colin Tarrant

The arts were also seen as an escape from the misery of life and proof that humanity is capable of great and positive activity. The arts were valued as a symbol of hope that life has more to offer than is currently experienced by many people around the world.

'In a world still divided by wars and other conflicts, the arts show that life has more to offer than just survival.'

Warrington Arts Council

3.5 Applications of the arts

Many respondents believed that the arts can be powerful when applied in a number of different contexts and can make an important contribution to achieving a wide variety of different outcomes and benefits beyond the production and consumption of art itself. Most saw the power of the arts to do this as firmly rooted in their ability to enhance capacity for and experience of life.

3.5.1 Education and young people

One of the most frequently mentioned applications of the arts was their role in education. A large number of respondents talked about the educational value of the arts, especially for young people. This was particularly important to those respondents who worked with children, either in the arts or as teachers, but it was also a strong theme among all types of respondents.

It was argued that the arts are an essential part of a rounded education. They support the curriculum in a wide variety of ways including improving literacy,

developing imagination and creativity, teaching empathy and providing a place to explore language and emotions. Creative Partnerships⁹ was mentioned as being a good example of the impact a creative approach to education can have.

'The contribution that the Creative Partnerships approach can make to the development of young people is now well recognised and celebrated in Northumberland.'

Northumberland County Council

Almost all respondents were keen to make it clear that the role of the arts in education should be about more than art classes in the curriculum. It was argued that the arts have a role to play in education throughout people's lives and can contribute across the spectrum of learning, including personal development, confidence-building, technical skills, teamwork and social interaction. They can help develop tolerance for complexity and uncertainty and to understand big and complicated concepts. Respondents argued that the arts are about developing the whole person; they allow people to discover something different about themselves, find hidden talents and develop creative thinking and an inquiring mind. The arts were also seen as an important route into education for those who might feel alienated from or uncomfortable in traditional educational settings.

3.5.2 Health and wellbeing

Many respondents saw the arts as fundamental to health and emotional wellbeing. They particularly emphasised the importance of taking part in the arts for ensuring healthy minds and bodies, with a number of respondents referencing the beneficial physical impact of dance in this context. Some respondents described the arts as a kind of social or psychological therapy. They were seen as contributing to wellbeing and mental health, and as important for making sure healthy individuals stay that way. Respondents also argued that the arts can help a wide variety of mental and physical problems including trauma, depression, distress, disturbance and pain. However, it was also pointed out that poorly thought out arts projects can be damaging to health.

⁹ Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creativity programme for schools and young people, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education and Skills. See www.creative-partnerships.org for further details.

'The arts are capable of expressing... and transforming some of the painful aspects of individual biographies and of the human condition... arts projects that are poorly thought out can and do do damage.'

British Association of Art Therapists

3.5.3 Addressing social problems

A number of respondents valued the role the arts can play in addressing specific social problems. This view was found particularly, although not exclusively, among responses from stakeholders. Much of this discussion was focused on the role the arts can play in alleviating the problems faced by the socially excluded and hard to reach, including the elderly and the lonely. It was felt that the arts can provide ways of reaching these groups and working with them in positive ways. They can create transformative experiences for these groups and promote wellbeing, skills development, communication, self-worth and self-expression.

The arts were also seen to be of value as a means of educating people about complex social issues and changing negative patterns of behaviour. Examples included road safety, arson, drugs and teenage pregnancy. They were also thought to increase community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour and crime, providing activities for young people and enhancing run-down areas. Others argued that they can provide inspiration within prisons, contribute to rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. Finally, it was felt that the arts can be important in addressing abuse and neglect in the lives of vulnerable children.

3.5.4 Community cohesion

Respondents valued the arts' ability to bring communities together, to act as a social bond and create a sense of community cohesion.

'I know that for some communities the arts can be the glue that holds them together.'

Sarah Foster (online)

The arts were seen to be a leveller, something that is able to use common language and shared experiences to build a sense of community. Stakeholders in particular focused on the contribution of the arts to social inclusion and community cohesion, while many others discussed the same concept while using more everyday language.

'They reach out to communities and help break down barriers... social inclusion for community groups through the arts is invaluable within society.'

Rosemary Pennington

'[The arts are] cultural glue... and... a social cohesion agent.'

Creative Exchange

These respondents believed that the arts can promote integration, increase tolerance and build social capital. They argued that because of this the arts can help reduce inequality and narrow the gap between better-off communities and those with a lower quality of life. The arts can also help to make communities safer places to be and improve the quality of life for those who live in them. This was felt to be particularly important in an increasingly multicultural society in which the gap between rich and poor is continuing to grow.

A number of respondents focused on the way the arts can break down stereotypes and bring specific groups into the mainstream.

'Certain groups have used the arts to peacefully express their points of view and to advocate for greater inclusion in society. Events such as the Gay Pride marches and Notting Hill Carnival bring these groups and wider society together.'

Jonathan Man

Respondents argued that the arts can do this because they can:

- provide fun social activities that are open to everyone
- empower both individuals and communities
- bring people together regardless of background and allow them to establish relationships and build trust
- raise aspirations and expectations
- provide a space where people can come together and explore and celebrate their differences in a non-threatening way
- transcend racial, religious, class, age, economic and cultural barriers

'[Art] allows us to see beyond our class, our familial prejudices, our received ideas, our cultural perspectives.'

Alison MacLeod

For some respondents this was directly reflected in their personal experience. They valued the fact that the arts allow them to enjoy shared experiences, to

socialise with others in their community or area, to learn about different cultures, to meet people that they would not otherwise have met, to collaborate with others and to make friends.

'I've made friends because I see people at the same music gigs or theatre shows. I talk to people online, across the world because we love the same TV programme.'

Tanuja Amarasuriya

3.5.5 A sense of place

The arts were also believed to play an important role in creating a sense of place, particularly at a local and community level.

'The arts are something to celebrate and a source of pride; they give our communities a shared focus and sense of identity.'

Gillian Perkins

Respondents believed that the arts provide uniqueness and character and can transform the way a place is perceived, bringing life, excitement and even a touch of glamour. This in turn can foster pride and provide a focal point for community identity.

'[The arts] create sociable, vibrant and thoughtful places to live.'

Anya Sampson (online)

Public art was felt to be particularly important in this area.

'Public art makes statements in places where we would otherwise take our surroundings for granted.'

Kate Hudson

A few respondents spoke specifically of the importance of arts venues and cultural spaces as forums for debating, exploring and celebrating the identity of a community. They argued that sharing these spaces is an essential element of citizenship. It was also pointed out that indigenous populations, folklore and oral /aural traditions often use the arts to create a sense of identity and significance around a place.

Several respondents also pointed specifically to the contribution that artists make to a sense of place. Their energy, drive and ideas are just as important as the art itself.

'We value the role that artists of all kinds play in contributing to Reading's environment and the public realm, both aesthetically and conceptually.'

Reading Borough Council

3.5.6 Regeneration and economic benefits

Many respondents valued the role the arts can play in regeneration and the economic benefits they can bring. It was pointed out that cultural buildings can drive regeneration and that culture-led regeneration can transform cities and areas, particularly those that are suffering from deprivation.

'The arts are increasingly at the heart of the Council's long-term vision through to 2030, integral to and a key driver for the regeneration of the coastline, the main townships and neighbourhood communities...'

North Tyneside Council

Respondents also pointed to other ways that the arts contribute to the economic life of the city, arguing that the arts are essential to a thriving economy.

'Our Arts institutions, colleges, theatres, galleries all feed into this wellspring of ideas and people who create, without it we die, culturally but also economically.'

Michael Proudfoot (online)

The arts were seen as a source of employment opportunities, not just in arts organisations but also in other creative industries, for instance graphic design and advertising companies. A number of respondents also talked about the importance of the creative economy to economic growth in the UK.

'The Creative Industries are revitalising the market place for the consumer.'

*Hinckley and Bosworth Borough
Council*

'We also value the vibrancy and creativity that creative practitioners bring to the economy. Creative industries help define a place as forward-thinking as well as contributing to a buoyant economy.'

Reading Borough Council

This was a particularly prevalent theme among stakeholders, who saw the creative industries as crucial to the local and national economies and as role models for other businesses because of their innovative, creative business models and potential for growth.

'Artistic inputs such as emotion and imagination, and artistic outputs such as meaning and beauty can bring depth and nuance to established business perspectives and processes. Some businesses build on what the arts offer to learn new ways to develop leadership, communication, innovation and collaboration.'

NESTA

The arts were also seen as important for tourism, with the potential to attract large numbers of visitors. This benefits the whole economy because the visitors spend money in other businesses as well as the arts attractions.

3.5.7 Internationalism

A number of respondents valued the international nature of the arts. This encompassed both the ability of the arts to cross international and cultural boundaries and the platform that the arts can provide for an individual, community or place internationally. Some artists talked about how much they valued the opportunities the arts provide them to travel and make international links and networks. A few stakeholders also talked about how they valued the ability of the arts to reposition cities to national and international audiences, encouraging visitors and exporting ideas. They were seen as an important means of gaining international influence and as key to the success of a city.

'The arts and culture contribute significantly to London's international competitive advantage in all fields... the breadth, richness and diversity of arts provision is fundamental to ensuring that London continues to develop and grow as a successful world city.'

Mayor's Office, City Hall, London

3.6 Artists and artforms

A small number of respondents took the opportunity to explain how they valued artists themselves or a particular artform.

Those respondents who talked about valuing artists highlighted their professionalism, their energy and commitment, their talent and skill (particularly

craftspeople) and their dedication. This included people who work in arts organisation as well as individual artists.

'We also value the enthusiasm of our local voluntary arts organisations, and how they can inspire others.'

*Royal Borough of Windsor and
Maidenhead*

These respondents valued artistic achievement and admired artistic talent. A few also talked about how much they valued artistic collaboration and believed that the interdisciplinary nature of the arts encourages innovation. In addition respondents talked about valuing the opportunity to work and perform with artists and arts professionals.

'Being able to perform to as high a standard as possible, with professionals of high quality.'

Bishopwearmouth Choral Society

Particular artforms that were mentioned as being of value to respondents included theatre, circus theatre, photography, visual arts, literature, poetry and music. Other respondents mentioned specific venues that they valued, including Tyneside Cinema, Laing Art Gallery and Blyth Community Centre art group. Some respondents particularly valued live performance, believing that things must be experienced live to be appreciated, while others placed particular emphasis on participation. A number of respondents also valued artistic diversity, talking about the variety of activity that exists, the diversity of practice and the breadth of experience.

Finally, a couple of respondents spoke explicitly about things that they did not value, namely 'conceptual' art.

4 Principles to guide public funding of the arts

4.1 Introduction

The second of the consultation questions asked respondents to consider what principles should guide public funding of the arts. It pointed out that there are many possible reasons for public funding of the arts. It can support organisations and activities that are part of society's cultural heritage and enable excellent arts practice that might not survive if left to the market alone. It encourages new work and alternative voices and makes the arts more accessible to more people in more places.

This question sought people's views on how the Arts Council should balance all these ambitions in a changing society. It asked how we ought to prioritise our funding to reflect the needs and expectations of many people. It also pointed out that many types of arts activities and experiences are available without any public funding at all and prompted respondents to consider where, with limited resources, our support can have most impact.

We wanted to gather views on whether public and lottery money should be used to support the arts, and if so why. We wanted to know what sort of activities people felt we should support, whether there are areas of arts activity that people believed should not receive public funding and how far we should try to improve access to the activities we fund. In short, we wanted people to tell us what principles they thought should guide our decisions.

4.2 Overall findings

4.2.1 Key themes

For most respondents, particularly those who returned a written response, this question was directly linked to what they valued about the arts. Respondents tended to be passionate about the arts, believing they are valuable, and that funding should seek to support this value.

As a corollary of this many emphasised the importance of public funding of the arts. There was concern that currently the arts are not valued enough and that funding for the arts is not viewed as a crucial investment in the way other types of public funding are.

'Art needs to be more recognised and respected. It is absolutely crucial that art and artists and those that support art are funded by public monies

appropriately ... Why is it that when we talk about public funding for the arts it is always in the negative: subsidised or dependent – not how it is described when funding: defence, health or education for instance.'

Merseyside Dance Initiative

Respondents' perspectives on how and why the arts are valuable also tended to inform their views about what public funding should seek to achieve and what the guiding principles should be. For instance, those who believed that the value of the arts lies in their power to have positive social applications tended to emphasise the importance of public funding as a means of achieving those outcomes. However, the relationship between funding principles and concepts of value is not always straightforward. For instance, some respondents made a distinction between why the arts are valuable to them personally and what they thought the role of public funding should be.

People also differed considerably in their views of how well the current system is working. Some respondents were happy with current funding priorities, believing that the aims are broadly right and that what is required is more effective delivery.

'Arts Council funding principles are spot on – who could argue with more high quality work to more people, a confident diverse and innovative arts sector. The devil [is] in the application of these principles.'

Adam (online)

Others felt that what is needed is a radical overhaul and suggested entirely new systems and structures for the distribution of public funding.

There was considerable variety in the way respondents understood and approached the question, and we have grouped responses into three broad categories. The first sets out the principles and outcomes that respondents felt funding providers should take into account when considering the distribution of funds. The second covers issues relating to the overarching strategy for public funding or its management and implementation. The third section sets out the views of those respondents who suggested alternatives to the existing public funding system that they felt would better serve the needs of the arts community or the public.

Finally, some respondents used this question to explore the qualities that public funders should look for when investing in a particular organisation or individual. For example, respondents argued that the organisation or individual should be

accountable, well run and managed, passionate, committed and should provide value for money. These qualities are discussed in more depth in sections 5 and 6.

4.2.2 Differences between response types

Responses to this question were extremely diverse and it is difficult to attribute particular schools of thought to particular respondent types. Most respondents outlined a broad range of principles that should be taken into account and the majority of the debate was characterised by a desire to get the balance right rather than by polarised argument in favour of one or another principle.

Where there was polarisation it was most likely to be found among the arts community or among the online responses. In both groups there was a division between respondents who felt that the main beneficiaries of public funding should be artists or art itself, and those who believed that the main purpose of public funding should be to benefit the wider public. The former group tended to argue in favour of allocating funding according to criteria such as quality and innovation, the latter that funding should be conditional on the individual or organisation making a tangible social contribution. However, these were both minority views and the majority of responses lay somewhere in the middle of this spectrum.

Priorities tended to reflect the situation and role of the individual respondent. For instance, individual artists were more likely than other respondents to talk about the importance of supporting artists and allowing them the freedom to take risks and experiment. The arts community in general were more likely to talk about the importance of artistic freedom and to be concerned about over-politicisation of the funding system. Respondents who worked with people with disabilities or were disabled themselves tended to emphasise the importance of access and inclusion. Respondents from community-based organisations felt that supporting grass-roots and community-based work is a particularly high priority, while teachers talked about the importance of young people as beneficiaries of funding. However, almost all respondents viewed their own particular area of work as just one of a number of complex and interrelated factors that should be taken into account when making funding decisions. The skew towards each respondent's own specialism or field of interest tended to be a product of their passion, enthusiasm and experience, and most respondents readily acknowledged the competing claims of other groups.

4.3 Principles and outcomes to guide funding providers

4.3.1 Art for everyone

'Art for everyone' was one of the most commonly cited areas that respondents felt should guide the distribution of public funding. The majority of respondents felt that public funding should seek to make the arts available for as many people as possible, wherever they live and whatever their background.

'Public funding should ensure that everyone has access to the arts and that good work is available as widely as possible, whether that be national or local.'

Caroline Anderson

Many of the responses specified that this should be high quality art, although there was also a strong argument supporting availability of a wide variety of different kinds of art to ensure there is something to appeal to everyone.

'Everyone needs to have access to the full range of what is available – you never know what people are going to like, you never know what is going to change someone's world.'

Tanuja Amarasuriya

This argument was often directly linked to a respondent's belief that the arts are important and valuable, and that therefore as many people as possible should be able to experience them. A few respondents also considered the general ethics of public funding: it is public money and therefore as many people as possible should benefit from the way that money is distributed.

'Getting the maximum number of people in all communities involved. Private funding should be for the peaks, e.g. Covent Garden, public money should go to the people; it's their taxes.'

Melbourne Festival

Within the broad principle of art for everyone, there were a variety of views as to how this aim can best be achieved.

Access and barriers

Many respondents simply stated that the role of public funding should be to make the arts accessible for as many people as possible.

'Making the Arts more accessible to everyone, more often and in more places.'
Dudley Performing Arts

Respondents also acknowledged the existence of barriers that currently prevent people experiencing the arts.

'The primary principle must be to support the lowering of barriers to access to the widest range and diversity of arts and artists; supporting opportunities for engagement and encounter by diverse audiences regardless of means.'
Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts

These barriers include cost. It was argued that if everyone is going to access the arts then they have to be affordable or free. This meant subsidising access to art, and a variety of different ways of doing this were suggested. These included subsidising entrance fees or making entrance free; providing free activities and transport; allowing organisations to adopt pricing policies to enable the greatest possible accessibility to their work and providing support to organisations with large building or staffing overheads which are unable to cover those costs through trading receipts.

The discussion also encompassed the availability of work. There was concern that the arts are not always easily accessible for those who live in more rural areas, or that people may be unused to or intimidated by seeking out the arts in traditional settings. In response to this, some respondents advocated funding for work that proactively reaches out to the public, including touring programmes where people are exposed to high quality work that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to access or the appetite to seek out, or work that takes place in public and unexpected places, including work places, shopping centres and libraries.

'I believe art needs to come out of its buildings, its comfort zones more ... lets take more of it to public spaces where it is unavoidable, spontaneous and democratic.'

Andrew Nairne (online)

Another barrier identified was the accessibility of the art itself. A number of respondents argued that currently there is too much support for arts that are 'elitist', pretentious or obscure. This was seen as a significant barrier to wider arts engagement.

'Funding should not be used for outlandish projects of little or no artistic merit, such as the offerings of Damian Hurst and Tracy Emmin. It should be spent to spread the appreciation of fine arts to a larger audience.'

Ashby Art Club

Some people felt that public funding should focus on art that people can relate to and understand, that is relevant to their lives, that appeals to the broadest possible audience and that is popular or even populist. Related to this is the idea of 'demand-led' funding. Public funding should support art that is responsive to public demand and is designed to meet the needs of the community. This argument was particularly prevalent in responses from stakeholders.

However, other respondents expressed real concern about the idea that increasing artistic accessibility should equate with a need to change the content of the art. There was a strong argument made by some respondents that funding should support the niche as well as the popular. It was pointed out that a large number of people are supporters of at least one 'niche' area, that this is not necessarily elitist, rather it is a manifestation of passion, commitment and interest in a particular area, and that sometimes it is essential to override popularity to achieve something cutting edge and difficult. Indeed, some respondents pointed out that not only does everything not have to appeal to everyone, it is actually not always desirable to have large audiences.

'The assumption that everyone should like everything at the same time and that as many people as possible should approve of and agree on one response to the same thing at the same time is pernicious and perverse in the culture we now live in. Different tastes, needs and motivations apply in all spheres of life.'
(name withheld)

Raising awareness and understanding of the arts

Some respondents believed that the solution to increasing the accessibility of the arts lies in better dialogue with the public: helping to change attitudes, explaining what art is about and the ideas behind it and educating people so that they have the skills and the confidence to engage with the art that is most relevant to them. There were a variety of suggestions about how public funding should seek to do this. These included:

- funding aimed at rebuilding communication with the public and promoting wider understanding and awareness; this should include campaigns and information in local media (including local TV news), PR and promotions. The aim should

be to be bold, to get people's attention, to get people interested and to educate and inform them

- artists and arts organisations making an effort to engage people with their work and explain in plain terms what they are doing
- resources to help people understand and appreciate artistic works and stepping stones to engagement and appreciation
- opportunities for people to take part in the arts themselves and discover that the arts can be an adventure
- more exposure to art through education, both through educational components run by artists and arts organisations and greater arts content within schools

'It is essential that we sustain our high standards in all our art forms but it is equally important to make them, not only accessible to but attractive to a much wider range of the public. We have to rid ourselves of the attitudes, which reject the arts as posny or even worse exclusive [...] It can only be achieved by a greater degree of arts content in our schools.'

Peter Cox

Some respondents pointed out that increasing public understanding of and engagement with the arts in this way would not only be beneficial to the public, it would also be a good thing for the arts. Greater public understanding would eventually increase the demand for the arts, and this would lead to more funding, not just from central and local government but also from the public directly as their level of engagement increased.

Targeting particular groups

The measures set out above were intended to ensure that access to the arts is universal. However, some respondents argued that, in order to achieve the overall outcome of ensuring everyone is able to engage with and experience the arts, public funding needs to be targeted. Stakeholders in particular believed that public funding should focus on specific groups to redress current imbalances in access to the arts. This was seen as particularly important in a context in which public funding for the arts is limited.

'There will never be enough public funding for all those who want it, so priority should be given to enabling people who would not otherwise have access to the arts to do so.'

Elsbeth Cox

The argument was generally presented as an aspect of social justice. Public funding should be redistributive and should therefore focus in particular on the less advantaged.

'Access to the arts must be prioritised for socially less privileged groups, as the privileged have the funds to see or create art.'

Jonathan Man

Suggested target groups included:

- those who are currently most excluded from the arts
- those who cannot afford to attend
- people living in rural areas and areas of social deprivation
- vulnerable or disadvantaged people and those at risk
- disabled people
- people with mental health or other health issues
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- older people
- migrants and asylum seekers

In addition to funding projects, artists and organisations that are dedicated to working with these groups, there were several other suggestions about how funding could ensure these people had access to the arts. These included forging partnerships between arts organisations and other agencies, for instance local authorities; free tickets to expensive venues for people on benefits; placing art in organisations and services that disadvantaged groups are likely to access, for instance hospitals, churches and factories, and support for particular artforms, for instance community music.

However, this approach is a contentious one, and several respondents warned against projects that target a particular group. They felt that the emphasis should be on mainstreaming rather than marginalisation: projects should be aimed at the whole community otherwise there is a risk of being patronising or of compromising what makes the art good in the first place.

'The whole concept of favouring minority groups just means fragmentation of the community and does nothing to bring harmony. Art crosses all borders and should be left to do it.'

Ken Baldwin (online)

Active participation

Some respondents emphasised the importance not just of access to the arts in general but of opportunities for active participation in particular. Participation was felt to be particularly beneficial in creating a sense of ownership of the arts and in allowing people to discover and explore their own creativity.

'As individuals people get most out of the arts when they participate in them – when they do them. So let the main thrust of public funding for the arts be directed at helping/enabling more people to be active in the arts – to sing in choirs, to take part in dramatics/musicals, to join art classes, rock bands, poetry circles... Bringing to more people the satisfaction that come from creating/creativity; widening participation, helping people raise standards.'

Richard Maylan

4.3.2 Quality

Another major theme in the responses to this question was the importance of quality. Many felt that the Arts Council should be both investing in quality and seeking to nurture and develop quality through our work and funding.

'Be brave and wise enough to recognise quality and support it – to know whom to support and when to withdraw support.'

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Quality was seen as important not only for its own sake but also because using public funding to support quality ensures that the best art is available for everybody.

'By acknowledging excellence and supporting it, public subsidy makes available the very best of artistic endeavour.'

The Society of Authors

Several respondents acknowledged that quality was subjective and therefore difficult to use as a guide to decision-making. However, they still felt that it is too important not to take into account and that ways have to be found to overcome these difficulties. A few suggested that the public should decide what is good art, although most of those who expressed an opinion on this subject felt uncomfortable with public involvement, preferring to leave decisions about quality to experts, practitioners and/or peers.

'the views of those of us who have arts training and have learned how to see cannot expect ever to be compatible with those who have not.'

The Faversham Society

A few respondents were concerned that quality currently gets lost among the concern for making sure the right box is ticked and that this needs to be redressed.

'Quality demands respect and I think in public funding sometimes other agendas take priority over quality but it is quality which should be the ultimate goal.'

Sally Sheinman

Respondents' beliefs about what constitutes quality can be broadly categorised into two strands of thought: those who are largely concerned with the quality of the artistic product itself and those who are largely concerned with the quality of the artistic experience, or the interaction between the individual and the art. However for many respondents these are two sides of the same coin, and to consider one without the other is meaningless.

Quality of the art

Quality of the art was particularly likely to be mentioned by respondents from the arts sector, although it emerged to some extent among all types of respondent. For a significant number of these respondents, artistic quality should be the primary or even the only factor, while for others it is one of a number of factors that need to be taken into account when making funding decisions. Most respondents did not define what they consider to be high quality, although a few noted the importance of skill, competence and ambition on the part of the artist.

Some were anxious to emphasise the importance of quality but also to be clear that this does not only apply to one particular style, genre or artform and is not defined by the big, established organisations. Decisions about quality have to take into account issues of race, culture and the developments in and skills required for different artforms.

'principally, the quality of the art produced, independent of any preconceptions of genre, style, fashion or received opinion.'

Grand Union Orchestra

The question of ‘access versus excellence’ was addressed by some respondents. A few wanted to redefine quality so that it explicitly refers to arts that engage and include.

‘I can understand the desire to fund and support excellence, but this raises two questions. What is meant by excellence? And should it be supported if it excludes? [...] Perhaps... [e]xcellence is considered to be work that while it maintains its existing appeal, is accessible, affordable and attractive to new and diverse audiences. [...] We can no longer afford to ignore the fact that by far the majority of people who pay for the arts (via tax and lottery tickets) do not engage with them, any guiding principle must address this fact.’

Geof Armstrong

Others argued strongly that the two ideas are not incompatible. Indeed, for many of these respondents, putting on good art is itself a crucial element in the process of engaging people.

Quality of the experience

Quality of experience was important to a broad range of respondents. It generally referred to the interaction between the individual and the art, which should be some or all of: exciting, inspiring, fantastic, beautiful, original, stimulating, entertaining, challenging, playful, engaging, redemptive, transformative or shocking. People wanted decisions that take into account the impact that the art would have on people, not just the number of people involved. They wanted art that would touch people’s lives, make them think, provoke emotion and create powerful, life-enhancing memories. Most respondents also felt that it should seek to do this not just for a few but for as many people as possible.

‘What new magic/horror will it bring to its audience?’

Alan Lane

‘Most of all it should strive to be fantastic, beautiful, original and make people happy and engaged.’

Positive Design

4.3.3 Innovation and risk

There was support across the spectrum of respondents for public funding that supports some degree of innovation. This ranged from the importance of public funders being aware of the new and understanding its potential, to a desire for a

funding system that actively encourages and supports groundbreaking work and practice.

'we need to fund artists and art that promise to break new ground, bring to life new ideas and forms that otherwise would not have a chance to flourish.'

Antony Mayfield (online)

This could include new interpretations of old concepts but it should be something that people haven't seen before, that is exciting, possibly challenging and maybe even uncomfortable. Innovative work was seen as important because it takes art forward and broadens collective horizons and understanding.

'Quite often the new in the arts can seem strange or unfamiliar, even threatening, but without patrons of courage and vision there would have been no Cezanne, no Samuel Beckett, no artists pushing the frontiers of imaginative communication.'

Carol McGuigan

For most respondents, supporting innovation includes supporting artists in the experimental and development stages of their practice and funding risky work. Many respondents saw risk and failure as integral to the process of creation and innovation. Pushing boundaries and innovating will always involve an element of risk and funders have to be brave about that and accept that sometimes these projects will fail.

'[W]e should try to fund art that is going to be of lasting significance and power – and that is very subjective of course, so many times the decision to fund will turn out to be problematic. But courageous and risky decisions must be made! Leave the cowardice to the politicians!'

(name withheld)

'Should never shy from taking risks.'

Lady Rima Scott

This potential for failure was something that was widely acknowledged, and several respondents from the arts sector wanted this to be explicit in discussions about public funding. Respondents talked not only about the possibility of failure but about the right to fail as an essential part of the creative process.

'individuals must have the opportunity to fail. This is not a luxury. Failure is part of the process.'

*British Board of Film Classification,
Yellow Earth Theatre, British Chinese
Artists' Association*

Respondents were aware that these decisions are difficult, and a few suggested that arts officers need support to back risky projects.

'If we as artists and arts organisations are asking the ACE to support a percentage of innovative work, knowing that with innovation comes some risk of failure, the same latitude needs to be extended to the officers backing the innovative projects. A certain percentage of failed or flawed projects needs to be embraced in their "innovation portfolios".'

Andrea Montgomery

A few respondents advocated the creation of an innovation fund with which to seed new thinking and support experimental work. This would diffuse some of the concerns about risk because the possibility of failure would be explicit.

Some respondents took a more extreme stance on innovation, arguing that funding should only be used for experimental and non-commercial work and that the aim should be to make that work more accessible. A few respondents argued that innovation should be focused not only on new work, but also on new methods of engaging people, and that accessibility and innovation should not be seen as incompatible.

'Ongoing improvements in equality of access should be integrated to innovative practice to ensure that accessible work is also pioneering.'

*Arts and Tourism Services, London
Borough of Camden*

However, there were also dissenting voices that argued against funding things that are too cutting edge, as this alienated people and does not reflect the needs and interests of the wider population.

'Big grants for non-participatory, 'cutting-edge' projects don't seem to me to answer the needs of real people (bar the few who are interested in 'extreme' art).'

Sarah Willans

4.3.4 Challenge

Related to the arguments about innovation were those that discussed the role of arts in challenging both individuals and society. For many respondents innovative art is about exploring new ground and challenging perceptions, and this is an important outcome of public funding for the arts. It can be a difficult experience because it poses questions and makes people think about things in new ways but this means that it also broadens people's horizons.

Some respondents believe in the capacity for the arts to bring about positive social change through raising difficult questions, engaging in cultural and political debate and challenging commonly accepted values. Public funding should actively support art and artists that do this, in order to ensure that art can continue to perform this function.

'Value the artist and the performer as important agents of change and thinking in modern society, as people who challenge, question, and reflect on the modern context and the cultural continuum.'

London Borough of Enfield

'Public funding should be there to help the artist/arts organisation to ... bring about political, environmental and social change.'

Bev Adams (online)

'Within a civic society there is always a need for the artist to critique models of power and political orthodoxies.'

Simon Poulter (online)

4.3.5 Artistic development and support

Respondents across the spectrum believed that one of the main functions of public funding should be to provide support and development for artists and arts organisations. Respondents felt there is a role for public funders, and for the Arts Council in particular, in encouraging new talent, supporting emerging artists, arts organisations and artforms, funding professional development and supporting and enabling artform development. There were a number of different rationales behind this. Some argued that supporting practitioners to work and develop was essential for high quality art, others that it would ensure a vibrant and innovative arts sector, including securing the next generation of artists, while others believed that it would result in greater public benefit because it would ensure artists are able and qualified to work with the public and communities in exciting and innovative ways.

However, for some supporting artistic development is simply an end in itself and should be the primary function of the Arts Council.

Suggestions for how this support could be delivered were extensive. They included:

- practical support and resources as well as financial support, including spaces to perform and exhibit, for instance by turning empty properties into workspaces for artists
- a proactive approach to seeking out artists to support, rather than waiting for them to ask for it
- funding for more innovative programming to sustain the UK's tradition of pioneering art and artists
- funding for organisations that present and support artists
- funding for young artists starting out on their career
- promotion and sharing of artistic good practice among the sector and the facilitation of partnerships and collaboration
- recognition of the importance of copyright to creators and ensuring that copyright rules support artists
- provision of residencies and mentoring, particularly for young artists
- funding time for artists to research and develop ideas as well as produce work
- support for flagship organisations and national projects
- ensuring that as much funding as possible goes directly to artists rather than to infrastructure, administration and marketing

However, some respondents were concerned about funding that is too heavily focused on the needs of practitioners rather than audiences and communities. Several argued that public funders should actively avoid funding 'conceptual' art and approaches that only serve the interests of other artists.

4.3.6 Cultural heritage

A small number of respondents mentioned the role of public funding in helping to preserve and celebrate society's cultural and artistic heritage. Different respondents had different views about what this might mean. These included the importance of recognising and funding the cultural heritage of the UK's diverse community, not just the more established 'high arts'; recognising craftsmanship and traditional skills; supporting local and regional heritage as well as national institutions; maintaining established cultural venues and artforms; and funding those areas where Britain has traditionally been world class.

There was a strong consensus that funding should support innovation as well as heritage, and traditional organisations and artforms should be finding new ways of expressing and interpreting heritage. For almost all respondents, supporting cultural heritage is as much about looking forward as it is looking back – creating and celebrating a shared heritage to forge a confident collective future.

4.3.7 Social benefit

The idea that public funding of the arts should seek to produce some sort of tangible social benefit was a key theme. For a few respondents social benefit should be the sole driver for public funding, although most also acknowledged the importance of other types of outcomes. A few respondents explicitly contrasted the idea of social benefit with the ‘art for art’s sake’ rationale.

‘Only a fraction (less than 2%) of RFO [regularly funded organisations] money goes to organisations which principally address social objectives (regeneration, community development, crime, health, education, disabled people, refugees), this needs to be made more of a priority over “art for art’s sake”.’

Creative Exchange network

Many respondents did not define what they viewed as social benefit, stating simply that there should be some sort of return to the public. For many respondents the benefit could simply be the impact of the art on the people who experience it – so supporting and nurturing creativity, shaping and changing lives and inspiring people are social benefits that would naturally occur as a result of funding great and accessible art. For others the benefit needs to be more tangible and specific. Many of these respondents listed a number of different ways in which social benefit might manifest itself, while a few focused on a particular area, for instance the role of the arts in education or health.

‘Public value above all. The work that is being commissioned should either have a demonstrable social value e.g. working with schools or socially excluded or a positive economic impact e.g. encouraging tourism.’

QUAD

Young people and education

One of the most frequently cited social benefits was the importance of art in motivating and engaging young people, and this was seen as a key role for public funding.

'While every project should not have to involve young people, engaging and inspiring young people should be a central part of the Arts Council's role.'

Sixth Sense Theatre session

Respondents argued that it is important to develop an appreciation of the arts among young people as they will provide the next generation of artists and art lovers, leading to greater sustainability of the arts in the long term.

'Children are the future guardians of art in this country.'

Tina Browne

It was also seen as important because experiencing the arts will have a range of beneficial effects on young people's development, helping them to become skilled and responsible adults.

It was argued that, in order to engage young people, funding should provide them with 'hands on' arts experiences; give free access to the arts; provide experiences that are relevant and engaging, including digital experiences; allow them to pursue a professional career in the arts if they wish; and provide them with entertainment and enjoyment. Schools should have wide-ranging access to the arts, including opportunities to visit museums, theatres and galleries, and there should be high quality teaching to bring the subject alive.

'There can not be enough funding for arts education and the Arts Council and arts community ... should be banging down the doors of the Government to make it happen.'

Hall.n (online)

The importance of education was not confined to children and young people. Several respondents emphasised the importance of funding that supports adult learners too. Their emphasis was on lifelong learning and the potential of the arts to contribute to training and help people develop skills. It was argued that arts funding should encourage the formation of links between the arts sector and the education system and enable artists, organisations and projects to work with schools, colleges and other educational establishments. Several respondents also suggested that artists and arts organisations should ensure that there is a strong educational component to their work.

Community benefit

The other social benefit cited most often was the importance of funding that benefits a particular community, and for many this is specifically about the creation of community cohesion. These respondents believed that funding should respond to the needs of local communities, including opportunities for whole communities to engage in the arts. This would ensure communities feel a sense of ownership over local arts provision. Funding should be for projects that aim to transform the prospects of communities, bringing them together and unleashing their potential.

'The role of the arts in promoting community cohesion and stimulating community activity and individual creativity – thereby liberating the creative potential in underprivileged communities – is also important.'

North Tyneside Council

Economic benefits

A positive economic impact was another area that was cited by a number of people as an important aim for public funding of the arts. These respondents argued that funding should be directed towards projects or organisations that are likely to have economic benefits and should respond to the potential for the arts to contribute to economic regeneration. They pointed to the ability of the arts to create jobs, stimulate employment and economic growth and boost tourism, and these were seen as important outcomes for public funding.

Other benefits

Other areas that were cited as important included increasing equality and diversity, contributing to health and wellbeing, transforming places, the creation of social capital, supporting regional development, nurturing regional identity and civic pride, reducing crime, increasing Britain's international standing, contributing to cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy and contributing to a civilised society with shared values where everyone's voice can be heard.

'Subsidy must underpin the moral imperative that access to and participation in cultural activity creates a civilised and informed society.'

Royal Shakespeare Company

Finally, while tangible social and economic benefits were important for some respondents, for others they raised concerns about the over-politicisation of the funding process. These issues are considered in more detail in section 4.4.1 below.

4.3.8 Fairness

Another very important area for public funders of the arts to consider is fairness. This was a recurring theme across respondents, although perceptions of what this might mean differed according to respondents' roles and experiences and how they believed the funding system is currently constructed. The responses relating to fairness can be broken down into a number of key themes: fair distribution among artforms; fair distribution by type of organisation or project; fair distribution among artists; geographical fairness; fairness across different communities and groups; and the importance of ensuring that the process itself is fair. The first three categories tended to be cited primarily by respondents from the arts community, but were not of major concern to stakeholders. The last three were mentioned by all types of respondent, including stakeholders.

Fair distribution among artforms

Some respondents, particularly those from the arts community, argued for a fairer distribution of funds between different artforms. For some this is simply about recognition of a wide variety of artistic activity with a fair distribution of funding across all of these different artforms. One respondent stated explicitly that this should include both modern and traditional approaches and another that funding should be fairly distributed across the whole continuum of what is included within the arts, including amateur and professional, participation and consumption, mainstream and marginal.

Others argued that a fair system would recognise the differing needs of different artforms, acknowledging that some practices need a higher level of subsidy than others because their audiences or participants are unable to pay for the arts themselves or because they are inherently more costly to produce or perform. A few felt that the current balance of funding privileges some artforms over others and that a fair system should rebalance the levels of funding across all artforms. This was often linked to a passionate belief that the particular artform the respondent was involved in is not receiving a fair allocation of funds in comparison to others, and was sometimes accompanied by specific pleas for an increase in funding to that area.

Fair distribution by type of organisation or project

A number of responses argued that funding should be more fairly distributed across different types of organisation or project. This was often linked to a belief that funding currently prioritises a particular type of organisation or project at the

expense of other areas (often the respondent's own area in particular) and that this needs to be redressed to make the system fairer. Some respondents went further, arguing that large, high profile organisations should not be funded at all. The audiences they serve are able to subsidise their own attendances and a fair system would be one which supported smaller organisations focused on those who would not otherwise be able to afford to engage with the arts.

'There are enough wealthy opera goers who will pay virtually any amount for opera, so they could provide the subsidy (I am in this category myself).'

Patrick Goode

There was a perception among this group that funding currently focuses too heavily on large organisations at the expense of small, voluntary and community organisations. There was particular concern that these large organisations are not well equipped to understand and meet the needs of their communities and that awarding them a monopoly of the available funding means that communities are losing out.

Another, smaller group of respondents felt that funding currently favours either new and cutting edge organisations at the expense of existing and well established projects, while others argued the reverse. Both sides believed that funding needs to be rebalanced to make it fairer.

Fair distribution among artists

A small number of respondents emphasised that funding should be distributed to artists as well as to organisations and projects, and that this should be fairly distributed so that it is available to artists of all ages and genres.

Fair geographical distribution

Respondents from all groups noted the importance of ensuring that funding should be spread fairly across the country. One respondent suggested that this should be accompanied by a recognition of both national and regional 'beacons of excellence'. Several respondents argued that the present system is unfair, with a bias towards London and the South. This was of particular concern among respondents from the North of England. One respondent suggested that a solution to the lack of high quality arts in some areas is greater investment in high quality touring.

Fair distribution among different communities/groups

A number of respondents understood fairness as ensuring that funds are either accessible to or benefit everyone in society. This is closely related to the idea of art for everyone, but it was driven by a broader principle that distributors of public funding have an obligation to ensure it is fairly distributed among all groups in society. Some people mentioned specific groups in this context that they believed are under-represented as beneficiaries of arts funding, including rural communities and Black and minority ethnic groups.

A fair process

Finally, a number of respondents focused on the importance of the process being fair. This concept encompassed a number of factors. For example respondents argued that funding should be open and accessible to everyone; that the policies guiding decision-making and the assessment process should be consistent, clear, transparent and publicly available; and that the system should abide by the laws of equal opportunities and racial equality. There was also a concern that the majority of funding currently goes to those who know how the system works and are adept at writing funding proposals, and that the Arts Council should help people to write funding bids to ensure the money does not always go to the 'usual suspects'. Further, specialists should be involved in decision-making so that decisions are made on the basis of knowledge and understanding, particularly in the case of funding for Black and minority ethnic projects.

'The Arts Council should examine its senior decision-makers to see if it is representative of the diversity in the real world. ... one non-white person cannot be responsible for approving all grants from non-white projects which are so incredibly diverse; one committee that has only one or no non-white representation at its senior level cannot hope to come to a decision that is either fair or representative of the real community.'

*British Board of Film Classification,
Yellow Earth Theatre, British Chinese
Artists' Association*

4.3.9 Balance and variety

Closely related to the arguments about fairness was a strong desire for public funders to ensure that there is balance and variety within the broader arts ecology. This may mean funding a wide variety of genres, artforms and types of practice, including 'populist' art, 'high' art, fringe, niche, social and community and the entire spectrum of different artforms. It should also encompass cultural diversity, ensuring that art from different cultures and traditions is supported.

'The aim should be to broaden the equality of provision particularly in terms of support for diverse projects outside of mainstream activity, to support a breadth and diversity of artistic and cultural provision.'

Mayor's Office, City Hall, London

Respondents also felt that there needs to be a balance maintained between innovation and more traditional or established work.

'There should be a balance between new, innovative work and established work which continues to develop models of good practice.'

DanceXchange

For many respondents this requires the Arts Council to balance support for existing clients with nurturing and supporting new organisations. There also needs to be a balance between preserving existing audiences and reaching out to new audiences. This is important not only because different types of work appeal to and inspire different people but also because it is not possible to second guess where developments in the arts will come from.

4.3.10 Need

A number of respondents felt that public funders should take into account some understanding of relative need when allocating funding. For a few respondents this encompasses both the need of the community or general public and the need of the artist or arts organisation, but most respondents tended to take one or another of these perspectives.

As noted previously, many stakeholders believed funding should prioritise those with particular social need or areas of deprivation, although one respondent suggested that funding should target areas *other* than those of highest deprivation as these receive 'initiative overload'. Instead the funding should target those areas that seem to miss out every time.

Respondents from the arts community tended to conceive need in terms of those projects or artforms that are unable to get funding from elsewhere or that would not survive in the market without public support.

'Funding for the arts should be reserved for projects that are not commercially viable in the normal way of things.'

Mike Durham (online)

This included support for traditional institutions that do not have the funds to compete in the modern world of mass marketing; supporting work that is hard to fund through other sources, such as training for artists; supporting work where the audience is not able to pay, for instance public art or work with children or in regeneration; providing funding in areas of the country where there is insufficient private or commercial wealth to support the arts in a significant way; and funding for areas that are too niche or too expensive to produce to support themselves solely through the box office.

4.3.11 Sustainability

Connected with the belief in the importance of need was an argument in favour of sustainability. This focuses on helping individuals and organisations move away from a dependence on public funding. It was argued that, while public funding might be necessary for a limited period, its aim should be to help artists and arts organisations develop their business model and audiences so they can become financially sustainable. A few respondents went further, suggesting that only those organisations that will eventually be able to survive commercially should be funded. Others thought that encouraging organisations to operate within the market was a good thing, but that it should not compromise the quality and integrity of the work and that any funds generated should be reinvested in producing and creating art.

Practical suggestions for implementing this included withdrawing funding once an organisation becomes self-sustaining, and helping funded organisations to be more entrepreneurial and develop other sources of income, for instance through sponsorship, building hire and ticket sales.

There was also an alternative definition of sustainability that emerged in the responses. For this group, sustainability is about stability and security of funding in the long term to ensure that arts organisations are able to survive, flourish and operate in a sustainable way. Without this consistency organisations are unable to plan properly for the long term and this prevents them from achieving their full potential. However, one respondent pointed out that this should not mean that failing organisations should continue to be funded.

4.4 Strategy and management

In addition to discussing the outcomes and principles that should drive arts funding decisions, many respondents also wanted to discuss the overarching strategy for public funding or the way in which it is currently managed.

4.4.1 Art, politics and the arm's length principle

One of the most common themes in this category was the relationship between public funding and politics. It was also one of the most passionately argued. There was deep concern among many respondents that arts funding decisions are currently bureaucratic exercises in adhering to the latest political agenda, rather than driven by artistic considerations.

'The present structure is not productive. It relies upon administrators who are more concerned that forms are submitted correctly, at the right time, for reasons that often have too much concern with political ideology than with artistic endeavour.'

Trevor Lockwood (online)

Respondents from the arts sector in particular felt that the current funding system is about ticking the right boxes and that it lacks integrity and an understanding of art. There was a belief that only those artists and arts organisations that have learned to 'play the game' and present their work in a way that looks as if it fits the current agenda get funding. Some respondents resented being asked about the profile of their audiences and disliked having to work with target audience groups in order to qualify for funding.

'I find it deplorable that to receive funding I have to consider whether there is enough ethnicity in my audience/participants and I find gender/sexuality questions particularly offensive. Why does this affect whether I receive a grant?'

Shelley Community Association

For a substantial proportion of these respondents this approach is in opposition to what they believe to be the core purpose of public funding for the arts. Public support should focus on the art itself, not see art as a tool for achieving political objectives.

'It is important to support the development of the art forms for their own sake and not simply for their ability to meet other agendas.'

Hilary Lane

'The Arts Council should not be a social service or ambitious to be a socially inclusive [sic]. Its purpose is to promote art.'

Juliet Simpson (online)

Some respondents argued that the Arts Council should leave funding for social or economic purposes to local authorities and other bodies directly involved with these policy areas.

'There are plenty more pots of money for community organisations to raid without sticking their fingers into an arts budget.'

Tony Clifton (online)

Some respondents also felt that this preoccupation with political objectives means that the system is biased towards those organisations that are more likely to tick the right boxes. As a consequence they would never be able to access funding because they don't fit into those boxes.

'I won't get funding anyway because I'm white, heterosexual and able bodied!!'

Kurt Smith (online)

Within this there was particular concern, primarily among the online responses, that the current distribution of funding favours applicants who represent minority ethnic communities at the expense of white British applicants.

Some respondents believed the role of the Arts Council should be to protect the arts sector from this kind of political interference. They felt that an ideal arts funding system would be one in which artistic freedom is preserved and artists and arts organisations are protected from political meddling. They argued that the Arts Council should act as an intermediary between the sector and government, interpreting the priorities of government for arts organisations and artists while protecting them from inappropriate political agendas. A number of respondents talked about the arm's length principle within this context. This was seen as a crucial tool for preserving artistic freedom.

'We believe that public funding should promote and protect freedom of expression in all its forms; and should help guard against political interference in the nation's creativity. This is why an arms-length organisation like the Arts Council is important.'

Southbank Centre

'Perhaps the most important principle is that of "arms length" ... Art becomes problematic when it becomes an instrument of the state.'

Simon Poulter

However, other respondents were more sanguine about the relationship between politics and the arts. Indeed, some respondents were clear that the two are inextricably linked. Decisions about spending public money were inevitably statements about what society values and therefore all arts funding decisions are political statements.

'Any principles underlying the funding of the arts are political statements about what it is that society believes to be worthwhile of support.'

Clive Gray (online)

4.4.2 Bureaucracy

Closely related to the concern about the politicisation of arts funding was a belief that the current system is too bureaucratic. There were complaints that the funding system is dominated by paperwork and box ticking, and that the Arts Council is staffed by bureaucrats who may not know enough about art.

Much of this concern was focused on the application form for the Arts Council's programme of lottery funding, Grants for the arts, particularly among the online respondents (although not exclusively so). There was a strong belief that the form does not allow the applicant to express the depth, scope and creativity of their project and that the process of filling in the form stifles creativity.

'I find that these forms, boxes, 50 words have a suffocating effect on one's creativity [and] an insidious effect on the art itself.'

Ken Turner (online)

There was also concern that the process of filling in the form itself is too difficult and that this means only those who are skilled at form filling would get grants, rather than those who are producing the best art.

'the application form is a nightmare.'

Karen Jones (online)

'Above all, simplify the application process.'

Adrian Brink (online)

'My own experience of the arts council is that organisations and individuals who can afford to spend several weeks putting the applications together and can actually survive without the funding are usually the ones who end up with

it, but other that have little time or real impact are dropped or don't even make it past the bureaucratic and academic krypton factors of the application process.'

Jon (online)

It was also argued that it is not possible to judge the quality of the work through an application form and that Arts Council staff should see work before making decisions rather than relying on the application form.

'Going out and sniffing out fresh talent, not sitting in your regional offices receiving forms.'

(name withheld)

'I think maybe ACE should get out of their offices and start engaging with artists at street level – visiting their studios, watching them at work with members of the public or the local community, having portfolio sessions. They could incorporate this into their assessment of the projects being proposed.'

Melissa Mostyn (online)

A variety of suggestions were made about ways to improve the process. Many argued that the Grants for the arts application form should either be simplified or scrapped. Respondents also advocated the end of what they argued is a 'one size fits all' mentality. It was felt that currently applicants for funding are required to fit into pre-existing boxes, but that the point of art is that it can't be categorised in this way. It requires a funding system that is able to consider the needs and uniqueness of different projects and artforms.

Related to this was the suggestion that while criteria are important, not every organisation should have to fulfil every criteria. Different organisations and individuals have different strengths and the funding system should recognise and support those.

'offer a host of criteria, but let projects choose which ones they will meet. If they meet them well, don't insist that all criteria must be met simultaneously on the same project.'

Andrea Montgomery (online)

Other respondents suggested that the grant application process be made proportional to the amount of money sought – the more money, the more evidence should be required.

A number of practising artists proposed that there should be more flexibility about the types of evidence submitted with an application. They pressed for the opportunity for artists to support applications with non-written evidence of their art. For example, one respondent suggested making it possible to submit an application in the form of a portfolio of prior work.

However, other respondents had little sympathy with this view. They felt that the current application process is relatively straightforward and that there needs to be a process to ensure a basic level of accountability and facilitate decision-making.

'I find the idea that filling in the Grants for the arts application form is too difficult is a lazy excuse!! The 50 word limit is there to stop people waffling. ACE just needs to know what the project is, how much money is required, what the money will be used for and who will benefit from the activity ... Every single person applying for funding (and it's public money at the end of the day) should be able to do this.'

Ian Beale (online)

A few respondents argued that the current application process weeds out unviable projects and helps to create greater artistic variety than market forces alone.

A few respondents also felt that in a situation with limited resources it is unrealistic to expect Arts Council officers to be able to see every piece of work and that it is better that more money is spent on art and artists than on employing the extremely large number of staff that would be needed to achieve this.

'ACE offices don't have anywhere near the resources available to attend all the activities of those they fund, or intend to fund, nor indeed to maintain regular contact with all arts organisations ... which would we prefer? Less funding available to artists, and more resources for ACE staff to attend events, or the maximum amount possible to go into the artform itself?'

Baz (online)

4.4.3 Accountability of the Arts Council

Related to the arguments about bureaucracy was a strong call for the Arts Council itself to become more accountable. This was primarily seen in terms of our accountability to those seeking funding. It was suggested that the Arts Council must be clear about what our funding priorities are and what the criteria are for decision-making. It was also felt that there needs to be greater clarity about the

reasons for these criteria and the degree of flexibility allowed around them. Applicants should know who makes funding decisions, there should be a built in monitoring process independent of the officers who make the decisions, and there should be easy access to information about how and when to apply.

Some respondents also argued that the Arts Council needs to be accountable to the public and to central government. A number of suggestions were made to this end, including that Council members should be elected by the public; that the public should be continually consulted and involved in decision-making and policy changes; that the Arts Council should keep the public informed about internal developments and policy changes; and that projects should be assessed against clearly defined, publicly available criteria so that the public are able to gauge how effectively the organisation is performing.

Some respondents argued that in order to be truly accountable the Arts Council should bring a range of different voices into our decision-making processes. A few respondents suggested that this should include the public in some way, although most focused on bringing specialists into the process. These included trained decision-makers, experienced representatives of the artform in question, and devolved, 'light touch' grants administered by panels of regularly funded organisations or peers.

It was also suggested that the Arts Council should become 'Compact compliant'¹⁰ in line with other government bodies and quangos in dealing with the voluntary sector. Some of these themes are explored in more detail in section 7.

4.4.4 Partnership

There was a strong emphasis on the importance of partnership. This was conceived in a variety of ways. Some respondents, particularly those from local authorities and other stakeholders, focused on the importance of partnership between funders. This would maximise the return on public investment by avoiding

¹⁰ The Compact is an agreement between the Government and the voluntary and community sector made in November 1998. It aims to improve the relationship between the two sectors for mutual advantage. The Compact is made up of five codes of good practice. These documents act like a legal agreement with clear points that outline undertakings both by Government and by the voluntary and community sector. The compact document can be accessed at: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What_we_do/Compact_Advocacy/Overarching%20Code.pdf

duplication and would allow the sharing of knowledge and best practice. There was also a call for funding strategies at both local and national level to be developed in partnership with key stakeholders and practitioners. This should include local communities, local authorities, regional development agencies, government departments and the voluntary sector as well as artists, arts organisations and cultural consortia.

Other respondents felt the need for more meaningful debate and dialogue. They believed that the role of the Arts Council should be to engage with the public and the arts sector when deciding our priorities and to foster dialogue between the two.

'ACE should consult better and listen to the voices within local communities regarding where they are at artistically.'

Mick Gallagher

There was also a call for the development of better networks between the arts community and related areas, like media and technology organisations, and for improved partnership working within the arts community, both across artforms and across different arts organisations. There was a feeling that effective networks of organisations and individuals would both help to develop a thriving arts sector and ensure the Arts Council can place funding in a community with the confidence that it will have real benefit. Some respondents also argued that if the sector worked together more it would be more effective at securing funding from government.

'I propose that we stop fighting with each other about who is getting the biggest share of the cake and figure out how to get the most cake to the public.'

Leann barber (online)

A greater sense of partnership between the Arts Council and the organisations we fund was also called for. There was a desire for more collaboration and more open discussion about the aims of both funder and fundee. It was suggested that this kind of dialogue could benefit both sides. The funder would better understand the ways in which a project can support its aims while a potentially funded project would gain an improved understanding of the funding body's language and needs. It was felt that this would benefit all concerned in the future, whether or not a particular project is funded.

4.4.5 Leadership

A number of respondents took the opportunity to call for the Arts Council to display greater leadership. A few argued that this should be leadership in taste – the Arts

Council and the arts community have a role in forming and educating the taste and understanding of the wider public. Some called for greater strategic leadership, ensuring that there is an overarching vision for the arts in the UK and encouraging and nurturing leadership skills among individuals in the arts community so they are able to play a central role in taking forward this vision. However, the most common interpretation of this need for greater leadership is the role of the Arts Council as an advocate for the arts in general and for greater arts funding in particular. It was argued that the Arts Council's role should be to make a robust argument for continued funding, to be a champion for the arts sector and to raise awareness of the value and successes of the arts.

'It is the role of the Arts Council to create a robust argument for a continued investment and sustained public sector.'

Serpentine Gallery

'To lobby government to make them understand the importance of the arts to the life of the people it governs. To act and support the arts in such a way that counters the general 'dumbing down' which we see in all aspects [of cultural life].'

Laurence Giles

4.4.6 Calls for more or less funding for the arts

A number of respondents took the opportunity to state that there should be as much money for the arts as possible, and definitely more than there is currently.

'Give more, not less. Fund it more than you fund any war.'

Seph Rodney

By contrast, a small number of respondents argued that there should be less funding for the arts. A handful suggested that the arts should no longer be funded by lottery money, as those who play the lottery are often from the poorest parts of the society, while another felt that there should be very limited funding confined only to preserving elements of the UK's cultural heritage.

'To the extent that it exists it should be minimal and restricted to preserving important historical buildings or artefacts.'

Tom Calvert-Lee

A couple of respondents argued that there should be no public funding for the arts at all, either because it skews the aims of the artist towards those of the funder,

thereby reducing the quality of the art, or because they do not believe that art is an appropriate use of public money.

4.5 Alternative financial models

Some respondents argued for changes to the current funding model. For some this is primarily about changes to the Arts Council's funding structures while for others it involves revising all elements of the system, including local authority and central government procedures.

It was pointed out that current shifts in funding tend to be incremental – a small increase or decrease in the settlement that the Arts Council receives from Government. This means that funding for new and small organisations starts and remains at a relatively low level, while those organisations that have dominated the funding pool continue to do so. It was argued that a more substantial redistribution of resources is needed, otherwise change will always be marginal.

In this vein there were a number of alternative funding structures suggested, including:

- a system based on the French system of 'intermittent'. This would have both regularly funded organisations that would justify their funding by writing detailed three-year business plans, and a system of funding individual artists. The latter would be funded once they have a track record of success, proved either through their ability to sell a piece of work or attract audiences. The funding would allow the artist to make their next piece of work and the success of this piece would determine whether they received a future grant. The artist would have to maintain a high standard of output to ensure their next period of development is funded and this would ensure high quality
- a system in which the greatest amount of the money should be devolved to the lowest point in the infrastructure in order to encourage a bottom-up approach
- one in which major capital projects like new venues and national organisations like the English National Opera or the Royal Shakespeare Company should be funded centrally while smaller projects and organisations should be funded at a regional level. The central and regional pots should be ring-fenced to ensure a fair balance between different types of organisation
- lottery funding should be moved outside the control of the Arts Council to offer a significant resource other than that controlled by the Arts Council

- new arts councils should be set up for each artform, allowing them to secure funding from a variety of government departments, reflecting the different benefits produced by different artforms

There was also a call for the development of a national policy for the arts that everyone buys into, including arts organisations, government departments, education establishments, business and the public.

In addition there were a number of suggestions for funding structures that would be additional or complementary to the current arts funding system. These included ensuring that there are various funding bodies able to fund the arts, including local authorities and other government departments. This was mentioned by several respondents and was intended to provide more funding for the arts and a wide range of funding opportunities to the arts community. A couple of respondents also thought that this would allow different funders to fund different types of activity or focus on different outcomes. For instance, local authorities could fund art that focused on more tangible outcomes like regeneration and community cohesion, the Department for Children, Schools and Families could focus on arts and education, while the Arts Council could concentrate on quality and innovation. Finally there was a suggestion that we should encourage a greater culture of voluntary contributions by the public to increase the public support available.

Other suggestions for additions to the current funding system included allowing organisations a greater degree of independence through measures like invested endowment funds, bursaries for individuals and a US-style tax system that favours donations.

5 Responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation

5.1 Introduction

This question asked respondents to consider the responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation. It noted that many arts organisations in this country receive at least some of their income from public funds. This support helps organisations to produce great work that excites and inspires their audiences. It helps organisations to make their activities more accessible to a wider range of people. It also helps them to make a positive contribution at a local level by getting involved in activities such as education and community development. Sometimes balancing all those demands can be difficult.

The question asked respondents for their views on whether publicly funded arts organisations have a responsibility to wider society as well as for producing excellent art. It asked how far an organisation should go to widen its reach and how important it is to support work that is risky and has limited appeal. It also wanted to know from those respondents who worked for publicly funded arts organisation what, if anything, they thought they should give back in return for their funding.

5.2 Overall findings

5.2.1 Key themes

The majority of respondents to this question believed that the responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation are to balance a commitment and responsibility to the people experiencing their work and/or the wider community with passion for and dedication to the arts. A few respondents argued that publicly funded arts organisations should focus exclusively on one or the other of these responsibilities, but the majority believed that an organisation should strive to balance both.

Within these broad aims, respondents identified a number of different ways that organisations should carry out their responsibilities. These ranged from ensuring that their work is accessible and inclusive, to supporting artists and fostering innovation.

Accountability and management were also key themes, with many respondents taking the opportunity to discuss what they believed a well run, well managed and accountable organisation should look like. In addition, some respondents took this question as an opportunity to discuss the responsibilities of the Arts Council.

5.2.2 Differences between response types

The majority of respondents felt that publicly funded organisations have a range of responsibilities and should aim to achieve a balance of outcomes.

Stakeholders generally had higher expectations of publicly funded arts organisations than other types of respondent and outlined the responsibilities in more detail, particularly with regard to accountability, monitoring, evaluation, partnership and engagement. Respondents from the arts sector found the issue of accountability more difficult, recognising its importance but also expressing concern about the potential negative effects of excess accountability on creativity.

5.3 Responsibilities to the arts, artists, audiences and the wider public

5.3.1 Accessibility and inclusivity

A large number of respondents felt that one of the primary responsibilities of a publicly funded arts organisation is to be accessible and inclusive. They believed organisations should be open to all sectors of the public regardless of their age, experience or background. They were also clear that the aim should be to include everyone rather than to focus on specific groups.

‘to permit as many people as possible to enjoy what they have to offer.’

Tam Tam Tales Trust

‘Enable as many as possible to experience, take part and benefit from the arts.’

Tina Browne

For some respondents it was important that this includes opportunities for the public to create as well as to view art. They believed that publicly funded arts organisations should ensure that the public are able to create work themselves or get involved in helping artists shape their work.

‘Each organisation will have its own priorities, but most could encourage appreciation and participation.’

Revd Judith Grieve

There were a number of suggestions for making the arts more accessible. These included breaking down physical barriers to accessibility, for instance ensuring good transport links and that buildings are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Respondents also talked about the importance of

keeping costs and prices low and ensuring that arts opportunities are well publicised, to potential and non-users as well as to existing audiences.

'I think publicly funded arts organisations should have to have at least one open day a year which is well publicised to the general public, where ordinary people who are curious about what art organisations do, can find out more.'

C Johnson

5.3.2 Reaching out

Some respondents argued that publicly funded arts organisations have a responsibility not just to welcome everyone who was interested but also to ensure that their work reaches as many different kinds of people as possible.

A crucial part of this for many respondents is the importance of reaching out to those who are least engaged with the arts. This includes communities who are isolated for practical reasons, for instance rural communities who have little access to the arts, as well as those who are excluded from the arts because of cultural, social or class barriers, including the belief that the arts are 'not for people like me' and a lack of interest in or exposure to the arts.

'Publicly funded arts organisations have an enormous duty to proactively seek to engage with communities who, for whatever reason, would not normally become involved with the arts.'

Breckland Council, Norfolk

'To present the arts to small isolated groups who would not normally have experience of the arts in their lives.'

Temple Normanton School Play Scheme

A few respondents also argued that organisations should specifically target minority groups and support practitioners from under-represented communities.

Solutions for reaching those who are isolated due to practical reasons tended to focus on the importance of touring. Solutions for addressing social and cultural barriers included the provision of meaningful, relevant art and programmes of interpretation and education to inform the public and build capacity. The importance of undertaking audience research to better understand how to engage the unengaged was also highlighted, as was the need to develop relationships with the public, consulting them and responding to their views.

Respondents also felt that organisations need to enable more diverse ‘ways in’ to the organisation and its product, thinking beyond the four walls of the arts venue.

‘Bridge the gap between an understanding of the processes of making work and the condition of its reception. Invite engagement but remain un-formulaic and open to genuine interests from their audiences as to the ways this may happen.’

Jo Stockham

A couple of respondents suggested that a commitment to outreach and audience development should be written into funding agreements, although targets should be realistic and based on a good understanding of the nature of the organisation or project. One respondent thought that it is important for arts organisations to take on the responsibility of developing audiences in order to free the artist from this burden.

Most respondents also emphasised that, while engaging people is important, the organisation’s aim must be to build people’s capacity to understand and engage with their work, not to ‘dumb down’ their content.

‘To bring art to the people, but without dumbing down.’

Patrick Goode

‘to present the best work, in the best possible environment, to the widest possible audience.’

Modern Art Oxford

Some of these respondents were clear that there is no conflict between ensuring both excellent work and widespread access.

‘There is no conflict between quality and access, and we seek to engage and involve throughout our programming.’

Southbank Centre

‘In the best arts organisations the traditional tensions between quality and participation can be resolved.’

High Peak Community Arts

However, not all respondents shared this view. Some argued that organisations should not try to widen their reach for the sake of it, and that excellence and outreach are two separate and potentially conflicting agendas. Others felt that organisations have a responsibility to their artistic integrity and conviction above and beyond public access, and that thinking of the audience first may be demeaning to the art.

5.3.3 Diversity and equality

A related argument put forward by some respondents was that publicly funded arts organisations have a responsibility to respond to and reflect the diversity of the population. This should include developing programmes of work that are culturally diverse and bringing different cultural forms to wider audiences.

‘Communicate on a variety of levels to reflect the multiplicity of cultures within our society.’

Graham Head

This also involved supporting and presenting a diversity of genres and supporting artists from all disciplines.

Closely related to this is the importance of supporting equality. Organisations should have an equal opportunities policy and should champion equality for audiences, participants and staff. This should apply both to the creation of work and to the right to access it.

5.3.4 Quality

Many respondents saw ‘quality’ as a central responsibility of publicly funded arts organisations. However, quality meant different things for different respondents. As discussed in section 4, concepts of quality can be broken down into two broad categories: quality of the art and quality of the experience.

Artistic quality

Respondents from all groups felt strongly that organisations have an obligation to ensure high artistic quality. They should strive for excellence, presenting work of the highest quality in every context. They should aim to set the standards for their artform. Respondents believed that this requires the organisation to be constantly challenging itself and pushing its artistic boundaries.

'To make the best work possible and to challenge themselves continually.'
National Association of Local
Government Arts Officers

It was argued that this requires a rigorous approach to artistic programming in keeping with the ethos of the organisation. It also means that organisations should nurture and support the most talented individuals and provide them with showcases for their work.

'Support the production of excellent art and provide showcases for it.'
David Johnson

Some respondents also pointed out that organisations must possess artistic integrity and honesty and may need to resist the pressures to please, as high quality work is not always popular.

'If everybody is happy with something it creates no debate or questioning, it is an appeasement or a base pleasure: a "sugar".'
Kaavous Clayton

Quality of experience

Many respondents also saw quality of experience as a central responsibility of arts organisations. It was argued that publicly funded arts organisations should seek to ensure that audiences and participants have imaginative, exciting, inspiring, enriching and meaningful arts experiences that will enhance their lives. This requires organisations to produce work that is beautiful, relevant and engaging, that challenges, entertains and provides a means of escape.

'To provide quality work that is challenging but not insulting to audiences.'
Angela Chappell

A couple of respondents also pointed out that pleasing the public does not necessarily mean compromising artistic integrity, and that arts organisations should not be afraid of doing everything they can to ensure their audiences have a good time.

'Do not think you are selling out if you are pleasing the public!'
PANDA (Performing Arts Network and
Development Agency)

It was also argued that organisations should make sure that the whole experience of engaging with them – from reading the marketing material or booking a ticket to using the toilets or eating at the cafe – is well run and of a high standard.

5.3.5 Challenge

A number of respondents argued that publicly funded arts organisations should seek to challenge individuals and society. They should aim to make people think and feel differently, to affect their perceptions and understanding and change the way that people view themselves and their surroundings. They should find ways of letting people dream, should open the door to new worlds and introduce people to the new and unfamiliar.

'To bite the hand that feeds it. To be the jester at the court. To embrace the complex and to assert that to be accessible is not to be simplistic. To reflect upon and to create new worlds. To be our prophets, our secular priests, our dreamers and our clowns.'

Border Crossings

Organisations should also engage with key issues faced by society today and provoke and facilitate debate around these. Several respondents felt that arts organisations should aim to change society in specific ways by promoting particular changes in public opinion and engaging in social and political action, for instance promoting peace and advocating the importance of a civilised society.

5.3.6 Innovation and risk

There was wide support for the argument that publicly funded arts organisations should take risks and innovate. They should be working in ways that are adventurous and experimental and that push boundaries. They should be making new work that hasn't been seen before.

'...to create new work, not just to re hash the classics.'

John Casson

Organisations should be forward thinking and should make trends, not follow them. This means that they have to be prepared to take risks and accept that a project or piece of work might fail to achieve its aims or attract large audiences.

'Should never shy from taking risks.'

Lady Rima Scott

For many people risk is an essential and enjoyable element of the creative process.

'Art is about taking risks. That's the fun of it.'

Jim M. Holdsworth

However, most respondents felt that innovation and risk are part of the overall balance, and organisations should not focus on this at the expense of accessibility and audience development.

'To support both high end innovation and basic introductory access to the arts.'

Beverley Sharpe

5.3.7 Advocacy for the arts

Respondents believed that publicly funded arts organisations have a responsibility to play an active role in the cultural life of the country and to speak up for the arts. It was argued that they should support their own artform and practice and advocate for the arts as a whole. They should contribute to the development of the arts in society and the public debate about the value of the arts. They should also promote the range and extent of skills and expertise that exist within the arts and encourage public champions of the arts.

'To express tellingly the story of the value of the arts to all groups in society... to reflect a wider perspective than the arts of one class, race, nation or time.'

Homeless Link

'To promote public debate/awareness about the role and value of the arts in society.'

Hazel Hine

This was seen as crucial if the sector is to persuade Government and the public that the arts should receive public funding.

'To inspire people to appreciate and argue for public subsidy for the arts. To inspire other people to spend their money on the Arts.'

Black Country Touring

Respondents also believed that organisations need to be able to demonstrate how their own work creates value. A number of suggestions were made for how best to do this, including producing and promoting high quality work, generating robust

evidence and evaluation, and providing good news stories that demonstrate the value of the arts. It was also argued that they should take on some of the responsibility for advocating for the importance of the arts in particular settings, for instance arts in education.

Some respondents suggested that publicly funded arts organisations should be advocates for quality in the arts and should not be afraid to stand up for their own work or others, even if it is controversial. They should take a stand against the dangers of ‘dumbing down’ and champion the importance of artistic expression and freedom.

‘To lobby government to make them understand the importance of the arts to the life of the people it governs. To act and support the arts in such a way that counters the general ‘dumbing down’ which we see in all aspects [of cultural life].’

Laurence Giles

5.3.8 Support artists

Large numbers of respondents believed that organisations have a responsibility to nurture and support artists.

‘Foster and empower the creativity of their artists.’

Nicholas Cox

Several respondents were keen to make it clear that this should apply to all artists, not just those in a particular sector and not just to established artists.

‘To champion the cause of all artists and not just those whose art form is currently fashionable to the exclusion of all else.’

Carol Nunan

Respondents argued that publicly funded arts organisations play a crucial role in providing artists with career opportunities, helping them to develop artistically, providing them with professional support, mentoring and training and a platform for collaboration, networking and development. They were also felt to have a responsibility to be responsive to artists’ needs and adopt and implement codes of good practice in their dealings with artists.

*'To foster and encourage the work and career of artists and performers.
Provide the means to employment for dedicated professional performers.'*

Ian Flintoff

Respondents also argued that publicly funded arts organisations should help create the conditions for artists to thrive. This includes building and maintaining artistic venues, providing artistic leadership and supporting creative but commercially unrewarding developments in particular artforms.

A number of respondents in this category also felt that organisations should have a responsibility to protect artists from political and commercial pressures.

'To look after artist interests not for a particular political agenda that has nothing to do with art. Look after the artist and the rest fits into place.'

Teresa Mills

'[artists should be] Freed from commercial pressures.'

Sanjeevini Dutta

However, a couple of respondents were concerned that organisations are not currently doing a good enough job of supporting artists and, instead, are too caught up with management and bureaucracy.

'In order to maintain the primacy of the artistic, senior management need to lift their eyes from the bottom line and their obsession with bureaucracy to recognise the wealth of potential and talent exists untapped in their own organisations.'

Nicholas Cox

A few pointed out that supporting artists is also beneficial to the wider public as it means that audiences are able to benefit from the art they create.

'...[serve] their audience by nurturing, developing and showcasing the most skilled and imaginative of artists or those with the potential to become so.'

Stephen Turner

5.3.9 Social benefit

A number of respondents talked about the responsibility of publicly funded arts organisations to provide some kind of broad social benefit. It was felt that ideally these benefits should be available to as many different people as possible and

should address both local and national needs. Respondents did not always specify what these benefits might be, although some gave examples, including contributions to education and supporting the development of young people. Other respondents believed that organisations have a responsibility to make a contribution to a particular area, including developing a relationship with the local community.

Work with communities

Many respondents considered it to be a publicly funded arts organisation's responsibility to work directly with communities, particularly the local community in which they are based.

'Publicly funded arts organisations should respond to communities and make a positive contribution at a local level.'

Rosemary Pennington

'I believe strongly that there is a responsibility for arts organisations to relate to wider society and contribute to the community.'

Roger Parish

For some this is about producing a sense of greater community cohesion or promoting community development; for others it is about empowering communities and allowing them to express their own creative potential.

Respondents advocated working directly in communities, using community centres and schools as well as arts and cultural centres. They believed that organisations should offer a range of activity that empowers the community and creates a sense of ownership. They should also consult with the community, listening to their needs and meeting those needs through their work.

'...[Its responsibilities are] to know the community it represents.'

Sonja Adams

A number of respondents also saw a role for publicly funded arts organisations in contributing to the overall vibrancy of an area.

'To bring a sense of life to the area or local community.'

Jonathan Cobb

'...to enliven the life of their community...'

Sue Norrington

Education and young people

Education and engaging with young people were important issues for some respondents. They felt that publicly funded organisations have a particular duty to work with and engage young people. It was argued that the arts can have a transformative effect on young people's lives, particularly those who are socially disadvantaged, and that young people are the next generation of artists and audiences.

For some respondents, engaging young people is best done through education. This should include arts education programmes run by and in arts organisations and a greater integration of arts into the formal education system, particularly schools.

Some respondents emphasised that education is important for all of society, not just for young people. It is seen as an important part of making art more accessible, it can develop skills and help participants reach their full potential. These respondents argued that education programmes should therefore be aimed at people throughout their lives.

'To give back to the community in the form of raising standards and providing essential education.'

*Sylvia Williams, SW Making Music
Committee*

5.4 Organisational responsibilities

In addition to having direct responsibilities to the public and to art and artists, many respondents argued that publicly funded arts organisations have a responsibility to ensure that they are well run, financially competent and accountable.

5.4.1 Leadership and governance

Leadership and good governance both emerged as important for publicly funded arts organisations. Good governance includes having high quality, representative boards that take a business-like approach, and an accountable constitution and structure.

Respondents also believed that organisations should ensure they have a skilled and inspiring leadership team in place. The team should be able to provide internal challenge and create a culture of optimism, transformation and aspiration. They should understand the context in which they work and respond to change. They

should be prepared to take risks, meet the needs of their community, represent their local constituency and seek honest feedback so that the organisation can move forward and develop.

5.4.2 Integrity, passion and commitment

Some respondents believed that publicly funded arts organisations have a responsibility to maintain integrity. For some this means not pursuing inappropriate agendas for the purposes of securing funding. Others argued that organisations should not be driven by value-for-money considerations but should follow their creative urges and be daring and imaginative.

For many respondents the most important element of integrity is being true to the organisation's core mission, even in the face of pressure from funders. It was felt that organisations need to retain the right of dissent and act with conviction.

A few respondents also stated that arts organisations that receive public funding should demonstrate passion and commitment to their art and their practice. A couple of respondents specified commitment to other areas as well as artistic practice, including social and environmental commitment and commitment to diversity, equality and social inclusion.

5.4.3 Management and finance

Respondents believed that organisations should also be well managed and financially competent. This was seen as important for the success of both individual organisations and the wider arts ecology, because poorly managed arts organisations can create an impression that public funding for the arts will not be used efficiently.

'they should be financially responsible, and be models of best practice as well-run businesses. Anything less than this encourages the old clichés that arts organisations are run by amateurs who have no business sense and thus waste public money. This undermines the case for further investment for all of us.'

*City of Birmingham Symphony
Orchestra*

Relations with and conditions for staff were also seen as important elements of good management. Respondents felt that organisations should support and nurture their staff, invest in their creative and professional development, provide training and career opportunities, treat them with respect within a framework of

equality and pay them decent salaries. This should include the artists that organisations work with as well as the staff they directly employ.

Other respondents stated that well run organisations were ones that:

- operate legally and efficiently
- have clear, open and accountable governance structures
- have a robust and sustainable business plan with quantified objectives
- have good project management processes in place, including risk analysis, communications, financial planning, performance management, evaluation and exit strategies
- ensure projects or proposals are well thought through and budgeted, with clarity about purpose, audience and dissemination and achievable aims
- are sustainable and flexible
- benchmark themselves against other organisations
- keep to the terms in their funding agreements
- maintain a focus on the core mission of the organisation
- have robust policies covering child protection and equal opportunities
- adopt ethical and environmental policies

'To adopt integrated ethical and environmental business practices as set out and agreed by their Board/Management structures across all aspects of their operations, products and services.'

a-n The Artists' Information Company

Good financial management was also thought to be central to a well-managed organisation. Organisations should be rigorous in ensuring that the money they receive is spent wisely and that it is used for the purposes agreed with the funder. Respondents believed organisations have a responsibility to be financially sound, cost effective, maintain probity, ensure accurate accounting and be honest and open with their finances. Several respondents also argued that organisations should provide value for money, and others felt that they have a responsibility to maintain good relationships with their funders and inform them about how money is being spent.

A few respondents emphasised that good financial management is particularly important when it is public money.

'organisations are spending taxpayers' money and owe it [the money] a duty of care.'

Magma Poetry

5.4.4 Accountability and transparency

Many respondents advocated the importance of organisations being open, transparent and accountable.

'To be responsible and accountable in its use of public funds and to be transparent in its dealings.'

*Birmingham Contemporary Music
Group*

Transparency should apply to all the organisation's activity, including spending, policy-making and decision-making. Organisations should be honest, both with themselves and with the public and their funders. They should distribute information about their activities and finances in a clear and accessible way and should create opportunities for the public to interact with the organisation and find out more about it.

'To be transparent – to open up its processes to the public who fund it – be that through workshops, participatory work or the Internet. Or telling the public that the leader of that organisation will be sitting in a public coffee house, available to all once a week.'

Alan Lane

One respondent also argued that organisations should be clear about the fact that they are publicly funded and should display the Arts Council logo prominently.

Accountability was a key concept for many.

'Stringent public accountability...'

*Nicholas Cox, Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra*

Most respondents felt that organisations should be accountable to a variety of different groups including the general public, but particularly audiences, artists, funders and other stakeholders.

'Arts organisations need to be highly accountable – to their audiences, to artists and to funders and partners.'

(name withheld)

Some respondents argued that publicly funded arts organisations should explicitly align themselves with the goals of their funders. They should attempt to understand the ethos and priorities of their funders, particularly of the Arts Council, and assist in delivering the funders' aims and objectives. However, a few respondents wanted to emphasise that accountability to the funder should not be at the expense of commitment to artists and audiences.

A large number of respondents, particularly from the arts community, had concerns about accountability. While most supported some level of accountability, there was concern that inappropriate or excessive accountability can stifle creativity and experimentation.

'Accountability is important but should not be stifling. The artist should be allowed to create and deliver within their particular art form without too many rigid restraints that inhibit the delivery of the arts.'

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Some suggested that there should be ways of reducing the burden of accountability, for instance short cuts for organisations that have proved themselves and apply regularly, or one-on-one meetings instead of forms and reports. Others argued that the Arts Council and other public funders should trust artists and arts organisations to be accountable in their own way.

There was also concern that accountability in its current form is an exercise in ticking boxes and does not capture the true meaning or value of art. It was seen as a game that everyone colludes in but that is meaningless because the real value of art is too difficult to measure.

'How do you measure how happy you make someone? How do you measure how much more tolerant a society becomes because someone took part in regular theatre projects in their youth which [...] introduced them to new and different peer groups?'

Tanuja Amarasuriya

There were also a small number of respondents who argued that artists and arts organisations should not have to be accountable at all. If art is going to be publicly funded then this should be done on the basis of trust and the recipient should then be left alone to get on with doing what they do best.

'if one is going to subsidise at all it should be without strings or interference.'
Geoff (online)

5.4.5 Monitoring and evidence

Many respondents saw monitoring and evidence as essential tools in ensuring accountability. Organisations have a responsibility to monitor their progress and provide evidence of their achievements and how they have used their funds.

'To negotiate appropriate and challenging targets with their funders and monitor and evaluate their performance against these.'

*National Association of Local
Government Arts Officers*

These respondents felt that organisations should be able to demonstrate the difference they have made in transforming lives and communities. Several respondents recommended that there should be a range of outputs and outcomes agreed at the point of funding which the funded organisation should deliver on. Some respondents would like the funding recipient to provide evidence of how they had achieved these goals, with a few emphasising the importance of this evidence being robust and setting out clearly the impact of the work. It was suggested that organisations should be recording numbers of attendees and participants, evaluating the impact of their activities and learning lessons from this knowledge.

'Ensure continuous appraisal and renewal of goals in line with public needs.'
Samantha Mellows

This was particularly important to some stakeholder organisations, who are concerned that the current system is not sufficiently robust. A couple of respondents expressed a desire for better evidence and assessment in those areas that have traditionally been viewed as too subjective to be measured, such as quality.

'Quality has to be measurable in some way. Publicly funded arts organisations can no longer get away with providing what they believe people want or should have and then hide behind an "it's all subjective so it's OK anyway" facade.'
Mick Gallagher

However, other respondents wanted to emphasise that while measurement and assessment are important, statistics and numerical targets are not always able to capture the nuances and complexity of the arts.

5.4.6 Stakeholder engagement and partnership:

Many respondents talked about the need for publicly funded arts organisations to work in partnership with stakeholders. Stakeholders include audiences, communities, funders, local government, the voluntary sector and other arts organisations.

Some respondents, mainly from the arts community, argued that publicly funded arts organisations have a responsibility to create and maintain a relationship with the public. This could take a number of forms. In some cases it is simply about being responsive to the needs of local people. Other respondents argued for a more proactive approach, involving research and consultation to identify the views and opinions of the public and taking these views into account in the management of the organisation. As noted previously, an important part of this is developing strong links with communities and focusing on community engagement.

Respondents also wanted organisations to work closely with funders, including local government and the Arts Council. It was suggested that closer collaboration between these groups would improve relationships and outcomes for all involved. Listening to each other and learning from each other's experience is seen as central to this.

Finally, respondents argued that arts organisations should work closely together, develop partnerships and share knowledge and skills. Respondents felt this would improve organisations' ability to reach new audiences, to deliver to communities and to advocate for the arts. It would also benefit artists and staff and would contribute to a vibrant and healthy arts sector.

'If we figured out a way to collaborate we would have the best contemporary art offering on the planet and everyone would know about it and want to participate.'

Leann Barber

However, a few respondents wanted to emphasise that partnership should not come at the expense of the organisation's own integrity.

'[It is important to have] Both a sense of partnership and negotiated development but which is also fully reflective of the independence and creative integrity of that organisation.'

Kevin Ryan

5.5 Responsibilities of the Arts Council

In addition to discussing the responsibilities of publicly funded arts organisations, many respondents took the opportunity to discuss what they believe are the responsibilities of the Arts Council. It was pointed out that the Arts Council is also a publicly funded arts organisation and that therefore this question should apply to our practices and priorities. Some respondents also felt that the Arts Council is not currently as responsible as we could be and suggested that we should 'put [our] own house in order first'.

'ACE... has some way to go before it could be considered "responsible".'

British Association of Art Therapists

A few respondents also suggested that before it is possible to answer this question, the Arts Council has to be much clearer about what our own goals and priorities are. These respondents wanted to know what public value means to the Arts Council and what our assessment methods and criteria are before they attempted to set out the responsibilities of the organisations that the Arts Council funds. Suggested responsibilities of the Arts Council and public funders in general are considered in detail in section 4.

6 Public funding for individual artists

6.1 Introduction

The fourth consultation question asked respondents to consider public funding for individual artists, currently available from Arts Council England in the form of lottery funding via the Grants for the arts programme. The question sought to gauge the views of respondents on various aspects of funding for individual artists: What type of support do artists need the most? What criteria should be applied to decide the artists who get funding? What should public funding for artists aim to achieve? The question also prompted respondents to consider some practicalities of the funding process: What conditions, if any, should be connected with grants and what type of expectations should we place on funded artists?

6.2 Overall findings

6.2.1 Key themes

Respondents approached the question in four main ways. They considered desired criteria for funding, the timing of funding, mechanisms for funding and arguments against funding individual artists.

There was general support among most of the responses for funding individual artists as well as arts organisations, although this was not universal and there was a minority who believed individual artists should not receive public funding.

Most respondents believed that funding for artists should aim to find a balance between creating benefits for the public and supporting and nurturing artists. For many, benefits for the public were broadly defined, with respondents referring to public value, community benefit or enhancement of public life. Others emphasised the importance of accessibility or reach of the work while a few required more specific social outcomes, for instance a contribution to health or education. For most respondents, benefit for the public should also be combined with criteria that ensure funding for high quality, innovative work and that ensured a degree of professional development for artists. There was also broad consensus that funding should be directed at artists who genuinely need it.

A few respondents, often artists themselves, felt that artists should have unconditional access to funding throughout their career. Some of these respondents argued that this is necessary because of the financial sacrifices necessary to be an artist.

'It's hard to be inspired, to dream, to take risks, to take time, when you can't pay your rent and you can't buy decent food.'

David Harradine (online)

Others believed that this is a question of professional acknowledgement: the work of professional artists is valuable to society and this should be acknowledged through financial support.

'[W]hen should an artist receive public money? Always – partially or entirely – as their means of working. Teachers, police officers, medical professionals etc. receive 'public' money. We need to expand the possible professional prospects for artists.'

Juniper (online)

However this was a minority view and most respondents believed that funding should come with some conditions. Some suggested that different criteria should be applied to different artists, on a case-by-case basis, although the majority attached multiple conditions and a range of criteria to funding.

6.2.2 Differences between response types

Most respondents could see a variety of reasons to fund individual artists. However, there were some differences between respondents. Stakeholders were more likely than other types of respondent to focus on the ways funding individual artists can create wider public benefit. Organisational responses from the arts sector reflected a dual concern for artists' welfare and for the wider public. Respondents from this group tended to prioritise quality of the artistic product, benefit to the public and the professional development of artists.

Artists tended to be of the view that artists should receive funding if their work is innovative, of high quality, and takes the artform forward, even at the expense of immediate popular appeal – thus public funding for artists should act as a counterbalance to commercial pressures. They were also resistant to the idea that funding for artists should be conditional on delivering on social or political agendas, or even have conditions at all.

Artists working in community contexts were much more likely to demand demonstrable public value in order for an artist to receive public money. This could take the form of tangible social outcomes or high quality experiences for audiences and participants.

A number of respondents mentioned their own amateur involvement with the arts. Having themselves gained a lot from working with professional workshop leaders or community arts workers, they tended to strongly support funding for artists to work in community settings or to facilitate amateur participation. They were more likely to think that a publicly funded artist should have a responsibility to bring work to the public and to make their art as accessible as possible.

6.3 Desired criteria for funding artists

The majority of respondents specified criteria on which selection for artist funding should be based. These criteria were varied and included the level of engagement the artist has with their audience or with the public more widely, the nature of the work that the individual produces and the impact of the artist's work on both the public and the artistic community and the talent, commitment and need of the individual seeking funding.

6.3.1 Quality

The most prominent theme across the sample was quality: there was a degree of consensus among respondents that public funding should go to artists who produce high quality art.

However, respondents used the term 'quality' in a number of different ways. For many it refers specifically to the place of a professional work of art within its genre – terms such as 'excellence', 'artistic worth', 'contribution to art' and 'integrity' featured frequently in their descriptions.

'it is important that awards to writers are made on the basis of quality first and foremost.'

The Society of Authors

'how the product contributes to the whole canon of creative endeavour.'

C. Cotton (online)

A number of these respondents recognised the difficulty of judging such subjective qualities and suggested ways in which this could be done. Some would prioritise artists' past achievements as selection criteria, funding artists of proven ability with an established portfolio of excellent work. A handful suggested that funding should be given to artists toward the later stages of their career, to commemorate their lifelong service to the arts. Others suggested that the best way to judge quality is peer review by other professional artists – who should be informed and impartial – which could capture not only past achievements but also future potential.

‘when recommended by experts in their fields.’

Natalie Highwood

However, many respondents thought that quality is not exclusive to professional artists but can also be found in other types of art, including community arts involving amateurs in artistic creation. These respondents argued that the definition of ‘quality’ may vary according to context.

‘Artists should receive public investment when it becomes clear through their emerging practice that their work is contributing to the growth and development of the arts and cultural sector, to the engagement of the wider community, and to the wider demands of sustainable human development in communities. The benchmark is still quality, but the judgment as to what amounts to quality will be different according to the intention behind the work.’

Creative Exchange

‘This also applies to community arts – which in my opinion can also have artistic integrity and excellence.’

Janey Moran (online)

As in responses to previous questions, many respondents used the term ‘quality’ to refer not only to the quality of the work produced, but also to the way it is received by the public – to the quality of experience. For these respondents, a work of ‘high quality’ is one that provides an engaging, enjoyable, exciting and inspiring experience for the audience or participants as well as the artist. This argument was often linked with the idea of offering something new to the audience.

‘When the idea is so good, so exciting that they could convince a randomly selected person in the street to part with 39p a week for the whole year to fund it. Failing that when the artist can show that it will be making something engaging, most importantly new, and that the world, however slightly, will be a more interesting one with their work in it.’

Alan Lane

6.3.2 Innovation and challenge

Another major theme in the responses was the desire for publicly funded artists to produce innovative art that contributes something new to the world. It was argued

that they act as the ‘research and development arm of our culture’ (Jacy Wall, online) and create work that is original and cutting edge.

‘Anything that pushes the boundaries of art, ie the stuff that wouldn’t normally get any kind of money but is really doing something new.’

Louisa Davison (online)

A key rationale for many respondents was that groundbreaking art provides new and challenging experiences for the audience. They argued that it can be transformative; can provoke controversy and discussion; can challenge stereotypes and change perceptions; it can widen knowledge and understanding of other people and cultures, providing exposure to other people’s points of view; and can even provoke people into political or ideological action.

‘Art changes the way you think about who you are, what is important and even how you think. Imagination and possibility, play and challenge are all on offer from good art. Even rubbish art does this sometimes.’

John Tonta (online)

‘When challenging perceptions of significant cultural situations.’

Hazel Hine

A few respondents recognised that artists who innovate and explore must be willing to take risks: not all innovations can be successful. Public funding for innovative artists should allow them space to explore and sometimes fail.

‘And we should be prepared, like anything on the edge, for it to fall flat on its face.’

Louisa Davison (online)

‘Public money is to create space for artists and artist-led projects to fail.’

Leeds Visual Arts Forum

However, a number of respondents were concerned that risky, experimental art can be alienating and felt that this is not an appropriate use of public money.

6.3.3 Professional development

Many respondents argued in favour of funding for training, skills and professional development for artists. For some this means grants for artists to pay for courses or specialist training. Others suggested that artists should be given grants to buy

or pay for a workspace and materials, to develop marketing and publicity, to set up in business and to set up and fund artists' exchange programmes.

A small number of respondents proposed that funding should be used to support networks and knowledge sharing among groups of artists. Suggestions included funding artists to mentor and encourage other artists, to share expertise among the artistic community and beyond, or to build relationships between professional artists or between artists and organisations.

'Money going to a particular artist would enable new and upcoming artists to work alongside them to reinvigorate the artistic community.'

*East Staffordshire Borough Council
(Burton College)*

Others considered the idea of professional development more broadly, arguing that at varying points in their careers artists need time and space to develop new ideas, techniques, artforms or to undertake research. Training for community artists to engage the public and work with disadvantaged groups was also mentioned.

Support for professional development was often linked to the belief that public funding should enable artists to innovate and take risks to develop their practice. Others argued that supporting professional development for artists would also benefit the public because it would result in higher quality work for audiences.

'In order to assist their professional development and help them to become more experienced in their work thus benefiting their audiences, whatever the art form.'

The Music Education Council

6.3.4 Accessibility

Many respondents argued that artists have a responsibility to ensure that their work is accessible to the public: in order to justify public funding, an artwork should be able to delight and engage people from all walks of life and with varying degrees of specialist expertise. Some defined accessibility as 'wide appeal': an artist should not be funded with public money if their work only appeals to a minority, niche audience (or at worst only themselves and a small circle of experts around them).

'Artists should not just speak to themselves – they are the voice of humanity – able to express that which is common to us all.'

Sarah Levitt

Respondents identified two types of barrier that artists need to tackle in order to ensure that their work is accessible: practical barriers (for instance physical access to a building, availability of art in the public domain) and social and cultural barriers (for instance a lack of confidence in engaging with art or a belief that the arts 'aren't for people like me'). They argued that artists need to consider the audience throughout the creative process. They should have a clear strategy for ensuring their work is available and for communicating with and engaging the public.

'We feel that public money should be conditional on the desire of the artist to communicate effectively and imaginatively to an audience of whatever kind.'

High Peak Community Arts

'When an artist is developing work for public consumption with a clear audience development strategy.'

Gary Titley MEP

Suggestions for overcoming practical barriers included a requirement for artists to make their work available to the public through exhibitions, performances, school visits, participatory workshops or a mixture of these.

'This doesn't mean that all artists have to be out there in public but their work does have to. If it's not about communication then what is it about?'

London Borough of Enfield

Suggestions for overcoming social and cultural barriers focused on communication. Respondents felt that artists should work at communicating with the public, both to make them aware of how and when they can see the work and to help them understand it. They suggested that artists provide a range of publicity materials in various media (leaflets, online marketing, programme notes, explanatory notes to accompany works) to give people all the necessary information and background needed for understanding the work and to explain the rationale and techniques around the creative process in clear, non-specialist terms. The content and media of all materials should be adjusted depending on the target groups, with consideration of their particular likes, interests and abilities (eg children, people with different levels of expert knowledge). A few respondents

also suggested that public talks and discussions about their work would be another effective way for artists to connect with their audiences.

Some respondents also felt that, whenever possible and relevant, an artist should provide opportunities for public participation in and feedback on the creative process or the end product. The internet was seen as a real opportunity in this regard as it is a relatively inexpensive way for artists to connect, communicate and interact with broader audiences across geographical areas.

However, a small number of respondents objected to the idea of aiming for wide appeal because of the risk of compromising artistic integrity and 'dumbing down'. These respondents were concerned that in order to appeal to large numbers of people, artists might have to give in to fashions of the day rather than following their own artistic calling.

'A definition of creative expression as being justified by a wide public reception is greatly limiting. Creativity that's worth its salt doesn't pander to popular appetites...'

Stephen John Clark (online)

This view was most commonly expressed by respondents from the arts sector. However, even within this group it was a minority view and most artists emphasised the importance of accessibility. This online exchange illustrates this point:

'Who deserves to be funded? The only criterion for funding/grant eligibility should be: that an artist show a consistent body of works that reflects creativity, quality, loads of potential and dedication to refine their craft to a higher level. "Art is for the Soul" not for the masses.'

ac, online

'If "Art is for the soul" not for the masses [...] does this mean the masses have no soul? Good art will touch many people and needn't be elitist. I used to feel like that at art school but with hindsight I was living in an unreal world (although very pleasant).'

Andy Hawkins (online)

Many respondents took the middle ground on this issue, arguing that in order to be accessible art need not be 'dumbed down', but that it is the responsibility of the

artist to communicate and convey the meaning of their work to their audience, regardless of how complex it is.

6.3.5 Reach

Some respondents believed that an artist should be funded when public subsidy would significantly increase the reach of their work; or, conversely, when the lack of funding would severely reduce the number of people that have the opportunity to engage with it. Many suggestions for how this might work in practice focused on engaging 'hard-to-reach' groups by funding artists to work in hospitals, prisons and with people with a disability, on low incomes and from minority ethnic groups.

'I believe my organisation (An arts organisation) should receive public money for engaging 'hard to reach' people (this is a minefield I know), inspiring them, giving them permission and confidence to be creative. We all have it in us but some just need a little bit of help.'

Debbie Dean (online)

6.3.6 Social benefit

A proportion of respondents argued that in order to receive funding artists should provide some specific social benefits. These included working with communities, in education and health, and contributing to economic growth and 'conflict resolution'.

Community

Many respondents felt that an artist should receive support when their work contributes positively to the community. These respondents believed that artists should be working with local people in local areas, engaging people who would not otherwise have a chance to get involved in the arts. Many respondents made comments about the importance of artists collaborating with communities on commissioning and planning work and providing opportunities for communities to get involved in participatory arts projects. This is particularly important to respondents who were themselves amateur participants and felt they had benefited from working with artists in this way.

The rationale for many respondents is the contribution artists can make to improving community cohesion by providing opportunities for people to come together, meet new people and share experiences.

Respondents also mentioned that the ideal target groups of community work are the most disadvantaged people in society, including the elderly and the disabled.

Others supported funding for artists undertaking community work with children and young people.

'When they want to use their art in ways that make life better for other people, especially less privileged than themselves and from different social groups.'

Sarah Levitt

Education

There was also support for funding for artists engaged with educational activities. While children and young people were most often mentioned, a few respondents also underlined the importance of life-long learning.

Economic benefit

A small number of respondents, primarily stakeholders, supported funding for artists in cases where their work demonstrates clear economic benefits. This could take the form of creating employment opportunities or contributing to the regeneration of a particular area by improving the built environment. It was also suggested that an artist could contribute to a regional or national economy by creating art that presents a region or nation in a good light and attracts increased tourism.

Health

A number of people mentioned the potential of art and arts participation to contribute to health and wellbeing, proposing that artists working in art therapy, with the disabled or other health-related projects should be supported with public funds.

Conflict resolution

A small number of respondents would like to see funding to go to artists whose work contributes to resolving or preventing conflict. Examples of the types of projects that could achieve this include international collaborative work, cultural exchanges, educational work to promote understanding of different cultures and artworks which challenge the audience to think about related issues in new ways.

6.3.7 Need

A number of respondents argued that decisions about funding artists should be based on need. Even if not properly means tested, there should be clear evidence

that any artist receiving public funding needs the money and that there are no other sources of funding available to them.

'A genuine need should be an important part of the criteria.'

Arts Council for North Herefordshire

In the opinion of these respondents, this principle needs to be considered in addition to any other desired criteria – for example, even if an artist's work is of the highest quality and benefits society to a great degree, they should not be funded with public money unless they need extra support to deliver the work or complete a project. A number of respondents, many speaking from personal experience, emphasised the point by highlighting the large number of artists in genuine financial need.

A key aspect of this theme is support for non-commercial artists. This argument was particularly popular among the online responses. It was argued that artists who cannot support themselves commercially are the most in need of public funding. It was also noted that markets do not provide certain kinds of projects very well, for example participatory work with children and young people, and that artists who work in these areas are particularly in need of public support.

'[W]hen their work is good and/or important and unlikely to be of immediate commercial interest (it's another exercise to establish how that might be judged!).'

Caroline Anders

Some respondents took this further, arguing that non-commercial artists not only need public funding, but that they also deserve it because of the non-commercial nature of their work. These respondents saw it as important to support non-commercial artists as a counterbalance to market-driven art and artists. Some saw this as the only way to ensure artistic diversity. Others saw market failure as a sign of artistic integrity: artists who are unpopular have followed their own path instead of producing what the majority wants, and they should be supported financially to allow them to continue to do so.

'[Artists should be] Freed from commercial pressures.'

Sanjeevini Dutta

6.3.8 Talent and commitment

A handful of respondents argued that the artist must demonstrate talent and commitment in order to receive funding. These qualities in the artist were connected to high quality in the work: in the challenging world of artistic creation, only someone with talent, passion, integrity, long-term commitment and determination to achieve has the potential to thrive and to develop their art to the highest professional level.

6.3.9 Effective delivery

For a number of respondents, it is important to award public money only to artists capable of delivering what they promised. This principle was valued particularly highly by respondents from local authorities. Respondents suggested a number of ways in which this could be judged prior to a funding decision, with indicators of good practice including:

- a clear proposal with objectives and delivery plan
- a solid business plan with detailed budgets
- evidence of capacity to deliver
- effective use of networks and partnerships, including local partnerships
- evidence of earlier projects delivered to agreed outcomes
- market research showing a clear demand/market for the work

'quality/consistency of product is not sufficient; there needs to be a clearly articulated audience/market for the work, which is realistic and resourced.'

Audiences Central

To the same end, respondents suggested that the funding agreement for a project or a specific piece of art should give strict specifications of expected outputs to maximise the chances of the artist completing the work.

A few respondents also suggested that public funding should not be granted to an artist unless they present evidence that they have also successfully secured other sources of funding.

6.3.10 Longevity

A handful of respondents believed that funding decisions should give priority to those artists whose work is likely to deliver benefits over a long period of time. One suggestion was that the outcomes of the funded project should have a lasting impact – for example, a durable public artwork. Alternatively, the funding should make a difference to the artist's career in the long term – for instance, the artist should be able to use the skills or experience from the funded project in the future

to support other artists, or the funding should allow the artist to become self-sufficient and continue to contribute to the development of the artform for a long period of time afterwards.

6.3.11 Unsuitable areas for funding

A small number of respondents mentioned specific types of artistic expression that they felt would be inappropriate to fund with public money. These included art constituting an artist's personal political statement and art which contains elements of offensive content such as pornography and violence.

'As all art is an interpretation and expression full reign should be given to this, but there are obviously certain subjects which must remain out of bounds. Sensitive issues such as pornography and gratuitous violence, art of an offensive nature. These should not and must not be encouraged.'

Sharon Cattermole

6.4 Timing of funding

In addition to artistic criteria and desired outcomes, many people also expressed views on when in their careers artists should receive public funding. Respondents generally focused on funding at the start of an artist's career or on the general principle of lifelong support.

6.4.1 Start-up funding

Among the sample, the most support was given to funding artists at the early stages of their professional career. Several arguments, often in combination, were used to support start-up funding.

The most common reasoning for start-up funding was genuine need: the life of an emerging artist is difficult and as an unknown name they cannot command high fees for their completed works or attract sponsorship like more established artists. Therefore public funding has an important role to play.

'Many of our graduates have been supported in the difficult transition from student to self-sufficient artist... by Arts Council funding, which has often acted as pump-priming to allow young artists to take their first step onto the professional ladder. This can be of immense importance in supporting graduate retention.'

*Culture Committee of Universities for
the North East*

There was some disagreement as to the ideal timing of start-up funding. Some respondents supported funding straight after graduation, highlighting the fact that around three years after graduation the majority of arts graduates have left the arts. Others argued that this drop-off is a healthy natural selection: funding two or three years after graduation would help to identify those with a true determination to succeed.

Respondents also specified that start-up funding should be available to those early-career artists who have 'potential'. It was argued that start-up funding should allow these artists to undergo further professional training, develop their personal style, build their artistic practice or business, develop an audience and make their name in the artistic circles. This would allow them to become self-sufficient and it was felt that funding could then cease. As one respondent observed, this system would in effect replace the past tradition of apprenticeships, aiming to train artists toward future independence.

A number of respondents also spoke about using start-up funding to encourage innovation: early-career artists supported by public money should develop their ideas and explore new ground, without being too concerned about popularity or immediate commercial success. A number of respondents saw it as important that starting artists are allowed to develop their artistic language free from commercial pressures.

Finally, while many of the responses associated start-up grants with young artists, a few respondents suggested that this should also apply to mature students after graduating or that there should be no age limit on start-up grants.

6.4.2 Ongoing funding opportunities

A number of respondents also highlighted the importance of supporting artists not just at the start of their career, but at various stages throughout their career, whenever it can make a significant positive difference to their artistic development.

For some respondents this point was also about fairness and equal opportunities in terms of age: funding should not just be channelled to young, aspiring artists but the needs of all age groups should be considered equally.

'...everything is geared to the young aspiring artists, but in many cases, the most needy (and most competent and developed) artists are in the group over 60 who find themselves marginalized by the system.'

Lillian Delevoryas

6.5 Mechanisms for funding artists

Respondents suggested a number of mechanisms to ensure effective funding of individual artists.

6.5.1 Loans and payback schemes

The most common suggestion was the idea of a grant payback scheme. This was seen to address concerns about spending public money on something that could potentially support itself commercially. It was argued that if an artist makes money with a project that was publicly funded they should pay back the grant. This arrangement would increase support for public funding for artists as the public could be confident that the money would only go to those who needed it. It would also ensure artists had the security to take risks, as those who never achieve success would not be required to pay back their grant.

A related idea suggested by several respondents was the creation of a loan scheme: artists should receive loans, to be paid back when they have managed to sell the completed artwork or achieved a level of financial stability.

'Artists should pay back grants when they become successful, as with student loans.'

*Dartford and Gravesham Local
Strategic Partnership*

These loans could help emerging artists to establish themselves, allow an artist to pursue training, receive mentoring or set up a business, while not permanently reducing the funds available for other causes. Some respondents believed that there should be minimal selection criteria for qualifying for such loans, which would remove the subjective, qualitative element from funding decisions, making funding fairer.

Some respondents suggested that artists could pay back their loan by donating the work produced as a result.

'If small grants were available to artists upon request and in exchange for a fixed number of completed works (it would be like selling their work) – these pieces of work could then be donated to charities for them to fundraise against. It seems to me that it could be a win/win situation, with the same 'pot' of money being circulated within the community. The artist gains, the charity gains and

they might not then need to make a claim against the original or similar 'pot' of public money!

Liz Holman (online)

Another suggestion was that all work produced with the help of public funding should belong to the public and the artist should not be allowed to sell it for their own profit. One respondent suggested that publicly funded works should be 'made available to the public under a Creative Commons Attribution or Share-Alike licence', since this would ensure that 'the public are able to benefit from the work they have paid for by copying from it while the artist is still free to sell the original work' (Rob Myers, online).

6.5.2 Commissions

There was also fairly widespread support for using public money to commission specific works or projects from artists throughout their careers. This included funding for artists to produce public art and 'artist in residence' programmes. Some respondents also stipulated that the projects should be of high quality (judged on artist's track record), accessible and interesting to the public or otherwise of public benefit. For that reason, some suggested that works commissioned with public money should be placed in a public collection or loaned to public exhibitions.

6.5.3 Multi-staged and retrospective funding

Some respondents proposed the use of multi-stage funding agreements to improve the chances of a project achieving what it was funded to do. One proposed model was to pay grants in instalments throughout the project, to allow periodic evaluation of progress. Another proposal was to pay only expenses in the planning and running stages, and pay the rest of the grant on completion of the project. Another respondent suggested setting up a centrally held account to which invoices for studio time and other expenses can be billed up to a certain amount.

In addition, a number of respondents suggested that grants should be awarded retrospectively, when the final form, quality and impact of the project or work is known.

6.5.4 Limited funding

In order to improve the fairness of the funding system and to increase the number of artists receiving awards, it was also suggested that there should be limits on the number of awards or residencies a single artist can receive from any one public source.

6.5.5 Longer-term funding

A number of respondents suggested the introduction of longer-term funding agreements instead of having all artist funding in the form of project-based grants. It was felt that this would allow freer artistic exploration and longer-term planning.

'The current GfA [Grants for the arts] set up seems to be quite flexible in terms of eligibility but I would really like to see the introduction of something like fellowships where artists could receive money just to go off and think/work without it leading to any particular project.'

Mark Wilsher (online)

Specific suggestions as to how this might work included a scheme that would mirror the current Arts Council system of regular funding for organisations by granting artists funding for three-year periods. Other respondents, predominantly artists, suggested some form of guaranteed salary scheme in which artists would receive a regular income from the Arts Council. Others suggested supporting artists through the tax and benefits system, for instance by granting artists tax-free status or by allowing artists to qualify for income support.

'Just like scientists. I believe the best way of accommodating this necessary, maverick, section of our society is to ease the basic cost of simply surviving, rather than making us jump through hoops to receive a finite amount of money to do something specific. Ireland used to have a policy of artists being income-tax free. This strikes me as being truly enlightened, more so than the Dutch policy of buying everything artists make (again, now not continued). This is the kind of route to supporting artists that I would wholeheartedly support. Public funding would then address more straightforward projects such as Arts in Health, Community Arts etc.'

jacy wall (online)

6.5.6 Alternative distribution mechanisms

A number of respondents thought that it would be more appropriate for the money to be distributed to artists via arts organisations such as galleries. In their view, arts organisations are better placed than larger agencies like the Arts Council or the government to oversee who it goes to and make sure funding distribution is fair. The organisations could also provide artists with other types of support, such as access to their networks of contacts, training, equipment, help with publicity and marketing.

Another suggested method of distributing artist funding is to divide the funding pot among the regions, which would then disburse the funds equally among artists working within the region, leading to reductions in administration costs and equal support across regions.

6.5.7 Other sources of financial support

A number of respondents also felt that funding for artists could be leveraged from many other sources, in addition to or instead of the public purse. The most frequently mentioned source of further funds was the private sector. Many respondents felt that the private sector should be encouraged to support artists by funding artist residencies, providing training bursaries, or by sponsoring and commissioning art in their local area as part of their social corporate responsibility scheme.

'I believe companies should sponsor artists in the local community, and commission them as part of this sponsorship, as Mozart and Handel were patronised by royalty. Lets go back to that way of funding. Then they will have funds and means to develop.'

Sharon Cattermole

It was also suggested that the role of the Arts Council should be to facilitate this process.

6.5.8 In-kind support

Finally, in addition to direct, monetary support, several respondents proposed other ways to support artists. For some in-kind support should supplement, for others replace, direct funding for artists. The most common suggestion was to support artists by subsidising facilities or equipment, for example studios, workspaces, musical equipment, rehearsal spaces and spaces to exhibit work.

Another area that was mentioned a number of times was supporting artists by providing information and advice. A number of people spoke of the benefits of mentoring schemes in particular: established artists should mentor younger ones, helping them with artistic and practical aspects of their careers. Participation in mentoring schemes could be made a condition of funding for established artists. Mentoring could also be an aspect of an artist's relationship with an arts organisation: in addition to a workspace and work opportunities, arts organisations could offer artists their in-house technical expertise and make provisions for mentoring with staff members.

Respondents felt this advice would be particularly valuable for developing professional skills that would help artists become sustainable, for example advice on running and establishing a business and available sources of funding. Some respondents felt that the Arts Council itself should play this role, supporting young artists to set up businesses or access financial support. In addition, it was suggested that the Arts Council could support artists by facilitating networks and information exchange among the artist community. Others suggested that the Arts Council could advocate for and establish a procedural and legal framework that supports artists. Examples of where this would be beneficial included pension schemes, unions, professional representative bodies and recognition under the government labour market index.

6.6 Arguments against funding artists

Around a tenth of respondents used their response to this question to express their disagreement with the principle of funding artists directly with public money. This theme was particularly prominent in the online debate. Interestingly, a number of artists themselves made strong cases against funding artists.

The most common argument against funding for individual artists had to do with fairness and the proper use of public money: tax payers' money is intended to be spent on the public good, not to subsidise any individual's career progression.

'Why should any career be publicly funded? If an artist is any good their work will sell. If not, get a job and make art a hobby.'

Bitter & Twisted artist (online)

Several respondents also stated that other professions do not receive subsidy and it is therefore unfair for artists to be subsidised.

'I do not work to pay artists, artists are no more important than plumbers, the last time I looked plumbers do not expect to be funded by the state. The somebody who should be capable of deciding the value of an artists work exists, it is called the free market, as in all other pursuits.'

Shanghai (online)

In the online debate, a few respondents argued that there are more worthwhile demands on the public purse: while there are still children in the UK living in poverty and hospitals and schools in need of support, the struggle of individual artists does not feature high on their list of priorities.

A few respondents also felt that funding artists is not in line with their understanding of the aims and rationale of public funding for the arts. For example, for a few of those who understand the role of public funding to be primarily about increasing access to the arts, funding individual artists is not the best way to advance this cause.

Those artists who argued against artist funding tended to do so on the grounds that public funding affects quality because the conditions attached compromise an artist's integrity: funding makes artists produce art for the funders, instead of producing art in response to their inner artistic calling.

'Real artists never have and never will need funding. I have yet to be moved by an artwork that was funded. Funding breeds mediocrity. Stop moaning and get on with it.'

Lazio Marx (online)

The 'dependency culture' caused by the availability of public funding for individual artists was also seen as harmful to artistic production.

'Public funding of artists is a disease posing as a cure... it creates a dependency culture within the artistic community leading to an unwritten belief in the power of the state to 'dictate culture' and paradoxically disempowering artists in their self belief.'

Tim Rose (online)

Conversely, a few respondents suggested that hardship (ie lack of funding) can yield better art because true artists will create with or without money. Thus, while the motivated ones will continue, the 'mountains of dross will hopefully disappear' (Andy Hawkins, online).

7 Public involvement in decision-making

7.1 Introduction

The last of the five key consultation questions asked respondents to consider whether members of the public should be involved in arts funding decisions. Most decisions about arts funding are made by professionals, namely Arts Council staff, with guidance from artists and public bodies. While recognising that this expert opinion is critical, this question sought to gather broad views on the potential advantages and disadvantages of greater public involvement in the decision-making process. Would greater public involvement bring arts funding closer to the needs and expectations of society? Respondents were also asked to consider the different ways in which members of the public could be involved, how much time and energy people would have to invest, whether it would improve the decisions made and what might happen if members of the public and experts disagree.

7.2 Overall findings

7.2.1 Key themes

Across all written and online responses there were three main approaches to answering this question. Around a quarter of respondents were broadly in favour of greater public involvement in arts funding decisions, generally as a means of strengthening the democratic process, responding better to public need or encouraging greater public engagement with the arts. Another substantial minority (around a fifth of respondents) were broadly opposed to the overall concept of public involvement, with key rationales being that decisions about arts funding would be overly safe or conservative; that members of the public lack the necessary knowledge and expertise; and that the existing democratic process is sufficient to represent the public interest. The third and most commonly held position was to support a limited level of public involvement, either in specific contexts only, such as community-based arts activity or in setting or informing broad priorities, with individual funding decisions made by experts.

In addition to these three key themes, some respondents suggested tools and techniques for involving the public in decision-making. Others noted the methodological challenges of public consultation and made some practical recommendations as to how they might be overcome. Finally, there were a number of suggestions for improving overall accountability in the publicly funded arts sector without necessarily involving the public themselves in the decision-making process.

7.2.2 Differences between respondent types

Individuals, including those responding online, were more likely to take a stand one way or the other, either broadly in favour of or opposed to the concept of greater public involvement in arts funding decisions. Organisational responses tended to advocate some sort of balance between public and expert input.

Responses varied across individuals and organisations in different sectors and roles but it was possible to identify a few patterns. Amateur arts participants were particularly keen on involving the public in decision-making and on engaging communities in a dialogue about the arts activities that will best meet their needs. By contrast, artists were generally more likely to oppose public involvement and were particularly concerned that public taste and conservatism would hinder artistic development. Arts organisations tended to support a limited degree of public involvement, often with public views and preferences being taken into account but final decisions made by experts. Individuals and organisations with a specific community or diversity focus were likely to be in favour of public involvement at a local level in decisions that affect them directly. Other stakeholders, particularly local authorities, tended to advocate an overall decision-making process that is effective and fair, with public involvement given due weight within that.

In the online debate there was a particular focus on the importance and effectiveness of the existing democratic process and on alternative forms of accountability.

7.3 Arguments for

For a small number of respondents, involving members of the public in the decision-making process for arts funding was an obvious, intuitive thing to do – they saw no reason why not and responded positively to the question without providing a specific rationale to support their position. Other respondents chose to explain the potential benefits of greater public involvement in decision-making and collectively put forward a wide range of arguments in favour of the overall concept.

7.3.1 Democracy and accountability

Many respondents argued in favour of involving members of the public in arts funding decisions as a means of strengthening or expanding the process of democracy. They pointed out that members of the public provide the finance for and are generally the intended beneficiaries of public spending and as such are entitled to have a say in how the money is distributed. A number of respondents

argued the importance of members of the public feeling that their views are listened to and appreciated.

'I believe in democracy and feel very strongly that tax payers and lottery punters should be consulted on how their money is spent.'

Dympna Le Rasle (online)

Public involvement in decision-making was also seen as an important aspect of accountability and transparency. By asking 'awkward questions', members of the public would be able to challenge professionals and ensure that decisions were open and fair.

'Public arts funding should not be immune from public scrutiny or influence.'

*East Staffordshire Borough Council
(Burton and District Arts Council)*

Some respondents noted that members of the public are already involved in decision-making in other areas of public life – education, health, policing and justice through the British jury system.

7.3.2 Response to public need

A number of respondents stated that by involving members of the public in the decision-making process, funders could become more responsive to public preferences and account for a wider range of views and priorities. Some felt that officials are often out of touch with the needs and desires of individuals and communities and are not always aware of the impact of their activities. It was argued that members of the public are well placed to make decisions about the arts activities that will best meet the needs of their communities, particularly at a local level.

'At BCT, one of our primary purposes [is] to enable communities to make decisions about what professional arts will meet the needs of their communities and to organise its promotion. Children and people who have no other access to the arts professions are making sound and discerning decisions about how the arts make sense and enhance their quality of life.'

Black Country Touring

Linked to this was the belief that a better understanding of what people want in the first place would help avoid or mitigate funding 'disasters' – capital builds that fail

due to lack of local interest or artworks in public spaces that become a source of hostility or vandalism.

'As an artist myself, I often see a bewildering amount of public art that is neither inspirational or inspiring. It often gets vandalised or neglected, and in some cases is considered such an eyesore that it is an embarrassment to the local council. At least with a public vote at the design state, further funds needn't be wasted if the design is found to be unpopular.'

Steve Lyon-Bowes (online)

7.3.3 Reduced bias and fresh thinking

A related argument was that the subjective views of a small group of 'experts' can bias the decision-making process, particularly if those experts have interests to protect or are not representative of the wider population.

'I recognise the possible pitfalls in this but unless they're [the public] involved the whole funding exercise could become an orgy of middle class back slapping.'

Colin Tarrant

Some respondents were concerned that top-down decision-making can be patronising and that it isn't possible for any small group to have a definitive view on what is valuable from a public perspective.

'Too often in the past, artistic merit and quality has been decided upon... by what certain individuals/organisations feel is good for public consumption.'

Mick Gallagher

Others felt that members of the public could bring a sense of balance and realism and help avoid an excess of artworks and activities that might be considered 'extreme' or 'shocking'.

'Local councils often spend large amounts of the public's money on projects that are not wanted. Some of the projects in my home town are, quite frankly, bizarre.'

Zoe Bremer (online)

Some respondents took this argument further and stated that involving members of the public would bring fresh ideas and perspectives, resulting in better and possibly more innovative decisions. It was argued that professional groups and

organisations can become inward looking and stale and would benefit from the insight of 'end users'.

'It can seem that the arts establishment is hermetically sealed.'

Jane Atkinson

It was felt by some that engaging a diverse range of voices would encourage disagreement and debate, which would in turn generate alternative and more creative solutions.

7.3.4 Support for and engagement with the arts

Many respondents were in favour of greater public involvement in the arts funding process because they believed it would lead to increased awareness, understanding and appreciation of the arts, which in turn would stimulate greater participation in a wider range of artforms.

'There can be no doubt that by involving the public in funding and provision decisions this will ensure greater engagement with and appreciation of the work or artistic endeavour and participation within the lives of individuals in all local communities.'

Mick Gallagher

For some, public involvement in decision-making was an important means of fostering greater understanding of the purpose and nature of art and the role of the artist in society. Others felt that the more people are engaged in the process, the more likely they are to value and engage with the end product. This was felt to be particularly true in the case of local regeneration projects and 'public art', where a lack of community engagement can lead to suspicion or resentment.

'...particularly critical in regeneration arts projects where local community engagement has proved to be the key to success in the future and legacy of the project.'

Rosemary Pennington

It was argued that greater public involvement would encourage a greater sense of ownership and pride, helping to embed the arts at the centre of community life.

'We have a real responsibility to genuinely engage with all sectors, including young people. It is only by doing so that the wider community will begin to see and value the arts as theirs.'

Robin Widdowson (online)

A number of respondents felt that it would also lead directly to more active engagement with the arts, developing audiences and widening participation. For some, this would occur because members of the public would be likely to support projects that appeal to a large population, widening the definition of the arts and encouraging more non-professional and community-based work.

'It could be fun, help to create a sense of community, and help to involve more people in the arts. It's an essential move forward.'

Trevor Lockwood (online)

Many respondents believed that all of these developments would ultimately lead to greater support for the arts, for public funding of the arts and for the Arts Council itself.

'This involvement would lead to greater appreciation of the art world and spur on the general public to protect the progression of the arts sector.'

Bridget Berko (online)

'It would mean new duties, new accountability and humility, and I think an enhanced popularity and success for the Arts Council.'

Paul Miskin (online)

7.3.5 Learning and empowerment

Finally, a small number of respondents supported the notion of public involvement in decision-making as they felt it would provide opportunities for constructive debate, for people to express themselves and learn and develop new skills and for discovering 'hidden talent'. It could also give individuals and communities a sense of empowerment and inclusion. For some, art appreciation is 'innate' and members of the public are therefore very capable of applying their understanding and skills to the problem.

'We are an intelligent group of people – capable of making serious choices.'

Trevor Lockwood (online)

7.4 Arguments against

At the same time, a number of respondents expressed concern or reservations about the prospect of greater public involvement in arts funding decisions.

'Absolutely not, this is a stupid idea.'

The Group

While some of these respondents did not provide any further explanation of their position, many respondents set out their rationale and collectively suggested a number of possible negative consequences of greater public involvement.

7.4.1 Lowest common denominator

One of the most common arguments against greater public involvement in the arts funding process was that policies and decisions might veer towards 'safe', 'bland' and 'conservative' work. It was argued that by trying to account for a wide range of opinions and tastes, public committees would inevitably resort to the 'lowest common denominator'. Respondents had varying views as to how damaging this could be.

'We'll simply get more of what we like – no bad thing in itself – but art isn't only entertainment. It has a bigger brief.'

Alison MacLeod

'If you merely obeyed the average common denominator you'd probably end up with cosy art for timid people, inoffensive but utterly anodyne and ultimately truly depressing because it errs on the side of safety. The arts thrive on RISK.'

Carol McGuigan

'Allowing the public to influence funding decisions will lead to Lowest Common Denominator Art. We do not want our theatres becoming reality TV venues.'

Cube

For many, public involvement in decision-making could limit innovation, diversity and quality and could make it more difficult for artists and arts organisations to take risks and challenge their audiences. Some respondents argued that artistic vision could become 'diluted' and emphasised the need for professionals to make bold decisions.

'As a consumer of art, I want an expert guide to challenge me and give me the chance to have new artistic experiences. I may not enjoy them all, but I would

rather risk a bad but challenging experience than just access art that has been democratically chosen and is safe.'

db (online)

7.4.2 Lack of expertise

A closely related argument was that members of the public lack the skills, expertise and experience to make effective arts funding decisions. For some, the subject matter is complex and it takes time and effort to develop the ability to appraise potential projects.

'Members of the public are not necessarily qualified to judge and we feel the right expert opinion is critical to making a decision.'

The Society of Portrait Sculptors

A key rationale here was that non-professionals are not always able to imagine the unknown – it was argued that people don't know what they like until they've seen it, and in some cases it can take years for an artwork to be recognised and understood.

'It's the public's money, but they don't always know about what they haven't seen, or understand the possibilities.'

Anna Ingleby (online)

A minority of respondents took this argument further, stating that members of the public don't understand work until it has been presented to them and interpreted by professionals. Some respondents were concerned that members of the public would be closed-minded or prejudiced when it comes to certain artforms:

'Shouldn't the decision-making process be unbiased? If this is rare enough with arts professionals on the panel, can we expect the public to have an open mind about contemporary art?'

ArtLink Exchange

Many respondents would prefer to leave decision-making to experts, who were seen to bring in-depth knowledge of specific artforms as well as vision, passion and commitment. A number of respondents argued that professional organisations are able to approach decision-making with objectivity, breadth of perspective and knowledge of regional and national priorities whereas members of the public can be irrational and are unlikely to see the 'bigger picture'. Some pointed out that the arts are a profession like any other and should be managed as such.

7.4.3 Not feasible

Some respondents were opposed to the concept of involving members of the public in arts funding decisions on the grounds that it would be very difficult if not impossible from a practical or methodological perspective. A number of respondents were concerned that greater public involvement would be expensive and time-consuming. Some felt that a genuinely democratic process would necessitate large-scale consultation on a regular basis and that even then it may not be possible to represent a sufficiently wide range of views.

A related argument was that the greater the number of people involved, the harder it might become to actually make decisions. It was pointed out that committees of experts find it difficult to achieve consensus already, and some felt that it would be impossible for large public groups to come to a decision that would please everybody involved. This was seen to be particularly problematic given the personal, emotive nature of the subject matter and varied and contradictory tastes of individuals.

'All decisions are subjective even those of arts professionals, so if members of the general public were asked to contribute their views about who should be funded and who should not, the debate could run and run. In the end who got the funding would have to be chosen by a majority vote which would... not please those in the minority, so... let the professionals get on with it.'

Alexandra Scott (online)

Some respondents felt that members of the public are either too busy or not interested enough to give up the time required. Some argued that only those with particularly strong viewpoints or vested interests would be willing to engage and that over time, public representation would become dominated by the 'usual suspects'.

Finally, a small minority of respondents felt that public involvement in decision-making was not feasible because of a fundamental incompatibility between public needs and priorities and the concerns of artists.

'The needs and expectations of the public are generally irrelevant to the artist.'

Richard La Trobe-Bateman

7.4.4 Not required in a representative democracy

A number of respondents, particularly in the online debate, believed that public involvement in arts funding decisions is not required as the system of representative democracy is already designed to ensure that the public interest is represented and reflected in government policy and the distribution of public funds. It was argued that the government delegates decision-making to an arm's-length body (the Arts Council), which in turn employs experts to make decisions on behalf of the wider population. Similarly it was felt that public involvement is not required at a local level because councillors are already elected to make decisions on behalf of their communities.

For a minority of respondents, engaging members of the public more actively in the decision-making process would represent an abdication of responsibility on the part of Government, the Arts Council and possibly voters themselves.

'...the United Kingdom is a representative democracy, not a direct one. We elect our representatives to make choices on our behalf and if we do not like those choices then we can always vote the buggers out... we have the solution in our political hands.'

Clive Gray (online)

Some called for public funders to take greater responsibility for their own decisions and to show leadership in both reflecting and shaping public opinion. It was also questioned whether giving a greater role to the public in decision-making might negate the need for an arm's-length funding body.

'It is not the UK's custom to create policy through plebiscite. Arm's Length bodies were created (a) to be independent of government (b) to have expertise and (c) to have the courage of their convictions in making difficult choices.'

Christopher Gordon (online)

A number of respondents suggested that members of the public are not involved in making decisions about other areas of public expenditure such as hospitals or the military, and it was no more appropriate to involve them in decisions about arts funding.

7.4.5 Sufficient involvement already

A further development of this argument was that members of the public are already sufficiently involved in arts funding decisions. A key concept here was that Arts Council staff, national and regional arts councils and arts funding committees

in general are all made up of individuals who, while they may have a particular interest or expertise in the arts, are ultimately members of the public.

'...we have to think of what we mean by public and how we would define a 'member of the public' in this instance because whatever our expertise or passions are all still members of the public.'

Alice Angus

Several respondents also felt that members of the public already have considerable influence as audience members, trustees and shareholders of arts organisations, media critics and through the general weight of public opinion. In particular, it was argued by some that market mechanisms already enable public desires and priorities to influence the kind of art that is produced and consumed.

'Box office pressure is a blunt instrument, but it essentially provides an on-going dialogue between an arts organisation and the public, which is effectively written in to the Arts Council's funding decisions.'

Graeme Rigby (online)

A small number of respondents pointed out that members of the public already make decisions in certain artforms or in certain contexts (such as the commissioning of public art) and indeed may already be more engaged than they are in other areas of public life.

7.5 Striking a balance

While some respondents argued strongly in favour or against greater public involvement in decision-making, the majority of respondents could see both strengths and weaknesses in the concept and therefore concluded that a degree of public involvement was desirable, but in specific contexts only or as a part of a broader process which incorporates a range of views, including those of experts. For many this reflected a more general desire that art should both challenge and engage people, and that public funding should seek to meet a range of needs.

'It is essential that risks are taken and art is a challenge to the communities that are its direct audience, but this must be balanced with many projects offering local communities a sense of empowerment to shape the space that they live and work in.'

Corinne Lewis (online)

7.5.1 Limited involvement or a combination of views

One of the most commonly held views across all responses to this question was that there should be a limited amount of consultation and engagement but that members of the public should not be involved directly in day-to-day decision-making. For some respondents, this simply means ensuring that public opinions are sought on a regular basis and that their concerns and interests are understood. Others felt that members of the public should provide ideas and recommendations and be engaged in debate about the 'big issues'. A small number of respondents suggested that members of the public should be involved retrospectively, providing feedback, evaluating work or having a chance to appeal decisions that have been made.

Another common standpoint here was that members of the public should be involved in developing arts policy, agreeing broad priorities and setting criteria for funding. In this way the general principles underpinning arts funding would reflect public needs and expectations, but members of the public would not need to be involved in making decisions on the ground.

In fact many respondents (particularly representatives of the arts community) supported the general principle that members of the public should be consulted but that trained experts – with knowledge of and expertise in particular artforms – should make the final decisions. For many it was important that experts listen to the views of members of the public and take them into account when making decisions.

'The public should be consulted and their view listened to and added to the professionals' view. At the end of the day though, the final decisions still need to be made by the professionals.'

*Temple Normanton School Play
Scheme*

A related argument was that decisions should be made by a mix of people, taking into account a combination of opinions and perspectives. These respondents felt that members of the public should play a role alongside experts and professional officers, and suggested that it would be positive for people with different levels of knowledge and understanding to work together as a team. For some, this was about finding a sensible middle ground for arts funding and avoiding extremes.

'...the extreme of excluding the public entirely can lead to elitist decisions that can alienate the chap (or chappess) on the Clapham omnibus. However, the

other extreme of funding art based exclusively on popularity runs the risk of lowest common denominator art... A moderate way that avoids the two extremes seems best to me.'

Darren Ross (online)

In general most respondents here advocated a balance between public representation and engagement and artistic independence and integrity. For many, public involvement in decision-making is important and desirable as long as funders retain breadth of vision, a degree of autonomy and a commitment to pushing artistic boundaries. Some noted how difficult this could be.

'The balance of decision-making between members of the general public and with professional expertise... is a delicate one. Where this balance has been overturned... severe damage has sometimes occurred.'

Culture Committee of Universities for the North East

Others – particularly local authorities – were seeking an overall decision-making process that is effective, transparent and allows for judgement of both artistic merit and the public good.

'Members of the Public should be part of a rational decision making process. The decision making process [must] be set in a framework that is clear, transparent, and open to adjustment over time to reflect the changing weight of priorities.'

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

'The framework should be one of informed decision-making, where quality, innovation and ideas can be reasonably assessed and judged.'

Mayor's Office, City Hall, London

7.5.2 Appropriate in certain contexts

A slightly different approach was to argue that members of the public should only be involved in decision-making in certain situations and that in other circumstances it is more appropriate for decisions to be made by experts alone. These respondents generally felt that members of the public should help make decisions about projects and activities that will affect them directly, namely community and participatory projects.

'Yes, the public should be involved in arts funding decisions... sometimes. It all depends on what the funding is intended to support. If it is a community-based initiative, then I can see the argument in favour, but I can't see a role for the public to be involved in, say, curatorial decisions of art galleries, or arts council decisions as to which artists to support.'

Steve (online)

There was widespread support for greater public involvement at a very local level, where local democratic mechanisms would enable residents to have a say in the arts projects that take place in their neighbourhood or district. In this context many respondents mentioned the importance of involving the public in decisions about 'public art' and art-led regeneration.

'Local authority led arts and regeneration programmes work best when community consultation is built in from the outset.'

*National Association of Local
Government Arts Officers*

A small number of respondents believed that members of the public should be consulted where large sums of money are involved, for example when decisions are made about allocations to major, national arts organisations. Others felt that the public should be involved in a reasonable share of the decision-making, leaving room for experts to take risks with more unusual work.

'They should have a say in at least 50% of the funding allocation, with the other 50% being for more avant-garde projects.'

*Dartford and Gravesham Local
Strategic Partnership*

Finally, some respondents noted that, if a project is aimed at a particularly marginalised community, it is important to engage members or representatives of that community from the outset.

7.5.3 Informed and interested only

A third approach to striking a balance was to argue that members of the public should be involved in decision-making but only if they have a sufficient level of knowledge and expertise. For some this means knowledge of particular artforms; for others it means a degree of support for and commitment to the arts; for others still it means people who have some sort of professional connection to the arts, such as teachers. A number of respondents also argued that to be involved in arts

funding decisions members of the public would require some more general skills such as the ability to handle complexity, an understanding of the wider context and sensitivity to the needs of different communities.

7.6 Approaches and techniques

A number of respondents took the opportunity to suggest some practical ways in which members of the public might be engaged in the decision-making process. A number of tools and techniques were considered, from general discussion and debate to steering groups and committees through to active involvement in the commissioning and creation of artistic work.

7.6.1 General debate

A number of respondents – particularly those taking part online – felt that members of the public should be engaged in an ongoing debate about the arts and their funding. Some pointed out that new technology enables large numbers of people to participate in wide-ranging discussions and felt that the Arts Council could use media such as the internet to encourage debate on key issues.

‘We are now able to create a more open society, using radio, the internet, mobile phones, podcasts etc. These present new opportunities for wide public discussion... Discussions could take place, the artist could present their case to us all.’

Trevor Lockwood (online)

‘New democratic processes of public consultation via the internet certainly could help the Arts Council decide core issues and tricky funding decisions.’

Paul Miskin (online)

Another respondent suggested using local newspapers to stimulate debate, with a pull-out arts section containing details of upcoming funding issues and questions. A small number of respondents noted the importance of creating forums for children and young people to join the debate, through schools and community groups or online.

Most of these respondents were appreciative and supportive of the arts debate itself and were keen for it to continue in some form. One respondent suggested that the arts debate be developed and become a regular feature of planning cycles.

7.6.2. Regular consultation

Some respondents advocated the development of a systematic approach to public consultation and research. This could involve a commitment to consult periodically on broad policies and processes, possibly through a national survey or more qualitative focus groups. Some suggested having consultation mechanisms in place for the development of any major new project, including a referendum on 'public art'. Several respondents suggested consulting at a local level through local authorities and regional partnerships.

7.6.3 Panels and advisors

There were a number of suggestions for involving members of the public more actively in the form of steering groups or panels, particularly at a local level. These included local cultural forums, citizens' panels and decision-making committees, often with membership organised on a fixed-term and revolving basis.

'It may be possible to use a local authority model and set up arts scrutiny panels for each region made up of local people which scrutinises the decisions made by grant giving committees.'

Bev Adams (online)

Others suggested that lay people should be included in the membership of existing boards, professional committees and local arts councils or that there should be mechanisms in place for members of the public to view the decision-making process firsthand and ask questions, raise concerns and make suggestions. It was also suggested that members of the public could act as advisors to or inspectors at the Arts Council and funded organisations.

7.6.4 Commissioning, creating and deciding on artistic work

A number of respondents were keen for members of the public to be more actively involved in deciding on and commissioning artistic work. For some this was about opportunities to vote on specific proposals, with a shortlist put together by experts or through television programmes where different arts projects and organisations could 'pitch'.

'It might be an eye opener for a local Arts Council to put together a panel of a hundred or a thousand or however many people from that area and ask them to vote online or maybe by phone on possible local arts projects.'

Jennifer (online)

Others suggested mechanisms for enabling people to explore and judge proposals more closely, either by commenting on tenders, assessing applications or again via the internet.

'Modern methods of communication such as the Internet would allow for much wider consultation than before. For example, visualisations of proposed public buildings, sculptures, or artworks could be provided via the Internet and on-line methods so that a large part of the public could comment or vote on them; similarly, sound-clips of the work of composers or writers could be made available for on-line listening and public comment/vote prior to major funding decisions.'

Caroline Gilmour

At a more local level, there was a suggestion to use the participative mechanisms of local authorities to involve people in determining the artistic activity they would like to see in their community. It was also suggested that members of the public might be engaged in the development of ideas and the design of projects, selecting and working with artists themselves. Similarly, funders could pay for an area or space for a community to produce its own work.

7.7 Methodological challenges

Many respondents noted that there are considerable practical difficulties and methodological challenges associated with involving members of the public in arts funding decisions. For some, these challenges are insurmountable and lead to a general opposition to the overall concept (see section 7.4.3). Others, however, acknowledged the potential dangers and pitfalls but felt they could be overcome through the careful design and management of the process. In general these respondents recognised that greater public involvement could be expensive, time-consuming and require significant capacity but felt that on balance it would be worthwhile. Respondents noted that it could be helpful to experiment with approaches and techniques to see what works and highlighted a number of factors that should be taken into consideration when designing a consultation process.

7.7.1 Ensuring representation

Firstly, many respondents stressed the importance of ensuring that those involved in the decision-making process are representative of the population as a whole. For some this meant achieving a balance in terms of key socio-demographic factors such as age, ethnicity and gender. Others made a more general point about the need to be sensitive to diversity within the population, noting that the public does not speak with 'one voice'.

Several respondents were concerned that only those who are already passionate, committed or have vested interests would want to take part and suggested that this could be avoided by offering appropriate remuneration or by ensuring that debate and consultation takes place in a wide range of settings, including pubs, schools and gyms.

7.7.2 Providing sufficient information

For several respondents it would be important to equip members of the public with sufficient relevant information to make considered and confident decisions. For example, information should be provided on the breadth and diversity of the arts and the nature and possible outcomes of different programmes. Some respondents also felt it would be important for participants to understand the concept of risk, be encouraged to experiment with the unknown and indeed recognise when an expert opinion may be required.

'Mechanisms must be created whereby the public are suitably equipped, encouraged and respected in their contribution towards arts funding decisions; enabling them in turn to respect and understand the artistic threshold whereby expert knowledge must be acknowledged as providing the deciding factor.'

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts

In this context funding bodies were seen to have an educative role, encouraging and empowering people to take part in their decision-making processes, but it was also noted that funders need to be engaged and informed themselves for the collaboration to be effective.

7.7.3 Credible consultations

Finally, it was noted that any consultation needs to be genuine and credible, designed and conducted by experienced professionals with their 'ear to the ground'. Respondents warned of the dangers of 'sham consultations' and the 'vener of democracy' and it was felt that any process for involving members of the public in decision-making should be fair and transparent with a clear governance structure.

7.8 Accountability in other forms

A number of respondents recognised the importance of accountability in the publicly funded arts sector, but felt that direct public involvement in decision-making was not necessarily the best mechanism for bringing funding decisions

closer to the needs and expectations of the wider population. Instead these respondents considered and proposed a range of alternative mechanisms.

7.8.1 General accountability

A number of respondents advocated greater overall accountability in the arts funding system. It was argued that the Arts Council's decision-making processes should be more transparent and open to challenge, with greater information provided on how decisions are made and how those decisions are informed by and reflect public concerns.

7.8.2 Representative and knowledgeable decision-makers

A number of respondents argued that while direct public involvement in decision-making is not necessarily desirable or required, it is important for those making decisions to be representative of the population and to have an informed view of public needs and expectations. Some felt that this could be achieved by ensuring that the Arts Council's regional and national councils are selected to reflect the demographics of the country as a whole. There were also calls for a more open and democratic process for appointing Council members.

'...what we still need is at least some substantial element of changing elected membership of the Arts Council itself.'

Christopher Gordon (online)

It was also felt that Arts Council staff need to represent the diversity of the population and more should be recruited from 'hard-to-reach' communities. It was suggested that Arts Council staff require a solid understanding of the needs of local communities and the ability to make decisions based on public benefit, and that this could be achieved by enabling officers to spend more time 'on the ground', engaging with artists, arts organisations and members of the public.

7.8.3 Devolved responsibility

A small number of respondents argued that the arts funding system could be made more accountable by devolving greater responsibility to local groups, particularly local authorities. Elected members were seen to be more capable of gauging and responding to the opinion of the public at large.

'Funding should be influenced far more by local councillors who are more likely to reflect their local priorities and be responsive to local needs than the 'arts establishment' represented by the Arts Council's bodies. They are also answerable through the democratic process in a way that Quangos never are.'

S Dearden (online)

7.8.4 Engagement through artists and arts organisations

A number of respondents felt that the public could be better served through greater engagement with artists and arts organisations than by direct involvement in decision-making. It was suggested that arts practitioners should have a dialogue with their audiences and communities and use this knowledge to inform and shape their programming.

'Arts organisations need regularly to ask questions such as – is what we are doing pleasing audiences, enticing new ones and achieving increased participation?'

*National Association of Local
Government Arts Officers*

Others took this argument further and suggested that funding applicants should be required to demonstrate public need and demand for their work and that attendance levels and audience response should be taken into account when funding is reviewed.

7.8.5 Greater professional input

Finally, it was suggested that the decision-making process could be improved by giving a greater voice to artists, arts organisations, other professional bodies and voluntary groups. It was argued that because of their close engagement with audiences and local communities, practitioners can bring a good knowledge of local needs to the decision-making process. There were calls to bring back expert panels of arts sector representatives and for greater peer assessment and review. It was also suggested that the Arts Council could learn much from the community and voluntary sector and from highly consultative bodies such as local authorities.

'The Arts Council has had a tendency to inform about policy decisions rather than enter into a dialogue with its local authority partners. The public could be better served by more two-way communication.'

*National Association of Local
Government Arts Officers*

8 Reflections and next steps

8.1 Diversity of views

The most striking characteristic of the responses to the consultation was the diversity of the views expressed. The area in which there was most agreement was that the arts are valuable. However, the reasons respondents valued the arts varied enormously and, even when those reasons were the same, each respondent articulated, expressed and experienced the value differently.

The responses to the questions about the role and distribution of public funding produced an even greater diversity of views. While there were some areas in which there was a fairly broad consensus among a majority of respondents, there was no area where there was universal agreement. This divergence of views was not found along the lines that might have been expected – for instance stakeholder organisations holding widely diverging views to arts organisations – but was evident right across the responses. In fact, some of the most diverse views can be found within the arts community, and it is clear that the arts sector does not speak with one voice.

8.2 Key themes

Despite the diversity of views some key themes did emerge. These were: the importance of the arts; the need to focus on access and reach; quality, innovation and challenge; and fairness and accountability.

8.2.1 Importance of the arts

There was widespread recognition among respondents that the arts are valuable. Respondents spoke passionately and in depth about why the arts are important in their own lives and why they have wider value to society. While this value was expressed in many different ways it can be identified as falling within three domains. Firstly, the arts are valuable because they are part of a fundamental capacity for life – they enable people to express themselves, to make sense of the world and their place in it, to communicate with and understand others, to explore personal and collective identities, to broaden horizons and to question where society has come from and where it might be heading. Secondly, the arts enrich people's experience of life – they bring colour, beauty, passion, intensity and are an important source of enjoyment, relaxation, solace and escape. Finally, the arts are valuable because they have powerful applications in other contexts – community development, education and learning, regeneration and growth.

While each respondent did not cite all of these elements, all respondents talked about at least one, and often a large number of these areas as fundamental to the value of the arts.

8.2.2 Access and reach

There was a strong consensus among many respondents about the importance of access and reach. There was concern that currently many people can't access or are excluded from what the arts have to offer and the majority of respondents felt that public funding should seek to make the arts available for as many people as possible, wherever they live and whatever their background.

Some respondents focused primarily on the physical, financial and social barriers that can prevent people accessing the arts. There was consensus that the publicly funded arts sector should find ways to overcome these barriers, including measures to reduce the cost of accessing the arts, ensure that arts organisations are welcoming and inclusive and that buildings and performances are accessible.

Other respondents advocated a more pro-active approach, reaching out to those who are least engaged with the arts. This included communities who were isolated for practical reasons, for instance rural communities who had little access to the arts, as well as those who were excluded from the arts because of cultural, social or class barriers, including the belief that the arts are 'not for people like me' and a lack of interest in or exposure to the arts. A few respondents also argued that organisations should specifically target minority groups and support practitioners from under-represented communities.

However, a few respondents expressed concern about focusing on access and reach. They tended to argue that good art would find its own audience, or that changing the content or interpretation of art could lead to 'dumbing down'.

8.2.3 Quality, innovation and challenge

The theme of 'quality' was a key feature of the responses to the consultation. There was a strong belief that quality should be a guiding principle for the publicly funded arts in England. However, the word 'quality' had different connotations for different people, and respondents took a variety of approaches to its interpretation, definition and assessment.

The most common interpretation of quality was artistic quality. Respondents felt that publicly funded artists and arts organisations should be striving to produce high quality work, and that quality should be one of the criteria that public funders

should take into account when making funding decisions. Other respondents focused on the quality of the experience, taking into account the experiences of the audience or participant as well as the nature of the work itself. There was little consensus on what either definition of quality might look like in practice, or how it might best be judged. What these interpretations had in common, however, was a sense of aspiration – publicly funded art should strive for excellence, no matter how that is judged.

This aspiration also emerged in the appetite for innovation and risk that was evident in many of the responses. Large numbers of respondents talked about the need for public funding to support innovation and to allow artists and arts organisations the space to take risks. This was seen as a crucial part of the creative process. It was also a way of ensuring quality – for high quality art it is important to keep pushing boundaries and developing new ideas. Some respondents also argued that innovation should not be confined to the art itself: public funding should also support innovative methods of engaging with the public.

Innovation was also closely linked to the debate about value. Respondents valued the way that the arts can broaden horizons and challenge perceptions, and many argued that for the arts to be able to do this they must be innovative – to provide new and unexpected experiences that surprise and challenge people. Innovation is therefore a crucial ingredient in the value of the arts and helps to produce not only high quality art but also high quality arts experiences.

8.2.4 Fairness and accountability

The other key themes that emerged were the importance of fairness and accountability. Large numbers of respondents believed that the allocation of public funding ought to be fair, or that its benefits should be fairly distributed across society. However, perceptions of what a fair funding system might look like differed according to respondents' roles and experiences and how they believed the funding system is currently constructed. They ranged from a desire for funding to be distributed more equally between particular artforms or types of organisation to a call for a more equitable geographical distribution of funding or greater funding for groups who are currently under-served by the arts, for instance those from Black and minority ethnic communities. These arguments were generally based upon a perception of an imbalance in the current system, although there was little agreement on where the imbalance lay, with many respondents holding directly opposing views on this matter.

Most respondents also argued that accountability is crucial, both in terms of how funders account for the way they distribute public money and how recipients of funding account for what they achieve with their share. Calls for funders to become more accountable were connected to the arguments about fairness. There was a strong desire among many respondents for a more open and transparent decision-making process in which the criteria for decisions are clearly articulated and in which the fairness of the system can be judged more easily. However, there was also some concern that the use of rigid criteria could limit the ability of funders to take risks, with some respondents arguing instead for a greater role for judgement and 'gut instinct' in decision-making.

Similar concerns emerged when accountability of organisations or individuals in receipt of public funding was discussed. While some respondents believed that a high degree of accountability should be demanded, with organisations in particular agreeing shared objectives with funders and providing evidence of what they have achieved, there was also concern about the potential for rigid systems of accountability to stifle creativity and hold back the development of artistic practice.

8.3 Attitudes and views by sector

Although on the whole there was no strong correlation between the type of respondent and their likelihood of holding a particular view, there are some areas where it is possible to identify some broad clusters.

8.3.1 Arts community

This category includes both individual, professional artists and representatives of arts organisations. There is no clear dividing line between these groups and many work in both capacities some or all of the time. Respondents from the arts community generally cited a wide variety of benefits and held a broad spectrum of positions. However, polarisation of views was most likely to be found among this group. For instance, a minority of these respondents believed that the value of the arts lies entirely in the intrinsic qualities of the art itself and that discussion of applications of the arts is misguided and could undermine the creative process, while others argued vehemently that the value of the arts is located primarily in the way art could be applied in community or other social contexts.

8.3.2 Amateur and voluntary sector

A small number of respondents mentioned their own amateur involvement with the arts. This informed the way they valued the arts and their beliefs about public funding of the arts. Having themselves gained a lot from working with professional workshop leaders or community arts workers, they tended to strongly support

funding for artists to work in community settings or to facilitate amateur participation for both adults and children (workshops or tuition in schools, art clubs, etc).

8.3.3 Stakeholders and community groups

Responses from stakeholders were more likely than those from other groups to focus on the applications of the arts. Although most also recognised the role the arts play in enhancing the capacity for and experience of life and acknowledged the relationship between these different types of value.

'There is often pressure on the arts to achieve many external objectives, and often they can, but the reason is because the arts have the capacity to reach beyond themselves into so many areas of personal and community life... the arts can simply offer something exciting or life-enhancing, which makes people and communities feel better about themselves.'

North Tyneside Council

Many stakeholders and respondents from community organisations or local arts organisations tended to value the impact the arts can have locally or in communities, with the latter placing particular emphasis on grass roots activity. These respondents often talked specifically about the value the arts are currently creating in the areas in which they operate.

8.3.4 Special interest groups

There were a small number of responses from special interest groups, including children and young people, teachers and prisoners. All of these respondents valued the arts a great deal but placed slightly different emphasis on how they expressed that value. Children and young people tended to value active participation rather than consumption. Teachers, as might be expected, tended to place a particular emphasis on education, while prisoners valued the arts as a form of escapism, a means of self-expression and a way of dealing with difficult issues and emotions.

8.4 Next steps

The responses to this consultation have been enormously valuable and illuminating, and we are grateful to all those who took the time to respond.

The information gathered through the consultation has been incorporated, along with the findings from all of the strands of research, into a report that summarises what we have learned through the arts debate: *Public value and the arts in*

England: Discussion and conclusions of the arts debate. This will be published in November 2007.

We will be spending the coming months sharing and debating the findings widely and working with our partners to determine how we take forward all that we have learned. A policy paper detailing how the Arts Council will respond will be published in spring 2008.

However, it is already clear that the arts debate must not be the end of the conversation. Perceptions of what is valuable shift over time and we must understand the changing needs and priorities of all the communities we serve. The arts debate is helping the Arts Council to become a more outward looking, listening, responsive organisation. It has also uncovered a widespread enthusiasm for debating and exploring what the arts mean to individuals and to society. We are therefore committed to continuing this important dialogue about the value of the arts, the role of public funding and our own priorities and principles in the future.

Appendix

Organisations responding to the written consultation

Abbay-Ethiopian
Abergavenny Millennium Tapestry Group
Acme Construction Company
Action Space Mobile
Action Transport Theatre Company
African Culture Arts and Sport Network
Amanda Nicole School of Dance
a-n The Artists Information Company
Animation Station Director and Artist
Art Of Gold
ArtLink ExChange
Arts and Crafts Newbiggin-By-Sea
Arts and Tourism Services, London Borough of Camden
Arts Council England, South East Regional Council
Arts Council for North Hertfordshire
Ashby Art Club
AUC UK
Audiences Central
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts
Beacon Promotions
Belgrade Theatre
Bexhill Artist's Workspace
Birmingham Composers' Forum
Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG)
Bishopwearmouth Choral Society
Black Country Touring
Black Londoners Forum
Black Training & Enterprise Group
Border Crossings
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Brazilian Contemporary Arts
Breckland Council – Norfolk
British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT)
British Board of Film Classification
British Chinese Artists' Association
British Music Rights

Carers Cultural Adventures
Centre for Life
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Cleveland Philharmonic Choir
Colin Spofforth Studio
Commission for Racial Equality
Contemporary Glass Society
Cube
Culture Committee of Universities for the North East
Daintynak Performing School
Dance City
DanceXchange
Dartford and Gravesham Local Strategic Partnership
Derby City Council
Derby Dance
Diversity Arts Forum (University of East London)
Dorset County Council
Dot to Dot
Dudley Performing Arts
East Staffordshire Borough Council
Elmbridge Borough Council
Firebird Trust
First Taste
Friends of Ferens Art Gallery
Frontline Audio Visual
Gloucestershire Arson Task Force
Grand Union Orchestra
Harrogate Theatre
High Peak Community Arts
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Homeless Link
Howden Town Forum
Imaginative Eyes
Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM)
Jazz Services Ltd
Kent County Council
Kick Start Poets
Kielder Partnership
Leeds Visual Arts Forum
Leicester City Council

Live Theatre
Liverpool Culture Company, Liverpool City Council
London Borough of Enfield
London, Mayor's Office, City Hall
Magma Poetry
Melbourne Festival
Mencap
Merseyside Dance Initiative
Mito International
Modern Art Oxford
Motiroti
nalgao (National Association of Local Government Arts Officers)
N.A.S.A. (Nine Arches Society of Artists)
National Campaign for the Arts
NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts)
Newcastle Theatre Royal
Norfolk County Council, Children's Services
North Hertfordshire District Council
North Tyneside Council
North West Composers' Association
Northamptonshire County Council
Northern Stage
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland National Park
PANDA (Performing Arts Network and Development Agency)
PATH UK
Pickering and District Arts Group
Positive Design
Proper Job Theatre Company
Purbeck Strings
QUAD
Reading Borough Council
Red Ladder Theatre Company
Richmond Theatre Trust
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Royal Shakespeare Company
Saint Martin's Arts
Serious
Serpentine Gallery
Seven Stories

Shelley Community Association
Sound Connections
Sound Sense
South Gloucestershire Council
Southbank Centre
Sprotbrough Music Society
St Edmunds Cathedral/The Edmund Project
St Helens Council, Education/Sure Start
Stringtheory Ltd.
Swamp Circus
Tam Tam Tales Trust
Temple Normanton School Playscheme
The Amir Khusro Society (UK)
The City Gallery, Leicester
The Company
The Faversham Society
The Group
The Music Education Council
The Sage Gateshead
The Society of Authors
The Society of Portrait Sculptors
The Studio
The Theatres Trust
Thee Black Swan Theatre and Opera Company
Tyne and Wear Museums
Tyneside Cinema
Voluntary Arts England
Wandsworth Council
Warrington Arts Council
Wellington and Wiveliscombe Community Learning
Westminster Arts
Westminster City Council
Wild Gift Ltd
Wiltshire County Council
Wise Thoughts
Women in Music
Xtend
Yellow Earth Theatre
York Early Music Festival

Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London SW1P 3NQ

www.artscouncil.org.uk
Email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk
Phone: 0845 300 6200
Textphone: 020 7973 6564
Charity registration no 1036733

You can get this publication in Braille, in large print and on audio CD. Please contact us if you need any of these formats

To download this publication, or for the full list of Arts Council England publications, see www.artscouncil.org.uk

ISBN: 978-0-7287-1366-6

© Arts Council England, November 2007

We are committed to being open and accessible. We welcome all comments on our work. Please send these to Andrew Whyte, Executive Director, Advocacy & Communications, at the Arts Council England address above